BILINGUAL CHILDREN IN HAWAI'I
THEIR LANGUAGES, SCHOOL LIVES AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

MAY 2004

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a case study approach to understanding the lives of English-Japanese bilingual children in Hawaii, whose parents or mothers are from Japan. It focuses on the main three issues, language, school lives, and cultural identity. To maintain Japanese language and cultural values, all the children in this study attend weekend supplemental Japanese school called Hoshuuko, while they attend local English school during weekdays. This study also describes the features of Hoshuuko, and discusses its advantages and disadvantages as expressed by the informants. The focal children are divided into three categories, such as Japan-Focused Returning Students, Japan-Focused Non-Returning Students, and Dual Nationality Students, depending on their family backgrounds. Interviews with mothers are included in order to analyze the results from their point of view. Some suggestions and recommendations are made in the final chapter to help educators relate more sensitively and productively with these children and parents who have dual languages and cultural values.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Issue

Hawaii is a place consisting of a number of immigrants from various countries, including Japan. Although the first generation of immigrants tend to maintain their own culture and language, their American-born children, the second generation, are likely to grow up as Americans and as native English speakers who possess another language and culture passed down from their parents. Harding and Riley (1986) stated that it is possible to be bilingual in both speech and in writing, but it may also happen that a bilingual only learns to read and write in one of his two languages.

Japanese is one of the foreign languages which has been most widely taught and spoken in Hawaii. Kondo (1998) noted that, “Hawaii provides vast educational opportunities for studying Japanese as a foreign language (p.19).” There are three main types of Japanese language programs in Hawaii (Kondo, 1998). First, formal Japanese language classes offered in regular schools, second, Japanese language school or Nihongo gakko which aim is to preserve Japanese language and culture within the Japanese-American community or “to promote a sense of community through the study of Japanese culture and language, as well as to perpetuate Japanese values” (Hawkins, 1978, p.42). Third, there is a hoshuukoo or supplemental Japanese language school in Honolulu, where the primary aim is to maintain Japanese language of children who came to Hawaii because of their parents’ business. These families plan to return to Japan in the future.
Having taught at the hoshuukoo, the last type of language school mentioned above, I have interacted with many Japanese children who were born in America, whose parents are from Japan, and who are bilingual, speaking Japanese at home and English in public. I would like to borrow the term “Shin Nisei,” used by Kondo (1998), to refer to these second-generation Japanese Americans. The term “Shin Nisei” – meaning “new second generation” - is used to differentiate them from an older generation of “Nisei.” Their fathers and/or mothers are the Shin Issei (new first generation Japanese) who immigrated to Hawaii after the 1965 liberalization of immigration laws (Kondo, 1998, p.1). When my Shin Nisei students speak to me in the classroom, they seem just like Japanese children in Japan. They speak fluent Japanese with no English accent, and they even act like Japanese children. For example, they bow properly when they need to, and some of the girls cover their mouths when they laugh. However, when they speak with each other in English, they seem like American children to me. They use English with American jokes and slang, and even their gestures reflect an American style when they talk in English. Furthermore, I have heard that some of these children act differently at their local English schools. For example, the ones who are lively and enthusiastic in Japanese school are shy and quiet in English schools. Or, the ones who are bored and tired in Japanese school are powerful leaders in English schools. These facts have made me wonder how Shin Nisei children identify themselves, and how possessing two different languages and cultures affects their school lives from both academic and psychological standpoints.
1.2 Significance of the Issue

One’s school life could possibly affect one’s self-esteem for the rest of his/her life. *Shin Nisei* children in America who possess two different cultures and languages might have a difficult time in their school life due to the ambiguity of their identities, and due to their bilingualism. They might also have some unique experiences which monolingual people would never have. The identities, self-esteem, or even academic performance of these bilingual and bicultural children may possibly be influenced by their environmental uniqueness. Teachers should always be aware of the sensitiveness of this cultural issue when teaching immigrants’ children, and should try to understand the difficulties they might encounter in their school lives, in order to provide them with equal educational opportunities without feelings of inferiority, disadvantage, or low self-esteem. Wang (1999) stated, “When educators are not culturally ‘literate’ – aware of the cultural dimension of their students’ lives – they cannot provide the right kind of help to their immigrants students and be effective teachers. So research on immigrant students’ school adaptation in relation to language and culture is of great significance (p.25).” To achieve this goal, it is important in this research to find out how bilingual *Shin Nisei* students cope with their multiple language and cultures, and how that affects their behavior, self-esteem, and academic performance. Another significance of this study is that it also includes interviews with mothers of *Shin Nisei* children in order to analyze the results from their point of view, and to illustrate how relationships between mothers and children can affect these language and cultural identity issues.
1.3 Purpose of this Study

As discussed above, bilingual Shin Nisei students might have a difficult time in their school lives because of the two languages and cultural values they possess.

As a language teacher and also a classroom teacher, I would like to investigate some correlations between language and identity in childhood, and how this issue affects the school lives of Shin Nisei children in Hawaii, from different perspectives, such as socializing with others and academic performance.

1.4 Research Questions

This study focuses on three major points in the school lives of Hawaii Shin Nisei students: language, relationships with others, and identity. All three issues are related to their bilingualism. To be more specific, this study will answer the following questions:

1) What kind of effort do they make to preserve their two languages, English and Japanese? What kind of support are they provided with to maintain two languages? What is the primary motivation for these children to maintain fluency in two languages?

2) How does possessing two languages influence the children's school life, both in American school and Japanese school, in terms of relationships and socializing with other children, teachers, and parents?

3) How do these bilingual children identify themselves, Japanese, American, or in another way? How do these identity issues affect their school life? Does it affect their general academic performance in school?
1.5. Methodology

1.5.1 Qualitative Inquiry

The method of this study will be qualitative research. Some books, documents and journals that examine previous research about identity issues and bilingualism of second-generation children in the United States were consulted. Case studies provide some real situations of school lives of bilingual children who are Shin Nisei in Hawaii. The case studies are employed in this study, because, according to Yin (1984), “The case study, like other research strategies, is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures... In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed (p.13).” It seems that case studies are the most suitable to this study, because the primary purpose of this study is to illustrate how Shin Nisei children live their lives in Hawaii, or how they cope with their language/identity issues. The case studies will investigate individual children from the standpoints of children themselves, their mothers, peers, and American teachers if applicable. Information on these children’s general academic performance is included, with their parents’ permission, in order to investigate the relationship between bilingualism and general performance in academic courses as it relates to identity construction. The interviewees and schools remain anonymous in order to protect their privacy, and also to obtain as honest opinions as possible from interviewees.

1.5.2 Background of Case Studies

In case studies, school lives of three children in grades 2 and 3 are described. They all attend either a public school or a private school in Hawaii. All of them also
attend a *hoshuukoo* or supplementary Japanese language school in Honolulu, called Forest Gakuen (See Chapter 3). These case studies are based on interviews I conducted with Japanese mothers and with *Shin Nisei* children who currently live in Hawaii. All mothers are originally from Japan, who moved to Hawaii, and whose native language is Japanese. These interviews were conducted in casual, relaxed circumstances at their houses. All of our conversations were in Japanese, and some of them were tape-recorded with the participants' permission. Some participants were uncomfortable about being taped, so I tried my best to take notes as accurately as possible. I transcribed some of those conversations and translated them into English. Interviews with mothers took about one hour each, and interviews with children took about thirty minutes, including some casual chatting which was not directly relevant to the questions (See Appendix A & B). I knew some interviewees before I began teaching at Forest Gakuen. They are more like "friends" or "acquaintances" to me, rather than just like "parents of my students." Possibly as a result of this relationship, all the mothers willingly shared their experiences and honest opinions, and supportively participated in this research, understanding the purposes and goals of this study well.

Interviews with the mothers and the children were conducted separately so that each of them would be able to make comments honestly. The interesting outcome to me is that the mothers and the children said the same things most of the time. In other words, it seemed that the mothers have great concern about their children, and they have been observant. The information the mothers provided me regarding their children was corroborated by the children themselves.
1.5.3 Limitation of Study

Some limitations were anticipated in conducting this study. First of all, the limited number of cases are insufficient to generalize results. Second, since I, the researcher, teach at the Japanese school the interviewees attend, the relationships between the researcher and children may have affected the interpretation of the findings, more than I presumed. All the children I interviewed looked a little nervous in the one-on-one setting, even though they are normally very cheerful and talkative at Forest Gakuen. The fact that I am currently a teacher at Forest Gakuen might have affected the children’s attitudes. Third, the children in the 2nd and the 3rd grades may still be too young to be aware of and to make comments about their school lives, their language issues, or their identity issues. Fourth, the situation in Hawaii is unique in its possession of Japanese language and culture preserved by a large number of descendents of immigrants from Japan, in addition to the importance of the Japanese language to the travel industry. Therefore, these facts may differentiate the outcomes of this study from one conducted on the U.S. mainland.

1.6 Overview

This Chapter introduced the basic idea of this study. It stated the issue and the significance of this study, and also provided the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the methodology and general background of the case study were discussed, following the research questions. In addition, some limitations in this study were pointed out, based on the nature of this qualitative study.

In Chapter 2, some general information/terminologies from books and articles
will be provided in order to understand the contents of this study better.

In Chapter 3, the settings of the supplemental Japanese school (Hoshukoo) will be introduced from various different aspects. It is essential to understand this study because the hoshukoo called Forest Gakuen is the school which all of Shin Nisei children in this study attend. It will provide the basic idea of hoshukoo, and will also provide an overview of the student experience in this setting.

In Chapter 4, the real lives of Shin Nisei children and their families will be described as case studies, based on the interviews. I will expand on the experience of representative Shin Nisei children and their mothers in Hawaii.

In Chapter 5, the brief summaries and analyses of Chapter 4 will be made in order to organize and clarify the findings from case studies. Summaries and analyses will be based on the research questions in this chapter, and on the types of the children/families defined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6 will be a conclusion of this study. Some statements from the findings will be made, and some recommendations for future studies will also be offered.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter defines some important terms that are related to this study, in order to provide some basic idea of the background of the interviewees, or Shin Nisei students in Hawaii.

2.1 Bilingualism and Bilingual

2.1.1 General Definitions of "Bilingualism" and "Bilingual"

"Bilingualism" has a deep history in the United States. Generally speaking, "bilingualism" in the United States means primarily Spanish bilingualism because of the historically large number of Spanish-speaking immigrants (Nunis, Jr., 1981). However, most immigrants, including Spanish-speakers, "frequently urged their compatriots to learn English if they wanted to get ahead in America (Nunis, Jr, p.32). In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was established for students who were "educationally disadvantaged because of their inability to speak English" to "force school districts to stop neglecting or abusing those students (Epstein, 1978, pp5-10)." However, being able to speak two different languages does not simply mean that a person is perfectly "bilingual." A language is composed of different parts, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Harding and Riley (1986) stated that it is possible to be bilingual in both speech and writing, though it may also happen that a bilingual only learns to read and write in one of his two languages, usually the one he has been educated in. According to
the Bloomfield (1933), "Bilingualism is native-like control of two languages... Of course, one cannot define a degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes a bilingual: the distinction is relative (p.22).” Haugen (1956) also stated the definition of “bilingual” as “the ability to produce complete and meaningful utterances in the other language [in Piper, (1998) p.92].” However, Piper also mentioned that Haugen’s definition does not assume balance, and it is not uncommon even for young children to be more fluent in one language or to reserve one for use in certain situations. His definition assumes that children are only able to communicate easily in either language at a level appropriate to their age.

