tesol QUARTERLY
tesol international association

Language-in-Education Policies in Japan Versus Transnational Workers' Voices: Two Faces of Neoliberal Communication Competence

RYUKO KUBOTA
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

YUYA TAKEDA
British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Foreign language education primarily aims to cultivate learners' competence to communicate in an additional language. However, the meaning of communication competence is not entirely transparent, especially given the current neoliberal valorization of communication in the knowledge economy. The meaning of communication can be scrutinized in two contradictory trends observed in language education: the exclusive focus on teaching English as a global language, signifying a homogenizing trend, and increased scholarly attention to the heterogeneity of linguistic forms and practices. This article examines how communication competence is differentially understood by policymakers and corporate workers in Japan. The authors examine a government report that evaluated the attainment of educational goals for coping with globalization and contrasting it with interview data drawn from another study on the communicative experiences of Japanese transnational workers in Asia. Political discourse analysis and content analysis reveal the paradoxical nature of what can be called neoliberal communication competence, which on the one hand conflates global communication with use of the four measurable skills in English to transmit information and, on the other hand, challenges linguistic norms, foregrounding plurilingualism and co-constructed interactional competence. Transformation of policies and pedagogies can be pursued by appropriating neoliberal communication competence for achieving broader educational goals.

doi: 10.1002/tesq.613

In the neoliberal globalized world, individuals are viewed as "bundles of skills" (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 211). Their communication skills as part of human capital are deemed essential for academic and career success. Moreover, the ability to communicate in English is considered to be crucial for demonstrating their value in the global market. Accordingly, non-English-dominant nations have emphasized the acquisition of English skills through public education in many parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and elsewhere (Kamwangamalu, 2013; Phan, 2017; Sayer, 2015). However, two contradictory trends exist with regard to *communication*. On the one hand, language-in-education policies highlight the teaching of English, often exclusively, recognizing its role in facilitating international activities. Standardized tests are widely used to assess English language skills, reinforcing the perceived importance of acquiring standardized forms of English. On the other hand, today's globalization has increased linguistic diversity, as seen in greater scholarly attention to the multiplicity, plurality, and hybridity of linguistic forms and communicative practices. These two trends mirror a tension between fixity and fluidity in sociolinguistic inquiry (Jaspers & Madsen, 2019).

Caught between these two trends, the concept of communication exhibits divergent meanings in different contexts. This article takes Japan as an example and examines how the fixity/fluidity or homogeneity/heterogeneity tension is manifested in the contradicting meanings of communication. More specifically, we investigate how the meaning of *communication competence* [*komyunikēshon nōryoku*] is differently understood by policymakers and corporate workers. Employing political discourse analysis as well as content and thematic analyses, we examine a government document that evaluated the attainment of education policy goals and interview data drawn from another study on the communicative experiences of Japanese multinational corporate employees working in Asia. We use the term *communication competence* to convey the nuance of the Japanese term in our data—*komyunikēshon nōryoku*—and to avoid confusion with the established scholarly concept of communicative competence, which is often used in the context of communicative language teaching. We demonstrate how communication competence in the data has contradictory meanings of fixity and fluidity. Given that such contradictions are embedded within neoliberalism, we describe this nature of communication ability as *neoliberal communication competence*. We suggest policymakers and language professionals reconceptualize the teaching of English to foster skills for genuine communication in the multilingual world.

In what follows, we first review the influence of neoliberalism on language education in general, and in Japan specifically, and highlight the seemingly contradictory forces of homogenization and

heterogenization. This is followed by a review of how communication is conceptualized in language education research. We then present our data analysis, demonstrating how communication is conceptualized by policymakers and Japanese transnational corporate workers. Based on our findings, we discuss two facets of neoliberal communication competence. Finally, we conclude with educational implications and recommendations.

NEOLIBERAL EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The idea of English as a global lingua franca has promoted English language education in many expanding-circle countries where English is learned as a foreign language. Although this trend is not new, the popularity of English language teaching today is unprecedented. This is aided by the discourse of globalization that positions English as an indispensable lingua franca (Block & Cameron, 2002; Kubota & McKay, 2009) as well as the neoliberal ideology that links economic benefits with English proficiency (Bernstein, Hellmich, Katznelson, Shin, & Vinall, 2015; De Costa, Park, & Wee, 2019; Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2015; Jenks, 2017; Kamwangamalu, 2013; Kubota, 2011; Park, 2011; Phan, 2017; Sayer, 2015).

The neoliberal discourse of English language education is especially noteworthy. Based on the principle of the free market economy, neoliberal policies have deregulated state control of production by leveraging the mechanism of competition, marketization, and privatization and by creating a more flexible but unstable labor force. This system requires individual self-reliance and accountability for developing human capital—a notion that commodifies and valorizes people's skills and abilities (Holborow, 2015). It compels individuals to align themselves with social expectations in order to enhance their value in the market as entrepreneurial selves (Bernstein et al., 2015; De Costa et al., 2019; Del Percio & Flubacher, 2017). Furthermore, the shift from the labor-intensive to service-based new economy indicates that human capital is largely concerned with what are called soft skills, including communication skills (Urciuoli, 2008, 2020). The emphasis on English language learning is situated in this neoliberal condition.

Neoliberal keywords, such as *human capital*, *skills*, and *communication*, tend to be clustered and convey ideological meanings that benefit the capitalist class (Holborow, 2012; Urciuoli, 2008, 2020). Under neoliberalism, these words take on new meanings, often vague and unfixed, and influence what education should provide to fulfill corporate

interests in enhancing capitalist productivity. Urciuoli (2008, p. 214) calls these clusters of keywords "strategically deployable shifters," which resonates with the process of "re-semanticisation (meaning-stretching)" (Holborow, 2012, p. 41). In neoliberal discourse, the conceptualization of *communication*, together with keywords such as *skills*, becomes neutralized and objectified as a thing, as seen in commercial manuals for training listening and presentation skills, leading to its commodification and fetishization (Urciuoli, 2008).

THE NEOLIBERAL TREND IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN JAPAN

In Japan, the promotion of English language teaching for developing communication skills parallels the rise of neoliberal politics in the globalized economy. Although the first appearance of the term *komyunikēshon* [communication] in English language education policies was in 1974, actual use of the term in the national curriculum began in the 1990s (Erikawa, 2018).

Before we proceed to our discussion, it is important to clarify terminology. Japanese language contains a large number of loan words originating from other languages. The word *komyunikēshon* [communication] is one of them and its use is long established. Although bilingual dictionaries published in Japan since the 19th century have assigned a variety of Japanese equivalents for translating "communication," none of them have become conventionalized, perhaps because they did not perfectly fit the original meaning (Nakagawa, 2003). In our introduction, we mentioned the rationale for using the term *communication competence* for *komyunikēshon nōryoku*. Although *komyunikēshon nōryoku* also refers to the scholarly term *communicative competence*, proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983; which will be discussed in more detail later), in language-in-education policies of English in Japan, it is commonly used as a lay term without the scholarly connotation. Because our interest is to reveal the contradictory meanings of this lay term appearing in a policy document and interview data, *communication competence* in this article simply refers to the translation of *komyunikēshon nōryoku* in the lay usage.

