Language education in a national school abroad in a bilingual society: a case of Japanese school in Catalonia

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Abstract

This paper explores language education in a Japanese school in Catalonia from the viewpoints of language policy with special attention to ideology. Our main goal is to identify the major factors which influence over the school's language education. As a national school abroad, this school should include national, local and global viewpoints in its education. Language education is one of the methods to respond to this expectation. The results of data analysis, collected through semi-structured interviews with the vice-principal and principal of the school as well as parents, suggest that home country ideologies have an important influence over the school's and sojourner families' views on language and language education. Our study has demonstrated that an ideology-loaded, top-down LEP is not appropriate for the current situation. Therefore, it proposes a need to update and revise the language education of Japanese schools abroad. This may ultimately lead to suggesting an involvement of the agents (principals, teachers and parents) and participants (students) who are absent from the design of the LEP.

Keywords: Language policy; language education policy; education for intercultural understanding; ideology; Japanese school; Catalonia

Introduction

In the age of globalization, more multinational organizations require their employees to move around the world for short-term placements in different locations (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). According to the data compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, over 1.3 million of Japanese citizens were living abroad in 2016. Overseas Japanese residents, a significant percentage of whom are business sojourners[1], are products of Japan's economic expansion (Befu, 2001). For sojourner families with school-aged children, the choice of school may be the first concern that they have, since

their selection depends on whether the curriculum is in Japanese, English or the host country's language (Tsuboi, 2003). Full-time Japanese school abroad (henceforth *Japanese school*) is one of these options, where Japanese children can receive an education based on their home country's national educational systems and in their language during their temporary stay abroad. Whereas, most Japanese schools provide education for 'understanding the host society', which is carried out mostly in the form of foreign language education.

The present study is an attempt to contribute to this under-researched field by exploring language education at a Japanese school in Catalonia as a policy issue by focusing on the school, Japanese families living in Catalonia temporarily and intermarried families.

Language education policy

While language is dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries, there have always been groups and individuals wanting to control and manipulate it to promote political, social, economic and personal ideologies (Shohamy, 2006, p.xv). *Language policies* (henceforth *LP*) are the mechanism to manipulate language practice in which prevailing discourses affect the language, focus and purpose (Liddicoat, 2007, p.1). In the context of education, a school may be viewed as an entity that takes decisions about which language(s) to teach and learn, how to teach the language(s) and so on to manipulate language practice. Shohamy (2006) called it *Language Education Policy* (henceforth *LEP*, p.76). LEP is considered a form of imposition and manipulation of language policy as it is used by the authorities to turn ideology into practice through formal education without attention being paid to the needs and wishes of those who are affected by the policy (ibid.). LEP is strongly influenced by ideologies that are often traditional and current attitudes of political groupings and the public

toward language(s) and language usage (Christ, 1997). Hence, a certain language is taught in school, whilst the use of the other languages may be reduced, which is often decided through ideology.

Background to the study

Catalonia's sociolinguistic situation

Catalonia is a bilingual society where Catalan, its own language,[2] and Spanish, Spain's official language, coexist as the autonomous community's official languages. After the end of the dictatorship in 1975, the banned social use of Catalan was greatly recovered through *linguistic normalisation*, which refers to the will to regain the full function of the Catalan language (Marí, 2016, p.220). This concept, elaborated by the Valencian sociolinguist L.V. Aracil (1965) was planned as a non-governmental, popular and democratic alternative brought about by the experiences of the actual protagonists of the linguistic conflict. Thus, it can be accomplished only within a restricted framework emanating from the central government (Boix & Vila, 1998, p.314-325; Marí, 2016). On this basis, Catalonia adopted language policies, having achieved positive results concerning the knowledge and use of the Catalan language in general. However, a disparity still exists between the two languages mainly due to two factors: the political subordination of Catalonia to the central government (Boix-Fuster & Farràs i Farràs, 2012) and the demolinguistic structure where a larger portion of the population in Catalonia is Spanish-speaking (particularly in the metropolitan area) due to immigration.