It seems that most definitions of the term “bilingual” are vague, therefore, defining a person as bilingual is almost certainly ambiguous.

2.1.2 General Aspects of “Bilingual Education”

"Bilingual education” has been practiced in the United States for over 200 years. In the U.S., “bilingual education” is the use of English and another language in instruction. Historically, the purpose of “bilingual education” in America has been “to help [the large number of immigrant] students keep up with reading, math and other subjects in their native tongue while they are taught enough English to transfer to regular classrooms” (Epstein, 1978, p.1). Urban and Wagoner (1996) stated that bilingual education mainly has three different approaches. The first approach is total immersion in English classes designed specifically for non-native speakers. The second approach is enrolling non-English speakers in special English language classes until they acquire sufficient mastery of English to return to regular classrooms. The third approach is
emphasizing study and practice in both the child’s native language and in English. The third approach emphasizes “biculturalism.”

This study will be about the Shin Nisei students, who attend both local English medium elementary schools and Japanese school in Hawaii. Therefore, the third definition of “biculturalism” appears to be the most useful term to apply to this study. This study will expand on the notion or term of “biculturalism.”

2.1.3 Japanese-English Bilingual Programs in Modern Hawaii

According to Kondo (1998), Hawaii provides vast educational opportunities for studying Japanese as a foreign language. Generally, there are three major institutional programs in learning Japanese in Hawaii.

First of all, there are many Japanese language programs conducted at public schools in Hawaii. Japanese language classes are widely available at Hawaii schools and universities. For example, in the 1994 academic year, 8,825 students at 51 public elementary schools and 7,885 students at 46 public secondary schools studied Japanese in Hawaii, making Japanese by far the most commonly taught foreign language at Hawaii public schools (Hawaii Department of Education, in Kondo, 1998, p19).

In addition, there are Japanese schools (Nihongo Gakko) in Hawaii that aim to preserve Japanese language and culture. Currently, there are only 12 Nihongo Gakko on the island of Oahu (Usui, 1996, in Kondo, 1998). Kondo (1998) also mentioned that, “most students at the Japanese schools are Japanese offspring in Hawaii, who are the third or fourth generation of the Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. Although those schools are called Nihongo Gakko, only half of the classroom is used for teaching Japanese, and
in reality, they play more of a role of baby-sitting rather than teaching Japanese. Since
*Nihongo Gakkko* is not very strict about teaching Japanese, the students speak to the
teacher and their classmates entirely in English (p.22).”

Lastly, there is a supplementary Japanese school (*Hoshu koo*) called Forest
Gakuen. It is only a weekend school, but it follows the formal school setting of schooling
in Japan. This school was established for the children of Japanese nationals to catch up
with formal compulsory education in Japan. Because all the *Shin Nisei* students in this
study attend this supplementary school, details of the school will be provided in the next
chapter.

2.2 Children Living with Two Languages

2.2.1 Home Bilingualism

Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) stated, “Research has shown that the first six
years of life are critical for language development. Evidence suggests that children can
easily learn more than one language from birth and in many countries this is normal
language behavior (p.30).” They also mentioned that “For young children entering a new
language environment, the continued use of the home language is important for social
and personal development.” Furthermore, “One of the most important reasons for
continuing the first language at home is to be able to keep links with other family
members both at home and overseas, and for the maintenance of family ties and respect
for elders (p.31).” Also, Piper (1998) stated that “Young children experience less
confusion between their two languages if those two languages are kept distinct. They
seem to have little trouble learning the separate languages of their two parents, or the
language of their peers or other care-takers (p.96).” From these examples, it is found that exposing children to the two languages from a very early stage of life is important. Furthermore, Kondo (1998) argued that “the choice of language for communicating with their mother seems the most important environmental factor associated with their Japanese [second language] proficiency. (p.88)” From this argument, it is ascertained that mothers’ talking with their children at home is crucial for their language development.

2.2.2 School Bilingualism

According to Piper (1998), there are generally five methods of applying bilingual education in the schools. The majority of children in the United States achieve whatever degree of bilingualism they possess in school. When they are adding another language to their native language, children may encounter any one of five different formal language programs listed below.

The first approach is called “Immersion.” The identifying characteristic of immersion is the exclusive use of the second language in school. Teachers must be bilingual, and for the first few years, instruction in every subject is in the second language. Immersion is one of the most promising of the second language programs in elementary schools (p.97).

The second approach is called “FLES (Foreign Language teaching in Elementary Schools).” FLES is the most common strategy, which is the taking of at least one foreign language in school. These courses do not attempt to teach other curricular subjects in the foreign language, but language is treated as a subject in its own right. Typically, both the
amount and the kind of exposure to the new language is limited, compared to immersion. Teaching is likely to focus more on the language itself than on content or meaning (p.99).

The third approach is called “Two-Way Immersion.” It is designed to develop language proficiency in two languages while promoting academic achievement. Borrowing from the principles of “immersion,” these programs integrate majority-language-speaking children and minority-language-speaking children in classes that provide separate teaching of both subject matters in adding to language development. This approach permits minority children to maintain and develop their language and majority children to acquire a second language, too (p.100).

The fourth approach is called “Bilingual Programs.” These are the programs intended to maintain the child’s native language within an English-speaking environment, or to ease the transition between the language of the home and the language of the school. The introduction of English in school and the widespread use of English in the community may cause children to lose much of their native language proficiency, unless there is a concerted effort to maintain it. Although there are relatively few global studies measuring the effects of bilingual programs, there is an emerging body of research on the acquisition of literacy in such programs. It is also mentioned that children need the support of an environment in which people practice literacy in both languages (p.101).

The fifth approach is called “Submersion.” In this approach, children are placed in classes where all their subjects are taught in the language of the school even though they may not know the language at all. It is the method by which many immigrants learned English in the United States. The submersion children come from minority cultures, and there is little if any protection or respect for their native language. By
contrast, immersion children come from a culture that is protected and respected by the dominant culture. If the submersion children do not use the language of the school, their teachers will probably not understand them (p.103).

The Shin Nisei children in this study are likely to have experienced either the fourth or the fifth approach, “Bilingual Programs” or “Submersion.” The Japanese children who are born and raised in Hawaii may have experienced the “Bilingual Programs” through Japanese school. Also, the children who moved to Hawaii recently might be going through “Submersion” when they go to local English schools in Hawaii. Although schools nowadays provide ESL (English as a Second Language) programs for immigrant children who do not understand English, the circumstances at the schools in a new country is similar to be in “Submersion” because English is still not their first language which they can understand naturally. Because of these situations that Shin Nisei children in Hawaii are in, these last two approaches will mainly be focused on in this study. The case studies will demonstrate the actual school lives of children who are in these school bilingual programs.

2.2.3 Code Switching

Bilingual Children like Hawaii’s Shin Nisei students tend to switch languages, depending on the situations. It is very interesting to see how easily they switch their languages, and it appears that they do it unconsciously. This phenomenon is described as follows: Young children may use both their native language and school language in early childhood settings. This is called code switching. Sometimes children change languages in the middle of a conversation or they may use words from their first language in second
language sentences or vice versa (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000). Furthermore, Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) note that if adults support young bilingual children with the use of languages other than English, children will feel confident about using both languages. They will gradually associate a language with a particular person or place and the two languages will be used more systematically. This suggests that support from adults is necessary for bilingual children to maintain two languages.

Similarly, stated in Heredia and Altarriba (2002) that code-switching refers to the alternating use of two or more languages, either within a sentence (intrasentential) or between sentences (intersentencial). Because code-switching is governed by grammatical rules, both language systems are presumed to be active while producing mixed sentences. Furthermore, according to Peynirciolu and Dulgunolu (2002), code-switching occurs in discourse of fluent and nonfluent bilinguals alike, although intrasentential switches are often thought to be illustrative of the level of bilingualism or comfort with another language. This statement from linguistic perspective suggests that children who have tendency to code-switch have some degree of confidence in using two languages, whether or not they are “perfect” bilinguals. Peynirciolu and Dulgunolu (2002) go on to say that code-switching is almost exclusively limited to spoken language, and in the rare written cases, it is often limited to conversation-like correspondence.

2.3 Language and Cultural Identity

Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) stated that the way children feel about themselves in not innate or inherited, it is learned. Positive self-esteem depends upon whether children feel that others accept them and see them as competent and worthwhile.
Roberts (1998) argues that the process by which all children develop their self-esteem and identity rests heavily upon the type of interactions and relationships people form with young children (cited from Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000). Consequently, the identity and self esteem of Shin Nisei students in this study is largely dependent on the people whom they socialize with, such as their parents, their other family members, their friends, and their teachers. However, these Shin Nisei children who have a dual culture and language may have a more complex identity than we assume. For example, it is generally true that bilingual children prefer not to appear different from their peers when they start school. As a result, they may go through a stage where they are reluctant to speak the home language. However, parents often report that gradually the use of English becomes dominant and children begin answering them in English (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000).

This often happens to Shin Nisei children in Hawaii as well, because the children who start going to school have strong influences from their peers. Furthermore, Garder and Lambert (1959) argued that the higher the degree of motivation, the higher the language proficiency. They also claimed that motivation for language study is determined primary by positive attitudes and readiness to identify with the target language community (edited in Khanna and Sachdev, 1998). In other words, according to their statement, being motivated is crucial for acquiring another language. In addition, having a positive attitude and identifying with both languages and cultures is the key for the children to successfully become bilinguals. Lastly, according to Nishimura (1997), "Mother tongue indexes an ethnic identity. And each of these identities has its own rights and obligations, so the interactants are expected accordingly." This suggests that Shin
*Nisei* children, or bilingual people in general, tend to act according to the language they speak. It indicates that the language one speaks probably shows what culture/country he/she identifies with. I would like to conclude this chapter in stating that language is clearly connected to sense of identity.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, some important terminologies, such as bilingualism, were introduced, based on the ideas that were borrowed from previous studies. These terminologies were all relevant to this study, because they introduce the backgrounds of the children in this study, and they also explain the dynamics of their situations. The terminologies were divided into three sections, such as “Bilingualism and Bilingual,” “Children Living in Two languages,” and “Language and Cultural Identity.”

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to the supplemental Japanese school (*Hoshukoo*) called Forest Gakuen, which all of *Shin Nisei* children in this study attend. It will provide the basic idea of *hoshukoo*, and will also expand how it is to be a student there.
CHAPTER 3
SUPPLEMENTAL SCHOOL: FOREST GAKUEN

3.1 Features of School

Forest Gakuen is the setting for this study. It is also the site where the focal students in this study attend Japanese medium classes. Forest Gakuen is a private, non-profit, weekend-only supplemental school, established in 1974. There are three primary purposes for the establishment of this Japanese school.

First, it aims to educate children of Japanese nationals in Hawaii who are going to go back to Japan in the future, so that the children can keep up with their studies, especially the Japanese language, and can easily adjust to the compulsory schooling in Japan. The Japanese compulsory educational system consists of six years of elementary school and three years of junior high school. The national curriculum is used in all Japan's public schools, and each grade's curriculum is precisely set. All public school students in Japan use the same type of textbooks which follow the national curriculum and are authorized by Monbukagakusho, or the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. This makes it difficult for some students who have lived abroad for years to return to school in Japan. Forest Gakuen's helps to make it less difficult by using Japanese curriculum and textbooks. Another aim of the school is to educate Japanese children in Hawaii who are at Japan's compulsory schooling age, and who would like to study the Japanese language. Finally, Forest Gakuen wishes to raise children who have cultural values based to two traditions and an understanding of Japan and America (Gakkoyoran: Forest Gakuen School Handbook, 2001).
Forest Gakuen is not qualified as an official Japanese compulsory school. However, the school employs the same textbooks that are used by Japanese students in Japan. Only three major subjects, Japanese language (Kokugo), mathematics (Suugaku) or arithmetic (Sansuu), and Social Studies (Shakai) are taught at the school due to the limitation of time. Students meet at school only once a week, from eight-thirty to three o'clock. Japanese traditional values and morals are taught at the school along with these three major subjects. The school offers classes from junior and senior kindergarten (Sakura and Momiji classes) to ninth grade, a total of eleven years of schooling.

