

Daburu Bind: Perceptions of the Speech of Mixed Race Japanese

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1 Abstract

This paper will explore how the Japanese speech of partially or half Japanese people (*hafu*) is perceived by fully Japanese individuals. While scholarly work has addressed the ways in which the Japanese speech of foreigners is received, this paper will bring critical race studies into the fold and complicate the traditional dichotomous construction that positions Japanese against non Japanese. By locating hafu vis-a-vis the Japanese nation-state and normative constructions of Japanese identity (as monoethnic, monocultural, and monolingual), it will posit that hafu produce a complex subjectivity that unsettles the boundaries of the Japanese state. As a result, the speech of hafu is also subject to particular ideas about the Japanese racial order and cultural norms. Through an analysis of specific media moments, it will highlight how the speech of mixed race Japanese people is expected to be both foreign and familiar, at once erudite and yet somehow deficient. Hafu are commonly questioned about their Japanese speaking ability; they are expected to avoid using *keigo* and infuse English into their speech.

2 The Problematic of Profiling: Linguistic, Racial, and Cultural

“Just as linguistic has been used to distinguish differences amongst us, it also unites us into the bundles of linguistic enclaves that reinforce our heritage and pride in our ancestry. That heritage is multiethnic by definition. When we are able to converse with people who share linguistic backgrounds similar to our own, most of us feel most comfortable and at ease. These same linguistic sensitivities alert us to differences among us...”

— John Baugh, *Linguistic Profiling*¹

*“The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. “Madam,” I warned,
“I hate a wasted journey--I am African.”
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was foully.
“HOW DARK?” . . . I had not misheard . . . “ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?” Button B, Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak...”*
— Wole Soyinka, *Telephone Conversation*²

In *Telephone Conversation*, Nigerian poet Wole Soyinka details a complex encounter with the politics of voice. Attempting to rent a house from a white woman in 1960s England, the character in the poem (ostensibly, Soyinka himself) is subject to questions about his race. His voice belies assumptions about his ancestry: he speaks “proper” English, perhaps even more proper than his British interlocutor. His speech fails to divulge his identity as a West African, black man. The “self-confession”, then, tells the white woman what she could not glean from his speech. A game of “public hide-and-speak” ensues, as the white woman attempts to locate, categorize and define the body from which this voice comes, from the other end of the phone, vis-a-vis herself.

Spoken language can be said to have two primary functions. While the first is linguistic communication, the

¹ Baugh 2003:163

² http://www.k-state.edu/english/westmank/spring_00/SOYINKA.html

second is to convey key paralinguistic cues. That is, spoken language offers the addressee insights into the identity of the speaker. It is precisely these paralinguistic cues that the white woman in Soyinka's poem sought and failed to find. Speech streams, broadly, are understood through a multidimensional framework. This heuristic, embedded in certain "linguistic sensitivities", provides listeners information about many aspects of the speaker's identity: perceived gender³, perceived sexual orientation⁴, perceived nationality⁵ and perceived age⁶, amongst other indices⁷.

Such assessments based on speech are, of course, often inaccurate and bounded on stereotypes. As *Telephone Conversation* demonstrates, assessments of people's identities based on speech alone disclose societal attitudes that are intertwined with and dependent upon situated understandings of race, culture and language. In a more contemporary setting, Rubin (1992) found that when the photographs of a Chinese woman and a white woman were paired with the voice of a native English speaker from rural Ohio, North Americans rated the voice as more accented in the case of the Chinese woman. Similarly, McGowan (2015) found that Mandarin-accented English was thought to be more intelligible when paired with an Asian face, as opposed to when it was paired with the face of a white person. These instances demonstrate that speech perception is a heavily contested site, revealing more about the attitudes of listeners than the actual linguistic abilities or particular identities of speakers. In other words, linguistic profiling necessarily implies racial, cultural and other manners of profiling as well.

While various scholars have focussed on linguistic profiling as it occurs primarily in a Euro-American setting, centered on English speech, it is instructive to move beyond the English-speaking Euro-American context and examine this phenomenon in different national, cultural and linguistic arenas. Examining the perception of the speech of mixed race Japanese by fully Japanese individuals, the problematic of linguistic profiling emerges in particularly stark terms. An analysis of the ways in which Japanese people parse the speech of mixed race Japanese reveals not only espoused representational patterns, but also the inconsistent sociopolitical positioning of multiethnic Japanese within the broader Japanese imaginary.

