A Case Study of a Bilingual Classroom and Its Implications for Language Management

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Abstract

While recent developments in language policy and planning studies have allowed us to examine how power is exercised and/or institutionalized in any given arena, it has also blinded us to the proposition that language may not have to be, or indeed is not, always managed with reference to any specific agenda. This case study takes a closer look at how participants in a bilingual classroom context negotiate their language choices and create meaning regarding what happens in the community, or how they 'do' language as legitimate members of the community. The classroom observation and follow-up interviews suggest that classroom language often simply takes its form as the participants try to perform their best as community members who are gathered together in the pursuit of shared goals.

1.   Introduction and the aims of the research

Globalization in mobility as well as in economic activities and transactions has allowed the research field of language policy and planning (LPP) to grow and expand in recent years. LPP studies have been successful in addressing issues related to the role of agency and power (see: Hult & Johnson, 2015; Johnson, 2013). While they have helped us to identify the power structure at every level of LPP practice, they may have prevented us from considering the possibility that language is not, and does not have to be, always managed in accordance with the agency's agenda. Students in a classroom should be considered more than just the object of management by the teacher or by the institution. Rather, they should be regarded as responsible individuals who 'do' language[i] (Charity-Hudley & Mallinson, 2014; Morrison, 1993). The first research question, therefore, asks, how do the the students, as well as the teacher, in a classroom 'do' language? In other words, is it possible that the students are not just being managed but are their own agent? The next research question is, how do the participants of the classroom interaction perceive their own negotiation of language and

identity? In order to address the questions, this case study, including classroom observation and interviews, was carried out at a private university in Tokyo. The study provides a detailed description of the bilingualism and code switching that is performed in the classroom and relays some of the participants' own accounts of how they feel to be part of the community.

2.   Classroom dynamics and the concept of trust and community of practice

Globalization in terms of economic activity and people's mobility has shed a light on the growing significance of the status of English as a lingua franca, which includes the status of English as the lingua franca in higher education (e.g., Jenkins, 2014). Recent approaches concerning English as a lingua franca and how that relates to LPP tend to be critical in nature (Jenkins, 2014; May, 2015), preparing us to examine how language is being "managed" (Spolsky, 2009). However, as many educational practitioners know, not everything in classroom can be planned or managed. Teachers often have to let things happen spontaneously. This brings us to Stevick's work (1976 and in particular 1980), where he advocates that the teacher should put trust in the learner, as well as in the idea of communities of practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991).

While Stevick's major works date back to the 1970s and 1980s, his ideas are still valued by many teachers. *Meaningful Action: Earl Stevick's Influence on Language Teaching*, comprising of eighteen papers contributed by notable educators, was published in 2013, which attests to his influence today. While Stevick's studies' primary concern is language education, his approach to teaching can be applied to other classrooms once we see that a classroom is where you can find a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), a place where the participants learn the appropriate language and behavior in the new community. For Stevick, "Trust" is of "primary importance" in language learning, and he emphasizes, in particular, the importance of "building an atmosphere of mutual trust" (Stevick, 1976, pp. 183-185). He specifically states that people need to feel "secure with those around them before they will say what is really on their mind" (p. 184). Candlin and Crichton (2013) add that, "it is not only language and learning that are negotiated, but also institutional structures and practices that are consolidated or challenged" (p. 85). Such negotiation is made possible when the learners feel secure enough to engage with one another.

Lave and Wenger's concept of situated learning (1991) and community of practice are similar in a way to Stevick's holistic approach to learning. They propose that learning is understood in terms of identification and participation. More specifically, they stress that learners "inevitably participate in communities of practitioners" and by doing so, the '"newcomers become a community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). When we take a university classroom, for example, we can see the students as individuals who are participating in a community and learning how to behave as community members.

If we agree that mutual trust between students and teacher is essential and that together they make up a community of practice, I would like to suggest that students in a classroom should not be viewed as something (or someone) to be managed; rather, as responsible adults capable of participating in the community of their choice, which, in turn, questions the validity of applying the idea of 'management' to classroom language.

