METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALISATIONS HELD BY CHILDREN AND PARENTS OF JAPANESE-ENGLISH BILINGUAL FAMILIES REGARDING LEARNING JAPANESE IN NEW ZEALAND

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Abstract

This study examines Japanese-English bilingual children's beliefs about learning Japanese in New Zealand. As a follow-up project to a precursory study that examined parental beliefs about the maintenance of Japanese-English bilingualism in New Zealand, it also delves into the relationship between the children's beliefs and their parents' beliefs. The author conducted structured interviews with 25 parents and 30 children across 24 families. Metaphor elicitation tasks were the main research method and were given at the end of each interview session to both children and parents in order to examine their conceptualisations of maintenance of Japanese as their heritage language. Overall, the children's metaphors primarily framed learning Japanese as challenging, largely because they were overwhelmed by its difficulty. In contrast, the parents' metaphorical conceptualisations reflected their beliefs that learning Japanese and maintaining it would bear fruit in the future, although they were conflicted in some ways. While they believed the mastery of Japanese would subsequently bring benefits to their children, they were faced by a dilemma caused by various contextual variables, feeling uncertain regarding the most pragmatic goal for their children, rather than themselves.

Keywords: maintenance of Japanese as a heritage language, children's beliefs, parental beliefs, metaphor elicitation, structured interview

Introduction

In New Zealand, English functions as the main language due to its overall dominance and its large number of speakers, whereas New Zealand Sign Language and te reo Māori are designated as official languages. That said, the increasing number of people with various ethnic backgrounds living in this country has made New Zealand multi-cultural and multi-lingual (Alsahafi, 2019; Ho, 2015; Minagawa, 2017). While 70.2% of people residing in New Zealand identify themselves as European, 16.5% identify as Māori, 15.1% as Asian, 8.1%

as Pacific, and 2.7% as Other (Stats NZ, 2020). In terms of linguistic diversity, while 96.1% of the population speak English, more than 160 other languages are spoken by minority ethnic groups (Cunningham & King, 2018). Within this multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment, many children in this country understand more than one language. Quin (2020) reports that 40% of two-year-old New Zealand children understand two or more languages.

Among these minority ethnic groups' languages, te reo Māori sits at the top of the language hierarchy, with various other languages (including Asian languages) sitting at the bottom (de Bres, 2015). As such, developing and maintaining non-prioritised minority ethnic languages in New Zealand is challenging due to the lack of national-level institutional support, with stronger emphasis being given to the languages of the dominant social groups in early childhood education, insufficient efforts being made to reduce the prevailing English monolingual bias at schools, and the non-recognition of literacy credits studied in minority ethnic languages as university entrance requirements (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2017; Chan, 2011; Cunningham & King, 2018; Major, 2018; Oriyama, 2018; Quin, 2020; Yu, 2005).

In response to this state of affairs, some studies have looked at how minority ethnic groups in New Zealand maintain their ethnic identity and heritage languages from generation to generation. Examples of these studies are those conducted by Holmes, Roberts, Verivaki, and Aipolo (1993, conducted in the Tongan, Greek, and Chinese communities), Plimmer (1994, conducted in the Italian community), Hulsen, de Bot, and Weltens (2002, conducted in the Dutch community), Barkhuizen (2006, conducted in the South African community), Crezee (2008, 2012, conducted in the Dutch community), Al-Sahafi (2010, conducted in the Arabic Muslim community), Tawalbeh (2017, conducted in the Iraqi refugee community), Kuncha and Bathula (2020, conducted in the Indian Telugu community), and Dagamseh (2020, conducted in the Jordanian and Palestinian communities).

Lauwereyns (2011) and Tabata-Sandom (2020) are studies in a similar vein to the current study and were both conducted within the Japanese community. This community's growing population remains under-researched, with the 2017 population of 19,664 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2020) more than triple that of 1999. These two studies looked at the beliefs about Japanese-English bilingualism held by parents living in New Zealand cities. However, they relied on questionnaire surveys that would have had limitations in obtaining individual respondents' unique perceptions, and they also only touched upon parental beliefs and did not examine those of children. The current study is a follow-up project to the latter of the two studies (i.e., Tabata-Sandom, 2020) and examines Japanese-English bilingual children's beliefs about learning Japanese in New Zealand,

using the direct data collection method of individual structured interviews. This study also revisits parental beliefs in order to compare them with those of their children. Investigation into the beliefs of both parties (children and parents) aims to provide a more holistic insight into Japanese-English bilingual maintenance in New Zealand. Growing our understanding of the existing congruence or disparity between children's and their parents' perceptions of learning Japanese in this English-speaking country may help inform the paths of similar bilingual families in the future.

Furthermore, this study strives to gain a more contextualised understanding of the children's and parents' Japanese language learning experiences by examining factors surrounding them. In particular, it investigates how the formal learning of Japanese at supplementary schools impacts the parent participants' perceptions of their children's Japanese learning and how they conceptualise this metaphorically.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (n.d., https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/clarinet/002/003/002/001.htm) defines the purpose of attending a supplementary school as "to study the essential knowledge and skills of basic Japanese subjects within a Japanese school culture in the Japanese language in order for children who attend (overseas) local schools to smoothly re-adjust themselves when they re-enter Japanese schools" (the author's translation). The gruelling reality is that supplementary school teachers and children need to do the same amount of work in four or five hours per week as their counterparts in Japan do in five full days. (Japanese community schools in New Zealand tend to follow the curriculum covered by supplementary schools.) Taking a closer look at the impact of this, along with other contextual factors, will enable us to understand the participants' metaphorical conceptualisations more pragmatically.

