

# PARENTAL BELIEFS ABOUT CHILDREN'S JAPANESE-ENGLISH BILINGUALISM IN NEW ZEALAND

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## **Abstract**

*This study examines parental beliefs about children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance in New Zealand. The participants are 148 parents who send their children (N = 267) to Japanese supplementary/community schools. Metaphor elicitation was the main data collection method, along with interviews, class observations, and a survey. The 84 metaphors obtained demonstrated that the participants, while being dedicated to bilingualism, held relaxed beliefs regarding their children's Japanese development/maintenance overall. The participants highlighted both difficult and rewarding factors in supporting children's Japanese learning in the questionnaire. The difficult factors included 'children's amotivation', 'difficulty in teaching Japanese logographs (kanji)', 'time shortage', 'burdens of Japanese homework', and 'penetration of English into their life'. The rewarding factors included 'seeing children's Japanese improvements', 'precious time spent with children through learning Japanese', and 'witnessing children's creative Japanese language use'. The metaphors used reflected the participants' beliefs, affective aspects, and behavior that had possibly been influenced by these difficult and rewarding factors. The study recommends that those metaphors demonstrating particularly positive perspectives and illustrative powers be used to guide belief development and resultant attitudes toward bilingualism held by parents and children.*

*Keywords:* Japanese-English bilingualism, parental beliefs, metaphor analysis

## **Introduction**

In the time since Holmes and Bell (1991) labeled New Zealand as one of the most monolingual countries in the world, the nation has steadily become more multi-ethnic and multi-lingual (Ho, 2015; Minagawa, 2017). The New Zealand 2018 Census revealed that 70.2% of people residing in New Zealand identified themselves as European, 16.5% as Māori, 15.1% as Asian, 8.1% as Pacific, and 2.7% as Other (Stats NZ, 2019). These various ethnic groups have made New Zealand a culturally and linguistically diverse society. In terms of linguistic diversity, while the majority of the country's population speak English (96.1%, Stats NZ, 2020), more than 160 languages are also spoken in New Zealand,

including te reo Māori, Samoan, Hindi, and Northern Chinese (Cunningham & King, 2018).

However, there is a hierarchy in minority ethnic groups' languages. Te reo Māori sits at the top and other languages, such as those spoken by Asians, sit at the bottom (de Bres, 2015). National-level institutional support for minority ethnic groups' bilingual and bicultural development (other than those of Māori) tends to be insufficient (Cunningham & King, 2018; Oriyama, 2018), lacking a stable foundation in the national educational infrastructure.

This makes it important to investigate how minority ethnic groups in New Zealand endeavor to cultivate their ethnic identity and maintain bi/multilingualism across generations. Although research on bilingualism in New Zealand tends to focus on bilingual speakers of English and te reo Māori (Turnbull, 2018), some studies have examined other bi/multilingual speakers (Barkhuizen, 2006; Barkhuizen, Knoch, & Starks, 2006; Crezee, 2008; Hill, 2017; Holmes, Roberts, Verivaki, & Aipolo, 1993). That said, there is a lack of such studies in some contexts, such as Japanese communities.

In keeping with New Zealand's steadily-increasing Asian population, the Japanese population in New Zealand in 2017 (19,664, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2020) was more than triple that of 1999. Noticing this demographic trend, some researchers have aimed to solve the aforementioned lack of research regarding Japanese-English bilingualism in New Zealand (e.g., Lauwereyns, 2011). The current study, using metaphor analysis as its main data collection method, also aims to contribute to filling this research gap and examines parental beliefs about children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance in New Zealand and contextual factors that possibly influence the beliefs.

## **Literature Review**

### **What is 'bilingual'?**

It is crucial for New Zealand, a culturally and linguistically diverse nation, to support the linguistic needs and rights of all bilingual citizens (Turnbull, 2018). This becomes ever more obvious as we recognise how much language and identity are interwoven and how linguistic dynamics in a society can obstruct the identity formation of bilingual speakers belonging to minority ethnic groups (Norton, 2013). When minority ethnic groups lose their languages it adversely affects their members (Lee, 2013; Liang, 2018; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002), and thus wider society needs to support minority ethnic groups in maintaining their languages.

When trying to understand the context in which bilingual speakers live, we first need to think about what ‘bilingual’ means. The term does not have a stipulatory definition. Its definitions in the literature range across a broad continuum, from only recognising the native-level competence in two languages to accepting the minimal proficiency in the second language. Moreover, its definition varies according to the researcher’s primary focus (e.g., the knowledge of language by Mackey, 1987; the regular use of two languages by Grosjean, 1989; the cognitive aspects by Cummins, 1978; the societal and individual aspects by Hamers & Blanc, 2000; the starting time of learning two languages by Costa & Sebastián-Gallés, 2014). To align with the reality that advancing globalisation nurtures more emergent bilinguals (Garcia, 2009), and the claim by Dewaele, Houses, and Wei (2003) that there are rarely perfect bilinguals, thus the conception of bilingual needs to be inclusive. Grosjean (2010) offers a good example of this: “Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives” (p. 4). Regarding the current participants’ children, Turnbull’s (2018) definition of a bilingual (conceived specifically in the context of New Zealand bilingualism) seems appropriate: a person who has the active knowledge of English and another language and uses it in situations relevant to her/his individual needs. They can be also categorised as “children exposed to two languages during early childhood” (Barac, Bialystok, Castro, & Sanchez, 2014, p. 701).