3. Methodology and the researcher's background

The case study was carried out from December 2015 to March 2016. I observed an introductory sociolinguistics class primarily taught in English on nine occasions. In addition, I interviewed the teacher as well as some of the students. With permission, the lessons were recorded on an IC recorder and I took extensive notes during the class. Interviews with the class instructor were repeatedly conducted over a period of four months, from the time I approached him with the research proposal and to the time all the data were gathered and I met him for a follow-up discussion. Five students volunteered to be interviewed: an international student, a home student, and three returnees, or *kikokushijo*. They had known me at least by sight by the time the interviews took place because I had been in the classroom, as stated above. I had also exchanged a few words with them when the class was in session and we happened to be seated in the same discussion group. The length of the interviews varied from 67 minutes to 84 minutes and they were recorded on the IC recorder after the research objectives had been explained and the interviewees had signed to indicate their agreement to this voluntary research participation.

It is my belief that a researcher in a classroom can never be a fly on the wall. As such, I share Miyahara's claim (Miyahara, 2015) that when conducting a qualitative study the researcher "need[s] to be more open about their professional as well as their personal background in order to make transparent their roles in the research" (xi), which requires that my personal as well as professional experience be made open before any interpretation of the data is presented.

I am a native speaker of Japanese and had never lived abroad until the six-week summer English program when I was a first-year student at the institution where I conducted this research. As a student I always liked studying English as a school subject and I had typical *akogare*, or desire, for the English speaking culture (see Piller & Takahashi, 2006, and Kelsky, 2001, for detailed accounts on how Japanese women tend to romanticize Western culture). I spent a total of ten years at this university covering the period of my undergraduate and graduate studies. My familiarity with the institution provided me with access to the research site and helped me build rapport with the informants. In addition, it gives me an advantage in interpreting the data as an insider. I also spent a total of two years the UK – one year each in London and Edinburgh – as an exchange student, which gave me the opportunity to experience what it is like for a non-

native speaker of English, or an NNSE student, to be part of English speaking academic community. In addition, as someone who uses English on an everyday basis for research and teaching, I consider myself to be part of the ELFA community – a community which recognizes English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (Jenkins, 2014, p. 42). I hope that by sharing with the reader where I stand on the intricacy of the research context and the participants, this study can provide "well-crafted, subjective interpretation of data" (Barkhuizen *et al*., 2014, p. 89).

4.   Contextualizing the classroom

Description and understanding of the context where the teaching and learning take place is important in understanding and interpreting what is going on in a classroom. I would first like to describe the university as the wider context supporting the classroom context, and then move on to describe the class itself, focusing on its bilingual environment and bilingualism.

4.1   The institution

The institution was founded in 1953 by a group of Christian missionaries from the United States. Since its foundation, the university has become known as an English-Japanese bilingual community, where most Japanese students undergo a two-year intensive English language program while students from overseas and (so-called) returnees, or students who were educated abroad for two or more successive years during their secondary education, take Japanese language lessons. While some universities in Japan offer English-only degree courses (e.g., Akita International University, Keio University's Prorgramme in Economics for Alliances, Research and Leadership), this institution emphasizes the importance of bilingualism on campus, not permitting their international students to take English-only courses and graduate. We will see later that this philosophy regarding their bilingual policy is reflected in the participants' views.

4.2   Language code

Every course offered at the university has a language code. A 'J' class means that it is taught in Japanese, using materials written and/or spoken in Japanese, and the students are expected to be able to cope with all the coursework in Japanese, while an 'E' class, in turn, means that it is taught in English and the students are expected to deal with the coursework in English. A 'J/E' course means that the primary language is Japanese but some English use is expected: for example, some of the reading materials may be in English, or term papers may be written in English. The particular class I observed was an 'E/J' course, which means that while the primary language of instruction is English, there is some room for Japanese to be used.