Literature Review

Parents' and children's beliefs about children's bilingualism

Children's bilingual development and maintenance can be affected by numerous factors such as parental beliefs regarding home language maintenance (Liang, 2018); parental input (Muranaka-Vuletich, 2002); the language(s) used between family members (Dixon et al., 2012); family language ideology and practice (Báez, 2013; Jeon, 2008; Wu et al., 2014); family structures (Lauwereyns, 2011); the time and effort expended by parents (Liang, 2018); the ethnolinguistic vitality of a given ethnic group (Minagawa, 2017); children's competence in their heritage language and the mainstream language (Yu, 2005); the influence of local ethnic communities (Kurata, 2015; Nakamura, 2019); the dominance of a

majority group's language in the local environment (Barkhuizen, 2006; Crezee, 2008; Cunningham & King, 2018; Yu, 2005); and the utilitarian value associated with the heritage language (Fishman, 2001). Among these, parental factors such as beliefs, language use, and language ideology play a key role (García, 2005; Kondo, 1997; Nakamura, 2019; Takeuchi, 2010; Yamaguchi, 2008). And it is parents who are likely to be the most significant source of linguistic input in the first years of a child's life.

The parents in this study are affected by emotional pressure and changing contextual demands themselves (Okita, 2002) and they influenced their children's bilingualism in various ways. Among the studies done prior to this one, De Houwer (1999) emphasised the importance of parental beliefs, attitudes, and linguistic behaviours on early bilingualism. For example, she suggested that parents' choice of what language they use with their children largely determines their children's language use. Garcia (2005) similarly gave primary importance to the use of the ethnic language in the family, noting that this requires strenuous effort on the part of the parents. Parents also need to be strategic in discourse, since children need to be exposed to sufficient input in both languages to reach fluent bilingualism (Mishina-Mori, 2011). Guessoum et al. (2021) reported that a heavy emphasis on the minority language (Arabic in their case) by the participating parents was key for their children to grow better linguistic skills in it. In the context of Japanese-English bilingualism, Kondo (1997) claimed that Japanese mothers played a pivotal role in transmitting Japanese language skills, particularly oral skills, to second generation Japanese descendants in Hawai'i, although such children's willingness to speak and learn Japanese was impacted by their social identities as well. Takeuchi (2006) pointed out several parental factors that favourably influence children's heritage language maintenance; namely the Japanese mother's consistency in language choice, her insistence on her children's speaking in Japanese, and positive parental attitudes toward Japanese speakers. Jackson (2006), contending with how fathers of interlingual marriages who speak the minority language (English in Japan in his case) contribute to their children's bilingualism, suggested that parents' L2 proficiency affects their children's bilingualism both positively and negatively. Regarding heritage language development and maintenance in terms of literacy in Japanese, Yamaguchi (2008) emphasised that parental support and encouraging home environments were essential. Motivating the decisions parents make regarding the factors mentioned here, are their beliefs. Parental beliefs related to children's linguistic development are a component of parental beliefs in relation to their children's overall development and these determine parents' language practice as it pertains to their children (De Houwer, 1999).

Previous studies have demonstrated that Japanese parents generally have positive beliefs about and attitudes toward their children's maintenance of Japanese as a heritage language (Shibata, 2000; Triest, 2018; Tsushima & Guardado, 2019). Lauwereyns (2011) claimed that due to this typically high level of parental aspiration, Japanese as a heritage language has the capacity to survive in New Zealand better than some other languages. Afrikaans and Dutch, for example, typically suffer speedy attrition against the dominant societal language of English (Barkhuizen, 2006; Crezee, 2008). Favorable perceptions toward Japan and Japanese people, as well as thriving Japanese language and culture studies in secondary and tertiary education (Minagawa, 2017), may have created better circumstances for Japanese-English bilingual families in New Zealand. That being said, the parents participating in Tabata-Sandom's (2020) study mentioned that they encountered numerous difficulties while supporting their children's Japanese-English bilingual development and maintenance in New Zealand. Still, their beliefs, as depicted in their metaphors, demonstrated relaxed attitudes despite the challenging nature of their endeavours. For example, the parents were tolerant of their children's mistakes (Tabata-Sandom, 2020), as recommended by Nakajima (2016). Tabata-Sandom (2020) reported that positive contextual factors such as seeing children interact with extended family members in Japan, jointly appreciating Japanese culture, and feeling a sense of belonging in the Japanese community were what enabled them to maintain a relaxed attitude and continue helping their children to learn Japanese.

While both Lauwereyns (2011) and Tabata-Sandom (2020) investigated parental beliefs toward Japanese-English bilingualism in New Zealand, neither of them examined the children's own beliefs. Therefore, we do not know how children in Japanese-English bilingual families in New Zealand perceive learning Japanese, and whether their beliefs about it are in tune with those of their parents. Regarding studies targeting children who are actually learning their heritage languages like the current participants, Suzuki (2013) conducted questionnaire surveys to examine the perceptions of Chinese and English of third- and sixth-year Chinese Canadian children who were under an official bilingual scheme. His study reported that the sixth-year children had deepened their understanding of their ethnic roots through learning Chinese more than the third-year children, and their subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (Bourhis et al., 1981) was stronger with Chinese than with English.

There is only a limited number of studies that have inquired into Japanese ethnic groups in New Zealand (Kominami, 2013; Kuragasaki-Laughton, 2007; Nakanishi, 2000). There have also been no studies to date that investigated

children's attitudes and beliefs toward their own Japanese-English bilingualism in this specific English-speaking country. That said, although her participants were not children who were learning Japanese at the time of the study, Minagawa's (2017) study did inquire into the experiences of Japanese youths aged between 19-32 living in Auckland who grew up in Japanese-English bilingual families. Her participants indicated that social expectations for them to be Japanese-English bilingual in New Zealand were not as high as those put on their counterparts living in Japan, who were expected to be proficient speakers of English due to the high esteem in which English is held in their society. In terms of mastering Japanese, while Minagawa's participants might have been "driven more for personal reasons, i.e., to be able to communicate with their Japanese grandparents, or even with their Japanese parents" (Minagawa, 2017, p. 26), some of them do not seem to have deep regrets over not being highly bilingual. This makes it interesting to investigate whether or not the current participants, who are younger than Minagawa's (2017) participants, have started having somewhat low aspirations regarding their mastery of Japanese.

