

Language Ideology and Japan's English  
Education Reform:  
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Reporting  
in The Japan Times

Master's thesis

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<b>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</b> <p>Japanin englanninopetusjärjestelmää on pyritty uudistamaan lukuisia kertoja 1980-luvulta lähtien. Englannin kielen taitotaso on Japanissa kuitenkin edelleen yksi Aasian alhaisimpia, ja vuonna 2013 Japanin hallitus ryhtyi valmistelemaan jälleen uutta englanninopetusreformia. Tämä tutkimus seuraa reformiin liittyvää uutisointia ja sen herättämää keskustelua englanninkielisessä The Japan Times-lehdessä vuosien 2013 ja 2019 välillä. Lehden tekstejä analysoitiin kriittisen diskurssianalyysin keinoin, ja analyysin tarkoituksena oli ottaa selville minkälaisia kielen ideologioita lehti toisintaa ja levittää, ja millä keinoin tämä tapahtuu. Tämän lisäksi tutkimus analysoi mahdollista muutosta aineiston ideologisessa sisällössä. Teksteissä englannin kieli nähtiin laajalti Japanin ulkopuolisena ja länttä edustavana. Englannin kielen taito nähtiin samanaikaisesti mahdollisuutena osallistua kansainvälisille markkinoille ja oppia muilta mailta ja kulttuureilta, sekä uhkana japanilaiselle kulttuurille ja identiteetille. Natiivipuhujat nähtiin aineistossa kielen oppimisen mallina ja natiiviopettajat tärkeänä osana englanninopetusta, mutta tekstit myös haastoivat ajatusta natiivipuhujista englannin kielen omistajina. Analyysi ei osoittanut merkittävää muutosta aineiston ideologisessa sisällössä. Lehdessä nähdyt kielen ideologiat olivat laajalti samoja vallalla olevia ideologioita, joita aiemmassa tutkimuksessa on tunnustettu, vaikkakin vastustusta niitä kohtaan oli myös nähtävissä. Tutkimus suosittelee kielen ideologioiden tarkastelua laajempaan osaksi tutkimusta ja keskustelua kielikoulutuspolitiikasta.</p>	
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, English is inarguably a global language. The increased interconnectedness of the world in the global economy and in the age of digital communication has led to English being spoken all over the world, and increasingly as a lingua franca between non-native speakers. Thus, for many governments, improving English education has been seen as a way to improve their global standing. Japan is no exception; since the 1980s, numerous reforms to the English education system have been implemented. However, these reforms have not seemed to produce results: Japan still has one of the lowest English proficiency in all of Asia, while other Asian nations have improved.

While many see the history of English in Japan, the focus on testing in the education system and the rigid employment system of Japan as some of the reasons for the lack of improvement, another topic is also central in discussion Japan's English education policy: language ideology (e.g. Seargeant 2008, 2009). Language ideology is an "ever-present component of our communicative behaviour, for it regulates the way we talk. Yet this is something of which most of us are unaware, and so we assume our linguistic choices and attitudes to be entirely natural" (Heinrich 2012: 1). Language ideology is thus central to all education policy, but exist hidden and implicit, rarely discussed.

One of the ways to analyze language ideologies and their reproduction and dissemination is to study media and journalism. News media plays a large part in shaping our view of society, thus shaping social reality itself (Richardson 2007: 13): by platforming the topics that are deemed important for discussion, and the voices that are heard in these discussions, news media is a powerful actor in shaping the ideological discussion within their audiences and society at large. The role of media in reproducing and disseminating language ideologies has been studied more generally, and especially focusing to newspapers (e.g. Johnson and Milani 2010, Leppänen and Pahta 2012, Vessey 2016).

This study aims to look at the ways newspapers reproduce and disseminate language ideologies in the context of Japan's latest English education reform by looking at an English language newspaper, The Japan Times. As the audience of the newspaper is largely foreign and English speaking, and consists of a large number of foreign English

teachers, it offers a unique look to a group that has a clear interest in the topic of English education reform. The data is collected from the planning stage and announcement of the reform in 2013 to the brink of implementation in 2019 and analyzed using the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis. Due to the long timeline of the data, the study also seeks to find out whether there is change in the reporting during the data set, and whether a change in the ownership of The Japan Times affected the reporting.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Language Ideology**

As language ideology is the central topic of the current study, this section will focus on the definitions of ideology more generally and language ideology specifically, discuss the role of media in reproducing and disseminating language ideology, and look at the research that has been conducted previously in the different topics of the current study.

#### **2.1.1. What is Ideology?**

The term *ideology* was coined by the French philosopher Antoine Desdutt de Tracy in 1796. In its original meaning, it referred to a “science of ideas”, a philosophical system based on rationality, reason and other liberal ideals of the enlightenment, created by De Tracy (Kennedy 1979). As De Tracy was connected to the republican movement, and their philosophy was critical of both religion and the ruling elite, it attracted the attention of Napoleon Bonaparte who wanted to discredit the ideas of De Tracy and their fellow liberals, calling them *ideologues*. This is when the word ideology started having the negative connotations that persist to this day. The meaning of ideology as “the science of ideas” has since wholly died out. (Heinrich 2012: 9-10, Woolard 1998: 5-6)

The pejorative meaning of ideology was further developed into a theoretical framework by Marx and Engels in *German Ideology*, where ideology was defined as a sort of distortion of reality or a “false consciousness” that exists to keep up existing power structures and to help keep the oppressed content and subjugated (Woolard 1998: 7). *German Ideology* was written as a critique of the “Young Hegelians” who Marx and Engels saw as “too preoccupied with ideas and the critique of ideas” (Thompson 1984: 1). These young Hegelians such as Ludwig Feuerbach were influenced by the liberal philosophers in the vein of abovementioned De Tracy, and were convinced that rationality and reason would be enough in itself to, for example, rid the common people from the oppression of the church (Heinrich 2012: 10). Marx and Engels criticized this idea of “the autonomy of reason” by claiming that ideology had a material dimension that made it impossible for the oppressed to contest the oppressive ideology and free themselves of it. Ideology, for them, was something that permeated society, hiding in plain sight and obscuring the interests of those benefitting from ideology. Instead of reason, Marx and Engels suggested that ideology can only be destroyed by “directly confronting the circumstances which had given rise to ideology” (Heinrich 2012: 10).

Karl Mannheim continued from the work of Marx and Engels in taking the concept of ideology further away from individual thought and towards the social structures from which ideology rises. However, in their approach ideology is something that permeates the whole society and thus influences all action and thought, making them ideological as well. This concept of *total ideology* was contrasted with the Marxist view of ideology as the tool of the political opposition or *particular ideology*. Mannheim’s aim was to neutralize the concept of ideology from the political struggle that was implied in the term, and to study the influence of culture and society on thought and knowledge. (Woolard 1998: 8, Heinrich 2012: 10)

In the two examples above we can see many of the divisions that exist in the study of ideology. Geuss (1981) divides the approaches in study of ideology between neutral or descriptive approaches and critical or pejorative approaches. Neutral approaches to ideology often relate to Mannheim’s total ideology: that ideologies are present

everywhere in thought and action regardless of whether they are “directed towards the preservation or transformation of the social order” (Thompson 1984: 4). Ideology, then, is a sort of hidden, deeper layer of culture and society, “the unspoken assumptions that, as some kind of ‘social cement,’ turn groups of people into communities, societies, and cultures” (Blommaert 2006: 510). Heinrich (2012: 12) describes neutral approaches as “mainly concerned with cultural systems of ideology, in which concepts, attitudes and social dispositions are studied in a non-evaluative way. Such descriptions may be concerned with values, religion, works of art, or with language.” From this quote we can see that neutral approaches to ideology are often utilized in anthropological studies.

In contrast, the critical, or pejorative, approaches focus more on how ideology is “essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power – that is, to the process of maintaining domination” (Thompson 1984: 4). Critical approaches are based on Marxist theory of ideology and were expanded by writers such as Althusser, Habermas and Bourdieu. For example, Althusser saw ideology as something that made humans social subjects and produced “the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in society” (Eagleton 1991: 18). Althusser introduced the idea of “ideological state apparatuses”, or the institutions of society that spread and normalize “the imaginary relationship between a subject and his/her position in the social world” (Blommaert 2006: 510). Geuss (1981: 21) claims in their classification of approaches that in critical approaches the term ideology is used “to criticize a form of consciousness because it incorporates beliefs which are false, or because it functions in a reprehensible way, or because it has a tainted origin.” Thus, according to Heinrich (2012: 12) “Pejorative approaches focus on the ways in which ideologies distort and confuse, invariably at the expense of truth, and of the less privileged.”

Geuss (1981) also introduces a third way to look at ideology, a positive approach. This can be seen in the works of Georg Lukács and V.I. Lenin, who saw ideology as a tool for emancipation and positive change in society that “may be a tool of any protagonist in the contestation of power” (Woolard 1998: 7). For them, the way for the oppressed

(in their case, the proletariat) to become free of oppression was to craft their own ideology that would replace the ideologies that uphold the imbalance of power. This positive approach gives ideology “the power to promote the interests of any group or class engaged in social conflict.” (Heinrich 2012: 11).

Boudon (1988: 75-96, cited in Heinrich 2012: 9) offers another way of classifying approaches to the study of ideology. First, Boudon makes the distinction between traditional and modern conceptions: traditional conceptions of ideology are concerned with the epistemological questions of ideology, i.e. whether they are true or false (e.g. the Marxist idea of a false consciousness), whereas modern approaches focus on whether certain ideologies have “aptitude to create meaningful interpretations” (Heinrich 2012: 9). Boudon’s second distinction is between irrational and rational explanations, i.e. whether ideologies are a result of uncontrollable forces (such as psychology or physiology), or whether they are created and accepted through social contexts, discourse etc. and thus able to be understood by studying these phenomena.

As one can see from the above definitions of ideology, it may be impossible to come up with a single definition of what ideology is. However, as Eagleton (1991: 1) points out, such exercise would be pointless anyway, as the different definitions offer useful perspectives to look at different phenomena. From the different definitions here, we can gather some aspects of ideology that give us tools to look at the ideologies of language: Following Boudon’s classification, this study positions itself as a modern, rational approach since it is more concerned with the social aspects and functions than the epistemological questions of ideology. This study also looks at ideology as being created and spread through social contexts, discourses, behavior etc. As Woolard (1998: 22) puts it, “In much recent theory, ideology is not necessarily conscious, deliberate, or systematically organized thought, or even thought at all; it is behavioral, practical, prereflective, or structural.” When looking at Geuss’s (1981) classification, we can see some useful elements in all the different approaches. Neutral approaches bring us the idea of ideology as a sort of hidden, deeper layer in all social action and thought regardless of power in society. From critical and positive theories, we can take the relation of ideology to power; ideology can both maintain and challenge existing



power relations. Critical approaches also add the layer of effect to ideology – not only do ideologies rise from social contexts, they also contribute to the creation of material conditions. This is what Eagleton calls the “performative aspect of ideology under its constative guise: ideology creates and acts in a social world while it masquerades as a description of that world” (Woolard 1998: 30, citing Eagleton 1991: 19).

Now that we have looked at the definitions and different approaches to ideology, we can examine the ways ideology is related to language, look at the ways language ideology has developed as a field of study, and hone in a definition of language ideologies that is suitable for the current study.

### **2.1.2. Definitions and Study of Language Ideology**

Language has played a major role in the study of ideology at least from the days of Bakhtin and Voloshinov, who stated that “language embodies and articulates the experience of social struggle, transition and contest, and consequently the linguistic sign is seen as deeply ideological” (Blommaert 2006: 11). The fact that language use reflects the users’ position in society and that these voices react evaluatively to others in interaction (dialogue) means that “human communication through language displays meaningful metalevel inscriptions, adding a layer of sociopolitical, ideological meaning to the event.” (ibid.) These works together with Peircian semiotics formed the building blocks to language ideology as its own field of study.

The study of language ideologies as a distinct field began with Michael Silverstein’s 1979 paper “Language structure and linguistic ideology” in which he defined the concept: “ideologies about language, or linguistic ideologies, are any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979: 193). This definition outlines individual language users’ rationalization of language as the “mediating dynamic between language form and language function” (Seargeant 2009: 26), i.e. that language ideology is an essential part of effective communication and that it actively changes how language forms develop and is intertwined with the usage of said forms.

More recent definitions of language ideology shift their focus away from the role of individual rationalizations to the larger sociocultural scale. For example, Heath (1989: 393) characterizes language ideologies as “self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group”, while Woolard (1998: 3) defines them as “[r]epresentations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world”. Irvine (1989: 255) defines language ideology as “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests”. These definitions add a moral and political dimension to language ideology and add emphasis on how language ideologies relate to the world outside language. Heinrich (2012: 15) argues that “[i]t is this act of connecting language with other issues which renders language an ideological entity.” Definitions like these have usually been used when studying the role of language ideology in language contact (e.g. Heath 1989, 1991) or with specific social groups and their interests (e.g. Irvine and Gal 2000, Woolard 1985).

Kroskrity (2000, 2006) adds another layer to the definition by acknowledging the multiplicity of language ideologies by defining them as “profitably conceived as multiple because of the multiplicity of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations and so on) within socio-cultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership” (Kroskrity 2000: 12). Kroskrity’s definitions take into account the methods in which language ideologies become dominant by becoming “common sense”, and how other opposing ideologies are made invisible or ridiculed (Heinrich 2012: 15). Furthermore, the object of analysis for Kroskrity “is the ways in which linguistic practices are embedded within social practices” (Sergeant 2009: 26), which can be seen in another definition by Kroskrity, where the term language ideology is used “to circumscribe a body of research which simultaneously problematises speakers’ consciousness of their language and discourse as well as their positionality (in political economic systems) in shaping beliefs, proclamations, and evaluations of linguistics forms and discursive practices” (Kroskrity 2006: 498).

The above definitions come from the discipline of linguistic anthropology, but another way of studying language ideologies comes from the field of critical linguistics. Critical linguistics is “predominately concerned with the ways in which ideologies are manifested, disseminated and reproduced through language, thereby focusing more on the effects of language ideologies on society” (Heinrich 2012: 15). Instead of focusing on the social and historical background that enables dominant ideologies, critical linguistics seeks to critically observe dominant ideologies of language, look at the ways in which power inequality is normalized by the “common sense” nature of the ideologies (Fairclough 2001: 27), and seeks to have an effect on social practice and societal norms by confronting and dismantling ideologies that sustain inequalities in power (Richardson 2007: 26).

Heinrich (2012: 16), however, criticizes the critical approaches for being concerned with what Mannheim calls particular ideologies. Criticism of specific, dominant ideologies easily leads to the assumption of Marx’s that these ideologies are false and fails to focus on the sense-making aspects of how the ideologies came to be. Heinrich also points out that actively siding with the oppressed against dominant ideologies, one has to take an ideological stance and thus take part in the ideological struggle for power, risking credibility and effectiveness. Even though descriptive approaches solve the methodological problems (by viewing different ideologies neutrally and not make value judgements on them) they run into the paradox of trying to analyze ideology from an objective, non-ideological stance while asserting that all thought and action is ideological.

Heinrich, among others (e.g. Eagleton 1991, Thompson 1984 and 1990), solves this problem by taking a stance between critical and descriptive approaches. Eagleton (1991: 29) frames the aims for study of ideology within Mannheim’s theory, which expands the view from particular ideologies to those cases in which “total ideology is interrelated with power issues.” Eagleton states that “the study of ideology should *promote* and *legitimize* the interests of [...] social groups in the face of opposing interest” (ibid., emphasis on the original). Thompson’s approach aims “to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” (1984: 4).

This approach focuses on the power needed to spread ideology in society, and to the power of ideology to sustain, reproduce and conceal existing power hierarchies (Thompson 1984, 1990). However, as Heinrich points out, this does not mean that only the powerful produce and reproduce ideology and spread it in societies, but that only the powerful have the means to spread ideology “beyond those groups whose interests are directly served by those ideologies” (2012: 14). Adding the dimension of power relations to the descriptive approaches then allows the study of ideology to be critical.

However, there are flaws in Heinrich’s argument. Heinrich suggests that in this approach – descriptive but paying attention to power relations – “being critical does not explicitly demand taking sides with any of the parties involved in any ideological struggle” (2012: 14). If the goal of the study of ideology is, nonetheless, to make visible what is invisible, to make the power relations explicit and to promote and legitimize the interests of those of opposing interest to dominant ideologies, it then is *de facto* taking part in the ideological struggle whether one explicitly means it or not. All this comes back to the criticism of critical approaches to studying language ideology: academic research in spite of its aim for objectivity is a highly ideological endeavor, and despite the capability of academia to promote the interests of those not in power, academic institutions are mostly an instrument in reproducing and disseminating dominant ideologies. Thus, the criticism for taking an ideological stance and joining the ideological struggle becomes moot. Rather than distancing oneself from ideology in a quest for supposed neutrality, I would argue that making one’s own ideology explicit and considering the implications of that ideology to the research would be a possible solution for solving this problem, and center the critical approach more than in the approach described by Heinrich. This is, in fact, a common stance in Critical Discourse Analysis (see e.g. Wodak 2001: 9), the framework of which the current study is based on.

Despite the criticism in the above paragraph, the definition that Heinrich gives for the study of language ideology is a very good starting point for the needs of the present study:

“The study of language ideology investigates the origin and effect of beliefs about language structure and use, as well as the ways in which those beliefs are promoted and spread beyond the social groups whose interests they serve’ (Heinrich 2012: 18)

The present study is less focused on the origins and effects of language ideologies, since those topics have been studied already quite extensively in the Japanese context (see Heinrich 2012, Seargeant 2009 and Yi 2010 for just a few examples). Instead the focus is predominantly on the ways of promoting and spreading language ideology, in this case through mass media reporting on language education policy. For the benefit of extending our definition to this direction, the next section looks at the role of media in (re)creating, promoting and spreading language ideologies.

### **2.1.3. Media as Language Ideology Brokers**

When looking at how language ideologies are disseminated throughout speech communities it is useful to make a distinction between language ideology brokers and the linguistic margin. The distinction is based on Bourdieu’s writing, which stresses that assumptions of homogenous speech communities can exist only if acceptance of certain language varieties as legitimate is more widespread than the possession of those varieties. This imbalance leads to the silencing of those who are not proficient in these variants or cannot use them in socially expected styles or registers. Language as social proficiency plays a large part in this: those proficient in dominant variants of language have advantages to those who do not (in education, employment, prestige etc.), and even though most speakers are not in control of the variants, they nonetheless accept and use them and thus legitimize them. Thus, even though the proficiency in the variant is unequally distributed throughout the speech community, the whole speech community ends up accepting the dominant variant even when it silences them. (Bourdieu 1991: 90-104, Heinrich 2012: 14-15)

Using this background, we can then define language ideology brokers as those people, institutions etc. who are authorities on language, and whose main activity is spreading and reproducing these ideologies (Heinrich 2012: 14). This focus on the reproduction

and disseminating of ideology is why this study chooses to use the term language ideology brokers instead of other similar terms in research (e.g. “language builders” in Hagège 1993). On the other side of the issue is the linguistic margin, i.e. those whose language are not prestigious, such as dialect speakers, linguistic minorities, language learners etc. (Heinrich 2012, Inoue 1996). Looking at linguistic margins help us recognize and deconstruct dominant ideologies, since they can help us see the contradictions in the common-sense appearance of ideologies, the imbalances of power between different groups of speakers, and also the alternative ways of thinking about language that these margins contain.