A detailed, three-page syllabus given to the students, of which I have obtained a copy, stipulates the language that should be used for certain activities and assignments. For the 'journal club' activities, an assignment where students read and critically review a published paper in an academic journal, the journal article may be in "Japanese or English". The students can choose a paper written in either language, read it over a period of two weeks, and then present the paper in a group for 20 minutes. For the midterm exam, which accounts for 25 percent of the student's grade, the syllabus states that the language is 'English'. For the "[f]inal project, presentation, report", which accounts for "50 %" of the students' grade, it requires students to "Hand in report on last day of class. 2500 words. English". 75 percent of the students' grade, therefore, depends on the results of the midterm exam given in English and the report, or the term paper, which must be written in English.

The syllabus also mentions language use in, "Class Interaction and Etiquette": "Lectures will be held in English except for one or more guest lectures. (a) Group Discussion. Discussion can be in English or Japanese. Try to use your weaker language (code-switch) as much as possible".

The reason why the language code of this particular class is 'E/J' is likely to be because, first of all, it was taught by a native speaker of English, who has lived in Japan for an extensive period and is a very good speaker of Japanese. Secondly, it is because in the wider context, the university is in Japan. As a result, the majority of the students are native speakers of Japanese, and the topics that the teacher and the students discuss in the classroom often include some elements that are unique to Japan or Japanese language: for example, when students talk about their own field work, it would be about the assignments they have conducted in Japan; and when they talk about their own language awareness, it would include mentioning how they feel about certain varieties of Japanese, or Japanese in relation to other languages. Where that is the case, it makes sense to speak in Japanese or to code-switch into Japanese from English.

Language code often encourages or discourages students when they choose to, or chose not to, take a particular course, and it also frames a course in a certain way. In this particular case, it is clear that, while the primary language is English, the students can expect some Japanese language to be used, which, on the whole, suggests a bilingual learning environment.

4.3   A class as a community

The class meets twice a week, a total of 210 minutes, for a period of twelve weeks. The learning goals are described in the aforementioned syllabus given to the students, which are essentially to understand the academic discipline of sociolinguistics and to apply this knowledge in a variety of situations. Unlike some English Medium Instruction (EMI) classes which often tend to focus on developing the students' English skills, the students' performance in English language proficiency is not mentioned. This course is recognized as a content course, not a language course, a fact respected by the students, as well as the teacher in charge, as

the interview data reveal.

When you meet the same people twice a week and work together with them over a period of time towards a shared goal, it is not just a gathering of individuals. You get to know the other people: whether they are more confident speaking in English or in Japanese; what they are interested in; what kind of people they are. You also learn the classroom rituals and rules, such as how a class begins and ends, and what you are expected to do in group discussions. You have opportunities to familiarize yourself to the environment and the people. Going to a classroom becomes synonymous with going back to one of the communities you belong to. As the interview participants later reveal, things that happen in the classroom, therefore, become 'natural' to them.

4.4   Participants and their linguistic background

The particular class I observed was taught by a native speaker of English. He has lived in Japan for an extensive period and has no difficulty communicating in Japanese. When I went to the class for observation, there were 26-30 students. Some were international students, including one native speaker of English. There were also two Korean students who spoke English and Japanese well. The majority, however, were Japanese students. As mentioned earlier, the international students are expected to have some command of the Japanese language since they are taking Japanese language classes and also because most of them tend to have some prior experience of studying Japanese before coming to this institution. Of the Japanese students, there were about five or six 'returnees', or *kikokushijo*, who had received some or most of their secondary education (and primary education) overseas. As for the returnees, because of their educational background, their stronger language in an educational context tends to be English. The rest of the Japanese students' dominant language is Japanese, while their proficiency in English varies.

5.   Classroom observation: bilingualism in the class

As stated earlier, I observed an introductory sociolinguistics class primarily taught in English on nine occasions. What makes this classroom unique is that this is an arena, or community, where bilingualism is encouraged, as the course syllabus stipulates. In the following section, I would like to present some examples where bilingualism was exercised by different participants.

5.1   Simultaneous bilingualism

While the code switching carried out by the teacher as well as the students provides us with interesting data, the manner in which English and Japanese is presented at the same time is also noteworthy. For example,

the writing on the board may be in English while the explanation may be given in Japanese; the PowerPoint slide may be in Japanese while the explanation given may be in English.

