

# Definitions of Bilingualism and their Applications to the Japanese Society

WANG Hui Ling

## 1. Introduction

As an officially monolingual nation (Harding-Esch & Riley, 2003) and mainly monolingual society according to this author's personal experiences, the Japanese people often express marvel, admiration and envy for non-Japanese people they meet who speak more than one language fluently. These feelings of admiration and envy are even more easily given to the foreigners living in Japan whom the Japanese people feel have a good grasp of the Japanese language. However, to this author who can be considered trilingual, and who comes from an officially multilingual country Singapore, many Japanese people themselves are also more than functional and conversant in English, the foreign language they are continuously learning as a second language (L2). Yet, according to both personal experience of the author and research done by many academics (Hosoda, 2017; Yamamoto, 1998), many Japanese people do not consider themselves to be bilingual. In the author's opinion, this mindset prevents the Japanese people from becoming more proficient in their pursuit of language study, cultural awareness and communicative abilities.

With this background, this paper aims to lay out the definitions of bilingualism, and describe the people who can be considered bilinguals, especially in the Japanese society. The definitions of bilingualism would expand into dimensions of bilingualism, and the dimensions of bilingualism would show the complicated nature of bilingualism and a vast range of individuals who can consider themselves bilingual. Examples of these individuals in the Japanese society would be shown while considering all the dimensions of bilingualism. Finally, the paper discusses further implications and suggests ideas for further research.

## 2. Definitions of Bilingualism

Bilingualism as a topic has been widely covered in research literature, and has expanded into numerous sub-topics. Some examples of sub-topics are, cognitive development in bilingualism, culture and identity in bilingualism, and bilingual education. 'Bi' means two, so the word simply suggests that bilingualism is about knowing two languages. In reality, the concept of bilingualism is much more complicated. Most literature also refers to bilingualism as including multilingualism, and this paper will do so as well.

Most research literature, in attempting to define bilingualism, has been careful to first differentiate between bilingualism in the individual and bilingualism in a linguistic community

(Baker, 2001 ; Butler, 2013 ; Hamers & Blanc, 2000 ; Harding-Esch & Riley, 2003 ; Hoffmann, 1991). An individual who is bilingual could be a member of a largely monolingual community. In the case of monolingual Japan, for example, there exists people who are bilingual. As for bilingual communities, it is believed that they usually call themselves so, or set up policies to reflect bilingualism, but may have members that are not bilingual. Hoffmann (1991) opines that one has to distinguish between these two types of bilingualism as they can be fundamentally different. A country may call itself bilingual or multilingual but in reality, its citizens might not be so, according to Hoffmann. Baker (2001) terms the 'individual possession' of bilingualism as 'individual bilingualism' and the 'group possession' of bilingualism as 'societal bilingualism', as had Hoffmann. 'Societal bilingualism' according to Baker could refer to 'a social group, community, region or country' (p.2). Hamers and Blanc (2000) opine that societal bilingualism is also just bilingualism in general, which refers to a linguistic community that uses two languages for interaction. Within bilingualism, they opine that there is the concept of bilinguality, which is individual bilingualism that encompasses dimensions including but not limited to psychological, social and cognitive dimensions. This paper will focus on individual bilingualism within the Japanese society.

The second observation found in literature on definitions of bilingualism is that bilingualism consists of a scale, or range, or even a spectrum (to reflect the multidimensional qualities of the term 'bilingualism'), or should be defined in terms of degrees (Harding-Esch & Riley, 2003). The two definitions of each end of the range are undoubtedly among the most quoted definitions of bilingualism. At the highest end of the range, Bloomfield (1933:56) defined bilingualism as the "native-like control of two languages". At the lowest end of the range, Macnamara (1967) "proposes that a bilingual is anyone who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills, listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, in a language other than his mother tongue." (Hamers and Blanc, 2000:6)

There is a lot of criticism regarding these two extremes, which this paper will discuss later on. Many other definitions of the bilingual are on various points along the range. An attempt at ranking some of these definitions according to expected language capability is shown as follows. The first definition is the highest end of the range requiring the bilingual to be a perfect user of two languages, and the last definition is the lowest end of the range suggesting that minimal language competence is adequate to be considered a bilingual.