3 Hafu as Discourse

*"In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger...
To survive the Borderlands
you must live sin fronteras
be a crossroads."*
— Gloria Anzaldúa⁸, *To Live in the Borderlands*

*"We are aware, sometimes painfully so, that when our families talk about Nihonjin (Japanese), they are not including us."*⁹
— Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, *When Half is Whole*

The vocabulary to refer to and discuss mixed race Japanese became particularly salient in the 1940s, coinciding with the U.S. occupation of Japan¹⁰. During this period, mixed race Japanese children became increasingly common and more visible; they were the stigmatised progeny of American servicemen and Japanese women. In the 1940s, the term *ainoko* was used to refer to these children. The word, usually translated to mean "half-caste" or "crossbreed", connotes illegitimacy and prejudice, and is embedded in the historical and political contingencies of World War II.

In the following decade, *konketsuji* emerged as a way to refer to mixed race Japanese. Fish (2009) describes how Japanese policymakers drew attention to *konketsuji* as a *mondai* or problem. *Konketsuji* were constructed as shameful because they were readily identifiable as having been sired by American soldiers, reflecting an accompanying assumption that the mother was a prostitute. Further, bureaucrats cited the apparent dysfunctions

³ Strand and Johnson 1996; Johnson et al 1999

⁴ Munson et al 2006

⁵ Niedzelski 1999; Hay et al 2006

⁶ Drager 2011

⁷ Babel and Russell 2015

⁸ <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/romance/spanish/219/13eeuu/anzaldua.html>

⁹ Murphy-Shigematsu 2012:18

¹⁰ Want notes that hafu have been considered attractive since the Taisho era, citing a 1926 news article about a movie featuring mixed race actresses (Want 85).

of single-mother families. They also asserted that *konketsuji* were likely to be discriminated against and collected data that suggested mixed race Japanese performed poorly in school compared to Japanese. Because of their phenotypes, *konketsuji* were thought to be unable to operate successfully within Japanese society¹¹. Neither *ainoko* nor *konketsuji*¹² are used in the contemporary era due to their accumulated pejorative meanings.

Today, *hafu* is arguably the most common way to refer to multiracial individuals. More specifically, *hafu*, derived from the English word “half”, tends to refer to people who are ethnically half Japanese. The term itself is the subject of debate and has been criticized variously. *Hafu* may be analysed as a term that not only (falsely) bifurcates the individual, but also obscures the presence of two or more distinct heritages that inform national and cultural identities in dynamic ways. In other words, “*hafu*” positions mixed race Japanese as fragmented; *hafu* cannot access wholeness. Yet, “*hafu*” continues to be the most popular way to refer to mixed race Japanese in contemporary media and discourse.

Since the 1990s, some have begun verbalising their preference for the term *daburu* due to its implied multiculturalism, opposing the reductive quality of *hafu*. The term *daburu*, derived from the English word “double”, was originally manufactured by media outlets to address the contexts of U.S. military presence in Okinawa, Zainichi Koreans, and the parents of multiracial children¹³. However, *daburu* is yet to gain currency and many mixed race Japanese claim to endorse the term *hafu* over *daburu*, adopting it as an empowering mode of self-identification¹⁴.

Furthermore, *daburu* erases those mixed race Japanese who may not be biracial or biethnic, but multiracial. Therefore, this paper will employ the term “*hafu*”, while acknowledging its problematic nature. The word itself invokes the precarious subject-position of mixed race individuals vis-a-vis the Japanese nation-state, and directly calls up the complex power relations that govern the discursive construction of multiracial Japanese.

Defining *hafu*, scholar Koichi Iwabuchi offers:

“*Haafu*¹⁵ are a racialized group due to their phenotype. It is a discourse category for the mixed-race people who are born between the Japanese and non-Japanese race, ethnic, or foreigners, all of these categories are historically constructed.”¹⁶

As this definition illustrates, *hafu* are caught between the reified categories of Japanese and non-Japanese. *Hafu* are perceived as neither completely Japanese nor completely foreign. Rather, *hafu* unsettle the boundaries drawn between Japanese-ness and foreignness. In other words, *hafu* are rendered legible through a constantly shifting dialectic of sameness and difference. Their facial and physical characteristics, in addition to their behaviors and ways of being, are considered simultaneously distinct and familiar by the average Japanese¹⁷.