To give a concrete example, during one class, the teacher wrote the following on the blackboard: "Survey Language Atittudes, Akita International University". Then he said, in Japanese, "*gengo-ni taisuru ishikichosa* [language awareness research]". The students, therefore, received the dual bilingual messages simultaneously. In another example, as he continued to explain the research results of the language attitude survey, he showed a slide which read "Perception of Japanese by Gender Association", and then went on to say, "I was interested in gender. (pause) *Dansei-teki, josei-teki*. [Masculine, feminine]". "Yes, *kyu-ban desuyone* [that's question number nine]."

The function of such simultaneous provision of information in both English and Japanese in visual and aural forms overlaps with one of the characteristics of code-switching provided by Ferguson (2003). Ferguson broadly classified classroom code-switching into the following three categories: code-switching for "curriculum access", "classroom management discourse", and "interpersonal relations" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 2). The simultaneous presentation of information in two languages in this context seems to serve the first function, which is to help students, "understand the subject matter of their lessons" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 2). Terminology such as 'language attitudes' and 'gender association' may not be readily understood by some of the students whose dominant language is Japanese. The teacher was providing the Japanese glossary of those terms or was supplying some additional information in Japanese about what was written in English in order to help the students understand the subject matter.

5.2　Language choice and code-switching by the teacher

While the teacher's primary language of instruction is English, there were times when he switched to Japanese. Below are examples of code switching performed by the teacher.

Explaining how to make a good questionnaire by giving a bad example:

Questionnaire fatigue. (pause) *Ato nan peeji? E, ima nan peeji? Ato ju peeji? Kanben shite kureyo*. [Questionnaire fatigue. (pause) *How many more pages? Well, where I am now? Ten more pages? You must be kidding me*.]

Here, the code-switching from English to Japanese seems to serve two of the functions proposed by Ferguson (2003, p. 2). First of all, it is done for the purpose of 'curriculum access', to help the students understand what 'questionnaire fatigue' means in their stronger language without having the term translated in Japanese. Just as importantly, it also helps build 'interpersonal relations'. The teacher was explaining to the students what questionnaire fatigue means by imitating non-verbally a questionnaire taker who apparently had

questionnaire fatigue. The teacher made exaggerated facial and bodily expressions to express the frustration of someone who unexpectedly had to answer a lengthy questionnaire. This would help the students understand, even if they did not know the term 'questionnaire fatigue', what it was and why it would be a problem when trying to design a good questionnaire. However, it was not the only function this code-switching served. Many of the students started to smile as they watched and listened to him. As Ferguson notes, while English in Asian and African contexts shows "a more distanced, formal teacher – pupil relationship", the local language, which is Japanese in this particular context, represents "a closer, warmer more personal one" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 6). It builds rapport between the teacher and the students and provides "personal warmth" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 6). Ferguson reminds us that this category of code-switching function, "highlights the fact that the classroom is not only a place of formal learning but also a social and affective environment in its own right" (2003, p. 6). The code-switching displayed in the above example clearly seemed to help create a positive environment.

The teacher himself appears comfortable switching between English and Japanese. As he was explaining one of the language attitudes questionnaire questions and how and why he came up with the question, he demonstrated extensive intra-sentential code-switching as well as inter-sentential code-switching. He was debating whether it was a good decision to use the term bilingual, or *bairingaru*, in the questionnaire presented in Japanese.

He reads aloud the question written in Japanese (shown on the screen) and starts to explain:

Kodomo-o bairingaru-ni sodateru, yoikoto-da to omoimasuka? I'm assuming that *bairingaru sore-wa tsuujiru*. I'm not assuming *hachiju-sai, kyuju-sai no ojiisan. 'Nani nani, bairingaru?'* *Demo maa* I'm assuming *maa tsuujiru. Bairungaru wa nigengo, nigengo-sei*. If I get this explained, '*Uwa, muzukashi sou.' Masumasu kou muzukashii. Sakusou-suru, to iuka*. (pause)

Then, he looks up at the slide again and reads aloud the possible answers to the question:

 Yes. *Tabun-hai. Wakaranai*.

 (pause)

 Talk about that.