The focus on communication in English language teaching in the 1990s coincided with the popularity of the discourse of *kokusaika* [internationalization] (Hashimoto, 2010; Kubota, 2002; Liddicoat, 2007) and neoliberalism (Kubota, 2011). The rise of Japan's economy in the 1980s and the subsequent trade friction with the United States

prompted the Japanese government to internationalize or Westernize its social, cultural, and economic systems.

Since the 1990s, the government has emphasized the development of *komyunikēshon nōryoku* [communication competence], especially speaking in English (Hashimoto, 2011; Kubota, 2002). Developing communication skills in English as an international language has been promoted through several educational initiatives, such as introducing English to primary education, hiring native-English-speaking assistant teachers, setting national achievement goals, promoting English-medium programs in higher education, and proposing the use of commercially available standardized tests of English to assess all four skills for university entrance examinations.

It is important to note that these initiatives have been heavily influenced by the interests of two major Japanese business associations. To strengthen their member corporations' global competitiveness, these associations have occasionally made recommendations for education policies and publicized them online (Erikawa, 2009; Kubota, 2011). The corporate influence on foreign language education policies had indeed become conspicuous in the 1990s (Erikawa, 2009). For large corporations, the global expansion of their business and shareholders led them to expect their employees to become more competent English users. This was to be accomplished by demanding that the government implement more robust policies for teaching English.

These demands were part of the larger call for the neoliberal restructuring of society through deregulation and privatization in order for corporations to remain competitive in the globalized economy. The education system in general also became a target of this neoliberal trend; it has been pointed out that the neoliberal education reform movement, which germinated during the 1980s, has become sedimented since the 1990s, as seen in introducing a more flexible curriculum, enabling school choice, and holding students and schools accountable through national achievement tests (Saito, 2004; Yotoriyama, 2008).

Also underlying the emphasis on communication in English is the synergy between neoliberalism and nationalism, mirroring the coexistence of internationalization and nationalism (Kubota, 2002, 2016a). In fact, keywords such as *awareness as a Japanese* and *Japanese identity* began to appear during the education reform in the 1980s and in the subsequent national curriculum guides for English. An analysis of government-approved junior high school English textbooks revealed that the most frequently featured country shifted from the United States in the 1980 editions to Japan in the 1990 and 2000 editions (Yamada, 2015). According to Kawai (2009, p. 20), the ambivalent relationship

between neoliberalism and nationalism actually functions to "'glue' the nation," which has been polarized into the rich and the poor.

In sum, teaching English in Japan has been aggressively promoted along with the neoliberal valorization of communication in English for bolstering economic competitiveness. The exclusive focus on English reflects a monolingual or homogeneous approach to foreign language education. Neoliberalism has also coexisted with the rise of nationalism, influencing the discourse of language education.

NEOLIBERAL FLUIDITY AND PLURALITY

The above observation demonstrates a centripetal or homogenizing trend, where English is exclusively promoted as the sole language for international communication. However, the increased mobility of people, goods, and information created by neoliberal capitalist globalization indicates centrifugal forces of heterogeneity regarding the form and use of languages (cf. Bakhtin, 1981). The phenomena of multilingualism and plurilingualism have attracted scholars' attention in their research, creating the multi/plural turn (Kubota, 2016b), especially in sociolinguistics (Jaspers & Madsen, 2019). Scholars in TESOL have also discussed plurilingualism (e.g., Taylor & Snoddon, 2013), translanguaging (e.g., Kiramba & Harris, 2019), world Englishes (e.g., Low & Pakir, 2018), and English as a lingua franca (e.g., Matsumoto, 2018), illuminating diverse and fluid language forms, use, and competence. These perspectives question the normative approach to language teaching while shedding light on the multilingual realities beyond English.

This trend toward heterogeneity appears inconsistent with the homogeneity of neoliberal globalization as seen in establishing global standards in industrial, technological, and academic fields, including the use of English. However, heterogeneity is an important part of neoliberal ideology. This is not only because the globalized economy requires workers to negotiate increased diversity brought by their coworkers and clients, as demonstrated by the corporate strategy of diversity management (Kubota, 2016a; Park, 2013), but also because cultural identities can become commodified, allowing people to deploy them to their advantage in the market (Gershon, 2011). "Under neoliberalism," Gershon (2011) said, "culture shifts from being a perspective that explains connections to being a possession, or trait, that endangers alliances" (p. 541). For instance, Sharma and Phyak (2017) illustrate the ways in which Nepali tour guides commodified their cultural and linguistic identities to display authenticity and approachability in order to gain their values in the market. The synergy between

neoliberalism and diversity is described as neoliberal multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2013) or progressive neoliberalism (Fraser, 2017; see Block, 2018). In language education, Flores (2013) has pointed out that plurilingualism promoted in Europe is inseparable from a political vision that pursues a borderless flow of capital and people in the region.

All in all, the neoliberal conceptualization of communication in the globalized economy contains both centripetal and centrifugal characteristics. While policymakers in countries like Japan narrow the target of language education to developing communication competence in English, scholars increasingly illuminate the heterogeneous nature of communication within and across languages. But what does *communication* mean? We turn to this question next.

CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for the discussion of communication in language education is the model of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). Although variations have been proposed since the original model (see Celce-Murcia, 2008; Culpeper, Mackey, & Taguchi, 2018), the oft-cited communicative competence proposed by Canale (1983) consists of four types of competence: grammatical, discourse, strategic, and sociolinguistic. Whereas grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of the phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic components of language, discourse competence is concerned with the ways in which a string of multiple sentences or utterances are connected (e.g., cohesion and coherence). Strategic competence includes verbal and nonverbal coping strategies for communication, whereas sociolinguistic competence is about knowing and manipulating linguistic forms and functions in particular sociocultural contexts (Savignon, 2001).

Despite its popularity in language education, communicative competence has met some criticisms. One problem is the expectation that learners should eventually acquire competence equivalent to that of an ideal middle-class native speaker of the standardized form of the target language. This native-speaker norm has been problematized as our field began to adopt a postmodern recognition of the multiple, fluid, idiosyncratic, and hybrid nature of language forms and uses (Leung & Scarino, 2016; Taguchi, 2011). Recent advocates of translanguaging (e.g., Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) also question the fixed

native-speaker norm and the expectation for learners to acquire complete knowledge of linguistic structures.

Furthermore, underlying the notion of communicative competence is what can be called the *transmission model of communication*, which views communication as the one-way transfer of information from the speaker to the listener (Naka, 2012; Wendland, 2013). However, being able to communicate actually depends on how interlocutors in a particular context interact with each other. Thus, communication takes place by employing *interactional competence* that involves the sender, the receiver, and the context of communication (Kramsch, 1986). Interactional competence, therefore, does not refer to the isolated knowledge and competence of individuals, but rather the deployment of interactional resources used "mutually and reciprocally by all participants in a particular discursive practice" (Young, 2011, p. 428). The co-constructedness of communication signifies the nature of communication beyond the transfer and exchange of information (Wendland, 2013) and implies that the efficient exchange of information can also be ineffective in terms of building interpersonal relationships (Naka, 2012).

