Rationale and Methodology for Implementing
a Two-Way Bilingual Program in Japan

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Bilingual programs in Japan are rare—the only officially authorized bilingual school is Katoh Gakuen in Shizuoka prefecture, however, it does not tout itself as an international school but as a private Japanese school with a dual-language program (Katoh Gakuen). In order to address the unique aspects of bilingualism in Japan, it is necessary to approach the problem from a perspective which differs from that of bilingual programs in North America or Europe. The bilingual programs in these continents have a primary focus of educating minority-language speakers to become proficient in the majority language; whereas, in Japan the goal is to teach the nation a second language to a high degree of fluency—different foci which require related, but different approaches (MEXT; Wakabayashi).

1. First Steps toward a Solution

Universities in Japan can take the lead to serve as examples for other institutions to follow in improving English language education. Sakamoto's factors limiting bilingual program success—a lack of adequate teacher preparation, unclear standards of instruction, and failure to get the support and buy-in of all of the stakeholders of the educational system—are all issues which Calderón and Minaya-Rowe found to be vital to the success of two-way bilingual (TWB) programs. According to Calderón and Minaya-Rowe, two-way bilingual programs require revisions of educational approaches in the following areas: curriculum, instruction, assessment, staff and faculty development, and organizational strategies. For Japanese students to become bilingual—a stated goal of MEXT—the entire educational system in Japan requires a retooling that would be politically and economically challenging and would require total commitment and buy-in by national educational stakeholders. Universities can more easily create bilingual programs that could be role models which demonstrate the viability and success of a well-planned, carefully executed, and constantly monitored program.

Calderón and Minaya-Rowe recommended that it is more expedient to create a bilingual program from the ground up; therefore, the first step toward bilingualism in Japanese universities should be a new program created outside of the existing departments and programs. Also, the limited number of fully bilingual and bi-literate university faculty members (Futao; Sakamoto) precludes the initial implementation of a wide-ranging program. Finally, Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis (as cited in Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Sakamoto) posits that students need a certain level of second language fluency before they are able to function academically in the second language. Because of this, the university level is an appropriate stage to initiate a bilingual program in Japan because the students have studied English for six years prior to entering university and they have an adequate grasp of English to be able to engage in academic content areas in both their native and second languages.

This paper will explore why and how a bilingual program could be better implemented at the university level in Japan based on current research into bilingual program management and existing practices. Additionally, a plan for establishing a two-way bilingual program will be laid out in detail

including the program objectives, staff and faculty issues, assessment practices, and the integration of parents and the community into the program.

2. The Model Program

The model Japanese-English bilingual program suggested by this paper is a six week-long program of instruction—the approximate length of a spring or summer vacation—with a variety of courses which focus on a comparative cultures curriculum allowing students to explore and compare the cultures of English-speaking countries with that of Japan. Courses offered would include an introduction to western cultures, a summary course in Japanese culture and society, language-focused courses which advance students abilities in academic and communicative Japanese and English, and a comparative cultures course which serves as a summative course which ties all of the content together. The courses would follow a graduated language use model in that students with lower-level English proficiency would be instructed in and use more Japanese—perhaps 30% Japanese and 70% English, and those with higher proficiency would use more English in their courses: as much as 95% (see Calderón and Minaya-Rowe for options regarding graduated bilingual instruction).

The use of both of the students' languages aligns with Cummins' proposal for bilingual education which takes advantage of the knowledge transfer between the two languages and allows students to grow further than they would if the instruction was isolated to only one language or another. The focus of the program would be follow Krashen's Content-based Learning Model (as cited in Haley and Austin) in that the program objectives would align with the students mastering the subject of cultural comparison instead of the English language being the primary focus. English would be moved from being a main subject to functioning as a means for delivering the content. Calderón and Minaya-Rowe supported this approach to incorporate the language and content across the entire curriculum: all subjects taught must integrate instruction in both languages, not one subject taught in Japanese and another in English.

3. Program Objectives

In the early stages of creating a two-way bilingual education program, it is important to consider the instructional methodologies to be employed by the faculty. The goal of the proposed program is to educate the students to be bilingual and bi-literate in both English and Japanese—a general education focus using two languages as modes of informational transfer. The instructional methods found in the literature to be successful include four instructional techniques: a) the application of active learning strategies, b) the implementation of balanced, two-way bilingual instruction including appropriate use of both languages, c) integration of all four language skills in an integrated curriculum, and d) guiding instruction with clearly defined learning objectives and performance standards. These techniques will be explored below with examples of how each can be used in creating an effective TWB program at the university level.