Referring to the canonical genre of writing which may be thought to constitute “a species of cultural nationalism” (Befu 2001:14), *Nihonjinron* presents Japanese-ness as a transhistorical essence. The journalistic and academic writings that comprise *Nihonjinron* poise foreignness as the diametric opposite of Japanese-ness. Within this regime, however, particular kinds of foreignness occupy different locations. Notably, whiteness is placed above Japanese-ness, while other Asians and Africans occupy the lower rungs of the racial and civilizational hierarchy. Meanwhile, *hafu* are generally stereotyped as half white or with Western roots; they are thought to possess Western phenotypes including fair skin, high noses, large eyes and taller statures (ibid).

As a result of the imbrication of Western standards of beauty in Japan and the tenets of *Nihonjinron*, part white *hafu* represent an ideal of beauty that regular Japanese can only aspire to¹⁸. *Hafu* are assumed to be attractive, exotic, sociable, cosmopolitan and also bilingual in English and Japanese in an ahistorical and depoliticized sense—regardless of their actual ancestry and upbringing. The most visible *hafu* tend to be representatives of “hegemonic *hafuness*” and appear in the Japanese imaginary as models, actors and *tarento* or talents¹⁹. In short, hegemonic *hafu* are those *hafu* who are identified as part white, physically attractive, and armed with English language ability. Hegemonic *hafu* also bolster the image of “global Japan”, in keeping with Japan’s growing emphasis on *kokusaika* and *tayousei*²⁰. Producers may often present stereotypical *hafu* in media as part of the larger project of fashioning a spectacle of multiculturalism (Iwabuchi 2014).

¹¹ Fish 2009; Arudou 2016

¹² The 1950s term *konketsuji* (混血児) is sometimes used by mixed race Japanese themselves, signalling perhaps a “taking back” of a historically oppressive vocabulary.

¹³ Carter 2014; Kamada 2010; Okamura 2016; Torngren 2017

¹⁴ Lise 2010; Murphy-Shigematsu 2012; Yamashita 2009; Torngren 2017

¹⁵ Alternative spelling of *hafu*

¹⁶ Iwabuchi 2005:13

¹⁷ Want 86

¹⁸ Murphy-Shigematsu 2001; Kamada 2010; Want 2015

¹⁹ Ko 2014

²⁰ *Tabunka kyosei* or multicultural coexistence may be considered something of a precursor of *tayousei*. Interestingly, *tayousei* and *chowa* are listed as two of the main ideals of the Tokyo Olympics 2020. Source: <https://tokyo2020.jp/jp/games/vision/>

4 The Other Hafu: Painting the Whole Picture

“It is normal that there are people with many skin colors overseas but not in Japan. In Japan, if your skin is dark like mine, you are discriminated against. That is why people like me and Sani Brown²¹ need to excel in sports or whatever, and have the Japanese recognize us.”²²

— excerpted from an interview with Okoe Ruis, mixed race Nigerian and Japanese professional baseball player

“Even today, I am usually seen not as a Japanese but as a foreigner. At restaurants, people give me an English menu and praise me for being able to eat with chopsticks.”²³

— excerpted from an interview with Ariana Miyamoto, mixed race African American and Japanese Miss Universe Japan 2015 winner

Although “hafu” connotes “part white hafu”, in truth, the majority of mixed race people in Japan today are Asian biethnic²⁴ hafu²⁵. Since the Japanese census does not ask respondents to report their ethnicity, it is difficult to provide an accurate number of hafu people in Japan today. Moreover, various groups such as the Ainu, Ryukyuan, Burakumin and “oldcomer” Chinese and Korean migrants have been largely assimilated into the Japanese population, although they once too negotiated the tenuous Japanese racial order²⁶.

Based on certain other metrics, it becomes clear, however, that part white hafu are in fact the minority. Japan has the smallest percentage of resident foreigners among the world’s advanced economies²⁷, constituting less than 2% of the overall population. However, the number of foreigners has been rising with each year. According to the Ministry of Justice, there are 2,382,822 foreign nationals registered living in Japan as of 2016, a 6.7% increase from 2015. The total includes 228,588 staying on trainee visas (up by 18.7 percent) and also a record high, and 277,331 on student visas (up by 12.4% percent)²⁸. Presently, the largest immigrant groups originate from China, Korea, the Philippines, Brazil, and Vietnam²⁹.