In September 2001, a total of 401 students attended Forest Gakuen, including 73 students in Sakura and Momiji classes and 78 students in middle school classes (7th to 9th). The average class size is around 15-20 students.

3.2 Perceived Advantages of School

From the parents' perspective, the primary advantage of sending children to Forest Gakuen is the possibility of raising them as fully bilingual and biliterate. There are many Nihongo Gakkoo (Japanese language school) in Hawai‘i, but there is no school like Forest Gakuen, where students are almost perfectly immersed in the Japanese language and which follows the same curriculum as used in schools in Japan. This means that the students from Forest Gakuen are able to adjust to schools in Japan more easily.

Since Forest Gakuen follows the Japanese national curriculum, students learn 1945 kanji (Chinese characters) by the time they graduate from the school. These basic kanji, learned during the compulsory school years, are called joyo-kanji, which are considered essential to be able to read and write fluently. Knowing kanji is crucial in
using the Japanese language in many ways. For example, it is said that about 3000 kanji are needed to read a Japanese newspaper (Kaigaishijyo kyoiku dayori: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2001). To acquire this number of kanji accurately and efficiently, it is necessary to study it from early childhood. Students at Forest Gakuen are required to learn a certain number of kanji each week, and they take weekly kanji-tests to make sure that they were memorized correctly. The kanji-tests also play an important role to ensure that students practice kanji at home. Although this is a tough process for the student to go through, this strict kanji training helps them to become highly literate in the Japanese language.

Forest Gakuen teaches not only the Japanese language but also Japanese cultural values and morals, such as honorific words, respecting elders, and proper behavior like bowing. Although these are the things that could be taught at home, it is more efficient and meaningful to be taught at school by teachers/adults who are not family members. In this formal school setting, students are more likely to feel obliged to follow proper Japanese traditional ways of behavior. Also, having opportunities to learn Japanese morals and values at school is important for these Japanese children who live in the United States, because they rarely have a chance to be exposed to them outside of the home.

Furthermore, Forest Gakuen provides some activities like undookai (sports festival) which are considered the traditional, major events for schools in Japan. In undookai, the students at Forest Gakuen even practice Rajio Taiso (radio exercise), which is a nation-wide morning ritual exercise in Japan. Outside of Japan, there are probably millions of non-Japanese people who can speak and understand the Japanese language
well. However, they would never know these cultural activities like *Rajio Taiso* until they actually lived in Japan, since this is rarely taught in Japanese language classes.

In addition, Forest Gakuen possesses a library with hundreds of Japanese novels, picture books, and videos. Students are free to borrow three books a week from the library. Teachers encourage their students to borrow the books so that the students have more opportunity to read in Japanese. From what I have observed as a teacher in the 3rd grade, students in general like to read, look forward to visiting the library, and enjoy the reading time during the school day. Despite the fact that Hawaii is known as a place where Japanese people can easily obtain Japanese products compared to the mainland, it is still difficult to be exposed to that amount of children's Japanese reading material. So, being able to use Forest Gakuen's library is a great advantage for its students.

Sending children to Forest Gakuen provides them more opportunity to socialize with other Japanese children who are from Japan and whose first language is Japanese. At Forest Gakuen, students can meet peers who share the same experiences and feelings as bilingual children who possesses Japanese cultural values in America. This opportunity could lessen their negative feelings of being minorities.

3.3 Problems of School

Although Forest Gakuen follows the Japanese curriculum, it is hard for the students to keep up with it because the school has to cover in one day the same subject matter that schools in Japan cover in one week. Therefore, every week, Forest Gakuen demands from its students a heavy load of homework that causes them a burden. To complete all the requirements from school, support from parents or family is necessary.
for all the students. Most students have to make a great effort to handle all the assignments from Forest Gakuen, because they also have to do homework from their local English school. In addition, some students participate in activities like soccer. As a result, most students are very busy with all the tasks they have to handle every week, some are tired out and get discouraged studying the Japanese language.

As mentioned earlier, Forest Gakuen was established primarily for Japanese children who are planning to go back to Japan along with their Japanese parents. However, there tends to be more local children enrolling lately. These students often have one American parent and their families are going to live in the United States for good and are not planning to return to Japan. It is said that one of the main reasons for this phenomenon is Japan's recession, which occurred in the mid 90's. When fewer Japanese business people come and stay in Hawaii due to the recession, more local students are likely to be accepted at the school. This fact brings less motivation to some students in studying Japanese, since such students do not see the reason why they have to study the language when they are not going to live in Japan. Less motivated students cannot catch up with the school's tough curriculum and requirements, and there are some students who quit school before reaching graduation in spite of their parents' hopes of their becoming bilingual and biliterate.

Another problem is the hardship that students have to overcome to maintain their Japanese language ability. Students at Forest Gakuen study new kanji every week, but the number of kanji they have to know accumulates year by year, and the level of kanji increases in difficulty and complexity toward the upper grades. Even though students practice kanji hard and get good grades on their weekly kanji-tests, they tend to forget it
quickly due to a limited opportunity to use it in their daily life in America. This causes Forest Gakuen’s students’ general ability of Japanese language to be lower than average students in Japan, in spite of the same curriculum employed in both schools.

3.4 A Typology of Shin-Nisei Children at Forest Gakuen

Although Forest Gakuen’s students are considered “Japanese,” they have somewhat different family backgrounds, depending on their parents nationality and their residential status in Hawaii. For this study, I divided the children at Forest Gakuen into three general categories, based on their family structures. Each category of children has different tendencies in terms of their learning attitude and outcome of studying Japanese. Of course, each child has unique qualities even if they are in the same category, because their family situations are usually more complicated than the typology suggests. Furthermore, these categories are tentatively stated based on my experiences as a teacher at Forest Gakuen and based on what I heard from some teachers and mothers. Therefore, they might be slightly biased. In order to provide the reader with a clearer sense of the scope of Shin Nisei students at Forest Gakuen, the following categories were developed.

(1) Japan Focused Returning Students:
- Children whose family plans to go back to Japan in the future
- Children whose entire family speaks the Japanese language at home
- Children who have lived in Japan for a certain length of time before coming to Hawaii

(2) Japan Focused Non-Returning Students:
- Children whose family does not plan to go back to Japan in the future
- Children whose parents are from Japan and speak Japanese with the parents, but not necessarily with their siblings
- Children who are born in the United States or have lived in Japan only for a short period of time

(3) Dual Nationality Students:
- Children whose one parent speaks Japanese and the other parent speaks English at home
- Children whose family plans to live in the United States permanently
- Children who are born in the United States or have hardly ever lived in Japan
- Children who speak in English with their siblings

3.4.1 Japan Focused Returning Students

These are the students whose both parents are from Japan, speak Japanese at home, and who are going back to Japan someday, and who have lived in Japan for a certain length of time before moving to Hawaii.

Almost all children in this category probably identify themselves as Japanese. They tend to be highly motivated in studying at Forest Gakuen. They are likely to maintain a high level of Japanese ability, about the same level as students in Japan. They are likely to enjoy going to Forest Gakuen every week, and look forward to talking with their Japanese peers in the Japanese language. During class, some of them proudly make comments like; "I knew this already because I did/saw it in Japan!" "In Japanese school, they do --. Did you guys know that?" or "Sensei (teacher), this is too easy for me! In
Japan, everybody knows this!”

On the other hand, some of the students in this category are having a hard time at their local English schools. They have fewer opportunities to be exposed to English compared to their American peers, because they speak only Japanese at home, and they only watch Japanese TV and videos with their parents. This language limitation may result in lower grades at English school. Some of them are still so new in Hawaii that they cannot even communicate with their English-speaking friends. One girl in the 6th grade mentioned in her essay; “I was hoping there would be at least one Japanese classmate in my new class [at English school]. I’m glad there was! We became friends right away and had fun talking about SMAP (popular Japanese singing group).”

3.4.2 Japan Focused Non-Returning Students

These are the children whose parents are from Japan, but their families do not plan to go back to Japan in the future. They are either born in the United States, or have lived in Japan for only a short period of time.

The identities of children in this category may vary, depending on how the family emphasizes the Japanese language and cultural values at home; some parents might insist that their children are Japanese while some just do not care if their children identify themselves as Japanese or American, because they are going to live in America anyway. However, because they live in America, it may be more likely that children identify themselves as American, or local Japanese-American in Hawaii.

On the other hand, this type of children may have the highest potentiality to become perfect bilinguals in all three categories, as far as I observed. Because of the
exposure to the Japanese language at home, such as TV, radio, music, and regular conversations with family members in Japanese, the children are likely to be fluent in speaking and listening Japanese, although other language usage abilities (reading and writing) are slightly lower than average Japanese students. For example, even though they speak just like native Japanese speakers with no English accents, their writing ability is not as developed as it should be at their age. They use inappropriate dialogue forms in formal writing. Likewise, they sometimes do not know the words that are specially used only at school and rarely used at home. For example, when I ask them in Japanese:

"A-kun (Mr.A), could you clean the kokuban no mizo (black board railing - a basic word all the students in Japan should know)?" They might answer; "What's mizo?" This kind of reaction often surprises me, because they normally speak so much like native speakers that I just assume that they understand everything I say. This indicates that children in this category lack exposure to the Japanese language outside the home.

This group of children normally enjoys studying at Forest Gakuen. However, there are some children who are reluctant to study Japanese when they know their families are not going to live in Japan. On average, the academic scores at Forest Gakuen of this group of children are likely to be lower than the Japan-Focused group of children, even if they are doing just fine at their local English schools. This might be the case especially when the children's motivation in learning Japanese is low.

3.4.3 Dual Nationality Students

These are the children who have one parent from Japan and the other parent from America. In many of the cases, the mothers are from Japan and the fathers are
Americans who speak/understand little Japanese. The characteristics of this group are more complicated, depending on the fathers’ backgrounds, nationalities, language abilities in Japanese, whether or not the family has ever lived in Japan, and so on. However, generally speaking, the mothers of this group usually speak to their children only in Japanese while they speak to their American husbands in English. As a result, the language in the family tends to be mixed in Japanese and English.

Because of the mothers’ efforts to talk to their children in Japanese, the children are likely to be fluent in speaking Japanese. However, since the children speak English at home to their fathers (and likely to their siblings), and since they also socialize with American friends from local English schools, they tend to have more chances to be exposed to English than Japanese. As a result, their first language is likely to be English rather than Japanese. The children in this group tend to act more like Americans than as Japanese. For example, they make some typical American gestures like shrugging their shoulders or pointing themselves by their thumb. They naturally make these gestures simply because they live in America, they are surrounded by American people more than Japanese people, and they speak more English than Japanese in their daily lives.