[*Do you think it is a good idea to bring up your child to be bilingual?* I'm assuming that *the term bilingual will be understood*. I'm not assuming *an old man, as old as eighty or ninety would understand it. (He may think,) 'What could 'bilingual' possibly mean?' But, well*, I'm assuming, *well, it will be understood. (I could say) bilingual means two languages, well, the state of two languages being used*. If I get this explained, *(they would think), 'Wow, it sounds difficult.'* Making things even more difficult. *They could feel lost*.]

[Yes. *Probably yes. I don't know*.]

(pause)

[Talk about that.]

The above quotation illustrates how the teacher himself is setting the tone, establishing that bilingualism and code switching are permissible and could even be the norm for this particular community.

This brings us back to Lave and Wenger's (1991) claim that learning should be regarded as a process of becoming a member of a particular discourse community. The students are exposed to an environment where bilingualism and acts of code-switching are encouraged and are also exercised by their teacher. Students learn to take the initiative under the supervision of the teacher (Stevick, 1980) and this seems to be happening in this classroom as well. Stevick states that the teacher can have 'nearly 100% of the control' and the students can have 'nearly 100% of the initiative' (Stevick, 1980, p. 17). Initiative here refers to, "decisions about who says what, to whom, and when" (Stevick, 1980, p. 17). For that to happen, Van Lier (2013) explains that, first of all, "on the institutional or community scale, educational contexts have certain rules and demands that – over time within specified parameters – create certain ideas and expectations that particular instantiations of educational activity (such as language lessons) are held to" (Van Lier, 2013, p. 242). In this case study, the course language code, the teacher's own language use, as well as the institutional policy of bilingualism, all support bilingualism and encourage students to be bilingual speakers. In addition, there is the "interpersonal scale" which fosters "a sociocognitive mindset", and Whether the teacher upholds or rejects a monolingual policy and ideology "will colour heavily the sorts of initiative that are legitimized in the classroom" (Van Lier, 2013, p. 243). It is apparent that the teacher rejects a monolingual policy and ideology, and embraces bilingual policy and ideology, and that is expected to have a significant impact on the kinds of initiative that the students perceive to be legitimate in the classroom. As a result, the students and the teacher, "may operate inside a controlling carapace of linguistic and pedagogical expectations and rules. This may or may not be overly visible or audible in classroom discourse, it may or may not be explicitly referenced as a guiding rule set (except when the rules are broken and explicitly invoked), but it may nevertheless be there" (Van Lier, 2013, p. 243). It is possible to interpret that a certain 'controlling carapace' is what is holding this particular community of practice together.

5.3   Language choice and code-switching by the students

When the students were in small groups in order to engage themselves in group discussion, some groups tended to favor English, others Japanese. For example, in one lesson, the students divided themselves into five groups – one six-member group and four five-member groups – and at one point, two of the groups were discussing in English, three in Japanese. At that time the teacher was sitting with one of the English-speaking groups, which suggests that the English native speaker teacher's presence might have influenced the students'

language choice.

On a different day of observation, however, when the teacher approached a Japanese speaking group and said, "May I join you?" one of the students said to him, "We are speaking in Japanese", to which he replied, "Fine" and the speaker, who was giving a presentation about her final project, kept speaking in Japanese. This incident suggests that the teacher's presence does not always affect the students' language choice. This brings us back to Van Lier's argument that the teacher's policy and ideology about monolingualism - and therefore about bi- and multilingualism – can determine what is considered a legitimate initiative in any given classroom. The students are witnessing their teacher exercising and performing bilingualism in class, which, in turn, seems to make them believe that they, too, can be their bilingual selves and act accordingly.

Students' initiative in their language choice is also negotiated among themselves. For example, at the beginning of one discussion session, I was watching and listening to five groups starting their discussions. Group one, with five students, started their discussion in Japanese. Group two, with six students including two overseas students, started their discussion in English. Group three, with one international student, started theirs in Japanese, but only after they discussed briefly, "*Docchi de yaru? Nihongo?* [In which language should we do this? Japanese?]" and the members showed their agreement. Group four, with seven students, including one international student, started their discussion in Japanese. Group five, which included two Korean students, first did "rock, paper and scissors" in Japanese, '*Janken pon!*', and the first speaker started her presentation in Japanese. Two groups out of five displayed explicit acts of negotiation regarding their language choice. In fact, in an interview with one of the students, I was told that 'everyone asks which language to use before they start'.