Whilst Spanish is a taken-for-granted language in Catalonia, one cannot always address a stranger in a non-normalized language, namely, Catalan (Suay & Sanginés, 2010). Gal and Woolard (2001) explained the language ideologies in Catalonia in terms of

'authenticity' and 'anonymity' to capture the specific characteristics arising in discussions on the value of language. The ideology of authenticity finds a language's value in its relationship with a particular community, which, in this case, is associated with Catalan. Conversely, the ideology of anonymity is that of nowhere in particular, i.e. it is supposedly 'public' (p.6), which here relates to Spanish. This authenticity of Catalan has contributed to the survival of the language as well as hampered efforts to make Catalan a public language due to its exclusionary identity (Woolard, 2016).

Nonetheless, this authenticity has begun to waver. Some recent research points out that demolinguistic changes in current Catalonia blur the line between Spanish speakers and Catalan speakers (Boix & Paradís, 2015; Pujolar & Gonzàlez 2013) since the Spanish-speaking younger generation also uses Catalan to different degrees. An ideological shift is being made towards the construction of Catalan as anonymous and cosmopolitan, with authenticity as a pluralistic project, including all non-Catalan speakers (Woolard, 2016, p.300-301). Recently, Woolard (2018) remarked that as long as Catalan identity is marked by the language, it will include native speakers and second-language speakers: 'For many, authentic Catalan identity is conceived now not as given by birth or mother tongue, but as a D.I.Y. project, what one chooses to become, including language choice'. She stresses that this open, forward-looking formulation of language and identity as fluid underpins the idea of Catalan sovereignty for many supporters. Catalonia's ex-president, Carles Puigdemont, also affirmed in an interview: 'We want to be an open state'[3].

Language ideology in Japan

Despite the emergent discourses of multiculturalism, as a society, Japan is perceived mostly and portrayed through the media, education and other public arenas, as 'monolingual' (Horiguchi, Imoto & Poole, 2015,p.2). Yasuda (2003), a Japanese

linguist who has numerous works on language ideologies in Japan, has demonstrated the hidden language ideology behind its absolute and axiomatic status as 'the only language' of Japan. The coherence between language, people and nation is taken for granted, and the mother tongue of all 'Japanese people' was believed to be only Japanese. This still prevails implicitly or explicitly as the ideology in Japan.

However, in the last decades its verisimilitude has been criticized by some sociolinguists (cf. Lee, 1996; Yasuda, 2003; Mashiko, 2003 etc.). A massive wave of immigrants, which started in the '90s changed the way in that it altered this monolingual view and opened Japanese citizens' eyes to the Japanese society's pluri-linguality (Yasuda, 2014). Contact with foreigners, and/or foreign languages other than English, is becoming something common in daily life; increasingly, foreign national children attend public schools in Japan because of the increase in the number of foreigners who work in the country (T. Yamamoto, 2016). However, people's views regarding societal pluri-linguality still remain ambiguous whether they accept it or not (Shoji, 2013). Yasuda (2003) stressed the historical pluri-linguality of Japanese society although circumstances making minority languages invisible in Japan still prevail.

Japanese schools abroad

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Science of Japan (henceforth *MEXT*), currently 88 Japanese schools are found in 50 countries around the world, where 21,027 children are studying[4]. Most of them are children who have moved due to their Japanese parents' work, whose current situation is, however, changing. Due to the transnationalization advances in 1990s, an increasing number of children from intermarried families began attending Japanese schools, particularly in Asian countries (G. Sato, 2010).

The main mission of Japanese schools is to provide Japanese children living abroad with the national compulsory education and to develop Japanese identity (G.Sato, 2010) so that the children do not feel inconvenienced from being overseas when they return to Japan (Goodman, 1990). That is, Japanese schools are designed to be 'a national school abroad' (Hill, 2007).