The transmission model of communication assumes that the sender is entirely responsible for making the meaning transparent for the receiver. When the sender is a second language (L2) speaker, this assumption reinforces a deficit ideology (Subtirelu, 2014) whereby any communication breakdown is attributed to the L2 speaker's lack of language proficiency. By contrast, a lingua franca ideology assumes shared communicative responsibility between first language (L1) and L2 speakers and resonates with interactional competence that underscores mutuality and reciprocity in communication (see also Lippi-Green, 2012). Seen this way, successful communication is highly context dependent, mutually constructed, and likely to be unmeasurable in an objective way. Yet, as we discuss below, because the transmission model of communication is highly compatible with neoliberalism's demand for accountability (i.e., objectively demonstrating one's ability), we see an ideological prevalence of communication characterized by efficiency, calculability, predictability, controllability, and standardization (Block, 2002), leading to the conflation of communication with a fixed set of linguistic knowledge and skills that can be measured by conventional tests. This resonates with corporate-oriented leadership training for students, in which communication skills become predictable sets of techniques (Urciuoli, 2020).

The above discussions suggest contested meanings of the ability to communicate constructed within language education. This study investigates how communication competence is understood as seen in the discourses of Japanese policymakers and Japanese transnational

workers that appear in a policy evaluation report and interviews with these workers.

THE DATA

In order to investigate how communication competence is conceptualized by policymakers and corporate workers in Japan, we drew on the following data sources: a policy evaluation report published online by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) and interviews with Japanese transnational corporate workers with work experiences in non-English-dominant Asia, as well as a Japanese employee at a large business association.

First, we examined a 252-page document in Japanese prepared by MIC: *Gurōbaru jinzai no ikusei suishin ni kansuru seisaku hyōkasho* (*Evaluation of the Policies for Developing Global Human Resources*; MIC, 2017; "MIC Report" hereafter). The MIC Report is an assessment document for the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education ("Second Plan" hereafter), which was released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in 2013.[1] Specifically, the MIC Report evaluates the extent to which measures delineated in the Second Plan for fostering global *jinzai* [human resources] have been attained. In the Second Plan, global *jinazai* is defined as

> those who are rooted in their identity as Japanese by an in-depth understanding of the Japanese culture and can thrive in a variety of fields with (a) high levels of language ability and communication competence, (b) autonomy and proactiveness, and (c) a spirit of intercultural understanding.
>
> (MIC, 2017, p. 13; authors' translation)

The MIC Report consists of a preface and four major sections: (1) the focus of the report and the evaluation methodology, (2) an overview of the policy measures, (3) findings, and (4) recommendations. The third section, the longest one, evaluates the attainment of the goals set for primary, secondary, and higher education, including English language education, international student exchanges (e.g., study abroad), and the internationalization of educational institutions. This section also includes results of a survey sent to all 4,932 Japanese corporations with overseas operations to assess how the corporations perceived the effectiveness of the policy measures. Of these corporations,

[1] Mandated by the revised Fundamental Law of Education, the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education has been developed every 5 years since 2008 by MEXT and approved by the Cabinet.

980 responded. Despite the response rate of approximately 20%, the data present interesting findings. We conducted a content analysis of the open-ended comments presented in the survey results.

The overall discourse leading to the policy recommendations in the MIC Report was analyzed through political discourse analysis (PDA; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). PDA views political discourse primarily as argumentative and critically examines how certain political discourse employs argumentation to make certain claims. Although the MIC Report does not resemble a typical political speech or public debate, PDA is applicable because it proposes solutions to achieving policy goals by presenting various premises including values, goals, means, and contexts of action.

In political discourse, a practical argumentation (which grounds a judgment or decision) consists of a series of premises that support the main claim. The *value premise* guides the choice of goals and actions. The *goal premise* specifies what end should be pursued. The way to achieve the goal is assessed in relation to two other premises: The *circumstance premise* defines the current state or situation, and the *means–goal premise* specifies what kind of action would result in the desired end (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Based on these premises, one makes a claim. PDA provides a systematic approach to evaluate the persuasiveness, plausibility, and validity of practical argumentations. The MIC Report was analyzed as a type of practical argumentation, in which recommendations (i.e., the claim) were made based on a series of premises.

For data other than the MCI Report, we drew on interviews conducted in a separate study, which investigated communicative experiences of Japanese transnational corporate workers in the manufacturing sector who have worked or were working in China, South Korea, or Thailand—countries where English may be used as a lingua franca. The numbers of the participating Japanese companies were four for China, six for South Korea, and five for Thailand. The first author conducted interviews in Japanese either in Japan or in these countries from 2010 to 2017 with a total of 35 employees—11 workers who worked in China, 12 in South Korea, and 12 in Thailand. The age of the interviewees ranged from 20s to 60s, and all of them except for two were male. As part of this study, the first author also interviewed in 2017 Ms. Y, an employee in charge of educational issues at a major business association, which exerts significant influence on the development of policies for English language teaching. Thus, it is possible to regard Ms. Y's positionality as aligned with the policymaker's perspective. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese, audio recorded, and transcribed later. The excerpts presented here have been translated into English by us. Thematic analysis was used

for the interview data to identify general tendencies and patterns in the participants' views and experiences, especially focusing on the notion of communication. Although thematic and content analyses are often understood similarly, thematic analysis tends to be more flexible in providing accounts of data, whereas content analysis often focuses on a more micro level of the data and provides frequency counts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this article, rather than presenting comprehensive findings, we demonstrate how representative examples of the transnational workers' views complement or contradict the policy discourse revealed in the MIC Report and Ms. Y's views.

FINDINGS

We discuss the findings from our analysis in the following order: (1) evaluation of the policy implementation as shown in the MIC Report, (2) Ms. Y's interview accounts, (3) open-ended responses to the corporate survey in the MIC Report, and (4) transnational workers' interview accounts (see Table 1). The first two sections analyze policymakers' views on language ability and communication competence, whereas the next two contrast them with workers' views.