Once the presentation and discussion session starts, the students again often code-switch and they also encourage others to speak in the language of their choice. When I sat with group five mentioned above, a pair of speakers, both Korean students, were just about to finish their presentation on their project about Korean schools and how they were trying to cultivate Korean identity among their students. As they were closing their English-Japanese bilingual presentation, they invited their group members to comment or ask questions:

Korean student 2:   *… o oshiete kuremashita*

[*(These are the things) we learned*]

Korean student 1:   So.

Korean student 2:   Questions, please.

Korean student 1:   *Nihongo demo ii no de.*

[You can ask the questions in Japanese, too.]

The first student who asked a question after this invitation did so in Japanese. It is possible to say that

they were choosing to speak in whichever language they felt more comfortable at the time. This seems to indicate that the students werre exercising their language rights whether consciously or unconsciously and they seemed to be doing so quite naturally.

So far I have explained the bilingualism, and the bilingual environment, of the classroom. The teacher himself provides a bilingual environment both in his writing and his speech, to which the students respond in the language they consider best fit for the purpose of each instance of communication.

In the next section, I turn to how the students feel about the bilingualism in their classroom.

6.   Interview with students

Three interviews were conducted on 24th February, 2016, after all the coursework was completed: one with a transfer student from Sweden (Interview One), one with three returnees (Interview Two), and one with a Japanese student (Interview Three). In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, I shall refer to them Amanda (Interview One), Tomoko, Sayaka, Kanako (Interview Two[ii]) and Rie (Interview Three). The interview time varied from 67 minutes to 84 minutes, and they were recorded on an IC recorder after the research objectives had been explained and the interviewees had signed a document giving their consent to the voluntary research participation. Notes were also taken during the interviews. Interviews One and Two took place in a cafeteria on the university campus, and Interview Three was conducted in a café in the local area.

Initial greetings were exchanged in the language I heard they usually use in the classroom, and I asked them in which language they wanted to use in the interview. As a result, two of the interviews were conducted in English, one in Japanese. (Rie, in Interview Three, elected to speak in Japanese, so her utterances are translated in English. The utterances of the other four participants are transcribed as they were.)

The interviews were semi-structured. First each participant was asked to fill in a one-page questionnaire about their educational and linguistic background, including which language they felt most comfortable with in classrooms; how many years they had lived in an English-speaking environment (if they had). The interviews were listened to several times and transcribed. I made note of what appeared to be important points as well as ideas that emerged during the interviews. Grounded theory approach (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008, Saiki-Craighill, 2016) assisted me with interpretation of the data, from making descriptive notes, making comments, identifying emerging themes to categorizing the themes and referring them to existing research literature.

6.1   Theme one: Bilingualism is the norm

All the interviewees consider code switching a natural phenomenon for themselves and the people who share this particular community. When asked what they think about the code switching that the teacher performed in class, they answered that they found it "natural".

> [The teacher] switches so naturally that I sometimes don't even notice it.
>
> (Tomoko)
>
> ...if it comes to some kind of break and then he adds in some Japanese because he lives in a Japanese environment and I guess he uses Japanese a lot in his everyday life. So it comes natural for him then.
>
> (Amanda)

The word 'natural' is also used to describe the code-switching students themselves performed.

> ...[b]ut it is still mainly Japanese people, so they might say something in Japanese to me then I catch on and then they catch on that I know Japanese and then the code-switching kind of begins. I don't really think that – I think that, yeah, it is very natural, it has become such a natural thing for me.
>
> (Amanda)
>
> [Code-switching] is just something so natural to happen, and I find it nice.
>
> (Rie)

All the participants were aware that the teacher's code switching was intended to make sure that the students would understand certain points that he wanted to emphasize in the lesson, which is the first function of code switching suggested by Ferguson (2003). They also noticed the importance of the third function, which is to make the classroom "a social and affective environment" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 6). In fact, for Rie, it was the first thing that she thought of when she tried to recall when and how the teacher code-switched.

