

The recent shift toward “globalization” in language policy in Japan: A critical analysis of recent language policy

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ABSTRACT

The impact of neoliberal globalization on the English language has been hotly debated in various countries (Heller, 2003; Jeon, 2012). In Japan, since the economic growth of the 1980s, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has proposed various policies to fit the demands of globalization. In 2013, the MEXT published a new policy named “English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization” and related policies. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this research critically investigates recent English educational policy in view of present-day ideologies of English language in Japan. This paper examines how Japan's notion of globalization shapes and is shaped by its foreign language policy related to neoliberal globalization as currently conceptualized by MEXT during the current Administrations. The findings show that recent Japanese policies aim to promote: 1) people who can actively work in global society with support from business industries; 2) an “elite” who have commodified English skills in globalization; 3) an imagined tool of English for communication, and 4) use of external proficiency tests in order to measure successful use of this “imagined tool” for communication.

I. Introduction

The Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development is a funding project that aims to overcome the Japanese younger generation’s “inward tendency” and to foster human resources who can positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field, as the basis for improving Japan’s global competitiveness and enhancing the ties between nations. Efforts to promote the internalization of university education in Japan will be given strong, priority support (MEXT, 2012a).

In 2012, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) proposed a new plan to foster “globalization” at 42 national and private universities in Japan with the purpose of developing “global citizens” through the adoption of unique curricula. This project has two specific agendas. The goal of Plan A is to foster the internationalization of the entire university-level curriculum. Plan B focuses on change at the faculty level within

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universities, as well as on contributing to the internationalization of universities as a whole (MEXT, 2012b). According to a booklet published by Benesse Cooperation, a major producer of educational materials in Japan, the project will enhance students' independence, spirit of inquiry, communicative skills, and foreign language ability-qualities that are required to be a global citizen (Benesse, 2013, p. 8). These governmental policies and one of the products from a major company demonstrate that foreign language ability is one of the "required" skills for people who are part of a global market. The new curriculum guidelines were fully implemented in elementary schools in the 2020 school year and in junior high schools in the 2021 school year. In high schools, they were implemented on an annual basis starting with students who enter in the 2022 school year. Now that language policies completed that transition period, it is a good time to once again ask how current English language policy came to be in 2023.

By employing Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), this paper seeks to critically examine how Japanese government's notion of neoliberal globalization shapes and is shaped by its foreign language policy as currently conceptualized by MEXT during recent Administrations (2011-2015). The ideological view of *gurobarizeeshon* as defined by MEXT, and the scrutiny of globalization as experienced in the world, are contradictory elements in conceptions of neoliberal globalization. This research will investigate and reveal an ideology of "English for globalization" built into language policy which is accepted uncritically on the national level in Japan, as if being built on a *de facto* stable notion of English as a "tool."

Although the definition of the term "globalization" is hard to lay out concretely due to its complexity, the term has long been used in various ways to describe its process, status, and world-wide situation. Bhatt (2010) argues that these multidimensional and social processes in many fields—including economic, political, cultural, and ecological perspectives on globalization—are the "interaction of localism and globalism" (p.103). In this sense, "locals" are reshaped and renegotiated by increased globalization, and globalization is also reflected and reshaped by locals. In analyzing such globalization, the concept of neoliberalism has widely been integrated across the field of applied linguistics (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012). Neoliberalism—an approach of free market economic theory—often denotes an ideological rationalization which is itself shaped by ideologies of freedom of choice, and is engaged in human-capital development. "Human capital" was originally used in economics and gradually expanded its meaning to the study of social fields. This term is a metaphor of the knowledge that people obtain through their lives.

