

The Anti-English Linguistic Imperialism Movement: Savior of Japanese Identity or Harbinger of Petit Nationalism?

反英語帝国主義運動：

日本のアイデンティティの救済者か、ペティ・ナショナリズムの前兆か？

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英語帝国主義、日本、ペティ・ナショナリズム、イデオロギ-、レトリック批評、アイデンティティ、多言語主義、多文化主義

要旨

本論は一部の英語教育研究者およびコミュニケーション学者が議論している「英語帝国主義への反論」に見られるイデオロギ-を批判的に分析することを目的とする。これら研究者達は日本人の英会話に対する熱のいれ方、日本人の欧米文化の取り入れ方、学校英語教育の方向性などを一種の「英語帝国主義のイデオロギ-」に毒された病理であると見なし、英語帝

国主義を批判している。しかしその一方でこの帝国主義に対抗する手段として「コミュニケーションの平等」の名の下に日本国内における英語の使用の否定、「美しい日本語」の保持、日本人としてのアイデンティティの確立などを提案する向きがある。本論はこのような 19 世紀的国家イデオロギーにも似た思想が、果たして真のコミュニケーションの平等、国際人の養成に健全な形でつながるのか、多言語主義・多文化主義の立場から理論的考察を試みるものである。

The aftermath of the current economic recession appears to have hurled Japan into a serious identity crisis. When the euphoria of economic prosperity turned out to be a hoax, when the bubbles burst, the loss of confidence in something “Japanese” surged. An increase in the number of suicide cases, juvenile delinquency, bankruptcy and the merger of major economic institutions, the fear of *ristora* (restructuring of employment, i.e., lay-offs) among company employees harmed the very substance that Japan had proudly thought of as impregnable. A TV commercial of a nutrition supplement drink, once celebrating the strength of “potent” Japanese business, now features healing piano music by Ryuichi Sakamoto. These examples reflect the bleak future of Japanese society towards the turn of the century.

As a counterpoint to this loss of confidence, Japanese society has seen the rise of “petit nationalism,” namely, restoration of lost confidence as “Japanese” by invocation of past signs and symbols of an imagined nation. A new Asahi beer advertisement poster on the subway features the slogan “*Makeruna Nippon* (Cheer Up, Japan!)” and “*Nippon no Egao Fuyashimasu* (We will increase Japanese smiles).” The Chamber of Commerce of the city of Harajuku raised banners on the shopping streets, saying “*Nippon wo Homeyo*” or “Let’s praise Japan!” Shintaro Ishihara, a rightist politician, coauthor of “*No to*

Ieru Nippon (The Japan That Can Say No)”, was elected as the new governor of Tokyo. During his campaign, he pledged to revitalize Japan by the reconstruction of Tokyo. One of his major pledges was elimination of the US Air Base in Yokota, a suburb of Tokyo. By calling for this, Ishihara aimed at increasing the awareness of Japanese towards a kind of national autonomy. The result is not unlike that of national identity leaders everywhere (Hitler included) before and after the second World War. One who looks confident and dons the breastplate of ‘racial identity’ during economic recession can hardly fail to appeal to people.

“A society undergoing crisis, particularly a crisis over which groups should be dominant”, according to Cormack (1992), “will manifest competing self-images” otherwise “the society will lose confidence” (p. 12). Petit nationalism is one of the ways to create such a counter self-image. This type of formation of self-image is motivated, I suggest, by a form of social Oedipus complex, reaching back towards and desirous of an image of a strong ‘mother’ country. The image, created by what I term petit nationalism (in contrast to more warlike expressions of nationalism involving aggressive action and overt propaganda), can easily prevail among people who recognize themselves as belonging to the group, symbolically the comfort of the maternal womb.

Academia is by no means free from this thrust of petit nationalism. While studies on the “uniqueness of Japanese culture” or “*Nihonjinron*” back in the 1980s were carried out mainly in order to explain the economic vitality of Japan, which enabled her to recover from the ashes of World War II, petit nationalism in the 90s seems to have emerged as a palliative, a stamina drink to regain the lost confidence of Japan. Nobukatsu Fujioka, professor of education at University of Tokyo, argues that historical descriptions of such incidents in World

War II as “comfort women” or the “Nanking massacre” in a history textbook is so “masochistic” that they give a negative image about the history of their own country to pupils. Therefore, he proposes that Japan rewrite those descriptions so that Japanese children will develop a more “cheerful” view of their history (“Defender of,” 1997, p. 7). He even promotes a rehabilitatory forensic method in high school social science classrooms. He proposes that classes have students debate on a topic such as “Resolved: That the Nanking Massacre was a Myth” in class in order to reconsider (but essentially alter) the negative image of own history. Current disputes concerning the purported purity of the Japanese language can be analyzed, I suggest here, in the same line as the culture of petit nationalism.

