

## Report on the Linguapax Asia 2018 International Symposium

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**Report on the  
Linguapax Asia 2018 International Symposium**

*Bilingualism Now:  
The Imperative Issues in Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*  
Tsukuba University (Japan), June 23rd, 2018

Organized by Linguapax Asia  
and the University of Tsukuba  
(*Institute of Comparative Research for Human and Social Sciences*)  
in co-operation with the Japan Association of Language Teachers  
(*Bilingualism Special Interest Group*)  
Sponsored by Kwansei Gakuin University  
(*Sign Language Research Center*)

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**Abstract**

*This paper reports on the proceedings of the Linguapax Asia 2018 international symposium on the theme of Bilingualism Now: The Imperative Issues in Bilingualism and Bilingual Education. The symposium was held at Tsukuba University (Japan), on June 23rd, 2018.*

**Keywords:** Linguapax, bilingualism, sign language

**要旨**

本稿はリングアパックス・アジア (Linguapax Asia) 主催国際シンポジウム「待ったなしのバイリンガリズム：バイリンガリズムとバイリンガル教育」(2018年6月23日、於筑波大学大学会館特別会議室)の記録である。

キーワード：リングアパックス、バイリンガリズム、手話

## **Introduction**

The Linguapax Asia 2018 international symposium on Bilingualism Now took place on June 23rd, 2018, at Tsukuba University (Japan). The symposium was co-organized with the Institute for Comparative Research in Human and Social Sciences at Tsukuba University and sponsored by the Sign Language Research Center at Kwansai Gakuin University. The program was prepared in cooperation with the Bilingualism SIG of the Japan Association of Language Teachers.

The symposium proposed to answer the following questions: How much have views of bilingual people - in the media, in streets and neighborhoods changed? Is there more language awareness about 'bilingualism' in schools? Is second/foreign language education in schools viewed as a gateway to personal bilingualism or something else? Do people recognize the various community languages around them?

The symposium opened with a welcome address by the chair, Saburo Aoki of the Institute for Comparative Research in Human and Social Sciences, and the Linguapax Asia director Jelisava Sethna, both of whom stressed the important role that bilingualism plays in the ever diversifying global community.

Divided into four sessions, the symposium comprised: academic presentations, which discussed bilingualism and bilingual education; a keynote lecture; poster sessions; and a plenary panel discussion on deaf sign bilingualism in Japan. During the lunch break, the participants were also treated to a reading of folk stories in Miyakoan, an endangered language spoken in the Miyako Islands located southwest of Okinawa, and excerpts from a Miyakoan documentary video prepared by Sachiyo Fujita-Round.

The academic presentations addressed the main topic of bilingualism and bilingual education from diverse perspectives and in a variety of linguistic environments, including the Ukraine, Thailand, Australia, Slovenia, Palau, East Timor and Japan; a detailed program can be viewed on the Linguapax Asia website <[www.linguapax-asia.org/symposium.html?lang=en](http://www.linguapax-asia.org/symposium.html?lang=en)>.

## **1. Academic presentations**

Chaired by Jelisava Sethna, Director of Linguapax Asia

The opening session of the symposium included four academic presentations. In the first presentation, Eugen Zaretsky (Marburg University Hospital, Germany), discussed strategies of intra and extra-linguistic nation-building in the former Soviet Union. Strategies listed included popularization of the local culture and reinvention of the cultural self in terms of being ‘non’ or ‘anti-Russian’, de-Russification of the vocabulary and grammar, and legal restrictions regarding the range of use of Russian, among others. The presenter exemplified these processes predominantly for the Ukrainian language where he observed pseudo-scientific, nationalistic linguistic theories, ethnic cleansing, discrimination, and eradication of bilingualism in favor of the local language.

The second presentation was by Suwilai Premsrirat and Mirinda Burarungrot (Mahidol University, Thailand), titled ‘Bilingualism and bilingual education: a pivotal point to the language loss or language revitalization’. The paper focused on a Patani Malay-Thai mother tongue based education implemented in three schools in the southern Thailand conflict zone. The aim of the project was to provide Patani Malay-speaking children with quality education while at the same time preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage. The success of the project has been achieved through the collaboration of academics, government and community stakeholders with project leaders from Mahidol University, Yala Rajah University, and UNICEF.