From Heinrich’s definition (language authorities) and previous definitions from the study of ideology (e.g. Althusser’s Ideological state apparatuses) we can see that many different institutions have a part in the dissemination of dominant ideologies, from the government level in the form of educational policy and lawmaking to private companies making money on language education, all the way to the micro-level of parents and other individuals that act as language authorities for other individuals. The focus of this study, however, is mostly on mass media, specifically newspapers. Richardson (2007: 13) notes that the power of journalism is that “it can help shape social reality by shaping our *views* of social reality.” A function of journalism is to decide what things are worth talking about and how they are framed in public discussion, not only shaping people’s opinions on the world but “also of their place and role in the world” (ibid.). This function also often leads to journalism being a sustainer of hegemonic power relations: as the creators of media often work under dominant ideologies, their own work is saturated by those ideologies by the way of assumptions of who get to be authorities on topics and whose voices matter. It’s not hard to also imagine how government media or large media companies might have an interest to shape and disseminate dominant ideologies.

#### **2.1.4. Previous Research on the Topic**

Now that the basic concepts of the study have been identified and introduced, this section will look at how the current study fits in with the research in the field. The

study of language ideology in Japan has mainly focused on two major topics: the study of historical perspectives of Japanese language ideologies and women's language use in Japan (for summary see Heinrich 2012: 13-14). Studies done outside Japan on Japanese language ideologies are also often focused on the historical perspective (e.g. Heinrich 2012, Yi 2010). These studies offer crucial context for analysis of contemporary language ideologies in Japan, Japan's relationship with foreign languages etc. even though they are mainly concerned with language ideologies relating to Japanese specifically. Furthermore, as seen in the previous sections, Heinrich's 2012 study is heavily used for background material for language ideologies in general, and it was in many ways the inspiration behind the current study.

There have also been some studies that look at English in Japan from a language ideological perspective, most notably Seargeant's work (2008, 2009). Seargeant's (2009) book studies the symbolic meaning of English in Japan, mapping "the ideological frameworks around and involving English within Japan" (Seargeant 2009: 2). Its aim is to use this Japanese perspective to inspect theories and methods of studying English as a Global Language, and it argues for expanding our view of English as a Global Language to a more context-specific approach that combines both language theory and linguistic ethnography. As the different topics addressed in Seargeant's research are central to this study (e.g. how English is visible in Japan, language education policy), we will take a closer look at Seargeant's work later in sections 2.3. and 2.4.

Outside the Japanese context, all the separate topics relating to the current study are fairly well researched: there are many studies on language ideologies relating to language policies, education etc. mostly concerned with English (see e.g. Ricento 2000), language ideology in media in general (e.g. Johnson and Milani 2010, Vessey 2016) and specifically in newspapers (also Vessey 2016, Leppänen and Pahta 2012).

Ricento's (2000) book discusses how ideologies shape language policies in diverse settings (mostly in ex-colonies), especially focusing on the complex issues of ideological conflict in these places (how ideologies can be both repressive or empowering at the same time, how formal language policies often fail in their intended effect etc.). At the same time, it argues for a more complex ideological view of language

policy research, meaning that both the object of the study and the research itself are the object of ideological deconstruction.

Johnson and Milani's book (2010) analyzes different media from around the world from different language ideological perspectives. The first perspective addresses how different media disseminate ideas of standards in language and how they act as gatekeepers to what is correct and good language use. The second perspective covers the different conditions and constraints, or how the ideological and material realities shape the media and thus the language ideological message that is spread by it. The third one focuses on the relationship between language and different social groups, especially on the relationship between language and race and ethnicity. The last part of the book focuses on "new media" and expands on the previous topics to discuss language ideologies in games, the internet etc.

Vessey's (2016) study is an in depth-look at language ideologies in Canadian media, studying both English and French media. The focus of the study is on comparative research of language ideologies, in this case on the differences between the media of two different languages, but also on the differences between language ideologies being recreated and disseminated through traditional news media, and on the internet in media sites and social media. Newspapers were studied by looking at corpus data from the major English and French-language regional and national papers, which was then analyzed by using Critical Discourse Analysis. In English newspapers, the most prominent language ideologies were those of monolingualism and instrumental role of language. The monolingual ideologies were mostly seen through the implications of English as the norm and everything else as marked - for example, the word "French" was about twice as common as the word "English" in the corpus data for English newspapers (Vessey 2016: 104). Knowledge of English in immigrants was also seen as a sign of integration, with examples of "broken English" and other phrases to describe fluency in English often used when discussing immigration, while fluency in French was ignored. Discussions of languages in the English newspapers were also often about the instrumental value of languages. Multilingualism was often presented as a desirable quality, with multilingual speakers being described as intelligent or



talented. However, English seems to always be in the center of these discussions, and when the focus is on other languages, it is rarely French. In some areas the discussion is explicitly about French being a burden on areas where other languages might be more useful. English is also framed through the lens of international languages, where knowledge of it helps with connecting with the world, educating yourself and taking part in the global society. The English newspapers also focus a lot on education: the mandatory English/French education is often framed through instrumental language ideologies (multilingualism as an asset) where for French speakers the question is often more about language rights, heritage and culture (Vessey 2016: 113-114) While French newspapers showed both monolingual and instrumental ideologies (monolingual ones more explicit than in the English data and instrumental ideologies largely relating to English), they were much more focused on language as identity and the perceived endangerment of the French language and the threat that English poses to it.

Similar themes can be seen in Leppänen and Pahta's (2012) study of Finnish newspapers. The study looks at editorial texts and letters to the editor to analyze the ways in which English is seen as dangerous. While English and the knowledge of it is largely seen as a positive thing (ability to travel, take part in international politics, etc.), the texts also implied that English poses a danger to the Finnish language, culture and national identity. English is compared to invaders and natural disasters, while being described as morally wrong or violent. One particular focus is on the English spoken by Finnish people, which is described as both too bad and too fluent (but without elegance or real communicative skill). It is feared that English both contaminates and replaces the national languages (especially Finnish) or that English education hampers intellectual growth and cognitive skills. The difference between the desired English and scary English can be seen quite drastically: good English is out there in the world, spoken by native speakers, or by non-natives who don't pretend to be natives but also don't have accents that are too strong. Good English is associated with the educated and the elite, with travel and business opportunities, and the chance for Finland to make a difference on the international level. Bad English is vulgar, spoken by those who are not educated as well, or an outside force seducing the Finnish people while

also destroying their nation. Leppänen and Pahta frame this discourse of dangerous English in the context of anxiety over internationalization and globalization, especially considering the historical context of Finland being a quite recently independent nation and spending most of its history under the rule of more powerful nations or under the fear of being invaded by one.

These studies focus on many of the topics that are instrumental in the present study. However, there is still research to be done in these fields and especially in the context of Japan. As Seargeant (2009: 39) notes, “the language ideologies which create the idea of English in Japan are to be sought in arenas in which the subject of English is of consequence and where it exists as a focal point for social practice”, e.g. education, official documents, media etc. Thus, the intersection of two such social practices, education and English language media, is a perfect place to look at language ideologies in Japan.

The data itself directs us towards the study methodology: as Van Dijk (2006: 115) notes, “Since people acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk, a discourse analytical study of ideology is most relevant.” Since our approach to the analysis and our definitions of ideology all are deeply related to issues of asymmetrical power relations, it is natural that we continue in that vein with Critical Discourse Analysis. Indeed, this is a popular and useful way to analyze newspaper texts (Richardson 2007).

When looking at English education in Japan, we must consider these power relations as a complex web of intersecting and opposing interests. It is not enough to look at the ideological hegemony of the state maintaining power over its people or the education system maintaining ideologies of nationalism, since we are talking about conflicting interests in the context of a global language. Ideological struggle, thus, cannot be simplified as happening between clearly separated groups, but we must take notice on the different issues that are happening all at once. The language ideologies in Japan are but one of the things to look at, while we have to also pay attention to global hegemony of English as the international language, interests of for-profit education companies and so forth, which are often in conflict with each other (more on this in

section 2.4.4.) This complex mesh of power relations that comes with multiplicity of competing ideologies is one of the reasons why it is helpful to use a definition of language ideology that borrows from both critical and neutral approaches to ideology. As Heinrich comments on the definition we used as a starting point, looking at the spread and promotion of ideology “forces us to differentiate between those for whom language ideology is beneficial and those for whom it is not, but who nevertheless, and to their own detriment, subscribe to dominant ideology” (2012: 18).

## 2.2. News Media Landscape in Japan

As we saw in section 2.1.3, media has a substantial role in reproducing and disseminating ideologies, and in shaping our views of social reality. In this section, the focus is on introducing the context of Japanese news media, and specifically Japanese newspapers, which are central to this study.

Despite the decline in print news readership, Japan still has the highest newspaper readership rate in the world with 77,1% of the population reading newspapers (Milosevic 2016). Out of the top 20 most circulated newspapers in the world, five are Japanese, with its two largest newspapers Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun taking the first two positions. There is, however, some skepticism towards the accuracy of these numbers due to the practice of *oshigami*, or artificially inflating the circulation by overprinting and overselling newspapers to delivery companies (Alford and McNeil 2010). The global trends of increasing popularity of online news sources and mobile news apps can be seen in Japan as well. Print journalism has become less relevant as a news source in recent years falling from around 63% in 2013 to 37% in 2018 (Newman et al. 2018). Television and online news are the most common ways of finding news, with around 60% of Japanese using them as a news source.

Japan’s news media landscape is mostly dominated by the five major national daily newspapers, as the corporations that own them also run other high-profile media: aside from their flagship publications, these corporations also own the major private national television stations as well as a number of local newspapers and television

stations, and publish magazines and other publications (Freeman 2000: 16-18). Aside from these corporations, the national broadcasting company NHK is also a major media outlet.

Although Japan has a free and independent press, the complex relationships between the media, government and large organizations sometimes make news reporting difficult. In the 2019 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Borders 2019) Japan ranks 67<sup>th</sup>, and Reporters without Borders note that journalists in Japan “find it hard put to fully play their role as democracy’s watchdog because of the influence of tradition and business interests” and that there are complaints about “a climate of mistrust” towards reporters since the Abe government came in power in 2012. Online harassment from nationalists and laws against whistleblowers and journalists publishing “illegally obtained” information are also mentioned. However, among the most important, and in many ways most unique, ways the relationship between the press, politics and major organizations manifest itself are the *kisha kurabu* or reporters’ clubs.

These press clubs are the major link between journalists and their major information sources (different levels of government, the police, businesses with large public interest such as electric companies etc.). Most large organizations have their own press clubs and thus there are around 700-1000 press clubs in the country, most of them in Tokyo (Freeman 2000: 68). The clubs can in most cases only be accessed by the members of the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association (*Nihon Shimbun Kyoukai*, mostly known as NSK), which manages and oversees the press clubs. This system means that independent news outlets, freelance or foreign journalists and magazine reporters are often left outside the main sources of information. Aside from the restricted access, the clubs also restrict the flow of information in other ways. There are internal rules (official and unofficial) about what information is released and when, largely enforced by the journalists themselves; no single media wants the others to get a scoop, and thus media themselves often keep up the rules that also bind them. Sanctions are given to those who break these rules, often by restricting access to sources.

Even those who have access to the clubs have a hard time performing their role as watchdogs of power. The services and gifts provided to journalists by the press clubs and the close relationships that form between journalists and sources may create an atmosphere where journalists feel obligated not to publish stories that sources do not want them to. At the same time the press clubs often help journalists deal with the vast amount of information that comes from these clubs by providing press releases that are designed to be as ready as possible to go straight to print, even with suggestions of headlines and major issues that could be focused on. This “press release journalism” has been widely criticized in Japan and is considered one of the factors leading to homogeneity in reporting between different news outlets (Freeman 2000: 78). This wealth of information also often leads to a lack of time to fact-check and do background work on the stories. Investigative journalism is also made more difficult for major news media as certain journalists mostly have access only to individual clubs and thus cannot access multiple sources (e.g. social affairs journalists can access the police press clubs but not political clubs), and collaboration between journalists in different topics is made difficult.

This context explains why most of the investigative journalism that leads to high profile news stories such as political scandals come from magazines and freelance journalists. As they lack access to sources, they often rely on leaks from inside the press clubs, or sometimes on articles written by club members under pseudonym (Freeman 2000: 100). At the same time this means relying on rumors and hearsay, or at least sources that cannot be verified, and are thus prone to sensationalism. When major news media breaks a story on a scandal, the story almost never comes from the political writers who are close to the sources, but from the less prestigious social affairs writers, which in the early stages of a scandal might bury these stories far from the first page (Freeman 2000: 119).

Freeman describe this system of press clubs, the trade association that manages them, and the small but strong network of large media companies as an *information cartel*. Even though Japanese media is independent from the state and works freely, the cartelization of information makes it difficult for it to function as the watchdog of

power. Even though the same problems have existed, and still exist, in many other countries, Japan's systematic cartelization of information is somewhat unique in the world. This system and incidents that have come with it, most notably the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, have had a strong impact on how the Japanese view media and government. The Edelman Trust Barometer reported in 2019 that only 35% of Japanese trust the media. Mass media, or *masukomi*, has earned a grim nickname: *masugomi*, or "mass garbage". Although criticism towards Japan's media landscape has been aired frequently in Japan and abroad, change has been slow and not very effective.

Despite Japan being an "information society" with high levels of newspaper readership and television viewership, the news the Japanese get are not very diverse in their viewpoints (Freeman 2000). Even in the internet era, with print media becoming less popular as a news source, the same companies that run newspapers run the majority of the news outlets online. Meanwhile television is still a large source for news especially for the older generations, and as seen before, major television stations are still part of the same networks run by the small number of media conglomerates. Mass media still has an important function in society and analyzing its role in the political process is thus important. In the conclusion of their book, Freeman (2000: 178) states questions that need to be answered in order to do this: "What actors have access to the media and on what terms? Whose view of the world ("reality") and events is presented? And what news stories are ignored or underreported?" These questions lead us back to the role of media in disseminating dominant ideologies, as discussed previously in section 2.1.3.: media shapes our perception of the world and our place in it by influencing which stories get to be heard, and from whose perspective they are told. As seen above, Japan with its somewhat unique strong network between the state and media offers an interesting context in which to analyze how news media functions as a language ideology broker.

### 2.3. English in Japan

In order to trace and illuminate the ideologies of the language it is necessary to examine how English is positioned within society, and interrogate the assumptions about the meanings associated with it that explain the nature of this positioning. It is the articulation of this positioning by means of the wide palette of semiotic resources which constitute the cultural organization of society which will be taken as the discourse of English within the country (Seargeant 2009: 38, citing Blommaert 2005).

In Japan, as is common throughout the world, English is seen as an important way to be a part of the global community and enjoy educational, economic and personal opportunities in the globalized era. In a policy plan for the new millennium the Japanese government stated that “knowledge of English as the international lingua franca equips one with a key skill for knowing and accessing the world” (CJGTC 2000: 10, cited in Seargeant 2009: 8). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) made a similar note in 2003:

“[g]lobalisation extends to various activities of individuals as well as to the business world. Each individual has increasing opportunities to come in contact with the global market and services, and participate in international activities... In such a situation, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language” (MEXT 2003, cited in Seargeant 2009: 6-7).

These policy statements clearly focus on the importance of being able to use and understand English, but at the same time Japan is struggling with its English education: Japan has some of the lowest TOEFL scores in all of Asia (Tsuneyoshi and Kitamura 2018: 5). A government study from 2014 gave a fairly pessimistic assessment of Japanese students’ English skills: “In the ministry’s first comprehensive study conducted in 2014 – which looked into the English proficiency of about 70,000 third-year high schoolers nationwide – abysmally low levels of speaking and writing abilities were discovered” (Osaki 2017). Over 85% of all the students surveyed were placed on level A1 – the lowest one – in the Common European Framework of

Reference for Languages. 40% of the students scored less than 5 points out of the possible 144 in the written exam.

Tsuneyoshi and Kitamura (2018: 8-14) comment that English is not a “living language” in Japan, and thus there are few uses for English skills outside the education system. Tsuneyoshi identifies two main reasons for this: First, Japan has a strong national language and a large domestic market. The entertainment industry and media in Japan are almost entirely produced domestically in Japanese, and the generous use of dubbing in Western movies and television make it rare for people to encounter English language media unless they specifically look for it. Even in academic contexts, English skills (especially speaking and writing) are not often necessary, as universities can mostly rely on publishing research in Japanese - funding largely comes from domestic industry and other domestic institutions and is rarely based on the international impact of the studies. The other factor that Tsuneyoshi identifies is the traditional system of finding employment. Japanese university students are generally hired during a job-hunting period in the year before their graduation, and failing to get a job during this time might make it difficult to secure employment. Employers do not generally care about the candidates’ academic performance during university studies - in fields other than sciences they might not even care whether your major is at all related to the job they are offering - and they base the application process more around personality and the status of the university the graduates are studying at. Companies generally like to employ graduates to starting positions and then train them in the company. All these factors contribute to the “English problem”: The rigid schedule of university studies, especially the job-hunting season, discourages studying abroad in cases where it would push graduation, and the experience is often not valued anyway by employers. Another factor that plays into this is the hierarchical system of Japanese universities; the universities that are the hardest to get into are prestigious, often traditionally so, and their graduates are sought after regardless of their studies. This also means that degrees from foreign universities generally do not have the prestige they do in other countries. After the graduates are employed, in-house training of the employees means that employers can choose applicants who have done well in their



language tests and then put them into English classes once hired, so developing English skills during university studies often is not beneficial during job-hunting.