In sum, what this paper deals with is petit nationalism as it operates across English language education and communication studies in Japan. Specifically, I refer to the debate over “English Linguistic Imperialism,” a popular dispute among a certain group of TEFL scholars and communication scholars concerning the use of English language in Japan. Those scholars characterize the widespread eagerness to learn English conversational skills among Japanese and also the direction of school education to foster English language communication as “an epidemic,” which promulgates the ideology of English Linguistic Imperialism (ELI). This view, Anti-ELI, may have succeeded in illuminating the problems of language education in Japan, i.e., the dominant position of particular languages, especially English by white American or British, and the lack of attention to other languages or varieties of English. However, as a remedy for this “linguistic bias”, those scholars propose the policy of promoting “equality in communication,” in which they argue that the Japanese should stop using English within Japan. They ought to restore confidence and identity as the Japanese. Some even go on to argue

that the establishment of a unique cultural self is the key to a better understanding of other cultures.

The concepts underpinning anti-ELI are ideological in the sense that, first, they are apparently “taken-for-granted” in the elaborations of anti-ELIists. Second, those concepts are socially constructed and legitimized. Therefore, they are inevitably detached from, or mask other realities. Among myriad definitions of the term “ideology,” Stuart Hall’s well-known definition is still useful. Hall regards ideology as “the mental frameworks — the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation — which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (Hall 1986, p. 29). A particular mental framework within the self is usually established as a “taken-for-granted” and functions as “grammar” or “logic.” Therefore, it does not become a target of critical scrutiny. Rather it keeps demanding its “universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world” (Hall 1982, p. 65). It assembles more followers.

Praise of language purity and melancholy or rage against the loss of confidence in racial identity are two major taken-for-granted among anti-ELIists. Criticism of the language style of Japanese high school girls or admixtures of Roman alphabet in the Japanese system of writing is one small example of this phenomenon. Paradoxically, a newly founded organization for international exchange, the English-Speaking Union of Japan (ESUJ), aims at the promotion of international mutual understanding through English. However, in their mission statement, they assert “we wish to address two issues particular to Japan at the present time: first, the need to convey the opinions of the Japanese people to the rest of the world, and second, the danger that the beauty of the Japanese language will be lost through the unnecessary and indiscriminate introduction of English into the

language” (ESUJ pamphlet, p. 5). Yasushi Akashi, vice president of the organization and former Under Secretary General of the United Nations claims “our own language has been adversely affected by the promiscuous introduction of English words and phrases. Not only does this make it difficult for us to preserve the beautiful Japanese language, but it also renders our English comprehension more confused” (ESUJ pamphlet, p.3). It is not mere coincidence when Akashi used the word ‘promiscuous’ in his remarks. His images of the Japanese language appear to be those of defenseless mother, pure virgin, and the intrusion of English as violent assault, rape. Here, the linkage of linguistic contact and sexual contact is clear. Is language mixing in this view a disease, AIDS? In fact, this organization co-opts people seemingly affluent in international experience, such as former ambassador in Italy or Britain, Chair of Fuji Xerox, Sony, Morgan-Stanley Japan Ltd., advisor of Simul International, and so forth, as well as university professors as its officials. This ideology is not the property of tendentious intellectuals but one can surmise that it reveals itself among what we may call the general populace. The adherents of this ideology hardly stop to look beyond the ideology to see how they confine themselves to the narrow mold of “Japanese.”

In this essay, I will try to do the following things. First, I will briefly outline the arguments of anti-ELI scholars in order to clarify two major presuppositions that underpin their ideology, i.e., existence of Japanese “racial” identity and the mixture of linguistic, cultural, and national borders. Second, I will describe how those presuppositions differ from the linguistic and cultural realities of Japan from the view point of multilingualism/multiculturalism. Third, I will examine the close relation between opposition to ELI and the imperialistic state ideology from the nineteenth century in order to further delineate

the ideological nature of anti-ELI arguments. Finally, this paper concludes that the proposal by anti-ELI scholars is theoretically and practically flawed, and does not contribute to equality in communication which those scholars propose.

My position in this essay is a critical even polemical one. There is a clear purpose behind my criticism, that is, to demystify the ideology behind anti-ELI for the purpose of emancipation of our self identities. McKerrow justifies this line of criticism suggested here by use of the term “the critique of domination,” as part of his “critical rhetoric” theory. “The critique of domination has an emancipatory purpose — a telos toward which it aims in the process of demystifying the conditions of domination” (McKerrow 1989, p. 91). When it comes to the issue of anti-ELI, it is difficult to clearly differentiate the dominating and the dominated. Rather what is at the stake is the fact that anti-ELIists are both dominators and the dominated at the same time. In other words, their ideology confines themselves to a small mold labeled “Japanese” and does not allow the free, personal choice of multiple identities. Besides, this confinement further induces people to have a narrow view toward the outer world, eliminates outsiders, and provokes counter productive results in mutual understanding among people. Therefore, the critique of domination is a justifiable position of attack in this essay.