Further, in 2014, 3% of marriages in Japan were between a Japanese male and foreign female, and 1% between a Japanese female and foreign male. The rates of international marriages, thus, continue to increase steadily. Chinese, Filipina and Korean women constitute the majority of foreign brides, while Korean, U.S. and Chinese citizens represent the largest group of foreign grooms³⁰. Around two percent of newborn babies born in Japan in 2014 have either a father or a mother who possesses one of the aforementioned citizenships³¹. It is also necessary to note that many children of American and Japanese ancestry may be half black or other races within “American”, rather than the presumed white.

Despite the statistics, the ideal type of hafu is part white³². Four main categories inform the economy of stereotypes about hafu: (i) Ideal hafu (attractive and English-Japanese bilingual); (ii) Beautiful hafu (attractive but not bilingual); (iii) Bilingual hafu (bilingual but not attractive); (iv) Disappointing hafu (unattractive and not bilingual either) (Haefelin 2012). Popular discourses about hafu fixate on the ideal hafu, consequently eliding the narratives of most mixed race Japanese who may be monolingual and whose non-Japanese parent may be Asian, African, South American, and non-white Euro-American amongst others. Depending on their particular ancestry, hafu are afforded varying degrees of visibility. Korean-Japanese hafu, for example, are rendered practically invisible because of their perceived racial similarity and high degree of assimilation. As Kohei Kawabata asserts, the question of their subjectivity is effaced from most discourses of hafu identity³³.

On the other hand, darker skinned biethnic Japanese are hypervisible in many ways. This renders them particularly vulnerable to racial discrimination and practices of othering. Especially if they were raised entirely in

²¹ Abdul Hakim Sani Brown, Ghanaian and Japanese mixed race track and field athlete

²² (Want 90)

²³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/world/asia/biracial-beauty-queen-strives-for-change-in-mono-ethnic-japan.html>

²⁴ Although “ethnicity” generally denotes cultural and linguistic differences, in this paper I will use “race” and “ethnicity” more or less interchangeably.

²⁵ Want 94

²⁶ Komai 1994; Komai 1995; Sellek 2001; Lie 2001; Douglass et al 2003; Lee et al 2006

²⁷ Carroll 2012: 193

²⁸ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/03/national/japan-quietly-accepting-foreign-workers-just-dont-call-immigration/#.Wg97H7Q-dLw>

²⁹ <http://www.ipss.go.jp/p-info/e/Population%20%20Statistics.asp>

³⁰ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2014; Tornngren 2017

³¹ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2015; Tornngren 2017

³² Murphy-Shigematsu 2001

³³ Kawabata 2014

Japan and only speak Japanese, they are thought of as insufficiently hafu³⁴. As statements made by Okoe Ruis and Ariana Miyamoto suggest, Japan's mythohistory of homogeneity pushes darker skinned hafu to the peripheries of the Japanese imaginary. However, this is not only because of their distinctive phenotypes. Instead, it is crucial to highlight the role of language ideologies as well.

5 Watch Your Tongue: Keigo and The Politics of Pera-Pera³⁵

"Because of the unique properties of their language, the Japanese people have brain patterns that differ from those of most other people in the world."

— Tadanobu Tsunoda, *The Japanese Brain*

*"How to say milk? How to say sand, snow, sow,
linen, cloud, cocoon, or albino?*

How to say page or canvas or rice balls?

Trying to recall Japanese, I blank out:

it's clear I know forgetting. Mother, tell me

what to call that paper screen that slides the interior in?"

— Kimiko Hahn³⁶, *The Dream of Shoji*

For many Japanese-Americans, especially those who lived through internment, the question of language can often be a painful one. As Japanese and American poet Kimiko Hahn alludes to in her poem entitled *The Dream of Shoji*, identifying with a sense of Japanese-ness is inextricably tied with proficiency in the Japanese language. In the case of mixed race Japanese, language once again emerges as a controversial theme. For many hafu, language is an important conduit for the expression of identity.

Significantly, Nihonjinron posits that the Japanese language is the sole property of Japanese people. In the internal logic of Nihonjinron, the ability to speak Japanese necessarily rests in the presence of Japanese blood³⁷. The lived experiences of mixed race Japanese are similarly mediated by language attitudes. As culturally constructed notions of multilingualism interact with the axioms of Nihonjinron, the speech practices of hafu (and non white hafu more so) transmute into contentious arenas of debate.