Bilingual development/maintenance can be affected by various factors in individual situations. Children’s bilingual development/maintenance can be impacted by factors such as parental beliefs regarding bilingualism (Liang, 2018), time and effort expended by parents (Liang, 2018), parental input (Muranaka-Vuletich, 2002), the language(s) used at home (Dixon, Zhao, Quirozu, & Shin, 2012), family language ideology and practice (Báez, 2013; Jeon, 2008; Wu, Lee, & Leung, 2014), and the structure of the family (i.e., endogamous [monolingual] or exogamous [interlingual] family, Lauwereyns, 2011). The reality that learning a heritage language at a supplementary /community school and the demands of formal education become more incompatible when grade levels increase also negatively impacts bilingual development/maintenance of school-age children (Triest, 2018). Furthermore, factors such as the geographical location of communities (Holmes et al., 1993), the number of speakers of and institutions for the heritage language (Holmes et al., 1993), ethnolinguistic vitality (Minagawa, 2017), the influence of ethnic communities (Kurata, 2015; Nakamura, 2019; Shibata, 2000), the dominance of a majority group’s language (Barkhuizen, 2006; Crezee, 2008; Cunningham & King, 2018), and the usefulness of the heritage language (Fishman, 2001) influence bilingualism in general.

### **Parental beliefs and roles regarding children's bilingual development/maintenance**

This study examines the beliefs parents hold regarding their children's Japanese-English bilingualism in New Zealand, taking into consideration the key role parents play in children's bilingualism (e.g., García, 2003; Liang, 2018; Nakamura, 2019; Takeuchi, 2010).

In New Zealand, Barkhuizen (2006) and Crezee (2008) have shown that the dominance of a majority group language (English) prevents parents from decelerating their children's language shift in the Afrikaans-English and Dutch-English bilingual contexts respectively. Unlike in these two contexts, there is research to support that "Japanese as a heritage language might be one of the languages which can survive or show slower patterns of attrition" in New Zealand (Lauwereyns, 2011, p. 62). Lauwereyns (2011) pointed out that the level of aspiration toward bilingualism of both endogamous and exogamous families is a strong contributor to this. An example of what can be achieved with a high level of aspiration can be found in Shibata (2000): parents' aspirations to teach Japanese as a heritage language led to the opening of a Saturday school in an American city where the ethnolinguistic vitality of Japanese was not strong. Some of the participants in Tsushima and Guardado's (2019) study were similarly determined to teach Japanese as a heritage language, believing that it would benefit their children not only linguistically but also in the form of stronger bonds with their extended family members. Investigating the learning experiences of the alumni of Japanese heritage language programs in America, Triest (2018) claimed that overall Japanese parents have proactive attitudes toward their children's bilingualism.

### **Metaphor analysis**

In demonstrating that parents are highly motivated to teach children Japanese as a heritage language in New Zealand, Lauwereyns (2011) relied solely on a questionnaire that contained a limited number of open-ended questions in response to which participants could articulate their thoughts in their own terms. It was hoped the metaphor elicitation task employed in this study would enable the participants to better explore their beliefs about their children's bilingualism. That is because metaphors can be viewed as an attempt to understand the broader picture beyond a single event or experience (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988) and thus they can illustrate not only beliefs but also affective aspects as well as actions.

Similarly, metaphors can be viewed as a type of narrative that facilitates the easy elucidation of a participant's understanding and experiences of the topic being examined. Metaphors enable people to conceptualise novel and complex topics

using simpler concepts that are more familiar to them. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed that metaphors, being omnipresent not only in language but also in thought and action, embody our conceptual system. Researchers then started recognising metaphors as reflections of people’s conceptualisations and using them to examine participants’ beliefs and the meaning that they attach to themselves (Asmalı & Çelik, 2017).

While various metaphor analysis studies have examined the beliefs of pre-service and in-service teachers in the language teaching discourse (Asmalı & Çelik, 2017; Block, 1992; Briscoe, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2015, 2002; Lynch & Fisher-Ari, 2017; Oxford, 2001; Oxford et al., 1998; Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil, & Ölçü, 2009; Shaw & Andrei, 2019; Shaw & Mahlios, 2011; Simsek, 2014; Zapata, 2015), it appears no study has examined parental beliefs about children’s bilingualism by using metaphor analysis. However, these previous teacher-focused studies mean that metaphors that reflect parental beliefs about children’s bilingualism in this study can be examined not only in their own right but also in comparison with those generated by pre-service and in-service teachers in the studies presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Metaphor Analysis Studies Relevant to This Study**

Study	What metaphors about	Examples of metaphors or metaphor categories	Findings
Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil, and Ölçü (2009)	About language teachers	“Guide” was a prevalent metaphor category. Also, there were “Facilitator” metaphors.	More experienced teachers leaned toward the “Facilitator” metaphor, which exhibited their progression toward a learner-centred orientation.
Simsek (2014)	About language teachers	Oxford et al.’s (1998) Social Order (“Brewer”, etc.), Cultural Transmission (“Basketball coach”, etc.), Learner-Centred Growth (“Parent”, etc.), Social Reform (“Flatmate”).	A ten-week practicum course did not change some of the trainee teachers’ teacher-centred and behaviourist view of teaching.
de Guerrero & Villamil (2015)	About language teachers	“Leader”, “Provider of knowledge”, “Agent of change”.	All the metaphor categories reflect the Puerto Rican ESL teachers’ traditional teacher-centred notions.
Duru (2015)	About elementary education teachers	“Compass”, “Sculptor”, “Technical director”.	85.7% of the elementary education pre-service teachers showed teacher-centred orientation.