In the era of neoliberal globalization, English proficiency has become a prominent way for people to participate in the global economy, with this proficiency being treated as a resource or a commodity. This ideological view of language as a commodity gives rise to a new ideology of stratification and exclusion built into language policy (Jeon, 2012). In Japan, it seems that the current trend of globalization both from top-down language policy by the government and upwards from society itself are two different processes; the government

continues to use “*guroobaru*” [global] and “*guroobarizeeshon*” [globalization] in policy documents as if this “*guroobarizeeshon*” is a tangible object, and that Japanese people aim to achieve status as “global citizens.” Also, many Japanese companies and much of society consider “globalization” and “global human resource” as equivalent to English and those who have English skills, respectively. According to the MEXT, the definition of Global Human Resource is “...who can positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field, as the basis for improving Japan’s global competitiveness and enhancing the ties between nations.” (MEXT, 2012b, p.1). Improving Japan’s global competitiveness in this sense, refers to business contexts and the government tries to nurture such people who are actively involved in such markets. The government seeks to nurture Global Human Resources useful to neoliberal globalization as laid out in many official documents in which MEXT has set goals. Looking back at the historical relations of language and economic growth, a discourse of *kokusaika* [internationalization] became prominent in the 1980s (Kubota, 2002).

In response to a growing national concern with *Kokusaika*, the Course of Study—the national curriculum by the MEXT— not only encouraged international understanding among students through emphasizing the importance of communicative competence in English, but also fostered an added value to the mother tongue of the nation. Japanese language education is an icon of Japanese nationalism which would “enable Japan to become a respected member of the West” (Kubota, 1998, p. 301). By valuing Japanese, the discourse of *Kokusaika* not only encompassed an increased awareness of Japan’s position as an international power, it also reinforced the value of Japanese identity as a form of resistance to the wave of Westernization. The discourse of *Kokusaika* [internationalization] thus has resulted in an ambivalent situation for local students, as a predefined idealistic view of internationalization and revitalized nationalism are pursued at the same time. The policy has been revised many times to fit the demands of social change (Seargeant, 2009). However, it seems that this does not place any restrictions on how schools adapt national policies according to local teachers’ actual expertise during implementation. This situation has continued as the replacement of the word “*guroobarizeeshon*” [globalization] with “*Kokusaika*” [internationalization] since 2011.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Language Ideology, Language Policy in Neoliberal Globalization

Language ideology refers to latent beliefs and assumptions about language use which are adopted and thus contribute to the use of power within standard language (Tollefson, 1991). The relationship between language ideologies and specific policies is interconnected, since policies often come with given and/or hidden agendas for a specific community to pursue (Ricento, 2000). Through this relationship, many studies on language policy reveal how specific policies are unconsciously assimilated and contribute to hegemony, in this case, the hegemony of English. This section reviews findings from existing language policy studies relevant to the current research.

Generally, top-down procedures written into policies are enacted by an administrative

authority (Sergeant, 2009). Critical Language Policy (CLP) research has helped to examine such top-down language policies by revealing inequalities of gender, ethnicity, race, and language contained within them. One way of looking at language policy critically is through the impact of historical and social factors on policies. For example, Lawton (2008) examined language policy and ideology in the United States by analyzing political speeches, online discussions, public opinion surveys, and other political dimensions. This research reveals the ideological view of language policy as reflecting a monolingual English-Only ideology inherent in society, and the policy both authorizes and gives immigrants English to enable them to succeed in society.

In an educational setting, classrooms and the outside world are in a reciprocal relationship: classrooms are influenced by what happens in the outside world, and vice versa. Classroom practice—language choice, materials, or pedagogy—is a vehicle for cultural and ideological messages (Pennycook, 2002). The importance of this reciprocal relationship has been developed by a number of researchers. Pennycook (2002), for example, has examined micro-level educational practices and discourses in relation to one particular community on the ground in Hong Kong. Dissecting the city’s language policy at the macro level, Pennycook found that Anglicist discourse emphasized the mission of Britain as a colonizer through English language and education, whereas at the local level, Orientalist discourse has actually shaped language education policy through promoting the vernacular language. This research on governmentality helps to critically reveal the competing concepts of language policy and education in a colonized country in Asia.

Jeon (2012) examines a specific language policy initiative in Korea, TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea), which promotes equal educational opportunities for rural Korean students by sending native speakers of English or overseas Koreans to rural Korean schools. At the macro-level of language policy, TaLK’s goal is to promote English as linguistic capital for rural Koreans to give them the opportunity for English education regardless of their residence, and to provide overseas Koreans the opportunity to understand their cultural roots and self-identity. However, at the local level, the English teachers of TaLK, especially overseas Koreans, are sometimes perceived as not “real” because of their limited ability to provide authentic English teaching, and the presence of monolingual English speakers contributes to **distinctiveness** of English in rural Korea. The national policy of TaLK therefore sustains the hegemony of English and the idea of “imagined” good speakers of English. Jeon’s research helps to clarify the discrepancy between macro-level intention and micro-level actual practices in globalization.

