

Ideologies of English in Japan

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ABSTRACT: A number of educators in recent years have argued that the dominance of English has created structural and cultural inequalities between developed and developing countries. Although they tend to dismiss ideological issues regarding teaching English in affluent countries in the Expanding Circle such as Japan, there is a growing concern and critique in Japan on ideologies of English. Critics argue that the dominance of English influences the Japanese language and people's views of language, culture, race, ethnicity and identity which are affected by the world view of native English speakers, and that teaching English creates cultural and linguistic stereotypes not only of English but also of Japanese people. Recent discourses of *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika* provide a broader context for understanding such ideologies. These discourses represent both resistance and accommodation to the hegemony of the West with a promotion of nationalistic values and learning a Western mode of communication; i.e., English. Among several proposals offered by critics, raising critical awareness of English domination parallels the philosophy of critical pedagogy. This paper suggests that both critical consciousness and practical skills in English along with inclusion of varieties of English in the curriculum are necessary for Japanese learners to appropriate English for social transformation.

INTRODUCTION

In recent studies educators and researchers of English as a second language have discussed issues of ideology that English language teaching creates worldwide. They argue that the dominance of English, promoted by teaching English, has constructed and maintained structural and cultural inequalities in which more resources are allocated to English than to other languages and in which English-speaking individuals and social organizations benefit more than others (Tollefson, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Kachru, 1997).

Arguments made by ESL/EFL educators, however, often focus on the linguistic and cultural inequalities between developed and developing countries, overlooking the impact of teaching English on language and culture in affluent non-English speaking countries such as Japan. In fact, Japan is considered to be one of the few non-Western countries to achieve remarkable economic success without sacrificing its traditional culture and language. Scholars and business leaders have often emphasized the cultural uniqueness of Japan, as opposed to Westernization, as a major cause of Japanese economic success in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Sugimoto and Mouer, 1980). In discussing the linguistic dominance of English worldwide, Phillipson (1992) suggested that the growing economic power of Japan or Germany might transform the current linguistic hierarchy, shifting the dominance from English as the 'international' language. It is certainly the case that the number of speakers of Japanese as a second or foreign language has increased, mirroring Japan's economic strength. For example, Japanese is now the most commonly taught foreign language in Australia, and it has also become one of the most popular foreign languages in Asia. Although the issue of the expansion

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of the Japanese language and culture is worth exploring, it can be said that the present penetration of English into the non-English speaking world is far greater than the spread of Japanese in the world.

The scarcity of discussions on ideological issues in teaching English to economically and academically successful learners in ESL/EFL situations can also be observed in the field of second language writing. To explain why second language writing has not focused on ideology like L1 English composition studies have, Santos (1992) states that language 'right' is not an issue for ESL/EFL students, since they are already proficient in their first language. Santos also comments that raising the issue of ideology can be problematic in teaching English overseas where not all countries share the same frame of reference on issues such as language rights. Johns (1993) asserts that the students whom ESL specialists teach are educationally and economically successful immigrants and elites, and therefore 'do not need personal validation' (p. 85).

Despite the scant attention paid to issues of ideology in ELT in the case of an affluent country like Japan, a review of the literature does indicate concern about the domination of English in Japanese society at various levels. The purposes of this paper are threefold: to synthesize the issues of ideology in teaching and learning English raised recently by critics in Japan, to discuss recent discourses of *nihonjinron* (uniqueness of the Japanese) and *kokusaika* (internationalization) as broader ideological contexts that would provide an understanding of ideologies of English in Japan, and to suggest that critical pedagogy would raise critical awareness of ideologies of English and that teaching communicative skills as well as including Outer Circle and Expanding Circle varieties of English (i.e., English used in former colonies where it has been institutionalized and English used as a foreign language – see Kachru, 1985) in the curriculum would facilitate appropriation of English for social change. Before discussing these issues, I will provide a brief historical background of ELT in Japan.