Asmalı & Çelik's (2017)	About language teachers	The largest category is "Knowledge provider".	The participants mostly followed teacher-centred educational orientation.
Shaw & Andre (2019)	About what learning English is for English language learners	"Challenge" was the largest category, followed by "Worthwhile challenge", "Process", "Learn", "Growth", "Diversity", "Exploration", and "Team".	Pre-service EFL teachers tended to view language learning as a hard task.

Keeping the aforementioned discussion in mind, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What do the metaphors used by the participants reveal about their beliefs regarding their roles in their children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance?
2. What do the metaphors used by the participants reveal about their vision of what Japanese learning can be like in their children's lives?
3. Since children's bilingual development/maintenance is a complex ongoing process, what factors possibly influence parental beliefs?

## Method

### Participants

The respondents to the questionnaire (see Appendix A) are 148 parents who send their children to supplementary/community schools where they study Japanese. The demographic profile of these parents is as shown in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, while many of the participants do not plan to go back to Japan, 73% of them talk to their children almost exclusively in Japanese (i.e., more than 90% of the conversation is conducted in Japanese). Only 7% of them talk to their children mainly in English (i.e., more than 90% of the conversation is conducted in English). The age of their children ( $N = 267$ ) ranged from 3 months to 18 years, with about 80% having an oldest child aged between 4 and 12 years old.

### Data collection

First, the researcher obtained an ethics approval for this study from her institution. Then, prior to the questionnaire survey, she conducted semi-structured interviews with three L1 Japanese mothers (referred to as MA [Mother A], MB, and MC), and two leading teachers from different schools (referred to as TA [Teacher A]

and TB). She knew the mothers interviewed because they were teachers of Japanese and she recognised them as being proactive in teaching their children Japanese as a heritage language. Each interviewee was asked about her/his beliefs regarding the bilingual development/maintenance of her/his children or students, and their language practices. The interviews, conducted in Japanese, usually lasted one to one and a half hours. The researcher observed TA's classes on four occasions (about 10 hours) and conducted two follow-up interviews. Two classes of another leading teacher (TC) at another school were also observed.

The researcher then constructed a questionnaire in Japanese (see Appendix A). The items included in the questionnaire were based on themes identified during the interviews, research norms, and those contained in the questionnaire compiled by Lauwereyns (2011). The questionnaire also included two metaphor elicitation tasks that asked the participants to use metaphors to articulate (1) their beliefs about their role in their children's Japanese acquisition, and (2) their vision of what Japanese learning can be like in their children's lives. A draft of the questionnaire was sent to MA and TA who then gave feedback on it. This feedback-and-modification process was repeated several times.

The researcher contacted known supplementary/community schools in Auckland and Wellington. Hard-copies of the questionnaire were then distributed to parents at seven supplementary/community schools by staff members, after having received senior staff members' permission. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

### **Data analysis**

The researcher iteratively analysed the participants' responses to the questionnaire items and her detailed class observation notes, allowing time between each analysis.

The interview transcripts were analysed and categorised into themes by the researcher and a research assistant with an L2 pedagogy background independently, following the procedures of content analysis described by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), and then all discrepancies were discussed and subsequently resolved.

The process of metaphor analysis followed Cameron and Low's (1999) recommended procedure: "[generalising from the collected metaphors] to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and using the results to suggest understanding or thought patterns which construct or contain people's beliefs and actions" (p. 88). Specifically, the researcher and the research assistant first independently labelled metaphors and sorted them into groups according to their

**Table 2** Participants' backgournd profile (N = 148)

Country of birth	L1*	Related to child(ren) as	L1 Japanese speaker at home	Future plan	Your English learning efforts	Daily socialising
Japan 96.6%	Japanese 99%	Mother 91.7%	More than one L1 Japanese speaking adults 52%**	Reside in New Zealand permanently 75%<	Making explicit efforts to improve English 46.16%	Mainly socialise with New Zealanders (Pākehā, Māori) <10%
Other (China, etc.) 3.4%	Chinese 1%	Father 8.3%	Only one L1 Japanese speaking adult 48%	Other (not sure, probably go back to Japan) <25%	Other (no time to study, happy with the current ability) 53.84%	Spend time mainly with Japanese or with other ethnic groups (90%<, equally distributed)

*Note.* \*L1 refers to the first language whereas L2 refers to the second language in this paper. \*\*These are the participants' partners who can speak some Japanese, or Japanese grandparent(s)



overarching meanings. Following that, they conducted joint categorisation until all discrepancies were resolved. Agreement on the categorical labels resulted in an inter-rater reliability ( $r = 0.8$ ) between them.

## Findings

### What do the metaphors used by the participants reveal about their beliefs regarding their roles in their children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance?