Being located abroad, they are expected to include national, local and global perspectives in their education (G.Sato, 1997). However, it was relatively rare for Japanese schools to have any special relationship with the local community for educational purposes (C. Sato, 2007), since more emphasis was placed on providing Japanese compulsory education than on the relationship with the host society (G. Sato, 1997). However, this closed nature of the schools became subject to criticism argued that they should be more open to the host society and the children should at least learn the local language and culture (G. Sato, 1997; C.Sato, 2007). As a response to the criticism, in the 1980s, some Japanese schools added 'education for international understanding' to the national education (Kojima, 1999), which was a narrowly practiced concept of 'education for understanding the host society' (*genchi rikai kyōiku*). Today, all Japanese schools abroad carrying out this activity which mostly includes language education[5]. According to the MEXT, this practice's aims were to raise children's awareness and acknowledgement of their own culture and to discover other cultures.

Whereas, Japanese schools are expected to foster *kokusaijin* ('internationally minded person') by taking advantage of being located overseas, which clearly reflects the MEXT's basic idea about Japanese children abroad considering them 'golden eggs' that will become 'global human resources' (MEXT, 2016), i.e. a person with high language proficiency and communicative competence, initiative, and intercultural

competence, while maintaining their Japanese identity. By 'intercultural competence', they refer to 'understanding different cultures', whereas language proficiency is often equated with high English competency. Therefore, almost all Japanese schools abroad provide English conversation classes from primary education to respond to a 'global viewpoint'. Previous studies on English education in Japan have shown how English education policy in Japan was closely associated with 'internationalization' or 'globalization' and strongly regulated by these concepts (Kawai 2007; Kubota 1998; Terasawa 2013). Consequently, Japanese society equates *kokusaijin*/global human resources with English (Miyazaki, 2014). This attitude is also observed in the MEXT's course guidelines for Japanese national education.

Research questions

Shohamy (2006) argues that LEP may reflect statements of intention by those in authority rather than realistic plans for practice; thus, it is necessary to examine the interpretation of these policies by teachers, parents and students, as well as the connection between ideology and practice. Therefore, our study explores the LEP of a Japanese school in Catalonia and how the school interprets the Ministry's policy. We also aim to identify the factors affecting the school's language education.

Language education is shaped by the complex interplay between policy and practice, which hides or reveals coherent or paradoxical discourses (Kubota, 2015: ix). Given the ideological nature of LEP, the study focuses on the school's and parents' attitudes and analyzes their talk (as in Laihonen, 2008) about the school's language education. Based on this, it identifies the underlying ideologies that inspire the school's LEP, particularly since people express their ideologies largely through text or talk (as in Van Dijk, 2006). Parental attitudes deserve special attention because parents decide for

their children (Akiyama, 2016, p.27), and they are ultimately under the guidance and protection of their parents, who know their time abroad is temporary (Fry, 2007, p.144).

The Japanese school in Catalonia provides a peculiar context in that it is a national school located abroad in a bilingual society bearing a conflict between two languages. Furthermore, while most children are from sojourner families, some children come from intermarried families. In such a context, the school positions local language learning as a part of education for intercultural understanding. In fact, language learning is an integral part of LEP and is often justified as a vehicle for promoting intercultural understanding (Liddicoat, 2007, p.1), as can be seen in the case of the Japanese government and eventually the school. Assuming that it is so, how does the school organise their local language education for these children from different background while also fulfilling the MEXT's expectations? It is also interesting to see how are the language(s) at play implicated as the centre of interest for said school's families, considering that the temporary nature of some families' stays may affect their commitment to the host culture (Fry, 2007).

Specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

(1) How is the local language involved in the school's education for intercultural understanding?;
(2) What is the school's attitude towards local language education?; Does language status have some implication in the school's LEP?; and
(3) What do the sojourner families and intermarried families think about the school's language education?

Now the definitions of national and official languages, and consequently the language(s) that should be taught in educational systems, are being questioned and challenged (Shohamy, 2003). This study is significant in that through a prominent case,

it tries to provide insights into language study in a national school in a non-English speaking bilingual society in an under-researched context; it uncovers assumptions of convenience in local language education at the school. The study stresses the need to redesign local language education to suit the current situation.

Methodology

Data collection

To obtain the data on the principal's, vice-principal's and parents' views on the school's language education[6] and to identify fundamental ideologies behind their responses, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and vice-principal of the Japanese School of Barcelona (henceforth *JSB*)[7], the parents from sojourners' families (N = 12) and those from intermarried families (N = 4)[8]. Parents were selected by the convenience sampling method.