3.1 Active Learning

Perhaps one of the most important instructional techniques in foreign language education is the implementation of active learning methods in the language classroom (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin; Tikunoff). Active learning instructional methods provide students with multiple opportunities to practice their language skills as they learn and develop. Not only does active learning provide an opportunity to practice new skills, it allows students to notice the gaps in their second

language (L2)—a concept posited by Schmidt and Frota in which language learners become aware of the areas in their L2 where their abilities or knowledge are lacking. When students are actively learning using both their first (L1) and second languages, they learn to fill in their linguistic gaps by asking questions or testing the language they learn from others. Along with students noticing and trying to fill their language gaps, they receive immediate feedback—a vital element to learning—during active learning events from both the instructor and from their peers (Schartel; Thurlings, Vermeulen, Bastiaens, and Stijnen; Tikunoff). Learning actively and receiving immediate feedback keeps the students engaged in the learning process and helps to maintain their motivation to learn. Calderón and Minaya-Rowe and Haley and Austin provide excellent suggestions of tasks and exercises which could be used to create active learning situations in the bilingual classroom during which students can notice their knowledge gaps and work to fill them in using the feedback they receive.

3.2 Implementing Balanced Two-way Bilingual Instruction Using Both Languages

Traditional examples of bilingual education in Japan have focused on adding in a minority language, usually English, to a majority language program (Sakamoto). However, the preferred approach is to create a new program in which both languages are balanced and given equal importance in terms of instruction and time allotment (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Cook; Tikunoff). In determining the amount of each language to use in the TWB program, it is important to consider the students' needs as well as the content being taught (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe). Options for balancing the amount of each language used were discussed above with a recommendation to graduate the amount of each language is used as the grade level increases. However, setting a firm percentage allotment of languages limits the freedom of the teacher to convey the information to their students in a manner they believe is appropriate. Therefore, the program's instructional guidelines should explicitly state that both languages should be used in an appropriate manner so as to enable the learners to achieve proficiency in both languages. Instruction in both languages is not reserved for the language classes only, this practice must be incorporated throughout the curriculum in all content areas.

3.3 Integration of All Language Skills across an Integrated Curriculum

To make a TWB program successful, language use and practice must occur in knowledge content areas, not only in the language classrooms (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin; U.S. Dept. of Education). In order to effectively incorporate the practice of both languages across the curriculum, clear and deliberate planning is required by all faculty members and the administration. An example of how the language and content can be connected would be that activities in one class taught in English can be connected to a related activity in a class taught in Japanese. For example, students reading the book 1Q84 by Haruki Murakami in a Japanese-language based Contemporary Japanese Literature course could be assigned to compose and act out a comparison of Japanese and western culture adapted from the book in an English-language based Comparative Cultures class. In order for such a set of activities to be successful, the faculty members responsible for each course would need to collaborate on their lesson planning and keep one another appraised of changes in the course schedule. Integration of content and languages across a curriculum provides students with increased opportunities to practice language grammar, vocabulary, and content multiple times in a variety of situations, thereby deepening the students' grasp of the content.

3.4 Clearly Defined Learning Objectives and Performance Standards

Collaborative planning and integrated language use across a curriculum, in addition to detailed planning, require that clearly defined learning objectives be established for each course. Also, detailed

performance standards must be created so that both students and teachers are able to measure the students' progress toward the learning objectives (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin; Tikunoff). Once the course learning objectives have been established, intermediate enabling objectives can be created to provide students with a path toward demonstrating that they have met the course completion standards. Having the learning objectives and performance standards clearly defined and announced to the students enables them to focus their own efforts toward reaching the goals set for them, thereby increasing their motivation and providing them with autonomy in their learning (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Kentucky Dept. of Education; Tikunoff). It is important for the students in an integrated TWB curriculum to clearly understand the learning objectives and standards they will be held to when being assessed in both languages.

4. Elements of a Successful TWB Program

4.1 Focus on Communication and Understanding

In reviewing bilingual classroom and community situations in the United States, Moll found that effective TWB programs included a collaborative relationship between the classroom and the local community with their combined efforts moving toward the goal of facilitating students' communication in both their native and second languages (23). This principle is the key to successful TWB programs because it establishes the overarching objectives for an entire program: the objective of enabling the students to communicate clearly and fluently in both their L1 and L2. With this objective in mind, a focus on communication over linguistic forms and grammatical perfection requires teachers to emphasize the importance of the active skills of writing and speaking over the receptive skills, listening and reading. A communicative language learning approach also focuses students' learning on real-life communicative skills, thereby giving them what Calderón and Minaya-Rowe called critical literacy—the application of language skills in real-world situations and requiring critical thinking and evaluating in the language (165). Teachers and administrators can demonstrate the importance of communication by setting communication-oriented learning objectives for each course in the program.

