

博士論文 (要約)

**English Literacy Retention in
Japanese Returnee Siblings**

(日本人帰国児童の兄弟姉妹による英語リテラシー能力の保持)

谷口ジョイ

This thesis is about Japanese children who have experienced mobility across languages and cultures. Specifically, the research explores English retention in four pairs of siblings (Sibling Pair 1–4) who once lived with their family in a foreign country where they were educated and/or functioned in English and then returned to their home country, Japan. Upon their return some of them continued to become more proficient in interacting with written texts in English, while others tended to lean toward improving their literacy in Japanese over that in English. The aim of this study is to explore how these children may retain and further develop their English literacy skills after a lengthy sojourn abroad.

Chapter 1 presented a brief background on Japanese returnee children as well as my own story of how I became interested in bilingualism and returnee language retention and my personal motivation for conducting the study.

Chapter 2 was devoted to a review of the theoretical framework of the study. I found that too much stress has been laid upon the linguistic aspects of an attrited language, and that social aspects are not sufficiently reflected in the literature on child L2 attrition. To equip myself to address this gap, I explained sociocultural theory and translanguaging approach, which this study incorporated to conceptualize and understand the meanings of English literacy retention in and to the participating children. A classification of bilingualism and biliteracy, with definitions of relevant terms, was also provided in this section.

In Chapter 3, the main findings of the relevant research were given. Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, I was able to detect some common findings and unexplored issues relating child L2 attrition.

Chapter 4 is a methodology section, which explained the process through which I undertook to capture changes in the children's literacy skills over time. It described the research approach, the general characteristics of the participants, the materials, and the procedures for data collection and data analysis. The ages at which the younger and older siblings returned to Japan separate the participants into two groups, one with potential to experience severe attrition and the other showing resistance to language loss. A set of criterion-referenced and standardized reading assessments for children attending kindergarten through Grade 8 was used for data collection. The reading sessions were conducted longitudinally at intervals of four to 10 weeks. In conjunction with the reading assessments, other data collection tools were chosen to gather information in order to triangulate the data and thereby substantiate and strengthen the findings. Ahead of the reading assessment, questionnaires were given to parents to gather information on the children's family background and linguistic environment. Other important data sources were

audio- and video-recordings of interactions mainly during literacy events at home, and literacy journals filled out by the children. I observed the entire family rather than just the participating siblings, in order to understand the reciprocal effects of factors related to children and parents on the children's English literacy retention. Through naturalistic observation of four families, I attempted to capture how the children and their parents interacted with written texts.

In Chapter 5, a detailed description of the participating children was provided. First, the demographic data gained from the *family profiles* and an extensive description of *family member personalities* based upon my longitudinal observation of and regular interaction with them during the examination period were presented. *English and Japanese language in the participating children* were provided mainly based on school reports overseas to identify literacy skills obtained by the participating children immediately before leaving abroad. The children's literacy performance was discussed from the perspective of *parental views on bilingualism and biliteracy* as well. Also, I investigated possible effects of children's *peer networks* and the children's *literacy engagement* on their English literacy retention. The children were asked reading preference questions at each session: who reads with or to them; what stories they like most; what books or types of reading materials they have read over the last couple of weeks; what criteria they use to select those books; what strengths they think they have as readers; and how they plan to achieve their goals. Data from the children's literacy journals, which provided information on home literacy practices, were also used.

Chapter 6 lays out the results obtained through the longitudinal one-on-one reading conferences. It elaborated a picture of each participant's literacy performance in English, including changes in English literacy skills in terms of accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and reflection in reading.

Oral Reading Fluency scores exhibited evidence of good retention for all participant siblings except the younger brother in Sibling Pair 1. The older brother in Sibling Pair 1, and the children in Sibling Pairs 2, 3 and 4 seemed to retain their oral reading skills well. Only for the younger brother in Sibling Pair 1 were there indications that he did not remain capable of allocating sufficient attention to both reading with accuracy and understanding meaning, as some of his errors in oral reading seriously affected sentence comprehensibility beginning approximately one year after his returning to Japan.

In *Previewing and Prediction* component, production of informative utterances of Sibling Pair 1 gradually became impaired as time elapsed, resulting in low scores. However, the older brother in Sibling Pair 1 obtained relatively high scores in the first year of incubation, using various types of communication strategies to compensate for his linguistic deterioration. The older sister in Sibling Pair 2 showed continually excellent performance, elaborating scene descriptions and including emotional expressions. Her younger sister was not able to simultaneously secure accuracy and convey intended

meanings at the early stage; however, as her cognitive skills matured with age, her performance in this component drastically improved. As for the sisters in Sibling Pair 3, although their descriptions were rather monotonous and simple, almost all the important events and information were included in them, and both sisters were observed to be highly proficient in previewing and predicting the text. Sibling Pair 4 also performed well, but the younger brother showed a slight decrease in his scores in the third year.

In *Story-Retelling* component, ability to reproduce stories of Sibling Pair 1 became limited in the second year of the reading conferences. The other pairs, on the other hand, obtained high scores in story-retelling, suggesting that, at least for the children in Sibling Pairs 2, 3, and 4, the reproductive skill of story-retelling was stable and not much affected by the decrease in English use.

There are also several significant findings regarding *Reflection and Making Connections* component. First, the older brother in Sibling Pair 1, who was assumed to be cognitively more advanced than the younger siblings, nevertheless showed greater difficulties responding in the reflection and making connections component. Second, the younger sisters in Sibling Pair 2 and 3, were not able to synthesize the information in the text with their prior knowledge or figure out what the author did not state explicitly in the text for the first several months of reading conferences, even though no apparent evidence of language loss was observed in their responses. Later on, their literacy performance relating inferential comprehension improved.

The results of *Story Grammar* showed that Sibling Pair 1 often failed to include important structural elements in the story-retelling component. This was significant when exploring the rates of occurrence of certain structural elements in their narratives without which a story cannot be appropriately organized in sequence, including Setting, Initiating Event, and Consequence for the younger brother and Initiating Event for the older brother. On the other hand, the children in Sibling Pairs 2, 3, and 4 were capable of reproducing well-structured stories containing all the main story elements as well as some digressions.

Chapter 7 presented a qualitative analysis to explore the individual and social aspects of the participating children's English literacy. One of the implications of the present study is that the home is an important domain for maintaining English literacy in returnees, especially when more recreational and socio-interactional literacy uses are emphasized. Peer networks also play an important role in retaining L2 literacy from the viewpoint of motivation and of the opportunity to use English in communicative situations. In addition, supportive parental attitudes and provision by parents of scaffolding, encouragement, and fostering of the children's English literacy practice are crucial. All the children seemed to wonder how they could best cope with using two languages during the period of readjustment and returnee experiences continued to matter in their lives through into high school. However, at the same

time, as the children grew older, they successfully avoided major linguistic and cultural difficulties and began realizing their hybrid language competence in a positive manner.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, provided implications from the study's findings and sketch out paths for further research.