The principal and vice-principal of the school were asked the following questions to obtain specific information and to elicit their views on the topics:

(1) What are the objectives of the school's language education?;

(2) How is the language education of the school designed?; and

(3) Are there any problems with the language education?

The parents were asked to give their opinion(s) about the school's language education and to explain about their children's language use in daily life. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions, but participants were allowed to freely discuss topics that emerged from the interview, since our main interest was the ideologies underlying their talk.

To guarantee anonymity, participants were given numbers in this text (Table 1). All interviews were conducted in Japanese and were recorded with an audio-recorder and then transcribed. Basically, they were individual interviews, though the mothers from the sojourners' families were interviewed in a group due to their schedules. Each interview continued for 60 minutes on average; one group interview lasted nearly 120 minutes because of interruptions as the interview was conducted at an informant's house.

Table 1. Profile of the parents interviewed

[Table 1 near here]

School's profile

In 2011, a total of 2,100 Japanese lived in Catalonia, amongst which business sojourners and their respective families represented a significant percentage ([Author], 2010). JSB is the only full-time Japanese school in Catalonia, founded in 1986, for the children of these business sojourners. In Spanish Royal Decree 806/1993 this school is categorized under 'schools that follow exclusively the foreign educational system'. Such schools cannot admit the pupils of Spanish nationality[9], but are not obliged to teach the local language(s). Most of the children are from Japanese business sojourners' families; those from intermarried families are few. When the research was conducted, the school had 105 pupils.

Data analysis

The data from the interview were analysed and interpreted using Qualitative Content Analysis (Dörnyei, 2007) as we mainly aim to identify topics and capture their

underlying meaning. The transcriptions of each interview have been analysed separately to identify topics that emerged. Then, these topics were categorised to identify topics commonly shared among our informants.

Results and discussions

Local language teaching in school education

Language education in Japanese schools was designed with regard to Japan's internationalisation/globalisation. Spanish and English classes aim at understanding the host society at JSB, aiming to develop the 'Japanese who participate actively in the international community'. A native Spanish-speaking teacher is engaged in teaching this language two hours per week to the children from the second to the fourth grade in the primary school, and an hour per week to the rest of the grades. The classes consist of learning basic vocabulary related to daily life through game and handicrafts and are given almost exclusively in Spanish.

In addition to these regular classes, the school organises cultural exchange meetings with local schools and universities, which is one of the few chances where the children can apply the knowledge acquired in class. The children of the JSB organise different activities to introduce Japanese culture to the local children or university students in Spanish, although based on a pre-prepared 'script'. Therefore, they do not communicate freely with the locals in Spanish and their interactions are very unilateral. The children from intermarried families took care of intermediating between the locals and the sojourners' children. All these factors suggest that the JSB's language education disregards practical skills in Spanish, thus not serving communication between children and the locals.

Regarding Catalan, despite being the local language, it is not included in this education. Its presence is symbolic, which is observed only on some occasions. For example, when the school celebrated its twentieth anniversary, the children learned the national anthem of Catalonia, *Els segadors*, in Catalan, though they only memorized the lyrics transcribed in Japanese.

According to the teacher, the children generally enjoy the class, though, it does not work well due to the frequent mobility of the children which makes it difficult to maintain the consistency of the classes: 'sometimes I glance over worksheets, then I think: "Haven't they learnt it before?" There are lots of children coming and going. If they could study Spanish in a continuous way. (...) As they have to adapt the new students every time they incorporate, the same contents are repeated. So, Spanish classes leave much to be desired for those children from intermarried families' (Mother, 5). Furthermore, students spend only few hours in class and they get few chances to use Spanish outside of class, which causes the classes to be relatively unsuccessful. As for the last factor, the children's lifestyles may be closely related, which has been commonly reported by other studies on Japanese sojourners' children: they usually move between their home and the school by school bus (Kurayama, 1994; G. Sato, 1997), spend most of the day in school (G. Sato, 1997), are living in their compatriots' enclave (Shibayama, 1993) and are often not allowed to go out alone for security reasons (H.Yamamoto, 1994). Thus, the children are living in a highly Japanese atmosphere (Goodman, 1990) with little contact with the locals (Kobayashi, 1981; G. Sato 1997; White, 2003). Therefore, their local language skills tend to be poor due to this low need to use local language (Ichiyanagi, Ozawa, Toshiatsu & Tsuboi, 1996, on Asian countries; Okuno et al., 2013 on Seoul; Shibayama, 1993, on Bangkok). These previous studies commonly state that the causes are related to the temporariness of their

stay, which affects their interest in and commitment to the host culture. One mother describes the isolation from the host culture in the following way:

> As we are all Japanese in our family, we speak in Japanese. My children speak Japanese also at school, since they attend Japanese school… So even though they learn Spanish, they have very few chances to use it and they don't really improve their Spanish. They speak it only when they greet the neighbours. If they learn mainly conversation, they would greet more sociably, I think. (Mother, 1)

Studies on acculturation or second language learning among migrants point out that variables such as contact with the host society or length of residence have some influence on allochthonous individuals' attitudes (Cortès-Colomé, Barrieras & Comellas, 2016; Berman, Lefever & Woźniczka, 2011; Ianos, 2014), language awareness (Atagi, 2017) or identity (Golan-Cook & Olshtain, 2011). However, social relations are key factors in the formation of attitudes (Cortès-Colomé, Barrieras & Comellas, 2016), and the abovementioned lifestyles of the sojourner children imply that their attitudes are less influenced.

The school's attitude: learning 'the local' language to discover the host society

The school maintains that it aims to discover the host society and culture by learning the local language, based on the idea of inseparability of language and culture. They believe that the Spanish class provides the children with an opportunity to become familiar with this language. However, considering children from intermarried families, it proves insufficient to meet their needs. The children are mixed in the same classroom regardless of their Spanish level, which is noted as a problem by the principal:

> 'Some parents of intermarried families request that we teach a higher level of Spanish and Catalan, because their children might have some difficulty

> with these languages when they start studying at a local school. (…) Considering the main motivation for the foundation of our school, it is really a problem. (…) We find it difficult to give Spanish or Catalan classes to achieve a high communication skill within our school curricula. Therefore, all we can do is to teach Spanish in the way that the children become interested in the local language. However, we still have not found a good method. So each family has to deal with this matter individually'. (Principal)

Language learning involves learning to communicate with others in that language and such communication necessitates an engagement with the culture (Liddicoat, 2005). Therefore, learning about culture is a necessary bridge to gain insights into the learner's culture and that of the target language (Abrams, 2002). Then, it raises language awareness (See Helot & Young, 2002). Therefore, the MEXT's interpretation that education is crucial for understanding the host society is quite appropriate, since it aims to raise children's awareness and acknowledgement of their own culture and to discover other cultures, which is the beginning of intercultural awareness and the prerequisite for intercultural understanding (Meier, 2007). Nonetheless, when it comes to language education, its goal remains ambiguous, since the JSB integrates two different goals of language education – experiencing a different culture and acquiring a skill (Mizokami & Shibata, 2009). It reflects the same ambiguity of the MEXT's general goals for language education, which are discovering the local culture and using the local language in daily situations. Helot & Young (2002) clearly distinguish the objectives of language education based on language awareness from those of language learning, since the former implies coming into contact with a variety of languages and cultures but does not mean acquiring a certain level of competence in these languages. Officially, JSB's language education aims to acquire skills in the local

language. However, the school admits that high achievement in the local language is not primary to the school's language education:

> In international schools, language of instruction will be English. In local schools, this language will be Spanish and Catalan. So, studying them [English, Spanish and Catalan] at our school is not enough at all to follow the classes in these schools' (Vice-principal).

This suggests different views of those who impose the policies and those who implement the order. The ambiguity seems to have led to the relatively unsuccessful language education program. As has been demonstrated by Helot & Young (2002), language awareness does not replace language learning but can be complementary to it.

Meanwhile, *JSB* admits children from intermarried families who may continue their study in Catalonia, since most of them have dual nationalities and they are also 'Japanese children' who have a full right to attend Japanese school. Therefore, when the Japanese school's main role is considered, it may cause a conflict over the different interests concerning the language education between sojourner families and intermarried families. It raises the question of what constitutes 'being Japanese', thus challenging the ideology of a supposed equality between language and nationality.