A bilingual, as has been defined in literature, is :

- a) someone who has "native-like control of two languages". (Bloomfield, 1933:56)
- b) someone with "complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic process". (Oestreicher, 1974:9)
- c) "a person who knows two languages with approximately the same degree of perfection as unilingual speakers of those languages". (Christopherson, 1948:4)
- d) one of "those people who need and use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives". (Grosjean, 2010:4)
- e) "an individual (who) possesses more than one language competence". (Valdes & Figueroa, 1994:8)
- f) someone who is involved in the "practice of alternately using two languages".

- (Weinreich, 1968)
- g) someone who practices “the alternate use of two or more languages”. (Mackey, 1970:555)
  - h) someone who is capable of speaking “a second language while following the concepts and structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue”. (Titone, 1972 in Hamers and Blanc, 2000:6-7)
  - i) someone who may have “all degrees of accomplishment, but ... (as) ... the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language.” (Haugen, 1953:6-7)
  - j) someone who has “the ability to speak, listen, read, and/or write in more than one language with varying degrees of proficiency”. (Brice & Brice, 2009)
  - k) “anyone who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills, listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, in a language other than his mother tongue.” (Macnamara, 1967 in Hamers and Blanc, 2000:6)

One criticism for these definitions is that there is no quantifiable measurement of what it means to be ‘native-like’, or to have ‘language competence’, or what constitutes ‘minimal competence’. Indeed, the ranking of these definitions itself had been tricky, which goes to show the relative and fluid nature of bilingualism as has been proven by many linguists. Definitions (a), (b), and (c) are perfectionist stances towards the view of bilingualism. Definition (d) is ranked second here because it is assumed that having to use two languages in everyday life shows a considerable proficiency in both languages, and a continuous usage supposes a continuous improvement. Again, this is a baseless assumption that a continuous usage would result in continuous improvement. Definition (e) is in its place because ‘language competence’ suggests a certain high standard of proficiency. Definitions (f) and (g) are almost exactly the same, and suggests at least a constant usage of two languages. Definitions (h) gives an indication of some type of grammatical skill necessary to be labelled a bilingual, but one can never completely list the concepts and structures of any language for no list is exhaustive. Definitions (i), (j) and (k) are the most lenient in judging literary skills, but may practically include almost everyone who can say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in a language other than his or her mother tongue.

Another criticism of these definitions above is that they “refer to a single dimension of bilinguality, namely the level of proficiency in both languages, thus ignoring non-linguistic dimensions” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Hamers and Blanc argue that bilingualism is multidimensional, but most definitions are one-dimensional. Even definitions that focus on the social-communicative dimension did not mention the linguistic dimension of bilingualism. Two definitions below focused on the social-communicative dimension of bilingualism. Mohanty (1994) says that :

“... bilingual persons or communities are those with an ability to meet the communicative demands of the self and the society in their normal functioning in two or more languages in their interaction with the other speakers of any or all of these languages”. (p.13)

And Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) defines that :

“A bilingual speaker is someone who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made of an individual’s communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures) or parts of them.” (p.90)

Both these definitions have no specific mention of the linguistic skillset of the so-called abled or functional communicator.

Yet a third criticism about these definitions of bilingualism is that one should consider “language behavior”, in which “bilingual behaviour” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000:8) is a part of. Hamers and Blanc are of the opinion that any description of bilingualism should be accompanied by a description of language behavior, which is the function of language. The social, cognitive and semiotic-linguistic functions of language will affect the definitions of bilingualism and explain the different degrees of bilingualism. Also, to Baker (2001), a distinction should be made between “language ability and language use”, or the “difference between degree and function” (2000:3). This is because one may have language abilities without using that language often. The average Japanese person may have a certain degree of proficiency in English after studying it as a compulsory subject in a formal school setting for at least six years, but may not get to use English often in Japan. One may also use two languages regularly, but have limited competence in one of the two languages. For example, a Japanese university student majoring in English may use English everyday in formal classroom settings but have limited proficiency in it. Mackey (1970:554) puts it on point when he says that “Bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language ; it is a characteristic of its use.”