Communication Competence as Measurable Skills in English: PDA of the MIC Report

Figure 1 shows the results of PDA of the MIC Report. Below, we spotlight key points. As mentioned earlier, the MIC Report assesses how various education projects have contributed to the development of global *jinzai* equipped with language and communication competence as delineated in the Second Plan. Thus, the *goal premise* of this document is the cultivation of global *jinzai*. This goal is supported by the Japanese government's valuing of "the sustainable development of

TABLE 1
Data Sources and Methods of Analysis

Data source	Policymakers' view	Method of analysis	Workers' view	Method of analysis
MIC Report	Evaluation of policy implementation	Political discourse analysis	Open-ended responses to corporate survey	Content analysis
Interviews	Ms. Y	Thematic analysis	Transnational workers	Thematic analysis

Note. MIC = Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

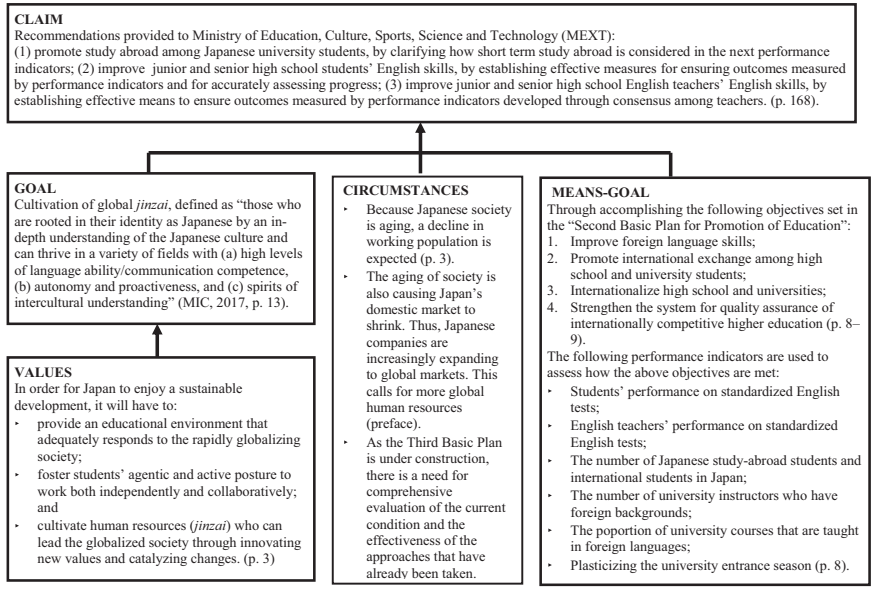

FIGURE 1. PDA of MIC Report.

Japan" (MIC, 2017, p. 3). In order to achieve the goal, MIC evaluated how the four main measures and the 13 performance indicators set by the Second Plan (means-goal premise) have been achieved. These performance indicators include students' and teachers' scores on standardized English tests, the numbers of Japanese students who studied abroad and international students in Japan, the numbers of university faculty members and instructors from foreign backgrounds, and so forth. Significantly, these measures and the corresponding performance indicators are evaluated only quantitatively. The *circumstance premise* is the need for Japanese companies' overseas expansion due to the diminishing size of the domestic market in the rapidly aging society. This circumstance necessitates global *jinzai*.

It is important to note that throughout the MIC Report, foreign language ability and communication competence—integral traits of global *jinzai*—are conflated and they are presented as a single category: language ability/communication competence (*gogaku ryoku/komyunikēshon nōryoku*). Furthermore, foreign language is conflated with English. Although one of the measures of the Second Plan is to "strengthen the teaching of foreign languages such as English" (MIC, 2017, p. 3), all the performance indicators refer only to English. These conflations are reflected in the report advocating sole use of standardized tests of English for measuring the achievement of the goal.

As its *claim*, the MIC Report recommends that MEXT consider the following three items: (1) promote study abroad among Japanese university students, (2) improve secondary school students' English ability, and (3) improve secondary school English teachers' English ability. Although developing communication competence is one of the measures for fostering global *jinzai*, the word *communication* is entirely absent. As the last two recommendations indicate, the concern is focused only on developing English language ability. These recommendations are likely to further reinforce the reliance on standardized testing and render communication synonymous with the four linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Overall, the argument for the development of global *jinzai* is rationalized by the need for outward economic expansion overseas, which necessitates learning English as a global language. Furthermore, language ability and communication competence are conflated and reduced to English ability measurable by standardized testing.

A Business Association Representative's View on Communication

The ways in which English language ability and communication competence are conceived in the MIC Report are echoed in an interview account of Ms. Y, an employee of one of the business associations that provide considerable input on Japan's education policy, as mentioned earlier. She has a master's degree from abroad but had not lived overseas to work. According to Ms. Y, her department oversees a committee on education and its subcommittee consisting of representatives from 30 to 40 companies. The subcommittee makes draft recommendations to MEXT once a year based on the results of corporate surveys and input from MEXT staff. Indeed, it provided input for the Second Plan. The first author asked the extent to which the association's recommendations to MEXT were actually reflected in language education policies. As one such example, the first author (Au) mentioned the use of commercially available standardized tests in English at schools and universities:

Excerpt 1

Y: *It boils down to the four skills. . . . You may know this, but until now, Japan's English language education has been really about reading and writing, or even writing is missing, so reading and listening.*

Au: *And grammar.*

Y: *Yes, grammar too, and listening. Only those two, and no writing and speaking at all. So, even after studying English for 12 years, people can't speak English at all. It is important to incorporate the four skills in a balanced manner from elementary school. After all, there is no point in studying English if we can't communicate in English. Having good scores on TOEFL means nothing. In that sense, we demand the use of tests that evaluate the four skills, and if you ask which ones, for example, there are TOEIC[2] and TOEFL—doesn't have to be TOEFL, though.*

Ms. Y's comment reflects a common trope that English language teaching in Japan is a total failure. The main points she makes are these: The reason why Japanese learners are unable to speak English is due to the heavy focus on reading and listening, this can be remedied by a balanced integration of the four skills in the curriculum, and the four skills must be tested. Here, communication in English is mainly concerned with speaking, and to develop speaking skills, the four skills should be tested in a balanced way. Her comment "having good scores on TOEFL means nothing" sounds contradictory—she might have wanted to emphasize that traditional tests do not assess speaking ability.

Elsewhere in the interview, the first author referred to the report of a survey conducted by her association. The report summarized the responses from 463 companies. Looking at the question on what competencies companies would like university graduates to have acquired, the first author asked the difference between communication competence [*komyunikēshon nōryoku*], which was ranked second, and foreign language competence [*gaikokugo nōryoku*], which was surprisingly ranked 12th. Excerpt 2 shows Ms. Y's response:

Excerpt 2

> Here [foreign language competence], it's a shortened form of communication competence in a foreign language. Because with foreign language competence, you must speak in a foreign language. But here [pointing to "communication competence"] is communication. This one is communication competence in Japanese [as L1]. That one is communication competence in a foreign language.

This explanation is peculiar, but the view that dissociates communication in Japanese from that in a foreign language parallels the view she expressed in Excerpt 1, which equates communication in English (as a foreign language) with the four measurable skills. This perhaps

[2] Test of English for International Communication. It is developed by Educational Testing Service and used widely in Japan.

made her delink foreign languages including English from the L1, which is typically not conceptualized as four distinct skills.

The conflation of communication competence and measurable English ability in Ms. Y's comments overlaps with the MIC Report—being able to communicate in English is equated with possessing an advanced level of the four skills, with a priority placed on speaking, and these skills should be measured through standardized testing. However, as the next two sections demonstrate, corporate workers view communication competence quite differently—they perceive it as basic linguistic proficiency, though not native-like, plus strategic and attitudinal skills.

