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# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S JAPANESE LEARNING: LANGUAGE COURSE FOR PARENTS AT A HIGH SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores parental engagement in second/foreign language education. While the current literature highlights the significance of parental engagement, it tends to view its impact as a unidirectional process from parents to children. This study explores the reciprocal and broader impact that parental engagement can have on children, parents and school communities. Data was collected from a Japanese language course designed for parents at a high school in Sydney. Thematic analysis was applied to pre- and post-course surveys for parents, children's video messages to their parents, and teachers' participant observation. The results identified that parents' and children's language learning was more collaborative, and that they also came to view Japanese learning more positively, thus further strengthening their relationships by considering each other as learning partners. Parental engagement also impacted on existing parent-teacher relationships, which can be considered to support children more comprehensively through parent-teacher partnerships.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the significance of parental engagement in Japanese language education (JLE) by drawing on the practice of a Japanese course designed for parents at Redlands, a high school in Sydney.<sup>1</sup> Parental engagement concerns “how parents and families support their children’s academic achievement and wellbeing” (DET 2018) and is conceived of as a crucial element that enhances the academic performance and wellbeing of children (e.g., Henderson and Mapp 2002; Harris and Goodall 2007; Emerson, Fear, Fox and Sanders 2012). Despite the various challenges that schools and teachers may face when attempting to promote parental engagement, it is typically discussed as a viable educational strategy to support children’s learning.

In the context of second/foreign language education, research has given us indications of the influence parents have on their children’s language learning. For example, several studies indicate that parents have varying degrees of influence on their children’s attitudes to language learning (Bartram 2006; Curnow, Liddicoat and Scarino 2007; Kormos, Kiddle and Csizér 2011). Other studies also report the correlation between the level of parents’ competence in the target language and that of their children (Bleakley and Chin 2008; Guven and Islam 2013). Furthermore, research has shown that even when they are not able to speak the target language, parents can still encourage their children’s language learning by displaying positive attitudes towards the target language and culture (Gardner, Masgoret and Tremblay 1999; Prescott and Orton 2012).

The number of studies on Asian language education in Australia (including Japanese) that explore the issue of parental engagement appears to be increasing. A report conducted by the Asia Education Foundation (2015a), for example, qualitatively examined cases of parental engagement in schools across Australia and presented key approaches that potentially enhance parental support for children’s language learning. Another study by the Asia Education Foundation (2015b) documented parents’ attitudes towards the learning of Asian languages in Australian schools. The study also explored the current situation regarding parental engagement in children’s Asian language learning. The key findings of the study are considered to “assist in guiding future collaborative work with and within the schools sector to foster parental attitudes towards Asian language learning in schools” (Asia Education Foundation 2015b, 4). These studies confirm the increasing significance of parents as key stakeholders who can exert a strong and positive influence on their children’s Asian language learning in the Australian context.

While the current literature implies the significance of parental engagement in children’s language learning, it tends to discuss its educational value by separating parents and children and assuming a unidirectional influence, i.e., from parents to their children. Drawing on a sociocultural view of language learning (Benson and Cooker 2013), this study aims to question this fundamental assumption and explores how both parents and children can mutually influence each other by being collaboratively engaged in their foreign language learning. This sociocultural view further suggests the importance of examining the impact of parental engagement on broader communities (e.g., the school community), which has not yet been widely discussed. Our study also aims to explore this area.

To achieve these aims, this study explores the experiences of the individuals who participated in an eight-week Japanese course for parents whose children were studying Japanese at Redlands. The paper will firstly explain how this study views learning, then describe the design of the course and the study, and finally present the results of data analysis: 1) how parents and their children influenced each other’s learning by learning Japanese collaboratively; and 2) how parental engagement impacted on the wider school community. The analysis identifies various benefits of parental engagement for parents, their children and teachers. The study concludes by discussing the implications of parental engagement in JLE at the secondary level.