Whether or not they like going to Forest Gakuen, their academic scores or basic ability in the Japanese language tend to be lower compared to Japan-Focused Students mentioned before. Although their pronunciation sounds natural in Japanese speech, it sometimes seems that they have not acquired the basic speaking skills, such as making proper structures. Their dialogues occasionally sound like a direct translation from English to Japanese, although their fluency is sufficient to make themselves understood. Their Japanese vocabulary is also limited because of their relatively limited exposure to
the Japanese language, so they sometimes put English words directly in Japanese sentences. For example, in a sentence of “Teacher, I have fever,” they might say “Sensei, watashi (I) fever aru (have),” instead of saying “Sensei, watashi (wa) netsu ga aru (arimasu).” “Netsu” means “fever” in this sentence, but they simply do not know or cannot remember the Japanese word “netsu.” Hence, they replace it with the English word “fever,” although the other words and sentence are perfectly natural Japanese.

As another hardship, mothers of this group of children usually have to devote themselves at home to helping with children's homework from Forest Gakuen. To help with homework from Forest Gakuen, it is essential to be a Japanese native speaker who is educated in Japan's educational system. In many of the cases, their American husbands are not able to help children with the homework, even when fathers are supportive in other respects like taking their children to school or picking them up from school. As a result, many of the mothers struggle by themselves helping their children with homework, with keeping up with the studies, especially in the upper grades. Some of mothers and children even become stressed on Fridays, the night before school at Forest Gakuen. Some children become grumpy or start to cry, feeling that they cannot finish up the homework by the coming Saturday. Some mothers become tired of this weekly battle and wonder how long their children can last in Forest Gakuen.

Another difficulty for these children stems from Forest Gakuen’s goal to teach not only Japanese language but also Japanese traditional values and behaviors. Forest Gakuen sometimes teaches those values (e.g. to bow to elders) to children so strictly that some parents (fathers) who do not have any Japanese background might feel resistant and may have a hard time accepting it.
Finally, some of the children in this group outwardly look non-Japanese because of their non-Japanese parents. They have probably been treated as foreigners even when they were in Japan. Nevertheless, it is very amazing to hear these children speak perfect native-like Japanese and to see them act just like typical Japanese children (e.g. bowing).

3.5 Observations at Forest Gakuen

This section will illustrate some of the behaviors/conversations of students at Forest Gakuen. These observations were conducted from the period of September 2000 to March 2002. They were all personally conducted by the researcher, and recorded either in the formal monthly report to the principal of the school, or in my personal class-operating journal.

As explained in the last section, I divided the students at Forest Gakuen into three general groups based on their family backgrounds. However, these are only general divisions, and of course, children in the same category are different in terms of attitudes and levels of academic success. Yet, in my point of view, most students at Forest Gakuen seem to be almost “perfect” bilinguals and have been successful in adopting two cultures.

More surprisingly, regardless of what category they are in, the students at Forest Gakuen naturally become friends with one another. They pick their friends based on their preference in personalities, not on their outward appearances. Since I started teaching at Forest Gakuen, I have never heard any racially discriminating words from students. It looks like they think of themselves just as “students at Forest Gakuen,” nothing more or less. I assume that the factor which strengthens this kind of commonality among children is the language. In other words, no matter what language they speak outside of school, or
no matter what kind of background they are from, because of the language spoken at school, they are all “Japanese” and “students at Forest Gakuen.”

In Japan, the majority of people are Japanese nationals, and Japan’s society is still relatively homogeneous. Foreigners are considered “different” and often called “gaijin (means “foreigner” but implies “outsider”). Foreigners tend to be treated differently both in a good way and a bad way. Some are treated too kindly or too special just because they are foreigners, and some are discriminated against just because they look different and do not speak proper Japanese. In school settings, as well as in the society, students who are from foreign countries might stand out and be treated differently like being teased or bullied. Considering this “insider-outsider” way of thinking (uchi-soto) that Japanese people likely possess, the open-mind of Forest Gakuen’s students toward one another is quite impressive. This may prove that the students at Forest Gakuen can successfully accept differences among their peers without being racially prejudiced.

Another phenomenon observed at Forest Gakuen is students’ language usage. They alternate their languages from English to Japanese very naturally and swiftly (code-switching, see Chapter 2). For instance, teachers usually require students to speak Japanese at school, so they speak in Japanese to teachers. However, some of them use English when they talk to one another during recesses, behind teachers’ backs. This is probably because either their English is stronger than their Japanese, or because it is more natural for them to speak English to one another, especially the case that they know one another from their local English schools. When they are used to speaking English to one another outside of Forest Gakuen, they might feel uncomfortable or strange speaking
Japanese, because they spend more time together at local English school than at Forest Gakuen.

Furthermore, as argued by Peynirciolu and Dulgunolu (2002) in Chapter 2, students at Forest Gakuen use code-switching almost only in casual settings like at recess. When they speak in formal settings, such as presentations, code-switching is rarely heard.

Another interesting example of code-switching is shown when students get emotional such as being sad, mad, or excited. For example, even the ones who normally like to speak in Japanese suddenly shout in English slang when they fight with each other. Also, when I tell them about next week’s homework or tests, they yell “n oo!” instead of expressing their feeling of rejection/reluctance in Japanese. This is probably because they do not know so many Japanese exclamations and it is more natural for them to use English words to express their feelings. Or, it may be because they just cannot help using English when they are emotional, even though they know they should use Japanese at Forest Gakuen. In addition, it is interesting to see them change their gestures, from Japanese style (e.g. bowing) to American style (e.g. shrug their shoulders), when they change their language. (Code-switching does not apply to students who arrived in Hawaii recently and still do not speak English fluently [Japan-Focused students]).

There are some other interesting issues regarding students’ identity. One girl who belongs to the category of “Dual Nationality Students,” who looks Caucasian one day said, “Sensei, you know my name is Hanako Matsuda, but did you know I have one more name? My English name is Hannah Brookfield!” In her case, “Matsuda” is her mother’s maiden name, and “Brookfield” is her father’s last name. Her mother probably had made her be called a Japanese name at Forest Gakuen, so that she could have more
opportunities to feel like a “Japanese.” I asked Hanako some more questions regarding her two names:

Teacher: Which name do you like better?
Hanako: I like them both!
Teacher: Don’t you get confused when you have two names?
Hanako: No, it’s fun to have two names, and I feel so lucky to have two!

This indicates that it looks like she identifies herself as both Japanese and American just naturally and unconsciously, and she has accepted the fact that she has two cultural/racial backgrounds. She enjoys having two names and even appreciates it.

One day, in my Kokugo (Japanese language) class, the required reading material was a story about a Japanese family during World War II. When we were talking about how cruel the War was and how sad people were, one girl who belongs also to the category of “Dual Nationality Students,” who looks African-American, made some comments:

Oh no... I wouldn’t know what to do if this kind of war started again, because my mom is from Japan but my dad is from America. I wouldn’t want to be for either of these two countries. I really hope a war between Japan and America will never happen!

This suggests that she loves both countries, and identifies herself as both Japanese and American.

3.6 Summary

As the only Japanese school in Hawaii that follows the national curriculum of Japan’s educational system, Forest Gakuen has been playing an important role for Japanese nationals who live in Hawaii to educate their children. In spite of its strict
curriculum, students at Forest Gakuen willingly study hard to learn/maintain their Japanese language and traditional Japanese values. Although their Japanese language ability and their academic level vary depending on their motivations or families' situations, most of them have successfully become balanced bilinguals. They have also acquired cultural understandings and have naturally accepted differences. Furthermore, the observations suggest that the students at Forest Gakuen in general seem to be proud of both countries no matter what kind of family background they have.
CHAPTER 4
CASE STUDIES OF SHIN NISEI'S FAMILIES

This chapter will describe actual cases of three families who have experience with a Japanese-English bilingual situation and whose children/child attend Forest Gakuen.

4.1.1 The Kuroki Family

Mrs. Makiko Kuroki came to Hawaii one and a half years ago, because of her husband’s job transfer. Her husband, Yoshiaki, is from a small city in the southern part of Japan. He was transferred to the Hawaii branch of his company one and a half year ago. The Kurokis’ have two children; the older son named Takeshi in the 8th grade, and the younger girl named Yuka in the 2nd grade. Yuka is one of my interviewees and is currently in the 2nd grade at Forest Gakuen. Both children attend public schools in Honolulu. Mr. Kuroki is going to serve in this new position in Hawaii only for three years, so, the family is planning to go back to Japan after one and a half years (Japan-Focused Returning Students: See Chapter 3). Because of the limited time of the stay in Hawaii, Mrs. Kuroki has been open-minded to new things that happen in Hawaii. In addition, she has also been encouraging their children to experience new and different things as well. The family lives in a decent, convenient area in town, where a large number of native Japanese live. Therefore, they have many opportunities to easily meet other families/people from Japan in their community.
4.1.2 Yuka’s Language Acquisition

Since this is the first time for Yuka to live in a foreign country, Yuka’s mother language is, of course, Japanese. A few months prior to coming to Hawaii, Mrs. Kuroki provided Yuka with some children’s English-learning tapes so that Yuka would become familiar with the sound of English, even just a little. However, on Yuka’s first day at the public elementary school, she could understand nothing of what her teacher said in English. Yuka recalled this time, and told me hesitantly that she just imitated what other students were doing, because she had no idea what she was supposed to do in class. She was even placed in an ESL (English as a Second Language) class for about the first six months. Mrs. Kuroki recalled;

There were times...especially for the first few months or so, I remember that Yuka was saying at home, “I’m too tired to go to school...” or “I don’t wanna go to school...” or something like that. Of course I knew why, she must have been having a hard time because she couldn’t understand what her teacher said in English at all.

On the other hand, Yuka enjoyed going to Forest Gakuen on weekends because she could understand everything that was going on there. At Forest Gakuen, Yuka’s academic grades have been extremely high, and most of the time, she receives a perfect score (100%) on her kanji tests. In addition to Forest Gakuen, Yuka takes monthly tushin-kyoiku (correspondence-schooling) from Japan in order to keep up with her grade level at home in Hawaii.

However, things have been changing with Yuka lately, according to Mrs. Kuroki. After over one year of stay in Hawaii, Yuka seems to have acquired English rather more quickly than anybody else in the family. Mrs. Kuroki described Yuka’s language use:
Yes, I’m sure Yuka’s language use has changed. Lately, she sometimes speaks in English even to me at home! Well, of course, the English words Yuka accidentally uses at home are just children’s English, and I can tell that she picked up those words from her friends at school. But it’s amazing to me how natural her English sounds, just after a little over one year [from their coming to Hawaii]. You know, compared to me! I still can speak only little English with strong Japanese accents! It’s really amazing how fast children pick up a new language.

On the other hand, it seems like Forest Gakuen is getting to be a burden to Yuka lately, although she still maintains her good grades there, according to both Yuka and Mrs. Kuroki. Yuka mentioned,

Umm...I think I like English school better. It’s more fun. Forest Gakuen is sometimes too hard. I like to learn *kanji*, but I don’t really like to write in Japanese. [She meant compose in Japanese.] I like arithmetic better than Japanese! But I like English. I like to write in English. It’s fun. I don’t know why.