### **3. Dimensions of Bilingualism**

In order to address these criticisms, a list of dimensions of bilingualism has been created by various linguists. This is the third observation about definitions of bilingualism - because bilingualism is too broad and wide a spectrum, there would rightly be many different types of bilinguals under different dimensions of bilingualism. Below is a summarized list of dimensions of bilingualism and the corresponding terms of the types of bilinguals or bilingualism under the respective dimensions, as have been discussed in research literature.

**Table 1 Dimensions and terminologies of Bilingualism and Bilinguals**

Dimensions	Types of bilinguals/ bilingualism
a) Age of acquisition (Butler, 2013; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003; Hoffmann, 1991; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)	Early bilingual, Late bilingual, Infant bilingual, Child bilingual, Adolescent bilingual, Adult bilingual, Simultaneous bilingualism, Sequential bilingualism, Consecutive childhood bilinguality (Brice & Brice, 2009; Genesee et al, 1978 in Butler, 2013; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hoffmann, 1991)
b) Context of acquisition (Hoffmann, 1991; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)	Natural bilingual, Primary bilingual, Ascribed bilingualism, Secondary bilingual, Achieved bilingualism, Natural bilingualism, School bilingualism, Cultural bilingualism (Hoffmann, 1991)
c) Order and consequence of acquisition (Hoffmann, 1991)	Incipient bilingualism, Ascendant bilingualism, Recessive bilingualism, Additive bilingual, Subtractive bilingual (Hoffmann, 1991; Lambert, 1974; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)
d) Cognitive organization (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hoffmann, 1991)	Coordinative bilingualism, Compound bilingualism, Subordinative bilingualism (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003; Weinreich, 1968 in Hoffmann, 1991)
e) (Relative) Competence (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003; Hoffmann, 1991)	Perfect bilingual, True bilingual, Balanced bilingual, Dominant bilingual (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hoffmann, 1991; Peal & Lambert, 1962 in Butler, 2013)
f) Functional ability (Butler, 2013; Hoffmann, 1991)	Receptive bilingual, Passive bilingual, Functional bilingual, Productive bilingual (Butler, 2013; Hoffmann, 1991; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)
g) Exogeneity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)	Endogenous bilinguality, Exogenous bilinguality (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)
h) Cultural identity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hamers & Blanc in Butler, 2013; Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003)	Bicultural bilingual, Monocultural bilingual, Acculturated bilingual, Deculturated bilingual (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)
i) Social cultural status of the languages (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)	Elite bilingual, Folk bilingual, Circumstantial bilingual, Elective bilingual, Additive bilingualism, Subtractive bilingualism (Fishman, 1977 in Butler, 2013; Harding-Esch and Riley, 2003; Lambert, 1974; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Butler, 2013)

An explanation of each dimension and the terminologies related is as follows.

- a) Age of acquisition (Butler, 2013; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hoffmann, 1991; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)

According to Hoffmann, the age the language is acquired can result in “considerable differences” (p.18). An ‘early bilingual’ may refer to an ‘infant, child or adolescent bilingual’, and a ‘late bilingual’ would be anyone beyond childhood or an ‘adult bilingual’ who picked up a L2 later on in life. Age specifications remain unclear, but some have defined it to be up to three years of age for an ‘infant bilingual’, and until the age of puberty for a ‘child bilingual’. Infant bilinguality

is also known as 'simultaneous bilingualism', where the infant develops two languages at the same time the infant learns the meaning of language. 'Consecutive childhood bilinguality' for Hamers and Blanc would occur if the child has first acquired his or her first language (L1) before learning the second (L2). Brice and Brice (2009) also call this 'sequential acquisition', and the former 'simultaneous acquisition'. Hamers and Blanc go further to say that the "age of acquisition plays a part not only in respect of cognitive representation but also in other aspects ... , particularly his linguistic, neuropsychological, cognitive and sociocultural development" (p.28).