These pieces illustrate that English education operates at the macro-level as a place where public officials and authorities attempt to reform policies corresponding to social changes and local practices, and at the micro-level as a site of an ideological struggle which is reflected in social changes and the citizens’ anxieties. The next section focuses on these dynamics within Japan, providing a timeline of important changes in perspectives and policies about language use.

2.2 Language policy in Japan

Japanese people have long held the Japanese language as the *de facto* and only spoken language of the country; it has also been perceived as a homogeneous language and culture. However, Japan is no exception to the global flow which has seen the influence of English spread all over the world. As the Japanese nation-state expanded its economic power base in the 1970s to 1980s, *Kokusaika* became a foregrounded concept in Japan. During this time, MEXT published the Course of Study to develop students’ ability to understand a foreign language, e.g., English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communicating in it (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). As a result, a curriculum implementing “English communication” goals was introduced into Japanese schools. As such, MEXT is fiscally and ideologically oriented towards the “standardization” of English education for communication through this curriculum. In 2003, the Course of Study was revised in order to fit the demands of society, and subsequent revisions of the Course of Study have reinforced the ideology of English for communication (Kubota, 2002). For example, the Center Examination (the standardized entrance examination for universities) introduced an English listening section in 2006, and designated Super English Language High Schools around the country. The discourse of *Kokusaika* has resulted in an ambivalent situation for local students in terms of language policy where inherent idealized internationalization is pursued.

Hashimoto (2009) further examines a specific language policy entitled “Developing a Strategic Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’” published by MEXT in 2003. She indicates that the original slogan of the policy is “Japanese who can use English,” which merely meant nurturing people who can use English as a tool for solving problems in internationalization. At the same time the policy made sure the government put efforts into maintaining cultural independence by fostering Japanese culture and traditions at the same time. She also points out the contradiction between the promotion of English learning in order to boost the Japanese economy and the maintenance of Japaneseness. Such is the ideology of learning English in Japan. In the next section, I delineate major chronological changes in English language policies and current language policy in Japan focusing on English communication for globalization.

Because of the decreasing number of both Japanese students studying abroad and college graduates who wish to work overseas, the Japanese government has organized various committees to foster globalization since 2004. Earlier, in July 2002, MEXT published a report entitled “Developing a Strategic Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’” to foster internationalization and nurture people who are able to speak English (Hashimoto, 2009). In order to set further achievement goals for the students to improve their foreign language skills and to consider teaching methodology and materials, the Commission on the Development of Foreign Language Proficiency (CDFP) was formed in 2010. At the end of the meeting, after having had eight meetings from 2010 to 2011, the commission published “Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication” on June 30, 2011. This was followed by the “Proposals toward Cultivation of Global Human

Resources” by the Japan Business Federation (JBF) on June 14, 2011. These proposals by JBF were significantly influenced by the Five Proposals by the MEXT. The five proposals emphasize:

- 1) Quantifying the English ability required of students through assessment and verification of attainment level.
- 2) Promoting students’ awareness of the necessity of English in global society, and stimulating motivation for English learning.
- 3) Providing students with more opportunities to use English through effective utilization of ALTs, ICT and other means.
- 4) Reinforcement of English skills and instruction abilities of English teachers/Strategic improvement of English education at the level of schools and communities.
- 5) Modification of university entrance exams toward global society. (CDFP, 2011, p.1).