Corporate Voices in the MIC Report

As we have mentioned, the third section of the MIC Report contains corporate survey results. The survey includes questions on topics such as whether the company recruits sufficient global *jinzai*, whether it provides language or professional training, and whether new employees possess competence for global *jinzai*. Along with numerical analysis of the results, the section also presents anonymous open-ended written responses to the following topics:

- Challenges the company faces in overseas operations.
- Education initiatives that the company hopes universities will implement.
- Ideal length of study abroad before employment.
- Opinions and suggestions for developing global *jinzai*.

What is intriguing is an inconsistency between the understanding of communication competence revealed by our PDA analysis and that represented by some of the open-ended comments. Peculiarly, these comments contradicting the premises in the MIC Report are not reflected in the *claim* (i.e., recommendations) at all.

Of a total of 128 comments on the above topics, 49 (38%) mention one or more of the following keywords: *komyunikēshon (nōryoku)* [communication (competence)], *gogaku (ryoku/nōryoku)* [language (ability/competence)], *eigo (ryoku)* [English (ability)], and *gaikokugo* [foreign language]. We analyzed the comments in which these terms appear by categorizing them according to themes to see what concerns or opinions were raised.

Table 2 shows the themes of the comments identified, the number of comments, and the percentages. Of the 49 comments, 17 (35%) are on study abroad, reflecting the fact that one of the topics in the

TABLE 2
Themes Identified in the Corporate Comments in the MIC Report

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Study abroad	17	35%
Requests for educational support	8	16%
Antinormative approach to language use	6	12%
Ability other than language competence	5	10%
Language other than English	5	10%
Adjustment during overseas assignment	3	6%
Requests for individual effort	3	6%
Other	2	4%
Total	49	100%

Note. MIC = Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

survey was specifically about study abroad. Of those 17 comments, all but one mention language (ability/competence), whereas only one refers to communication. However, 12 refer to issues beyond language acquisition, including intercultural understanding, indicating the corporate expectation that potential employees would have also gained nonlinguistic experiences during study abroad.

The second most frequent theme is requests for educational support, as shown in Excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3

> Since language training requires a large amount of money, at the least, we want people to acquire language ability and communication competence while they are in college.

Note that in this comment, language ability and communication competence are both mentioned. We identified four other comments with similar use of these two terms. These comments hint that corporate workers may conceive language ability and communication competence as related yet separate.

The next three most frequent themes challenge the prevalent discourse that equates communication competence with competitive scores in English tests that require linguistic accuracy. Six comments question the traditional normative approach to language teaching and learning, as shown in Excerpts 4 and 5

Excerpt 4

> English language education in Japan emphasizes grammar too much. Education that fosters communication competence is needed.

Excerpt 5

> In overseas workplaces, even if [workers] cannot use English sufficiently, we want them to communicate (*ishi sotsū suru)* with hand and body gestures and communicate with foreigners like they do with Japanese people.

Excerpt 5 evokes the transmission model of communication with unhindered delivery (*sotsū*) of what one has in mind (*ishi*). Nevertheless, the communication competence assumed here is not native-like language proficiency but strategic competence.

The comment in Excerpt 6 questions the gap between test scores and actual competence:

Excerpt 6

> Obtaining high TOEIC scores and being able to actually speak in English overseas are two different things. We want universities to offer classes for developing English competence that can be used overseas.

Unlike other parts of the MIC Report, where communication competence is conflated with the four skills measured by tests, these comments do not conceptualize communication competence as equivalent to native-like language proficiency. Intriguingly, these comments are concerned primarily with speaking, which is consistent with an overall emphasis on oral communication.

Furthermore, five comments stressed the importance of competence beyond or in addition to language ability, as shown in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7

> Speaking English and being able to work are different. Students should acquire competencies needed by businesses operating overseas other than language ability. In addition to language ability, these workers must possess additional skills such as marketing.

This comment questions the primary emphasis placed on English proficiency for global *jinzai*. Although the comment in Excerpt 8 is complex, with all four keywords appearing, the importance of professional competence is foregrounded as well. Here, the word *transmission* (*dentatsu*) carries the nuance that language ability should serve as a means to communicate professional knowledge, which presupposes mutual interaction with interlocutors.

Excerpt 8

> In the technology sector, what is required for global *jinzai* is professional knowledge rather than language ability. What is demanded in overseas workplaces is leading-edge technology and management ability. . . . Universities should focus on education of technical knowledge and teach a foreign language as a transmission tool. It is best for all students to acquire the communicative level of English ability.

Five other comments emphasize the importance of learning languages other than English, as shown in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9

> Recently, we have an increased amount of business in China, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan. It is often assumed that English can be used in these countries. However, the local language is essential in factories in rural areas, since English is not spoken.

The importance of local languages was also discussed by the participants of the research on transnational workers, as discussed in the next section.

In sum, these open-ended survey responses display different meanings of communication. On the one hand, communication tends to be juxtaposed with foreign language or English language ability, especially speaking. It is also mentioned in the sense of transmitting information. Yet, on the other hand, it deemphasizes linguistic accuracy and primacy placed on English proficiency for international communication. Language competence, and communication by extension, is also understood as a tool for accomplishing job tasks, rather than an independent skill set. We can see a stark difference from the policymakers' conceptualization of communication, which equates communication with the four skills in English measurable by standardized tests and foreign language with English. These views of communication are also consistent with the interview data from transnational workers, to which we now turn.

Communication Conceptualized by Japanese Transnational Corporate Workers

The views on communication shared by Japanese transnational workers in Thailand, China, and South Korea highly resonate with corporate voices in the MIC Report and sharply contrast with the policymakers' perspectives. Referring to accuracy in English, Mr. T, who had worked in South Korea, made the following comment:

Excerpt 10

> Well, I don't think it's good to have only one correct answer. ... When Japanese people try to speak [English], they automatically think of grammar first. ... But saying "he have" or whatever is okay as long as the meaning is conveyed. That's how I think. Education should foster that kind of courage, I think.

Mr. S, who worked in China, made a similar comment:

Excerpt 11

> Rather than people who know a lot of vocabulary, someone who can substitute with appropriate words in a particular situation might have higher *komyunikēshon ryoku* [communication ability]. ... Rather than communicating with appropriate vocabulary and grammar, what's necessary for us, I think, is the ability to convey meaning even with incorrect grammar.

These comments overlap with Excerpt 5 regarding their depictions of actual language use, which parallels the features of business English as a lingua franca (BELF) identified among European business professionals (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

It is worth adding that Mr. S had been sent by his company to a Chinese university to study Mandarin for one year before assuming marketing duties in the Chinese office. According to him, he used Mandarin 80% of the time for work. Almost all interviewees mentioned the importance of learning the local language, and many, especially those who worked on the factory floor in China and Thailand, actually used the local language. This supports the importance of languages other than English pointed out in Excerpt 9 from the MIC Report.

The following statement made by Mr. M, who worked in South Korea, also provides insight into the nature of communication competence. He reflected on his previous experience of working in the United States: "I realized that communication is not just about language." He then recounted how his Japanese boss, a fluent speaker of English, always talked rapidly using difficult words without checking his conversation partner's comprehension:

Excerpt 12

> I was amazed how much he can't communicate, even though he can speak [English] very well. ... We can gauge how much the other person is comprehending while we talk. But some people don't do that.