Mrs. Kuroki assumes that this is due to which language Yuka uses in her daily life; she now uses more English than Japanese, compared to before. Mrs. Kuroki thinks that Yuka has more friends from the English school, compared to before. As a result, she spends more time with them, and spends more and more time being exposed to English, rather than in Japanese. Although Mrs. Kuroki feels sometimes bewildered by Yuka’s quick adjustment to the English world, she is still happy about Yuka’s becoming a bilingual. Mrs. Kuroki even wants to encourage it, rather than worry about her Japanese maintenance too much, because the family has to return to Japan one day. She thinks that being a Japanese/English bilingual in Japan is useful, and also believes that this whole experience in Hawaii will be meaningful to Yuka after she returns home to Japan.
4.1.3 Yuka's Socialization

Generally speaking, Yuka is a cheerful girl who likes to talk and play with her friends, according Mrs. Kuroki. As mentioned in the previous section, Yuka has been making many friends from her public elementary school. Yuka said that she mainly plays with those friends after school, instead of her Japanese friends from Forest Gakuen. Yuka mentioned,

Now I can understand everything my friends say in English. It's so fun to play with them. I have Japanese friends, too. But sometimes we [Yuka and her Japanese friends] talk to one another in mixed Japanese and English.

According to Yuka, some of her friends from Forest Gakuen even talk to her in English. Mrs. Kuroki assumes that it is because those Japanese children have been in Hawaii so long that they are more used to speaking English than Japanese in their daily lives. Therefore, according to Mrs. Kuroki, Yuka goes along with them, and is easily influenced by them, because Yuka is still so young and flexible.

This is another thing that surprises me... You know how easily Yuka gets along with her friends from English school? It's amazing! Look at me, I'm still having a hard time to make friends with her friends' mothers at the English school, because I'm not very confident about my English. I always just stay quiet at any kinds of PTA events.

Mrs. Kuroki also mentioned about Forest Gakuen as follows;

On the other hand, I really enjoy socializing with Japanese mothers at Forest Gakuen. We exchange lots of information that we wouldn't know if we didn't talk one another. We also complain to one another about inconvenience of living in a foreign country. They give me sympathy, and I feel so assured whenever I talk to them because I can feel that I'm not the only one who is struggling in a foreign country. Actually, Forest Gakuen is functioning as a socialization place for mothers, not only for kids... But Yuka is different. She doesn't care which language to speak with her friends, and it doesn't matter to her where her friends are from...or what nationality they are. Children are so easy... I'm almost jealous (laughing).
According to Mrs. Kuroki, there seems to be no cultural boundary that exists for Yuka right now to make friends. It seems like Yuka’s social life in Hawaii has been getting better and better, although she had a hard time adjusting for the first couple of months. Furthermore, being Japanese in an English school does not seem to be a big handicap for Yuka’s school life.

4.1.4 Yuka’s Identity

Since Yuka has been in Hawaii for only one and half a years, Yuka’s primary identity is Japanese, according to Mrs. Kuroki. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there are many native Japanese in the community the family is living in. Because of the environment Yuka is in, she does not have to feel like a “minority” even at her English school. Mrs. Kuroki mentioned;

Yes, I think Yuka is lucky as far as adjusting to a different country is concerned. She could make a good adjustment because it was Hawaii. I don’t think it would have been this easy if we had to live on the mainland or somewhere there were no Japanese people. Yuka’s elementary school [English school] not only has Japanese children from Japan, but also many local Japanese-Americans or even Asian-Americans. You know, those Asian-American kids. Even though they speak English, they still look Asian. I mean, Yuka does not look any different from them. I guess that’s why Yuka didn’t feel too uncomfortable to try to imitate them, or even their language.

Mrs. Kuroki thinks it is an important issue what kind of environment the children are in. Additionally, she thinks Yuka is lucky because Yuka’s elementary school also has some Japanese language classes. According to Yuka, there are times that all the students in the Japanese class admired her because of her
Japanese knowledge and proficiency. Mrs. Kuroki recalled;

I was glad when I heard from Yuka what happened in her Japanese class. She looked so proud of herself, being able to speak Japanese, or even being as a Japanese. Since Forest Gakuen is getting a little hard for her right now, it’s good something like this happens, because Yuka can feel it’s rewarding to studying Japanese in some way.

Furthermore, Mrs. Kuroki thinks that the younger the children are, the more flexible they are when they adjust to a new environment, or even to a new culture and language. She compared Yuka to her older brother, Takeshi, and made this comment.

Oh yes, it took much longer for Takeshi to adjust to the new life in Hawaii. Of course Takeshi still has stronger identity as Japanese than Yuka, because he has lived in Japan and has attended schools in Japan till 7th grade, after all. That’s why he couldn’t make an adjustment at school as smoothly as Yuka. It took so long... And I don’t think Takeshi has completely adjusted like Yuka. Yuka is so flexible, compared to Takeshi.

At this point, there seems to be no problem for Yuka, as far as identity issues are concerned. She is young enough to easily adjust to her new life, and has successfully adjusted to the new language as well. However, some questions still remain, is Yuka lucky enough to have easily adjusted unlike others because she lives in an area that is open to the Japanese people and culture? Or, is it only her character, which is naturally cheerful, open-minded and friendly, that has allowed her to make this easy adjustment?

4.1.5 Parent's Perspectives

Although Mrs. Kuroki is pleased about Yuka’s easy adjustment to living in Hawaii, Mrs. Kuroki has been feeling a little tired about supporting her children with both the English school and Forest Gakuen. She thinks that it is no wonder that Takeshi is having such a hard time in succeeding in either school, because his grade level of study is
already difficult no matter what country he is studying in. However, Mrs. Kuroki is a little concerned about Yuka starting to show a dislike to both Forest Gakuen and to studying Japanese.

I think this is just too hard for the children at her age. Forest Gakuen gives Yuka a lot of homework. I know she needs to do it in order to keep up with her study as a Japanese student. But it just seems too much. She has homework from English school, and it’s an every day thing, so she usually tries to do it first. Then she gets tired after doing it, because it still takes time for her to do it because her English vocabulary is still sort of limited. I can’t be of a good help, because my English is worse than Yuka’s. So, there is little time for Forest Gakuen’s homework. She usually gets it done on Friday, right before the day of Forest Gakuen.

However, although Mrs. Kuroki thinks that balancing Forest Gakuen and English school is too hard for the children at Yuka’s age, she does not view Forest Gakuen only as a place for the children to study or maintain their Japanese.

Of course, it’s necessary to send your kids to Forest Gakuen if you want your kids to keep up with the Japanese educational system, and it’s even crucial if you are going back to Japan someday in the future. That’s the main reason for me to send my children to Forest Gakuen, but this is not all. I expect them [her children] to learn not only subject matters, but also...something like, [Japanese] school life, system, events, cultural values, how to behave on certain occasions...and...communication skills with other kids or teachers, and so on...I mean, something they can learn only outside of home. That’s why it’s so important to send your kids to Forest Gakuen, I think.

This comment shows that Mrs. Kuroki values Forest Gakuen as a place for many purposes other than simply for studying Japanese. At the same time, she showed her openness toward her children’s English study, acquiring other cultural values, or different customs.

Although it’s hard to balance two different schools [Forest Gakuen and English school], I believe it’s more than just worth it. You know, right now, Yuka is learning something that she could never have
learned if she had just lived in Japan....Not only being able to speak or understand English, but she’s learning different culture, different kind of school life, different style of classes, and different kind of people. It is a great thing that she has this opportunity when she is this young and flexible. I hope, in the future, that she will appreciate it and that she will grow to be a person who has an open mind and wide views. I don’t really care even if, right now, Yuka’s English is getting stronger than her Japanese. She can always catch up with her Japanese later in Japan. I just want her to try her best for now, for both Forest Gakuen and English school, and, I want her to just appreciate this great opportunity.

As mentioned in the comment above, Mrs. Kuroki feels positive about Yuka being exposed to two different languages and cultures. This positive attitude might possibly be affecting Yuka in her quick adjustment to her new life, while she still maintains a high level of her Japanese proficiency.

4.2.1 The Okawa Family

Mrs. Ikuko Okawa came to Hawaii about two and a half years ago, because of her husband’s new business. She has two children; the older one is a girl named Lisa in the fifth grade, and the younger one is a boy named Ken in the fourth grade. (Ken is one of the interviewees and is in the third grade at Forest Gakuen.) Both children attend a public elementary school on Oahu. Mrs. Okawa’s husband, Hideki, is also from Japan, and all the members of the Okawa family speak Japanese to one another at home. The Okawa family is planning to stay in the United States permanently if Mr. Okawa obtains a green card. (Japan-Focused Non-Returning Student: See Chapter 3.) Mr. and Mrs. Okawa both think that Hawaii is a good place to raise children because of its relaxed environment, and they think Hawaii has more places for kids to play freely, compared to Japan. Although the children’s education is not a primary reason for them to move to
Hawaii, Mr. and Mrs. Okawa are both happy about raising their children in Hawaii, and they are not regretful about their decision. The Okawa family lives in a quiet area of central Oahu, where many new houses have been built recently. Unlike Honolulu, there are not so many Japanese people living in that area, probably because it is a relatively new area and a little far from the town.

4.2.2. Ken’s Language Acquisition

Although the Okawa family has been in Hawaii more than two years, the children’s first language is still Japanese. Even though the children attend a local English school every day, their English vocabulary is still limited to a certain degree, according to Mrs. Okawa. Ken was in the second grade when he moved to Hawaii. In the beginning of his life in Hawaii, he had a difficult time to adjust because of the language. He hardly knew any English words when he first arrived in Hawaii. Mrs. Okawa had to teach him some English (though she is not a native English speaker herself), and also had to help with Ken’s homework from English school. Ken’s classroom teacher told her that he was very quiet in class. Ken was put in an ESL class and also placed in a speech class for students who have problems speaking in front of people. Ken is an easy-going boy and did not show any other serious problems at school, other than the language issue. However, looking back, Mrs. Okawa thinks that Ken must have had a very hard time having a language barrier at school, and it must have been a great burden for a little kid of Ken’s age to overcome.

Ever since the time the Okawa family started a new life in Hawaii, Ken has been attending Forest Gakuen. His former classroom teacher and I, his current teacher, both
agree that Ken is one of the most committed students in studying the Japanese language. His test scores are always high, and he is a “straight A” student. He never forgets his homework, and it is always done well. He even enjoys practicing kanji as if it were a game, and works hard to get “good” scores on the weekly kanji test. Mrs. Okawa also mentioned that she is sometimes surprised by some “sophisticated” Japanese words Ken accidentally uses. Mrs. Okawa said she could tell that Ken learned those words at Forest Gakuen, because she knows no one in the family uses them at home. Mrs. Okawa said:

I think sending Ken to Forest Gakuen is very effective in the development of his Japanese, even though it is only once a week. If he had not been attending Forest Gakuen, he would never have chances to be exposed to the Japanese language this much. He can read and write ok because he is “forced” to do so because of Forest Gakuen. It is good because the vocabulary he uses at home is very limited, and Forest Gakuen helps him learn Japanese in a wider range.

However, no matter how well he is doing at Forest Gakuen, it is getting hard for him to read/write Japanese, just like the other students there. Ken says that it is easier for him to speak Japanese than English, but it is harder to read/write Japanese than English because of kanji. Speaking of watching TV, Mrs. Okawa said that Ken enjoys both English programs and Japanese programs at home. Ken even watches jidaigeki (dramas/shows about Japan’s history) like Hojo Tokimune on Kiku TV, which has many difficult, old usage of the Japanese language. Ken likes Hojo Tokimune and even shows interest in the Japanese history, yet, he told me that he is reading subtitles on the bottom of the TV screen most of the time when he watches the show. This fact indicates that Ken’s listening comprehension is not developing well enough for his age, or, living in Hawaii – having English subtitles even on the Japanese TV – may be preventing him from being completely exposed to the Japanese language.
Likewise, Ken speaks some English words even at home, even though the Okawa family’s home language is Japanese. According to Mrs. Okawa, when Ken becomes emotional, such as surprised, excited, sad, or mad, he is likely to say some English words. For example, he says “Duh” when he loses a card game with his older sister, Lisa. Mrs. Okawa said it is probably because children naturally learn those kinds of words at school, and do not have enough opportunities to hear those words in Japanese.

