

Cultural Expectations and Parental Involvement in Early Literacy

Meredith Stephens and Richard Blight

Abstract

This study investigates the involvement of parents in early literacy in Japanese and Australian primary schools. While both schools valued support from parents in the education process, different cultural expectations are evident in each system. A number of significant areas are discussed, including traditional domestic situations in Japan, changing work cultures in Australia, education and maternal duties, higher expectations in Japan, parents supporting homework activities, parents supporting class work, correspondence with the teacher, and parents' concerns. The relative complexity of attaining literacy in Japanese appears to generally necessitate higher levels of support from parents, although a number of presumptions concerning social circumstances were also evident in the Japanese educational milieu. Australian parents also supported their children's literacy development, but similar expectations for their involvement in the education process were not apparent.

Introduction

Without comparison we simply refashion the world to fit our individual, collective or political interests and remain imprisoned by local or national habits that are too deeply ingrained to allow us to countenance alternatives.

(Alexander, 2000, p. 49)

One approach to developing a child's bilingualism is to enrol them in overseas education programs, although different pedagogical perspectives and a range of varying cultural expectations are likely to be encountered in the overseas school. When we enrolled our seven year-old daughter in an Australian school during the Japanese vacation periods, we observed a number of major differences between the two education systems. We consequently decided to research the differences between Japanese and Australian school systems, and the potential impact of these differences on our daughter's education.

Our research focuses on early literacy education since we are particularly concerned about our daughter's development of literacy skills in the two languages. Two areas of our investigation have been reported in previous research papers. In the initial study, which is based on classroom observations and informal discussions with parents and teachers, a range of cultural and pedagogical differences between Year One classes in the two countries were identified (see Stephens, 2002). In the second study, we reported on differences in error correction practices evident in our daughter's written work from the two schools, and explained these in relation to different educational goals and differences in linguistic form (see Stephens & Blight, 2002).

The current study reports on a third area which also appears to be significant within the context of our research project. While schools in both countries aimed to involve parents in the education of their children, different expectations were evident in the two school systems. In this paper, we examine how expectations for parental involvement in literacy education differed in the two countries. A number of topics are explored in detail: traditional domestic situations in Japan, changing work cultures in Australia, education and maternal duties, higher expectations in Japan, parents supporting homework activities, parents supporting class work, correspondence with the teacher, and parents' concerns. Our findings in each area

are discussed and related to previous research findings. We hope that other parents in Japan who are considering overseas enrolments as a way of developing their children's bilingual skills may benefit from our research into differences between the Japanese and Australian school systems.

Methodology

This research project has involved a number of avenues of investigation. Firstly, we conducted a series of formal classroom observations in primary schools in Japan and Australia. In Japan, we observed eleven Year One *kokugo* ("National Language", i. e., Japanese) lessons at a Japanese public school, attended four *parent observation days*, and participated in three *parent-teacher interviews*. In Australia, we observed ten literacy lessons in a combined Reception / Year One class at a private primary school. Secondly, we were personally involved as parents in our daughter's education throughout the full period of attendance at each school (one year in Japan, nine months in Australia; due to different calendars and starting ages at each school). We helped with her homework assignments during this period and were involved as parents in school and class activities at the two schools. In addition we experienced approximately two years as parents of kindergarteners at two Japanese kindergartens while each of our daughters was in the second year of kindergarten between ages four and five. Although this study is concerned with primary education, some reference will also be made to the expectations made of parents of kindergarteners, because of the formative influence of these expectations on parental roles in the subsequent years of schooling.

Furthermore, we routinely discussed differences in the education systems with our daughter in order to appreciate her own personal experience of the two systems. Finally, we engaged in frequent informal discussions with parents and teachers at the

two schools, in order to understand their individual experiences and to share their varying perspectives on the education process in each country.

Traditional Domestic Situations in Japan

Major cultural differences were observed during the study in the area of parental roles and associated responsibilities. Expectations for traditional domestic situations were evident in Japanese society, where it was presumed that children were supported by either nuclear families (comprised of mother, father, and children) or extended families (including grandparents cohabiting with the nuclear family). Fathers were expected to be *breadwinners* who were preoccupied with full-time employment and consequently unavailable to assist with the children's education. Mothers, on the other hand, were expected to be *homemakers* who were available to support school activities and to shoulder various educational responsibilities. While traditional role patterns also commonly occurred in families at the Australian school, a more diverse range of family situations was apparent. As a consequence, the roles taken by each parent were less clearly defined.