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1 Redlands is a private coeducational school consisting of preschool and K-12 and is located in Sydney. This study focuses on Years 7-12. One author (Yuji) is a Japanese teacher at Redlands, who initiated and executed this project. The other author (Takuya) is a PhD candidate and Japanese teacher at UNSW Sydney, who contributed to the design of the course and also taught the course. Both have been involved in the research part of this project, which was generously funded by the Association of Independent Schools of NSW. Redlands offers five foreign languages at the secondary level (Year 7 to 12); Group A constitutes Japanese, Chinese and Latin, and Group B constitutes Spanish and French. Students are required to take two language courses (one from each group) in Year 7 and they must continue studying one of them in Years 8 and 9.

## VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT

This study draws on the sociocultural concepts of “vertical development” and “horizontal development” (Beach 1999, 128) to understand the language learning experiences of parents and their children, since these provide a useful two-dimensional model of the dynamic process of learning. Vertical development refers to 1) increasing the amount of knowledge (e.g., memorising expressions), and 2) refining one’s existing skills to do something more skilfully, (e.g., writing kanji faster and well).<sup>2</sup> Vertical development often requires repetitive engagement with knowledge and skills (e.g., pronouncing the target expression a number of times). Horizontal development, on the other hand, is defined as “the transformation or creation of a new relation between individuals and social activities” (Beach 1999, 128). Horizontal development is triggered when individuals realise a new aspect of what they already know. Therefore, instead of repeating a certain pattern of activity, actually participating in various activities is the key to horizontal development. For instance, when individuals participate in multiple contexts where a Japanese expression which they already know is used differently, they begin to understand it differently, which results in creating a new relationship with the expression and the activity involving the expression. Likewise, when they interact with others in different contexts, they may receive different impressions about those participants and may change their relationships with them. Thus, activities promoting horizontal development can create positive relationships with social activities and individuals involved in those activities (e.g., developing an interest in them).

Vertical and horizontal development are aspects which ideally grow together to enhance one’s language learning, although they are often discussed separately (Beach 1999; Kagawa and Aoyama 2015). The interdependent relationship between vertical and horizontal development is conceptualised as shown in Figure 1 below. When vertical development facilitates one’s participation in a variety of social activities, we can imagine that horizontal development occurs, just as the roots of a tree grow wider and stronger. In turn, this means that horizontal development encourages individuals’ active and sustained engagement in activities, which promotes their vertical development, just as the tree grows taller and stronger.

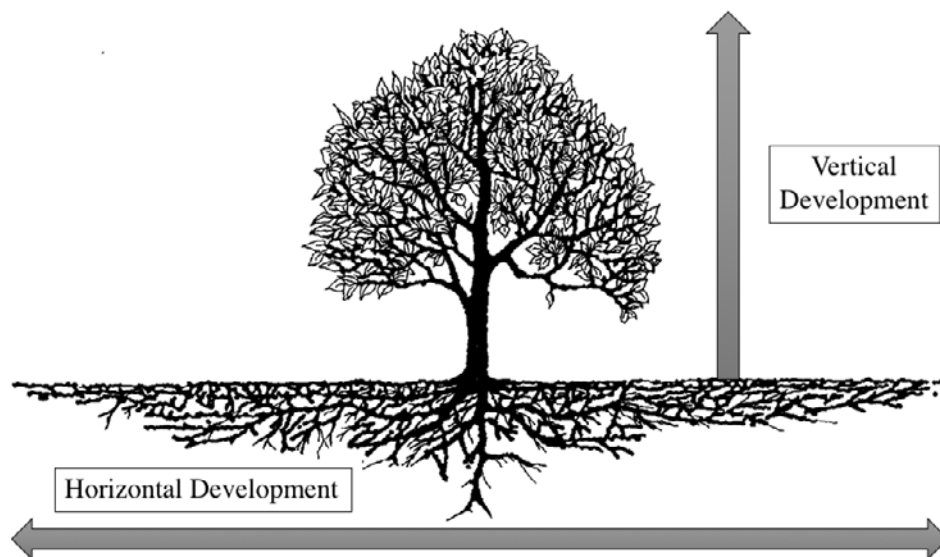


Figure 1: The interdependence between vertical and horizontal development (Stubbing 2015; modification added by the authors)

2 In the field of language acquisition, vertical development can be understood as the process of automatization (Ellis 2003). Ellis explains that learners move from *knowing what* as declarative knowledge to *knowing how* as procedural knowledge through repetitive practice of certain knowledge/skills. However, we take a sociocultural view of learning. Therefore, vertical development is not about one’s cognitive development operating independently regardless of context but construed socially to acknowledge development dependent on a particular context.