Two presentations by Linguapax Young Scholars, selected and sponsored by Linguapax Asia, followed in the second half. Asuka Ando (University of Tokyo, Japan) presented her study on bilingualism in Coda (Children of Deaf Adults) and Coda identity. The result of the study shows that fluency in sign language can be one aspect of Coda identity. The result also agrees with previous studies which describe Coda as being bilingual of spoken and sign languages and bicultural of hearing and deaf cultures.

The second young scholar, Esther Lovely (University of Queensland, Australia, and Institute of Women’s Culture, Showa Women’s University, Japan) introduced her research on how young Korean students navigate their bilingualism and

biculturalism in Australia. The examples taken from case studies revealed not only the challenges, but also the innovative ways in which students as bicultural and bilingual individuals utilized the linguistic and cultural resources accumulated in Australia.

## **2. Keynote lecture**

Chaired by Saburo Aoki, Tsukuba University

The keynote lecture of the following session ‘Bilingual life in action: reminiscences from former Yugoslavia and present Slovenia’ was delivered by Andrej Bekeš (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia). The speaker initially outlined the last 100 years in the history of Central Europe and the Balkans, which has always been a thoroughly multilingual and multiethnic area with ethnic majorities and minorities. A number of policies to accommodate this linguistic reality have been employed throughout this time. Before WWII in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the predominant practice was assimilation and/or elimination of ethnic and linguistic minorities. After WWII, socialist Yugoslavia introduced various degrees of accommodation of minority communities and their languages, though often only in the form of lip service. In the second part of this lecture, Andrej Bekeš focused on his own experiences from his bilingual hometown of Piran and the relatively successful policies in Slovene Istria, from the mid 1960s to present. He pointed out some reasons for this success, such as favorable language policies which grant official status to the minority language and which promote bilingual education in the area. He compared this with the less successful situation in Kosovo, where the lack of such policies contributed to the eventual secession of Kosovo from Serbia.

## **3. Academic presentations cont’d.**

Chaired by Yoko Miura, Wright State University and  
Fred Anderson, Kansai University

Continuing on with the academic presentations, the afternoon session started with that of Joy Taniguchi (Shizuoka Eiwa Gakuin University, Japan), titled ‘English Literacy Retention in Four Pairs of Japanese Returnee Siblings’. The speaker presented her study of Japanese children who have experienced mobility across languages and cultures. The study explored English retention in four pairs of

siblings who lived with their families in a foreign country where they were educated and/or functioned in English and then returned to their home country, Japan. The presenter pointed out that the home is an important domain for maintaining English literacy in returnees, especially when more recreational and socio-interactive literacy uses are emphasized. Peer networks provide further motivation and opportunities to use English in communicative situations.

From linguistic and euro-linguistic perspectives, Hideyuki Taura (Ritsumeikan University, Japan) in his paper ‘L2 loss and re-acquisition: A neurolinguistic case study’ explored both how one’s L2 undergoes attrition in an L1 community and how it becomes reactivated in an L2 dominant milieu. The data which included spontaneous narrative and writing data, semi-structural interview data, and verbal fluency tasks were collected from a Japanese-English bilingual girl who was born in the U.S.A. and attended a local school there till ninth grade before returning to Japan and attending a local Japanese school. She later returned to the U.S.A. to pursue a B.A. degree. The linguistic analyses showed that the girl’s deep-rooted English suffered from little attrition, despite some skill-selective attrition, such as oral fluency decline, which was quickly recovered when she returned to the U.S.A. Brain activation data showed gradual attrition in Japan (more brain activation) and the gradual regaining of the L2 (less brain activity) in the U.S.A. These findings demonstrate the dynamic nature of childhood bilingualism.

Kane Ord (University of Newcastle, Australia) in his paper ‘The Language of Poverty: A study of the intersection of multilingual education, development and poverty reduction in East Timor’ explored the intersection between language and economic development within the context of Timor-Leste. The result of the research indicates that the dominance of Portuguese, as a language of education and government administration, is negatively impacting on the development of the country by socially excluding large swathes of the Timorese community from accessing economic and cultural resources. The research suggests that Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) can increase the capacity for participation in the formal economy in a more significant and meaningful way, thus theoretically building financial, physical and social capital in developing communities.