Mrs. Okawa also mentioned that Ken has better vocabulary in English in certain areas. For example, Ken likes insects and knows many of the names. However, he only knows English names and sometimes does not know the Japanese equivalent. He knows “ants” but he does not know “ari.” Those words, which he can learn only at school, he just says in English in Japanese sentences, even when he talks with Mrs. Okawa in Japanese. This fact shows how much schools can affect children’s language acquisition, no matter how hard parents try to use the other language at home.

Ken said he does not really care which language he speaks. He said he just naturally switches from Japanese to English, or from English to Japanese, depending on who he is talking to (See, chapter 2, code-switching). He also told me that now he does not have any difficulty in speaking either language. Mrs. Okawa made some comments about Ken’s language acquisition:

Ken started his life in Hawaii without knowing many English words. I know he had a hard time because of that, but I think he has been catching up in English very well. He’s also trying hard at Forest Gakuen. So, although he’s probably a little behind in his Japanese, compared to the students at his age in Japan, he’s been keeping up his Japanese quite well, too. I think, right now, he is “well-balanced” bilingual. I wonder what’s going to happen to his two languages in the future, though. As long as he continues living in Hawaii, I think Ken’s English is more likely to become stronger than his Japanese. We must try harder to develop his Japanese in order to maintain his level of bilingualism.
4.2.3. Ken's Socialization

Ken is a kind, gentle, and hard-working student at Forest Gakuen. He is especially good at arithmetic and willingly helps the other students who are not good at it. He is the kind of child who voluntarily stays in the classroom after school to help out his teacher with cleaning up the room. He hardly shows negative emotions, except for the times he or the group he belongs to loses games. For a boy, he is usually so gentle that he gets along with almost everybody, and never fights with anybody. However, he does not seem to have any particular friend whom he really likes, or whom he is really close to.

Mrs. Okawa said that Ken's teacher at his local English school told her that Ken is relatively quiet in class. His teacher also told her that Ken never fights with anybody, but does not seem to have any particular close friend. This suggests that Ken does not act any differently at either school. On the other hand, Mrs. Okawa also told me that his teacher said that Ken is a boy who hesitates to give or take a hug in greeting. This may show that Ken is still a Japanese boy inside, no matter how naturally he speaks English, because hugging people is not a part of Japanese culture.

Ken said that there is a Japanese girl at his school whose mother is from Japan. He told me that she is the only student who speaks Japanese at his school, except for his older sister, Lisa. Ken told me as follows:

When I talk to that girl, I speak in Japanese. But her Japanese is sometimes strange. I don't care which language to speak, but there just is nobody who speaks Japanese at my school. I guess nobody [implying his teacher] really cares if I can speak Japanese or not.

When I asked Ken if he has ever felt proud of being Japanese or being able to speak Japanese at school, he answered that he had almost never felt it special to be able to
speak Japanese. Also, he mentioned in the dialogue above that the Japanese girl’s
Japanese speech is sometimes strange. According to Ken’s description, the girl is
probably not taking any formal Japanese language education like Ken does, and she
probably speaks Japanese only at home with her mother. The fact that he has an ability to
distinguish what is “native-like Japanese” and what is not suggests that Ken has the
language facility of native Japanese speaker.

Although Mrs. Okawa and Ken’s teacher both agreed that Ken is relatively quiet
and not very sociable, he is good friends with a neighbor boy whom he often plays with.
The boy’s name is Steven. He is the same age as Ken. When Ken met Steven for the first
time, Mrs. Okawa had to play with them because Ken could not speak any English and he
was hesitant to make friends. Now, Ken does not need Mrs. Okawa and plays with Steven
only by himself. Mrs. Okawa observes when Ken and Steven play together. When Ken
talks with Steven, Ken’s English sounds just like a native English speaker to Mrs. Okawa,
and it seems no problem for Ken to play all in English. This fact may prove that Ken has
finally adjusted to the English-speaking world after two years of living in Hawaii. Now,
Ken can perfectly communicate with people in both languages with no problem. He just
naturally alternates the language, depending on whom he is talking to.

4.2.4. Ken’s Identity

Mrs. Okawa assumes that Ken still identifies himself as Japanese, in spite of his
current “well-balanced” bilingualism, and in spite of his having no problem
communicating with people in English. Although he never went to elementary school in
Japan because he moved to Hawaii right after graduating from kindergarten, he has many
good memories of kindergarten in Japan because he had great times there. He still keeps in touch with some of his friends in Japan. Also, he is close to his grandmother who often visits Hawaii to see her grandchildren. Ken’s grandmother is very eager to promote her grandchildren’s education. She sends many Japanese books, school supplies, and even Japanese toys to Ken and Lisa, so that they can catch up with Japanese education and they will not forget that they are Japanese. Having friends and a close grandmother in Japan might help Ken to be still close to Japan, and to feel that he is Japanese.

At Ken’s elementary school, they celebrate Christmas, Halloween, or Thanksgiving just like regular schools in America. On the Halloween day, students are allowed to wear costumes they like, if they want to. However, Ken showed no interest in this event, according to Mrs. Okawa. Ken made comments like this:

Mom, is it okay if I don’t wear any costume on the Halloween day? I don’t want to wear anything stupid. I don’t care about Halloween or those events. Some people don’t even have to join the event. [Because of religion, the school does not force everybody to join] So, it’s not that I have to join, right? I don’t need to be same as everybody!

Mrs. Okawa was a little disappointed by his indifference to American events, but she attributes this to Ken’s strong identity as Japanese.

Mrs. Okawa also told me that Ken is sometimes critical of American lunches that Ken’s American friends bring to school.

Mom, American lunch is not healthy. They just bring sandwiches, chips, and sodas. I can’t believe how people can eat like that every day. I like Japanese lunches better because they have more variety of okazu (food)!

According to Mrs. Okawa, Ken intends to go back to Japan some time in his future, even though the Okawa family is going to live in Hawaii permanently. Mrs.
Okawa one day asked Ken if he wants to go back to Japan, Ken answered “Yes.” This makes Mrs. Okawa wonder if this is why Ken is motivated to study hard at Forest Gakuen.

4.2.5 Parents’ Perspectives

Since the family moved to Hawaii, both Mr. and Mrs. Okawa tried hard not only to adjust to the life in Hawaii but also to promote their children’s education. They had to help their children to adjust to the American school lives, as well as helping them to preserve/develop their Japanese language skills.

When Ken still did not know much English, Mrs. Okawa helped him with his homework from his local American school. However, she sometimes felt frustrated because she did not know some academic English words in certain categories because she was not educated in the United States. For example, she did not know some mathematics terminology in English, such as “product,” “factor,” “great factor,” until she saw Ken’s homework, because she was never exposed to those words in Japan, although she is a college graduate and is considered a “highly-educated” person in Japan. She also had a difficult time to help Ken with his writing. No matter how excellent her English is as a non-native English speaker, she still makes many minor grammatical mistakes and cannot write like native English speakers. Even though Ken submitted an essay that Mrs. Okawa proofread and corrected, his teacher made some corrections on her corrections. Furthermore, Mrs. Okawa sometimes feels uncertain if Ken is progressing satisfactory at school because she is not very familiar with American educational system and curricula. These may be small issues, but they accumulate and make Mrs. Okawa feel frustrated and
helpless at times. To overcome this hardship and to adjust to American society faster, Mrs. Okawa often volunteered for Ken’s school, helping with library work, events, PTA, and so on.

It wasn’t so easy. You know, even though I joined a PTA conference, I sometimes didn’t understand what was going on because of the language. Even when I understood, I couldn’t say many opinions so I just sat quietly. I couldn’t even communicate well with other mothers. It was so frustrating, but I couldn’t help. Another time, I visited Ken’s classroom with lots of hand-made sushi, because they were having some kind of cultural event. I had to...or maybe I wanted to bring something Japanese to make Ken feel proud of Japan. It was so much work to make the sushi and carry it to school (laughter). I tried hard not only for the sake of Ken but for myself.

At the same time, Mrs. Okawa is very active at Forest Gakuen’s parents association. She is a leader of Ken’s class, and supports/volunteers for many events. She is also very supportive with Ken’s homework. Mrs. Okawa said:

It’s good because I can help Ken’s study in my own language when we work on Forest Gakuen’s homework, because I know exactly what I should do. Also, as far as following Forest Gakuen’s curriculum, I know exactly how good or bad Ken’s doing, because this is almost the same subject matters as what I went through in Japan. It brings me a good sense of reassurance and self-confidence as a mother. I guess sending Ken to Forest Gakuen is good not only for Ken but also for myself as a mother.

Needless to say, both Mr. and Mrs. Okawa still identify themselves with Japan, in spite of their decision to settle in the United States permanently. Although Mrs. Okawa knows Ken still identifies himself as Japanese, she is not sure which country Ken will eventually start seeing as home.

Well, I’d probably feel a little sad if they were brought up as Americans, because America is not my home country. But I don’t think I should “force” my children to identify only with Japanese, knowing that they are going to have to stay in America with us at least until they become independent and make their own decision about which country to live in. Even though we live here running a business, I sometimes feel like we are only “guests” in this country. Do you know the Japanese term, Gomame? That’s the one who is treated differently in a game... Although a Gomame
participates in the game, the other players give him special easier rules usually because Gomame is too young or too weak to compete with regular players. I feel like we are Gomame in this country... participating in a game, but people don’t treat us as “normal” people or “one of them,” because we are from a foreign country after all and don’t speak good English. I don’t want my children to encounter this hardship. I want my children to participate in a game as a “regular player” in this country. So, I sometimes wonder if they must identify themselves with this country. After all, I guess I want Ken to grow up as a person who can alternate both faces and languages, as Japanese and American. Well, we’ll see.

This dialogue may summarize all of her hopes, wishes, and reasons for providing Ken with a Japanese language education while trying hard to help Ken to adjust to the American school. From all that she told me on this interview, raising children bilingually seems like a long, difficult, and uncertain journey for both parent and children.

4.3.1. The Yasukawa-Miller Family

Mrs. Akiko Yasukawa-Miller has been living in Hawaii for about seventeen years, ever since she married her American husband, John Miller. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller’s husband, John, is Caucasian from the mainland America, who understands little Japanese. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller and John have a fourteen year old boy, Yutaro (Mitchell in his English name), and an eight year old girl, Saori (Susan in her English name). Saori is one of my interviewees, and is in the 3rd grade at Forest Gakuen. Both children attend private schools in Honolulu. The children were both born and raised in Hawaii, and the family has no plan to live in Japan in their future, mainly because John is originally from the mainland and has a stable job in Hawaii.

Their daughter, Saori, is currently in the third grade at Forest Gakuen. At home, although Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller talks to John in English, she speaks to her children only in Japanese. The children communicate with John in English, but they speak only in
Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller has devoted herself to teaching Japanese to her children ever since they were born. She sent both children to Forest Gakuen, helping them with homework from the school. In addition, she tried to read Japanese books to the children when they were younger. Furthermore, she has been very strict with having her children speak only Japanese to her at home. She has even gone so far to pretend that she does not understand English when the children accidentally speak to her in English.