## STUDY DESIGN

This study involves two components: 1) designing and implementing the Japanese course for parents, and 2) data collection and analysis.<sup>3</sup> The first component was crucial to enable both parents and their children to be collaboratively engaged in Japanese learning. The second component aimed to explore and understand the experience of individuals (e.g., parents, their children, and teachers) involved in the project as well as the impact of the course on the wider community.

### THE JAPANESE COURSE FOR PARENTS

An eight-week Japanese course for parents was held every Tuesday between 18:30 and 20:30 during Term 3, 2017.<sup>4</sup> The target audience was beginners with no or little learning experience of Japanese; this was one of the requirements set by the funding organisation. We designed the program by referring to the content of Stage 4 prescribed in the current Japanese K-10 Syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority 2003) so that parents and their children were more likely to share their learning experiences. The following topics were included in the course:

- Self-introduction;
- Counting in Japanese, asking and saying age and year grade;
- Family terms and descriptive expressions (adjectives);
- Hobbies, likes and dislikes; and
- Favourite Japanese foods/restaurants.

In addition to the contents of the K-10 Syllabus, the course also introduced expressions that aimed to better suit parents' learning context. For example, we included expressions such as *Nansai ni miemasu ka*<sup>5</sup> and *Eien no jūhassai desu*<sup>6</sup> to answer the question *O-ikutsu desu ka*,<sup>7</sup> and *O-wakaku miemasu*<sup>8</sup> to make a compliment.

The primary motivation to provide this course for parents was to encourage parents and their children to be collaboratively engaged in Japanese learning. To achieve this end, we adopted a project-based approach and several teaching and learning strategies that are used for children's Japanese learning at Redlands such as lecturing on basic language concepts, conducting pattern practice, engaging in interactive pair and group activities, and using ICT. In addition, the class showed videos in which participating parents' children demonstrated model sentences and activities. This aimed to provide opportunities for parents to see their children's progress in Japanese learning while presenting goals for parents to achieve with their children.

Outside the class, participating parents were instructed to film themselves using Japanese with their children for homework. Homework was based on what parents learned in their class. Therefore, parents could show what they had learned and, when necessary, seek support from their children. That is, parents and their children could learn collaboratively at home. These videos were shared at the beginning of each class so that parents could observe how their classmates were making progress and, more importantly, could learn from each other.<sup>9</sup>

For the end product of the project, parents combined, added new parts to and edited homework videos to make one long version of a video entitled "My Family Video Album", in which they used what they had learned to introduce their family members, their ages and year grades, personalities, hobbies and interests, and their favourite restaurants.<sup>10</sup> At the end-of-course party (the last lesson), parents and their children watched the videos together in class and peer-voted the top three

3 Ethics clearance was sought and granted by the school. Participating parents also gave their permission for data to be collected and used for this study.

4 The authors decided on Term 3 because this is when children and their parents start to consider whether they will continue with the language in the following year. While the influence of their decision has not been examined, based on our reflection, the course for parents should have more or less a positive influence on their decision making.

5 "How old do I look?"

6 "I am forever 18."

7 "How old are you?"

8 "You look so young."

9 We emphasised that homework was optional, as we assumed that making it compulsory could put excessive pressure on parents. Most parents did their homework regularly.