Another important challenge is coping with the Catalan language. When it comes to the academic future of the children from intermarried families, it emerges as a question that cannot be overlooked, since many schools in Catalonia are Catalan-medium. *JSB* is fully aware of this, and in fact, they once incorporated the Catalan class into their school curricula: in the school's pamphlet of 2005, Catalan was mentioned as an activity of 'education for understanding the host society', together with Spanish. Furthermore, the school had to face external pressure from the Catalan government to incorporate Catalan at that time. The school responded to the pressures by offering the

Catalan class as an optative subject for interested children. However, only the children from intermarried families attended this class, which revealed no interest in this language by the sojourners families.

Currently, Catalan classes are not available, since 'it is not compatible with the original motivation for the foundation of this school' (Principal). The ideology of equating 'language' with 'state' can be clearly observed in that Spanish was chosen by default as 'the local language' to be taught at the school since it is the State's official language, while Catalan is not despite being the local language. Given that 'understanding the host society' encompasses all the sociocultural concerns, Catalonia's societal bilingualism may be overlooked. The vice-principal also added regarding the wider use of Spanish, which is implicitly related to language status: '(Spanish) is spoken also in Latin America, whilst use of Catalan is limited to Catalonia […]'. Consciously or unconsciously, the school gives priority to Spanish, which gives Catalan a secondary status and justifies its absence in the school's language education. Furthermore, the two aforementioned ideologies —anonymity and authenticity— also seem to influence the school's view. Consequently, it is perceived as something beyond reach or irrelevant to 'outsiders', which was observed when they were asked about Catalan and reacted as if they were asked something unexpected.

All these suggest that the JSB's language education is based on a monolingual ideology. Although the JSB's language education does not aim explicitly to provide education on diversity, the absence of Catalan in school seems paradoxical.

Another factor that prevents Catalan from being incorporated into the school's language education is that English cuts into the time spent teaching Japanese and the local language(s). The principal explained: 'Some parents request that we should put great effort into English classes, taking into consideration their children's academic

future, because high English skills will be of great use whether the children go to high school in Japan or international school after leaving JSB. Furthermore, 'they request that we should prioritise English classes because the school is located abroad and it is a good chance to enhance children's English learning'. Additionally, 'most of the parents of the children are business sojourners who came from other countries and do not know where they will be dispatched next, so they hope that their children will acquire a good grasp of English' (Vice-principal), since they strongly believe that 'English is an international language' (Mother 6,7,8). As Kubota (2015) states, the discourse of English as a universally useful lingua franca shapes the policies and practices in various institutions in Japan, while marginalising the teaching of other foreign languages (p.viii). Consequently, English is prioritised over the local language(s), causing some parents to consider local language learning a burden on their children. Mogi's (2017) study on the Japanese School of Brussels found that many students prefer to select English over French mainly because of overemphasis on English in entrance examinations in Japan.

Sojourner families' attitudes: temporality and monolingual views

All sojourner families interviewed commonly agreed that it is important to know the local language. They considered it logical for them and their children to learn the host country's language as long as they are living there in order not to be rude with the locals. However, they confessed that they expected little from the school's language education. The reason for this negative attitude is related to the few chances the children get to apply the knowledge acquired through the classes: 'I have never seen my daughter speak to the concierge of our flat. Whenever I ask her to go to buy something, she says: "no". It means that she has not learnt Spanish enough to motivate herself to

use this language, I guess' (Mother 5). In fact, children's interpersonal relationships were limited to their compatriots, consisting mainly of their classmates or their families: 'My children return home to an entirely Japanese household.' (Mother 5). Furthermore, only a few hours can be dedicated to the education for understanding local society because it is regarded as something 'extra' added to the regular school curricula (Kubo, 1994; G. Sato, 1997).