As mentioned above, to the best knowledge of the author, there have been no studies that have inquired into children's beliefs about Japanese as a heritage language in New Zealand, where official bilingual schemes for this minority ethnic language—such as the one reported on by Suzuki (2013)—do not exist. This insufficient level of exploration into children's beliefs about their own bilingualism is also observed in the relevant field of family language policy research (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Fogle, 2013; Schwartz, 2008). This makes it very worthwhile to investigate what beliefs Japanese-English bilingual children living in New Zealand have about learning Japanese. The findings of the current study will provide useful knowledge to parents who support their children in learning Japanese in New Zealand and countries like it, where official Government support for immigrants' home languages is lacking.

Metaphor elicitation as a means of investigating beliefs in the context of language learning

Research methodology that investigates beliefs related to language learning has changed from the earlier normative and metacognitive approaches to the more recent contextual approach. Surveys such as Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI, Horwitz, 1988) have been traditionally used in applied linguistic belief research, since the advent of the normative approach. Alternatively, using the metacognitive approach Wenden (1987) included interviews so that learners could explore their beliefs on their own terms. These

two earlier approaches tended to regard beliefs as something fallacious, static, and unchanging. In contrast, the contextual approach views beliefs as something emergent and context-mediated. In other words, this more recent approach tries to see "how beliefs are constructed in everyday practice, and how they may change and take shape in the social context of learning" (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003, p. vii). Since contextual variables mediate belief formation, their examination is key to this approach. Reflecting this transition, the research field has pushed its qualitative orientation further to better explore such changeable mental entities. Metaphor analysis then started being used in the newer contextual approach (Kalaja et al., 2018), largely reflecting what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claimed in relation to the notion of Conceptual Metaphor Theory: because they are omnipresent not only in language but also in thought and action, metaphors embody our conceptual system and give expression to physical, social, and affective experiences. Srivastva and Barrett (1988) similarly asserted that metaphors can reveal people's attempts to understand a discrete event or experience within a broader framework. As a research tool, "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" (Tabata-Sandom et al., 2020, p. 51).

Numerous metaphor analysis studies have examined diverse themes: learners' cognitive and affective aspects of language learning (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005); pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs (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 et al., 2009; Shaw & Andrei, 2019; Shaw & Mahlios, 2011; Simsek, 2014; Zapata, 2015); learners' perceptions of language teachers (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008); and learners' perceptions of language learning (Aktekin, 2013; Caballero, 2006; Ellis, 2001; Farjami, 2012; Kramsch, 2003; Tabata-Sandom et al., 2020). These studies have demonstrated that metaphor analysis can be very useful in investigating the conceptualisations of language learners and teachers regarding language learning *per se* and factors related to it. It is expected that this methodology will also be useful in examining parents' and children's beliefs about bilingual development and its maintenance, which is another crucial aspect of language learning.

Among the aforementioned metaphor analysis studies, some examined metaphorical expressions (implicit metaphor use) occurring in participants' verbal or written discourse, whereas others used metaphor elicitation. Metaphor elicitation involves asking participants to use a metaphor to describe a topic being

examined and thus metaphors obtained from metaphor elicitation are deliberate metaphor use, which is "the intentional use of a metaphor *as* a metaphor" (Steen, 2015, p. 67, italics original). Despite metaphor elicitation's efficacy as a research tool in examining beliefs about language learning, it seems that only Tabata-Sandom's (2020) study has used metaphor elicitation in the context of bilingual research. However, some studies have analysed spontaneous metaphorical expressions contained in verbal or written discourse provided by bilingual and multilingual speakers (Erdmann, 2016; Golden & Lanza, 2013). For example, Erdmann (2016) examined figurative language that took the form of metaphorical expressions in order to look into the experiences of language acquisition and retention of nine immigrant students to Norway. She reported that an examination of spatial figurative language, or metaphors, used by her teenage participants revealed a lot of their conceptualisations about their immigration experience and multilingualism. Unlike Erdmann's (2016) study, the current study employed deliberate metaphor elicitation tasks and attempted to examine children's and parents' metaphorical conceptualisations of learning Japanese in New Zealand. Specifically, the study answers the following research questions:

1. What do the metaphors used by the participating children reveal about their beliefs about learning Japanese in their lives?
2. How do the participating children's metaphors relate to their parents' metaphors?
3. How do the contextual variables affect the two parties' belief constructions?

Methodology

Recruitment of participants and data collection

After having obtained ethics approval from the university, the author recruited participants through one supplementary school in Wellington, one supplementary school in Auckland, and one community school in Auckland. Supplementary schools are partly supported by the Japanese government and support Japanese children who live overseas and attend local schools so that they are ready for (re-)entering Japanese schools when they go back to Japan. Community schools are not supported by the Japanese government as they do not meet certain requirements, but they tend to offer the same curriculum to children, based upon parents' expectations. Tabata-Sandom (2020) found that only 16.7% of the 148 participating Japanese-English bilingual families in New Zealand planned to go back to Japan to live in the future. Despite that, many parents wished for their

children to acquire Japanese literacy at least to the third-year level of Japanese primary schools.

The 30 children participating in this study fit into the definition of bilingual used by Turnbull (2018) and Barac, et al. (2014): children who were exposed to English and another language from their early childhood and who have developed an active knowledge of the former language while using the latter language on a daily basis to satisfy their individual needs. Twenty-three of them were attending or had graduated from supplementary or community schools at the time of the interviews. Some of the remaining seven children were learning what their same-age cohorts in Japan learn (reading, writing, and age-appropriate *kanji*) at Japanese primary schools via correspondence courses. The children ranged in age from eight to sixteen years old. As for the participating parents, they were all L1 speakers of Japanese. All the parents but one were the mothers of the children. One participant was a father. Participation was open to both parents, but it is likely the current sample was formed predominantly by mothers because those who actively engaged in the Japanese supplementary or community school circles were predominantly Japanese mothers whose partners were L1 English speakers. Five families were endogamous families (both parents were Japanese) and 19 families were exogamous families. Most of the non-Japanese fathers were L1 English speakers, with two being L1 Chinese speakers and one being an L1 German speaker.