Sergeant (2011: 3) notes on a similar theme: “Despite the strong visual and conceptual presence [English] has no official status, nor, in relative terms, do the majority of citizens require any particular fluency in it for their everyday lives.” The “strong visual presence” mostly comes from two phenomena - Japanese has a large number of loanwords from English, but they are often stripped of their original meaning, shortened and/or pronounced in a way that makes them fit better for Japanese use. As in many other countries, loanwords are also often seen as detrimental to the native language and their use is sometimes discouraged, even though they are widely used even in government campaigns to signal coolness or modernity (Sergeant 2009: 77). English is also highly visible in urban landscapes, mostly in advertisement and product design, often in a way that is very weird for English speakers. Slogans and taglines are often ungrammatical, inexplicably odd or just seemingly random. This ornamental use of language, where English (and other languages) are used to convey cultural connotations (e.g. coolness) rather than overt linguistic meaning, is almost omnipresent in Japan (Sergeant 2009: 77-78). Sergeant uses these two methods of language absorption as an example of the complicated relationship between English and Japan - policy rhetoric promotes English for enabling international communication and allowing opportunities in the global world, “the language itself has a prominent alternative presence within society which does not conform in any sense to ideals of universal linguistic communion” (Sergeant 2009: 78). Tan and Rubdy (2008: 2) also note that “English as a global language is accepted in Japan, but not before taming it and Japanizing it and rendering it acceptable for Japanese consumption.” This also ties into a larger point of the language ideologies of English in Japan as an index to foreignness and especially the West.

In 2006 the newly appointed Minister for Education was preparing changes in the Fundamental Law of Education, which would place more emphasis on tradition and Japanese values in education. As an example of why the changes were needed, minister Ibuki noted that the amount of foreign language (i.e. English) classes should

not be increased before the issue of declining academic abilities, and especially the Japanese skills of students, were improved (Seargeant 2009: 16). This juxtaposition of Japanese tradition and English was even more visible in a later statement: 'It is fine [for elementary school pupils] to eat sweets and cakes, but only if they still have an appetite after consuming basic foodstuffs for the sustenance of the body such as protein and starch' (MEXT 2006, cited in Seargeant 2009). Seargeant (2009: 16) notes: "The logic here is one of mutual exclusivity, of a choice in which, if the study of Japanese promotes traditional values, then English (that is, the language which denotes an international outlook) can only impede such values." The fact that this mutual exclusiveness is understood as common sense at its face value by both Ibuki and the newspaper, and supposedly by the audiences of both, is a great example of language ideology at work.

The next section will look at the history of English in Japan to give context to the complicated relationship between English and Japan and to see the development of English education in Japan up to the newest reform and our topic at hand.

## **2.4. Historical Background and Development of English Education in Japan**

### **2.4.1. Value of Historical Perspective**

Before delving deeper into the history of English in Japan it is necessary to establish some context around the study of English education in Japan. It is somewhat traditional in these studies to briefly recount the history of English in Japan to either add context to the reader or to use it as an explanation for the current state of English education. In fact, many of the earlier studies about English in Japan are mostly re-iterations of Japan's history with English that are offered without additional context or critique. Seargeant (2009: 47-50) criticizes this uncritical recounting of history in a few points: first, it reinforces the implicit idea in English education research that pedagogical knowledge and research comes from "the linguistic center", i.e. the English-speaking west, and that the failure to follow the knowledge of the "center" is detrimental to Japan. Second, the historical context is often used to explain current

educational practices as a direct result of history. The grammar-translation method, for example, is often described as a result of the need to understand foreign texts and expertise, which allowed Japan to quickly modernize during the Meiji restoration. This neatly leads to the last point, which is that the narratives of the arrival of English in Japan and the development of English education there often emphasize the imported nature of the language. Even though English was naturally brought to Japan from outside, the narratives of these historical recounts build a picture of Japan as dependent on the West in the process of modernization, and of English as a mandatory tool to access the technology and “civilization” of the West. As Seargeant (2009: 50) puts it, “it is associated at every stage with a very specific chronology of foreign contact, political coercion and even invasion.”

This repetition of the history of English in Japan in linguistic research leads into the recreation of the above narratives in research and language policies, thus reinforcing the dominant language ideologies. However, in the context of language ideologies and their creation, distribution and normalization, historical context does give us a way to look behind the narratives that create Japanese language ideology. The story of English in Japan is, in the words of Seargeant (2009: 49):

“itself a particular history of the nation, which begins as an entirely insular province and then, in incremental steps, is opened up to the wider international community. While the English language is not cast as being directly responsible for this political history, it is presented in such a way that its status becomes an index of Japan-international relations, with each significant incident of language contact or educational innovation being associated directly with a major political landmark.”

Thus, it seems that the historical context is not important because it tells us how we ended up with the current system of English education, but precisely because it lets us look at the interpretations and narratives that are built upon that context to create Japanese language ideologies.

### 2.4.2. Pre WW2

Ike (1995) begins their often-cited recount from the year 1600, when British sailor William Adams washed up on the shores of Japan and met the to-be shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first recorded instance of contact with English speakers in Japan. However, the incidences of contact would remain isolated for the next two and a half centuries, as would Japan itself, under the Tokugawa government's *sakoku* (closed country) policies. Despite the name and many of the descriptions of sakoku-era which suggest isolation from the rest of the world, trade between Japan and the outside world continued. European ideas and modern technology came through mostly in the form of *rangaku* or Dutch studies, where the scientific texts brought in by Dutch traders were translated into Japanese and used for learning western sciences. There were also a few isolated incidences of contact with English speakers, and English education in Japan is said to have started from training Dutch interpreters to study English in the early 1800s. The sakoku era ended with the arrival of commodore Matthew Perry and their Black Ships in 1853 and the subsequent establishing of trade and diplomatic relationships between Japan and the rest of the world. The imagery of sakoku era can still be seen at times when discussing ideas such as Japanese uniqueness, often descriptions of Japan as an island isolated from the world by both geography and culture.

Japan found itself in a need to modernize to avoid colonization by Western powers and to establish itself as a nation of its own. Learning English (among other European languages), then, was an important way to learn about foreign ideas, sciences and technologies of the West. During this time of Japan's opening to the world and the subsequent Meiji restoration of 1867, English came to be more widely taught and studied, and an influx of foreign teachers came with it. This need for modernization and the quick absorption of Western technology and ideas to Japanese society, preceded in the contact with the Portuguese and Dutch in the centuries before, is widely used as the reason grammar-translation came to be the prevalent method of teaching English in Japan. Regardless of its relation to the prevalence of grammar-translation method, this need for modernization led to a new elite, consisting of

Western-educated young men who would go on to form the new nation of Japan. One of these men was Mori Arinori, Japan's ambassador to the US and later the Minister of Education, who in 1872 proposed to replace Japanese with a simplified version of English as the national language of Japan. Mori's proposition was motivated by the idea of English as an international language of modernism and progress, the adaptation of which would ensure that Japan would keep itself uncolonized and join the western powers in the world stage as a modern nation. It turns out English was not to be Japan's national language, but the debates sparked by Mori's proposition came to be integral in forming a standardized national language for Japan (Heinrich 2012).

As Japanese was being standardized and nationalism was on the rise, the role of English became a debated topic. Japanese was adopted as the language of instruction rather than English in the newly formed University of Tokyo, while foreign teachers were dismissed in numbers by the government's lack of funds resulting from the cost of 1877 Seinan war. Among the rising nationalist tides English educational systems in other Asian countries became to be seen as tools of the colonizers, and the debates about the need for English education became more and more heated. Education of all levels was Japanized by 1885. As Japanese began to occupy the sphere of education, English became specialized knowledge and the level of fluency in English decreased among educated people, especially in spoken forms. Saito (2018: 181-182) connects this with the popularity of grammar-translation methods in Japanese English education: English studies in higher education were mostly about literature and linguistics, which justified grammar and translation as the key focuses and meant spoken English was not really needed even amongst the highly educated. This decline led to every subsequent English education policy reform to include more emphasis on improving spoken language skills. In the 1920s, in what Saito (2018: 182) calls the first large scale, state driven ELT reform in the world, the Oral method was heavily promoted for English education by Harold Palmer (himself a major contributor to the creation of that method).

### 2.4.3. After WW2

During the Second World War English education was disparaged and the amount of lessons in schools decreased, but the post-war era would become the second major era for development of English education in Japan. American occupation of Japan led to the reform of government and constitution, which restructured the entire Japanese education system. These reforms made English an important school subject, and although it was officially an elective subject, in practice it was almost always mandatory, especially after English testing became a major part of university entrance exams in the mid-1950's (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 158, Seargeant 2011: 5). At the same time the presence of American soldiers and the influx of foreign popular culture made English more visible in Japanese society. The economic growth and increased business opportunities led to more foreigners in Japan, and to Japanese workers being sent into foreign countries (their children, or "returnees", would later be seen as valuable global talent as they often spoke English fluently) (Tsuneyoshi 2018: 31-32). Japan also wanted to show their return to the international stage as a peaceful nation and a booming, competitive economy: one of the major ways this was done was the organization of two major world events: the 1964 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo and the 1970 World Expo in Osaka.

In the 60's and 70's, audio-lingual teaching methods such as the Oral Approach and Pattern Practice, heavy on repetition and behavioristic reinforcement, were practiced widely in Japan. However, since the introduction of communicative language teaching (or CLT) the popularity of these methods declined. CLT did not become very popular in English classrooms though, and the majority of teachers continued using the traditional grammar-translation methods (Saito 2018: 182-183). In 1978, a massive study called *The Teaching of English in Japan* was published, and it made the study of English in Japan its own, international field of study (Seargeant 2009: 46). The findings of the study sound familiar even today: too much focus on reading comprehension and grammar-translation, not enough on listening and speaking, and a need for using CLT in classrooms. The study is based around a "problem frame" of Japan's English

education is somehow broken and in need of fixing, which remains omnipresent in the study of English in Japan to this day (Seargeant 2009: 47).

#### **2.4.4. Kokusaika and the Age of Reforms**

The concept of *kokusaika*, or internationalization, came to prominence in Japan in the early 1980's. The rising number of Japanese travelling abroad, the booming economy and "foreign pressure for Japan to open up its markets" (Seargeant 2009: 54) made the term into a common buzzword, and it became commonplace in all political discussion. Even though there was heavy emphasis towards the importance of international communication and even idealistic notions of kokusaika mentality bringing the Japanese into the global community, kokusaika policies mainly focused on the national economy. They are (and have been since the 1980s) often criticized for being primarily interested in strengthening the national identity of Japanese by focusing on the growth and power of the national economy and the excellence of the Japanese (Butler and Iino 2005, Seargeant 2009:54). While the government was talking about the importance of international communication and global talent, the education system was being reformed to focus more on Japanese identity and morals.

The 1980's also saw heavy reforms in the education of English. As kokusaika coincided with the surging popularity of CLT internationally, communication skills and communicative teaching methods started to appear in policy documents and curricula. CLT was presented in public discourse and research as a "modern" and "international" way of teaching English while being contrasted with the more "traditional" and "closed" grammar-translation, again mirroring the themes of modernity vs. isolation that can be seen in the discourse of English in Japan since the Meiji-era (Seargeant 2009: 50-51). Oral communication classes were added to the senior high school curriculum in 1989 and began to be implemented in 1994. The three courses were focused on speaking, listening and "higher-order thinking skills" such as discussions, speeches and debates, but studies such as Wada's (2002) showed that most teachers still held these classes in Japanese, and almost none of them actually

offered the third course (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 161). Now, let's look at some of the largest reforms in detail.

### **JET Programme**

One of the more famous initiatives was the establishment of the Japan Exchange and Teaching or JET Programme in 1987, with the intention "to expose Japanese youth to foreign cultures and improve their communicative English skills" (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 159) and to "promote and deepen mutual international understanding through co-operation between native English speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and Japanese people" (Galloway 2009: 169). The JET Programme was born out of previous programs to bring native (mainly British and American) English speakers to Japan as English teachers, and also as a way to "mend U.S - Japan relations ... soured by trade disputes due to Japan's rising competitiveness in the global market" (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 159). Even though the program also brings in non-teachers, ALTs make up over 90% of the JET participants (JET Programme 2019). In the first years of the program it was specifically designed for native English-speakers, but it expanded throughout the years to include other countries (and even then, the focus was initially on bringing in native speakers of other languages that were taught).

Even though the program seems to have been successful in bringing more communication to English classes, it has faced a fair amount of criticism over the years (see e.g. Galloway 2009). One point of criticism has been the majority of ALTs being from the US (56,5% in 2019) or other English-speaking Western countries: participants from US, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland made up 89,4% of all ALTs in 2019 (JET Programme 2019). The vast majority of ALTs coming from these countries leads to a situation where "the majority of ALTs represent not only native Englishes, but also Western culture as an ideal to be emulated by Japanese learners" (Galloway 2009: 172 citing Yoshida 2003: 292). However, there seems to be an increased interest in diversifying the ALT population, as the proportion of teachers from the US and the abovementioned native-speaker countries have slightly decreased in the past two years: US ALTs represented 59,4% of all ALTs in 2017 (decrease of 2,9 percentage



points in 2019), and ALTs from US, Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland combined represented 91,5% of ALTs in 2017 (decrease of 0,9 percentage points in 2019). As for the remaining 9,6% of ALTs who are not from the abovementioned countries, most are from other majority native speaker countries or countries where English has an official status and/or a very strong presence, such as South Africa, the Philippines and Caribbean islands. Some ALTs do come from countries where English is considered to be a foreign language (e.g. a Finland sent one ALT in 2019 after a break of several years), but in many cases they are hired to teach their own native language.

Other criticisms towards JET include the lack of teaching qualifications for ALTs (the program does not require teaching qualifications, only that candidates “be strongly motivated to take part in the teaching of foreign languages”) (JET Programme 2019), the limited opportunities to develop professional skills during the program, the unclear role of the ALT in the classroom and in the working community, and the lack of possibilities to learn Japanese and be a part of the intercultural exchange that JET is supposed to promote (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 166, Galloway 2009, Breckenridge and Erling 2011).

### **Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities**

The Action Plan was initiated by the Ministry of Education in 2003 with a heavy focus on English as a way to participate in the global market and be a part of the international community, framing it as an international lingua franca. The Action Plan aimed to improve Japanese people’s English fluency in the subsequent five years with five major initiatives: 1) Using English as the means of instruction in English classes, 2) reducing class sizes and dividing English classes based on skill, 3) designation of Super English Language High Schools (or SELHi), which acted as a hotbed for innovative solutions to teaching English, 4) sharing of knowledge and teaching methods between schools and teachers, and 5) overseas training programs for teachers and exchange periods for students to increase exposure to English (MEXT 2003, Glasgow and Paller 2016: 159). The Action Plan also attempted to reform university entrance exams by including a listening component in the tests from 2006 on and suggested that

universities look into using private testing (such as TOEFL) in entrance exams (high school and university level) to also measure spoken fluency. Despite the ambitious goals, the plan mostly failed to change anything: even though the SELHi-scheme seems to have improved students' skills to some degree, few teachers were inspired to teach classes in English (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 159). English was officially made the primary language of instruction in senior high schools in the 2009 revision of the Course of Study, which came into use in 2013 (Saito 2018: 183).

### **Foreign Language Activities**

Even though many elementary schools in Japan taught some English and the Action Plan had promoted English education in elementary schools, it wasn't until 2011 that "foreign language activities" was implemented nationally as a part of the elementary school Course of Study (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 159,166). Foreign language activities currently begin in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and their aim is "to form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages" (MEXT 2011:1). Even though it is an official class in the curriculum, it is not really an official subject in many ways: there are no MEXT-approved books for it, it is mostly taught by home teachers and not qualified English teachers, and it is not graded by the same standards as other subjects (Yoshida 2012: 23, cited in Glasgow and Paller 2016: 167). Despite the name, the language taught is almost universally English, as is suggested by the Course of Study ("In principle English should be selected for foreign language activities", (MEXT 2011: 1)). The description of foreign language activities also focuses a lot on the students learning about Japan and Japanese: Instructions should be given in a way that deepens "experiential understanding of the languages and cultures of Japan and foreign countries" (MEXT 2011: 1), and there is a heavy focus on the differences between Japanese language and culture to other languages and cultures. The classes also feature moral education. This focus on Japan seems to come as a compromise to those who

feared early education of English would be harmful for pupils' Japanese language learning (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 166-167). Many elementary school teachers shared anxieties about the reform due to a perceived lack of English skills, due to the unclear nature of the subject and its Course of Study description, the lack of a textbook to follow, and the perceived lack of teaching skills by native-speaker ALTs that come to classes (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 167) However, MEXT surveys in the following years indicated that most junior high school teachers thought that foreign language activities had had a positive influence on students' attitudes towards learning English and communicating in English.

### **Other measures**

Aside from the abovementioned larger reforms in English education in basic education, there have also been efforts to increase the amount of English in higher education. The Go Global Japan project (2012) selected a number of universities and specific university programs that were focused on internationalization and aimed to share knowledge and practices to enhance students' English fluency and encourage them to study abroad (Yonezawa and Shimmi 2018: 55-57). A similar program was established in the high school level with Super Global High School, which funded programs in high schools which aimed to develop students' skills in English, problem-solving and global leadership by improved English education practices, overseas field trips etc. I actually had the chance to visit one of these schools in 2015, and the students were quite fluent in English compared to many other schools I visited, despite the teaching methods not seeming very different: When taking us to see an English class a student told us that their focus is on improving their spoken English and conversation skills, and described the preferred method of learning these skills as reading dialogue aloud from their books and repeating phrases after the teacher.

There have also been some high-profile projects to increase the number of programs taught in English in Japanese universities, but these have focused more on bringing global talent to Japan from other countries. Global 30 Project was a program established in 2009 to fund internationalization measures for thirty universities,

chosen either for their prestige and high quality of research and education, or for their established internationalization measures already in place (Yaguchi 2018: 132-133). The program encouraged universities to hire more international staff, market internationally, form new English language programs for international students etc. to attract international students (especially undergraduates) and researchers to Japanese universities and to improve Japanese universities' standings in the international university rankings (Japanese universities struggle with the rankings since they often measure global impact in things like international citations, staff diversity, amount of foreign students etc.). In the end, the project only funded 13 universities due to budget cuts, and the new programs themselves faced many challenges (see Yaguchi 2018: 133-142 for an account of one such program). However, it inspired other universities to form English language programs (Yaguchi 2018: 133), and after the project ended in 2014, it was renewed and expanded as the Top Global University project, which funds 37 universities and is planned to continue until 2023.

### **Obstacles for change**

The last paragraph of Ike's (1995) historic recap reads almost as if it was written today: There are more opportunities to learn and use English than ever, international business and tourism are thriving, and communication is the buzzword in English education. Yet, there is antipathy towards English stemming from the cultural differences of Japan and the West (which English represents), and negative feelings towards the perceived English fluency of Japanese people among the Japanese. Despite the reforms of the last three decades, the problem frame is still essentially the same as in the research of the 1970s.

The main reason for this lack of change is often said to be the exam system, which has mostly remained unchanged. Exams are an important aspect in the transitions between schools in all levels and especially so when applying into universities, as the prestige of the universities is one of the most important factors in employment opportunities after graduation. Glasgow and Paller (2016: 168-169), for example, point out that the importance of the exams is visible in the curriculum organization of schools: reading

and grammar classes outnumber oral communication classes, and there is a stark division between the classes. Reading and grammar classes are taught by the Japanese teachers, while communication classes are often taught by native speaker ALTs, and the contrast in teachers and number of classes creates a situation where preparing for the English exams becomes the default goal for the English classes, while communication is the marked, special class.