In her dissertation *Hafu Time: Mainstream and Alternative Constructions of Mixed Race Identities in the Japanese Media*, Florence Crick-Friesen offers a detailed critical analysis of an episode of the television show SMAPxSMAP. Aired on 29 May, 2015, the particular episode featured a panel of celebrities known as members of *Hafu Kai* with self-identified hafu Becky, JOY, Toyota Erii, Wentz Eiji, Yuji, Anthony, Rola, IVAN and Horan Chiaki being interviewed by SMAP member Masahiro Nakai. The Japanese-ness and foreignness of these hafu talents featured on the show was exploited strategically in order to project both exoticism and proximity to Japanese-ness when appropriate or called for³⁸. Crick Friesen notes that Japanese language competency was formulated as a fundamental element that Nakai and the *Hafu Kai* drew on, establishing both difference and belonging. Nakai asks the group, "Do you have an elder/younger dynamic? Probably not, right?" (先輩後輩はある? ないんでしょ?) Becky responds, "Nobody uses honorifics when we talk" (もうみんな敬語使わない。)。Horan challenges this, however, by saying that she in fact does. Seemingly dissatisfied, Nakai persists by suggesting "You probably don't really use honorifics because you're partly foreign, right? 'Hey, what's up,' that kind of thing." (外国人が入ってるわけで、敬語とかあまりないでしょ。hey, what's upみたいな)³⁹.

Agreeing with Crick-Friesen's assessment, Nakai's assertion that the members of *Hafu Kai* would likely not use keigo suggests that the foreignness of hafu exempts them from following Japanese norms of social interaction and that hafu lack the linguistic proficiency to use keigo correctly to begin with. Nakai insists that because they are hafu, they are more given to using casual forms even in situations that may conventionally call for the use of keigo⁴⁰. Building on this, Nakai's insertion of an English phrase seems also to invoke the assumption of hafu as Japanese-English bilinguals even though many of the hafu represented do not have English-speaking heritage at all. Hafu, can "transgress the linguistic boundaries and cultural norms of Japanese"⁴¹. As proprietors of some degree of foreignness, hafu are also thought to be deficient in their Japanese speaking ability:

³⁴ Want 92

³⁵ Onomatopoeic Japanese phrase denoting fluency in a language

³⁶ <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/dream-shoji>

³⁷ Befu 2001

³⁸ Crick Friesen 2016

³⁹ Crick Friesen 2016:19

⁴⁰ ibid

⁴¹ ibid

“Nakai positions the use of honorific language as a symbol of Japanese belonging, as if by exposing the members’ ‘limited’ language ability this will mark them as foreign. However, there are many young Japanese who are unable to correctly use honorific speech which attests to the paradox of using this as a measure of Japaneseness.”⁴²

Crick-Friesen goes on to analyse the ensuing exchange wherein Wentz opposes Nakai and asserts that he is indeed Japanese. Wentz, perhaps fed up with Nakai’s stubborn pushback, says that he sometimes wishes he could say “yo” like foreigners in Japan often do. He quips, “Did that not seem foreign enough?” (外人感が足りないじゃないですか?) Given the context, the interaction is mediated by jest and performativity, and resists being actually confrontational. However, this particular media moment offers key insights into the ways in which the Japanese-ness and foreignness of hafu may be leveraged from moment to moment for dramatic and comedic effect.

Moreover, negotiations surrounding language bring to light the expectation placed on hafu to be not only visibly foreign (in terms of their physical appearance), but also audibly foreign. Hafu may be considered narrators of a register of *yakuwarigo* or role language. In other words, the role of the hafu is to present a type of domesticated foreignness to Japanese audiences; hafu must inhabit foreignness in their speech while simultaneously speaking in a way that is easy to consume by the average Japanese. As a result, the role language of hafu is infused with English, and is often bereft of keigo. Adopting Teshigawara and Kinsui’s definition of *yakuwarigo*, hafu, too, present a “fictionalised orality”⁴³ that reifies their positionality as partial and perpetual outsiders. This framework is particularly instructive when analysing the specific case of Rola, one of the members of the aforementioned Hafu Kai, which I present in the following section.