**b) Context of acquisition (Hoffmann, 1991 ; Valdes & Figueroa, 1994 in Baker, 2001)**

While Hamers and Blanc (2000) put this in the same category as age of acquisition, the context of acquisition refers to the way or environment in which the languages are learnt. A 'natural bilingual' or 'primary bilingual' would have learnt two languages in a natural way from his or her family and environment, and an infant or child bilingual might fit into these types. This is also called 'ascribed bilingualism', and 'simultaneous acquisition' also applies here. The 'secondary bilingual' goes through formal, structured training in the acquisition of the L2, and this is also called 'achieved bilingualism' or 'school bilingualism'. School bilingualism involves learning in a school environment, while 'cultural bilingualism' would be adults learning a L2 as a hobby, or for leisure, travel or work. 'Sequential acquisition' applies here.

**c) Order and consequence of acquisition (Hoffmann, 1991)**

The order of acquisition, as the name suggests, is the order of acquisition of L1 and L2 at different times, L2 after the L1, and the consequence of this on the L1. Baker (2001) calls this the "development" (p.3) of the two languages in a bilingual. 'Incipient bilingualism' and 'ascendant bilingualism' both reflect the improvement in the ability of the 'additive bilingual' to use two languages after adding the L2, and the opposites are 'recessive bilingualism' and 'subtractive bilingualism', where the bilingual is in danger of losing the L1 or getting less competent or functional in the L1 because of the addition of L2. Here, however, the ascendance and recession do not refer to linguistic competence of the language alone. It also refers to the addition or subtraction of social and cognitive abilities. For example, positive consequences of the acquisition of an L2 would be the acquisition of social skills and knowledge of culture associated with the L2, and increase in cognitive abilities of managing another language. An example of negative consequences, or subtractive bilingualism, is when immigrants or their descendants live in a country where they are the minorities and their L1 is the minority language, and where they start losing knowledge of their native culture and competence of their L1 after learning L2, the main language in the adopted country. This will be discussed further in other dimensions.

**d) Cognitive organization (Hamers & Blanc, 2000 ; Hoffmann, 1991)**

Hoffmann calls this the "relationship between sign and meaning, i.e. the mental organization of the speech of bilinguals" (p.19). Butler calls this the "organization of linguistic codes and meaning unit(s)" (p.113). Yet, Hamers and Blanc call this the "form-function mapping" (p.29). Weinreich's (1968) research on linguistic organization concludes that there are different ways in which a bilingual organizes semantic content and linguistic signs. In 'coordinative bilingualism',

the L1 and L2 have different sets of linguistic signs and semantic content. These sets do not interfere with each other. In ‘compound bilingualism’, the bilingual considers similar semantic content of L1 and L2 together, but knows that the linguistic signs are different. In ‘subordinative bilingualism’, the L2 is learned with the help of L1. The criticism about this dimension is that there is little need to distinguish bilinguals according to how they organize language cognitively. Unless there is some way to use these distinctions to aid L2 learning, this dimension may be of little significance.

e) (Relative) Competence (Hamers & Blanc, 2000 ; Hoffmann, 1991)

Baker (2001) calls this the “balance of two languages” (p.3), and Butler (2013) calls this the “relationship between proficiencies in two languages” (p.113). This dimension compares the general competencies of L1 and L2. A ‘perfect bilingual’ or ‘true bilingual’ is someone at the highest end of the range of definitions discussed in Section 2, with similarly high native-like competencies of both L1 and L2. A ‘balanced bilingual’ has similar competencies in both L1 and L2, and a ‘dominant bilingual’ has a superior competence in one language over the other, more often the L1. To reiterate, as Hamers and Blanc note, these competencies are all relative, and the dominance or balance does not equate to the balance of abilities of different functions within each language. Also, a balanced bilingual may not necessarily imply someone with high competencies, but only that the person has a similar level of competence for both L1 and L2.

f) Functional ability (Butler, 2013 ; Hoffmann, 1991)

This refers to the functions and usage of the languages. Someone who has competence in more than one language is more likely than not to have different uses and functions of each language in practical life, as most of the time he or she will not be expected to use both languages at the same time for the exact same functions. A ‘receptive bilingual’ or ‘passive bilingual’ understands the L2 but may not necessarily use it well, but the term ‘passive bilingual’ seems to imply that the bilingual is passive in the process of understanding the L2, which is untrue because language processing is also at work even only at the receiving end of the L2. A ‘functional bilingual’ or ‘productive bilingual’ would be able to use the four skills of language - speaking, listening, reading and writing - effectively or productively in both L1 and L2, but one should be aware that there are too many possible combinations of the levels of competence across the four skills within each of the two languages. According to Baker (2001), functional bilingualism is about language production and speech events, and is a specific area of research on its own.