An opposite experience was narrated by Ms. E, a sales representative in Thailand. Shortly after moving to Thailand, she made a surprise visit to a Thai customer for product sales. It turned out that the customer spoke neither English nor Japanese and Ms. E could not speak Thai yet. After a moment of silence, she started to show a catalogue written in English and interacted using Japanese words and gestures. In the end, she successfully received an order.

Similar to Excerpts 7 and 8, competence beyond linguistic ability, including having professional knowledge and motivation, building trusting relationships, and respecting the local culture and people, was also deemed important. According to a personnel manager, who was interviewed in addition to transnational workers, language competence was not a key for selecting workers for overseas assignments. Criticizing that obtaining a perfect test score often becomes the ultimate learning goal, he makes the following statement, using the "language as a tool" trope, similar to Excerpt 8:

Excerpt 13

> What's clear is that it's not about language skills—what matters is whether a person can do the work or has motivation to do it. That's it. ... Basically, we don't consider language skill as the goal. ... At work, the goal is to accomplish your task whether in Japan or abroad. We consider language skill as just one of the tools.

The transnational corporate workers' overall accounts can be described by what Kubota (2013) calls *border-crossing communication*, which consists of (1) ability to communicate, including not only knowledge of language but also strategic competence; (2) communicative dispositions, such as willingness to communicate and mutual accommodation (Lippi-Green, 2012); (3) foundational dispositions, including the attitudes to building positive human relationships; and (4) cultural knowledge (Figure 2). It is perhaps more similar to communication competence rather than the foreign language competence in Ms. Y's Excerpt 2. This conceptualization situates linguistic knowledge and skills as only small portions of overall communication competence. Standardized tests seem to only tap into these small parts of border-crossing communication.

TWO FACES OF NEOLIBERAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

The data demonstrate two conflicting interpretations of communication competence deemed necessary for global *jinzai*. In

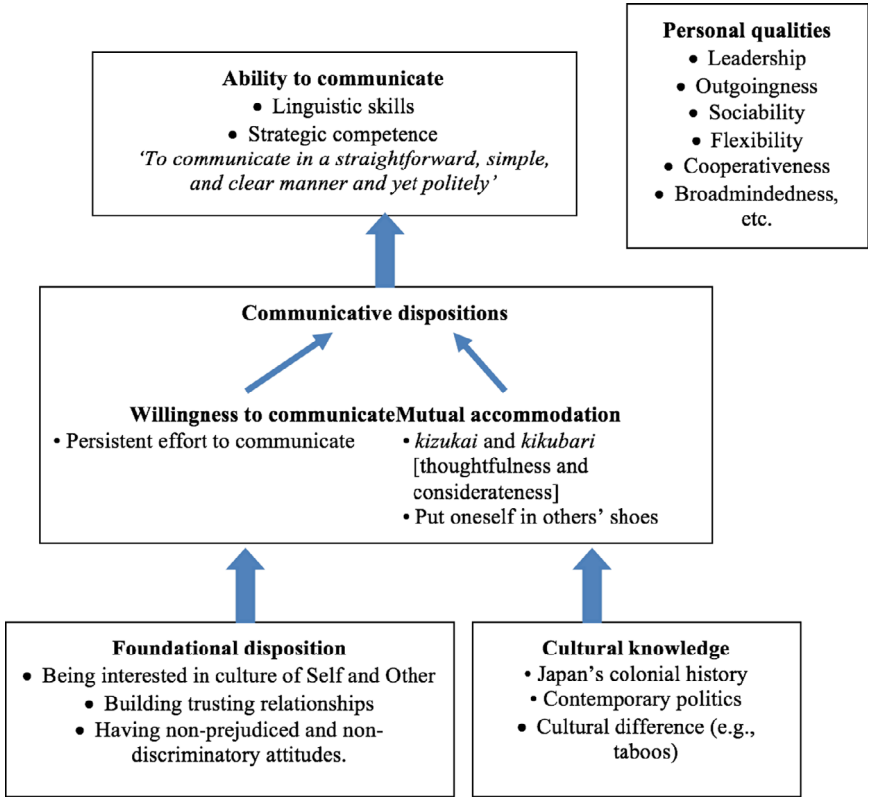

FIGURE 2. Qualities required for border-crossing communication (Kubota, 2013). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

policymakers' discourses that focus on goals and outcomes, communication competence is tightly packaged as four skills in English. Conversely, transnational corporate workers understand it as a tool for accomplishing job tasks, characterized by flexibility, fluidity, and malleability as well as embracing BELF features and plurilingualism. However, these conflicting meanings are all situated in the discourse and institutional systems of neoliberalism. Therefore, we use the term *neoliberal communication competence* to signify the contradiction of fixity and fluidity underlying the notion of communication imagined in the neoliberal global market.

The neoliberal communication competence conceptualized by policymakers denotes communication in English, especially speaking skills. This derives from a sense of frustration held by policymakers regarding Japanese workers' lack of ability to speak in English. Thus, promoting communication competence in English is often synonymous with

developing speaking skills. When this urge is combined with the neoliberal principle of accountability, stakeholders are compelled to establish achievement goals, performance indicators, and assessment protocols by using standardized testing to measure the four skills. Here communication competence further becomes the four measurable skills of English, reinforcing a normative view of language, because conventional tests are developed based on the standardized language norm. Furthermore, these stakeholders' perspectives on neoliberal communication competence are tied to the language ideology of English as the ultimate global language, making the language-in-education policies focus exclusively on English. Urciuoli (2008) describes the term *communication skills* as a strategically deployable shifter because it takes on the meaning of an objectified and predictable set of skills in the neoliberal imaginary. In our study, this facet of neoliberal communication competence renders communication for global *jinzai* equivalent to the four objectified and quantifiable skills in English.

Conversely, *neoliberal communication competence* is understood differently by some corporate workers and representatives. For them, communicative competence includes ability in a foreign language, especially—though not exclusively—English. But it goes beyond the competence that can be measured by tests. It includes strategic competence and communicative dispositions, as mentioned in the previous section. It also entails some fundamental qualities that promote interpersonal and intercultural understanding, which are essential for business success in intercultural contexts. Some of the communication skills (e.g., public speaking, presentations, teamwork) can be learned through training and perhaps objectively measured, as Urciuoli (2008) discussed. Nonetheless, the strategic and dispositional elements of border-crossing communication may be difficult to assess—they are grounded in fluid and emergent everyday practice often associated with identity formation, rather than in purely technical, predictable, and controllable negotiation for meaning. Although corporate voices still tend to be concerned with transmission of work-related information, successful business is obviously enabled by mutual understanding through accommodation. In this sense, this facet of neoliberal communication competence resonates with interactional competence (Kramsch, 1986; Young, 2011).