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After America initiated trade relations with Japan in 1853, English replaced Dutch as the major Western language studied in Japan. Although intellectuals in the Meiji Period (1868–1912) were acutely aware of the need for learning English, dissemination of English was not so extensive during this time as it was after World War II. During the war, English language instruction was discouraged, but Japan's post-war political, social, and economic reform was strongly influenced by the American system and therefore the English language. Learning *eikaiwa* or 'English conversation' was already popular when Douglas Lummis began to teach English in 1961 in Japan. A few years later, he wrote an essay titled, 'Ideorogi to shite no eikaiwa' ('*Eikaiwa* as ideology') (Lummis, 1976), raising the issue of ideology behind the practices involved in *eikaiwa*. Lummis pointed out that the world of *eikaiwa* is racist in terms of hiring, paying, and advertising practices, as well as in the ideology promoted in textbooks and classes.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Japan's economy began to surge ahead, increasing the amount of contact between Japanese and non-Japanese people and worsening friction between Japan and its trade partners. The enhancement of international communication and understanding became an imminent issue. Since the 1980s the slogan, *kokusaika* or 'internationalization' has become prevalent in businesses, national and local government offices, schools, and communities. Learning English has increasingly been emphasized as

one of the strategies to 'internationalize' the nation. Hastened by technological advances in mass-communication, English has penetrated in various aspects of daily life from TV to radio, movies, and the internet (Tanaka, 1995).

Historically, the Japanese language has survived some intellectuals' attempts to replace it with English. In the late 19th century, Arinori Mori, the first Minister of Education, advocated the adoption of English as the language of Japan. Also in 1947 and 1950, Gakudo Ozaki, a politician, advocated the adoption of English as a national language. Although English did not and perhaps will not replace the Japanese language entirely, its influence on Japanese has been and will continue to be significant. (On the history of English teaching in Japan, see Ike, 1995; Koike and Tanaka, 1995; Nakamura, 1989; Tanaka and Tanaka, 1995.)

RECENT ARGUMENTS ON IDEOLOGIES OF ENGLISH IN JAPAN

In recent years, issues of ideology of English and ELT have been discussed by intellectuals and educators in Japan. Arguments are often given titles such as 'English imperialism,' or 'domination of English.' Some books that discuss this topic have been published (e.g., Nakamura, 1989; Oishi, 1990; Tsuda, 1990, 1993, 1996), a weekly magazine, *Syukan Kinyobi*, published a series of articles and debates on the topic in 1994, and *Gendai Eigo Kyoiku*, a widely circulated journal for English teachers, devoted an entire issue to this topic in 1995. The arguments center around the issue of social and linguistic implications of English as well as the construction of Japanese people's ambivalent view of language, race, and culture.

The linguistic influence of English is perhaps the most obvious phenomenon evident in Japan. There are increasingly more English loan words written in katakana (syllabic symbols used for the phonetic transcription of foreign sounds). Further, the number of English words written in the alphabet used for advertising, product names, and titles for magazines and TV shows has also increased. Tsuda (1990) mentions a letter to the editor in which the writer deplores the official use of katakana words for welfare policies for the elderly. They include phonetic transcriptions of English words such as 'home helper,' 'short stay,' 'day service,' and 'hospital,' which can be expressed using Japanese equivalents. According to a recent survey, 58% of Japanese respondents said there are increasingly more loan words or foreign words, and more than 81% said they had encountered loan words or foreign words on TV or newspapers which they did not understand (Ishino, 1996).

English influence exists not only at the word level but also at the macro level of written discourse. Despite the belief that the Japanese text organization is very different from English (Kaplan, 1988) since it is characterized by indirectness, a classical pattern called *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu* (Hinds, 1983), 'delayed introduction of purpose,' or 'quasi-inductive' (Hinds, 1990), many Japanese composition handbooks for college students and professionals (e.g., Kabashima, 1980; Kinoshita, 1990; Morioka, 1963) base their theory on English composition (cf. Kubota, 1997). They promote using topic sentences, and emphasize unity, clarity, and logic. Japanese academic papers in social sciences, for instance, follow the organization of English academic papers including 'introduction,' 'literature review,' 'method,' 'results,' 'discussion,' and 'conclusion.'