10 We did not implement any assessment in this course as evaluating parents' progress was not part of the course's purpose. However, we introduced peer voting for the final videos to determine the top three videos. The peer voting acknowledged the effort parents and their families put into making the video. We also provided a certificate for the completion of the course to all parents.

videos to acknowledge their efforts and progress together. In the last lesson, parents also watched their children's video messages, in which children expressed their gratitude to their parents and celebrated their parents' successful completion of the course.<sup>11</sup>

## PARTICIPATING PARENTS

Following an advertisement for the course via email to parents whose children were studying Japanese, 32 parents registered, although 28 attended the first lesson. Six parents stopped coming mid-way through the course. Twenty-two parents completed the course. The number of absences varied among the participating parents. Out of the 22, 17 participants were female. Three pairs were couples.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of those who were involved in the course: parents, their children and the teachers. Three tools were used to collect data: 1) pre- and post-course surveys for parents; 2) children's video messages to parents; and 3) participant observation. These tools allowed for data triangulation (Rothbauer 2008), which co-constructed reflection on the significance of parental engagement in children's Japanese learning for individuals and communities.

The first tool, a pre-course survey, was administered to gather general information about whether parents had studied Japanese or been to Japan, their understanding regarding their child's Japanese learning at Redlands, and their own motivation for taking the course. The post-course survey asked about their interactions with their children through Japanese learning during the course, the influence of their Japanese learning on their children, and an evaluation of the course using a Likert scale along with open-ended questions. These were used to understand parents' learning experiences in this course, and relationships between their learning and interactive experiences that they had with their children.<sup>12</sup>

The second tool, children's video messages, asked each child to make a video message regarding their parents' Japanese learning in the course. The video messages were shown to parents in the final lesson, then transcribed and analysed by the authors. This helped the authors understand how the children observed, reflected upon and were influenced by their parents' Japanese learning.

The third tool, participant observation, was used to understand parents' and children's experiences and their changes from the teachers'/researchers' perspectives. After each lesson, the teachers wrote a journal to reflect upon participants' engagement in learning, their interactions, and their comments and conversations about their own and their children's language learning. The teachers regularly discussed what they had observed in order to deepen their understanding of the participants' experiences in this course.

We conducted a thematic analysis (Nowell et al. 2017) to identify the salient themes in the data sets relevant to the aims of this study. The concepts of vertical and horizontal development as the overarching framework guided the analysis.

## FINDINGS

The first part of these results of the data analysis sets out how parental engagement through collaborative learning of Japanese impacted on parents and their children. Their vertical development is explored, followed by an exploration of their horizontal development. We then illustrate the impact of the course for parents on the school community. The study shows how parental engagement can bring about a positive impact on not only parent-child but also teacher-parent relationships to benefit broader educational practice.

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11 The schedule and brief summary of the course contents for each week are presented in Appendix I.

12 For the pre- and post-surveys, please see Appendix II.

## CHILD-PARENT MUTUAL IMPACT OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN JAPANESE LEARNING

This study found that parental engagement enhanced children's vertical development. First, it was salient that children gained opportunities for their own vertical development in helping their parents' vertical development. For instance, one of the parents commented that "it was good to have her 'teach' or 'tutor' me. I'm still not very good but much better than before" (Parent B). Parents and children often constitute unidirectional relationships in terms of learning, i.e., parents tend to guide their child's learning. Instead, in this case, they switched roles. Another parent called this "a good role reverse" (Parent C). Children, likewise, reported that they helped their parents, saying that "I like how you have to ask me questions and I can help you" (Student B). This suggests that the children's "help" was given when questions occurred to their parents as they undertook the Japanese course, questions that could be dealt with by children who were more or less advanced in Japanese.

Secondly, as parents kept using Japanese at home, their children's exposure to Japanese increased. One child said that "it's really nice when you come home and speak to me in Japanese" (Student A). The increased exposure was not only about frequency but also variety. Parents' Japanese uses were not the same as their children's due to the extra contents of the course and parents' unique needs. As a result, one parent reported that her child "was forced to practise 'my' words and new words that I asked her to pronounce" (Parent B). This signifies that children together with their parents not only reviewed what they knew but also learned new knowledge that had not been introduced yet in their own Japanese class.