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller’s husband, John, has been very understanding of her enthusiasm toward teaching Japanese to their children. He has also been supportive of providing the children with a strict, institutional Japanese-language education from Forest Gakuen. However, despite his supportiveness, the family has had difficult times raising the children bilingually. For example, when the family talks to one another at the dinner table, one person may tell a joke in Japanese. Three of the family members laugh at it, but only the father stays quiet because he cannot understand the joke. Or, on the other hand, when a family member may tell a joke in English, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller cannot laugh. Although she is quite fluent in English, she does not understand the punch line/cultural reference point because English is not her native language. One of the parents feels left out by whichever language the family chooses to use. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller recalls;

I know John had a hard time because I was always trying to force my children to speak Japanese at home... I know that John sometimes feels isolated, frustrated, or even upset. But I really wanted to raise my children as Japanese-English speaking bilinguals.

4.3.2. Saori’s Language Acquisition

According to Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller, although the Japanese Saori does speaks at
home to her mother sounds fairly natural to her, Saori’s first language seems to be English, not Japanese, since Saori was born and raised in Hawaii,

As far as I, her classroom teacher at Forest Gakuen, observed, though Saori has attended Forest Gakuen ever since she was four, her grade level there is a little lower than average students. She is considered “Dual Nationality Student (See, Chapter 3),” because she is born and raised in Hawaii, and her family has no plans to return to Japan in the future.

In spite of Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller’s devotion to teach Saori Japanese, Saori seems unenthusiastic in classes of Forest Gakuen. Although she does fine in arithmetic, she seems to dislike kokugo (Japanese language) class, especially studying kanji. She also has a difficult time reading Japanese textbooks aloud, though she can understand most of them. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller has had a hard time, too, getting Saori to finish her homework from Forest Gakuen. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller said she sometimes has to scold Saori and force her to do the homework.

On the other hand, according to Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller, Saori likes to read English books at home and always reads English books in bed before she goes to sleep. Surprisingly to Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller, Saori reads very fast especially when she reads popular novels she likes, for example, “Harry Potter.” Saori’s grade level in English has always been higher than average, and, unlike Forest Gakuen, she will automatically do her homework from the English school without her mother’s suggestions.

When I asked Saori which language she feels more comfortable to use, she answered;

I like English better because it’s easier. I don’t mind speaking Japanese, but I don’t like studying it because it has too many kanji! Some of them
are too complicated to remember, so I don’t like to study kanji for the kanji tests of Forest Gakuen. You know, English has only twenty-six letters. That’s why I think English is easier!

This comment sounded to me as if Saori studies kanji mostly for the sake of the kanji tests, not to use it her day-to-day life. Furthermore, she has little chance to be exposed to the environment which requires kanji, because she, or “Dual Nationality Students,” are born and have been raised in Hawaii their entire lives.

4.3.3. Saori’s Socialization

Saori is a sweet, friendly, and soft-spoken girl at Forest Gakuen, who often follows her teacher around in order to help her carry her teaching materials. Even if she sometimes looks tired or bored in classes, she is normally cheerful especially at recess and at lunch time. Although she is a sweet and likable girl who could get along with anybody, it seems like she has a limited number of girl friends, as far as I observed. She only socializes with particular girls, who are in the same category as her, “Dual Nationality Students.” When the girls in this group talk to one another at recess, they suddenly change their language to English, which creates an exclusive atmosphere to other students who do not speak/understand English well. Saori mentioned;

It’s just weird to talk with Emi-chan (a girl who is in the same group) in Japanese. We talk only in English at local English school, and we have done this way ever since we met. It’s just easier and more comfortable for us to speak in English.

Although Saori tends to act like an American girl especially at Forest Gakuen, she is likely to be treated just as “Japanese” by her friends at her English school. For example, Saori told me that she does not like to show that she can speak Japanese at
English school because some of her classmates tease her about her Japanese ability and call her "Japanese." Her English school has Japanese language classes, and of course, those classes only teach basic Japanese, which are too easy for Saori, because she attends Forest Gakuen. When the students in the Japanese class compete in games, Saori is the one who always wins because the games are just too easy for her. When she wins, some students may say something like; "Hey, it’s so unfair! It’s no wonder she [Saori] can win, because she is Japanese!” When Saori is criticized like this in classes, she feels hurt. She said that this is why she does not want to show too much of her ability in the Japanese language at English school. Saori said;

I hardly use any Japanese words when I’m with my friends at English school. Only times when I may feel comfortable to speak Japanese is when I’m with some friends who are from Japan... Well, even when I was with those girls, if there are other people [who do not understand Japanese] around, we all talk in English. We just do so, I don’t really know why... I guess it all depends on whom I talk to. If everybody around me speaks English, I speak English, and if everybody speaks Japanese, I guess I speak Japanese.

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller presumes that Saori is not very enthusiastic about studying Japanese because she hasn’t had so many chances to feel proud of being bilingual. Thus, Saori has hardly felt that studying Japanese is something rewarding. Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller also mentioned that Saori’s older brother Yutaro, who is graduating from Forest Gakuen this coming spring, is old enough to feel proud of being bilingual, or being able to understand two different cultures/languages. On the contrary, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller thinks that Saori is still too young to appreciate what she has learned at Forest Gakuen.
4.3.4. Saori's Identity

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller assumes that Saori identifies herself as American, rather than Japanese, despite her fluency in the Japanese language. Unlike Saori, her older brother Yutaro, has a stronger identity as Japanese, according to Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller. However, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller thinks that Saori seems to be growing up as an American because of her American gestures, her tendency to speak English rather than Japanese, and her lack of interest in Japanese entertainment, such as TV show, music, or comic books, compared to Yutaro.

I would say Yutaro is perfect bilingual, and he may even identify himself as Japanese. I wonder why... Well, I guess the part of the reason is that he is very close to his grandparents and his cousins in Japan. He has some boy cousins around his age and he also became friends with many of his cousins' friends when he went to Japan. They keep in touch with one another every so often. On the other hand, Saori has no cousins around her age and few friends in Japan. I wonder if that affects how she just acts just like an American girl.

However, although Saori tends to act like an American girl rather than a Japanese girl, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller recalled some of Saori's interesting attitudes when she switches around two different languages at home.

When I asked to Saori some question like; "Which ice cream do you want to eat, strawberry or vanilla?" Saori just answered in English, "I don’t care," without even looking at me. It sounded so cold or rude to me that I told her in Japanese, being a little upset; "What kind of answer is that? How can you talk to your mother like that?" Then, Saori seemed surprised by my reaction, and replied in Japanese with a sweet voice, "Mama, honto ni docchi demo iino yo, docchi mo oishisou ni mierundamon. [Mom, I really do not care/either is fine, both looked delicious to me.]" You see what I mean? It’s almost funny how different she [Saori] acts when she speaks different languages. When she said "I don’t care," it’s such a short sentence which has only three words. It sounded so cold and rude to me! In contrast, when she meant exactly the same thing in Japanese, it sounded so polite and cute! The tone of her voice even changes when she speaks two languages. It’s lower when she speaks in English, and it’s higher when she speaks in Japanese!
Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller noticed that Saori acts like two different people when she speaks English and when she speaks Japanese. She also wonders if Saori’s identity changes along with the languages that she speaks, not only along with the people whom she talks to.

4.3.5 Parent’s Perspectives

As mentioned before, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller has devoted herself to raising her children bilingually, even though there were difficult times with her husband John about raising them bilingually. She recalls her primary reason of raising her children bilingually as follows;

I wanted to raise them [her children] bilingually mainly because I wanted to communicate with them well in my native language. I wanted to be always close to them, and to be an understanding mother for them. I needed to say exactly what I wanted to say when I discipline or even when I scolded my children. How could I discipline them in my second language?

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller feels that she has been successful in being close to her children because she has made them learn Japanese, and has tried to communicate with them in her own language. Furthermore, she mentioned another reason for raising her children bilingually.

I wanted my children to be fluent in Japanese as well as English, not only for the relationship between me and them, but also for my parents... I mean, for their grandparents. I didn’t want my children to be grandchildren who are not be able to communicate with their grandparents, even though we live apart. When I told my parents that I wanted to marry John, they opposed to the idea because they didn’t want me to leave to a foreign country. Well, I convinced them and they allowed the marriage in the end, but I knew they were sad about me living far away. I didn’t want to make them sadder. I wanted to make them happy for letting them see or talk with their grandchildren. Though they cannot see each other so often,
when my parents get to see and talk to Yutaro and Saori, they look really happy. They really cherish them. When I see that, I feel so glad that I put all my effort to raising my children bilingually.

Although Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller has been successful in raising her children bilingually, she has said that she has been questioning if she should continue this bilingual-style in the family. The main reason is her husband, John. As mentioned before, speaking two different languages at home sometimes causes family conflicts.

I sometimes feel guilty about John because I know he has felt very frustrated sometimes. You know, he cannot understand what’s going on in the children, or the family when we speak in Japanese. I know he has been very patient with it and has been supportive for my ambition to raise the kids as bilinguals. I really appreciate him for that, because I wouldn’t have been able to do this had I not had his understanding and support. But I have been wondering if it’s time to release him from this situation… I mean, to make it [being a bilingual family] a little lenient. It’s not worth it if our relationship suffers because of this family-bilingualism. I think the most important thing for the kids is that we [she and John] are getting along well, without any resentment.

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller mentioned that she has actually been lenient to the children about which language to speak, compared to before. It is all because she takes her husband’s feelings into account, but she has been a little worried about Saori’s language acquisition in Japanese.

I wonder if that [having been lenient] has been affecting Saori’s Japanese. You know, Saori has not been doing very good at Forest Gakuen, as well as Yutaro did at her age. I wonder if that’s because I’m not pushing Saori to use Japanese as hard as I did to Yutaro. Even her identity seems much like American, compared to Yutaro who has stronger identity as Japanese. But well, I guess it doesn’t really matter which language Saori speaks more or which country she identifies herself with stronger. The most important thing is that I want her to be proud of having two languages and cultures. I hope that she will understand my wish one day and that she will appreciate being bilingual.

Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller concluded her statement, saying that she thinks the children, even Yutaro, will in time maybe, identify themselves as Americans, as long as
they live in and are educated in the United States. No matter which country the children identify themselves with, Mrs. Yasukawa-Miller hopes that her children will always be proud of their background, which comes from two different countries and cultures. She said this is the most important reason of all for not giving up, and continuing to send Saori to Forest Gakuen although it is not always easy.

4.4 Summary

This chapter illustrated the real lives of bilingual children in Hawaii and the dynamics of their families. The children represented three groups as introduced in the previous chapter: They were Yuka, a Japan-Focused Returning Student; Ken, a Japan-Focused Non-Returning Student; and Saori, a Dual Nationality Student. In order to observe each child's life from similar perspectives, the same five issues were focused on in all the cases: family dynamics, language acquisition, socialization, identity, and parent's perspectives.

In order to obtain clearer ideas of each type of children/families, the next chapter will summarize those case studies, which were described in this chapter. In addition, the next chapter will analyze the case studies.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND ANALYSES OF CASE STUDIES

As revealed in the previous chapters, there are variety of types of Shin Nisei children in Hawaii, depending on their history and family-background. This chapter will summarize and analyze the case studies of Shin Nisei children, which were described in Chapter 4. In order to follow the research question, the analyses will focus on the three issues, such as children’s language, school lives, and identity. Each issue will be divided into the groups of children: Japan-Focused Returning Students, Japan-Focused Non-Returning Students, and Dual-Nationality Students.