The parents did not think that their children should master Spanish, though they hoped their children achieved a level that enabled them to communicate with the locals in some way. This ambivalent attitude is closely related to the temporality of their residence in the host society: 'we have no idea how much longer we will be here, so I think that if you have a minimum knowledge of the local language necessary for daily life, it will be enough' (Mother 3). Others added that the utility of the language in Japan would be an important factor that motivated them to learn the language. Thus, 'I do not think that I have to learn both local languages. My children, either. Because you can make yourself understood in Spanish' (Mother 1). As has been observed in the school's view, behind this comment underlies the monolingual ideology of Japan. In interpreting the linguistic situation of the host country, the first cognitive resource is often interpreting it with the parameters learnt from their own culture in the way that they value the languages according to their origin's scheme (Junyent, Monrós, Fidalgo, Cortès i Colomé, Comellas, & Barrieras, 2011). Hence, they are still affected by Japanese ideologies. Since the temporary residents usually come to Catalonia with little information about its sociolinguistic situation, the sociolinguistic context of Japan serves them as a framework, whereby Catalan is perceived as a variation of Spanish or a language used exclusively by a certain collective such as nationalists (Mothers 1,2,3).

These parents' explanation evidenced that the school's language education is quite symbolic, 'not designed so that the children become competent in speaking Spanish' (Father 2). Another father's comment, 'It would not sound nice if there is no Spanish class in a Japanese School in Spain' (Father 3), suggests that the school's local language education is an attempt of 'positive affirmation' for the host society (Iwasaki, 2006) to demonstrate that they are at least interested in the host society's language.

Intermarried families' attitudes: stuck between Japanese identity and Catalan/Spaniard identity

Given the characteristics of a Japanese school, it is not a typical option for intermarried families permanently settled in the host country. Nonetheless, some parents choose this school because they hope that their children achieve a native speaker proficiency in Japanese. When the interviews were conducted, there were 10 children from intermarried families in JSB. All the parents interviewed responded that they selected this option for their children's cultural identity formation in addition to language acquisition; they hoped that their children could learn Japanese values and customs as 'they are also Japanese' (Mother 10, 11), which cannot be acquired only through language education. Their choice of school reflects their belief in Japanese playing a significant role in one's Japanese identity (Liddicoat, 2007). Some of their children are reported to identify themselves strongly as Japanese: 'My daughter has highly Japanese mentality and she doesn't like Spain. She begs me saying: "Mom, don't send me to a Spaniards' school please"'! (Mother 12). They consider the JSB a comfortable place as they were called *chino* ('Chinese' in Spanish) by their local classmates at a nursery school, making them feel 'different' to other classmates. In the JSB, such a 'difference' seems less clear, at least physiognomically.

Nonetheless, these children live among Japanese culture/language at school and Catalan/Spanish culture/language, or a mixture of both, outside school. After leaving the JSB, they have to position themselves again in a new setting. Although they may identify as 'Japanese' with Catalan/Spaniard heritage, language-related issues are inevitable. Thus, the parents were anxious about their children's command of Spanish and Catalan: 'so far, I don't find it as a problem, but when my daughter leaves Japanese school and starts studying at a local school, we have to complement her Spanish and Catalan, because her level is quite low' (Mother 11). Though the children spoke local languages at home and have occasions to 'learn' Spanish at school, 'not much can be expected of these classes' (Mother 11), since 'they do not satisfy what the children will need in near future and are something superficial' (Mother 9). According to one mother, it is because 'demand for Spanish class may reflect the families' intentions, I think. [Sojourner] parents' attitude of giving no importance on Spanish seems to be conveyed to their children. I heard that some children were learning Spanish reluctantly. So, as we can imagine, their level is low' (Mother 9). She further stated that while she understands the teachers have come to provide Japanese national education to Japanese children, the teachers should also learn local languages and culture, as 'they must have come here with the purpose of international understanding'.

Regarding Catalan, it is an important concern for these families. The demand to teach this language emerged amongst them, though 'families are divided into those who support strongly Catalan and those who insist on Spanish' (Mother 11). Language ideologies in Catalonia are often discussed in terms of the different values of language – instrumental function or identifying function – which are often considered by parents when choosing the language for their children's education (Mas i Miralles & Montoya, 2011). Those who support Catalan believe that the children should learn and use the

language of where they live (Mother 9,11,12), whilst those who defend Spanish justify their belief by its usefulness (Mother 10).