These parent-child interactions remained active and reciprocal. Children commented that "we are together [...] doing work with you" (Student C) and "you talk to me in Japanese at home, we can be fluent together" (Student D). Our observation of their homework videos affirmed that both parents and children were collaboratively engaged in their learning, and they used Japanese in a mutually supportive way. Even while filming their performances, there was frequent scaffolding of each other's listening, understanding and utterances.

Parents' and children's comments also suggest the occurrence of horizontal development in children. One of the key *feelings* expressed by them was enjoyment and fun of learning Japanese together. One parent wrote that "[the children] enjoyed learning together and so did I" (Parent F). Children also expressed such feelings by using the terms "fun", "loved", "happy", "cool" and "nice" (Students A; C; D; and E). The homework videos (where a group of parents and children gathered to play bingo in Japanese; a father cooking rice balls with his two sons and saying *oishii*<sup>13</sup> together; and another father and his son joking about whether he likes studying by using the expressions *uso*<sup>14</sup> and *usotsuki*<sup>15</sup>) document how children and parents enjoyed "hang[ing] out together" (Parent L). Furthermore, parents and children encountered what one parent called "encouragement" (Parent H) to converse in Japanese together. In turn, children had their parents as their encouragement. As one parent mentioned, "children find it encouraging that I am trying to learn new things" (Parent I). These comments indicate that parental engagement in this case was not unidirectional and obtrusive, but mutually encouraging.

Such mutual encouragement supported children's increase of motivation in Japanese learning. Parents wrote that "learning together increased her motivation and confidence" (Parent K), "it was good to hang out together to do the video. It helps build my son's confidence" (Parent L), and "I think it made him more diligent with his homework knowing we were more involved" (Parent D). Children also reported how they wanted to continue learning Japanese together with their parents; for example, Student A said "I hope you can learn further and practise with me." All these comments suggest that children changed how they viewed Japanese learning and built a (positive) relationship with Japanese learning when parents were more involved.

The parental engagement in their children's Japanese learning offered opportunities for children to see their parents differently. The data indicate that children expressed their gratitude and respect to their parents by acknowledging their parents' initiative, persistence and progress in Japanese learning. Comments from children included "I am just really happy that you are taking initiative to learn a language" (Student A), and "thank you for giving up your time to really try and learn Japanese" (Student F). One of the children told his mother "well done on going to all the classes" (Student I), showing that he was impressed with her sustained effort. Furthermore, children offered observations like "you've been really doing good with Japanese and you progressed so much and you can say some really cool sentences now" (Student G), "I've been

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13 "tasty"  
 14 "lie"  
 15 "liar"

very impressed with the work you've done in Japanese" (Student H), and "well done with your Japanese progression. I noticed a very good improvement" (Student I). The children who commented appear to have drawn on an evaluative voice. Considering the parents' common role as *guide* in their children's learning, perhaps it seemed unusual and yet impressive and inspiring to children to see their parents demonstrating learning themselves.

Likewise, parents changed how they viewed their children. This change occurred when parents were brought to understand their children's relationship with Japanese learning more intimately by experiencing their "interest and enthusiasm" (Parent J) directly. In the pre-survey, most parents did not have a clear understanding of why their children selected Japanese. What the data indicated was that parents not only practised Japanese with their children but also understood what learning Japanese meant to their children. This better understanding resulted in filling the gap that had existed between them and their children in regard to Japanese learning.

Furthermore, by attending the course parents experienced how their children learn Japanese, since the class employed both the content and pedagogy that were often used in their children's Japanese classes. Importantly, when parents came to know what learning Japanese was like, they acknowledged the difficulty involved and how well their children were making progress in such a challenging school subject. One of the parents wrote that "[I have gained] an appreciation of the progress and confidence my daughter has achieved" (Parent K); another wrote "now, I fully understand it requires lots of time and effort to learn Japanese well and I will provide my best support to her" (Parent N). In the end, being on the same page allowed parents to view how their children were learning Japanese from the children's perspective. This experience enabled parents to respect and appreciate their children's effort, progress and achievement. As a result, they increased their willingness to 'support' their children.