Neoliberal communication competence in this way contains two contradictory sets of attributes that correspond to both centripetal (normative and fixed) and centrifugal (antinormative and fluid) forces of neoliberal globalization. On the one hand, global communication is reduced to speaking in English, and language education, despite its focus on oral communication, becomes more prescriptive with test-

oriented accountability. Neoliberal communication competence in English is also commodified as testing businesses are becoming major players in the language-in-education policies (Kubota, 2011). On the other hand, neoliberal workers have more fluid and dynamic understandings of language choice, use, and learning, as consistent with neoliberal multiculturalism as well as the multi/plural scholarly discussion in research. Yet it is important to recognize that this heterogeneous orientation is still situated in the neoliberal capitalist pursuit of economic profit, a system that widens income gaps, and what primarily drives such communication is facilitating the flow of capital in an ever more efficient manner.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The two-faced neoliberal communication competence offers several implications and recommendations for English language professionals who advocate linguistic diversity and equitable relations of power among languages and language users and learners in contexts of English as a foreign language (EFL).

First, this article demonstrates corporate workers' skepticism about the relationship between test scores and job performance. This indicates that policies and practices that promote test-oriented education are problematic not only because of pragmatic incongruence, but also because of their washback effects on teaching and learning, including widening of the English divide or the economic gap regarding access to opportunities to learn English and the outcomes of the learning (Terasawa, 2017). Although we do not propose to abolish all language tests, more sensible and radical approaches should be sought. As Shohamy (2019) states, "Current tests serve the system: they are *not* based on how languages ARE used, but on how some think [they] SHOULD be used" (p. 284). We must demand that tests become more aligned with real language use and be offered equitably for all learners (Jenkins & Leung, 2019).

Second, it is necessary to question the ideology that elevates English as an international language with universal utility. English language professionals are naturally inclined to promote the teaching and learning of English. However, they must recognize the multilingual reality of global communication and encourage learners to have open-minded attitudes toward learning other languages. Furthermore, this attitude, as a part of the qualities for border-crossing communication,

goes beyond learning; it encourages respect and affirmation of all kinds of linguistic, cultural, and human diversity.

Third, educators may consider strategically appropriating the fluid/heterogeneous facet of neoliberal communicative competence for educational transformation. Although this facet, or border-crossing communication, signifies communicative qualities of elite neoliberal corporate transnational workers, it challenges the fixed conceptualization of communicative skills and it can be appropriated for the antineoliberal reorientation of language education. Obviously, not all school learners in EFL contexts will become elite workers for multinational corporations or use English for work (Terasawa, 2017). Even elite workers are unlikely to be required to use native-like English. Expecting all students to learn English to become globally competitive via the norm-driven skill-based approach to English language education is meaningless for both career and life purposes. In reconceptualizing the goals for language teaching and learning, Leung and Scarino (2016) advocate the inclusion of personal development through knowing self and other; aesthetics that employ creativity and imagination to explore the multiplicity, openness, and uncertainty of meanings; and critical reflexivity in learning to communicate with awareness of biases and construction of difference. These goals certainly overlap the qualities of border-crossing communication that can resist the fixed approach to neoliberal language education. What makes language teaching and learning educational is not about enabling learners' acquisition of capital, but it ought to be about becoming more as a person—*ser mais* [be more] in Freire's (1970) words.

We need to acknowledge that neoliberal economic and institutional systems are entrenched in our everyday experiences. It is perhaps not possible to completely overhaul these systems. After all, most of us benefit from the products and services that neoliberal businesses produce. The system is not a total failure partly because most individual workers in many parts of the world have integrity and sensibleness in human communication. The positive side of neoliberal communication competence—the plurilingual and fluid dimension—can be productively and proactively appropriated for achieving broader educational goals for more equitable and humane ways of communicating with others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We thank Constant Leung for his feedback on our earlier draft.

THE AUTHORS

Ryuko Kubota is a professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, where she teaches applied linguistics. Her research draws on critical approaches to second language education, focusing on race, gender, culture, language ideologies, and critical pedagogies.

Yuya Takeda is a PhD candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. He studies philosophy of education, critical media literacy education, participatory video, and discourse studies.

REFERENCES

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bernstein, K. A., Hellmich, E. Y. A., Katznelson, N., Shin, J., & Vinall, K. (2015). Critical perspectives on neoliberalism in second/foreign language education. *L2 Journal, 7*, 3–14. https://doi.org/10.5070/L27327672

Block, D. (2002). "McCommunication": A problem in the frame for SLA. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 117–133). London, England: Routledge.

Block, D. (2018). The political economy of language education research (or the lack thereof): Nancy Fraser and the case of translanguaging. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, 15*, 237–257. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2018.1466300

Block, D., & Cameron, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Globalization and language teaching*. London, England: Routledge.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2–27). London, England: Longman.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*, 1–47. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/I.1.1

Celce-Murcia, M. (2008). Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching. In E. Alcón Soler & M. P. Safont Jordá (Eds.), *Intercultural language use and learning* (pp. 41–57). Berlin, Germany: Springer.

Culpeper, J., Mackey, A., & Taguchi, N. (2018). *Second language pragmatics: From theory to research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

De Costa, P. I., Park, J., & Wee, L. (2019). Linguistic entrepreneurship as affective regime: Organizations, audit culture, and second/foreign language education policy. *Language Policy, 18*, 387–406. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9492-4

Del Percio, A., & Flubacher, M.-C. (2017). Language, education and neoliberalism. In A. Del Percio & M.-C. Flubacher (Eds.), *Language, education and neoliberalism: Critical studies in sociolinguistics* (pp. 1–18). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Erikawa, H. (2009). *Eigo kyōiku no poritikusu: Kyōsō kara kyōdō e* [The politics of English language education: From competition to collaboration]. Tokyo, Japan: Sanyūsha Shuppan.