These five proposals state the intention of the government to promote English ability in global society. Before publishing this policy, the loanword “global,” (*グローバル* *guroobaru*) was less commonly used (Hashimoto, 2013), but *guroobaru* and *guroobarizeeshon* have begun to appear in recent published policies. For example, in May 2011, the Council on Promotion of Human Resources for Globalization Development organized by Cabinet officials under the Council on the Realization of the New Growth Strategy was established in order to cultivate people who are able to actively take part in globalization. This council was slightly different from the CDFP because this council was organized by the Cabinet of the Japanese government. This meeting was organized by various ministries, such as the Cabinet, MEXT, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Seven Council board meetings and four Council meetings were held from May 26, 2011, to June 4, 2012. The Council published an interim report on June 22, 2011, and a final report on June 4, 2012. In this report, they defined “global human resources” as possessing three factors:

Factor I: Linguistic and communication skills.

Factor II: Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and mission.

Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as Japanese.

These factors from the Council show a more detailed action plan for globalization and for their goals of the following three points: 1) enhancing English teaching, 2) promoting studying abroad to high school students, and 3) developing entrance examination systems and reformatting job recruiting systems for college students (MEXT, 2012b, p. 28).

After the change in administration from the Democratic Party to the Liberal Democratic Party on December 26, 2012, these plans were followed by merely changing the name of the commission. “A Proposal for Global Human Resource Contributing to the Growth Strategy” was published on April 8, 2013. The government also organized the Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding to discuss educational issues. Meetings have been held monthly. At the meetings, English education and nurturing Global Human Resources are

a priority on the agenda, and the Council published a proposal named “University Education and Global Human Resource Development for the Future” on May 28, 2013. Five proposals toward globalization were contained:

- 1) Resolutely proceeding with internationalization and making an educational environment at universities that can compete with the best in the world.
- 2) Providing opportunities for all students with the desire and capability to study abroad, and doubling the number of Japanese students studying abroad to 120,000 and increasing the number of overseas students in Japan to 300,000.
- 3) Enhancing education at the primary—and secondary—school levels to respond to globalization.
- 4) Cultivating an identity as a Japanese person and spreading Japanese culture to the world.
- 5) Utilizing a special zone system to respond effectively to globalization.

The government should undertake necessary deregulation and develop required support measures to facilitate these efforts. The government will consider supporting the efforts by utilizing the scheme of the “National Strategy Zones” (provisional name), which is being discussed in the Council for Industrial Competitiveness. (p.8).

These proposals mirror what the former administration and other Councils proposed. MEXT responded to the proposal and published the detailed English educational plan on December 13, 2013, named “English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization” “in order to promote the establishment of an educational environment which corresponds to globalization from the elementary to lower/upper secondary education stage” (MEXT, 2013), and for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. After announcing the plan, the government organized the Expert Council for English Education to discuss in greater depth plans for the reformation of English education for globalization.

Now that a timeline of language perspectives and policies has been given, I turn now to explaining Critical Discourse Analysis and how it is used in this research to shed light on the ideological and interdiscursive dynamics that underlie all these policies and the reforms they prescribe.

III. Research Methodology

This research applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to policy statements. CDA is used by many researchers to uncover the embedded discourses of a particular writer or community (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In doing so, CDA reveals discursive social behaviors, how ways of thinking are reproduced, and explicit political ideologies. CDA focuses on various linguistic features including the relationship between agents and patients, the use of adverbs, and naming and wording in the texts (Johnstone, 2008). Political discourse is a major field of research within critical discourse analysis. In particular, political discourse involves agents’ symbolic struggles which shape and are shaped by people’s views of the social world. The documents of government officials and talk from professionals, politicians, or political

institutions where these discourses are embedded are all interconnected with the overall society (Van Dijk, 1993). This research strives to analyze the data not only linguistically but interdiscursively, e.g., through how social events, social practices, and social structures influence the agents of a particular community.

Japanese policy is also the place where these discourses are embedded. These policies convey and reveal a social agenda of the policymakers and society. There is much research on language policy in Japan in various fields (Kawai, 2007; Hashimoto, 2009). Kawai (2007) focuses on the policy proposing English as an official language of Japan in 2000, and states that there are differences between the macro-level Japanese government's views of English and public discourse. The government is treating English as a de-culturalised and neutral tool for communication, whereas public discourse perceives English as a cultural force representing other cultures. The focus on the promotion of English is "welcome as long as Japanese people's English language ability serves Japan's national interests" (p. 49). Thus, the Japanese people value English merely for its instrumental function, not as a means of promoting a multiethnic society.