Each metaphor tasks elicited 84 metaphors (and their entailments). Table 3 categorises the metaphors, which illustrate participants' beliefs about their role in their children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance.

**Table 3** Metaphors that illustrate parental beliefs about their role in their children's Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance

Category	Tokens	Examples of metaphors
Helper	22	Sports team supporter
		Golf caddie
		<i>Anpanman</i> (a Japanese <i>anime</i> hero)
		Guide
Provider of input	21	Lighthouse
		Radio
		Google
		Dictionary
Companion for a long journey	19	Book
		Mirror
		Ordinary person
		Roly-Poly
Scheduler	7	Fanfare
		A steam-pot with which you can enjoy two sauces
		Watch
		Alarm clock
Backbone	7	Timer
		Great Buddha
		Beam
Coach	3	Sun
		Draconian parent
		Intensive volleyball trainer
Other	5	Fan that sometimes blows a strong wind
		Rice cooker
Total	84	Roomba (robot vacuum cleaner)

The biggest group, "Helper" (N = 22), illustrates the participants' belief that, while they should support their children's Japanese learning, it is the child who

must take the initiative. The entailment of “GPS” expands on this: “[GPS] indicates many possible routes to a destination, Japanese improvements. But it is the child who chooses a route and drives”.

The second category, “Provider of input” (N = 21), is original to this study, and reflects the participants’ understanding that they need to be an input source of Japanese in environments where English is prevalent. The entailment of “Shower” expands on this: “pouring Japanese words over children, like shower, is very important”.

The next group, categorised as “Companion for a long journey” (N = 19), demonstrates the participants’ belief that parents should closely share the ups and downs of Japanese learning with their children. This can be done sometimes by demonstrating a never-give-up attitude (“Roly-Poly”), or by helping children realise how much they have learned (by blowing “Fanfare”). The authors of the “Scheduler” metaphor (N = 7) believe that their children need management assistance due to their young age. For example, an “Alarm clock” functions to remind children to do Japanese homework.

The “Backbone” group (N = 7) reflects these parents’ belief that they should be a firm foundation, like a “Great Buddha”, for their children when they are conducting a hard task and need a place to go for reassurance.

Overall, the metaphors provided above illustrate those participants’ supportive, gentle, and learner-centred (in this case, child-centred) beliefs about language learning. TB shared the below approach in his interview:

I see my school as a place where children can relax ... it’s a kind of rehabilitation center ... My children are leading a tough life. They have to study at local school, while keeping learning Japanese. I want them to see my school as a shelter from their hard daily life.

In contrast, the participants who fell into the “Coach” (N = 3) category indicated more austere beliefs. MB defended this in her interview:

(My metaphor is) a coach who forces athletes to do basic training ... Because Japanese is a foreign language here. If you don’t use it with your mother every day just as you do basic training every day, you simply forget it ... I hope that one day my daughter will find out how lucky she is to have had basic training.

The remaining five metaphors were categorised as “Other” due to their idiosyncrasy.

**What do the metaphors used by the participants reveal about their vision of what Japanese learning can be like in their children’s lives?**

Table 4 sets out the metaphors that the participants offered in response to this second question.

**Table 4 Metaphors that illustrate parental vision of what Japanese learning can be like in their children’s lives**

Category	Number	Examples of metaphor
Natural thing	26	Air (x 8) Daily life (x 3) Breathing (x 3) Meals (x 2) Habit
Fun thing	22	Game Ice-cream Entertainment Snack Hobby
Difficult but meaningful act	14	Exploration Mountain climbing Marathon Exercises
Tool for expanding world views	10	Kaleidoscope Special glasses A book that is always on hand The <i>Dokodemo</i> door used by <i>Doraemon</i> ( <i>Doraemon</i> is an <i>anime</i> character who uses the <i>Dokodemo</i> door to go anywhere he wishes.)
Enhancer of life	5	Spice ( <i>Yuzu-koshoo</i> ) Facial make-up Jewelry
Paramount thing	3	Important thing White rice Pet
Identity	2	Color Identity
Other	2	Dream Fountain
Total	84	

The largest metaphor category is “Natural thing”. These participants envisioned Japanese learning as a natural thing (N = 26) like “Air”, which is “a naturally existing thing and a part of their lives that doesn’t require conscious awareness”.

This is followed by the “Fun thing” (N = 22) category, which includes metaphors such as “Game” or “Hobby”. These participants envisioned Japanese learning as something that their children enjoy, particularly as they see themselves improving.

In contrast, the authors of the “Difficult but meaningful thing” (N = 14) metaphors understand that Japanese learning is a demanding task. At the same time, they believe that “(like Mountain climbing”) there is a great sense of achievement after painful uphill battles”.

Ten participants created metaphors that reflected their envisioning of Japanese learning as a “Tool for expanding world views”, with one example being “Special glasses” that help children to expand their world perspectives. These authors hope that learning two languages will encourage their children to respect different cultures and values.

The “Enhancer of life” category (N = 5) is original to this study. These metaphors indicate that their authors acknowledge the secondary but enriching nature of Japanese learning, with “Facial make-up” as a good example: “You don’t have to put make-up on, but if you do, you can change a bit.”