A number of previous researchers have identified certain expectations for traditional parental roles in Japanese society. Vogel comments directly on the gender division: "husbands typically leave childrearing totally to their wives" (1996, p.194). Imamura explains the husbands' limited involvement in their children's education in terms of two principal reasons: the major time commitment required for work duties, and a prevailing attitude that education is primarily a mother's duty (1990, p.24). Sakamoto also argues that educational development, particularly in the area of reading skills, is typically regarded as part of the mother's responsibilities. He describes a "mother-child twenty minutes a day reading campaign" (1985, p.130) in which the father is expected to provide limited

support: "It is the mother who most usually listens but other family members, e. g., father, grandparents, siblings, could take part when the mother is not available" (p. 135). In the current study, while a gender bias was evident in terms of demands placed by Japanese society on the mother, it is significant that this expectation was not enforced by the school. School notices, for example, were phrased in politically sensitive terminology addressed to *ouchi no hito* ("the person at home"). Significantly less pressure was exerted on us regarding these traditional gender specific roles by members of the school teaching staff than had been experienced informally in interactions with other parents, suggesting a heightened awareness of gender equality by teaching staff.

Changing Work Cultures in Australia

In Australia, there have been major changes in family situations, economic conditions, and educational perspectives in recent decades. Domestic roles and responsibilities are now arranged according to each family's specific situation, and frequently do not follow the traditional father-breadwinner, mother-homemaker roles. Workplace restructuring has resulted in a major shift from full-time to part-time employment across many employment sectors, and the ensuing reduction in family incomes has precipitated a requirement for participation of both parents in the workforce (Townsend & Walker, 1998, pp. 83-84). Parents in many families are consequently unavailable to provide educational support on behalf of their children, and schools have been required to readdress the expectations they can make of parents with regard to educational support. The traditional domestic pattern is now actually reversed in some households, where the mother earns the majority of income, and the father cares primarily for the children. The number of single parent families in the community has also reached substantial proportions and

appears to be on a continuing uptrend. Furthermore, affirmative action programs for women have had a significant impact on education policies, so that schools have been required to address gender bias as a contemporary social issue. Townsend and Walker discuss the major impact of changing domestic situations on the Australian educational system :

the most critical issue facing schools in the next decade is their ability to encourage parents to become more involved in school activities. Given the situation of many parents—in some families both parents work, in other families there is a language barrier and in yet other families there is a level of demoralisation because of financial, social (e. g. marriage breakdown) or employment problems—there will be some difficulty for schools in this task [T]he changing nature of families and their ability to support their child at school may become the most critical factor that education . . . will have to address. (1998, p. 96)

Institutional expectations based on mothers sharing responsibility in their children's education would generally appear to be both misplaced and impractical in contemporary Australian social contexts. Furthermore, presumptions made by schools concerning parents' contributions to specific areas of their children's education have also been revised during recent decades. Carrington, for example, discusses the impact of reduced parental involvement on literacy education :

Restructured economic conditions and changing work cultures have not occurred without impact on family operation and structure. Parents and children spend less 'free' time at home and this means less time is available for what are seen to be the traditional print-based home literacy activities, for

example, mothers reading to small children, older siblings helping younger ones write notes and letters, fathers reading the paper. (2001, p. 90)

Education and Maternal Duties

More substantial demands were made on mothers in the Japanese educational milieu, where their role in supporting a child's education was perceived as a form of maternal duty. Importantly it was not predominantly the teachers who transmitted their expectations to us, but peer pressure resulting from interactions with other families, and observing ways in which mothers promoted their children's education through attendance at cram schools and extra-curricular activities. Ensuring that their child was always appropriately equipped for school was hence a matter of some pride to most mothers, particularly since this reflected upon their own capacity as a mother. Iwao discusses the conceptualisation of maternal duties in Japan :

what it means to be a good mother in Japan is measured by how much a mother does for the sake of the child. Society (the schools, in particular) demands that mothers work closely with their children, especially in the early years of primary school, preparing some of the supplies needed for attending school, monitoring the child's homework and preparations for school, and otherwise keeping a close eye on what the child is doing. Such close involvement by mothers has been a source of great success in assuring that small children acquire solid basic knowledge and skills (such as writing and arithmetic skills), and this involvement is not supposed to be given short shift even if a mother is working. (1993, pp. 138-139)