For Glasgow and Paller (2016), the prioritizing of the entrance exam is just one of the issues that are emblematic of the “ideological gap” between Japanese language education policy and the institutional practices in schools and classrooms. Another reason for the ideological gap was found in the professional cultures of Japanese schools: Heavy workloads, beliefs of the importance of the exams or social pressures from their surroundings, perceived English fluency and other factors were seen as limiting the implementation of these reforms in the classroom. The unclear roles of ALTs in English education and their use as tokenistic representation of internationality were also seen as contributing factors. The third major reason for the ideological gap between policy and practice is identified in the textbooks and other teaching materials. Even though the textbooks are MEXT approved, their content is largely comprised of grammar-translation methodology, contradicting the government’s message of the importance of communication in English education. The textbooks also repeat the cultural assumptions of English that I have noted on previously: focus is on the differences between Japan and the foreign, and the cultures associated with English are mostly Anglo-American.

These conditions which lead to the gap between policy and practice have even raised questions on whether the Japanese government truly means to reform language education or whether the largely western ELT researchers just understand the term communication in a different way that Japanese policy makers do (Glasgow and Paller 2016: 161-162, Seargeant 2009: 51-52). All these questions are relevant once again, as another large-scale English education reform is beginning to be implemented.

## **2.5. English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization**

In the spring of 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party announced that they were working on a new plan to reform the Japanese education system. The plan was a part of Abe's pledge to spend one trillion yen on education reforms that would create a globalized workforce in Japan, and its focus would be to help Japan improve its standing in the global economy by improving science and English education in Japan. At this point, the goals of the reform were to double the number of doctorates in English and to implement TOEFL English tests to measure the skills of those who apply to universities or to government jobs and improving TOEFL scores of the Japanese in general. In May of 2013, an advisory panel for the Ministry of Education proposed that the beginning of English classes would be moved from 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and that the number of English classes would be increased. English classes would also be instructed mainly in English, and students would be encouraged to use spoken English more. The panel also suggested improving opportunities and incentives for Japanese to study or intern abroad (this materialized as "Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan"-program in late 2013, with the aim of sending a total of 180,000 university and senior high school students abroad by 2020). In October 2013 MEXT announced its plan to begin English education in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with the current foreign language activities class, and to start proper English classes in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The official blueprint for the reform was announced in December 2013 and called "English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization".

### **2.5.1. Contents of the Reform Plan**

A major part of the reform is to lower the age in which students start learning English. Foreign language activities were moved from the last two grades of elementary school to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, with no apparent changes to the curriculum from the original establishment of the classes in 2011. Regular English Language classes are brought forward from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, focusing on basic English skills. Even though current English classes are taught by specialized English teachers, the reform plan states that class teachers "with good English skills" can also teach English in

elementary schools, even though specialized course teachers should be “actively utilized” (MEXT 2014). In junior high schools, the major change is the shift into English as the medium of instruction in English classes (at least “in principle”, as the plan states). In senior high schools, English classes are conducted in English and feature “high-level” linguistic activities such as presentations, debates and negotiations, and aim to nurture students’ ability to “fluently communicate” in English.

The plan is clearly focused on communication, and “coherent learning achievements” are stated as a way to ensure the nurturing of communication skills throughout English education. National identity also makes an appearance in the plan, as one of the goals of this plan corresponding to globalization is to “Enrich educational content in relation to nurturing individual’s sense of Japanese identity (focus on traditional culture and history among other things)” (MEXT 2014).

The plan details different measures needed to successfully implement the reform, such as improving teachers’ English and pedagogical skills, improving teacher training in universities, developing teaching materials and digital aids for education etc. These also include the requirement from junior/senior high school teachers to prove their English skills periodically (EIKEN Level pre-1 or TOEFL iBT score of over 80, which roughly translates to CEFR B2 or above). The plan also calls for increased utilization and improved training of ALTs, and also promotes creating guidelines to use local community members as external staff for schools.

The aim of the plan is to “enrich English education” in all levels from elementary to senior high school and improve students’ English ability, for which the plan sets a goal of EIKEN Grade 2 or above or over 57 in TOEFL iBT (in the higher end of CEFR B1-level). Later the goal was changed to at least 50% of senior high school graduates achieving EIKEN Grade 2 or Pre-2 (Murai 2015) It also promotes the use of these private tests “which measure all four skills” to be used in university entrance exams.

The implementation of the plan began in early 2014 by establishing an expert council and by beginning to build necessary frameworks, doing trials in selected schools etc. From 2018 on, the plan is to revise the national Course of Study and incrementally

implement the changes in schools. The full implementation is timed with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

### **2.5.2. Criticism and Implementation so far**

As with the establishing of foreign language activities, again concerns over the detrimental effect of early English education to students' Japanese and cognitive skills (Kameda 2013, Saito 2018: 188). As with former Minister of Education Ibuki's comment we saw in section 2.3., another LDP lawmaker made an interesting comment on the new reform that shows the depth of the dichotomy between English and Japan. They noted about the use of TOEFL in the university entrance exams and the reform at large: "[requiring certain TOEFL scores from university students] sounds to me like colonial policy ... We should instead teach Japanese history and culture" (Mie 2013).

However, the main criticism towards the reform has been focusing on the lack of resources. Most elementary school class teachers do not have any training in English teaching, and some viewed the time frame of the reform too tight for training existing teachers or creating suitable materials for elementary school English classes (Yoshida 2013). The lack of specialized English teachers, as well as ALTs, especially affect rural regions. Overall, it was estimated that due to the reform and a massive number of teachers reaching retirement age in the near future, some 144000 new English teachers would be needed (Clavel 2014, Aoki 2016). This has led to criticism over not only where to get all these new English teachers, but also over the financial implications of the new reform (Kameda 2013). Concerns have also been raised on the skill level of English teachers: in 2014 only 55,4% of senior high school teachers and 28,8% of junior high school teachers met the standards set by the reform plan (Murai 2015).

One of the ways the plan tries to combat the lack of teachers is the increased utilization of ALTs in education. As previously noted, ALTs have already faced criticism for often lacking teaching skills or experience among other things, but the situation becomes even more relevant as in some cases ALTs are already the primary teachers of English in Foreign language activities classes. Most of ALTs currently come from outside the



JET Programme, from private companies that schools and local governments hire to supply ALTs, and the contracts and training that they receive vary by a big margin (Aoki 2014). For example, some contracts do not allow team teaching between the class teachers and the ALTs, which results in ALTs teaching the classes alone. At the same time many of the private companies are not training the ALTs adequately for the job. Both the training and the pay for these jobs are planned for the traditional role of the ALT as an assistant teacher, who plans lessons together with the usual teacher of the class (Aoki 2014, Clavel 2014).

Another major concern about the success of the reform is the university entrance exam system. The move to TOEFL or similar tests that measure speaking and writing ability is seen as positive and consistent with the aim of increasing communication by some commentators, but critics point out that TOEFL might be too difficult for Japanese English learners (e.g. Matsutani 2013, McCrostie 2017), with e.g. culturally specific expressions that might not be familiar or relevant to Japanese students (Osaki 2013).

In 2018 it was decided that 8 privately run exams (including TOEFL) are recognized for the options for the English portion of university entrance exams, from which the applicant can choose two tests to use for application (“8 private English tests” 2018). However, TOEIC later withdrew their participation citing the complexity regarding the university tests as their reason (“TOEIC won't provide” 2019). The full implementation of privately run language tests as the only English test in the university entrance exams is scheduled for 2024, with a transition period starting from 2020 allowing universities to use either the national Common Test for University Admission, the private tests, or a combination of both (Tanaka 2018). This approach has been criticized due to the disadvantage it brings to students of lower economic status due to the prices of the exams, and to students in rural areas, as some of the tests can only be taken at specific locations; as of 2020 only three of the tests are accessible in the entire country (McCrostie 2017, “8 private English tests” 2018). The private tests chosen for entrance exams also differ from each other considerably, sometimes resulting in very different scores among same test takers (Brasor 2018). As the first privately-run entrance exams were approaching in late 2019, there were appeals and

protests by high-school students, school personnel and university professors against the tests (“Application period starts” 2019, “Address concerns” 2019, “Ministry launches website” 2019)

With the full implementation of the reform beginning in the spring of 2020, the planning stage is closing in at the time of writing, and since 2018, elementary schools have already had the option to begin teaching English at third grade. Even though there has been criticism towards many aspects of the reform, there has also been optimism towards it. Throughout the timespan from the reform’s planning and announcement in 2013 to the brink of implementation in 2019, the different events and reactions to them have been widely reported. The next chapter will focus on the aims, data and methods of the current study to analyze this reporting and the language ideologies that are contained within and the ways they are disseminated.

### **3. THE CURRENT STUDY**

#### **3.1. Aims and Research Questions**

The aim of the study is to look at the ways newspapers work in reproducing and disseminating language ideologies in the context of the current English education reform in Japan. To achieve this, the study places the current reform in the context of the previous language education reforms and the larger context of English in Japan, and looks at the reporting of an English language newspaper to see what kind of ideologies are being promoted and disseminated, the ways in which this is done, and how the paper’s reporting contributes to the language ideological struggle: does the newspaper challenge the dominant ideologies and perhaps aim to change them, or does it mainly uphold them?

The data chosen for this study comes from Japan’s largest English language newspaper, The Japan Times, between the years 2013 and 2019. The newspaper in question offers an interesting way to look at the spread of ideology due to its unique position and interest in English education (discussed in more detail in the section below). The timespan of the data from when the reform was being planned to the point

of early implementation also makes it possible to examine whether there are changes in reporting during the years the reform was being planned and implemented. The timespan of the study also enables analysis of possible changes in the editorial practices of The Japan Times (more detailed discussion in the section below).

From these aims and data, the following research questions were formed:

- 1) What kind of language ideologies are promoted and disseminated and how is this done?
  - a. What is being reported? Whose voices and views are heard?
  - b. What kind of linguistic and discursive practices are used to promote and disseminate language ideologies?
  - c. Are there signs of ideological struggle in the reporting? Challenges to dominant ideologies? How do these ideologies relate to the Japanese context, especially to previous reforms?
- 2) Are there changes in the reporting throughout the timespan of the study?
  - a. Is there change in reporting throughout the data as the reform is being implemented?
  - b. Does the reporting change after the alleged shift in editorial practices in 2017?

The following sections present the data selected for the study, provide background on The Japan Times and its place in the Japanese news media landscape, and finally discuss Critical Discourse Analysis as the theoretical framework of the study.

### **3.2. Data**

The data consist of 62 texts published in the English language newspaper The Japan Times published between March 29, 2013, when the preparations for a new English education reform were announced, to August 18, 2019. At the end point of the data set the curricula change of the reform was one semester away from being implemented in Japan, and the results from the first junior high school level proficiency tests had come

out and sparked reactions. This section will go through the reasons this particular data set was chosen for analysis and the processes of selecting and collecting data.

### **3.2.1. The Japan Times**

The Japan Times is the oldest running and largest English language newspaper in Japan. It has a circulation of around 45000, and aside from the print newspaper it operates online as well. Since 2013, the paper has been printed and sold with The International New York Times. Aside from the newspaper, the parent company The Japan Times, Ltd. publishes books, largely for learning English and Japanese. The newspaper also contains a section for languages, which includes short articles with discussion topics and vocabulary help to use in English learning called Morning English. It also has various tools for learning Japanese, such as short news stories in Japanese with vocabulary lists, articles about the usage of certain expressions, grammar points etc.

Even though English language newspapers were published in Japan even before the Meiji-restoration, The Japan Times was the first one to be run by the Japanese themselves. The first edition of The Japan Times was published on March 22, 1897 with two stated missions: “to develop and promote a better understanding between the Japanese people and foreign residents” and “to report on and to explain Japan’s foreign policy, behavior and place in the world.” (Tsutsumi 2017: B2). In its 120-year anniversary issue, the president of The Japan Times Takeharu Tsutsumi contextualizes these missions with the strained relationship between the locals and the around 5000 foreigners living in Japan at the time: as a result of the “unequal treaties” between Western powers and Japan (e.g. the Harris treaty of 1858), foreigners were living in Japan extraterritorially, i.e. under the law of their origin countries instead of Japanese rule of law, which understandably created tension between foreigners and the Japanese (Tsutsumi 2017: B2). However, by 1897 Japan’s race to modernization (itself a reaction to the unequal treaties and the West’s colonization of other Asian nations) had been ongoing for decades, and as a result the treaties were beginning to be renegotiated as Japan proved itself to be an international power. Japan had emerged

victorious from the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895, expanded its territory even before that, and thus proven itself the dominant power in Asia. At the same time, Japan was beginning to renegotiate the unequal treaties and ally itself more closely with Britain. This era also marks the beginning of the development of a unified and standardized Japanese as the national language (Heinrich 2012: 62-70).

In this context the two stated missions make perfect sense: the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is in many ways a turning point from a Japan that looks towards the West in an effort to modernize and resist colonialization, to a Japan that was a modern nation state that was finding its place on the global stage and building its own colonial power. The original missions also give us a nice example of newspapers' position as ideology brokers: Aside from bridging the gap between foreigners and the locals, the newspaper also acts as a platform for Japan's nationalist ideology and for legitimizing it internationally. This can seem as an act of almost nationalist propaganda to the world, but at the same time it is about representation, giving Japanese people a voice in the global discussion. In the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of The Japan Times, Sam Ito writes about the main motivations of founding the papers as "patriotism and the need to communicate with the outside world" and the "need to speak up in English", quoting the original editorial of the first issue (Ito 2017: B8):

*"In the eyes of the general public abroad, Japan is like a dumb actress leaving the audience to attach her motions whatever meaning it may please them to choose ... we persist in our assertion that Japan has not been adequately represented through the press, and further, that under the circumstances it is only by the Japanese themselves that their views, sentiments and aspirations can be presented to the outside world."*

The president of The Japan Times Takeharu Tsutsumi stated that in 2017 these missions "remain largely unchanged" and highlighted the need for there to be an independent Japanese voice in the global media landscape while also helping foreigners in Japan in their everyday life. (Tsutsumi 2017: B2)

In the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue The Japan Times profiled itself as not being afraid of being critical of Japan and its government, citing the experiences of government

control during the Pacific War as a “lesson the paper must not forget in its reporting activities”, and priding itself in being able to publish opinions critical to the government actions even then (Kawabata 2017: B9). This policy was seen in action in the critical reporting of several policies by the Abe government. However, in July 2017 The Japan Times was sold to an online PR company News2u, which brought with it a change in editorial practices. Reuters (Saito and Miyazaki 2019), reported the new goals given to the staff by executive editor Hiroyasu Mizuno: “to avoid creating the perception the paper was “anti-Japanese,””, and to “better reflect a more objective view of topics that are both contentious and difficult to summarize.” According to Reuters, the issue of advertising revenue from Japanese companies and institutions was also at the heart of the issue. These goals came in the wake of an editorial decision to refer to wartime Korean forced labor as “wartime laborers”, and to so called comfort women (women forced to work in brothels for Japanese soldiers) as “women who worked in wartime brothels, including those who did so against their will”. The issue of forced labor and comfort women are a major issue in Korean-Japanese relations, and Japan is often criticized for revisionist history when looking at its wartime history and Asian colonialism. The Reuters article quotes several leaked staff communications that suggest larger editorial changes in the newspaper, aimed to appease the Japanese government and conservative groups. Debito Arudou, a contributing writer to The Japan Times and a critic of Japanese media practices, also commented publicly that the paper has become a “servant to the elite” with its right-wing, government appeasing shift (Arudou 2019). Due to the leaked staff communications and the international criticism received by the paper, both Mizuno and Tsutsumi issued statements that the editorial change was not caused by a shift to more right wing politics after the change of ownership, and that the changes are not related to any external pressure (Saito and Miyazaki 2019, Saito and Doyle 2019).

The Japan Times was chosen for the data because it is the largest English language newspaper in Japan. It was also chosen because it has an obvious interest in English education in Japan. As with other English language newspapers, its audience is largely foreign, and especially foreign people living in Japan. Many of these foreigners are English teachers, and English education is a common theme in the newspaper. The

company also has a clear interest in language education due to its book publishing side, which focuses on language learning books. The newspaper also has its own section dedicated to language which regularly contains articles that are explicitly meant for English and Japanese learning. The position of the paper as a critical voice and the controversy regarding the allegedly shifted editorial practices post 2017 also make it an interesting case to study from the perspective of ideologies.

### **3.2.2. Collection of Data**

The data was gathered from The Japan Times website which publishes and archives the paper's stories online. The website was searched for all texts relating to the English education reform and English education in general. Out of these texts, those directly related to the reform were chosen for the data. Furthermore, texts that referenced the issues central to the reform, i.e. university exam reform, lowering the starting age for English classes and increased communicative English education were chosen as well. Aside from these categories, some additional texts were chosen due to their strong thematic link to language ideologies, e.g. dealing with identity and the clash of English with Japanese culture or values.

Due to restricted access to the full chronological archive of all issues of The Japan Times and having to rely on the public website, the texts chosen for this study do not include all the texts published in the newspaper about the education reform (for example, news articles by some wire services are removed from the site after a certain time period due to licensing reasons). However, as the data set consist of 62 texts that fall on the timeline fairly evenly and has a mix of different types of newspaper texts, it is assumed to be representative of the papers' reporting on the topic and the ideologies within.

The data consists of 27 news articles, 17 column articles, 4 editorials, 13 commentary or opinion texts (collectively referred to as opinion texts from now on), and a single long form interview/discussion (see fig. 1). Two of the news articles were shorter texts with vocabulary aid and discussion topics for English learners. Of the 17 column

articles, 9 were published in columns dedicated to education topics, 3 in columns that function as language learning aides and 4 in other columns. One opinion text was a collection of shorter opinion texts collected from online and email submissions.

Number of texts by type	
News	27
Column	17
Opinion	13
Editorial	4
Other	1
Total	62

Figure 1. The number of texts by type in the data set

Various text types were chosen in the data set to give a representative picture of the different voices the reporting showcases to the reading audience. Text types such as columns and letters from the readers also allow the writers to express their opinions directly, as news stories are (at least in principle) more objective reporting of facts. This allows the newspaper to publish more subjective views of the topics at hand, which offers a new way to look at the ideologies they promote and disseminate.

While the large data set of different text types over several years offers insight to the various voices presented by the paper and gives a chance of analyzing possible changes in the reporting throughout the time period, it also present challenges in analysis. The various text types have to be analyzed in different ways as they have different styles of writing and a different purpose, and the large data set makes analysis more demanding. Possible gaps in the data also mean that the data set might not be fully representative, but the size and scope of the data set is hopefully enough to balance out the possible gaps. The next section will take a closer look at the methodological framework and process of analysis.