6 Appreciating Rola

*“When you see Rola for the first time, you may be confused. She is extremely easy going, even sound a little crazy. Her animated hand gestures and comments she makes on everything keep the audience laughing. She is a very special model because of her slightly tanned skin tone. She isn’t a typical Hafu model you would come across in Japanese fashion magazines.”*⁴⁴

*“When I moved to Japan, I had no concept of the culture, language, anything. It was definitely a struggle, but one I wouldn’t trade. The difficulties I faced growing up, from a lack of ability to communicate to looking very different than the kids around me in a homogeneous society are a strong part of who I am today.”*⁴⁵
— excerpted from an interview with Rola

Rola is a popular celebrity with Bangladeshi, Russian and Japanese ancestry. As Want writes, Rola is commonly used to promote traditional Japanese foods such as pickled vegetables and *gyuudon* under the Yoshinoya brand presumably because of the false assumption that hafu do not consume such local foods. This serves to surprise the audience and thus heighten the interest of potential customers⁴⁶. Since the time of Want’s writing, Rola’s repertory has enlarged to include GU, Suntory’s Jim Beam liquor and tourism promotions for Kagoshima, amongst other ventures.

Although Rola has exploded onto the Japanese media scene, her speech has often come under fire. Specifically, Rola is well-known for her consistent use of *tameguchi* or casual speech- even in settings where the usage of keigo is more appropriate and indeed, expected⁴⁷. She is often criticized for speaking in a childish manner, accompanied by extralinguistic gestures such as filling her mouth with air, gesturing with her hands, sticking her tongue out, and such. Some have suggested that Rola’s overall comportment and use of casual speech is a form of *kyarago*- that is, she is deliberately constructing a character who is cutesy and accessible using casual speech, notwithstanding the situation⁴⁸. On the other hand, people have also conjectured that Rola is unable to speak Japanese well because she has foreign blood⁴⁹. Rola, on several occasions, has had to defend herself:

⁴² Crick Friesen 2016:20

⁴³ Teshigawara and Kinsui 2011

⁴⁴ <http://www.yumitolesson.com/whats-wrong-with-rola/>

⁴⁵ <https://galoremag.com/japans-favorite-model-rola-admits-200-pairs-shoes/>

⁴⁶ Want 88-89

⁴⁷ <https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2141868315370043601>

⁴⁸ https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q1285084752 - “そういうキャラ作りだと思います。芸人さんと一緒にカメラの前ではキャラとして許されても。基本的な礼儀をわきまえなければ使ってもらえなくなります。”

⁴⁹ Ibid. “ハーフだから日本語しらない”

「よくね、わたしが敬語はなせないって思っている人がいるとおもうのだけどね、わたしはね、普段は年上のかたやはじめてあう方、病院にいったときなど、たくさんの場所で敬語をはなすよ！」⁵⁰ (Rola's personal blog, post 「みんなに言いたいこと」)⁵¹

While the given instance occurred in 2012, even five years later, Rola continues to be interrogated about her Japanese ability, centered on her non-use or deficient use of keigo. In a 2017 interview⁵², Rola was asked (Figure 1) whether in recent times there have been more situations in which she has been expected to use keigo (最近では敬語を使わなくてはならない場所も増えたんじゃないですか?). She responds in the affirmative (Figure 2), saying that she often uses keigo (うん、敬語は普通よく使ってる). Rola explains that she often uses keigo when she takes taxis (Figure 3). To this, her panel of interviewers ask what sorts of keigo she uses (Figure 4) in the given situation. Rola offers (Figure 5) in a humorous manner: 「こんにちは、失礼いたしま〜す。はい、ありがとうございました。楽しい運転でした。」 Following this, Rola, her interviewers and onlookers from the studio all laugh (Figure 6). The producers also inserted a laugh track, presumably in order to heighten the comedic effect of the interaction.

As the interview demonstrates, Rola is continuously interrogated about her Japanese language ability, hinging on the topic of keigo. When Rola offered that she in fact knows how to and does use keigo, the interviewers are suspicious and probe further. The viewer is meant to laugh when Rola presents her elementary and amusing usage of keigo, and empathise with the mainstream Japanese audience to whom Rola's speech is comical, unrefined and juvenile.

Both Rola and her interviewers co-construct the interaction as unserious and flippant, but in truth, there is no less at stake than Japanese identity and its embeddedness in language ideology. Although Rola was reportedly raised in Bangladesh till the age of nine where she attended American international school, she has been living and working primarily in Japan for the past eighteen years. It is not unimaginable that having spent her most of her life in Japan, Rola is able to use keigo- at least as well as her Japanese peers. As Crick-Friesen mentioned, it seems unfair that the Japanese language ability of hafu is determined based on their capacity to use keigo despite the fact that keigo is often thought to be difficult by mainstream Japanese as well. This, in effect, is the double bind of the hafu. On one hand, hafu are expected to produce speech that is legible as foreign. On the other, they may often be held to unrealistic standards of Japanese proficiency.