Our findings support Iwao's perspective on the very close support typically

provided by Japanese mothers. Further to the examples given, we also observed mothers being expected to actively participate in the PTA (parent-teacher association), as well as in various school events including Sports Day and the School Fete. They were assigned to specific tasks at these events, such as monitoring bicycle parking in the school grounds, or preparing food items or craft goods to sell at stalls at the annual fete. Traditional Japanese expectations for a mother's involvement in her child's education are further discussed by Imamura :

Children's education is based on the premise that mother will be free to devote a lot of time to helping the child-not only with homework and at examination time but making nutritious and varied lunches, seeing that the child does not forget to bring items to school, ensuring that he has a clean handkerchief and clean fingernails every day, and so on. Teachers often send home a memo asking the mother to produce a box or case or other item made to a specified size by the next day. . . . Mothers are expected to participate in PTA, which meets during the day. . . and take their turns at various offices in this group. There is also a great deal of after-school learning that involves mothers, whether it is taking children to art, music, or sports lessons or to after-school academic study It is thus not surprising . . . that the mother views the child's success at school as *her* achievement. (1987, pp. 19-20)

In Australia, while parental support is also regarded as beneficial to various school functions, including assisting in the canteen and clothing store, and helping out on maintenance days (Ashton & Cairney, 2001, p. 150), teachers could not presume that mothers were freely available to contribute to school activities. Parents were invited to participate in various events in the school bulletin, but involvement was strictly voluntary. The schools consequently did not require parents' involvement

as a basis for running various school events, although their support in certain areas was clearly important to the school's operation.

Higher Expectations in Japan

Previous reports by western mothers who have experienced schools in Japan and an English-speaking country have typically perceived expectations for involvement in their children's education to be higher in Japan. Benjamin discusses her experience of the different cultural expectations: "I knew intellectually that Japanese mothers are more active, more encouraging, more involved and more necessary than I am in America: it just didn't sink in emotionally and practically" (1997, p. 192). Commenting on the use of the *renrakucho* ("daily communication book") between the teacher and parents, she continues: "Another way of looking at it is that these communications are ways of reminding mothers that their role as *kyoiku mama*, 'education moms', is one the school system counts on, not one that is optional for them" (p. 195).

In interactions with Japanese parents, we experienced pressure being applied to ensure that mothers nurtured their children's development. One researcher comments wryly on such forms of institutional pressure: "some teachers now say that they don't know who's being graded, the mother or the child" (White, 1987, p. 125). In another study, Imamura observes that some foreign mothers resisted cooperating with schools when they did not agree with particular policies: "many object to the type of participation demands placed on the mother" (1990, p. 21). Peak also discusses the pressure placed on mothers, and argues that expectations concerning maternal responsibilities are in fact established and reinforced from the earliest stages of the Japanese educational system. As early as preschool level, mothers are routinely required to sew a range of clothing and outfit items, and to provide an

elaborate daily boxed lunch for their children :

The very high expectations for maternal participation in Japanese preschools may be seen as an important influence in socializing Japanese mothers in their appropriate role in supporting their children's education. Preschools reinforce maternal compliance through frequent allusions to an assumed direct relationship between the strength of maternal love and the amount of maternal assistance. They also provide numerous subtle opportunities for mothers to compare each others' work. (1991, p. 62)

We also witnessed an implied relationship between maternal commitment and educational support in the Japanese educational milieu. Furthermore, we support Peak's view that this association is engineered to work for the educational institution's advantage. In our experience, mothers were routinely urged by pre-school staff to express their maternal commitment in various institutionally beneficial ways. The teachers used a range of subtly coercive expressions to seek their compliance with various educational directives (e. g., *kokoro o komeru* ; "put your heart into it"). The prevailing gender bias was particularly evident in the use of these expressions, which were reserved solely for mothers, while fathers were never exhorted to express their affections in a similar way.