### 3.3. The Analytic Framework

#### 3.3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

As the focus of the study is on ideology and newspapers as ideology brokers, Critical Discourse Analysis is central to analyzing the data. Simply defined, Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA is an approach to language studies which connects linguistic analysis to social analysis, sees context of language use as a crucial part of it, and “has a particular interest in the relation between language and power” (Wodak 2001: 2). Thus, CDA focuses on discourses that have to do with, for example, the realms of politics, institutional discourses, discourses on gender, race and sexuality, and media discourses. Furthermore, Wodak (2001: 3) notes that all approaches to CDA are tied to three concepts: power, history and ideology. As the current study deals with media discourses (as well as political and institutional discourses) and is focused on the three concepts central to CDA, it is an easy choice for an analytical framework.

Critical Discourse Analysis has its roots in the 1960s and 70s with, and was born from the reactions to the linguistics of the day: for example, Chomskyan linguistics and sociolinguistic research were revolutionizing the field of linguistics, but at the same time issues such as social and cultural dimensions of language use, and especially dimensions of power and hierarchies were seen as neglected in linguistic analysis. Linguistic scholars such as Halliday and social theorists such as Foucault, Habermas and Bourdieu were instrumental in combining linguistic and social analysis and helped form the foundations of Critical Linguistics (CL) in the 1970s, which would itself lead to the birth of CDA in the late 80s and early 90s (Blommaert 2005: 22-24, Wodak 2001: 5). Norman Fairclough’s 1989 book *Language and Power* can be seen as a seminal publication for CDA as a new discipline; Blommaert describes the book as an “explicitly politicized analysis of “powerful” discourses in Britain ... [which] offered the synthesis of linguistic method, object of analysis, and political commitment that have become the trademark of CDA” (Blommaert 2005: 23-24).

### 3.3.2. CDA and Ideology

Wodak (2001: 10) summarizes the importance of ideology to CDA as follows: "Ideology, for CDA, is seen as an important aspect of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. CL takes a particular interest in the ways in which language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions." As CDA is rooted in critical theory (e.g. the Frankfurt school), it often takes a critical approach to ideology (see Boudin's classification of approaches in section 2.1.1.). Wodak (2001: 10) describes some of the aims of critical theory as "rooting out a particular delusion" and informing agents of the ways "they are deceived about their own needs and interests", and in this way working as a tool for enlightenment and emancipation. However, the aims of critical theory also allow for approaches that are more in line with the "mixed approach" of the current study: e.g. Wodak (2001: 9) describes a need for interdisciplinary work with complementing approaches and theories, self-reflection and taking an explicit stance on the issues at hand. In any case, as CDA is interested in social relations and relations of power, critical approaches are always present in the ideological analysis of language (Wodak 2001: 9-10) As Wodak (2001: 10) puts it: "For CDA, language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use powerful people make of it. This explains why CL often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and opportunity to improve conditions." To expand on the last point, those in power also have more control on the spread of knowledge, and where our interest lies, the spread of ideologies.

At the same time, CDA offers us a view to the other side of power: "texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (Wodak 2001: 11). By critically analyzing texts produced by those who have power we can see resistance to non-dominant ideologies, the ways in which dominant ideologies adapt in order to stay relevant and other signs of ideological struggle, which also gives us a way to look at those non-dominant ideologies.

Critical discourse analysis thus offers us a way to see that the dominant ideologies are not the only possible ones. As Lukes (1974: 54, cited in Richardson 2007: 45) states:

“To use the vocabulary of power in the context of social relationships is to speak of human agents, separately or together, in groups or organisations, through action or inaction, significantly affecting the thought or action of others (specifically, in a manner contrary to their interests). In speaking thus, one assumes that, although the agents operate within structurally determined limits, they non the less have a certain relative autonomy and could have acted differently. The future, though it is not entirely open, is not entirely closed either (and, indeed, the degree of its openness is itself structurally determined).”

Richardson (2007: 45) puts it somewhat more poetically: “Another world *is* possible. It is the point of CDA to show how discourse conceals this from us, normalising inequalities and closing down the possibility of change.”

### 3.3.3. Analyzing Newspapers

News media discourse is often presented from the point of view and with opinions from those in power, and requires power in order to be produced and disseminated effectively to audiences. The audiences themselves affect the discourse, since it is partly formed to and by them. Perhaps most importantly, as Richardson (2007: 1) believes: “it is flawed to consider issues such as contemporary democratic politics, social values and the continuing existence of prejudice and social inequalities without reference to the formative influence of journalism.” These characteristics of journalism make it an important site for CDA, and a popular topic for analysis (see e.g. Fairclough 1995a, Vessey 2016, Richardson 2007: 2). Richardson argues for the importance of CDA in analysis of journalism in comparison to quantitative methods as follows:

“[critical discourse analysts] offer *interpretations* of the meanings of texts rather than just quantifying textual features and deriving meanings from this; situate *what* is written or said in the *context* in which it occurs, rather than just summarising patterns or regularities in texts; and argue that textual meaning is *constructed* through an interaction between producer,

text and consumer rather than simply being “read off” the page by all readers in exactly the same way.” (Richardson 2007: 15)

Richardson also argues that analysis of journalism should focus on three different levels: “on the material realities of society in general; on the practices of journalism; and on the character and function of journalistic language more specifically” (2007: 2) Adhering to Fairclough’s model of CDA, these three levels can also be labeled as follows: textual analysis, analysis of discursive practices, and analysis of social practices. Next, we will delve deeper into these three levels of analysis and outline the tools used in the current study.

### **Textual analysis**

In CDA, textual analysis is based on the *function* of textual elements: it assumes that textual choices on different levels of detail (from word choice to above sentence level structures like cohesion) are deliberate choices from the producers of the texts that serve a purpose to those who have interests in the text. Richardson (2007: 35) notes: “Therefore, we must examine the traditional forms of linguistic analysis [...] in relation to their direct and indirect involvement in reproducing or resisting the systems of ideology and social power.” According to Fairclough (1995b: 104) textual analysis should be conducted in two levels: firstly, structuring of proposals and secondly, combination and sequencing of proposals. The first level “concerns the representation of individuals and other social actors, and the analysis of *clauses* representing actions processes and events” (Richardson 2007: 45). Structuring of proposals is concerned with smaller linguistic structures in language such as word choice and sentence level syntax. The level of combination and sequencing of proposals is then concerned with how clauses are structured to form rhetoric and narratives in the text. Richardson (2007: 47-74) offers some examples of the kind of elements of language which might offer insight for CDA of newspapers, from which I have chosen the ones most suitable for the current study:

*Lexical analysis:* The choice of words in a text carry value judgements in their denoted and especially connoted meanings. They can assign roles and identities to agents and suggest their part or culpability in the stories. In the data, for example, word choices of “revitalization” or “rejuvenation” of the Japanese economy imply both a declining economy and a greater past in which Japan can return if the English reform is successful.

*Syntax and transitivity:* Who does what to whom? Are the agents named or are they “hidden” in passive sentences? This can be used to analyze, for example, who are seen as the owners of English, who English teachers are, who are responsible for the lack of English proficiency in Japan etc.

*Modality:* What kind of value judgements are made with using modal verbs (must, can, will etc.)? What kind of certainty is the text conveying (e.g. something will happen vs. something may happen)? What kind of obligations is the text suggesting, which actions does the writer think should be taken in the future? In the data set modality is especially seen in the justifications of the reform and in the different actions agents deem necessary to do in order to improve English education in Japan.

*Presupposition:* What kinds of things does the writer assume to be known already? What do the presuppositions suggest to the reader? For example, discussions of the need for reform presuppose that Japan’s English education is not good enough, and the government goals of economic growth are presupposed necessary and beneficial.

*Rhetorical tropes:* How does the writer persuade readers to take their point of view? What kinds of metaphors or metonyms are used? Is there hyperbole in the text? What kind of euphemistic language is used? As the data set includes columns and opinion texts that are more subjective and often aim to present convincing arguments and to influence opinion, the analysis of rhetoric is important.

*Narrative:* What kind of narrative tools does the text use? What is the “plot” of the story? In which order are the agents introduced and how do the events unfold? The analysis of narrative allows us to study how different issues or arguments are contrasted against each other, to analyze how different agents are placed in a dialogue

with each other, and so on. In general, narrative analysis ties together the smaller levels of textual analysis and allows us to look at the texts as a whole. In the analysis this allows to place shorter examples to larger textual contexts to show their ideological significance.

### **Discursive practices**

At the level of discursive practices, the analysis looks at journalistic discourse as its own specific set of genres and furthermore analyses them as “they are embedded within, and relate to, social conditions of production and consumption” (Richardson 2007: 39). The producer, text and consumer all exist in an interactive relationship with each other, with the producer imbuing meaning to the text, and the reader interpreting that text with their own experiences and opinions. At the same time, an assumed audience affects the producer, as do the expected genres of journalism. Richardson (2007: 39-41) argues that this level of analysis is often overlooked in CDA of journalism, as the rigid genre conventions and practical operation of journalistic organizations make journalism quite different from other media discourse. Richardson (2007: 77-113) outlines the following as some of the crucial aspects that need to be taken into account when analyzing newspaper discourse:

*Conceptualization of audience:* Audiences can be conceptualized in various ways, e.g. as a public that has a right to be informed, as a public that is deceived by those in power, as consumers of newspapers or as commodities to be advertised to. This study conceptualized the audience through their interest and investment in the topic of English education in Japan. A large part of the audience can also be conceptualized as reliant on The Japan Times to inform them about the announcements, events and discussion related to the reform and enable them to take part in it, as many readers can not engage with the discussion in the original language.

*Professional practices:* In contrast to the market-oriented goals of commercial newspapers, Richardson sees the ethics and values of the journalist profession as a challenging force to market values: journalists seek (at least in principle) to inform

truthfully and objectively, separating fact from opinion etc. At the same time, the ethics of journalism might lead to internal conflicts: accurate reporting of sources does not necessarily mean accurate representation of material reality, and the quest for objective reporting does not mean that news is reported from all perspectives of the issue. The specific professional practices of Japanese newspapers and The Japan Times were discussed in more length in sections 2.2. and 3.2.1. respectively, and the insight gathered from this background is used especially in the analysis of possible change in reporting following the change in ownership of The Japan Times.

*Organizational practices:* Who is the audience and how does it affect the production of the texts? What kind of agenda does the newspaper have and what does it expect the audience wants? What kind of events and stories are deemed interesting or important to the audience and thus newsworthy? As established before, the audience of The Japan Times has an active interest in English education, and many of the readers are themselves native speaker English teachers. Thus, the topic of English education is presumably aimed specifically for this audience, which informs the way we can look at topics such as Assistant Language Teachers or use of native English as a model of learning. The audiences' reliance on English reporting also allows us to look at the newspaper as an intermediary between Japanese sources and the audience.

*Intertextuality:* How do the texts relate to previous news stories or larger culture, what kind of references are made? Who is quoted in text and how? How does the text comment references to other texts? How do references relate to both the original text and the context surrounding them? In this study, the use of quotes and their relationship with the texts and their context is one of the key points of analysis, as voices of politicians, academics, parents etc. are often in the center of the events and announcements of the reform.

### **Social practices**

In this last level of analysis journalistic discourse is looked at in its various contexts, be it the immediate situational context of the events reported on, a wider institutional

context or even larger socio-cultural ones. At this level we can ask questions about what these texts tell about the society they were produced in and for which they were produced, or about the possible impacts these texts have or are meant to have (Richardson 2007: 42). It is at this point that Richardson (2007: 42) claims Discourse analysis becomes critical, as it “involves analysis of how discourse (language in use) relates to and is implicated in the (re)production of social relations [...] Analysis retains the details of both *textual* analysis (the analysis of propositional content) and *discourse* analysis (the analysis of text production and consumption), but now these insights are expanded and viewed in relation to the wider society.” It is at this point where ideological assumptions can be compared to other possible realities (or in critical view of ideology, reality itself), and thus challenged.

#### **3.3.4. The Process of Analysis**

To get an overview of the data set, the general content and themes of the reporting were established: what kind of text types (news stories, columns, editorials) were published in different moments of the timeline of the reform; what did the texts discuss; how did the content relate to the timeline etc. The genres and general topics of the texts were coded. Next, the methodology of CDA was applied to the text (as outlined above). At this stage the analysis was quite general, with shallow readings done to the texts in the data set. General themes and interesting textual and discursive examples were noted and coded to establish larger themes on which to perform a deeper level of analysis. The authors of the texts and the people quoted in these texts were also coded for later analysis.

The coding of themes in the preliminary analysis showed that there were certain themes that were predominant in the data, and which also were central in the background research of the study. After the establishment of these major themes, a deeper analysis of the texts was done. All the texts in the data were read and coded with the specific themes in mind, and quotes from the texts were gathered. The larger themes were broken down into smaller sub-themes. After this thematic phase, the results from the different levels of analysis were compared chronologically to see if



there were any changes in the data throughout the timeline, and specifically after the papers alleged change in editorial practices in 2017.

#### **4. ANALYSIS**

The results of the analysis are organized starting with an overview of the reporting during the timeline of the dataset, followed by the major themes established during the preliminary analysis, and ending with possible changes in the reporting throughout the data.

The overview of the data looks at the chronological distribution of the texts in the data, the general topics of the reporting, and the authors and other voices heard in the texts.

The two major themes chosen for the core analysis were further divided into smaller thematic sections. The first theme is centered around the ideological reasoning for the reform and the need for it, which allowed this study to look more generally at the ideological reasonings for why studying English is valuable to societies and individuals. The larger theme deals with ideologies of globalization, nationalism, international and intercultural communication, and benefits of language learning to individual. The second theme is about the ownership of English, which led to analysis on the identities and ideas that the English language and the people who speak it represent. This theme deals with ideologies about native speakers, who they are and what kind of roles they represent, as well as ideologies of English as incompatible with Japanese culture and identity or an outright threat to them.

The final section looks at the possible changes in the reporting. This analysis includes the distribution of texts published and their types on the data set's timeline, the possible changes in the ideological content of the texts, and the possible effects of the change in ownership to the reporting.

For the purpose of clarity, the primary sources in the data set are cited in this chapter with a code indicating the genre of the text (NW for news article, CL for column, OP for opinion, ED for editorial and OT for other), and the date of publishing.

#### 4.1. Overview of the Reporting

As expected, news stories of the reform were published following announcements issued by the government and as events relating to the reform unfolded. Major points of interest in the timeline are the planning stage of the reform throughout 2013, the announcement of the reform plan in December 2013, the discussion of language proficiency standards for English teachers (2015-2016), the release of results of students' language proficiency tests in early 2015, 2017 and 2019, and the selection of private tests for university exams (late 2017 to 2018). Commentary, in form of columns, opinion texts and editorials, often relates to current news stories or reacts to other commentaries. The biggest cluster of published texts is formed around the announcement of the reform blueprint. The most common type of text in the data set are news articles, with columns and opinion pieces representing the other major type (see fig. 1 in section 3.2.2.).

The most common topic in the data set is a general discussion about the reform, its aims, hurdles and developments, and this is especially true in news articles. Out of the more specific topics, the most common are related to the major parts of the reform: the low performance in international and national language proficiency tests, the entrance exam system and other language exams, and the need for communication skills in English education. Columns and opinion texts more commonly included less frequent topics such as talk about the ownership of English, specific pedagogical issues etc.

The data set includes texts from both Japanese and Western authors. News articles are overwhelmingly written by either Japanese authors or wire services (in most cases Jiji or Kyodo), except in 4 of the texts, where the author is Western. In contrast, columns and opinion texts are overwhelmingly authored by Western writers. In columns, the only texts authored by Japanese writers are companion pieces to news stories or columns that also function as Japanese teaching aides.

Other than the authors, the preliminary analysis looked at the people and organizations that are quoted or used as sources or authorities in the texts. The most common voice in the texts was unsurprisingly the ministry of education and the people and groups who planned and run the reform, such as prime minister Abe, the

minister of education, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) officials etc. Quotes and sources often come from the ministry as an organization, but individual politicians are also quoted at times. The other group that is most often seen in the texts are researchers, other academics and academic institutions. Over a half of the quoted academics are Japanese, and of the Western academics quoted most work in Japanese institutions. Other Asian academics are mostly quoted in the context of English education in Asia. The next largest quoted group are teachers and school leaders. There is almost equal distribution between Japanese and Western voices in this category, with Western voices being a bit more varied, quoting both current and ex-ALTs as well as teachers in other countries. The last larger group that is visible in the data set are for-profit language schools and language testing companies. Interestingly, students are quoted directly in almost none of the texts, and their opinions about the reform and English teaching in Japan generally are ignored nearly completely.

#### **4.2. What is English for?**

One theme that emerges from the data concerns the explanations to the question of *why* improving English skills, and the reform that seeks to do that, is necessary. Through these explanations we can analyze the ideological reasonings on what English is for and why it should be studied, from a societal level to an individual one.

In the texts, a need for reform is often taken for granted and assumed to be known to the readers. A government official deems the changes “necessary”, as “[w]e all know that the (current) six years of English education did not help us speak English” (NW 29.3.2013). Low proficiency scores in tests are also cited as proof of the need for reform, or as an editorial puts it, “desperate need for reform” (ED 28.3.2015). Another common reasoning for the need of English is globalization. Texts remind us that we live in an “age of globalization” (CL 16.9.2013, NW 23.10.2013) or in a “globalized” (OP 29.10.2017) or “increasingly interlinked” world (NW 14.2.2017, NW 6.3.2017), and that improved English skills are needed “to pursue globalization” (NW 31.12.2013). The situation at the time of the reform is not seen as good enough: a linguistics professor is quoted as saying: “I think it’s fair to say Japan has not interfaced well with

globalization and is really missing out on what globalization has to offer” (CL 17.8.2014). A columnist shows similar sentiment in saying: “Japan doesn’t treat English... as a vital way to make Japan globally competitive” (CL 27.12.2013). An opinion writer feels that “[t]oo much is on the line in the globalization of the economy” to settle for the current quality of English teaching (OP 10.9.2016).

Japan’s place in the global marketplace or global economy is a common notion in the text throughout the data set. With the reform, the government aims to foster “global talent” (NW 29.3.2013), “global human resources” (CL 28.12.2014) or “internationally minded” individuals (CL 16.9.2013, ED 10.5.2014, CL 28.12.2014), who will “aid economic growth” (CL 16.9.2013) and “reverse the nation’s declining competitiveness on the world stage” (NW 29.3.2013). The specifics of what this global talent will do to improve the economy and Japan’s position in global competition are mostly left vague, but most of the time the implied solution is through improving the English skills of international companies’ employers. This is at times explicitly given as a concrete example of the goals of the reform, as is tourism.