This study employed an interview-based methodology. Both the children and their parents were interviewed individually. The children were always interviewed first and their mothers (and in the case of one family, both parents) were interviewed later. Two metaphor elicitation tasks were given at the end of each interview in order to examine the participants' conceptualisations of learning Japanese in New Zealand. For the individual interviews with the children the author made the questionnaire in Japanese, basing it on the questions used in the aforementioned precursory study (Tabata-Sandom, 2020). She then sought advice on the questions' suitability from two people: a mother and teacher of L2 Japanese who raised her children to be Japanese-English bilinguals, and the principal of the community school in Auckland mentioned above. In addition to giving the author advice about the length and procedure of the upcoming interviews, these two people examined the question list for its language and content appropriacy, given the children's Japanese linguistic ability and cognitive maturity. The principal of another supplementary school in Auckland also examined the completed questionnaire in order to further confirm the appropriacy of its content, which was later translated into English by two L1 English speakers,

both of whom spoke Japanese as their L2. The resulting question list is provided as Appendix A. The parents answered the same questions from their perspectives. The following are the two metaphor elicitation tasks:

(First task)

Who helps and supports your Japanese study most?
Please explain how the person helps your Japanese study. Please use a metaphor.

(Second task)

Now complete the following sentence using a metaphor: '<u>Learning Japanese for me is like (a metaphor) because (explanation)</u>.'

The Japanese supplementary and community schools follow the official Japanese curriculum. Metaphors are taught at the third year at primary school and therefore 23 of the participating children had learned about this linguistic tool at their supplementary or community schools. Nevertheless, the researcher explained it in detail to all 30 children. It should be noted that the metaphors obtained in this study were elicited, rather than simply being metaphorical expressions contained in learner discourse, as were examined by studies such as those of Ellis (2002) and Erdmann (2016). Moreover, the 'metaphors' obtained during the second task are strictly speaking 'similes.' However, in this study the word 'metaphor' is used because of its generic usage in the research methodology name of 'metaphor analysis'. The sentence format mentioned above, '<u>Learning Japanese for me is like (a metaphor) because (explanation)</u>', was chosen in order to make the task easier for the children since the format was similar to how metaphors were introduced in textbooks officially approved by the Japanese curriculum. Moreover, it was expected that the use of this format would generate data in a uniform format. In this study, the findings from the first metaphor task were not discussed due to space limitations.

All the interviews were conducted over Zoom and were recorded, with the participants' permission. The recordings were sent to the participants who requested them. The children were able to choose the language of both the interview and the questionnaire displayed on the computer screen. The interviews lasted between one hour and one and a half hours per family. With six of the families, two children were present during the interviews.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the author. All the participants received full transcriptions of their interviews by email, so that they were able to

confirm their comments and edit the transcriptions if they appeared to have connotations differing from what they wished to convey.

The data, mostly in Japanese, were analysed by the author and an L1 Japanese research assistant independently. The interview transcripts were analysed inductively, following the procedures of thematic analysis described by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017). For analysing metaphors, the approach explained in Cameron and Low (1999) was taken: "[generalising from the collected metaphors] to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and using the result to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs and actions" (p. 88). More specifically, the author and the aforementioned research assistant independently labelled the obtained metaphors from the children and their parents and categorised them into groups based on their underlying meanings. For example, the labels of 'opportunity expander,' 'useful item,' and 'positive additives' were used for three parents' metaphors of 'A light,' 'Dictionary-to-be,' and 'Spice', respectively. Based on these labels and an examination of their explanations, these three metaphors were categorised together into a group referred to as "Life enhancer" because of their shared underlying meaning: something that will better children's lives. The participants' explanations helped to confirm and deepen the author's understanding and interpretation of their metaphors. The author and the research assistant later conferred to resolve any discrepancies. Agreement on the categorical themes resulted in an inter-rater reliability value of $r = 0.83$. In this study, the findings from the second metaphor elicitation task were used to answer research questions 1 and 2, and the rest of the data were primarily used to address research question 3. For research question 3, the occurrence of the two words, 'homework' and '*kanji*' (Japanese logographs) were counted using the Microsoft Word's 'Find' tool because the author noted that they often appeared in the participants' transcripts.

Findings

In the findings that follow, each number is a number allocated to an individual family. 'C' stands for child and 'P' stands for parent. When two numbers are allocated after C, that means two of the children were from one family. For example, C12-1 and C12-2 were the two children from the 12th family. There is only one case where two numbers are allocated after P: P15-1 and P15-2, with the former being the only father participant. Actual remarks given during interviews are presented with double quotation marks. This section is organised into three parts: 1. The children's beliefs about learning Japanese illustrated by

their metaphors, 2. The relationship between the children's beliefs and those of their parents illustrated by their metaphors, and 3. The influence of the contextual variables on the two parties' belief constructions. The metaphors obtained are presented in this way for readers to easily follow.

1. The children's beliefs about learning Japanese illustrated by their metaphors

Twenty-six of the 30 participating children completed the second metaphor elicitation task: 'Learning Japanese for me is like (a metaphor) because (explanation).' Table 1 below categorises the 26 metaphors obtained, paired with the underlying meanings the author generalised from the explanations the participants provided for their metaphors.

Table 1. Metaphors that illustrate children's beliefs regarding learning Japanese

Category	**Tokens**	**Metaphors** *Learning Japanese for me is like…*	**Underlying meanings** *because it …*
Fun but hard thing	10	Ice-cream, Mountain or Rollercoaster, Game of Life, Soccer, Tree, Books, Journey, Swimming, Going for a walk Endless driving (C24-2)*	has both fun and hard sides
Endless thing	4	Books, Long mathematical formula, Thick book, Marathon	gives me endless things I need to learn
Difficult thing	4	Wrecking ball, Walking down a street being hit by 100 pancakes, Swimming, Cross-country	is often hard and tiring
Natural thing	2	Sitting, Brushing teeth	is something I can do effortlessly
Complicated thing	2	Rubik's Cube, Journey	creates a succession of both good and bad experiences
Things I am not good at	2	Eating *nattoo* (fermented soybean), Banana	is something I am not a big fan of
Others	2	Driving a car Cleaning→Shopping (C24-1)**	
No metaphor	4	C1, C6-2, C17, C23	
Total	30		

Note. *, **The metaphors created by C24-1 and C24-2 are explained at the end of this section due to their unique contexts.