In English-speaking countries, the role of parental involvement in achieving successful literacy education is also considered highly significant. Carrington discusses findings in this area from research in the United States :

recent research has clearly identified the moral connection between 'good mothering' discourses and the role of mothers in the development of early literacy '[G]ood' early literacy skills have been closely associated with a

family model where there is sufficient time for mothers, in particular, to inculcate print-based literacy skills and patterns modelled closely on those associated with the school. (2001, pp. 90-91)

However, while successful literacy education appears related to "good mothering" practices, institutional expectations in this area were not evident in Australian society. While teachers recommended that parents should provide levels of literacy support (particularly in terms of the benefits to their children), schools could not generally count on receiving substantial support from parents in the education process. Furthermore, the level of close involvement and support expected of mothers in Japanese society was considerably less evident in Australian society. There was no implied relationship between the quality of a mother's affections and the level of support provided to ensure the child's success in the educational system.

Parents supporting Homework Activities

Parents were involved in supporting literacy homework at the Year One level in both Japan and Australia. Reading homework was assigned on a daily basis in both countries, and required close supervision from parents. However, different methods of reading education were observed at the two schools. In Japan, children would read a set passage from a textbook for homework with their parents, in order to prepare for reading the same text together at school the next day. By contrast, children in Australia read *basal readers* at home with their parents, and continued with the readers at school. The readers were borrowed on an individual basis from class sets, according to graded reading levels and individual preferences for content. Advanced readers were able to quickly progress to more challenging materials, and

their learning was not delayed by being required to progress at a uniform class rate. Children at a lower reading level also benefited by being allowed sufficient time to develop their skills without receiving undue pressure or any forms of negative feedback. In addition to using the basal readers at home, teachers advised parents to provide "purposeful reading activities such as reading recipes or directions," to read to children on a daily basis, and to read together in a variety of domestic situations (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997, p. 74).

Children in Japan were given several additional written homework exercises each week. The exercises involved two principal forms of activity: copying set texts, and composing haiku. Children copied excerpts from the textbook into a special graph book, and were required to carefully replicate the precise form and position of characters and punctuation in the correct part of each square of the graph book. The haiku compositions were undertaken as a collaborative activity between children and parents in order to encourage creative thinking within a defined structure, and to facilitate awareness of seasonal change (Stephens, 2002). Parents were required to monitor that the copying activities were completed at an acceptable standard, and to participate directly in the haiku compositions. The written work was then checked by the teacher the next day. While written exercises were not assigned for homework in Australia, parents were advised to support their children's writing in a number of ways, including: praising their writing; responding to written messages rather than to grammatical errors; and providing a range of opportunities for purposeful writing at home, including writing notes, cards, and telephone messages (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997, p. 73).

Parents in Japan were also engaged in supervising their children's daily education. School work was brought home each day and parents were advised to check their children's progress and to discuss any problem areas. In this way, parents acted to complement the teacher's efforts in order to directly support their

children's learning. By contrast, school books that were not required for homework in Australia were stored overnight in a class locker, and there was no practice of reviewing their children's work on a daily basis.

Two major differences were hence apparent between the schools' expectations for parental involvement in homework activities. Firstly, parents in Japan were generally expected to provide more support, particularly by way of providing assistance with the written assignments. The earlier commencement of written homework is likely to be related to the greater complexity of the Japanese writing system (Stephens & Blight, 2002), which requires a significantly longer time period to learn. Furthermore, children in Japan are often one year older when taking Year One, since many children in Australia start school at age five, and Australian Year One classes are commonly multi-age classes composed of both five and six year-olds. Secondly, parents in Japan were expected to share responsibility for their children's education with the school by supervising their daily progress. We view this practice in terms of another fundamentally different cultural perspective on the education process.

Parents supporting Class Work

In Australia, parents were directly involved in the daily classroom practice of literacy education. Parent volunteers joined classes to listen to children reading aloud from their readers. With the basal reader system, children's reading needs to be monitored individually since each child has a different reader. During our study, volunteers were observed attending the classroom each morning, listening to children reading, providing support with difficult words, and helping children to exchange readers after completing a book. Significantly, the parents were directly supporting the education system, which involved helping other children (apart from

their own) learn to read. This arrangement appears designed to support a reading system based on individual development, whereas the Japanese reading system has the class progressing as a group. In Japan, the teacher was observed leading the choral reading sessions, and did not appear to require support with this method. Parents did not participate in classroom activities, nor were they involved in the teaching process in a similar way. They were, however, invited to observe classroom practice by attending demonstration lessons on parent observation days, and these were generally well attended by both mothers and fathers during the study period.