One columnist describes the governments’ goal as follows: “Ringed in 2014, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a dream: One nation that will actively re-engage with the global marketplace.” (CL 5.1.2014) The word choice of *re-engaging* is echoed in the initial descriptions of the reform as “rejuvenation” and “revitalization” of the education system (NW 29.3.2013), which, if successful, could lead to “Japan’s economic rebirth” (CL 5.1.2014). A successful reform is described as what “revitalizes Japan” (OT 22.3.2017) or “wind in the sails of a resurgent Japan” (CL 28.12.2014). A more forward-looking sentiment is present in a quote from a Japanese mother criticizing the scope of the reform: “greater improvements *must* be made for the future of Japan” (CL 12.1.2014, emphasis added). The modality of the phrasing makes the statement carry even more weight, suggesting that unless improvements are made, the future of Japan looks bleak.

An interesting insight into why the decline in global competitiveness is inspiring a new interest in English education reform is offered by one columnist; the column quotes a Western English teacher in China: “Maybe the English fantasy has died out

in Japan because they have already secured their position in the global marketplace – Japan surpassed that point” (CL 19.1.2014). The writer argues that this is supported by Japan’s position as a developed economy compared to the developing economies of South Korea and China, and the number of exchange students that leave for native speaker countries from these nations. In the column, South Korea and China are positioned as having many of the same problems with English education Japan has, but their efforts in reforming language education are seen as more “serious” as Japan’s, partly due to their position in the global marketplace. This comparison between the countries, and the above word choices eliciting visions of a greater past and revitalization neatly leads us to the next topic at hand, nationalism.

#### 4.2.1. Nationalism

As seen above, the need for reform is often seen in quite nationalist terms despite the overall focus on globalization. As we saw in section 2.4., globalization, English and Japanese nationalism have all been intertwined ever since the Meiji era and can be seen throughout Japan’s English education reforms. Furthermore, Prime Minister Abe’s politics are and have been very focused on nationalism (or explicitly, patriotism), but in the data set this is not really drawn attention to. In the texts, the global outlook of the English education reform is more often *contrasted* with nationalism. In the narrative of the texts that discuss the more general education reforms, revisions of history curricula and other reforms are implied to be controversially nationalistic, while the English education reform is more outward looking, either addressing globalization or preparing children for an “increasingly interlinked world” or the “global society” (CL 28.12.2014, NW 6.8.2015, NW 14.2.2017, NW 6.3.2017). Overtly nationalist rhetoric regarding English is not really seen outside one particular opinion text, which even alludes to the ultranationalist pre-war attitudes:

“As a Japanese citizen who grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, I have to say that Japan needs people who can really speak and use English as a weapon for doing business overseas and also for diplomacy.

Japan's education was wonderful before World War II. Even though there are problems in every system, what's most important is that there always needs to be the elite that can lead this country to a better and stronger future.

In order to achieve that, I think that Japan should just limit English education to the elite and teach them very intensively so that Japan can be No. 1 again." (OP 27.1.2014)

As seen in section 2.4.2., English education before World War Two was limited to a specialization for the few due to the Japanizing of the education system and rising Japanese nationalism. The Pre-War era is also characterized by extreme nationalism and Japanese imperialism, which presumably is the point where the writer sees Japan being "No. 1". The word choices of the text also show nationalist traits: English can be used as a "weapon" in business and diplomacy, signaling aggression, which is also seen in the need to be "stronger" in the future. The positioning of international business as a fight between nations is interesting regarding the context of the reform, and the focus on Japan's position in the global economy, which does imply a sort of struggle between nations for the top spots and positions the whole reform in a nationalistic ideology. Another interesting focus in the text is on educating only the elites, which seems to be increasingly rare in this age of populist nationalism but does make more sense in the context of Japanese pre-war nationalism with its obsession with the divine emperor and a ruling warrior class.

Seeing international business and diplomacy as a struggle between nations leads us to another topic reflecting a nationalist ideology, which can be seen in how Japan is compared to other countries. Most often this comparison is made regarding English proficiency rankings. As the initial announcement of the reform included the wish to use TOEFL as the test for university admissions, Japan's rank "among the lowest three out of 33 Asian countries" is a part of the discussion from the start with even the headline stating that the education reform "seeks to boost TOEFL levels" (NW 29.3.2013). A newer text alludes to the failures of the previous English education reforms, noting that Japan ranks as "the fifth from the bottom, ahead of Afghanistan, Cambodia, Tajikistan and Laos" (CL 5.9.2016). The placement of Japan among these "less developed" countries is then contrasted with the higher rankings of China and

South Korea, and the writer notes dryly that in speaking ability Japan placed last. A column talking about the Education First's English Proficiency Index results from 2013 puts it even more explicitly:

*"In a damning assessment, EF concludes that "In the past six years, Japanese adults have not improved their English. If anything, their skills have declined slightly. During the same period, other Asian countries, most notably Indonesia and Vietnam, have made enormous progress. Despite being a far wealthier and more developed country, Japan is struggling to teach its students English for use in a competitive global economy.""* (CL 17.8.2014, emphasis added)

The comparison between the less wealthy and developed countries with Japan not only implies that because Japan is superior economically, it should be in other aspects as well, but also implies success in English education to be mostly about resources, ignoring other factors such as ideological ones. As we saw earlier, another way to view the issue is the complete opposite point: as Japan is already a wealthy and developed economy, there might be less motivation and need to improve English proficiency compared to countries for whom it might improve their global standing more radically.

Among this framing of Japan's low language proficiency ranking it is no surprise that an opinion writer describes Japan's low TOEFL ranking as "humiliating" (OP 10.9.2016). The rankings imply a competition between nations, which is at times explicitly noted. A school principal is quoted as saying that with this reform "[Japan] will finally be able to catch up with South Korea in English" (NW 13.12.2013), and a Japanese English teacher with the quote: "without the ability to speak English properly, Japan will fall behind other countries in many fields" (CL 15.12.2013).

Another focus that can be related to a nationalist ideology is on the Japanese "brand", especially related to the 2020 Olympics. As the reform's implementation is tied to it, it is seen as an opportunity to show "whether Japan is serious" about improving English education (CL 19.1.2014). An opinion writer notes that the success of the games will "depend on how well you communicate in the most common language spoken among the visitors", and that improved English skills will make Japan a more attractive tourist

destination. It is also noted that the Olympics are a part of the reason why there is a “heightened interest in the language” (NW 13.12.2013), and that China and South Korea also introduced English education reforms ahead of their Olympic Games (CL 19.1.2014).

As seen in the examples, even though global competitiveness is mostly defined in terms of global economic standing, the comparisons between language proficiency rankings and the wish to be number one in the world reflect a general wish to have more influence in the world, to somehow be the best nation in an undefined way. The need for being more globally competitive and improving the national economy are also not seen in terms of what this means to Japan and its people in any concrete way. The implication is that economic growth is good for Japan (this being a common presupposition of capitalist ideology), and it is presupposed that the reader agrees with this even without explicit examples of any effects this could have. The implication is of a general wellbeing of the nation which the ideology of nationalism connects to the wellbeing of its people. The next section will look at some of the more international outlooks of the English education reform.

#### **4.2.2. International and Intercultural Communication**

Even though globalization is often viewed in nationalist terms in the data set, another side of globalization is also visible: English can also be seen as a tool to communicate with people from all around the world and learn about their cultures. As this notion often comes presupposed with English as a global language, it is often left unsaid, but there are some examples in the text where the idea of intercultural exchange and international co-operation are explicitly mentioned in various contexts ranging from global politics to practical use for individuals.

There are some examples in the data set that show the hand-in-hand relationship that language and culture have: one column notes that the goal of the JET Programme was not only to improve English education, but also to “promote cultural exchange” (CL 19.1.2014), and a news article talks about the changes to English teacher education to



include study periods abroad to facilitate intercultural exchange (NW 28.2.2016). The latter implies that intercultural exchange is beneficial to the teachers' skills in teaching English. Similar sentiment is shown when a Western assistant language teacher is quoted saying that the role of ALTs "first and foremost, is to make students interested in other languages and other cultures. That's the most important thing in learning a new language" (NW 2.1.2014). Reversely, a linguistics professor notes that "Language is the basis of building intercultural awareness" (CL 17.8.2014), which shows the other side of the relationship between language and culture.

The texts also show more concrete examples of what improved English and thus improved international communication might entail: the most idealistic of these is the notion that English "enhances world peace" (OT 22.3.2017), or more practically acts "as a tool with which to peacefully deal with our neighbor countries" (OP 27.1.2014). English is not only seen as the lingua franca of global politics (OP 8.3.2019), but for the global academic community as well (OP 9.7.2014, OP 8.3.2019). Global business is also given as an example: "Global business requires not just English skill but an attitude of openness to understanding the world, by interacting with people, practices and ideas from other countries. Learning a second language can help foster such an attitude." (ED 18.7.2015). One opinion writer directly states the need for more intercultural exchange as a reaction to a trend of rising nationalism:

"One of the benefits of knowing/using more than one language is the exposure to diversity. Knowing more than one language exposes us to different ways of thinking and doing things. It enables us to realize there are other value systems with which people of different cultures and languages live by. It gives us the opportunity to review our own value systems and revisit our own culture and ways of thinking. In the recent trend toward nationalism and emphasis on national sovereignty over global collaboration, I am convinced that the knowledge and awareness of different value systems and culture, for which language plays a significant role, is needed now more than ever." (OP 8.10.2017)

Even though the quote does not specify a language, the opinion piece only talks about English. The text also positions diversity outside Japan, accessible by learning English, and thus suggesting homogeneity in language and culture inside Japan. The examples given (the US and UK) also imply that the diversity that needs to be contacted is in the

West (more on this later in section 4.3.). While the text is explicitly challenging nationalism, this in itself is quite a nationalist ideology, ignoring the linguistic, ethnic and other diversity in Japan which is accessible without the use of English. While the text does focus on the more noble goals of intercultural exchange, it does also suggest that Japan need to “reap the benefits of interconnectedness”, and thus centers Japan’s interest in globalization. At the same time, it wants to do this in a way that avoids “issues such as extremism and inequality”, showing the internal conflict of nationalist and internationalist ideologies that play a part in the dominant ideologies of globalization.

For a more individual focus, one text offers a very interesting point of English and intercultural exchange as empowering to students: “Developing a more dynamic notion of identity, realizing there are far more similarities across cultures than differences – to encourage learners to appreciate this can be quite empowering. By making students aware of their multiple identities when using other languages, it allows them to behave differently in appropriate situations more consciously and strategically.” (CL 17.8.2014). Another writer states that understanding the perspectives other than your own “is important for any type of communication”, and that communicating with others globally is “full of potential for creativity” (CL 20.4.2014). One columnist talks about the benefits of intercultural communication in everyday life:

“A lot of people assume it is only about the different nationalities or English levels of the speakers, but in work situations, often intercultural communication has more to do with the organizational culture or the professional cultures. So when engineers are talking to salespeople, for example, there can be a cultural divide that will cause problems.” (CL 17.8.2014).

This notion of diversity as a part of everyday life gets closer to what was missing in the example in the previous paragraph, but its focus is in professional life, again ignoring a lot of the cultural diversity inside nations and communities. At the same time, it at least notes that English is useful not only outside Japan, but inside as well. Again, the given examples mostly look towards the West.

As to what culture Japanese English learners are supposed to learn from and about is often vague or assumed to be general. Most of the texts talk about talking to “others around the world” (CL 20.4.2014) or learning from unnamed others, some of them clearly imply “the West” or English-speaking countries, for instance by only giving examples of Western countries. At the same time there are explicit challenges to the native speaker ideal: for example, the opinion piece about English as the lingua franca of global politics uses the EU as an example of global politics done mainly in English, despite native speakers’ being a minority, and Brexit possibly leading to even less status to native speakers in the EU. One writer explicitly draws attention to the prominence of English in Japan as the language to access other cultures and suggests encouraging students to learn other languages as well (OP 18.8.2019). The narrative of English as an international and intercultural language also focuses on foreignness: while talking to foreigners in Japan is given as an example for English use in one occasion, the texts mostly assume that English is used outside Japan or with outsiders. At the same time, they mostly ignore the multiculturalism that already exists inside Japan. The ideas of nativeness in English education and the role of English as a representation of the West will be discussed more with the next thematic topic in section 4.3.

#### **4.2.3. Benefits to Individuals**

As seen previously in this chapter, the reasoning for the reform and the need for better English skills is mostly based on the need for Japan to be more competitive in the world stage and as a way for Japan to be part of the globalized world by being able to communicate with and learn from other cultures. The focus then is largely in the realm of the nation state and less on the individual learners. However, there are some examples in the data set that look at the reform and English learning from the perspective of individual learners.

Learning English is clearly seen as beneficial: for example, one columnist quotes multiple parents criticizing the English education system heavily since they feel their children are not learning English, which implies value in English education (e.g. CL

5.1.2014, CL 12.1.2014). One columnist notes that parents have “A prevailing regret [...] that despite years of their own English studies, they cannot speak the language” (CL 12.1.2014), clearly putting value on English skills. In discussing the private sphere of education, there is concern about the growing divide in English skills between those who can afford private schools or cram schools and those who rely on public education, again implying value in English education (e.g. CL 5.1.2014).

The most common benefit for individuals mentioned in the data set is career advancement. One text discussing companies making English as their official language puts it very clearly: “the move toward English as an official language in companies does at least offer an answer to the question many students, parents and teachers still ask: “Why is English important?”” (ED 18.7.2015). English skills are also seen as an important way to gain academic opportunities (NW 25.5.2015, NW 1.8.2016). One writer notes that “The primary beneficiaries [of improving English education], of course, will be Japanese students who are competing for jobs” (OP 29.7.2015). A columnist quotes a mother criticizing current English education: “It’s studying for a test, not for future use in a career” (CL 5.1.2014).

This topic is common in the data: many texts question whether it is English skill that is actually useful for career advancement rather than test scores. Another columnist writes: “Today Japanese students and job-seekers must choose between committing themselves to getting a ticket to a job or something of practical value for the future – between English proficiency on paper and true communicative skills.” (CL 8.6.2016). Most of the texts discussing the heavy emphasis on exams in Japanese schools imply this lack of connection between test scores and practical English skills. One column talks about the EIKEN language test as follows: “Many employers see the certificate as a valuable asset in a prospective employee’s portfolio” (CL 8.6.2016) and then continues by criticizing EIKEN for making learners study English that is of no practical use. The overall focus on communication skills in the data set is not only due to it being one of the major parts of the reform; the texts have a focus on practical use of the language, a competence which is difficult to measure in an exam. Language testing is one of the central issues in the reporting of the English education reform and shows

perhaps the most resistance to the current language education system in Japan, even though the texts do not offer significant challenge to the dominant ideologies on why English is studied. At the same time, the discussion is mainly focused on employment and Japan's economy. One text also notes that learning to speak English is not enough to compete globally (in this case economically, as it references prime minister Abe's goals), with skills such as critical thinking being needed even more (OP 27.1.2014).

Aside from career advancement, practical benefits of English are mostly related to travelling (e.g. CL 18.6.2018), meeting and communicating with foreigners (CL 18.6.2018, OP 18.8.2019) and consuming English language media (OP 8.3.2019). Language skills are often presupposed valuable as is, or are linked more generally to communication skills or intercultural skills that can come with language learning, but one opinion text also gives examples of more direct benefits of language learning: the writer states that learning languages improves cognitive skills, can help you consume media more critically by accessing more sources and perspectives, and can also improve your skills in the first language (OP 8.10.2017).

### **4.3. Who Does English Belong to?**

Another theme that is prevalent in the data set relates to the ownership of the English language. This theme deals with questions of who speak English "correctly" or who should be held as the model of English proficiency, what kind of identities are tied to English, and what kinds of groups are represented by English.

#### **4.3.1. The Nativeness Paradigm**

The idea that native speakers are the owners of English and as such the models for correct and fluent English use is prevalent in the data set. Increasing the number of native speaker (assistant) teachers is seen as an important part of improving English education (e.g. CL 6.5.2013, CL 5.1.2014, CL 12.1.2014) and in some cases even a must if the reform is to succeed (NW 23.10.2013). Teachers "beg" native teachers to practice English with the students (CL 10.1.2014) and students "typically look at the native

speaker as their model" (CL 17.8.2014), "place great importance on native-level accuracy" (NW 2.1.2017) and think a native-like pronunciation sounds "cool" (NW 13.3.2018). Especially in terms of pronunciation and speaking English, native teachers are seen as "essential" (CL 6.5.2013) and in one text it is stated as "conventional wisdom" that native teachers should teach conversation skills (CL 3.11.2018).

As native teachers are seen to teach "proper" pronunciation, Japanese-speaking teachers are in a way blamed for teaching bad English. One column (CL 15.12.2013) by an American ex-teacher talks about the "damaging effect" of the Japanese phonetic system and the katakana-syllabary to the students' pronunciation, and notes that the efforts of a native teacher to reverse the pronunciation errors of students seems like a futile effort as the students are immersed in "katakana-English" by their Japanese-speaking English teachers. The column contrasts the usual teachers with one exemplary exception, a Japanese teacher who takes time to "correct" students' heavily accented pronunciation and views katakana English as "our national nemesis". In another column, the owner of a language school is quoted as saying: "I do believe that it is best for the children to learn from native English speakers so that they don't have to try to unlearn the 'katakana English' that they will *inevitably* learn in school" (CL 17.8.2014, emphasis added).

Native teachers are also often seen as experts of teaching English: one Japanese teacher is quoted: "We need more native speakers to teach the students directly and to teach us teachers how to teach the students English" (CL 12.1.2014). Japanese teachers also seek the help of natives in improving their own English skills. A news article headlined "Native English speakers in demand as Japanese teachers hone their language skills for new curricula" (NW 13.3.2018) notes that teachers seek classes from native speakers to increase their confidence in their English skills, as they are afraid that they will teach "the wrong things". A Japanese opinion writer states: "the government should prepare teachers to be fluent and capable of teaching English – or hire native English teachers" (OP 27.1.2014), clearly equating nativeness with fluency and capability of teaching English. One Western opinion writer goes as far as to suggest that to succeed in

improving communication, natives should be actual teachers instead of ALTs, or even school leaders:

“The only way to assure that English education in Japan will ever lead to greater communicative ability among more Japanese is to have qualified foreign-bred educators teach – and perhaps lead – in schools.” (OP 2.8.2019).