The perspective that I employ to look at the discourse of anti-ELI is that of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Multilingualism, according to Miura (1997), usually refers to a personal command of multiple languages and a social conditions where many languages are used at a time. But it also refers to an attitude of appreciation or valuing the use of multiple languages and to guarantee and further promote them (Miura 1997, p. 12). Anti-ELI contains or embodies linguistic separatism (use Japanese in Japan, use English in America),

and monolingualism, which eliminates the existence of others within a group (Use Japanese in front of foreigners as long as you are in Japan) as its dogma. Therefore, multilingualism provides an effective analytical tool to describe the reality, masked by anti-ELI ideology.

Anti-English Linguistic Imperialism: An Overview

Use of English in Japan has been more diverse of late, not only in official school education. Private language schools continue to thrive. More and more students enjoy the opportunity to travel and study abroad. Neon signs and advertising posters in town tend to use more alphabet and loan words in Katakana than Japanese traditional orthography, i.e., Chinese characters and Hiragana. This particular language situation is viewed with horror by anti-ELI scholars as the “imperialistic invasion of Japan by English language.” While many scholars give their analyses of this matter and various proposals for remedy,¹ Yukio Tsuda, professor of communication at Nagoya University, for example, tries to delineate the mentality of those Japanese who are ‘addicted’ to English. He argues that ever since the sudden visit of the American fleet led by Commander Perry in the late nineteenth century, the Japanese have been suffering from a deep inferiority complex, faced by the overwhelming power of America. This Perry Shock, according to Tsuda, had a massive impact upon the stability of Japanese identity, and induced in the Japanese a split self: a co-existence of the “Inner Self,” which embodies antipathy towards European and American cultures, and the “Outer Self,” which admires those cultures as superior (Tsuda, 1990, p. 119).

Tsuda further argues that this mental devastation is the key to understanding the admiration to English by the Japanese and the

“flood” of English language in Japan. He attributes the tendency of the Japanese to feel inferiority to “*Gaijin*” or foreigners to their “Inner Self.” Because of their obsessive neurosis, the Japanese feel obligation to speak English in front of foreigners even in Japan. Their eagerness to spend money for private language schools in addition to official school education is the reflection of this awe and respect towards *Gaijin*, or the “*Gaijin Complex*,” according to Tsuda (1990, p. 125). On the other hand, their admiration of European and American culture is the result of “Outer Self.” Examples of this admiration are infinite; the “addiction” to English conversation such as the desire to increase fluency in English (*Eigo ga pera pera ni naritai*) and to study abroad, such cultural stereotyping as recognizing the sense of beauty in a blond haired white, and the prevailing use of Roman alphabet in advertisements. All of the phenomena, according to Tsuda, are the reflection of a worship of European and American cultures by the Japanese.

The inferiority complex of the Japanese causes significant problems, according to the Anti-ELI scholars. First, foreigners in Japan do not even try to speak Japanese language and manage to do everything by English. Oishi (1990) observes that American and British people believe that they can do with English everywhere on the earth and do not even try to learn local languages. On the other hand, the Japanese tend to be apologetic in front of them even in Japan and say “I’m terribly sorry, but I can’t speak English” (pp. 109-110). Tsuda (1990) argues that scholars from non-English speaking regions are at an unequal position because English is commonly used at international conferences and conventions. Since they have to give lectures, presentations, and answer questions in English, their physical as well as mental burdens are enormous (p. 29). Those scholars are also disadvantaged in access to information compared to English speaking

scholars since many academic articles are written in English (p. 30).

Anti-ELI scholars have been making various proposals to alter this language situation in Japan. However, in this essay, I would like to focus on one of the proposals, which might be labeled “the denial of the use of English language in Japan.” To clarify this proposal, I will analyze the excerpt from the manifesto written by Tsuda (1990), “21 Proposals for Consciousness-Raising for Emancipation from English Domination.”

“21 Proposals for Consciousness-Raising for Emancipation from English Domination.”

A. About the English Language

2. It shall be recognized that English is a ruling language in the world and that the language oppresses minorities.

B. About “Gaijin,” i.e., European and American people

7. It shall be recognized that it is not necessary to speak to Gaijin in English inside Japan,

C. About the “Self” of the Japanese

12. The Japanese must establish a positive self consciousness.
13. The Japanese shall recognize the existence of crisis in their self consciousness in relation to the West.
14. The Japanese shall recognize that the Japanese language is indispensable in order to maintain order in self consciousness as Japanese.