The last academic presentation of the day was delivered by Kazuko Matsumoto (University of Tokyo, Japan) on ‘Changing views of bilingualism in the Pacific: A restudy of postcolonial multilingual Palau after two decades’. Previous research, conducted between 1997-1998 highlighted that Palau presented an interesting diglossic situation where High language had been replaced from Japanese to English in accordance with historical change in colonial power, while indigenous Palauan remained as Low spoken language. In recent years, since tourism (from Asia and more particularly Japan) is the major industry in Palau, the Japanese language is regarded as a useful language in the local job market. On the other hand, not only elite but also ordinary Palauan families have started to raise Palauan children in English, leading to the emergence of dominantly English-speaking children in urban Koror. So, there have been increasing worries that this could be an early symptom of Palauan language extinction.

### **3.1 Poster Presentations**

During the morning and afternoon breaks, poster presentations were conducted in the adjacent hall. The presenters and their topics of research are as follows:

- Miranda Burarungrot & Suwilai Premsrirat (Mahidol University, Thailand), ‘Language transfer from Patani Malay to Thai in mother tongue-based bilingual education in southernmost provinces of Thailand’;
- Mari Kakuta & Ren Kikukawa (Kanto Gakuin University & Freelance, Japan), ‘Japanese sign language and Japanese glosses: Influence of Japanese in the performance of the hearing learners’ usage of the sign -smooth-’;
- Barry Kavanagh (Tohoku University, Japan), ‘Being a bilingual and bicultural child in Japan and the UK: A cross-cultural examination of societal perceptions, L2 exposure and ethnic identity’;
- Nina E. Levinson (International Christian University, Japan), ‘Language education policies in Okinawa: From past to present’;
- Owen Minns (Anglia Ruskin University, U.K.), ‘Just starting out: The Japanese language learning of newly-arrived foreign English teachers in Japan’;
- Satomi Mishina-Mori, Yuki Nagai, and Yuri Jody Yujobo (Rikkyo University, Japan), ‘Discursive transfer in connecting events in Japanese/English bilingual children’s narrative’;

- Yoko Miura (Wright State University, U.S.A.), ‘Predictors of Bilingual children’s English language performance in the United States’;
- Patrick Ng (University of Niigata, Japan), ‘English-knowing bilingual policy in Singapore: Problems and challenges’;
- Heesu Oh (Nagoya University, Japan), ‘How they conduct their lives with two or more languages; A life story approach in understanding meaning-making of languages in bilinguals’ lives’;
- Akiko Okamura (University of Tokyo, Japan), ‘Transfer from Spanish to Japanese in speech of bilingual Japanese Mexicans’;
- Masaki Ono (University of Tsukuba, Japan), ‘The Flexibility on Japanese: From the Evaluation of native speakers and non-native speakers’;
- Ruth Vanbaelen and Risako Ide (University of Tsukuba, Japan), ‘Crossing the invisible divide: The effects of bilingualism in a cross-cultural classroom on student motivation’;
- Ying Zhan (Kansai University, Japan), ‘Cross-linguistic Influence in Early Trilingual Acquisition of Prepositional Phrases in Mandarin Chinese’.

### **3.2 Invited posters**

- Sign Language Research Center (Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan);
- Joël Laurier, JALT representative (University of Tsukuba, Japan), ‘JALT activities: Something for every EFL teacher’.

### **4. Plenary Panel Discussion: Deaf Sign Bilingualism in Japan Now**

Chaired by John C. Maher, International Christian University

The plenary panel discussion of the final session addressed the issue of bilingualism of two different modalities, namely spoken and sign languages.

The session began with Masayo Yamamoto’s (Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan) talk on ‘Bilingualism in Japan’, followed by two experts on Japanese deaf sign, Kiyoshi Kawaguchi and Natsuko Shimotani (Sign Language Research Center, Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan). Yamamoto noted that attitudes are changing and have changed in Japan not only concerning attitudes towards the deaf but also towards bilingualism itself.