g) Exogeneity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)

This dimension explains perhaps the political situation of a country, in particular. ‘Endogenous bilinguality’ refers to that of a community that uses a mother tongue that may not be formally used in institutions. For example, an East African native mother tongue language used only by the community in social settings but not in formal institutional settings, is an endogenous language. ‘Exogenous bilinguality’ consists of an exogenous language that is usually imposed politically, such as through colonialization, and from colonial history, is used only in



formal institutions, with few people in the community using it as an L1. One example is English or French in a formally colonized African nation.

h) Cultural identity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000 ; Hamers & Blanc in Butler, 2013)

A 'bicultural bilingual' would "identify positively with the two cultural groups that speak his languages and be recognized by each group as a member" (Hamers & Blanc, 2000:30). Some good examples are the three main races in Singapore, with ancestors from China, Malay Archipelago and India. Many Singaporeans identify themselves as having Chinese, Malay or Indian cultural backgrounds, but in general, have a strong sense of Singaporean cultural identity. A 'monocultural bilingual' would have competencies in two languages but has not adopted the culture of the L2. Cultural identity can also be an addition or subtraction, like competence. An 'acculturated bilingual' is someone who decided to renounce his cultural identity with his L1 because he eventually identifies more with the cultural characteristics of his L2, and a 'deculturated bilingual' is someone who has lost his L1 culture, but at the same time is unable to adopt his L2 culture either because he cannot identify with it (Berry, 1980 in Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Skutnabb-Kangas would consider this the attitude of the bilingual, where "self-identification or identification by others" (Hoffmann, 1991:25-26) is important for a sense of belonging as a member of that language community.

i) Social cultural status of the languages (Hamers & Blanc, 2000)

The last dimension listed here, is the social cultural status that the L1 and L2 each have in the community. Butler (2013) calls this 'language status and learning environment ; literacy support of L1' (p.114). The 'elite bilingual', according to Valdes and Figueroa (1994), "refers to those who choose to learn another language in formal or informal settings but who will remain most of their lives in the community where their L1 is spoken" (Guerrero, 2010:168). The 'folk bilingual' on the other hand "become[s] bilingual involuntarily in order to survive" (Guerrero, 2010:168), because their L1 is not that of the majority. Valdes and Figueroa also call the elite bilingual an 'elective bilingual', with a choice to learn the L2, and the folk bilingual a 'circumstantial bilingual' with little or no choice because of circumstances. Nugent (2013) states that folk bilinguals are associated with the working-class immigrant communities. The differences between these two types of bilinguals thus "raise(s) differences of prestige and status, politics and power among bilinguals" (Baker, 2001:4). Lambert (1974) also considers these two types of bilingualism as additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism respectively, as has been also used in (c). Subtractive bilingualism is especially "experienced by many ethnic minority groups who because of national educational policies and social pressures of various sorts are forced to put aside their ethnic language for a national language" (p.25).

#### 4. Bilingual profiles in the Japanese society

After having considered the definitions and dimensions of bilingualism thus far, this section shall attempt to identify the different types of bilinguals present by discussing each dimension in relation to the Japanese society. With this focus on the Japanese society, the L1 would from here



on refer to the Japanese language, and the L2 English, unless otherwise stated.

Using the dimension, the age of acquisition, an example of early bilinguals would be children from mixed marriages with a Japanese parent and a non-Japanese parent (who does not use Japanese as a L1), who learnt both languages from infancy. Child and adolescent bilinguals are also present, as there are young children who are being sent to private English language schools by almost monolingual Japanese parents for a head start in English education, which is compulsory in the Japanese education only from Years 5 and 6 in elementary schools to senior high schools. This is consecutive childhood bilinguality, as these children were functional in only Japanese before attending these schools. Late or adult bilinguals include Japanese people who decided to take up a hobby to learn English, especially by going to private English conversation classes.