1. Language Issues of Shin Nisei Children

1.1 Japan-Focused Returning Students

Children in this category tend to have an extremely difficult time in the beginning of their new life in Hawaii, because of the language barrier. They are likely to have little knowledge of English when they first come to Hawaii, like Yuka in the Kuroki family. They are placed in a situation like “Submersion” program at school (See, chapter 2). The children in this category, on the other hand, enjoy Forest Gakuen, because they can perform well there. However, after a certain length of time, they become used to English, although they still have a limited vocabulary as far as the academic words are concerned. Since they do not have enough opportunities to be exposed to those kinds of words at home, they need to work hard in order to catch up with their study at English schools. At
about the same time that they start enjoying English schools, Forest Gakuen starts to become a burden to them, although they still maintain a high level of Japanese proficiency.

1.2 Japan-Focused Non-Returning Students

Although the children in this category have chances to be exposed to Japanese at home, their reasons to study Japanese may seem less important than Japan-Focused Returning Students. Some of the Japan-Focused Non-Returning students, like Ken of the Okawa family in this study, may lose the chance to acquire some basic Japanese words unless they use those words often at home. Even though Forest Gakuen plays a great role to have them maintain their Japanese, there still seems to be a limit of maintenance. If they eventually lose their motivation toward studying Japanese or their interests in Japanese, Forest Gakuen could possibly be a great deal of burden to them. Making them keep their motivation and interests for studying Japanese seems to be a key for the children in this category to preserve their Japanese.

1.3 Dual Nationality Students

The first language of the children in this category is most likely to be English, rather than Japanese, due to their limited times to be exposed to the Japanese language. Talking to their mothers is usually the only time for them to use Japanese in their daily life, as shown in the case of Saori, in the Yasukawa family. Although Forest Gakuen allows them to have opportunities to study Japanese, and to socialize with other Japanese children and teachers, the amount of time is still limited. Despite their native-like fluency
in speaking Japanese, they tend to have a difficult time in reading and writing. Furthermore, it is hard for them to maintain a high level of motivation in studying Japanese, due to their little opportunity to actually use the Japanese language in their daily lives. Mothers’ efforts to encourage them seem to be a key for the children in this category to succeed in obtaining a native-like skill in the Japanese language, even in reading and writing.

2. School Lives of Shin Nisei Children

2.1 Japan-Focused Returning Students

Because of the fact that they are returning to Japan some day in the future, life in Hawaii for the children in this group is going to be only temporary. So, the success in adjusting to their new school life in a different country may depend upon the children; whether or not he/she is motivated enough to adjust to a new life. Although the students in this study tend to experience some difficult times in adjusting to the new school life in Hawaii, they are able to manage it if proper support is provided. For example, as indicated in the case of the Kuroki family, it is effective to place the children in the environment where they can feel that their language and culture are valued to a certain degree, in order to not feel marginalized at school. In addition, mothers’ encouragement and support for their new school life is essential, although it is sometimes difficult for mothers to support the children’s study in English schools. However, it was found in the case study that it is possible for the children in this category to adjust to their new school life and enjoy it.
2.2 Japan-Focused Non-Returning Students

The children in this group have a great possibility of encountering a hardship in their socialization process at some point of their school lives. They are raised as Japanese in the family, but they have to socialize with non-Japanese children at school, just like an American child. This fact may cause them confusion in terms of their identity. Forest Gakuen could possibly be a place for them to realize that they are still Japanese, not only at home, even though they go to English school everyday, and though most of their friends are Americans who speak only English. Ken, in this study has a neutral attitude, and appears to act the same in both Forest Gakuen and his English school. It may indicate that he is still uncertain which type of school or friends (Japanese or English) he can socialize with better.

2.3 Dual-Nationality Students

The children in this group tend to prefer to speak English, and to socialize with friends who are born and raised in Hawaii, just like them. Despite the fact that their mothers are from Japan, and that they attend Forest Gakuen once a week as a Japanese child, they have been living in Hawaii for such a long time that the foundations of their lives are all in Hawaii. Forest Gakuen tends to be only an additional activity to them, and as a result, they are reluctant to socialize with children from Japan, like Japan-Focused Returning Students. As found in Saori's case, Dual-Nationality Students find that children, like Japan-Focused Returning Students, are somewhat different from them. In addition, they find it is easier to relate to children in the same group as them. On the other hand, they might encounter identity confusion at their English school, because their peers might
label them as Japanese merely because of their high proficiency in the Japanese language, which they acquired from Forest Gakuen.

3. Identity Issues of Shin Nisei Children

3.1 Japan-Focused Returning Students

The children in this group are most likely to solely identify themselves as Japanese, because of the fact that all the family members speak Japanese at home, and that they are all going back to Japan some day. As mentioned in an earlier section, it is important for the children in this group to be provided with an environment where they can feel that they are accepted as members of a minority group. In other words, they need to feel that their culture and language are somewhat appreciated, since the culture and language represent their identity as Japanese. Also, it is important for the children in this group to have some opportunity to proudly maintain their Japanese identity. An opportunity like attending Forest Gakuen can possibly help reassure their Japanese identity, and that their language and culture are still important, even when they are in a foreign country.

3.2 Japan-Focused Non-Returning Students

The children in this group may have an especially confusing time regarding the identity issue. They might feel like they should act like American at English school because they are going to stay there for good. On the other hand, they are still expected to act like Japanese at home, because of their parents' expectations, and the family environment that they are exposed to mostly is Japanese. If a child in this group identifies
as an American, because of the influence from his/her friends at English school, he/she might go through a frustrating time at home, where his/her parents expect them to be like Japanese. However, if he/she identifies more as Japanese, they might sometimes feel unrelated to his/her English school or friends there, like Ken of the Okawa family. Attending Forest Gakuen could be a good chance of reassurance of being Japanese, if they identify more as Japanese. At the same time, it could become a burden if they prefer to identify as American.

3.3 Dual Nationality Students

The children in this group are likely to identify themselves as American rather than Japanese, because of the fact that they are born and raised in Hawaii. Furthermore, because of the fact that they only speak English to their fathers, and that talking to their mothers is the only time they speak Japanese and act like Japanese, it is hard for them to identify themselves as Japanese. In addition to the language issue, attending Forest Gakuen is likely to become only an additional weekend routine for them, rather than maintaining their identity as Japanese. However, as shown with Saori of the Yasukawa family, they might encounter a difficulty in the fact that they are treated as Japanese at their English school, though they still identify themselves as American. Providing an environment or support to them, so that they can feel proud of themselves inheriting Japanese culture and language, seem to be a key for them to maintain a good self-esteem of themselves. Succeeding to do so will bring them to have a good sense of identity of themselves.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this study, the difficulties of acquiring two cultures and languages for *Shin Nisei* children in Hawaii has been emphasized, although it also suggested that such children can be almost perfectly bilingual as Harding and Riley (1986) stated (See Chapter 2). It is difficult, of course, for all the children in all groups in this study, to acquire two cultures and languages at the same time, as described in Piper (1998)'s examples of school bilingualism. The issues they have to overcome are unique, and they are something that children who have only one culture and language would never have to deal with. As mentioned in the research questions, the three issues which have been focused on in this study are: language, school life, and identity issues. Although they are treated separately, they are all connected and affected by one another. For example, children’s language issues can affect their school lives a great deal, and the degree of success in their school lives might affect their identity as shown in Piper (1998)'s theory. Furthermore, the dynamics of their identity can influence their language preference or proficiency, as Robert (1998) stated. In addition, the results of this study suggest that a mothers’ or parents’ effort is crucial for children at this age to maintain their two different languages and cultures. How parents approach their children for this goal could greatly affect the children’s success in their school lives, and even their identity. Especially in this study, it was found that mothers’ approach was influential to children’s language proficiency, as mentioned by Kondo (1998).

Furthermore, attending a supplemental school itself, like attending Forest Gakuen,
can be a very complicated and controversial issue, depending on the family’s situation, the children’s motivation, and their language proficiency. Supplemental schools could be one of the most effective places for children to preserve their native culture and language when they are not in the country. However, supplemental schools could also be a great burden for the children, if what they learn there is beyond their expectations or motivations, or if proper kinds of supports for attending the school are not appropriately provided by adults. Carrying such a big burden could possibly affect their lives, especially because the children are still young, and it may be difficult for them to overcome solely by their own efforts. In addition to children’s efforts/hardships, the difficulties for mothers/parents were shown in this study, even in terms of sending children to a supplemental school. It was shown that children and mothers (or parents) working together is essential, to successfully complete the curriculum of supplemental schools.

However, if they could overcome the difficulties, the results of their effort are extremely rewarding. Not only because they could obtain native-like fluency in two languages, but because they could become adults who possess two different sets of cultural values. They may therefore be more open minded to alternative cultural values, and can see things from cross-cultural points of view. In order to find out more detailed future effects of their efforts, more research may be needed, especially in terms of how rewarding it could be to attend supplemental schools.

I hope that this study will help educators who may encounter students with dual languages, cultures, and nationalities. I suggest, as an example, that teachers in English schools have some cultural events/classes so that children can appreciate each other’s backgrounds and cultural values. I also suggest that Forest Gakuen’s teachers, or any
educators who teach languages and cultural values of another countries, encourage their students by talking more about their countries. I would encourage them to ask their relatives and friends in Japan about life there. I would also encourage them to talk about popular culture (e.g. TV stars or comic books), instead of only teaching language or old traditional values. Furthermore, I also hope that this study will help educators who encounter mothers or families who are struggling with raising children in a foreign country. I suggest that teachers encourage these mothers or parents by reminding them how rewarding the result will be to their children. Likewise, I would advise teachers to keep reminding their students how much the parents are sacrificing for their education.

I believe, as a teacher, that it is important for the educators to have a better understanding of these kinds of children/families, and their unique social/educational needs.
APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Language Issues:
1. What type of support (institutional/private) do you provide to your child for him/her to maintain their two languages?
2. What do you think is the primary motivation for your child to maintain fluency in two languages?
3. When did you feel it most rewarding for your child to have possessed fluency in two languages?
4. Have you ever encountered any difficulty in terms of providing education to your child in two different languages?

Relationship with Others:
1. How does possessing two languages influence your child’s school life both in American school and Japanese school, in terms of relationship and socializing with other children and teachers?
2. Has your child ever experienced difficulty in socializing with other children or teachers, both in American school or Japanese school? If so, what do you think is (are) the reason(s) for those difficulties?

Identity Issues:
1. What do you feel your child identifies himself/herself, as a Japanese, an American, or
2. Do you think identity issues such as these can affect your child’s school life? If so, please explain.

3. Do you think identity issues can affect your child’s general academic performance in school?
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN

Language Issues:

1. Do you like to study Japanese?
2. Why are you studying Japanese?
3. Which do you like better, American school or Japanese school? Why?
4. What is your favorite subject, both in American school and Japanese school? Why do you like them?
5. What subjects do you dislike the most, both in American school and Japanese school? Why do you dislike them?
6. Which is easier for you to read/write/listen/speak, English or Japanese? Why?

Relationship with Others:

1. Who do you spend more time with outside of school, your Japanese-speaking friends or English-speaking friends? Why?
2. Which do you feel more comfortable, with your Japanese-speaking friends or your English-speaking friends? Why?
3. Have you ever felt that your friends/teachers treated you differently (both in good ways and bad ways), because you speak two languages?

Identity Issues:

1. Have you ever felt yourself different from your friends (in good ways and bad ways)
because you can speak both Japanese and English?

2. When you talk to people, which language do you feel more comfortable speaking, English or Japanese? Why?

3. Are there times that you feel that you are lucky to be able to speak both Japanese and English?

4. For your future job, would you want to be able to use two languages?
REFERENCES


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