## IMPACT ON THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

The data analysis indicates that this course for parents functioned as a strategy for advocacy to promote the presence of JLE at Redlands. Tohsaku (2014) emphasises the importance for advocacy of raising the visibility of JLE. To achieve this end, the six Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Culture, Credibility, Connections, and Communities) need to be considered (see National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) (2011), in Tohsaku 2014). Regarding Communication, for example, Tohsaku claims that "we [Japanese language educators] should communicate what we are doing in our classroom to parents, other educators, community and stakeholders whenever possible" (2014, 9). This course was designed by employing the content and teaching/learning strategies that are used for the children's Japanese language learning. In this way, the course provided one of the authors, Yuji, who teaches both participating parents and their children, with a direct communication channel by which he could share what he does for their children with the participating parents.

The data support the view that this course functioned as a communication channel between the teacher and the participating parents. Several parents expressed that they formed a clearer understanding of how their children learned Japanese at school, for example, commenting "[this course] makes me understand the learning process of my kids" (Parent N). Furthermore, many participating parents highly evaluated the professionalism presented by the teachers. This positive evaluation was often represented by words such as "enthusiasm" (Parent D) and "commitment" (Parent E). This indicates that this parents' course also allowed Yuji not only to convey to parents what he teaches his students (the children of the participating parents), but also to communicate the passion and vision that he maintains to enrich their children's Japanese language learning.

The data indicated that the participating parents communicated with other parents in the school community regarding their experiences in this course. One parent, for example, commented that "I've mentioned to other parents that I'm doing the course, and I think there would be a lot of interest from parents to do a Chinese, Latin, French, and Spanish course too" (Parent D). This comment is considered important not only for raising the visibility of the Japanese language program in the wider school community, but also for highlighting the great potential of this course to advocate foreign languages education programs in the school by involving other stakeholders such as other language teachers and collaboratively working with them.

This course for parents was considered beneficial in terms of strengthening the teacher-parent partnerships for children's learning. Parent P, for example, commented "it was fun to meet other parents and teachers". As explained above, Yuji has been teaching their children for some time; it may therefore sound somewhat strange to hear "meet teachers" from parents, since he has met them before. Reflecting upon this comment, it is important to ask how much he knew about

the parents of the children in his classrooms. Although we come to know each other through various opportunities where teachers and parents interact (e.g., school events, emails, telephone calls, and parent–teacher nights), it appears likely that parent–teacher relationships were strengthened considerably by working together towards a particular goal, discussing children’s progress regarding Japanese on a more regular basis, exchanging and negotiating their educational visions, and sharing a lot of laughs throughout this course.

Interestingly, before this course, many parents addressed Yuji as Mr Okawa, to signify that he was their children’s classroom teacher. However, as the course progressed, the same parents began calling him not only Okawa Sensei (the significance of which was explained to parents) but also Yuji (his first name). This is another example that indicates that relationships shifted to create something different, something that parents and teachers could establish by sharing a larger amount of time and a stronger sense of trust towards each other.

## DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated how improved parental engagement facilitated opportunities for children and parents to influence each other’s development (vertical and horizontal) in the context of the Japanese course for parents. As our literature review identified, the current scholarship on parental engagement in second/foreign language education tends to discuss its educational values by addressing parents separately from children, based on the assumption that parents influence children’s language learning (e.g., Prescott and Orton 2012). However, as shown above, through the series of activities set in this course, the children and parents were able to mutually scaffold each other’s vertical and horizontal development in a variety of ways. Thus, this study suggests that an emphasis needs to be placed on this mutual engagement in Japanese learning when viewing, designing and facilitating parental engagement.

It is now clear that mutual influence between children and parents brings about additional benefits, i.e., increased horizontal development rather than just increased vertical development. When a unidirectional influence of parental engagement is assumed, the individual activity and child–parent relationships are unlikely to change. However, child–parent mutual involvement in Japanese learning altered how they engaged with and viewed Japanese learning. To them, learning Japanese became not merely a school subject to study but a social activity where they “[hung] out”, enjoyed and shared their “interest and enthusiasm”. Furthermore, children and parents gradually came to view each other differently as they understood, acknowledged and respected each other’s initiative, effort, persistence, progress, confidence and achievement in Japanese learning. This change transformed their relationships into more harmonious, mutually encouraging and collaborative ones. These positive relationships between children, parents and Japanese learning enhanced children’s motivation, confidence and diligence in their own Japanese learning. This interplay between vertical and horizontal development can facilitate development of a child as a whole person, thus putting their wellbeing at the forefront.

