By looking at longitudinal ethnographic data, the current paper explores the linguistic phenomena observed within 6 international marriage families – composed primarily of a British father, a Japanese mother, and their children – employing One Parent One Language Policy (OPOL) as a FLP. The focus in this paper is on FLP negotiation trajectories according to changing spatial-temporal circumstances and at nexus life events, with a special focus on minority language speaking bilingual family members – children (age 3-7) and their mothers.

This paper finds that the children’s enrolment into British mainstream school brings about dramatic linguistic changes within families. Children’s preference for the use of English is perceived as ‘un-favourable’ by mothers who are in charge of children’s Japanese language development in OPOL policy. For the purpose of securing children’s Japanese language skills, a local Japanese community such as a Japanese Saturday school is considered as an important context. Although those contexts employ a monolingual policy ”Japanese only”, the rich ethnographic data shows that the contact with such communities interestingly increases children’s bilingual language use and appreciation of their bilinguality, since the members of those communities are mostly bilinguals, which is considerably different from the monolingual context of mainstream schools.

By focusing on the role language plays in different contexts, this paper also explores the process of constant negotiation involved in FLP. The paper argues that the mothers’ desire to keep Japanese language use at home is not only for the benefit of the children’s bilinguality, but also for mothers in order to maintain their parental power, while negotiating their own position in the English-speaking society. This paper treats the family as a social unit, and captures a detailed account of their negotiation of language use at home, and the linguistic and social complexities involved in this process.

Keywords: ethnography, multilingualism, FLP negotiation.