In his presentation ‘The bilingual experience of Mr. Kawaguchi: I’m Deaf since I was an infant. What is my mother tongue?’ Kawaguchi pondered on his experiences as a deaf person in Japan and the U.S.A., delivering his presentation in shuwa Japanese sign language.

Lastly, in her presentation ‘The bilingual experience of Ms Shimotani: My second languages of two different modalities’, Shimotani revealed her exploits as a hearing person who developed an interest in sign language as a student in the U.S.A., and later developed fluency in shuwa through social interaction with deaf friends in Japan.

The presentations were simultaneously interpreted and shown on the screen in Japanese and English transcript.

The panel discussion was skillfully moderated by John Maher who in conclusion stressed the importance of networks which can flourish at all levels, even in the absence of supportive policies. Japan's deaf community has demonstrated that it is vigorous and enlightened - and that bilingualism in Japan will continue to grow in both idea and action. Maher added that understanding bilingualism is important in order to help us organize our understanding of language diversity in society as well as enrich our personal experience, restore justice and foster career and livelihood. As such, successful bilingualism requires both big decisions as well as life decisions – on personal and governmental levels, which must then be followed by action.

## **5. Evaluation**

High quality presentations, both as individual papers and poster presentations, covered various areas of research in bilingualism, multilingualism, bilingual education, language policy, family bilingualism, Japanese as a second language, mother tongue, language and identity, language loss and maintenance and deaf sign language. The presentations and discussions that followed shed light on the latest deliberations in bilingualism, both on the societal and personal levels. On the societal level, the role of language policies was stressed, which can enhance bilingual practices (Bekeš), or lead to the decline or even eradication of bilingualism (Zaretsky). Networks can provide support and platform to minority

language communities for lobbying with the government. Collaboration between government, academics and local stakeholders facilitates a successful outcome of minority language projects. In education, Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB- MLE) enables children from minority language communities to obtain quality education while at the same time preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage (Premsrirat). MTB-MLE can also decrease dropout rates and class repetition and increase multilingual literacy in developing communities, allowing for meaningful participation in the formal economy (Ord). On the personal level, bilingualism is closely linked to identity issues. Language practices at home affect the way children feel about their bilingual identity. For example, Coda children who use only sign language with deaf parent(s) tend to be more confident in their sign language ability than those who use mixed methods of communication. This, in turn, affects their Coda identity (Ando). In the case of returnees, home is an important domain for maintaining English literacy, while peer networks provide further motivation and opportunities to use English in communicative situations (Taniguchi). Adults, on the other hand, can make their own choices of pursuing bilingual and bicultural practices, often based on their experience abroad (Lovely, Shimotani). The panel discussion emphasized that bilingual individuals are found in both spoken and sign languages. The discussants also noted that attitudes toward bilingualism and biculturalism are changing in Japan. While minority groups were previously considered insignificant in the overall Japanese view, old perceptions are changing along with the reality of international relations, making the study of bilingualism a more attractive field.

The declaration ‘Bilingualism Now’ Linguapax Asia 2018, drafted by John Maher, succinctly summarizes the symposium deliberations, as follows:

Bilingualism means an understanding of language freedom. Bilingualism means the choices we make, today and tomorrow, about the languages we can use in society. Language diversity works. It works for society.

- Bilingualism enriches our personal experience, restores justice and fosters career and livelihood.

- Bilingualism supports people. An understanding of bilingual people - speakers and signers - is essential for the proper organization of how language works in society.
- Bilingualism and bilingual people, adults and children, must be protected by the politics of government and law, by power and resources.
- Bilingualism is part of the moral order, of personal identity, the life course, the politics of life.

Linguapax is committed to building a gateway to the recognition of bilingualism and the life of all bilingual people.

The symposium was attended by approximately sixty participants who gave a very positive and enthusiastic evaluation of the symposium at the end. The collaboration with organizations that share Linguapax values and objectives has proved very successful and we hope to continue with this practice in the future. In 2020 Tokyo will be hosting the Olympic Games and this may be an opportune time to further promote Linguapax's essential mission and objective which is "language for peace".