Under the context of acquisition, this paper would assert that school bilingualism characterizes the Japanese society. While English is a compulsory and important subject in school, students have no or very limited opportunities to speak English in society without trying hard to find an avenue to do so, like going to formal English classes or making foreign friends. It is with this lack of a conducive environment for practicing the use of the L2 that many local Japanese people are unable to communicate in English despite having had at least six years of formal English instruction in school. However, after leaving the educational system, the Japanese are finding their way back to L2 learning. Learning English for leisure, travel or work has long become common in society. As the society continues to get caught up with the trend of believing English as being necessary to becoming global and intercultural citizens, and the fad of the importance of communication across cultures in a very monocultural society, society is transforming from school bilingualism to cultural bilingualism, and cultural bilingualism will be here to stay.

For the cultural bilinguals, their main motivations for learning English would be positive consequences of the acquisition of English, such as the pleasures of learning about foreign cultures and customs, making foreign friends and being able to travel outside of Japan. Japanese people who go on to use English in their jobs or for a living after studying it as a student would also fit into terms like ascendant and additive bilinguals, having experienced beneficial consequences of the L2. Subtractive bilingualism, or the negative consequences of the acquisition of English, are what some Japanese people think might happen to young children if educational reforms result in the young children starting to study English as a compulsory subject in schools at increasingly younger ages. Some Japanese people, and even local English teachers, believe that young Japanese children have not properly developed their Japanese language competence and should not be made or encouraged to start studying English from a young age. Whether this is true is another major issue for development and is not yet conclusive. On a different note, children who have experienced early bilingualism might also slowly subtract away their other language inherited from the non-Japanese parent, as well as cultural knowledge obtained from the parent, because of a lack of support in the monolingual society with regard to keeping up the minority language and culture.

Cognitive organization is not helpful in trying to identify bilinguals, but for many Japanese learners of English, subordinative bilingualism is used, the main evidence being that Japanese

is used to teach English in the structured classroom in compulsory education, or at least in the higher levels of elementary school, where English formally becomes a compulsory subject. Even though local English teachers have been constantly pressured to give English lessons in English, this is fraught with difficulties as English teachers profess themselves to be still learners of English with limited competencies. Another evidence is the usage of katakana English, where foreign words are transliterated into Japanese using the Japanese language form of encoding and pronunciation. It should also be noted that studies have shown that the bigger the linguistic difference between L1 and L2, the longer the time taken to learn the L2 (Butler, 2013). English and Japanese are known to be structurally opposite in terms of grammar. The above being said, coordinative and compound bilingualism may also be relevant to the early bilinguals, especially those whose parents practice the one-parent-one-language rule, or highly competent balanced late bilinguals.

Under the relative competence dimension, one cannot rule out that there are balanced bilinguals in the monolingual Japanese society. They could be people in jobs requiring a high level of English, such as English teachers, journalists, translators, or interpreters, early bilingual children of mixed parentage, or simply people who consistently use English for leisure until they have achieved a high level of competence. However, most of the bilinguals in the society are likely to be dominant bilinguals, especially after considering the circumstances of the context, as mentioned above, of officially monolingual Japan.

Regarding functional ability of English, it is believed that there would not be many in the society that can be called functional or productive bilinguals. Except for people who use English in their jobs to communicate in a meaningful way, such as tour guides, most Japanese people who have had school bilingualism would not be considered to be functional in English. Even teachers of English may not necessarily be functional because they still communicate to their students in the common L1 and teach English from the textbooks. Because of continuous self-criticism of the lack of functional ability in English after learning it in compulsory education for at least six years, English education has, in the last ten years or earlier, been constantly evolving to be now called English Communication, with meaningful, communicative tasks with the goals of teaching effective communication skills constantly incorporated into English education and the English classroom. Having said this, being functional or productive is also relative, and one could also say that any Japanese who has the ability to make meaningful interactions with an English speaker, for example, an English-speaking tourist, colleague, or foreign English teacher, is a functional bilingual. Anyhow, understanding this dimension demands more intensive study into the measurements of functionality in a L2, especially in the Japanese society.