4.2 Incorporation of Active Learning

Most people who learn foreign languages state that their primary goal is to be able to speak the language (Haley and Austin). Therefore, TWB program classroom practices should incorporate strategies which enable students to learn how to actively communicate in both languages. Because the classroom is where students learn how to communicate in a variety of contexts, it is important that the classrooms be a safe place to practice (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Additionally, explicit instruction of grammatical constructions and communication techniques should be a fixture of classroom activities, followed by chances for students to actively practice their newly-learned language by communicating via speech or in writing. Even the passive skills of reading and listening can be activated by adding critical thinking and evaluation tasks to the lessons (Haley and Austin).

The objectives set forth for the TWB program should reflect the need to focus on active learning, and be measurable using productive skills of writing and speaking. The success of students' active learning can be assessed by the teachers by using alternative assessments which require students to communicate in their language in real-world scenarios (Çakir).

4.3 Enabling of Skill Transfer between Languages

In a TWB program, both languages are seen as assets and the growth of each language is encouraged. When both languages are improved, the students are able to transfer knowledge and skills

from their first language to their L2 (Haley and Austin). For example, reading strategies mastered when learning to read in the L1 can be applied to L2 reading as well to enable more rapid improvement of reading ability.

Additionally, in teaching both the L1 and L2 languages, all four language skills should be included in instruction from the very beginning—it is common to postpone reading or writing instruction until the student has some grasp of the lexicon and language, but this is not necessary and can even hinder the development of the second language (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Even though students' oral and aural skills are rudimentary in the beginning, teachers can begin to teach reading by focusing on letters and phonemes, growing into words, phrases and eventually sentences. The students' L1 language skills will help to compensate for the mismatch of L2 skills in the beginning of language learning (Haley and Austin). Because of the benefits of language transfer from students' native language, it is vital to provide instruction in both the L1 and the L2 to the greatest extent possible.

4.4 Emphasizing of Critical Literacy

By placing the focus of TWB programs on teaching students how to communicate, they are being prepared to use the language in the real world. Emphasizing critical literacy in the educational program fits well alongside communicative language learning methodologies. The standards set for the courses must be connected to real-world activities as well as to teach students to use the language critically so that they can deal with ambiguities in the language better. Explicit instruction in language components and grammatical constructs as well as pointed instruction of specific skills are needed to enable students to use the language critically (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Therefore, lesson plans should incorporate the use of realia and realistic situations in the instruction of each language skill individually as well as in the activities to promote the improvement of general language proficiency. Reality-based scenarios cause the students to push beyond the language taught in the lessons and force them to critically evaluate how to apply their knowledge and vocabulary to succeed in the given situation.

4.5 Creation of Learning Communities

Students not only learn in the classrooms of schools or instructional programs, they also learn from their surroundings and the community at large. Therefore, a successful TWB program must create a community of learning in which the students can practice their languages or test their hypotheses safely without fear of ridicule (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Haley and Austin highlighted the fact that people learn appropriate speech, verbal and nonverbal communication conventions, and interpretations of others' words and actions through existing in language and cultural communities; in short, people learn to communicate appropriately with the other members of their community (191). In order for learners in a TWB program to truly succeed and become members of their communities, they need learning communities within which they can practice and grow through trial and error among their peers (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Learning communities can be constructed by providing opportunities for students to use the language outside of the classroom in clubs and activities, volunteer work using either or both languages, or in guided exploration of students' interests or hobbies.

5. Assessment Practices

Academic language proficiency in a foreign language takes approximately five years to develop (Collier and Thomas), so assessing students' linguistic progress in a short-term, two-way bilingual

program requires a unique approach. Authentic assessment is necessary to adequately assess students' progress toward program objectives (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Haley and Austin). Cohen explained that interim knowledge or skill checks are quite valuable in ensuring the students' overall success in the course. The initial assessment vehicle encountered by students entering a TWB program is a language placement test to measure students' ability levels for assignment to specific classes in accordance with their needs (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe). Placement tests in a TWB program would determine a student's levels of L1 and L2 proficiency so that they could be classified into the most appropriate language classes. Once students have been placed in an appropriate course, their progress toward the course objectives must be measured using another type of assessment: achievement assessments.

Achievement assessments measure students' progress toward learning objectives as determined by course curriculum standards. A TWB program must have formative and summative achievement assessments to measure the students' progress toward the course objectives (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe). These assessments should be more accommodating of students' learning styles than the placement discussed above, as they hold greater importance in the students' academic lives and should be tailored to fit students' needs as greatly as possible (Haley and Austin). Program assessments should integrate alternative assessment methods—those that go beyond the paper-based written tests currently in use. Students all have different learning styles and not all learning styles can be assessed with one standardized test (Haley and Austin). A variety of authentic assessments would provide a better overall picture of students' abilities. Aksu Ataç provided suggestions for assessments which align with real-life situations, such as those which require students to demonstrate their ability to perform a task instead of simply writing about how to do it.