In contrast, three respondents saw Japanese learning as a “Paramount thing” in children’s lives. One participant, who generated the “Important thing” metaphor, believed that “culture and language are a person’s treasure, and therefore (she/he) should cherish them and pass them on to the next generation”.

Two metaphors were categorised as “Identity”. One participant wrote that “(Japanese learning is) a place for my child to find an identity as half-Japanese”. The remaining two were placed in the “Other” category due to their idiosyncrasy.

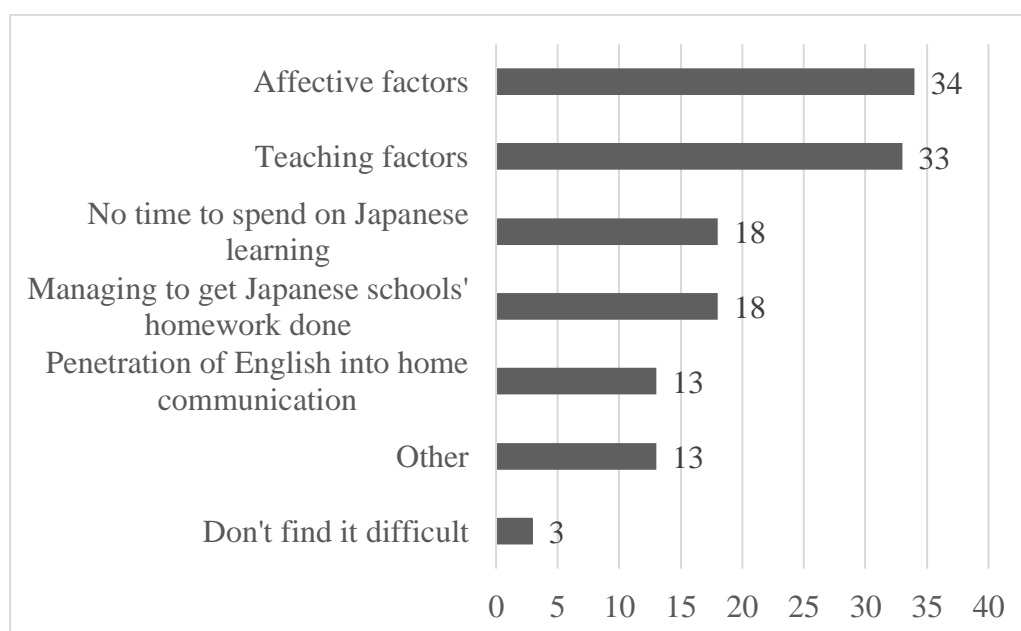
Overall, this second type of metaphor also demonstrated the participants’ relaxed, pragmatic beliefs. Most of them do not see learning Japanese as dominant, but rather as something natural, fun, and additional that enriches children’s lives. These relaxed beliefs concur with those expressed by MA, MB, TA, and TB in their interviews. MA explained how she came to have her current relaxed attitude toward her children’s Japanese learning:

The reality of the situation made me realise how difficult it is to help my children develop Japanese abilities to the age-appropriate native level. I then came to prioritise my children’s steady inner development rather than pushing my own ideals on them. That’s led me to have a more relaxed approach ... Now I strive to help them acquire basic Japanese abilities from which they can flourish when they start aiming to be better in the future.

MB reported that she had to soften her attitude due to her daughter's unavoidable shift to English. TA similarly reflected on her flexible language use in class, stating "I don't want my students to feel that speaking English is a bad thing, because they grow up here [in New Zealand, speaking English]". Her advice to mothers of bilingual children is: "doing things in a dogmatic manner isn't good ... whatever you do, your children may or may not be tempted to pursue Japanese learning in the future".

### **Since children's bilingual development/maintenance is a complex ongoing process, what factors possibly influence parental beliefs?**

The researcher examined the participants' responses to the questionnaire, trying to detect factors that possibly influenced parental beliefs. Table 5 summarises the results. In Table 5, although the participants note their children's low literacy in Japanese, 44% of them are satisfied with children's current Japanese proficiency and have higher hopes for their children's mastery of English. Their responses to the question "Is it difficult to support children's Japanese learning in New Zealand? If so, what causes difficulty?" (Figure 1) explains this phenomenon to some extent.