Exogeneity may not at first seem relevant to the Japanese society which is officially monolingual, but one can say that since Japlish, a localized form of English, is a language created from within, Japlish is an endogenous language. Japlish may not be as utilized or developed compared to other forms of localized English, but there are some Japlish words coined that have become common colloquial expressions used in society. Some examples are 'my car', or 'my pace', phrases using the word 'my' to emphasize the individualistic nature of the noun after it. 'My car' refers to a personal item used for a work trip, for instance, instead of a company car which should rightfully be used, underlying the bureaucracy and red tape of the Japanese system. 'My

pace' refers to the stubborn and individualistic nature of a person, with underlying tones asking for forgiveness for the individuality because the Japanese culture frowns upon individuality and standing-out. Yet another example is the phrase 'power harassment', using the similar pattern of the English phrase 'sexual harassment', to express the strong Japanese culture of obedience expected in the workplace of subordinates towards superiors and as a tool to handle the misuse of power of superiors. Even though Japlish is not considered the L1 of this society, Japlish words have been naturally incorporated into the Japanese language and are commonly spoken and written. Oftentimes, these newly coined seemingly English words are also ridiculed by English-speaking members of the community, or so-called native speakers, as being bad English, and thus, there are also issues of social cultural status, prestige and power of English, the L2.

This leads to the discussion of both the cultural identity of bilinguals in the Japanese society and the social cultural status of English or other L2s. Children who are half-Japanese, who identify positively with the cultural backgrounds of both their parents and who see themselves as members of both cultural groups are the best examples of bicultural bilinguals. The Hafu Japanese Project (2010) dwells into the cultural identity of being half-Japanese. English learners in the Japanese society who see the culture of the English language as an interesting foreign 'other' are monocultural bilinguals. Some local Japanese people who really love the English language and foreign culture and who constantly criticize and find fault with their own Japanese culture become acculturated bilinguals when they decide to renounce their Japanese identity, or even relocate outside of Japan, sometimes for good. Deculturated bilinguals may also be present, because there are Japanese people who are like the former, but cannot identify with the newly adopted L2 culture either, or are never accepted as a member of the English-speaking community.

English has a powerful and elite social cultural status in Japan. Some students have claimed it to be 'cool', and see someone who speak it well to be 'smart' and 'cool'. Some students have said that their strong motivation towards learning English is the desire to be considered 'smart' and 'cool'. Even some local English teachers motivate their students by encouraging them to become 'cool' or praise them this way. A Japanese who is a highly competent English user can have the image of being 'elite', thus falling into the category of the 'elite bilingual'. Some cultural bilinguals also believe that a proficiency in English is 'classy' or shows a high level of educational achievement. These bilinguals in the Japanese society are also elective bilinguals as they chose to revisit learning English after completing compulsory English education in formal school settings. On another note, there are also many non-Japanese residents with Japanese spouses in society who have a L1 other than English. Some have shared that they do not speak to their mixed children in their L1 because of the imagined lowered status their L1 has in the Japanese society. With regard to elite and folk bilinguals, Harding-Esch and Riley (2003) disagree that being bilingual is elitist, for bilingualism spreads across all levels of class of people. Very often, people in the middle class have no choice but to learn a L2 for survival, so it is not fully right to say that people who learn a L2 with no choice are folk bilinguals. In the case of the Japanese society, foreign residents have no choice but to learn Japanese for the sake of survival in a very monolingual society, and these foreign residents could be professionals in industries like health, science and education, and not necessarily the working class. These foreign residents would be

considered circumstantial bilinguals.

Now that it is shown a list of numerous possibilities of individuals in a mainly monolingual Japan who can be bilingual under different dimensions, this paper shall attempt to draw up a summarized list similar to Hoffmann's (1991:16-17) list in his paper, of a variety of individuals in the Japanese society who could all be classified as bilinguals, but that "public opinion, and at least some of these people themselves, would probably disagree" (1991:17). These people, and the list is of course unexhaustive, are :