As can be seen from the chronological changes in policy statements, the term globalization is foreseen in policy in recent years and the government strives to improve English education to fit the demand of "globalization" all over the world. This paper will focus on recent educational policy during the Noda and Abe administrations (2011-2018), and on the minutes of the meetings for making such policies. Table-1 below summarizes the policies for this research and their features. By looking especially at the documents from the government, MEXT, the Councils, and statements from committee members, this paper investigates how Japan's notion of globalization shapes and is shaped by its foreign language policy as currently conceptualized by MEXT.

Table-1:

Date	Language Policy	Measure reforms
2008	Course of Studies (Junior High School)	English classes increase 3 to 4 classes in a week Vocabulary introduced in class is increased from 900 to 1200 words
2009	Course of Studies (Senior High School)	English should be taught in English Subject names were changed: English I & II → English Communication Oral Communication → English Expression English Reading → English Conversation English Writing → English Expression

June 14, 2011	“Proposals toward Cultivation of Global Human Resources.” <i>Keidanren</i> (Japan Business Federation)	Proposals to company, university, and the Japanese government for nurturing global human resources in order to compete against foreign countries.
June 30, 2011	Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication	Motivate students’ English learning Promote Assistant Language Teachers & Information and Communication Technology Revise Entrance exam and utilize TOEIC, TOEFL, and other external tests
June 4, 2012	A strategy for development of global human resource Meeting for Promotion of Global Human Resource	TOEFL & TOEIC for external tests. Curriculum development for college: Teaching classes in English
April 8, 2013	A proposal for Global Human development contributing to the growth strategy	Aim to get TOEFL iBT 90 for college students; 45 for high school. Open to public the number of competent English teachers in each prefecture.
May 28, 2013	University Education and Global Human Resource Development for the future	Teaching English Though English at Junior High School (JHS).
December 13, 2013	English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization	Start to teach English for 3 rd -, 4 th - graders in elementary schools. Classes will be conducted in English in principle (JHS).

In order to analyze the policy documents published by Japanese government officials, this paper extracted English versions of policies available from the websites of each ministry and related governmental offices. Where there were no English versions on the websites, the policies were translated into English by the author with a peer examiner to ensure translations were true to the original versions. At present, all of the minutes of the meetings have been posted in Japanese so these statements were translated into English, focusing closely on the interactions between committee members during the meetings. By applying these methods, this research clarifies the assumptions which shape and are shaped by the discourse.

IV. Findings

This section illustrates the embedded discourses around the term globalization in language policy, including how the government actually views globalization, particularly the contradictions involving the term “globalization” in Japanese educational policies.

4.1. *Guroobarizeeshon*: Promotion of teaching English for business companies.

The first data excerpt shows that the government promotes global human resources who actively take part in business settings. The government views English language improvement as “a key problem not only for the educational community, but also for business community” (MEXT, 2012b, p. 1). The purpose of promoting global human resources is to promote

people who are useful resources for the business community, and the government left their promotion to the companies. It is easy to identify such a relationship between the government and the business community in the policy: “Through cooperation with enterprises and private individuals, the government should establish new measures, including mechanisms for promoting donations, for supporting overseas study expenses including scholarships...” (p. 5). The government expects the main part of the decision making and the financial supports to be arranged within the business community. One of the opinions of a committee member at the third global human resources promotion meeting held on June 16, 2013, stated:

“Since small and medium-sized companies have been accelerating overseas promotions, their supports are needed for globalization...” (the minutes of GHRs, 2013).

The need for global human resources is increasing for the business community, and this is one of the reasons for encouraging Japanese people to be a global human resource. The government urges nurturing people who use the linguistic capital of English and acquire commodified English as the language of international communication.