Perhaps the most troubling way English exerts influence in Japan is in affecting the formation of people's views of language, culture, race, ethnicity, and their identity. Critics

argue that by learning English, the Japanese have adopted native English speakers' view of the world. Indeed, as Erikawa (1995) shows, many textbooks used since the Meiji Period reflected a racial bias of English-speaking authors at the time. A textbook published in 1872 (Meiji 5) called *Mitchell's New School Geography* categorized people into five groups: 'savage,' 'barbarous,' 'half-civilized,' 'civilized,' and 'civilized and enlightened.' According to Erikawa, up to the early 1970s, native Americans and Africans described and illustrated in English textbooks used in Japan were not given an independent ethnic and cultural status. They were often stereotyped as subject to the white, saved by the white, or attacking the white. Erikawa also cites a paragraph in a widely used textbook, *Standard Jack and Betty*, which was published in 1956: 'Some of them (languages) are less important, for there are not many people who speak them. English is one of the most important languages because many people use it.' What is represented in these textbooks are the superiority of English, native speakers of English, as well as their culture and society.

It is argued that by learning English, the Japanese have internalized such Anglo-Saxon views of the world (Nakamura, 1989). English has thus become eyeglasses through which the Japanese have viewed other ethnic groups, particularly minorities (Nakamura, 1991). The non-native speaker of English, or the *Other*, is viewed as uncivilized and inferior to the Anglo speaker of English. Learning English, a language of the 'civilized,' has been one of the means for the Japanese to identify themselves with Westerners. Here the Japanese identity is split – although the Japanese are Asians, they have wished to identify themselves with Westerners, and their Asian self as well as other Asian peoples have been perceived as the inferior *Other* (Oishi, 1990; Tsuda, 1990).

It is important to note, however, that these arguments on the construction of Japanese people's world view influenced by learning English can be challenged. First, these arguments are intuitive rather than empirical. The relation between learning English and the formation of learners' particular world views can only be speculated. Second, Japanese people's prejudice against certain Asian ethnic groups existed before the English language was introduced. For instance, legends of the Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula appeared as early as the eighth century in Japan's first chronicles, *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicle of Japan). The Japanese superiority manifested in these legends was used by Toyotomi Hideyoshi as the justification for invading Korea in 1592 and 1597. Notions of the Japanese superiority over Koreans was strengthened under the imperialist ideology of the 19th and 20th century, when Japan sought economic and territorial dominance in Asia to compete with the major powers of the West (Yoon, 1991). From these perspectives, it can be said that the Japanese attitude of looking down upon Asians was reinforced, rather than created, by the racially biased view represented in English textbooks and English classes.

Another ideological aspect of teaching and learning English is the construction of cultural stereotypes and trivialization of content. In learning English, the target language and culture that are to be emulated have been idealized, simplified, and given a certain stereotype. Lummis (1976) pointed out that the images of the United States presented in English conversation classes are what native teachers wish America could be. The negative side of American society including poverty, crime, illiteracy, racism, and so forth is rarely touched upon. More recently, Nakamura (1992) criticized the tendency toward 'infantilization' in junior high school English textbooks. According to Nakamura, recent textbooks contain an increasing number of 'amusing' illustrations as well as topics and content that are trivial (see also Pennycook, 1994 in reference to the trend of trivialization of

content in the communicative approach in teaching ESL). There is very little space for developing critical thinking within such superficial understandings of language and culture. English language education, thus, has not only contributed to the construction of the ideal image of the target language and culture but also failed to question inequalities and injustices that exist in the world. Nakamura proposes analyses of the role of the English language in the world and its relation to the political, economic, cultural, and military powers of the United States, for instance, as far more meaningful and important topics for students, helping them to understand various linguistic and cultural injustices throughout the world.

Through teaching and learning about English, stereotypical images and certain value judgments on language and communication style are also created for both English and Japanese. Since the 1960s the discourse of *nihonjinron*, or uniqueness of the Japanese, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section, has characterized the Japanese communication mode in terms of taciturnity, ambivalence, non-logical situational ethics and emotionality, while characterizing the Western mode in terms of eloquence, dichotomous logic, rigid principle and rationality (Yoshino, 1992). As for written discourse features, Japanese texts have often been characterized as being 'emotional,' 'subjective,' 'unclear,' 'indirect,' 'ambiguous,' and 'inductive,' whereas English texts are described as 'logical,' 'analytical,' 'direct,' and 'succinct' (Kubota, 1992). Such a contrast is not without value judgments. Although *nihonjinron* generally champions the uniqueness of the Japanese, it often suggests that the English communication pattern is better than Japanese and should be emulated. The following quote from Saisho (1975) clearly demonstrates this point:

... what is present in English but absent in Japanese is logical and analytical reasoning. English is equipped with functional expressions in this respect. It may be a good idea to incorporate such features into Japanese.