The text is a response to an earlier opinion criticizing Japan’s English education policy and especially the reliance on unqualified foreign teachers, and instead of focusing on developing Japanese English teachers’ skills and qualifications it sees qualified foreign (implied native speaker) teachers as the only solution to improve communication. The writer positions themselves as the qualified English teacher, stuck as an ALT despite their education and skill, and contrasts their skill with Japanese teachers, who do not understand communicative methods or know the contents of the national Course of Study:

“There is very little understanding among lower secondary school English teachers of what is transpiring at the elementary level, and these teachers are not capable of continuing the push forward. I regularly attend classes in which Japanese teachers of English hand out worksheets for students to engage in. Many times I serve as a voice for learners to repeat after. The few times I am permitted to administer communicative activities, I have come under criticism because my activities contain language that teachers have not previously covered with learners in their textbooks – despite the fact the same language was introduced in the ministry’s elementary school textbooks.

[...] An elementary education major, I took part in many training opportunities and participated in a number of English education association events in order to make myself more marketable for future employment opportunities. I later earned a master’s degree in education, yet I remain an assistant language teacher with little influence.” (OP 8.2.2019)

The writer’s rhetoric and their attitude has echoes of colonialism in it: the Japanese have tried and failed to improve their education system by themselves, which is proof that foreigners need to step in and fix it. The text does not mention any of the many issues established as central hurdles to English education reform in this study (see e.g.

sections 2.4.4. and 2.5.) or in The Japan Times' reporting, instead only focusing on the dichotomy of Japanese vs. foreign teachers.

At the same time, some of the texts do note that nativeness itself does not make a teacher good, if they for example lack qualifications for teaching (e.g. NW 2.1.2014, CL 17.8.2014). The need for native teachers, however, is not questioned. However, one Western ALT does note their wish for "a larger variety of native-speaker teachers" in classrooms (CL 12.1.2014).

The idea of the nativeness paradigm is present even when the aim of native-like proficiency is questioned. One university professor notes that the aim should be in comprehensible English, "even if we do have our own accent [and] grammatical errors" (NW 31.12.2013). In this quote native-like English is still seen as the standard, but it acknowledges that students do not have to reach a native-like level of English to be understood and to use English. Similarly, a western ex-teacher notes that "language is very forgiving. It doesn't have to be exact; it just has to be close. English is spoken as a second language all over the world in different accents and with various foibles, yet we all manage to understand each other" (CL 10.1.2014). The ideology of native ownership of English is still clear: English does not have to be exact but close to native use; communication between different kinds of English speakers is common, but speakers of English as a second language have "various foibles" compared to native use. Even a text arguing for a English as a lingua franca-approach to English education includes the quote "Japanese people sometimes hesitate to speak English, but in reality we do not need to reach *native level*, with *perfect English*, in order to communicate" (CL 17.8.2014, emphasis added). Some texts also imply that the students will most likely use English mainly with native speakers (e.g. CL 10.1.2014, OP 29.7.2015), even though this is mostly left vague.

However, some explicit resistance to the nativeness paradigm can be seen in the data. One text notes that the improvements in machine translation make English a useful intermediary language between speakers of other languages (OT 22.3.2017), and some texts discussing the university entrance exams suggest that using British and American language proficiency tests ignores the needs of Japanese English learners as



their design is for native-level English (e.g. CL 16.9.2013). A linguistics professor quoted in one column notes the failings of the native model as the goal of English education:

“In terms of research into language and language teaching – and a lot of this comes from Noam Chomsky – the native speaker is the model and the idea is to become like a native speaker for success as a second language learner [...] But the reality is, it is virtually impossible to become like a native speaker in another language. By setting up the native speaker as the only model, you are setting up your students to fail.” (CL 17.8.2014)

Even though the text invokes Chomsky, it does not explain their connection to the native speaker model (and it is fairly safe to presume that most readers are not assumed to know about Universal Grammar as a second language acquisition model). The native model is however positioned as a more traditional and old-fashioned in contrast to the lingua franca model that the text advocates for, or at least not as realistic. In this text the same professor also notes that native speakers may not have the skills of communication and intercultural exchange that the reform wants to foster, and also notes that native teachers are often worse than teachers who know what learning and communicating with another language is like. One opinion writer also challenges the nativeness paradigm fairly directly:

“I have learned through my past experience that English is an indispensable tool of communication when you are in those parts of the world where it is not a local language. Japanese kids will never learn to speak English as long as they are brainwashed into thinking they need English to communicate with sacred “native speakers.” They need to become convinced that English is a global language because it has more non-native speakers than native speakers and that they are among them.” (OP 27.1.2014)

Another opinion piece (OP 8.3.2019), headlined “Brits and Americans no longer own English”, is explicitly in opposition to the nativeness paradigm: it notes that English is a lingua franca in domains such as academics, global politics and the internet, and would remain so even if native speakers disappeared from them. It uses the European Union as an example of an organization that uses a very specific non-native English as

a lingua franca, and how English will remain a strong language even if the amount of native speakers in the EU would plummet in case Brexit happens (at the time of writing the outcome is still unknown). The text even challenges Braj Kachru's three circles as an outdated model, as the power of English-speaking nations in the world stage is decreasing due to China's increasing influence and events like Brexit. The text concludes by talking about the ways the domain of English has moved away from the US and UK, and how non-natives can use English to even oppose the global dominance of the native Anglosphere:

"This communication [between non-native speakers] includes stories, ideas and customs that are not well-known in the U.S. and the U.K. and those that are rejected there, including authoritarian concepts, politically incorrect views and harsh criticism of the Washington-led world order. Not all these conversations are meant for the eyes and ears of Americans and Brits, and not all of them require their input. But they are all taking place in the much-expanded Anglosphere, in which people with a better command of the language don't necessarily get to moderate the discussion or set its tone.

Native speakers still get something of an unfair advantage when it comes to that, of course. But it is no longer inextricably linked to power, hard or soft. In that respect, English is quite unlike the dollar, as dominant in financial transactions as that language is in the global conversation. We all mint our versions, and they're all legal tender these days." (OP 8.3.2019)

#### **4.3.2. Who are the Native Speakers?**

As seen in the text mentioned above, when talking about native speakers of English the writers often mean British and especially American speakers. British speakers are mentioned explicitly more rarely (e.g. NW 2.1.2013, CL 16.9.2013, OP 8.3.2019) while Americans are often more visible both explicitly and implicitly (e.g. CL 16.9.2013, OP 27.1.2014, OP 10.9.2016). The implied nationalities of native teachers often come through examples: many of the texts talk about a need for native teachers in general, but the examples given about the problems that might arise with native teachers are focused on cultural differences between the US and Japan and so on (e.g. OP 10.9.2016). Even though native English speakers are mentioned in this way, mostly as non-

specified nationals, the examples of native speakers from any other countries than US and UK are not mentioned in the entire data set.

What is clear from the texts is that native speakers of English are not Japanese: at least one text explicitly states “We can’t be native speakers of English. As we are Japanese, we have to regard English as a second language after Japanese” (NW 31.12.2013). To be fair, the number of Japanese nationals who are native speakers of English is comparatively low in Japan, but it does ignore children of immigrants, returnees and others who speak English as their first language. When the texts discuss learning English anywhere else than in school, it is mainly outside the country (e.g. CL 17.8.2014) or from native speakers in Japan.

Another interesting example in the data is the Philippines. One text states:

“A quick scroll through popular job listing sites for English teachers in Japan reveals an almost universal demand for native speakers, but Handford relates how his daughter’s current assistant language teacher at her public elementary school in Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture, is Filipino – something he believes “10 years ago would have been unusual, but now is more common with the acceptance of a variety of English models.”” (CL 17.8.2014).

Another text, a column (CL 27.12.2013), marvels at the amount of exposure to English learners get in the Philippines, as it is everywhere. It does quickly note that English is an official language in the Philippines, and this is the case because of the American occupation, but the tone of the text is somewhat surprised that English is prevalent and casual in the Philippine society. Neither of these texts consider the possibility for Philippine English speakers to be native speakers. Other Asian nations that are explicitly mentioned as non-native speakers are the Singaporeans and Indians, even though they are mentioned in the context of English as a lingua franca and its openness to different Englishes.

### 4.3.3. Japan v. the West

As seen in the previous section, the English language is heavily associated with native speakers, and especially the British and Americans. More generally, English is seen as a representation of the West and its culture, as it has been in Japan since the times of first contact (see section 2.4.). This representation of English as the language of the West, and its contrast to Japanese culture and identity is a common theme in the data. The connection between English and the West is mostly implied and assumed to be known, and often comes through in the discussions of native speaker teachers, as we have seen previously. One text that explicitly notes this discusses ALTs in English education, stating that ALTs “are the embodiment of Western culture”, and that their job is to “bring [their] culture and a different way of thinking” (NW 2.1.2014). One writer hopes that Japan can improve their English ability, while “The country should not become too Western” (OP 9.7.2014), implying that English learning brings Western thought and culture with it, perhaps damaging the “original” culture permanently.

The idea that English might “westernize” Japan is in many ways in the heart of the difficult relationship between English and Japan. As in the Meiji era, this is viewed both as a possibility and a threat even now. We saw in section 2.4.2. that English was viewed as a way to modernize, and similar sentiments can be seen today: an editorial discussing the use of English in the education ministry notes that “If decisions and plans are being made in English, it just might produce a more progressive and internationalized mindset” (ED 10.5.2014). Another editorial talks about Japanese companies choosing to adopt English as their official language: “A workforce willing to continue to engage with English is a workforce willing to engage in other challenges with a forward-thinking, flexible attitude” (ED 18.7.2015). These are, in a way, a continuation of the ideas we saw in the above section discussing international and intercultural attitudes: English is seen as a way to look outside and learn from people on the outside, and often this is seen as a way to “catch up” with the modern times. Sometimes it is seen as necessary: an opinion piece notes the need for English as a peaceful diplomatic tool and thinks that for this purpose “the Japanese language and washoku (Japanese cuisine) are totally useless” (OP 27.1.2014).

However, a more negative picture of the effects of English on Japan is commonly painted in the data. English is “perceived to threaten Japan’s national identity in the face of globalization” and thus “sure to remain a contentious topic in the Japanese zeitgeist for the foreseeable future” (CL 12.1.2014). The passive suggests that the threat is perceived by the Japanese and not the Western columnist, as does the connection to the Japanese zeitgeist. Interestingly, this point is not really connected to the rest of the text – it is mainly focused on criticism and suggested improvements to the reform in ways that do not imply threat to Japan’s national identity – but makes more sense in the context of the next column by the same writer. In it, the author talks about the English reforms in other nations, and the similarities and differences between these nations. In all of them, English language education is said to be “fraught with deeper undercurrents of language protectionism and national identity” (CL 19.1.2014).

An LDP lawmaker who opposes the introduction of TOEFL to university exam is quoted: “Mandating (certain TOEFL scores for) all Japanese college (students) sounds to me like a colonial policy [...] we should instead teach Japanese history and culture” (NW 29.03.2013), implying that English education takes something away from those subjects. Sceptics of the reform note that students’ Japanese skills are falling and should be taken care of before increasing English education (NW 31.12.2013), and one text notes that this discussion has been going on at least since the 90s (CL 5.9.2016). This is presented as a broader problem in Asia by a Singaporean researcher, who is quoted as saying that giving prominence to English in the curriculum “can come at the expense of other subjects from basic literacy in the native language to progress in the advanced sciences” (CL 19.1.2014). One opinion writer takes it even further: “making English a very important subject that also makes students forget their own culture, language and the countless works of literature associated with their culture. Schools need to pay more attention to that!” (OP 27.1.2014).

English is also seen as replacing Japanese culture with Western culture: one opinion writer notes that “We are simply brainwashed into believing that we have no other choice than to become “global,” and that means becoming fluent in (what is believed to be American) English [...] We don’t need English to adopt Coca-Cola-McDonald’s

junk culture.” (OP 27.1.2014). Another opinion states that English “rides in as “ugly American” to all local cultures” (OP 27.1.2014). The tone of these writers clearly suggests a derogatory view of American culture, with the first one especially suggesting a culture of consumerism, cheapness and unhealthiness (which also offers an interesting connection to the quote we saw in section 2.3. comparing Japanese to basic foodstuffs and English to sweets and cakes). Other writers allude to the mental distress caused to the elderly by the number of English loanwords in news media (CL 15.12.2013) and the inter-generational “English allergy” that Japanese have (CL 18.6.2018). English loanwords are contrasted with “proper Japanese”, and there are stereotypes of English speakers as “un-Japanese”, “snobbish” and “showy” (CL 18.6.2018).

There is very little explicit resistance to the ideas presented above that is not already presented previously in this chapter. Ideas such as the need for international or intercultural exchange, the need to respond to globalization etc. are often in opposition to the claims that English is detrimental to Japan, but when texts discuss the detrimental effect of English to Japanese culture, there is no explicit challenging of the idea in any of the texts, suggesting that some form of threat to Japanese culture and identity is accepted by the writers, and assumed to be accepted by the audience. One text, while promoting English education in Japan from a very positive perspective, might hold the answer as to why: “Learning language is also about acquiring an identity in that language” (CL 20.4.2014), and that in itself is a threat to a nationalist idea of a unified Japanese identity. Another reason may be the expected audience of the newspaper: as many of the readers are English speaking foreigners, often from English speaking countries; they already have an identity that is not threatened by English. One opinion writer suggests a way in which the perceived harmful effect of Western culture would be dampened: that English should be taught in the local context, making Japanese culture “the key parts of English learning” (OP 27.1.2014).

The topic of colonialism and linguistic imperialism are also at the heart of this theme. In the data set Japanese and other Asian voices are the ones that note the echoes of colonialism that inherently exist in the pursuit of English education in Asia.

Meanwhile, Western writers mostly do not highlight this relationship. One Western columnist talks about the prevalence of English in the Philippines as a great model of how Japan could improve English learning (CL 27.12.2013). The writer notes that English is everywhere in the Philippines: in road signs, advertisement, company logos, radio and TV news etc. The fact that English is the official language of the Philippines and that it is so because of American colonialism is touched upon very briefly: “English was brought to the Philippines during the 1896-1946 American occupation and it still enjoys an official status”. In fact, the text does not use the term colonialism or discuss it further, nor does it include any Philippine perspectives on English.

In the end the writer notes: “English is an official language in 60 countries. While making it an official language in Japan might be going a bit far, it couldn’t hurt to make English the de facto language of education.” The list of 60 countries is not specified in the text, but out of the countries that use English as a de jure or de facto official languages, almost all of them use English due to colonization. The notion of the language of education is interesting, since the Philippines had English as the language of instruction in schools, instituted by the Americans, and only moving away from it after independence (this is not discussed in the column). This use of a colonized country as a model for Japan, especially considering Japan’s history of English as a national language having been a very serious consideration (whether or not the writer is aware of Mori Arinori’s proposal is unclear, see section 2.4.2.), seems like the exact Western idealism about English that might encourage the view of English as a threat to Japanese culture and identity commonly seen in the data.

#### **4.3.4. Cultural Hindrances to Learning English**

Even when English is not threatening Japan, Japanese culture and identity are sometimes deemed to be the reason for Japan’s perceived low English proficiency. Cultural reasons such as the fear of losing face (e.g., CL 10.1.2014, NW 2.1.2017, CL 18.6.2018), the hierarchical nature of the culture (CL 10.1.2014), and “a cultural trait of shyness” (CL 12.1.2014) can cause “neurotic dread” of making mistakes (NW 2.1.2017), which leads to Japanese students not using and practicing their English skills. A

Western linguist notes that both Japanese culture and language might have an effect: “Japanese as a language can be quite insular. Japan’s culture and society emphasize sameness. There’s positives, of course, as that attitude builds a cohesive structure for society here, but at the same time, it can make it difficult to communicate outside the cultural norm.” (CL 17.8.2014). Some writers note the mismatch between Western pedagogical approaches and Japanese culture that may hinder English education (CL 19.1.2014, OP 10.9.2016). One linguistics professor is quoted stating that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) pedagogy popular in Asian English education reforms was created in a very different American context and has been imported without considering the particular cultural contexts and needs of Asia. They note: “Endeavors to transplant Western language teaching methodologies without giving due attention to the local pedagogical ecology have not met with expected success” (CL 19.1.2014). In this quote the focus is more on the role of the language in society (with the original context of CLT relying on there being ample exposure to English outside the classroom), but another text sees it as more of an issue between Japanese and Western thought: A Western opinion writer talks about the lack of knowledge about Japanese culture and pedagogy as an issue that hinder native speaker teachers’ effectiveness in Japanese classrooms:

“For example, native English speakers from the United States are unfamiliar with the concept of *minamoru*, which is a unique Japanese pedagogical approach to observing and caring with minimal intervention. They are equally unaware of the concept of *omoiyari*, which stresses empathy and consideration for others. These and other vital cultural factors illustrate how Asians and Westerners think differently. Yet incorporating these concepts in instruction can make the difference between success and failure.” (OP 10.9.2016, emphasis in the original)

In this text, the writer explicitly notes that native speakers are needed for a successful reform, but that they need to be more immersed in Japanese culture and the pedagogical practices within to effectively teach English. It also contrasts the Western teachers with Japanese teachers in the US by noting that Japanese teachers often quickly adapt to the activeness and outspokenness of American students. The cultural



values assigned to the Japanese – empathy, passivity, consideration for others – then suggest Western culture to be active, individualistic and perhaps selfish.

On the other hand, the texts also note that even if cultural factors affect language learning, they do not explain it fully (NW 2.1.2017, OP 29.10.2017). These stereotypes are even seen as harmful, as one linguistics professor is quoted saying: “Japan has historically emphasized or exaggerated its cultural differences, the cultural uniqueness of Japan. It causes problems for Japanese speakers of another language, as they immediately feel the differences, and this can hamper communication” (CL 17.8.2014). One writer notes that there is a self-propagating belief that native Japanese speakers find the language too difficult (CL 12.1.2014). These texts often note that the hurdles in English education are mostly practical and familiar; for example, over-reliance on Japanese in the classroom, the exam-focused system and the lack of exposure and opportunities for practice.

#### **4.4. Summary of the Thematic Analysis**

Overall, the ideological themes in the data set are a continuation of language ideologies in Japan that can be seen ever since the Meiji period. English is seen as a way to engage in the global community, by accessing global markets and learning from other cultures. As in the Meiji period, the global outlook is also intertwined with Japanese nationalist interests of increased influence in global politics and national economic growth. English is mostly positioned as something outside of Japan, as a representative of the West in general, and the US in particular. English is simultaneously a tool to access Western “progress”, and a threat to Japanese culture and values. These ideological dichotomies of English are familiar and long lived in Japan, and they act as an example of how larger ideologies are not often internally consistent but instead consist of mutually conflicting or even incompatible ideas.

Some ideological struggle can be seen in the data: the direct challenges to the nativeness paradigm are clear in the data even though it remains unquestioned in most of the texts. Overall, the ideology of nativeness remains dominant, but the possibility

for at least moving away from a model of nativeness to a more lingua franca approach in language learning seems to not be very controversial. However, the number of native speaker teachers talking about the need for native speakers in English education in the data set shows clearly that there is interest in keeping the status quo, which does not come as a surprise considering the audience of the reporting is largely consisted of native English speakers, many of whom teach English in Japan and thus rely on the demand for native teachers. The balance between globalization and nationalism is also a somewhat contested topic, but without explicit challenging of nationalist ideology per se, with the discussion being more concerned about combatting extreme nationalism and isolationism, and benefiting from international and intercultural exchange without challenging Japanese culture and values.