Students' preparedness for successful completion of a TWB program can be measured by a comprehensive or alternative summative assessment. The format of the assessment can vary, but should focus on authentically measuring students' abilities to perform given tasks in both languages (Çakir; Calderón and Minaya-Rowe). Çakir and Cohen have laid out specific methods for implementing alternative, authentic assessments in the language classroom; these methods would be useful as summative assessments to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a comprehensive, realistic way (Aksu Ataç) and determine students' readiness to graduate. Some examples of alternative summative assessments are writing and performing a play in groups about university life, publishing student newspapers about program activities or the student population, and producing video news shows.

6. Faculty and Staff Development

The faculty of this program must be highly-motivated and experienced in bilingual education in order to combat one of the problems cited as a limiting factor in program success by Calderón and Minaya-Rowe, and Sakamoto. All faculty members must be bilingual in both Japanese and English to a level sufficient to instruct their subject in either language as necessary. The faculty will be given training prior to and throughout the program to ensure that all members are aware of the program objectives and bilingual teaching methodology based on current research, as well as instructed in how to employ research-based communicative language teaching methods in their classrooms (Nunan). Finally, the faculty must function as a team oriented toward the success of every student and ready to respond to student needs in a timely manner with sound educational actions to enable the students to

succeed.

During the preparations to implement a TWB program, there are several areas of professional development which should be covered prior to the program's commencement. As the program will employ a team-teaching approach to instruction in both languages, training in current team teaching methods and practices is vital to the program's success (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe). The high level of synchronicity among teachers makes team teaching challenging, so training and practice sessions are necessary to assist the faculty in becoming comfortable with this teaching practice. To ensure that the faculty is prepared to take advantage of the most current technology and blended learning practices, the teachers should receive training in educational technology integration with practical activities using classroom materials so that the teachers can realistically consider where, when, and how to use technology tools in their lessons.

Throughout the pre-program training, the administrators should include team-building exercises to develop a sense of camaraderie and collaboration among the faculty and staff. Teachers who have a network of support and feel that they are part of a tight-knit educational team perform better and produce a higher-quality education for their students (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe), so TWB program success greatly depends on strong bonds of teamwork among the faculty and staff. As the faculty members coalesce into a team, each teacher should be required to choose a mentor or partner with whom they can freely discuss professional successes and concerns. These mentors will provide a support network upon which the teachers can rely throughout the program for advice, guidance, and emotional support. Establishing a network which supports a strong faculty team as they collaborate to implement bilingual learning objectives for a TWB program will ensure that the teachers feel secure in their professional environment and are prepared to successfully educate the students.

7. Parental and Community Involvement in a TWB Program

Parents can play a variety of roles in a TWB program—the key element is to find opportunities to get them involved. Parents can provide support in a traditional sense, such as through participation in Parent - Teacher Associations, by supporting school policies from home, and through collaborating with the teachers to ensure the student body's success (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Larios and Zetlin). There are also more proactive roles which parents can take in their relationships with the schools, such as by volunteering in the classroom, and through running extra-curricular activities or sharing cultural experiences in their L1 (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe; Larios and Zetlin; Lau). Parents can also be extremely valuable in encouraging the development of minority languages in a TWB situation (Ramos). They are a resourceful group with skills and knowledge which can be harnessed to support the schools in numerous ways; the issue remains that teachers and administrators must find the means to bring parents into the process. In the Japanese university setting, parents will support the TWB program because of an existing societal custom of supporting their children's schools financially, materially, or through volunteer efforts (Holloway et al.). There are myriad reasons to involve parents in the educational process of TWB programs that result in more successful programs, better educated students, and more effective instruction; very few negative aspects to parental involvement, if any at all, exist.

8. Conclusion

The optimum piloting place for a two-way bilingual program in Japan is at the university level

because of students' ability to cope with academic demands in both languages as well as a lower level of bureaucracy which would hinder TWB program inception in primary education. A short-term English-Japanese TWB program could be implemented in Japan with a focus on clearly-defined, active learning-based program objectives which integrate all course content in the program with an emphasis on equal use of both languages in instruction. The bilingual faculty would employ team-teaching methods while building learning communities within the student population to support the students' growth in communication skills and critical literacy in both of their languages. Students would be assessed using alternative testing techniques in both formative and summative types. This assessment regime provides a clear path for the students to follow to meet the program's objectives. Also, to ensure success of such a program, the faculty would require proper and thorough training in team teaching methods, bilingual educational practices, and technology integration beforehand. Also, a strong an active pool of engaged and supportive parents is necessary for the success of the program as well as the long-term sustainability of the TWB program. A university-level TWB program in Japan would be a model of the future of bilingual education in Japan and throughout the world.

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