... There are a small number of British and American people who have mastered Japanese perfectly. Studying the Japanese language spoken and written by them will be beneficial because it is structured by the English logic.

... These people express what average Japanese people do not usually think of in excellent Japanese for us. This would be of help for expanding the range of Japanese expressions ... Their Japanese is rich in content, topics, and persuasiveness.

However, it is not advisable for the Japanese to speak English using the Japanese logic because a higher level of logicalness as a communication tool is required in using English, which is the world language (pp. 177–8; translated from Japanese).

Here the logic of English is championed and viewed as a model for the development of the Japanese language. A characteristic of the arguments on linguistic uniqueness of Japanese is the tendency to contrast Japanese only with English and other European languages. Such an unbalanced contrast is logical since English has been considered the most important language to learn.

I have synthesized recent arguments on ideologies of English discussed among Japanese intellectuals. As mentioned above, one of the aspects of ideology of English in Japan is the creation of a stereotypical image of Japanese language as seen in the discourse of *nihonjinron*, which attempts to define a distinct Japanese cultural and linguistic identity *vis-à-vis* the Western culture and language, particularly English. This section also mentioned that through learning English, the Japanese have identified themselves with Westerners while regarding non-Western peoples as the *Other*. *Nihonjinron*, which

represents cultural nationalism (Yoshino, 1992), and the discourse of *kokusaika*, which is closely related to *nihonjinron* and has become prevalent during the 1980s and 1990s, would further provide a socio-political context that enables us to understand ideologies of English in Japan.

IDEOLOGIES OF ENGLISH IN THE DISCOURSES OF *NIHONJINRON* AND *KOKUSAIKA*

Nihonjinron, which is literally translated as ‘theories on the Japanese,’ became popular during the 1960s and the 1970s when Japan experienced fast economic growth. Many Japanese and American authors wrote about the sociological, psychological, and linguistic uniqueness of the Japanese people (e.g., Doi, 1971; Kindaichi, 1975; Nakane, 1967; Reischauer, 1978; Vogel, 1979). Since the 1980s, however, critics have begun to point out the ideological underpinnings of *nihonjinron*, arguing that it promotes racial, ethnic and class uniformity and harmony while ignoring diversity and conflicts in Japan, and that it serves the interests of Japanese political and business leaders (e.g., Dale, 1986; Sugimoto and Mouer, 1982; Befu, 1987; Lummis and Ikeda, 1985). *Nihonjinron* domestically imposes a particular Japanese identity on people including ethnic minorities while it internationally legitimates Japanese business and political practices that are incompatible with Western counterparts (Sugimoto and Mouer, 1982).

Critics have argued that *nihonjinron* is a reaction against a sense of identity loss. Befu (1987), for example, argues that *nihonjinron* as an ideology saves Japanese identity which has been threatened by post-war Westernization and industrialization. A similar analysis can explain the love/hate sentiment that the Japanese have toward English and foreigners. Tsuda (1990) interprets Japanese negative attitudes toward English and English speaking people as xenophobia caused by ‘English allergy.’ According to Tsuda, ‘English allergy’ is a defense mechanism to fight against the fear of identity crisis caused by ‘English addiction.’ English ‘allergy’ and xenophobic attitudes reflect a reaction against excessive or unsuccessful attempts to acquire English and identify with English speakers.

It appears that *nihonjinron* as cultural nationalism and ‘English allergy’ prevent a spread of English. However, the discourse of *kokusaika* which is closely affiliated with *nihonjinron* clearly represents an ideology that promotes teaching and learning English.