Language ideologies are reproduced and disseminated in the data in a large variety of ways (see section 3.3.3. for an overview of the analysis of textual and discursive practices). The examples in the analysis show a wide range of textual practices from individual word choices to overall narratives of texts. At the smaller level of structuring proposals, word choices (including modality) and presupposition are seen commonly in the examples. The assignment of roles and agency to different actors is especially interesting in the discussions of who should teach English, who is responsible for bad English education etc. The level of combining and structuring proposals offered most interesting analysis especially in terms of narrative structuring, even though rhetoric played a role especially in opinion texts (which is unsurprising, as these texts have the implied purpose of attempting to influence opinions of others). On the level of discursive practices, the assumed audience of the text and intertextuality were the most common points of analysis. Especially quoting different actors and sources makes up a large part of the examples given in the analysis. For example, quotes from Japanese teachers were used by Western writers to confirm that native speakers are needed in the classrooms to teach spoken English, and references to studies and reports were used to confirm presuppositions about the lack of English proficiency in Japan and as starting points for criticism towards the education system. A more detailed breakdown of the voices quoted in the texts can be found in section 4.1.

The results of analysis, their connection to the larger historical context, and how this study relates to previous research on the topic will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. The final section of this chapter will look at the analysis through a chronologic focus to find out whether the reporting changed throughout the timeframe of the data set, and the possible ideological implications of that change.

#### 4.5. Changes in Reporting Throughout the Timeline

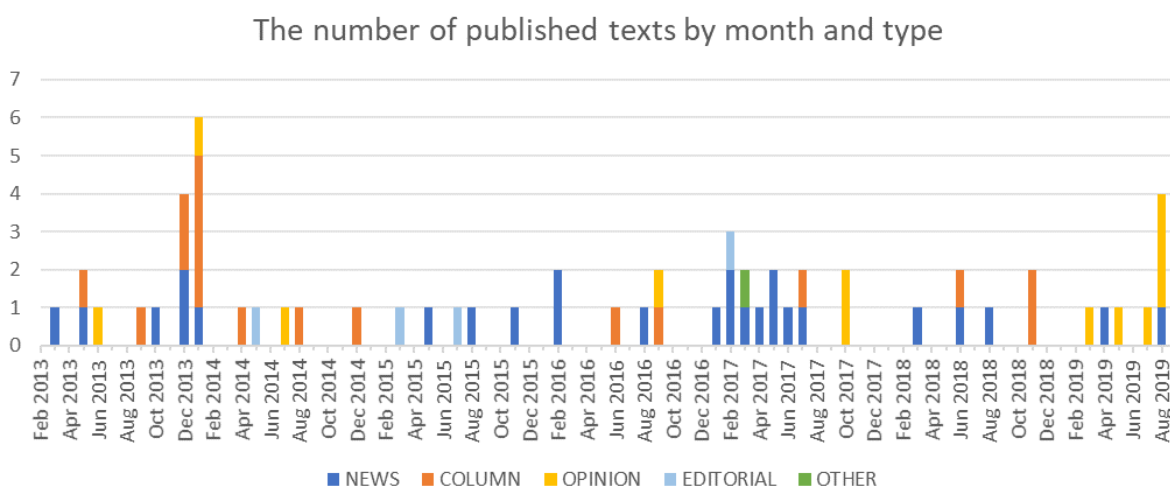


Fig. 2. The number of published texts by month and by type

Overall, there do not seem to be major changes in the reporting throughout the data set. In terms of frequency, the publishing time of the texts skew somewhat to two periods of time: around the release of the reform plan (late 2013 to early 2014) and around the first half of 2017 when major announcements and study results were being released. In general, the middle of the data set (mid 2014 to late 2016) and the end of it (late 2017 to early 2019) are less densely populated. Especially the middle part shows a lack of commentary texts (columns and opinions), which suggests that there might be diminishing interest in the topic between major announcements and events. The increased commentary in the latter part of the data set also suggests that as the reform's implementation is getting closer, interest towards it also increases. In terms of text genres, columns are more prevalent in the earlier stages of the data set, while opinion

pieces are more prevalent in the end of the data set. The editorials regarding the reform are all published before the editor changed with the ownership of the paper. The distribution of the data set along the timeline and by genre can be seen above in figure 2.

In terms of the language ideological content of the texts, the change is harder to analyze without the use of content analysis or other statistical methods, but some changes can be seen by looking at the amounts of codes relating to the themes of the analysis and where they fall in the timeline. This analysis suggests a slight change in the focus from competition in the global marketplace and nationalistic ideologies to ideologies about internationalism, intercultural exchange and practical benefits to the individual. Discussions relating to the nativeness paradigm are clustered more in the beginning and end of the data set, but this is likely related to the frequency in publishing, as almost all examples of the discussion are from columns and opinion texts which fall in the beginning and end of the timeline. The topic of English as a threat to Japanese culture, and its incompatibility with it, is most present in the news articles in the planning stage of the reform and in the columns and opinion text published in 2014, and less present later in the data set, This, again, is likely to result from a large number of examples found in columns and opinion texts, particularly the one collection of shorter opinion texts (OP 27.1.2014).

Other than the lack of editorials, the alleged changes in editorial practices do not seem to have a major effect on the reporting about the reform. Before the change, the English education reforms are sometimes talked about in tandem to more nationalist reforms to history education and juxtaposed to them, but this does not occur once after the change in ownership. It is possible that this is a result of a change in editorial policy, as topics such as the island disputes were in the heart of the controversy surrounding the change in ownership, but there is no further indication that these two things are related.

To summarize, more substantial statistical analysis of codes would be required to confirm changes of the language ideological content of the texts, but the analysis regarding the chronological dispersion of codes suggests that changes in reporting

relate mostly to the publishing frequency and the types of text rather than ideological change in the content. To establish the possible effect of the editorial change, a deeper analysis of its effects on the paper as a whole would be required.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the study in light of the aims and previous research. The chapter begins with discussion about the contents of the reporting and the voices and viewpoints that are presented in them and follows with thoughts on the value of analyzing the reproduction and dissemination of language ideologies when discussing education policy. Finally, the chapter reflects on the current study's conduction and its significance, and by looking forward to areas of further study and the future of English education in Japan.

### 5.1. Contents of the Reporting and the Viewpoints Presented

The topics of the reporting are, as expected, mostly tied to the major aspects of the reform plan itself, such as globalization, low proficiency, communicativeness, the exam system etc. As seen in section 2.4.3., the discussion is mostly still viewed through the "problem frame", where the Japanese English education system is somehow broken and needs fixing (Seargeant 2009: 47), and the topics of discussion remain largely the same as they have throughout the previous English education reforms. The texts still talk about the need for more communicative teaching methods and contrast these with the more traditional focus on grammar and translation, and still see the exam system as one of the main culprits why this has not changed. However, with the inclusion of listening and speaking in the private tests that are to be used in the university entrance exams, there is overt discussion about the value of testing, whether the tests can measure communicative ability at all, and whether the improvement in the tests themselves can change classroom practices.

ALTs are still a major topic of discussion, and as before, the need for ALTs is not questioned in the text, which is not surprising as the audience of *The Japan Times* has

a clear interest in the jobs that ALT positions offer for English speakers in Japan. Even though the concern over teaching qualifications of ALTs is not a new one (see e.g. Galloway 2009: 173), the way it is combined with the open challenges to the nativeness paradigm in the texts speaks of a larger recognition of the issues involving ALTs. Concern over their role in the classroom, the hiring practices of private ALT contractors and the wellbeing of ALTs are also expected in the texts as the audience has an interest in the profession. This discussion has also been seen in the academic research on ALTs (e.g. Galloway 2009, Glasgow and Paller 2016, Breckenridge and Erling 2011). The data set of this study shows that these concerns have arisen also in the larger English-speaking community in Japan.

The high amount of Western voices in both the authors of the texts and the people quoted in them is again not very surprising due to the largely Western audience of the paper and as the topic is English education. The divide in authors between news texts and commentaries such as column and opinion texts is interesting; it seems that in the topic of English education, Japanese authors act more as intermediaries between Japanese sources, such as the government, and the English-speaking audience, transmitting information about the reform and offering context in the news articles. Meanwhile, Western authors are the ones leading the discussion about these topics in columns and opinion texts. One of the side effects of this is the centering of Western ALTs in much of the discussion about classroom practices. As Japanese teachers in the news are often seen reported as underqualified and trying to improve their English skills, Western ALTs (both as authors of the texts and through quoting) get to contrast themselves against the Japanese teachers as experts in communicative teaching, reinforcing the need for native speaker teachers.

The voice of academic researchers was also prominent in the texts. Despite the large number of Western academics quoted in the text, most of them were working in Japanese institutions. Japanese academics were also slightly more prominently featured in the texts. The inclusion of researchers was expected in the topic of language learning, but their challenges to the native model of English learning and promotion of the lingua franca approach were somewhat surprising, as these pedagogical

concepts do not always make it into public discussions of education, especially considering the heavy reliance on native teachers in Japan.

Even though Japanese teachers were quoted and referenced in the texts, their agency was limited. They were mostly seen reacting to the reform, supporting or criticizing parts of it, or talking about their own lack of skills. Often their role in the text was highlighting the need for native speaker teachers in helping improve their English skills or to be models of English pronunciation to the students. Japanese teachers were rarely seen as agents of change themselves, even though the success of the reform is in many ways directly related to whether teachers themselves change the way they are teaching students. Teacher training as a topic was also discussed very little, even though Glasgow and Paller (2016: 173-174) note that it plays a large part in policy implementation: even though reforms change education policy and call for new pedagogical practices, teacher training in Japan often lacks focus on how to practically implement these policies and practices in the classroom, and sometimes even lack training in the methodology altogether. The lack of agency for teachers and the absence of discussion about the part of teacher training in the reform again speaks about the assumed audience of the newspaper: as the interest of the audience is more on the ALT side, Japanese teachers are sidelined in the discussion.

The most noticeable lack of representation was the voice of students. Discussions on why people want to learn English, or do not feel they need to, remain largely in the abstract. Students' feeling towards English are only seen in terms of English as a school subject, never in practical application of it. Students are also always seen as a group of people, either in statistics regarding their language proficiency skills or as a full classroom, and not a single student is quoted in the data set as an individual. The lack of representation for students is quite shocking as they are arguably most impacted by the reform if it manages to change classroom practices. Students also have a clear interest in changing classroom practices as they currently see English classes as un motivating and the English they learn in school "useless" (Osumi 2017). Students have also protested the move to privatize the English test in the university entrance exam ("Application period starts" 2019). The lack of students' voice in the discussion

about the education reform positions them as passive recipients of education, ignoring their wishes over how English could be taught and what use they have or wish they have for their English skills.

## **5.2. Language Ideology and Language Education Policy**

The ideological themes of the texts largely reflect the dominant ideologies about English that have been common in Japan ever since the Meiji era and can be seen throughout the English education reforms, as discussed in sections 2.3., 2.4. and 2.5. Despite the ideological struggle that can be seen especially in finding a balance between nationalism and globalization, and more overtly in the challenging of the nativeness paradigm, there is little to suggest that the dominant ideologies are threatened. For example, even though exposure to other cultures and diversity are seen as desirable and important, the texts mainly assume this diversity to be outside Japan, suggesting a homogenous Japanese nation (or seeing the diversity in Japan as something there is nothing to learn from). Calls for a more lingua franca-based approach suggest that native speakers are not the owners of English, but do not suggest abandoning American English as the taught standard. Likewise, native-like proficiency is not challenged as a goal because there is another model to aspire to, but because it is seen as unrealistically high. This leads to one of the central arguments of Heinrich (2012): dominant language ideologies are rarely discarded and replaced, but are instead mutated to better answer the challenges to them. These ideologies do not have to be internally consistent or reflect material reality, and they often consist of contradicting ideas. Instead, they try to make sense of the world around us and describe it, and in the case of dominant ideologies, justify the status quo.

Heinrich (2012: 18) also notes that studying the reproduction and dissemination of language ideologies “forces us to differentiate between those for whom language ideology is beneficial and those for whom it is not, but who nevertheless, and to their own detriment, subscribe to dominant ideology.” Some of the beneficiaries are clearly seen in the texts: native speakers, private language testing and teaching companies, and Japanese people with good English proficiency seen as the global human



resources. Furthermore, these groups also make up a large number of the authors of the texts and the voices included, the leaders in discussion, as advertisers in the papers etc. The people who do not get to benefit from these ideologies also do not have their voices heard, most notably language learners who do not achieve desired proficiency. And this only in the scope of this study, not considering the English-speaking immigrants from the Philippines or Africa, or other people who face systemic discrimination and lack access to employment where proficiency in their languages otherwise is seen as desirable.

As seen above, ideologies do not only act as descriptions of the world, but they also have material effects. Language ideologies drive education policy, and despite the rhetoric of change related to English education reforms, very little has changed in terms of classroom practices or ideology during these reforms; Glasgow and Paller (2016) call this the “ideological gap” between policy and practice. This is one of the central reasons why analysis of language ideologies is crucial to language education policy, as is analysis of dominant ideologies in general. As ideologies are hidden either deliberately or accepted as common sense, analysis of them allows us to question our education practices, the justifications behind them etc., and more openly discuss the other possible options; to make visible what is invisible. Overt discussion about ideologies is rare in public discourse of education (and in general), and this is reflected in the data of the study. The derogatory meaning of ideology lives strong: to be ideological is to have an agenda and suggesting that education policy is driven by ideology is to attack it. Those empowered by dominant ideologies can use it to justify education policy as rational and common sense without having to question the presuppositions that are central to that ideology. As seen in this study, questioning only a few aspects of ideologies of English – what is English for, who does it belong to, and who benefits from these ideologies – has opened possibilities for questioning some of the most dominant ideologies of our current era, such as nationalism and capitalism. This is why discussion of ideologies in education policy is doomed to face resistance. However, at the same time it shows why these discussions are necessary: questioning dominant ideologies, recognizing those marginalized by them, and imagining other

possible futures allow us to challenge dominant ideologies in a more meaningful way, and strive for better, more egalitarian education policies and societies.

### **5.3. Reflection on the Study and Opportunities for Further Research**

As seen in the results of the analysis, research question 1 (What kind of language ideologies are promoted and disseminated and how is this done?) offered a good foundation for the analysis and produced results that are in line with the previous studies on the language ideologies of English in Japan. The results for research question 2 (Are there changes in the reporting throughout the timespan of the study?), however, were more inconclusive, and considering the qualitative method of analysis may have been a bit too ambitious for the scope of this study. The long timeline of the data set and the change in ownership of The Japan Times were seen as opportunities to analyze the changes in the reporting and its ideological content, but tracking ideological change is a long and subtle process. The method used – analyzing the chronological distribution of codes and comparing it to the results of previous analysis – would have required a more robust statistical analysis to produce more conclusive results, which the chosen methodology did not allow. A more in-depth comparison of the changing editorial practices would have benefited from a larger analysis of the paper's reporting, which was not possible in the scope of this study. The analysis of the distribution of published texts and their types was however beneficial to establishing a fuller picture of the timeline of the reporting.

Another shortcoming of the study was the time constraint that limited the analysis only to texts that were published before August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. A more conclusive analysis of the reporting about the English education reform would have benefitted from including the full timeline of the planning and early implementation stage until March 2020 and even beyond. There were also other issues with data collection. The lack of access to the full archive of The Japan Times meant that the gathering of data had to rely on their website and search engines, which has likely led to the data set missing some of the texts discussing the reform. However, as the data set came to contain 62

texts fairly evenly distributed along the timeline, it can be assumed to be representative of the reporting.

The aim of the study was to look at the reproduction and dissemination of language ideologies in newspapers in the context of Japan's English education reform. As the data set is limited to one newspaper, it does not offer a full description of language ideological discussion of English in Japan; especially as the paper's audience is largely foreign and English speaking. However, as seen in previous studies of language ideology in newspapers (e.g. Leppänen and Pahta 2012, Vessey 2016), the reproduction and dissemination of dominant language ideologies works in similar ways in newspapers around the world and in different contexts, and some generalizations can be made from the results of the current study. Furthermore, the study focused on a newspaper targeted to a specific audience with a particular interest in the topic of English education. As the audience of the paper largely consists of native English speakers, of which many teach English in Japan, it is not surprising that their interests are largely aligned in upholding some of the dominant ideologies such as the nativeness paradigm.

At the same time, it would have been interesting to contrast this analysis with the discussion of the reform happening in Japanese newspapers and from a more Japanese point of view. My lack of Japanese skills has however necessitated the use for English sources both in the background research and as the data, even though the study also attempts to highlight some of the Japanese research done in the field (e.g. Tsuneyoshi (2018) offers larger discussion on the current Japanese education system and its relationship with globalization that has been instrumental in this study). This unfortunate reliance on English sources is, in many ways, endemic of a lot of research on English language education, and can perpetuate dominant ideologies about who can act as an expert on English education etc. The study however attempts to showcase the other possible realities of English education in Japan through analyzing ideological struggle and by giving a platform to views that are not present in the data.

As noted in section 2.1.4., research on the individual topics of this study have been conducted before and are expected to be conducted in the future. The results of this

study suggest that more extensive analysis of newspapers' role as language ideology brokers in the Japanese context would be an interesting expansion and could focus more on the voices who are more directly affected by the English education reform, such as students and Japanese teachers. As the full implementation of the reform begins in the spring of 2020, further research about it is guaranteed to be published, and hopefully the ideological implication of the reform is a part of that research.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The language ideologies of English seen in the reporting of The Japan Times largely reflect the dominant ideologies that have been part of discussions about English in Japan ever since the Meiji era, even though some challenges to them are apparent in the data. A large variety of textual and discursive practices were used in the texts to reproduce and disseminate ideologies. The results of the analysis regarding ideological change in the data was largely inconclusive.

The results of the study show that Critical Discourse Analysis of newspaper reporting offers effective tools in analyzing the reproduction and dissemination of language ideologies in discussion about language education reform. Moreover, the study suggests that more overt discussion about language ideologies is needed when talking about language education policies, both in Japan and elsewhere.

It remains uncertain whether or not the newest reform in Japan's English education will improve Japanese students' proficiency, and only time can tell. It is certain that the implementation process and the effects of the reform will be a topic of future studies, and hopefully the study of language ideologies is featured in that research. To expand on the topic of this study, a further analysis of the role of newspapers in promoting and spreading language ideology should be conducted in a larger scale featuring Japanese newspapers.

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