**Figure 1** The challenging factors in supporting children's Japanese learning

**Table 5** The participants' responses to the questionnaire

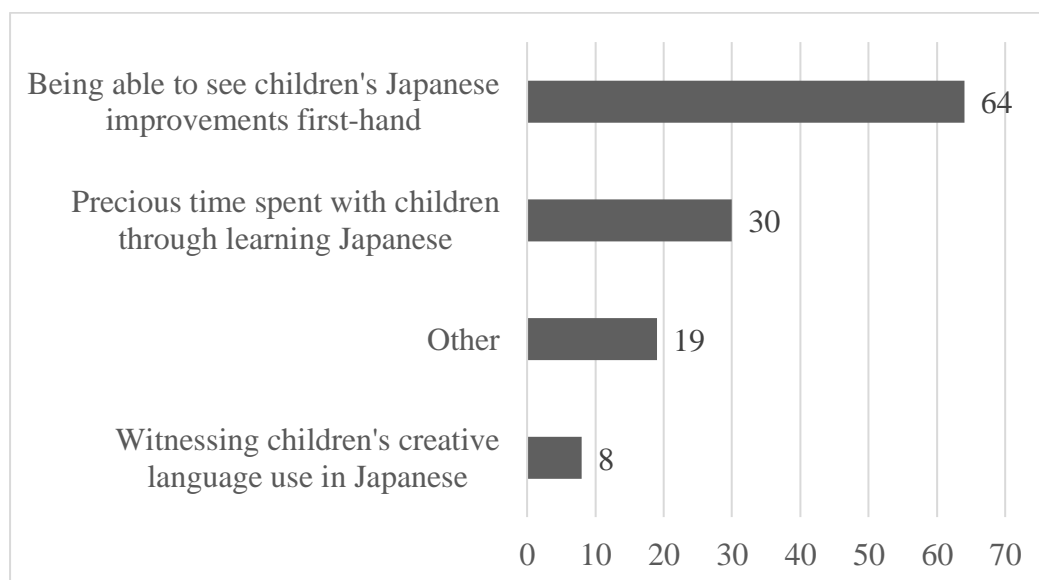
Your satisfaction level with child(ren)'s Japanese proficiency	Your assessment of 1st child's Japanese proficiency	The level of expected Japanese competence for child(ren)	The level of expected English competence	How important child(ren)'s Japanese acquisition to you	Reasons for wanting child(ren) to maintain Japanese
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly satisfied or satisfied – 44%</li> <li>• Average – 33.1%                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somewhat unsatisfied or very unsatisfied – 18.9%</li> </ul> </li> <li>• I don't know – 4%</li> </ul>	<p>Compared to the same age cohort in Japan,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher in four skills – 3.75%</li> <li>• Average in four skills – 29.25%</li> <li>• Lower in reading &amp; writing – 30.55%</li> <li>• Lower in four skills – 36.45%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master oral/aural skills &amp; a lower or upper primary school level of literacy – 16.2%/23.6%</li> <li>• Master oral/aural skills &amp; an intermediate level of literacy – 19.6%</li> <li>• Master oral/aural skills &amp; a college level literacy – 10.8%</li> <li>• Master all four skills to university level – 17.6%</li> <li>• Only master daily conversation – 10.9%*</li> </ul>	<p>74.3% of the participants hope that their child(ren) will acquire a highly sophisticated proficiency in four skills in English.</p>	<p>Very important or Important 77%</p> <p>Better if they can acquire it 20.3%</p> <p>Other 2.7%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with extended family members in Japan (N = 119**)</li> <li>• I want to speak with my child(ren) in Japanese (N = 95)</li> <li>• I want my child(ren) to be bilingual (N = 72)</li> <li>• It may be useful for jobs in the future (N = 69)</li> </ul>

*Note.* \*Two respondents (1.3%) failed to answer this question. \*\* The participants were allowed to choose multiple options

Eighty seven percent of the participants found it difficult to support their children's Japanese learning in New Zealand. Two equally significant reasons for this are 'Affective factors' and 'Teaching factors'. The former reflects children's amotivation to learn Japanese and parent's frustration in motivating children. The latter largely reveals parents' struggles with teaching Japanese logographs (*kanji*). 'Other' includes 'A lack of daily exposure to Japanese' and 'No opportunity to write in Japanese or using *kanji* in everyday life'. The participants are also impacted by other challenging factors, such as 'A lack of time', 'Japanese schools' heavy homework', and 'The dominance of English'.

Despite these challenging factors, the participants continued to hope their children's Japanese acquisition would improve, with 77% of them viewing it as 'Very important/Important' (Table 5). The two biggest reasons for thinking it was important were 'Communication with extended family members in Japan' and 'I want to speak with my child(ren) in Japanese'. All the mothers interviewed wanted to be able to do this. For example, MC said: "I simply don't want to speak in English ... because I feel if I speak in English with my daughter, I can't convey the subtle nuances of my feelings."

The factors pointed out by the participants as rewarding in supporting children's Japanese learning (Figure 2) probably support their aspirations and positive beliefs.



**Figure 2 The rewarding factors in supporting children's Japanese learning**

*Note.* 'Other' includes "being able to pass on what I know", "being able to relearn what I learned as a child", "being able to get closer to my own roots".

Nearly half of all the participants enjoyed seeing their children's Japanese improvements. Despite their difficulties teaching *kanji*, the time they spent with their children learning Japanese was cherished by 30 participants. 'Other' included benefits such as "Speaking in Japanese with my child is like we are using a secret code" and "Seeing my child becoming interested in my culture".

Many of these comments touch upon 'happy little things' that happen in everyday life. High oral competence of the participants' children was a big source of these 'happy little things'. During the researcher's 13 hours of observation of two teachers' classes, the children were only once invited to answer questions in English by TA due to the difficulty of the task.

TA was trying to teach her students how to use metaphors in Japanese. She said, "because this is difficult, you can ask me in English". There was a short silence, but none of her students resorted to English in the end. They started actively asking questions in Japanese and creating their own metaphors to describe their mothers in Japanese (e.g., "Mum scolds me like thunder"). The researcher noted the extensive linguistic richness of TA and TC's lessons. For example, some of the vocabulary used effortlessly by the children was well beyond what highly-advanced L2 Japanese learners the researcher knows can handle (e.g., Achilles' tendon, draw a tie, counterclockwise). This high oral competence probably leads to the 'happy little things' (like "laughing at Japanese TV shows together") that are rewarding to their parents.