The focus on mutuality in this study requires re-addressing what it means to *support* children in language learning. As mentioned, parental engagement concerns “how parents and families ‘support’ their children’s academic achievement and wellbeing” (DET 2018, single quotes added). It is certainly beneficial for children to receive direct support in forms of teaching and guiding from their parents. In high school core subjects that parents are likely to have studied themselves, such as English and mathematics, they often have more knowledge than their children and are able to support their children. However, for subjects that parents often have not studied, such as Japanese, a different approach is needed. This study demonstrated that children can develop their knowledge and skills in Japanese by tutoring and helping their parents who are less advanced in Japanese than themselves, revising language items with their parents, and being exposed to new expressions that are brought back to the home by their parents. Both parents and children could develop their language knowledge and skills through a “good role reverse”, by being involved in the varied tasks that were set to promote their collaboration. This suggests that support can take different forms. Importantly, parents do not have to *teach* the subject or *guide* their children with their expertise. Parents’ “best support” can be provided not only as guides who walk ahead of children but also as partners who walk alongside their children. When support is viewed in this way, parental engagement can become achievable for subjects like Japanese.

The results of this current study also suggest that teachers reflect upon their views of parents to design a more supportive learning environment for children. Harris and Goodall’s study (2007) revealed that, while parental engagement is often regarded as a “good thing” by teachers, parents and children, these three cohorts interpret the term differently. They found that children view parental engagement as being primarily about moral support and interest in their progress, parents



view it as offering support to their children, and teachers view it as a means for improving behaviour (39). These findings cannot be overgeneralised, and we, as educators, need to be cautious about this result. The gap that appears between parents and teachers might confine parents to a limited role for their children's learning or may even exclude them from the process. It is also debatable if teachers can provide the "best support" for their students on their own. Rather, it can be suggested that this best support takes a stronger and more comprehensive form by encouraging parents and teachers to work collaboratively without confining them into certain roles.

The results of this study further indicated that the teachers and participating parents began to construct stronger relationships by sharing their interests, passion and educational visions around Japanese language learning. They shifted the focus of their mutual gaze and came together by reconstructing their expected roles. This shift is a type of horizontal development that enabled teachers and parents to realise their potential to better support their students/children by connecting with each other differently. It seems that the stronger parent-teacher partnership fostered through this course can function as a more solid foundation that enables students' (children's) Japanese language learning at school and home.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study questioned an often-fundamental assumption that parental engagement operates in one direction, i.e., parent to student. We investigated how both parents and children can mutually influence each other's learning. The study also explored the potential impact that parental engagement can have on the broader school community. The results discussed above clearly indicate that the Japanese course designed for parents enhanced both parents' and children's vertical and horizontal development, affecting how the notions of support and of parental engagement ought to be reconceptualised.

We used the metaphor of a tree in Figure 1 to illustrate vertical and horizontal development. We conclude by returning to it here. Parental engagement can promote both vertical and horizontal development of children. To nurture the tree or child to become taller and stronger (vertical development; something that is visible to the eye), the tree also requires an extensive network of roots (horizontal development; something that is invisible to the eye). To become a healthier tree, however, the tree (child) also needs a number of optimal conditions (contexts) that support its growth and development. One way this can be achieved, through parental engagement, is discussed in this paper. Through their mutual partnership and interest in the tree, parents and teachers can provide the nourishment that best supports a child's learning and wellbeing.