Many metaphors and explanations belonging to the largest group, 'Fun but hard thing' (N = 10), acknowledged both the fun and hard aspects of learning Japanese, and confirmed the former exceeded the latter as C3-1 described: "Learning Japanese for me is like ice-cream. It's fun to read things such as *manga* comics, but it's hard when difficult words appear… (it's) like ice-cream because it's yummy, but you sometimes get brain freeze. Then that quickly goes away, and you enjoy the taste again." On the contrary, the four children who offered the 'Endless thing' metaphors seemed to be overwhelmed by the endless nature of learning Japanese. Comparing it to a 'Thick book', C20 elaborated that: "Even if I read it every day, it doesn't end… There is more coming."

The 'Difficult thing' group (N = 4) emphasised the difficulty of learning Japanese. C6-1, who learned Japanese at a supplementary school, remarked that "Learning Japanese for me is like a wrecking ball. Japanese homework comes and hits me." In contrast, the two children who created the 'Natural thing' metaphors found learning Japanese easy and natural. C12-1 commented that "learning Japanese for me is like brushing my teeth because I do it every day."

"Rubik's cube" (C18) and "Journey" (C21-2) belonged to the 'Complicated thing' group and objectively observed the complexity of learning Japanese, while the two 'Things I am not good at' metaphors reflected the two authors' personal history. C9 felt obliged to maintain his Japanese ability because he lived in Japan for seven years before coming to New Zealand. He described his conceptualisation as "eating *nattoo*," a food that he did not like but that is loved by many Japanese. The author of "Banana" was unable to eat bananas as an infant, according to her mother. For her, learning Japanese was like a "Banana", while she did not hate it, she did not like it either.

Overall, the children's metaphors highlighted the dual nature of learning Japanese, which can be fun but also difficult. Although the 'Fun thing' group viewed learning Japanese as enjoyable, like a "Rollercoaster" (C3-2), they also acknowledged the difficult side of it, as C21-1 confirmed with a metaphor of "Journey": "I keep doing it. Despite there being difficult times, there are lots of fun things, and I am always learning." The 'Endless thing' and 'Difficult thing' groups similarly touched upon the difficult nature of this mental endeavour, as did the 'Complicated thing' metaphors. Thus, 20 of the 26 metaphors recognised the challenging aspect of learning Japanese. Despite this common characteristic of the children's metaphors, it is noteworthy that only a small number (e.g., "Eating *nattoo*", and "Wrecking ball") expressed an aversion to learning Japanese.

C24-1 and C24-2 were the participants who had been formally studying Japanese the longest among this cohort. C24-1 recollected his early years of learning Japanese, reflected upon his current state, and then remarked: "Japanese learning for me used to be like 'cleaning' because I had to do it though I didn't want to. Now it's like shopping, because I neither like nor dislike it." Before offering two metaphors, he told the author that he could only remember he didn't like going to supplementary school, which shows his aversion to the formal learning context. His mother explained that he probably did not like going to and studying at the supplementary school because he was often the only student in his grade. His mother said that this circumstance did not change, but nevertheless, his aversion got weaker over the years. In contrast, his older sister, C24-2, commented more positively: "I like learning languages. So, Japanese learning for me is like 'endless driving' because it isn't difficult, but I am just sitting and cruising… (My metaphor) may have changed a bit but it hasn't changed as much as my brother. I had hard times, but they didn't last forever." C24-1's case is an example of changing metaphorical conceptualisations over the years, whereas C24-2's metaphorical conceptualisation did not change much, partly because she originally liked learning languages and viewed her learning journey as relatively effortless. The two cases imply that following up on the participants' metaphorical conceptualisations over a long period of time can be revealing.

2. The relationship between the children's beliefs and those of their parents illustrated by their metaphors

Using a metaphor, the participating parents described what learning Japanese can be and is like in their children's lives. Table 2 below categorises the 24 metaphors obtained. One mother did not offer a metaphor.

Table 2. Metaphors that illustrate how parents envision their children's learning of Japanese

Category	**Tokens**	**Metaphors** *I believe learning Japanese can be/is …*	**Underlying meaning** *because it …*
Life enhancer	14	Brain training, Luxurious freebie, Tool that makes life more colourful, Dictionary-to-be, Treasure-to-be, Supplement, Spice, Key, Foundation, Support-to-be, A tool contained in a tool kit, Communication tool, A light, Passport	gives child(ren) more options such as better learning ability, chance to live in Japan, etc.

Life essential	7	Rice, Home, Clothes, Eating, Brushing teeth, Mealtime, Bookshelf in the lounge	naturally becomes an essential part of child(ren)'s life
Others	3	A part of body and brain, Identity, Sharpened feeling	
No metaphor	1	P23	
Total	25		

Through using 'Life enhancer' metaphors, more than half of the parents demonstrated a belief that learning Japanese would enhance their children's lives. P4 remarked that "(Japanese is a) tool that makes a life more colourful. An option…that enriches life." It is noteworthy that 'Life enhancer' metaphors are future-oriented. That is, these metaphors reflect parental beliefs that learning Japanese will enhance their children's lives in the future rather than now. The future-oriented characteristic of this group's metaphors was crystalised in P7's explanation for her metaphor, which was "Treasure-to-be": "One day my daughter will surely feel that it was good to keep learning it." It should be noted, however, that this belief was not forceful, as P10's explanation for her metaphor "supplement" is: "You can live without it, but it is beneficial to have it."