Research literature views the direct participation by parents in Australian classrooms as a result of recent shifts in educational policy, which now aims to enlist voluntary parental support as a valuable contribution towards achieving educational goals. As discussed by Ashton and Cairney, the Australian policy has in fact changed significantly since two decades ago when “most schools engaged in a one-way process of transferring information to students and families alike” (2001, p. 146). The current direction is to involve parents in decision-making processes associated with areas of classroom practice and school management, although limited success has also been reported in terms of the realisation of this goal (p. 145). Contemporary pedagogy emphasizes the need to establish collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers: “What is important, therefore, is that partnership discourses and practices be matched. Parents must be given opportunities to contribute to policies, management and governance as well as offer support for reading and fundraising” (p. 155). One factor which facilitates the current policy of cooperative involvement can be associated with parents’ access to the teacher. In Australia, parents have more frequent opportunities for informal contact with teachers, since they generally attend school twice daily when accompanying their children to and from school. In contrast, many children in

Japan commute to and from school with other groups of children, so that parents typically do not attend school on a daily basis and have less routine access to teachers. However this is made up for by telephone calls from the teacher to the parent at home when the need arises. This practice indicates both the high degree of concern for individual children by the class teacher and the importance attached to effective parent-teacher communication.

Correspondence with the Teacher

Parents were involved in several forms of routine correspondence with the teacher in both countries. Firstly, they provided written feedback on their children's reading homework to the teacher, although this was done in different ways. In Australia, a form was completed with the date, the title of the book, the number of pages read, and a comments section, and subsequently signed by both the parent and the teacher. In contrast, the feedback system used in the Japanese school was significantly more detailed. The Japanese form contained additional columns for whether the child read in a loud voice, whether the child read accurately, whether the child paid attention to full stops and commas, whether the child paid attention to quotation marks, and the number of times the passage was read. Parents were also required to assess their children's reading homework with a double circle to indicate excellent reading, a single circle to indicate good reading, and a triangle to indicate that more work was required. The teacher would check and stamp the written record daily, and also attached new feedback sheets when necessary so as to collate a continuous record of each child's reading progress over the year.

In both countries notices were routinely distributed to the parents, which sometimes required written responses to be returned to the teacher. The volume of

notices, however, was significantly greater in the case of the Japanese school, and their purpose was somewhat different. The notices were used both to provide information to parents and to inform them of various responsibilities and duties that the school expected, including their required participation in school activities. While school notices were also routinely distributed in Australia, the volume of distributions was substantially less, and their purpose was limited to providing information, special announcements and requests to parent volunteers to assist with activities such as listening to children read and making lunches in the canteen.

Parents in Japan also engaged in a regular form of correspondence with the teacher through the *renrakucho* (“daily communication book”), which was used to monitor children’s individual progress and to discuss problem areas or particular concerns. There was no regular daily correspondence in the Australian school, although parents had more routine access to the classroom through their daily visits to deliver and collect children, and were often able to discuss various matters directly with the teacher.

Educational Concerns of Parents

The concerns exhibited by parents about the education systems differed somewhat at the two schools. While in both countries parents expressed general concerns about the standards of education, parents in Japan perceived more pressure to be associated with their children’s individual achievements. With Saturday classes set to be terminated in Japan from the 2002 school year, some believed that the impending reduction in classroom hours and curriculum content would negatively impact their children’s development. Some parents were also already considering sending their children to *juku* (“after-hours schools”) in subsequent years in order to ensure that they ultimately attained the educational standards necessary to passing

entrance examinations for preferred high schools. So that while western mothers in Japan perceived the Japanese early education system to be overly demanding on both children and parents (Benjamin, 1997), many Japanese parents were already concerned that their children would be seriously disadvantaged if an insufficient level of educational achievement was attained. In Australia, formal after-hours schooling is much less widely subscribed. However a major source of private tutoring for children in Australia, Kumon, has its origins in Japan. Clearly parents in both cultures are concerned with their children's literacy, and the export of Kumon to Australia is indicative of a cross-cultural transfer of an educational practice.

Conclusions

This study has investigated cultural expectations for parental involvement in early literacy education. Mothers in Japan were more routinely involved in their children's education in a number of ways, including providing support with written homework, and supervising work which had been completed in class. They also corresponded more regularly with teachers, and participated more directly in school events. In Australia, lower expectations for parental involvement were generally apparent, with parents required to do little more than listen to reading homework. Some parents also assisted the teacher by providing individual reading support to children during lessons, but this was done on a voluntary basis.