Erikawa, H. (2018). *Nihon no gaikokugo kyōiku seisaku shi* [A history of foreign-language-in education policies in Japan]. Tokyo, Japan: Hitsuji Shobō.
Fairclough, I., & Fairclough, N. (2012). *Political discourse analysis: A method for advanced students*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Flores, N. (2013). The unexamined relationship between neoliberalism and plurilingualism: A cautionary tale. *TESOL Quarterly*, *4*, 500–520. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.114
Fraser, N. (2017, January 28). Against progressive neoliberalism, new progressive populism. *Dissent*. Retrieved from https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/nancy-fraser-against-progressive-neoliberalism-progressive-populism
Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum.
Gershon, I. (2011). Neoliberal agency. *Current Anthropology*, *52*, 537–555. https://doi.org/10.1086/660866.
Hashimoto, K. (2010). "Inernationalisation" is "Japanisation": Japan's foreign language education and national identity. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *21*, 39–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860050000786
Hashimoto, K. (2011). Compulsory "foreign language activities" in Japanese primary schools. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *12*, 167–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2011.585958
Holborow, M. (2012). Neoliberal keywords and the contradictions of an ideology. In D. Block, J. Gray, & M. Holborow (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and applied linguistics* (pp. 33–55). Abingdon, England: Routledge.
Holborow, M. (2015). *Language and neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Jaspers, J., & Madsen, L. M. (2019). Fixity and fluidity in sociolinguistic theory and practice. In J. Jaspers & L. M. Madsen (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on linguistic fixity and fluidity: Languagised lives* (pp. 1–26). New York, NY: Routledge.
Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2019). From mythical "standard" to standard reality: The need for alternatives to standardized English language tests. *Language Teaching*, *52*, 86–110. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444818000307
Jenks, C. (2017). *Race and ethnicity in English language teaching: Korea in focus*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2013). Effects of policy on English-medium instruction in Africa. *World Englishes*, *32*, 325–337. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12034
Kankaanranta, A., & Planken, B. (2010). BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. *Journal of Business Communication*, *47*, 380–407. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943610377301
Kawai, Y. (2009). Neoliberalism, nationalism, and intercultural communication: A critical analysis of Japan's neoliberal nationalism discourse under globalization. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, *2*, 16–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050802567049
Kiramba, L. K., & Harris, V. J. (2019). Navigating authoritative discourses in a multilingual classroom: Conversations with policy and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, *53*, 456–481. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.493
Kramsch, C. (1986). From language proficiency to interactional competence. *Modern Language Journal*, *70*, 366–372. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05291.x
Kubota, R. (2002). Impact of globalization on language teaching in Japan. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 13–28). London, England: Routledge.

Kubota, R. (2011). Questioning linguistic instrumentalism: English, neoliberalism, and language tests in Japan. *Linguistics and Education*, *22*, 248–260. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2011.02.002
Kubota, R. (2013). "Language is only a tool": Japanese expatriates working in China and implications for language teaching. *Multilingual Education*, *3*(4). https://doi.org/10.1186/2191-5059-3-4
Kubota, R. (2016a). Neoliberal paradoxes of language learning: Xenophobia and international communication. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *37*, 467–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1071825
Kubota, R. (2016b). The multi/plural turn, postcolonial theory, and neoliberal multiculturalism: Complicities and implications for applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, *37*, 474–494. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu045
Kubota, R., & McKay, S. (2009). Globalization and language learning in rural Japan: The role of English in the local linguistic ecology. *TESOL Quarterly*, *43*, 593–619. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00188.x
Kymlicka, W. (2013). Neoliberal multiculturalism? In P. A. Hall & M. Lamont (Eds.), *Social resilience in the neoliberal era* (pp. 99–126). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Leung, C., & Scarino, A. (2016). Reconceptualizing the nature of goals and outcomes in language/s education. *Modern Language Journal*, *100*, 81–95. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12300
Liddicoat, A. J. (2007). Internationalising Japan: Nihonjinron and the intercultural Japanese language-in-education policy. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *2*, 32–46. https://doi.org/10.2167/md043.0
Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States* (2nd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
Low, E. L., & Pakir, A. (Eds.). (2018). *World Englishes: Rethinking paradigms*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
Matsumoto, Y. (2018). "Because we are peers, we actually understand": Third-party participant assistance in English as a lingua franca classroom interaction. *TESOL Quarterly*, *52*, 845–876. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.430
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication. (2017). Gurōbaru jinzai no ikusei suishin ni kansuru seisaku hyōka hyō [Evaluation of the policies promoting global human resources]. Retrieved from http://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_news/snews/107317_00009.html
Naka, K. (2012). Komyunikēshon nōryoku no ikusei" o tou: Shiirareru "sekkyoku sei, Jihatsu sei. [Questioning the "development of communication competence": Imposed "proactiveness" and "self-initiative"] *Shakai Gengogaku*, *12*, 1–19.
Nakagawa, M. (2003). Kindai eiwa jiten ni okeru communication no yakugo ni tsuite [On the Japanese equivalent for communication in modern English-Japanese dictionaries]. *Shakai Gengo Kagaku*, *6*(1), 149–152. https://doi.org/10.19024/jajls.6.1_149
Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *6*, 281–307. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014
Park, J. S.-Y. (2011). The promise of English: Linguistic capital and the neoliberal worker in the South Korean job market. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *14*, 443–455. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573067

Park, J. S.-Y. (2013). Metadiscursive regimes of diversity in a multinational corporation. *Language in Society, 42*, 557–577. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404513000663

Phan, L. H. (2017). *Transnational education crossing "Asia" and "the West": Adjusted desire, transformative mediocrity, neo-colonial disguise*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Saito, T. (2004). *Kyōiku kaikaku to shinjiyūshugi* [Education reform and neoliberalism]. Tokyo, Japan: Kodomo no mirai sha.

Savignon, S. J. (2001). Communicative language teaching for the twenty-first century. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd ed., pp. 13–28). Boston, MA: Heinle.

Sayer, P. (2015). "More & earlier": Neoliberalism and primary English education in Mexican public schools. *L2 Journal, 7*, 40–56. https://doi.org/10.5070/L27323602

Sharma, B. K., & Phyak, P. (2017). Neoliberalism, linguistic commodification, and ethnolinguistic identity in multilingual Nepal. *Language in Society, 46*, 231–256. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000045

Shohamy, E. (2019). Critical language testing and English lingua franca: How can one help the other? In K. Murata (Ed.), *English-medium instruction from an English as a lingua franca perspective: Exploring the higher education context* (pp. 271–285). Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Subtirelu, N. (2014). A language ideological perspective on willingness to communicate. *System, 42*, 120–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.11.004

Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 31*, 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000018

Taylor, S. K., & Snoddon, K. (Eds.). (2013). Plurilingualism in TESOL (special topic issue). *TESOL Quarterly, 47*. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.127

Terasawa, T. (2017). Has socioeconomic development reduced the English divide? A statistical analysis of access to English skills in Japan. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 38*, 671–685. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2016.1221412

Urciuoli, B. (2008). Skills and selves in the new workplace. *American Ethnologist, 35*, 211–228. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.00031.x

Urciuoli, B. (2020). Leadership communication "skills" and undergraduate neoliberal subjectivity. In L. Martín Rojo & A. Del Percio (Eds.), *Language and neoliberal governmentality* (pp. 91–109). Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Wendland, M. (2013). Controversy over the status of the communication transmission models. *Dialogue and Universalism, 1*, 51–63. https://doi.org/10.5840/du201323119

Yamada, M. (2015). *The role of English teaching in modern Japan: Diversity and multiculturalism through English language education in globalized era*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Yotoriyama, Y. (2008). Shinjiyūshugi kyōiku seisaku o kisozukeru riron no tenkai to sono zentai zō [The development of the theory undergirding neoliberal education policies and its entire profile]. In H. Sanuki & Y. Yotoriyama (Eds.), *Shinjiyūshugi kyōiku kaikaku: Sono riron, jittai to taikōjiku [Neoliberal education reform: Theory, reality, and resistance]* (pp. 36–52). Tokyo, Japan: Ōtsuki shoten.

Young, R. (2011). Interactional competence in language learning, teaching, and testing. In E. Hinkle (Ed.), *Handbook of research in language learning and teaching* (pp. 426–443). New York, NY: Routledge.