These data explicitly show that the government promotes global human resources who are actively involved in the business community. In a later published policy entitled “Report of The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development” on June 4, 2012, the importance of global human resources for business is put on the line and the actual intention(s) are not portrayed. The government also admits the necessity of global human resources: “from the viewpoint of continuously cultivating a critical mass of global human resources, it is necessary for our economy and society as a whole to create a support system to this end” (MEXT, 2012b, p. 19). These policy statements show that the government does not promote globalization into Japanese society, but to nurture “global human resources” who actively work in the business community. Looking at the date of the policies reported to the public, these policies are mirroring the intentions of Japan Business Federation (JBF) as displayed in multiple proposals. “A strategy for development of global human resources” released by MEXT on June 4, 2012, followed by “Global JAPAN” by JBF on April 16, 2012. Japan has been facing a continuous economic downturn since the burst of the economic bubble in 1991, and losing national competitiveness. The hegemonic culture of the economic capital of English as a commodity (Duchêne & Heller, 2012) can be seen in Japanese language policy that would reinvigorate business activity.

4.2. *Guroobarizeeshon*: Promotion of the elite in neoliberal globalization

The government sometimes acknowledges the negative side of promoting “distinguished” business people: “...for university personnel to be overly focused on corporate employees, while corporations recklessly rushed into acquiring the limited number of “distinguished” students without paying enough attention to domestic education...led to a simultaneous negative spiral...” (Report of The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development, p.7). At the same time, the government seems to promote

cultivating people who are “distinguished” and can contribute to global society. In the Five Proposals, it states, “[p]romotion of advanced efforts...is important to train **top-level human resources** acceptable to the standards of the global society” [emphasis added] (MEXT, 2011). The government states that, to meet the standards of global society, top-level Japanese people should be trained, and English is viewed as an important factor for competing in the global market. The importance of English for globalization is noted: “it not only contributes to the improvement of English proficiency level of all children, but also makes possible the acquisition of **more advanced English skills** acceptable in the global community.” [emphasis added] (MEXT, 2011). In other words, the government assumes that all students need to improve their English skills, but more importantly, the students need to acquire advanced English skills specifically for globalization. This idea has been taken over by the next language policy and its detailed plan in the University Education and Global Human Resource Development for the Future in 2013, suggesting “[t]he government should designate ‘Japan’s Global High Schools,’ **advanced high schools** that will **foster future global leaders**, and expand opportunities for using foreign languages, especially English...” (p. 7). The policy documents state that not all students move toward globalization, only those who are global leaders at advanced high schools. The Parliamentary Secretary of MEXT, during the first meeting of the Development of Foreign Language Teaching states:

“It is important to gradually raise the English levels up [for all the students]; however, considering the gap between the children who really want to use English and the children who want to be able to speak English to some extent, I think everyone should not be the same level at this point” (MEXT, 2014).

His statement explicitly claims that all Japanese students are not necessarily going to be a “global human resource” with the linguistic capital of English for globalization. Also, this statement to some extent contradicts the policy goals: “Promoting students’ awareness of [the] necessity of English in the global society, and stimulating motivation for English learning” (MEXT, 2012b). The students who are willing to be a global human resource are foregrounded in the “globalization” discourse, and others are ignored even though the policy requires “[p]roviding opportunities for all students with the desire and capability to study abroad” (MEXT, 2012b). The chance of going abroad is inherently for the students who are “top” and “distinguished”. The Japanese government reflects the neoliberal sense that individuals have free choice, are self-governed, and everything is dictated by economics (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012). Elite people who are designated “top-level” have an opportunity to get high-quality education and take a share of globalization in English.

4.3. *Guroobarizeeshon*: Promoting English as a tool and communication for globalization

Various current language policies portray English for globalization is viewed as merely a tool. The English version of the Five Proposals states: “English and other foreign languages are an important **means** for our children who will live in the global society...” [emphasis added] (MEXT, 2011, p. 2). The Japanese version used the word *tsuuru* [tool] to

be used by the children in global society. Also, the same policy states “[f]oreign language proficiency required in global society can be defined as capability of smooth communication with people of different countries and cultures **using foreign languages as a tool.**” [emphasis added]. The goal of using foreign languages—mainly English—as a tool for globalization is clear, but how this “tool” can be used is vague. The word “tool” changes into *comunikeeshon* [communication] as if the achievement of acquiring the language is for merely communicating with foreigners. The Five Proposals state the importance of communication in global society for teachers: “English teachers need to understand the importance of **communicative competence** [*comunikeshon nouryoku*] in English in global society.” It shows that English is viewed as a tool for communication in globalization and this English is “required by **actually using** the language, just like sports” (Five Proposals). In the Course of Study for elementary, junior, and senior high schools, the phrase “communicative competence” is foregrounded as a main goal for Japan to become a “global society.” As Hashimoto (2007) argues, “English is adopted only as a tool so that the values and traditions embedded in the Japanese culture will be retained” (p.27) and the Japanese government views English as a mere tool for use with an “imagined’ international community” (Hashimoto, 2013).