The higher expectations for parents to support their children's education in Japan appear to be associated with presumptions concerning the prevalence of traditional domestic situations. Mothers are generally expected to be available to directly participate in the education system, and educational institutions count on their contributions in a number of important areas. Support is enlisted through

expectations which associate the quality of a mother's affections with her maternal duty to provide educational support. An underlying competitive element also appears to have been fostered at the preschool level which results in a form of peer pressure for mothers to assist in the education process.

Both education systems recognise the immense value of parental support to the education process. The lower expectations generally evident in Australia can be associated with workplace restructuring, different domestic situations, more widely varying levels of support for schools and a range of social issues which have resulted in many parents being unavailable to assist with educational purposes. Contemporary policies acknowledge the importance of gaining support from parents, although limited success has in fact been reported in realising this goal. And while Australian schools are seeking the higher level of parental involvement currently found in Japan, this may in fact be difficult to achieve on account of different social circumstances and workplace cultures. In contrast, however, Australian pedagogy aims for parents to be included in a collaborative management capacity, in addition to directly supporting the education of their own children. The focus in Japan is on parents supporting the progress of their own children, and in contributing their efforts to ensure the success of various school events.

Finally, the relative value of the various cultural differences observed in this study cannot be readily determined. Each education system reflects a range of cultural perspectives which tend towards different educational goals (Stephens & Blight, 2002). In previous studies, we have argued that the literacy education system in Japan has evolved in order to provide instruction in what is ultimately a more complex and demanding writing system (Stephens, 2002; Stephens & Blight, 2002). It is also evident from the current study that additional parental support serves to complement classroom literacy instruction. As observed by Wray, the complex task of learning Japanese literacy appears to be achieved through "the

coordination of mothers, teachers . . . and the Ministry of Education" (1999, p. 3). There are also, however, a range of different cultural perspectives which establish a system of higher expectations on parents in Japan. And while cultural differences in writing systems, pedagogy, and social circumstances continue to render meaningful comparisons between the two education systems difficult, the greater expectations in Japan should be recognised as serving a fundamental role in the Japanese education system.

References

- Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture and pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education*. London: Blackwell.
- Ashton, J., & Cairney, T. (2001). Understanding the discourses of partnership: an examination of one school's attempts at parent involvement. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 24 (2), 145-156.
- Benjamin, G. (1997). *Japanese lessons: a year in a Japanese school through the eyes of an American Anthropologist and her children*. New York: New York University.
- Carrington, V. (2001). Emergent home literacies: a challenge for educators. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 24 (2), 88-100.
- Education Department of Western Australia. (1997). *Writing developmental continuum*. Melbourne: Rigby Heinemann.
- Imamura, A. (1987). *Urban Japanese housewives: At home and in the community*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Imamura, A. (1990). Interdependence of family and education: reactions of foreign wives of Japanese to the school system. In J. Shields (Ed.), *Japanese schooling: patterns of socialization, equality and political control* (pp. 16-27). University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Iwao, S. (1993). *The Japanese Woman: Traditional image and changing reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Peak, L. (1991). *Learning to go to school in Japan: the transition from home to preschool life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sakamoto, T. (1985). Reading promotion in the post-literacy age: the case of Japan. In *The*

- right to read: literacy around the world* (pp. 129-140). Evanston, Illinois: Rotary International.
- Stephens, M. (2002). Early literacy in Japanese and Australian classes. *Studies in Language and Literature*, Matsuyama University Research Association, 21 (2), 185-223.
- Stephens, M., & Blight, R. (2002). The influence of culture on the development of biliteracy: A comparison of error correction in early writing in Japanese and Australian schools. *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, Japan Association for Language Teaching (Bilingualism NSIG), 8 (1), 75-94.
- Townsend, T., & Walker, I. (1998). Different families: new issues for schools. In T. Townsend (Ed.), *The primary school in changing times* (pp. 80-100). London: Routledge.
- Vogel, S. (1996). Urban middle-class Japanese family life, 1958-1996: A personal and evolving perspective. In Shwalb, D. & B. Shwalb (Eds.), *Japanese childrearing: two generations of scholarship* (pp. 177-200). New York: Guilford Press.
- White, M. (1987). *The Japanese educational challenge: a commitment to children*. New York: Free Press.
- Wray, H. (1999). *Japanese and American education: attitudes and practices*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Harvey.