As mentioned earlier, in the 1980s a discourse of *kokusaika* emerged as economic conflicts between Japan and its trade partners, particularly the United States, became intense. Japan as a world economic power experienced a need to communicate better with its international partners in order to ensure its economic prosperity while maintaining its own identity. A strategy that Japan employed in order to fulfil this need was neither to subjugate the nation to the West nor to seek a counter-hegemony against the West; it was to accommodate the hegemony of the West by becoming one of the equal members of the West and to convince the West and other nations of its position based on a distinct cultural heritage. The discourse of *kokusaika* thus harmoniously embraces both Westernization through learning the communication mode of English and the promotion of nationalistic values.

The discourse of *kokusaika* constitutes the backbone of the recent education reform. *Rinji Kyoiku Shingikai*, the Ad Hoc Committee for Education Reform, compiled four reports on education reform between 1985 and 1987. A sarcastic image of an ideal Japanese person envisioned by the Council’s reports is presented by Morita (1988: 8):

An English-speaking samurai carrying a computer on his back, advances to Asia and Pacific under the Stars and Stripes with a flag of the Rising Sun tied around his head singing *Kimigayo* (The Era of Your Highness: the national anthem).

Here, the spiritual aspect to be fostered is patriotism, love of traditions, as well as worship of the Emperor. The second report of the Council proposes that one should develop a wide and deep understanding of Japan that allows persuasive assertion in the international community of Japanese history, traditions, culture, and society. The use of the national flag and anthem at school ceremonies has been mandated by the Ministry of Education despite opposition from concerned teachers and citizens who regard them as symbols of Japanese militarism and colonialism before and during World War II. The ability required for the next generation, on the other hand, is a command of language and logic of the West (particularly English). Teaching English is regarded as important as ever, and secondary schools emphasize teaching communicative competence particularly in speaking and listening to English (cf. Tanaka and Tanaka, 1995). The ability to think and express oneself articulately and persuasively is to be fostered not only in English but also in Japanese 'in order to explain Japanese culture in accordance with the logic and psychology of the people addressed' (The Third Report). 'Debate' has become a popular activity in Japanese language classrooms in which students construct logical arguments to convince their classmates of their points of view. In this discourse of *kokusaika*, creation of cultural identity and patriotism as resistance to Westernization harmoniously coexists with promotion of learning English and English 'logic' that would enable Japan to become a respected member of the West.

This discourse of *kokusaika* still underlies the most recent report on education reform, which promotes learning English as well as Japanese cultural heritage. The first report of *Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai*, the Central Committee for Education Reform, which was released in 1996, includes a section on 'Education policy for adapting to societal changes including *kokusaika*, and the development of information and science technology.' The report recommends introducing English instruction at elementary schools in order to enhance international understanding. Although the report recognizes Japan's past tendency to look to only developed countries in the West, and states that Japan needs to pay more attention to countries in Asia and Oceania, the budget proposed by the Ministry of Education based on the Committee's report seems to still gravitate toward promotion of English education. Most of the budget proposed to cope with *kokusaika* is allocated to projects such as inviting teachers from the United States, increasing the number of Assistant Language Teachers (the majority of whom are native speakers of English from the Inner Circle; i.e., USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and providing study abroad opportunities for Japanese teachers of English (listed in *Daijin kanbo seisaku ka*, 1996).

One significant commonality shared by *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika* is that both discourses tend to define Japan's position only in relation to the West. *Nihonjinron* as a reaction against Westernization tends to stress the uniqueness of Japanese culture compared to the West. In this discourse, Japan is usually juxtaposed with the West while non-Western cultures are excluded from the scope. The discourse of *nihonjinron* defines Japan as the *Other* that is distinct from the Western counterpart, but through the Western eyeglasses it views non-Western non-Japanese racial and ethnic groups as already the inferior *Other* that does not require a definition. The notion of Japanese uniqueness often lacks legitimacy when Japan is compared to non-Western counterparts such as other

Asian cultures. Similarly *kokusaika* tends to stress teaching and learning Western cultures and languages (particularly American English) and to promote cultural exchange with the Inner Circle. Referring to British colonialization of India as a process of transforming the *Other* in accordance with a Western social cultural norm, Tanaka (1993) argues that *kokusaika* is a form of colonization and is synonymous to Americanization. These ideologies do not strongly encourage learning and appreciating Englishes used in the Outer or Expanding Circles nor do they promote a creative use of English among native speakers of Japanese to constitute an indigenous variety. The adherence to American or British English and literature observed among English programs in Japanese universities (Kachru, 1997) reflects this ideological context.