The participants' responses to the questionnaire together with the interview comments and the class observation results show that they are surrounded by both challenging factors and encouraging factors, all of which possibly influence their beliefs, resultant attitudes, and practices in an intricate manner.

## Discussion

Parental support is crucial to children's bilingual development/maintenance (Kondo-Brown, 1997; Shibata, 2000; Yamaguchi, 2008). The current findings suggest that the participants are dedicated to supporting their children's Japanese learning in numerous ways. Underlying this dedication they also managed to maintain relaxed beliefs, despite being surrounded by many of the challenging factors identified in the literature (Aiko, 2017; Barkhuizen, 2006; Crezee, 2008; Cunningham & King, 2018; Jackson, 2009; Minami, 2013; Triest, 2018), such as: children's amotivation, difficulty in teaching *kanji*, a lack of time, the burden of Japanese homework, and the dominance of English. Parental beliefs are highly significant to children's bilingualism because parents tend to prioritise their own beliefs over those of experts (King & Fogle, 2006; Kuramoto, 2019). Of all the metaphors depicting their beliefs about their roles in their children's Japanese



learning, only those falling into the “Coach” category (N = 3) reflected austere beliefs. The other metaphor groups reflected a belief that children’s Japanese learning should be supported in an unforceful manner. This approach is supported by what Nakajima (2016) recommends for parents of Japanese-English bilingual children: have a long-term relaxed vision, be tolerant with children’s mistakes, and so forth.

The participants demonstrated children-centred views despite their children’s young age. This contrasts with the teacher-centred views demonstrated by the pre- and in-service teachers’ metaphors used in some studies (Asmalı & Çelik, 2017; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2015; Simsek, 2014). The participants’ children-centred views are aptly explained by a metaphor “Supporters of sports teams”: “Supporters (parents) cannot play but only cheer for players (children)”.

The metaphors used also demonstrated people’s affective aspects (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) and behaviors (Asmalı & Çelik, 2017; Godor, 2019; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The “Provider of input” metaphors are a good example. They probably reflect the participants’ frustration with their children’s lack of exposure to Japanese in New Zealand and their practice of continuing to talk to their children in Japanese. The beliefs expressed by these metaphors are conducive to children’s Japanese learning where input is crucial (Input Hypothesis, Krashen, 1985).

The metaphors that illustrate the participants’ vision of what Japanese learning can be like in a child’s life have similarly relaxed orientations in general. With the exception of the “Paramount thing” metaphors (N = 3), this second type of metaphor illustrated the participants’ views that Japanese learning does not need to be the most important thing in a child’s life. The “Enhancer of life”, “Tool for expanding world views”, and “Fun” metaphors all emphasise the pleasant nature of Japanese learning. This finding is the opposite of that of Shaw and Andrei (2020). In their study, half of the pre-service teachers envisaged learning English for L2 learners as a “Challenge” like “Swimming with no life jacket” (Shaw & Andrei, p. 5). The vocabulary size of even L2 English post-graduate students barely reaches half that of native-speakers (Nation, 2006). Simply looking at difficult vocabulary learning proves the hardship of L2 learning. Huang and Feng’s (2019) participants’ metaphors also illustrated the overwhelming nature of learning grammar in L2 Japanese. It may be that the participants’ children’s high oral competence in Japanese, which was largely developed as a result of their parents continuing to talk in Japanese (Dixon et al., 2012; Takeuchi, 2006, 2010), may divert their minds away from the challenging nature of learning Japanese as a heritage language.

The “Natural thing” metaphors top this second type of metaphors. The participants found their children’s amotivation, which was often the result of the unnaturalness of using and learning Japanese in New Zealand, to be an obstacle in assisting Japanese learning. These metaphors, therefore, indicate the participants’ desire for their children to eventually feel as though they use and learn Japanese naturally. Similarly to the beliefs demonstrated by the “Provider of input” metaphors, the vision expressed by the “Natural thing” metaphors supports earlier research: bilingual speakers who are equally competent in both languages will be able to switch languages naturally, without it destabilising their identity (Nakajima, 2016).

Beliefs are contextually constituted (Kalaja, Barcelos, & Mari, 2018) and the positive contextual factors in this study are attributable to the participants’ relaxed beliefs, as illustrated by their metaphors. In particular, the role of the “happy little things” that happen in daily life (including children’s creative and strategic linguistic play in Japanese as a meaning-making strategy, Danjo, 2018) probably enables them to maintain such relaxed beliefs. In short, their metaphors imply they positively accept that Japanese may not remain “a language that both (parents and children) are most comfortable with” (Au, 2008, p. 337) but that it will be something that enriches their life.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined parental beliefs about their own role in their children’s Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance in New Zealand and their vision of what Japanese learning can mean in their children’s lives via metaphor elicitation tasks. A questionnaire was also used to investigate what factors in the participants’ lives impacted this learning. The metaphors obtained revealed that, while the participants were dedicated, they also seemed to have relaxed beliefs and attitudes, despite facing certain challenging contextual factors (such as burdens of Japanese homework) detected by the questionnaire.

