

HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY広島大学

Reading Assignment for Class 6

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND COMMUNICATION II

外国語習得とコミュニケーション II

**Submission Information**

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1. Purposes

The paper (Kubota & Takeda, 2020) investigates the core of communication competence (referred to as komyunikeshon noryoku) within Japan, comparing the views that of the policymakers, whose MIC report is conflated and focus on communication competence as a measurable skill set, and the experiences of the Japanese corporate workers, who would prefer people that could strategically communicate their professional knowledge. That is in order to uncover how neoliberal ideologies impacts language education, where individuals are viewed as mere “bundle of skills,” reducing communication competence to measurable English skills while overlooking the practical aspects of real-world communication.

The authors aim to emphasize the tension between two trends in language education, the homogenizing focus on English as a global language, which is often measured through standardized tests, and the heterogeneous reality of multilingual communication, which emphasizes flexibility and context-dependent skills.

# Methods

The study uses two main sources of data: a Japanese government policy evaluation report (MIC) and interview transcripts from Japanese transnational workers, all of which were translated into English. To which the authors apply Thematic and Content Analysis correspondingly to identify patterns and common themes related to communication in the workers’ experiences, based on corporate surveys and interview responses.

For the MIC report, they use Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) to examine the policy discourse. These findings are then compared to determine whether the views of transnational workers align with or contradict the policy narrative, focusing on how communication is understood by workers and corporate representatives.

# Findings

The findings show a clear difference in how policymakers and corporate workers define communication competence. Policymakers, guided by neoliberal values, focus on measurable English skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, evaluated through standardized tests like TOEIC and TOEFL. (However, they identify speaking as a particularly weak area among Japanese learners.) Their approach prioritizes accountability, efficiency, and measurable results, in addition to treating English as the main global language for communication.

In contrast, corporate workers emphasize a broader understanding of communication competence, which includes strategic skills (e.g., using gestures, simplifying language) and attitudinal qualities (e.g., willingness to communicate, cultural sensitivity). Workers value local languages (e.g., Mandarin, Thai) and practical communication over linguistic accuracy, highlighting the importance of intercultural understanding and professional knowledge in their daily interactions.

# Implications

The study has several important implications for language education. It calls for reforming language testing to better align with real-world communication needs. Current standardized tests often fail to reflect the skills required in multilingual, multicultural settings. Tests should be redesigned to assess actual language use and be made more equitable for all learners.

The paper also questions the dominance of English in global communication, advocating for language education policies that recognize the multilingual reality of global interactions. This approach challenges the fixed, test-oriented model of communication and aligns more closely with the fluid, dynamic nature of real-world interactions. Finally, the paper suggests that educators can strategically appropriate the fluid aspects of neoliberal communication competence (e.g., flexibility, plurilingualism) to promote broader educational goals, such as encouraging intercultural understanding and development.

# References

Kubota R., & Takeda, Y. (2020). Language-in-education policies in Japan versus transnational workers’ voices: Two faces of neoliberal communication competence. TESOL quarterly, 55(2), 458-485.