In summary, the discourses of *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika* promote both strengthening Japanese identity based on nationalistic values and learning the communication mode of English. These discourses reside in the hegemony of the West and represent both resistance to Westernization and accommodation to English. These discourses also tend to exclude non-Western cultures and languages as reference categories. As long as Japan continues to negotiate and struggle for power within the hegemony of the West, it will probably continue to regard the Inner Circle variety of English as a model to acquire.

STRATEGIES AND DIRECTIONS FOR A CHANGE: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Without apparent resistance to the domination of English in Japan, it seems that teaching and learning English taught and learned in Japan will continue to gravitate toward the Inner Circle varieties and to promote Westernization in various aspects of Japanese life while failing to provide global socio-linguistic perspectives. There are, however, proposals and trends that might change the current situation.

An early recommendation proposed by Suzuki (1975) suggested a use of *Englic*, which is a variety of English that is dissociated from the thought and culture of the UK, the USA and other Anglo-English speaking countries. *Englic* would allow the Japanese to communicate with other English speakers without sacrificing their own cultural identity. Another recommendation is to offer various foreign languages along with English at the junior high school level in order to promote *kokusaika* in a truer sense (Oishi, 1990, 1993). Yet another suggestion is to use Esperanto instead of English for international communication. Mizuno (1993) suggests that making an ethnic language such as English an international language always disadvantages non-native speakers of that language. For critics like Mizuno, Esperanto is the only effective solution to the problems of the current situation.

A trend that can be observed in some recent junior high school English textbooks is to promote multicultural perspectives by including topics and characters associated with languages and cultures other than American and British (Watanabe, 1995). Although it is unknown whether such a trend would actually change students' attitudes toward different languages and cultures, it would certainly raise their awareness of the fallacy that English is learned only in order to interact with native speakers of the language (cf. Kachru, 1992).

Still, in order to effect change, the most powerful strategy in ELT seems to be to foster critical awareness with regard to English domination, construction of identities, and social, linguistic, racial, and ethnic inequality (cf. Tsuda, 1994; Kubota, 1994). The problems associated with English domination in Japan are reinforced by the general public's uncritical and unconscious acceptance of the status quo. Solutions might be initiated by raising awareness that these problems exist, and that particular values, beliefs, and

preconceptions are attached to English. In order to raise a new awareness that would liberate Japanese people's consciousness from English dominance and to seek racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic equality, Tsuda (1990, 1993) makes 21 proposals. They include rejecting the value judgements such as the superiority of the English language and English-speaking foreigners; becoming aware that one does not have to speak in English to foreigners in Japan; becoming aware that Japan is a country that treats Westerners favorably and discriminates against non-Westerners; establishing a positive self-image as a Japanese; and recognizing that internationalizing consciousness involves developing attitudes that promote equality among people, languages, and cultures. Tsuda also suggests adding an area of study on 'human communication' to the undergraduate curriculum in order to explore these issues.

Raising critical consciousness and taking critical actions for creating new possibilities parallel the philosophy of critical pedagogy advocated in the context of literacy education (e.g., Freire, 1973; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Walsh, 1991), educational philosophy (e.g., Giroux, 1991), and second language education (e.g., Pennycook, 1990; 1994). Critical pedagogy, in essence, aims for creating racial, ethnic, gender, class, cultural and linguistic equality in our society based on morality and ethics. In this philosophy, language, culture, and education are viewed as a political site of struggle where particular meanings and practices are constructed and erased in power relations. Our knowledge is often constructed by and reinforces a dominant discourse or ideology which privileges some and oppresses others. For instance, Japanese people's particular knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about English *vis-à-vis* other languages, which have been discussed in this paper, is constructed by and reinforces the discourse which regards English and Anglo-speakers of English as developed, civilized, and superior.

Teachers who engage in critical pedagogy thus challenge and question the knowledge that is taken for granted, and explore the creation of new knowledge. In this view, the teacher's role shifts from that of an apolitical technician merely transmitting information to a 'transforming intellectual' (Giroux, 1991), critically aware of power and discourse who addresses social and political issues. Thus, teaching is never neutral or apolitical; it legitimizes or challenges a particular discourse that controls social practices. Therefore, to teach critically is 'to acknowledge the political nature of all education; it is not to take up some "political" stance that stands in contradistinction to a "neutral" position' (Pennycook, 1994: 301).