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## APPENDIX I

Summary of schedule, topics, and activities of the Japanese course for parents

WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITIES	COOKING LESSON	HOMEWORK
1	Getting to know each other (Self-introduction)	Role-play (Greetings at a gorgeous party)	Welcome sweets	Introduce yourself to your family members in Japanese!
2	Counting in Japanese (age, year grade)	Bingo in Japanese!	Onigiri rice ball	Play Bingo with your family!!
3	Introducing your family members (description)	Ask me about my family		Interview your child using Japanese! (e.g. Personality)
4	<u>Revision Week</u>		Temakizushi	Make onigiri rice balls with your child!
5	Talking about your hobbies, what you like to do, what you are good at	Find your best friends!		Ask your child about what they proud of themselves!
6	Talking about your favourite Japanese foods	Let's use Interactive Whiteboard!		Family time at your favourite Japanese restaurant
7	Expressions and sentences you want to know		Okonomiyaki Yakisoba	Edit your video clips for your presentation with your child
8	Presenation: <u>My Family Video Album</u>		Party!!	

## APPENDIX II

### Samples of pre- and post-surveys

#### PRE-SURVEY

##### Parental Polyglots - Japanese class preliminary survey

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

This survey aims to obtain some information regarding why you have decided to take this Japanese language course. The survey will be useful for us to design and deliver this course and future courses. Information contained in this survey is strictly confidential, however, we would like to be able to present our findings to several stakeholders such as the school and in other venues. To gain your permission for the information to be used (anonymously), please check the appropriate box below.

[ ] I give my permission for the information in this survey to be used.

[ ] I do not give my permission for the information in this survey to be used.

We are planning to set a post-course survey in which we would like to understand your potential change you might experience by having done this course. Please create a pseudonym (a combination of first name and family name) which allows us to link your preliminary course survey (this survey) with your post-course survey. Please avoid names that are considered 'typical' (e.g., John Smith or Mary Jones). You will be asked to write your pseudonym on your post-course survey.

Your pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Have you ever studied the Japanese language before?

If yes,

When?  
How long?  
Where?

No

2) Have you ever been to Japan?

Yes (give details)

No, but would like to

No, and don't intend to

Never really thought about it

3) Do you have any chance to speak Japanese? Give details

4) Why have you chosen to study the Japanese language in this course?

5) Do you know why your son/daughter chose Japanese at Redlands?

Yes, (give details)

No

6) Do you discuss their study of the Japanese language with your son or daughter?

If yes, what do you discuss with him/her?

If no, why not?

7) What do you want to achieve by doing this short Japanese language course?

8) Any comments for us to consider at this stage of the program?

Thank you for your cooperation.

#### POST-SURVEY

##### Parental Polyglots - Japanese class post-course survey

Thank you very much for participating in the post-course survey. This survey aims to obtain some information regarding your experience of learning Japanese language in this course. The survey will be useful for our reflection and evaluation of this course as well for planning future courses. Information contained in this survey is strictly confidential, however, we would like to be able to present our findings to several stakeholders such as the school and in other venues. To gain your permission for the information to be used (anonymously), please check the appropriate box below.

[ ] I give my permission for the information in this survey to be used.

[ ] I do not give my permission for the information in this survey to be used.

Please circle the pseudonym that you created for the preliminary survey from the list below.

##### List of pseudonyms

1) Please evaluate the following aspects of the course by circling the most appropriate number on the scale.

a) Satisfaction

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4 - - - - - 5

Extremely low Extremely high

Provide reasons:

b) Applicability to your situation

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4 - - - - - 5

Not applicable Highly applicable  
at all

Provide reasons:

c) Motivation

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4 - - - - - 5

Unmotivated Highly motivated

Provide reasons:

d) Curriculum (e.g. teaching, course content, materials)

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4 - - - - - 5

Poor Excellent

Provide reasons:

2) What, in your opinion, were some of the best things about doing this course?

3) Have your chances to speak in Japanese increased since doing this course? Give details.

4) Did your participation in this course assist your child's language learning? If so, how?

5) What did you think about learning the Japanese language with your child? Why do you think so?

6) What do you think you have achieved by having done this Japanese language course?

7) Did you find it beneficial for you to get to know other parents doing this course? Give reasons.

8) Any further comments?

Thank you for your cooperation.