> I don't think I always noticed it when it happened. When I did, well, that was when he was trying to make us laugh. Then I pay attention, thinking, "Oh this is funny. ... Well, we are all prepared to listen to English, so when he suddenly switched to Japanese, it felt interesting or funny, so I think he was trying to loosen up the atmosphere. So when I tried to imagine him code switch from English to Japanese, I associated that with this image of students laughing.
>
> (Rie)

It seems that the code switching by the teacher is helpful in creating a positive atmosphere of the

classroom by making it a "warmer more personal" environment (Ferguson, 2003, p. 6).

6.2   Theme two: The classroom is a place where students and should feel comfortable and secure

The fact that the language code is 'E/J' (i.e., the main language is English while some Japanese is also used) and that the students are allowed to choose to speak in the language of their choice (as long as it is agreed to by other participants) is welcomed by the students. They describe such an environment as 'safe' and 'comfortable'. For example, Amanda (Interview One) finds the bilingual environment good for her because she can choose to express herself in either English or Japanese.

> ... a lot of the homework is in English and I can write the papers in English. So I can choose to take tests or choose to do my assignments in English. I have kind of so far made a choice to do it in English because I do not feel safe. I do not mind using Japanese. When it comes to writing an academic paper or writing something academic, I don't feel that safe in my Japanese skills.

I also asked them if they think the students in the 'E/J' class might be using Japanese too much. My question came from the assumption that since English *is* the primary language and the teacher is a native speaker of English, they might want to seize the opportunity to use more English in class and encourage others to do the same. They answered, however, that they found no problem with the way many of their peers (and themselves) spoke in Japanese rather than in English for classroom interactions. Amanda explained her reasoning as follows:

> ...because I know that if I would be in the position of a Japanese person taking that class, I would feel very comfortable knowing that it is okay for me to use Japanese because I know how it feels to have to talk in a language you are not confident in and how that can affect your ability of like performing, like academically. So it is a big relief to, to know that it is okay to use Japanese and that will make them able to perform better and then they might try in English and if they know that it is okay to use Japanese they can still, like, relax, and I think that's important to like not try to force people too much.

Tomoko, a returnee who said she was more comfortable using English for academic purposes, said:

> When we are doing discussions, what is important is that we all understand, and if someone is not comfortable in English, then Japanese is fine, we all understand, *nihongo-de iiddesuyo toka* [and I'd say, You can speak in Japanese, that's fine'].

Rie, the only person among the interviewees whose preferred language of communication is Japanese, speaks of students' free choice of language positively.

> (As long as the class is not designed for the purpose of the students speaking perfect Japanese or perfect English, then) I don't think there is any problem with it. ... As long as what they say is fine in terms of its contents, and as long as other people understand them and they understand what they are saying themselves, then there is no problem, I think.

The students value a classroom environment which allows them to express themselves in the language of their choice. It makes them feel secure and comfortable. There is a "mutual trust" (Stevick 1976) between the student and the teacher in that as long as they can express themselves in a way that can be understood by the other members of this particular bilingual community, it is up to the speaker to choose which language to use. It also seems to confirm that the teacher has created a classroom environment that allows student initiatives, letting the students think and make decisions "about who says what, to whom, and when" (Stevick, 1980, p. 17). It also suggests that what we see here is one community of practice where the students are learning how to behave and be accepted as English-Japanese bilingual university students in their own right.

6.3   Theme three: The classroom is a place where students should be treated as intellectual beings

'As long as everyone understands' seems to be a key which grants them permission to exercise language choice, and, as expected, the students are aware of the importance of understanding and demonstrating one's understanding of academic subjects in university. As described earlier, the teacher's code-switching was often done for the purpose of better understanding. Amanda stressed the importance of understanding the subject and of having an opportunity to show that you are capable of understanding and discussing academic subjects:

> I know that if I would be in the position of a Japanese person taking that class, I would feel very comfortable knowing that it is okay for me to use Japanese because I know how it feels to have to talk in a language you are not confident in and how that can affect your ability of like performing, like academically. So it is a big relief to, to know that it is okay to use Japanese and that will make them able to perform better and then they might try in English and if they know that it is okay to use Japanese they can still like relax, and I think that's important to like not try to force people too much... because this is still a university, and you are encouraged to learn a subject, and language is the second thing.