Parents' ardent demand for an appropriate language education suggests that language-related issues are labelled the main interest for all intermarried families. However, the parents appear to be in a dilemma—a strong desire to preserve their children's Japanese identity and the price to be paid for doing it.

Conclusions

This study found that the JSB's LEP is significantly influenced by the ideologies of the Ministry and Japanese society. This suggests that LEP turns ideologies into practices through education and reflects the opinions and attitudes valued at the highest levels in the planning process (Kaplan, 2004; Shohamy, 2006). All the practices observed in the school's language education program suggest that the school is confined by a national perspective such that their local and global perspectives also stem from the ideologies in Japan, i.e. these perspectives are based on ethnocentrism, viewing 'Japan' and 'others' in a dichotomous way (G.Sato, 2010).

This top-down LEP, where agents who implement LEP are not included in the planning process, results in the imposition of the top's perspective without considering the real needs of those who are affected by LEP. Consequently, ideologies of monolingualism and homogeneity are imposed, which also results in the imposition of 'a single identity' equating language and nationality. Furthermore, tensions arise between macro-level policy and the micro-level situation (Baldauf, 2006), as has been observed in ambiguous school goals for intercultural understanding and an ideological conflict between sojourner families and intermarried families in terms of language. Further research that focuses on the children is needed, although from the viewpoints of

the school and the parents, the school's relatively unsuccessful language education implies that LEP serves only as a statement of intent that cannot be enacted (Shohamy, 2006, p.143). This may ultimately lead to a need for involvement of the agents who are excluded from the LEP design process.

This study has a pedagogical implication in that it questions the assumptions of language education in Japanese schools abroad and suggests a revision of language teaching within 'education for understanding the host society' through this prominent case of Catalonia. The peculiar context of this study reveals that through a monolingual ideology which this education stuck to, linguistic diversity can become 'a problem' external to the classroom. Nonetheless, the supposed problem of language education of children from intermarried families could be an immediate opportunity for the sojourner children to increase their curiosity about their linguistic surroundings. It might also open their eyes to composite identities, since linguistic and cultural diversity cannot be valued if they are not first recognised in the children's own environment (Young & Helot, 2003, p.252).

If a language is learnt as part of 'intercultural understanding', skill acquisition is not a goal but a result, and it should be taught so that learners become interested in the target language's culture (Mizokami & Shibata, 2009). As long as the JSB clearly establishes the 'real' objective of their language education as motivating children to be interested in the host society, the school's language education should not focus on a certain language but encompass sociolinguistic concerns equally. Then, student cultural and linguistic awareness can develop, which opens the door for intercultural understanding. This change could have implications for Japanese schools in other countries and eventually for schools in Japan that have an increasing numbers of students from different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.

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[1] The terms 'expatriate' or 'sojourner' are often used while referring to these Japanese citizens, since they share some common features. Expatriates show more specific motivations for staying in the destination country due to their high professional skills and are already employed with legal status when they enter the host society. On the other hand, sojourner is a more encompassing term (Sinangil and Ones, 2001). Therefore, in this study we use the term sojourner.

[2] The English translation for 'llengua pròpia', which is adopted by Catalan government.

[3] «Si se separa la gent per la llengua, s'acabarà balcanitzant Catalunya», *dBalears/E.P.*, 22/01/2018, https://dbalears.cat/politica/2018/01/22/310869/puigdemont-separa-gent-per-llengua-acabara-balcanitzant-catalunya.html, consulted on January 23 2018

[4] http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/clarinet/002/002.htm

[5] In some Japanese schools, the local language is taught as a compulsory subject since it is a necessary condition in order to be authorized as a formal educational institution by the educational law of the host country (Ex. Japanese schools in Thailand, in Indonesia and in Munich).

[6] In the present study, we will not treat covert and overt attitude separately, since the boundary between them is not precise (Lybaert 2016).

[7] As there is only one Japanese school in Catalonia, the school's real name has been used.

[8] All of them comprise a couple of Japanese–Spanish nationalities.

[9] Except for those who possess 'double nationalities'.

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