The second group's ('Life essential') metaphors reflected parental beliefs that learning Japanese was or could naturally be an essential part of their children's lives. P9 explained that learning Japanese is like "clothes, which are always near my son and always a part of him, something naturally close to him." A "Bookshelf in the lounge", as described by P24, "is always there for the children to reach for a book whenever they want to read one." Thus, most of the parents' metaphors acknowledged the essential but not-dominant status of learning Japanese in their children's lives. Even more interestingly, three metaphors ("Rice", "Eating", and "Mealtime") are related to food, which shows that those parents viewed learning Japanese as a fundamental thing in their children's lives.

As seen above, more than half of the parents believed that learning Japanese would enrich their children's lives in the future. This view was not detected in the children's metaphors, which instead focused on the demanding characteristics of learning Japanese they were currently experiencing. While there is no congruence between the metaphors of the two groups in terms of future orientation, two children's metaphors (i.e., "Sitting" and "Brushing teeth") corresponded with those of the seven parents who created their own 'Life essential' metaphors.

3. The influence of the contextual variables on the two parties' belief constructions

This study draws on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. That is, the study regards conceptual metaphors as useful tools to understand people's complicated perceptions in simple terms and therefore help us to gain insight into abstract issues being examined. However, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, though supported by many researchers as mentioned above, has invited some criticism. For example, Erdmann (2016) reported that some scholars have criticised its "emphasis on deep conceptual structures and embodied experiences, arguing for more pragmatic and contextualised understandings of figurative language" (p. 186). It is, therefore, hoped that examining how contextual variables affected the participants can give us pragmatic and contextualised understandings of the metaphors obtained. To this end, the participants' interview responses to the discrete questions (mainly Questions 10, 11 & 12 shown in Appendix A) will be discussed in this section.

As seen in the children's choices with the second metaphor elicitation task, they viewed learning Japanese as challenging, although many of them were able to see the joyful side of it. Their responses to the other interview questions about both the difficult things and the good things about learning Japanese in New Zealand give some insight into the roots of their difficulties. Regarding the difficult things, fourteen of 30 children claimed that formal study such as homework and *kanji* learning assigned by supplementary and community schools was tiring. 'Homework' and '*kanji*' frequently appeared in the children's transcripts, with the former occurring 17 times and the latter being mentioned 60 times. Since New Zealand mainstream schools do not give primary school-aged children homework regularly, being assigned Japanese homework makes these children's lives difficult. For example, C7 said, "While I am doing my (Japanese) homework, my (Kiwi) friends play with each other, which makes me sad." Learning *kanji* is also difficult in New Zealand because of the lack of opportunities for input and output outside of the supplementary schools. As C3-2 explained: "I forget how to speak (in Japanese) and (how to use) *kanji* because I don't use it anywhere." Nevertheless, 22 children (73%) said that they wanted to improve their Japanese proficiency and 15 of them wished to improve their literacy in a way that involved *kanji* learning. When mentioning good things, the children pointed out things such as 'being able to speak with their family members in Japan,' 'being able to fully enjoy visits to Japan,' 'being able to enjoy *Manga* and *Anime* in Japanese,' 'being able to better communicate with their mothers,' and 'being able to understand more *kanji*.' C15 explained the difficult but rewarding process of

kanji learning: "[B]eing able to write… the *kanji* I had a hard time learning in a sentence is the best thing." Most of the difficult and good things raised by the children referred to things they were currently experiencing.

Although many of the parents' metaphors appear to be future-oriented, their interview comments suggested that their metaphors also came from their own experiences. For example, many parents claimed that if their children continued learning Japanese, they would have fewer difficulties in the future than they (the parents themselves) were currently having with mastering English. P1 commented that, "as I'm having difficulties with English [without a base], I assume if my son establishes a base (now), he will be able to learn it quickly when he gets motivated." P1 continued, "I want learning Japanese to be brain training for my son. A base from which to learn something like another language (in the future)."

A striking factor detected during the interviews was the conflicts faced by many of the participating mothers. They said that they were surrounded by encouraging factors such as:

- Partners' support of the children's learning Japanese
- Mainstream schools' multi-cultural stance
- Sense of belonging created by supplementary and community schools
- Children's willingness to speak in Japanese in the family
- Being able to enjoy Japanese culture with their children

Nevertheless, they were also faced with some discouraging factors:

- Having to motivate their children when they rejected formal Japanese study
- Worrying about their children's English proficiency
- Feeling uncertainty and guilt
- Taking sole responsibility for their children's Japanese learning

These mothers often needed to motivate their children, who were reluctant to engage in formal Japanese study. However, they had to do so subtly in order to not interfere with their children's study at mainstream local schools where English was a medium of instruction. In the first metaphor elicitation task, P6 described her role as "fanning a small flame in my daughters' hearts without being noticed to stop the flame from dying down." Also, many of them were

worried about their children's English proficiency because they were unable to help further it. P2 commented, "I'm worried about my daughter's English. She doesn't seem to understand some everyday vocabulary and doesn't get exposed to the idioms used in other ordinary families." This worry seems to be interwoven with feelings of uncertainty and guilt. Many of them explained that they wanted to speak with their children in Japanese so that they could communicate deep feelings better. P19 said, "I'm not good at English. I want to talk about something deep in Japanese with my child." Many mothers are conflicted by their wish for their children to acquire high Japanese proficiency and their anticipation that they might be pushing their children too far by asking them to learn Japanese formally as they busily study at mainstream schools in English. In short, they did not know what the final answer to the question of their children's learning of Japanese should be. P24 summarised this by stating: "There is no right answer to how much I should push learning Japanese." Finally, even though their partners were understanding about their children's learning of Japanese they felt a huge burden, as explained by P3: "I feel the heavy burden of deciding things alone (such as whether my children should continue further in a supplementary school). It wears me out. Because 'Japanese is mum's work,' I cannot consult my husband… The dilemma is overwhelming." In summary, these mothers had to perform a balancing act in dealing with the emotional "conflict" described by P8, as well as contextual and linguistic conflicts.