What Amanda says here suggests that understanding is also connected to feeling confident and safe. Sayaka shares Amanda's opinion that university is a place where they have come to study course subjects, not language:

> The purpose of going to university is to learn the subject, not simply language. Language is important but it's only a tool to do things. If language impairs you, inhibits you, to think and express academically, I don't think it's right.

And for everyone in class to perform well academically, Amanda says:

> ... the big part is that we have to use a language that everyone can understand.

Here we have a community where the participants are learning how to speak in a manner that can help everyone understand. The students' ultimate goal lies in their intellectual pursuit of their academic interest. Language should not be a barrier to their learning and it should not be a barrier to their teacher or their peers when they assess an individual's knowledge and opinion.

7.   Conclusion

The first research question asked how the teacher and the students in a classroom 'do' language, or more specifically, if it is possible that the students are not just being managed but are their own agent. As the classroom observation showed, the students seem to be aware of their language rights and are in control of their own language choice. If anyone is managing their language, it appears that it is the students themselves. In response to the second research question of how the participants of the classroom interaction perceive their own negotiation of language and identity, I would like to state that interviews with the students suggest that they believe they should be responsible for their own language choice and that, as legitimate members of this particular community, what they say should be respected, regardless of the language they use to express their thoughts. Such attitudes are in contrast to many EMI settings in which the participants tend to express their anxiety. The students in this study seemed on the whole very relaxed about the linguistic environment provided by the institution and in the classroom.

The observations revealed that bilingualism was practiced not only in the oral communication of the participants but also in the selection of assigned readings and language used in the power point slides. The class participants share the idea that it is 'only natural' that the such code-mixing and code-switching take

place.

From the observations and interviews, it appears that every participant in this classroom seemed to enjoy having the right to negotiate which language to use and, as a result, the classroom language *emerged*. The idea that the classroom language just 'emerges' is also the teacher's description of what he does with language in the classroom (private conversation with the teacher, March 17, 2016). It should also be noted that bilingualism has been a pillar of the university's philosophy since it was founded in the 1950s, preparing the members of this particular community of practice to embrace the idea and practice of bilingualism. It was also found that what kind of classroom language you may find in one classroom is more complicated than what the language code for the course indicates, though it certainly helps give a framework for the participants to work in.

Because it is beyond the scope of this current study, the interview data with the teacher are not included in the data presentation and analysis in this paper. However, the extensive, repeated interviews with the teacher will be helpful in understanding what is going on and why in this particular bilingual community in a more comprehensible way. Those data and the interpretation will be added to the current findings in a subsequent study on the theme of classroom language and language policy in an educational context.

The above findings should also have an implication on English-medium instruction contexts and language management in such contexts, helping alleviate some of the tensions that are typically found when non-native speakers of English are left feeling vulnerable. Upon starting the research, I had expected more tensions regarding language choice and language policy. However, this study suggests that this does not always have to be the case and the teacher does not always have to assume the role of the language policy maker/enforcer. It appears that language choice can be left without being managed sometimes.

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[i] The expression, "we do language" is taken from what Toni Morrison said after accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. She explained how language is central to our daily lives and said, "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives." Charity Hudley and Mallison borrowed the expression, "We do language", for the title of their book on how educators and students communicate in secondary English language classrooms (2014). The idea that we 'do' language, I believe, can be applied to any classroom and at any level of education, given the importance of language to express ourselves and understand each other.

ii   Of the three returnees who came for the interview, Tomoko is the one who was taking the class of this research target. I had told all the potential interview participants to come with their friends if they wanted to because I believe it is beneficial to make sure that the interviewees feel comfortable in front of the researcher in order to get them to speak more freely. While the other two were not taking the same target class as Tomoko, they had also shared similar experiences on campus.