There are some problems with how this ideological view of English as a tool for globalization is evaluated in the policy. In the Five Proposals, it is stated: “Japanese government, school board, and schools actively utilize external examinations, such as STEP and “GTEC² for STUDENTS” to measure the achievement of students’ English ability...” (Five Proposals, 2011). These are external examinations: STEP is a non-profit organization, and GTEC was introduced by the Benesse Corporation. Also, the same policy advocates “[p]romot[ing] the development and dissemination of [a] standardized method that shows how to evaluate and convert the scores of TOEFL, TOEIC, and other language skill tests for the purpose of general entrance exams” (p.12). That is, the government promotes the use of external tests for entrance examinations for university. However, these tests do not follow the Course of Study from the Minister of Education that Japanese English teachers follow in teaching in schools. The Course of Study TOEIC, TOEFL, and other types of external examinations mentioned above are merely for English learners outside the Japanese school system. For example, TOEIC is the Test of English for International Communication, and it focuses only on business settings. TOEFL is the Test of English for Foreign Language, measuring academic English skills in universities. Thus, these tests may not be a suitable measurement of Japanese students for determining whether their English proficiency meets the government’s expectations. Furthermore, if the government tries to promote English as a tool, they do not need to set a firm goal for student achievement, and there are no ways to measure how such a “tool” interacts with globalization.

² GTEC stands for Global Test for English Communication

V. Conclusions & Discussions

As discussed above, the Japanese government and society indirectly deliver the embedded discourse of *guroobarizeeshon* in order for us to understand the necessity of English for Japanese people. What the MEXT and other political documents require for *guroobaru* and *guroobarizeeshon* is:

1. People who can actively work in global society with a support from public companies;
2. That those people are “elite” who have commodified English skills in globalization;
3. The language (English) which is required for Japanese people, which is an imagined tool for communication;
4. The measurement of their “imagined tool” for communication through external proficiency tests.

Most language policies cannot be detached from economic, cultural, and social aspects, and there are some hidden political agendas seen in the documents. This research contributes to delineating how the government views language policy, especially English education, within a framework of neoliberal globalization. The government seeks to nurture Japanese people who hold commodified English as a linguistic capital. This movement of elite discourse in late capitalism for their economic development is a mirror of what the MEXT tries to pursue in the policy.

It seems that these policies of *guroobarizeeshon* [globalization] from around 2010 were adopted after the banking crisis beginning with Lehman Brothers in 2008, e.g., the policies are created to rationalize economic failure in Japan. The government dodges responsibility for the failure by shifting the blame to “bad English education” and pointing to the problem of a shortage of “elite” people who had learned English for competing in a neoliberal world market. Terasawa (2015) mentions that the number of English users in Japan has decreased since 2006 due to the decline of world trade. By looking at the reality, we can critically view what *guroobarizeeshon* goals people are expected to and are trying to achieve in Japan.

Language policy is a place where policy makers, government officials, professionals, and politicians’ discourses are embedded. Due to the limitation of space, the data shown here are not thorough. However, by closely looking at the current language policy for globalization, this paper illustrated a part of the discourses toward globalization and analyzed them critically. While it is important to see how such top-down policy shapes the linguistic behavior, how such macro-level policies are grounded and localized in practice needs to be examined (Canagarajah, 2006). Future research needs to address micro-level reflections from English teachers, how these macro-level regulations assimilate the Japanese view of English for globalization, and especially, how Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) view the role of English for globalization to see the localized version of the *guroobarizeeshon* discourse. I hope the word “globalization” does not merely act as an important tool for communication in an imagined global society. Rather, we need to carefully discuss who could be “Global Human Resources” for the future, not just creating commodified elite people who can compete in a global neoliberal market.

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