Their metaphors reflected their beliefs that they should be supportive in an unforceful manner, and that Japanese learning could be a positive addition to their children’s lives, rather than being the sole focus. Some of the metaphors used also illustrated affective aspects such as frustration over the lack of exposure to Japanese in New Zealand. The factors that the participants found as rewarding are possibly a source of their overall positive beliefs.

Future studies could examine the metaphors that children generate to illustrate their beliefs about Japanese learning and compare them to those of their parents

in order to see whether there is a gap between them, as relevant metaphor analysis studies have done with the comparison of teacher-student metaphors.

## Implications

The current participants like many other parents of Japanese-English bilingual children find teaching their children Japanese reading and writing, especially *kanji*, demanding. However, being biliterate is highly valuable (Aiko, Nakajima, Haidee, Furukawa, Ikuta, & Nakano, 2014; Goldenberg, 2013; Shaw & Andrei, 2019). Mori and Shimizu (2007) claim that those who use only rote learning tend to lose motivation to learn *kanji*. Various methods need to be used to enhance children's motivation in *kanji* learning. One promising method is extensive reading (ER), particularly ER using comic books (Yamaguchi, 2008). *Kanji* contained in comic books often have reading supports (*furigana*), and therefore ER through comic books is a good way for children to grow their *kanji* knowledge. Furthermore, it has been proven that ER has a positive effect on vocabulary developments, reading fluency, motivation to read, and reading habits (Nation & Waring, 2020).

The number of participants who generated metaphors was low in this study, despite Japanese being a language with a rich metaphor tradition (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hiraga, 2005). Reflecting the voluntary nature of their participation, the participants were allowed to leave questionnaire items unanswered. This probably contributed to the low rate of metaphor generation. Future metaphor analysis studies need to examine the level of difficulty of metaphor elicitation task and the participants' level of willingness to complete this task.

Ellis (2001) and Wan and Low (2015) claim there are pedagogical benefits to metaphors. As there are some beliefs that are more important than others and thus can be better used as mediational means (Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro, & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2016), some of the current metaphors have such mediational strengths. For example, when used to enlighten children about the benefits of Japanese acquisition, positive, illustrative, and concrete metaphors are more beneficial than abstract, overly philosophical ones. Such mediational metaphors hopefully enable children (and even parents) to see the tangible and accessible value and goals of language learning.

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## **Appendix A. Questionnaire on parental beliefs about Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance in New Zealand**

This questionnaire started with biodata questions (e.g., participants' home-country, L1). Because of space limitations, only the questions that asked participants about their beliefs, practices, and contextual factors surrounding them are reproduced here. The original questionnaire was written in Japanese and was translated into English by the researcher.

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For multiple-choice questions, please circle the option that best suits you. For open-ended questions, please write your answers in brackets.

1. How important is your child(ren)'s Japanese-English bilingual development/maintenance to you?
  - a. Very important
  - b. Important
  - c. Better if they acquire it
  - d. Not concerned if they cannot acquire it
  
2. If you answered a or b in Question 1, please choose reason(s) for your answer. You can choose more than one option. If you have an original reason, write your answer in the bracket.
  - a. Communication with extended family members in Japan
  - b. I want to speak in Japanese with my child(ren).
  - c. I want my child(ren) to be bilingual.
  - d. I think it will be useful for their future career.
  - e. We will go back to Japan in the future.
  - f. I don't want my child(ren) to lose Japanese abilities that have been developed.
  - g. Other ( )
  
3. If you answered d in Question 1, please specify your reason(s).  
( )

4. Why did you start sending your child(ren) to a supplementary/community school? You can choose more than one option. Please specify positive aspects of sending your child(ren) to the supplementary/community school. Also point out how the supplementary/community school functions in your life.
  - a. In order to be prepared for Japanese education because we plan to go to live in Japan
  - b. In order to acquire age-appropriate Japanese proficiency even if we don't plan to go to live in Japan
  - c. In order to maintain current Japanese proficiency
  - d. In order to know about Japan (culture, history, etc.)
  - e. In order to make Japanese speaking friends
  - f. In order to nurture Japanese identities
  - g. In order to nurture abilities of thinking and learning in Japanese
  - h. Other ( )
  
5. What is the Japanese level you want your child(ren) to acquire?
  - a. Basic everyday conversation
  - b. Relatively good at everyday conversation
  - c. Fluent in everyday conversation
  - d. Oral/aural mastery + mastery of lower primary school literacy
  - e. Oral/aural mastery + mastery of upper primary school literacy
  - f. Oral/aural mastery + mastery of intermediate school literacy
  - g. Oral/aural mastery + mastery of college level literacy
  - h. Mastery of university level in all language skills
  
6. What is the English level you want your child(ren) to acquire?
  - a. Highly-sophisticated proficiency in four skills
  - b. High fluency in conversation as an L1 speaker
  - c. Japanese is more important, so the English level can be below average
  - d. Don't worry much about the English level
  - e. Other ( )
  
7. How satisfied are you with your child(ren)'s Japanese proficiency?
  - a. Very satisfied
  - b. Satisfied
  - c. Average
  - d. Somewhat unsatisfied
  - e. Very unsatisfied
  
8. What stances toward Japanese-English bilingualism do you think local New Zealand school teachers have?
  - a. Actively cooperative
  - b. Understanding
  - c. Indifferent
  - d. Negative
  - e. Other