In the Japanese context, to raise critical consciousness means first of all to notice the linguistic and cultural imbalance and contradictions in everyday social and cultural practices that are taken for granted, and to critically reflect on the values attached to those practices. For instance, Japanese media use an increasing number of loan words from English despite the fact that there are Japanese equivalents. Many products, institutions, events, and so on are named in English. English is used for designs for clothes and personal goods, while it is rare to see words written in other scripts such as Arabic, Chinese, and Korean. Almost all Japanese youngsters are learning English but almost none of them are given the opportunities to learn other foreign languages. Learning English and *kokusaiika* are so bound up together that people take for granted an advertisement of an 'English conversation school' in the Tokyo subway which says, 'If you have a dream in English, you are a *kokusaijin* (international person)' (Nakamura, 1991).

While raising critical consciousness is a precondition for achieving ethnic, cultural and

linguistic equality, it is also important, considering the fact that English is in fact an international language, to develop communicative skills in English and to appropriate English for expressing cultural identity and advocating global cultural/linguistic equality. There has been a controversy in a weekly magazine, *Syukan Kinyobi*, between critics of the dominance of English and people supporting the teaching of communicative skills in English. The debate tends to dichotomize the importance of the theoretical aspect and the practical aspect of English language education. The critics argue that too much emphasis on developing practical skills in English will reinforce the domination of English, and that theoretical and critical understanding of the history of linguistic and cultural oppression induced by ELT needs to be taught. They tend to de-emphasize the development of skills in manipulating language, and advocate equality in international communication through respecting and using one's native language. People who emphasize the practical aspect of English, on the other hand, tend to underemphasize the ideological aspect of English since English is, *de facto*, 'the international language.' These two positions, however, do not have to be mutually exclusive; rather, both of them need to be incorporated in critical pedagogy for social change. To only study the ideological aspect of English without developing communicative skills may disadvantage and alienate learners, since English does play a role of gate keeper, and it is influencing various aspects of Japanese language, culture, and society. Also, it would be difficult for a Japanese person with critical awareness but without English skills to communicate with English speakers to voice his/her opinion. On the other hand, developing only communication skills without understanding how a language of power oppresses other languages, cultures, and societies would further reinforce global inequality and a biased view of language, race, and culture. Both critical awareness of the power of English and communicative skills in English would enable us to transform our psychological biases *and* enable us to use English as a weapon for social transformation. The need for both acquisition and appropriation of a dominant language as a voice against marginalization and oppression is advocated by educators of minority students (e.g., Delpit, 1992; Reyes, 1992). Acquiring the communication skills in the dominant language does not necessarily lead to the rejection of one's linguistic and cultural identity, since meanings are not fixed but multiple. What is necessary for a critical teacher is to help students develop a critical discourse and formulate their identities, and to 'saturate the dominant Discourse with new meanings' (Delpit, 1992: 301).

While Japanese teachers of English need to help their students develop both critical awareness and communicative skills, it is also necessary for them to help students broaden their cultural/linguistic perspectives through recognizing 'multiple identities' of English (Kachru, 1997). English curriculum needs to include varieties of English and literatures from the Outer and Extending Circles in addition to the Inner Circle varieties. This would help teachers and students begin to develop respect and appreciation of non-Western languages and cultures. This would also help them become aware of the possibility of appropriating English in order to create new meanings and identities rather than simply modeling the Inner Circle varieties.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have presented current discussions on ideologies of English in Japan and provided a larger ideological context offered by *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika*, which represent both resistance and accommodation to the hegemony of the West and English. Contrary to

some American and British researchers' speculation that ideology of English may not be a significant issue in economically developed countries, English dominance is an immanent issue in Japan. Discussions on this issue will perhaps continue, and critical thinkers and educators in Japan will continue to explore possibilities for creating equality in communication among people with different cultural and linguistic heritage. The future of the status of English in Japan would depend on continuous dialogues between concerned individuals, policy makers, the general public, and educators in Japan.

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