

Talking Tactics – Fathers' Language Work in Bilingual Childrearing in Intermarried Families in Japan

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Contemporary social change related to the structure and function of families has spurred an increasing scholarship of fatherhood, and much is now known about the vital and diverse roles that fathers play in the lives of their children. At the same time, a growing literature now exists pertaining to international marriage and the raising of bilingual children.

Specifically, recent works have acknowledged the demanding and at times taxing nature of the “language work” that is undertaken by the minority language speaking parent (Okita, 2002). However, the majority of these sociolinguistic studies have adopted the perspective of the intermarried mother living as a cultural minority (e.g.: Liamputtong, 2001; Varro, 1988), and have tended to assume that intermarried fathers play peripheral, subordinate roles in the bilingual childrearing process.

This paper challenges such an assumption. The presenter's ongoing PhD research is a qualitative investigation of the language work undertaken by native English speaking intermarried fathers residing in Japan, and their experiences of the bilingual childrearing process. In this presentation, a preliminary discussion of a recently conducted case study will detail one family's experience of implementing a specific language use strategy, and the effect that location and parental L2 proficiency has had on the application of that strategy.

Key Words: fatherhood, intermarriage, childrearing, bilingualism, language work, Japan.