As a contrast to these general tendencies, there were some cases where congruence was implicitly observed between the children's and parents' metaphors because the aforementioned conflicts were mitigated by situational factors (e.g., not pursuing biliteracy). One such case is that of the 15th family. In this family, both L1 Japanese parents (P15-1 & P15-2) were well versed in language acquisition and jointly committed to supporting their only son's Japanese-English bilingualism and biliteracy. As Table 3 below indicates, C15's metaphor implicitly embraced his parents' metaphorical conceptualisation: A small bud (his mother's word: solid foundation) will grow into a big tree that will point to the sky far away from the ground (his father's word: different world).

Table 3. Congruence between one child's and his parents' metaphors, observed in the 15th family

ID	Metaphor	Explanation
C15	Tree	First there is a small bud. The bud grows bigger and eventually becomes a big tree (like my Japanese increasingly getting better).
P15-1	Key	(Learning Japanese is a) key to open a door to a different world.

P15-2	Foundation	(Learning Japanese will be) a solid foundation… for learning another language, for learning anything.

Discussion

Overall, many of the children's metaphors illustrated that they found learning Japanese challenging, though a third of them acknowledged the enjoyable side of it. This finding corresponds with those obtained by some metaphor analysis studies that examined older L2 learners' beliefs about language learning. For example, some post-tertiary L2 Japanese learners in Tabata-Sandom et al.'s (2020) study created the 'Enjoyable but also hard' metaphors that acknowledged the dual nature of learning Japanese as L2. In line with Kalaja, et al.'s (2018) suggestion that "finding out what influences beliefs is more important than mapping the beliefs themselves" (p. 225), this study revealed one of the possible sources of the belief that learning Japanese is challenging: formal learning of Japanese, Japanese homework, and *kanji* learning. As mentioned in the Introduction section, overseas Japanese supplementary and community schools' teachers and children are required to cover the same content that is covered by their counterparts in Japan in less than a third or sometimes a quarter of the time. Therefore, lots of work has to be assigned as homework to compensate for the shortage of time at supplementary and community schools. The heavy burden of the homework assigned on both parents and children belonging to supplementary and community schools has been reported in the literature (Minami, 2013). *Kanji* acquisition is also a confirmed difficulty in learning Japanese (Heath, 2017). Sano (2019) claimed that it is additionally difficult for bilingual children that learn both Japanese and an alphabetical language due to the distinctive differences in the orthographies of two languages. However, the "Japanese language is strongly related to motherhood in the minds of the children, having gained an *indexical* meaning of love and care" (Danjo, 2021, p. 301, italics original). Seventy-three percent of the children wished to improve at Japanese, their mothers' language, despite these difficult factors.

Many of the parents' metaphors illustrated that they also wished for their children's Japanese to improve enough for them to have more options in the future. This comes partly from the fact that they regularly experience linguistic disadvantages in New Zealand as L2 English users whose reading speeds and vocabulary sizes barely reach half of those of L1 English speakers (Nation, 2006; Tran, 2011). Another ongoing project of the author found that even long-term Japanese residents in New Zealand were unable to understand unsimplified English texts such as newspapers, which hindered them from fully partaking in some aspects of daily life in New Zealand. The parents believed that it would be less demanding for their children to maintain Japanese than it would be to re-learn it as adults. Many of them also had high aspirations for their children's

mastery of Japanese literacy, the importance of which has been emphasised by researchers (Aiko et al., 2014; Goldenberg, 2013; Shaw & Andrei, 2019). However, the parents simultaneously worried about their children's English proficiency, as did the participants in Shinozawa et al.'s (2020) study. These worrying contextual variables led to the parents becoming more flexible and perceiving Japanese as something essential but not prioritised to the exclusion of other things. Ironically, congruence in the children's and parents' metaphorical conceptualisations seemed to only be detected in cases where contextual conflicts were mitigated by factors such as a partner's equally fully-fledged commitment to the children's bilingual maintenance and parents' forsaking the pursual of mastery of literacy in Japanese.

Regarding specific metaphors created by the participants, when compared to prior metaphor analysis studies that have investigated L2 learners' beliefs about language learning, some of the participating children's metaphors showed similarities to other studies' findings. Specifically, the current findings contain two 'Journey' metaphors, which is a widely cited metaphor across L2 research (e.g., Ellis, 2001; Tabata-Sandom et al., 2020). Some of the other children's metaphors and some of the categorical labels used in the current study can be also found in the relevant studies (e.g., "Driving a car" in Aktekin, 2013; "Tree" in Littlewood, 2012; "Endless" in Xiong, 2015; "Enjoyable but also hard" in Tabata-Sandom, et al., 2020). It is fair to say that the limitless, complex nature of learning a language is experienced and articulated in similar ways by different groups of learners (i.e., bilingual children and older L2 learners) who overall draw on similar or the same source domains when conceptualising an experience.

In contrast, the parents' metaphors were unlike those found in metaphor analysis studies that examined L2 teachers' beliefs about language learning. Through comparison we can see that while the two groups' roles as people who help children and learners with language learning seem similar at a glance, each group's circumstances, roles, and resources are in fact very different, and they perceive the meaning of language learning differently. In general, L2 teachers' beliefs tend to be pedagogically-oriented. Even similar metaphors that can be found in the literature illustrate that L2 teachers' conceptualisations are quite different from those held by the parents. For example, some of the student-teachers in de Guerrero and Villamil's study (2002) viewed themselves as nurturers or Mother Nature. However, their beliefs evolved around how to maximise their learners' language learning potential. In contrast, the parents' metaphors strongly reflected their *parental* beliefs. The current study reconfirmed the findings obtained by its precursory study (Tabata-Sandom, 2020) and it also revealed that the parental beliefs seem to be the outcome of their inextricably involved parental commitments, which come from surroundings where contextual, emotional, and linguistic conflicts create dilemmas. The participating

Japanese mothers in Okita's (2002) study faced the same conflicts in similar circumstances. Okita described 'childrearing in Japanese-English bilingual families in the UK' as emotionally demanding, invisible one-man-operation work that is complexly influenced by numerous factors: parental aspirations, changing needs based on changing contexts (pre-school years, school years, and later years), and a movement towards or away from use of either English or Japanese according to childrearing and educational experiences.

