

simultaneous (from infancy) or balanced L1–L2 rarities (Baker 2006: 3–17). Thus, institutions and students alike are discouraged from venturing out of their monocultural shell. In order not to be demotivated, learners need attainable goals and a positive conception of where they will arrive as a person. The bilingual perspective makes it clear that the learning process should start from where the language development of the whole person is aimed.

### Fallacy 4: Acquisition is measured by speaking

Conversely to glossing over speaking, too much may be inferred from recorded utterances or silence in the L2. People always say native *speaker* when it should be *acquirer*. They invariably ask even in Japanese if one's children *speak* English. Rather they should be asking if bicultural children *understand* English. The so-called passive bilinguals (Baker 2006: 3–7)

the goal should be to become  
bilingual and, to the extent one  
chooses, to become bicultural.

show that people have acquired much more of a language than they have occasion to speak. To possess listening comprehension, the most basic proficiency through which nearly everyone acquires L1, means that huge structures have been built up in the brain.

The notion of *native language* is singular grammatically and conceptually, at least in a predominantly monolingual country like Japan. Thus it comes as a surprise, except to those who have studied bilingualism, that children can have more than one native language.

Listening comprehension in any language can be demonstrated with physical gestures or movements, which is how infants start picking up the rhythms of native languages (Kobayashi 2007). Infants becoming bilingual can distinguish two languages by facial expressions alone from four months old, while monolingual children lose that ability by eight months old (Lickenbrock-Fujii 2007: 7). But as unspoken acquired language is not readily measurable by conventional research methods, results may be misinterpreted if acquisition is judged by speaking. The terrain under the street lamp cannot be extrapolated to illuminate less visible territory.

### Fallacy 5: The purpose of language is communication

Rethinking another basic assumption, it is generally thought that the purpose of language is communication, the transfer and negotiation of meanings. Language also serves further purposes such as self-expression, exploring and discovering the world as well as hitherto unconscious regions of oneself. Yet another view has emerged in a society like Japan where an enormous number of daily mobile phone messages seem to serve purposes not so much of communication as alluded to above but rather of contacting people in one's social

network (Hoffman 2007). It could thus be hypothesised that, where the contact itself is more important than the message content, it is not a form of communication *per se*. Rather it may be a primordial contact saying that one is there in the relationship, to be recognised as one of the group, without exchanging content, in order to be accepted by one's peers.

This point was foreshadowed in the third paragraph in examining motives for studying English conversation. Similarly, the notion of phatic communication could be held up as a style of discourse that means contact or positioning more than communication of content. On the other hand, surely much of non-verbal communication carries meanings, and the discipline of pragmatics may well tackle this challenge with a wider definition of communication. But this hypothesis calls attention to pre-communicative imperatives of verbal and non-verbal communication serving purposes such as signalling one's presence, desiring relationships, or maintaining membership in a peer group.

### Conclusion

Surely these considerations are not confined to Japan. It is always healthy to examine assumptions, to brainstorm and rethink issues for possible biases. Misconceptions about bilingualism certainly abound (Genesee 2007), impacting negatively on language learning, so the bilingual perspective tends to look beneath the surface for multidimensionality. It would be worth initiating an international congress drawing on ELF research to standardise a range of English norms as correct, provided they are agreed upon democratically, with the majority of stakeholders—now non-native users. Intercultural communication will not only be made possible by non-native English users but enriched when roadblocks to their full participation are relinquished. The Street Lamp Syndrome bespeaks the convenience of documentable measurability, whereas the bilingual perspective suggests the whole street and where it can lead the traveller.

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