- 1) the two-year-old Japanese who is beginning to talk, speaking English to one parent and Japanese to the other ;
- 2) the four-year-old Japanese whose home language is Japanese but has been going to private English classes for some time ;
- 3) the schoolchild from an American family living in Japan who increasingly uses Japanese outside but whose parents speak to her in English only ;
- 4) the Chinese child from China who comes from a Chinese-speaking background but attends school in Japan where all subjects are taught in Japanese ;
- 5) the young Japanese graduate who has studied English for ten years ;
- 6) the sixty-year-old Japanese university professor who has spent a considerable part of his life working with English papers and textbooks ;
- 7) the Japanese technical translator ;
- 8) the personal Japanese interpreter of an important public figure ;
- 9) the Japanese scientist who can read specialist literature in his subject in English ;
- 10) "the Japanese airline pilot who uses English for most of his professional communication" (1991:17) ;
- 11) the Nepalese foreign worker who speaks Nepali at home and with his friends and colleagues, but who can communicate in Japanese, with his superiors and the authorities ;
- 12) the wife of the Nepalese in (11), who is able to get by in spoken Japanese but cannot read or write it ;
- 13) the Korean immigrant who has had no contact with Korea for the last forty years ;
- 14) the foreign English teacher who uses mostly English at his private English conversation school but is exposed to Japanese from the environment around him ;
- 15) the Japanese retiree who attends an English club to learn English for personal enjoyment ;
- 16) the Japanese spouse of a foreign national who communicates with the spouse by listening to English and speaking in Japanese.

Finally, after considering so many possibilities of the types of bilinguals present in the society, one of the most useful methods this paper discovered, of describing the bilingualism of an individual, would be Hoffmann (1991)'s suggestion to draw up a bilingual profile for each individual or group according to all the dimensions discussed above, "instead of trying to make people fit into previously established definitions" (Hoffmann, 1991:31).

## 5. Implications for further research

This is only a preliminary study on the definitions of bilingualism, and already we can see that the topic is relative and fluid and expands into many subtopics that demands greater exploration. Firstly, delving into the definitions of bilingualism shows that there is a need to quantify bilingualism in a way that can have practical use. One obvious area of further research would be on measurements of bilingualism.

Secondly, especially for educators, when do learners of English stop becoming learners and start becoming bilinguals? To see them as a learner after 10 years of English education is surely demoralizing and even insulting. Or rather, why are they still considered learners after a long period of structured English education? At some point, teachers may have to start teaching students as bilinguals, or work towards a goal of that recognition.

Thirdly, what is the purpose of labelling someone a bilingual, especially in the Japanese society? Further research into the benefits of bilingualism and the benefits of recognizing someone as a bilingual is necessary.

Fourthly, a commonly asked question by the layman in the Japanese society - is it too early for Japanese children to start learning English as a L2 in elementary school? What are the advantages and disadvantages? These lead to a basic question - what are the cognitive processes of acquiring a language? One could go into further studies about the critical period in language acquisition and what the implications for the Japanese society as a whole are.

Last but not least, it is the bilingualism of the Japanese society as a whole. What are its characteristics and how can the society improve on its English education, bilingualism, or even multilingualism? If the current trends of believing in English as a necessary skill and working toward higher usage levels of English continue, how will the society change from being a monolingual to a bilingual one? On top of these, multiculturalism will also come into question. This paper has provoked further implications in the form of questions like these.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper first explored definitions of bilingualism, which is very subjective, and discovered that definitions of bilingualism occur within a range because the different definitions are mostly varying degrees of competency expected of the bilingual. The definitions can also be said to occur in a spectrum because this paper next discussed nine dimensions of bilingualism, in the process listing many different types of bilinguals, making the range more complex like in a spectrum. It is also discovered that being bilingual is relative and comparative among different types of bilinguals. Next, bilingual profiles in the Japanese society are drawn up against these dimensions, showing that even though the Japanese society is mainly monolingual, there are many people who can call themselves bilingual. Finally, a list of issues for further research are drawn up, and would provide food for thought and opportunities for the next study.

As Harding-Esch & Riley (2003) and Hoffmann (1991) mentioned, over half of the world's population is bilingual. The Japanese people who admire foreigners for being bilingual are perhaps themselves bilinguals too. The Japanese society needs to learn English as a L2 with the

goal in mind that they will one day consider themselves bilingual. By believing themselves to be bilingual, they can then constantly remind themselves that they possess dual tools or systems of language that they can use to their advantage in many areas in life.

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