Within such complex circumstances, in order to maintain their children's Japanese many of the participating mothers followed the One Parent One Language Policy (OPOL), which "has become axiomatic in recommendations for bilingual parents and bilingual parents themselves regard it as 'the best' strategy" (Piller, 2001, p. 65). This may have led to the participating mothers holding monolingualist-fixated language assumptions as the default. However, the separation of languages in bilingual families has also been criticised. For example, Danjo (2021) claims that "the employment of OPOL inevitably leads parents to embody a monolingualist ideology, as they are required to constantly judge '*which named language*' their children use, and to '*correct*' children's language practices if they '*mix*' languages" (p. 295, italics original). The current parents' metaphors, especially those belonging in the 'Life essential' category, also reflect responses to the conflict-inducing circumstances they find themselves in, where they may be sensing the limitations of OPOL and searching for flexible ways to support their children's learning Japanese.

Conclusion

This study examined children's and parents' beliefs about learning Japanese as a heritage language in New Zealand via individual interviews in which the participants completed metaphor elicitation tasks. The metaphors obtained from the children revealed that they believed learning Japanese was challenging, but that it also had an enjoyable side. This belief is similar to that held by some older L2 Japanese learners. In contrast, the parents' metaphors were original, reflecting their beliefs that learning Japanese could enhance their children's lives significantly in the future, and thus wanting it to be an essential, but hopefully not too forced, part of their children's lives.

Using individual interviews, this study examined how both groups grappled with the maintenance of Japanese as a heritage language more deeply than covered by its precursory study, which used a questionnaire survey. Specifically, it revealed that the children, while facing difficulties (especially in terms of literacy development), did wish to improve their ability to communicate in their mothers' language. The parents were engaged in a balancing act that encompassed numerous conflicting priorities, including worries about their children's English

proficiency. Ironically, the higher the parents' aspirations were, the stronger their dilemma seemed to become. Future studies could explore how the demanding state of affairs of Japanese-English bilingual maintenance in New Zealand could be mitigated.

Limitations and implications

One of this study's limitations is its unwitting monolingualist tendency. While the author offered opportunities for the participating children to use and mix Japanese and English at their discretion during the interviews, the discrete questions predominantly spotlighted Japanese. This unwitting approach failed to recognise that these children essentially studied two different curricula, with the Japanese one necessitating a condensed time frame. Future studies would benefit from adopting a translanguaging approach that treated the two languages as equally important natural linguistic repertoires (Garcia & Wei, 2014) in their research designs, procedures, and objectives. Erdmann (2016)'s study provides useful guidance in this respect. The two metaphor elicitation tasks may have been difficult for the younger participants, although they had learned metaphors at their supplementary and community schools. In future studies, getting younger participants to draw a picture could be a useful alternative.

Future studies may also take an ethnographic approach, as did Jeon (2008). Jeon examined how language ideology relates to the maintenance of Korean as a heritage language in America over three years using extensive data collection methods and examining three separate sources. As Yu (2005) claims, parents' actual practice does not fully reflect their beliefs. Therefore, studies that examine actual language practice data (e.g., audio-recording, videorecording) will be welcomed in the research context of the maintenance of Japanese as a heritage language in New Zealand. Such studies could shed some light on possible discrepancies between parents' beliefs and their practices.

Longitudinal studies would also be welcome in this context. C24-1 and C24-2's metaphorical conceptualisations indicate that children's beliefs are not monolithic. Long-term studies could follow changes in children's aspirations and aversion toward the maintenance of their heritage languages, and also better capture bilingual children's perceptional changes, as well as stabilities created by contextual variables over time. Specifically, collecting metaphors and similes at multiple times may help provide valuable findings.

Additionally, if future studies were able to report comments such as those contained in Jeon (2008, for example, Mike's comment on p. 217 about his positive perceptional changes toward Korean culture and language), they could

be inspiring to children who cannot currently see the valuable wider meaning of learning their heritage languages in English speaking countries.

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Appendix A. Interview questions

1. Which language is easier for you to speak?

☐Japanese ☐English ☐About the same

2. About Japanese, please number from 'Easiest = 1,' 'Second Easiest = 2,' 'Third Easiest = 3,' to 'Fourth Easiest (Most Difficult) = 4 .'

☐Speaking ☐Listening ☐Writing ☐Reading

3. What language do you use when speaking with your family?

☐With mother

→☐All in Japanese ☐Mostly in Japanese ☐Half in Japanese half in English ☐Other

☐With father

→☐All in Japanese ☐Mostly in Japanese ☐Half in Japanese half in English ☐Other

☐With brothers and sisters

→☐All in Japanese ☐Mostly in Japanese ☐Half in Japanese half in English ☐Other

4. When you compare your English to your friends' English, what do you think?

☐My English is better (A lot/A little) ☐About the same

☐My friends' English is better (A lot/A little)

5. What do you think about your Japanese proficiency?

☐ I'm happy with it. ☐I want to be better.

6. If you want to be better at Japanese, in what way?

7. What do you think your New Zealand teacher thinks about your learning Japanese?

☐My teacher seems to be interested in my Japanese study

☐My teacher knows that I am studying Japanese but does not seem to be interested in it.

☐My teacher does not know about it.

☐My teacher encourages me in my studying Japanese.

☐I don't know what my teacher thinks.

8. Do you use Japanese at your New Zealand school?

☐Use normally ☐I don't use it because I don't need it.

☐I don't want to use it. Why?

9. Do you like your Japanese school?

☐Yes ☐No Why?

10. What is the best thing of your Japanese school?

11. What is the most difficult thing (or thing you don't like) about learning Japanese in New Zealand?

12. What are good things about learning Japanese in New Zealand? What are some good things you have experienced?

13. Who helps/supports your Japanese study most/hardest?
Please explain about the person how she/he helps your Japanese study. Please use a metaphor.

14. Now complete the following sentence using a metaphor: "Learning Japanese for me is like (a metaphor) because (explanations)."