7 Conclusion

*“There are no handles upon a language
Whereby men take hold of it
And mark it with signs for its remembrance.
It is a river, this language,
Once in a thousand years
Breaking a new course
Changing its way to the ocean.
It is mountain effluvia
Moving to valleys
And from nation to nation
Crossing borders and mixing.”*
— Carl Sandburg⁵³, *Languages*

In light of the discussion of the ways in which hafu are positioned in the Japanese imaginary coupled with the case studies presented of particular media moments, it becomes clear that the speech practices of hafu are subject to fluctuating, often contradictory impulses and expectations. In a sense, the speech that hafu are expected to produce constitutes one type of yakuwarigo. Qualitatively, the speech of hafu is assumed to be inflected by English-Japanese bilingualism and casualness. When this sort of speech is not produced by hafu, they may be subject to question, criticism and direct opposition. In other words, hafu are not legible as hafu unless they produce speech that is identifiable as foreign and yet Japanese, and familiar and yet exotic.

Each hafu is, of course, unique. Their specific national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds vary widely. Most hafu ostensibly do not conform to the archetypal construction of hafu or the so-called ideal type. For this reason,

⁵⁰ <https://rocketnews24.com/2012/01/31/177638/>

⁵¹ “You know, often people think that I don't know to speak in keigo but I actually do use keigo for instance with elders, when I first meet people, when I go to the hospital... I use keigo in many different places!” (Message for everyone)” [my translation]

⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRhpDj3UCoM>

⁵³ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45038/languages>

it is necessary to move beyond the ideal type and bring forth more diverse representations that speak to the embodied, lived experiences of mixed race individuals in Japan today. While hafu are becoming more and more visible in everyday media, close analysis of specific representational patterns and the goals of productions suggest that hafu are deployed to fabricate pageants of multiculturalism:

“The term [multiculturalism] has been deployed to account for the progressing acknowledgement of the changing face of Japanese society. Such discursive commitment may have suggested critical engagement with the diversifying Japanese reality. However, it has been criticised for being a merely discursive policy tool... The emergence of the multicultural ideal did not mean that immigration and the growing (visible) presence of foreigners in Japan, or the future prospects of accepting even more foreigner workers to mitigate the effects of Japan’s population ageing, would not be contested. Particularly in popular media discourses, the presence of foreign migrant workers has often been seen as disruptive to the national fabric of Japanese society.”⁵⁴

Radical multiculturalism does not deny individuals their internally diverse identities. The sort of superficial multiculturalism that the analysed Japanese media moments demonstrate, however, are less concerned with representing the lived experiences of multiracial Japanese with veracity. Rather, they are engaged in fabricating Japan as the stage for an emergent multiethnic tableau.

According to the most recent statistics, one of every thirty babies born in Japan today is mixed race⁵⁵. Their growing presence indicates that Japan may be undergoing crucial demographic shifts; discourses of Japanese-ness and foreignness require reconsideration in order to adequately understand and integrate the experiences of hafu within the larger narrative of contemporary Japan. Further, as the foreign population of Japan increases with each year, it is important to note that both the Japanese state and the media treat different types of foreign bodies differently. While lighter skinned foreigners do not suffer in quite the same way at the hands of the Japanese racial hierarchy but may nonetheless be at the receiving end of prejudice, darker skinned foreigners continue to be thought of as “contaminants” of “pure Japan”⁵⁶. Japan, of course, has never truly been monocultural, monoethnic and monolingual⁵⁷. Yet, the exclusionary logic of the Japanese nation puts hafu in a peculiar position: they are both within and without, embraced and rejected, and admired and despised.

Racialized hafu challenge more than just a visual order. They also endanger the aural regimes that structure Japanese society. With the dizzying and disjunctive movements of people, cultures and ideas that contemporary globalisation brings, Japanese society is changing like never before. So too is the Japanese language. Already and in the future, the interlocutors of the Japanese language will be multiracial. We must hear them, and seek to represent their voices as they are, not as we hope for them to be.

⁵⁴ Świtek 2016:22

⁵⁵ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/9/hafu-in-japan-mixed-race.html>

⁵⁶ Lie 2001

⁵⁷ Befu 2001; Lie 2001; Sellek 2001; Lee et al 2006

Appendix



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

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