D. About Internationalization

21. It shall be recognized that an international person is not a cosmopolitan, but a person who has a positive self image as Japanese. (Tsuda, 1990, p. 198)

The linguistic/cultural situation in Japan that this manifesto describes is that Japan is colonized by English and Western culture, and that Japanese are psychologically subordinate to “Gaijin,” defined as “blond, blue-eyed, whites.” Tsuda proposes that in order to restore a positive image of what is called “Japanese identity” Japanese must use the Japanese language to counter Western people, and “destroy their consciousness of superiority and erase our sense of inferiority” (Tsuda, 1990, p. 201).

The observation so far has clarified that there are two major presuppositions which underpin the ideology of anti-ELI. First, they take it for granted that personal identity must be rooted in that of nation and race, i.e. Japanese must maintain what they called “Japanese identity.” Second, they understand that a particular language and culture is the property of those who live in that country, i. e. the mixture of linguistic, cultural, and national borders. From now, I will examine each presupposition in order to reveal the myths attached to them.

Identity as the Japanese

The assumption behind these ideas is the dichotomy that the Japanese language is the property of the Japanese and English is that of “Gaijin.” However, this dichotomy lacks comprehension of the actual situation in Japan. The argument’s premises are not valid. First, it is unclear what ELI proponents mean by “the Japanese.” The mid-1980s witnessed the emergence of a heated debate over concepts such as “the uniqueness of the Japanese culture” or “Japan as a racially homogeneous nation.” Japanese cultural theories, or *Nihonjinron*, have been criticized since then, but are still maintained rigorously.

According to these theories, “the Japanese” are the direct descendants of the Yamato race, sharing a pan-Japanese identity, which is maintained and transmitted by the Japanese language. It seems that the particular view of Japanese by Anti-ELI scholars shares much with that of Nihonjinron. Referring to the relation between language and identity, Tsuda (1990) mentions “language plays a vitally important role in establishing racial and national identity. If each person spoke different languages, ties and the stability of race and nation hardly grew, and so did racial and national identities. Language is directly connected to consciousness, therefore promotes homogeneity of language, unity of consciousness, and stability of identity” (p. 89). Moreover, he argues that speaking in foreign languages, especially in English for Westerners in Japan, is an action “that dumps the Japanese language, the core of the Japanese identity” (p 92).

Prohibition of the use of English by “the Japanese” within their national border as a strategy for consciousness-raising of racial identity, however, is an impossible idea. The idea is flawed even at the level of its underpinning assumption, i.e., “the Japanese” must identify themselves by the use of the Japanese language. In the very strict sense, the only means that can clearly label a group of people as “the Japanese” is registered nationality. If somebody possess Japanese nationality and carries its passport, he or she can safely be categorized as “Japanese” without doubt. Nationality provides a useful administrative “proof,” which divides Japanese from Americans. Nonetheless, identity does not or should not function as the same because its axis is not official registration, but personal choice. In spite of their Japanese nationality, those who have long overseas experiences may feel much stronger intimacy to the languages that they have been with rather than Japanese. Naturalized Japanese, though they are “the Japanese,” may feel strong identity in their

native languages.

Personal choice of identity, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously, is sometimes quite a meaningful decision for people. Many Korean descendants in Ikuno ward, Osaka, can no longer speak Korean and use Japanese on a daily basis. Maher (1997) observed that in an interview with him, those Koreans living in a small district of Osaka did not even try to speak in standardized Japanese, but rather spoke Japanese in a strong Kansai accent and seemed to feel strong intimacy to it. He argues that this avoidance of standard Japanese and their preference of Osaka dialect exemplifies the psychological opposition of a marginalized community to the power and oppression of the central government, under which they survive (p. 79). In other words, the Osaka dialect is necessary for those Koreans to maintain the unity of their community. Quite a few young people in Tokyo, as well as the elderly in Yokosuka, are naturally raised with American pop music on the radio, enjoy watching performances of Michael Jordan and Sammy Sosa on sports cable television channel, wear Levi's jeans and a Grateful Dead T-shirt, talk with friends via letter and e-mail in which they use both Japanese and Roman writing systems. These things are parts of the identities that people acquired in the course of their lives. By forcing them to abandon those "shameful, corrupted, and rotten" elements and to appreciate "genuine Japanese identity" is, therefore, nothing but a denial of their true personal identity, a denial of personal freedom.

Since identity is a matter of personal choice, it is completely possible for a person to have multiple identities. While appreciating ancient poems in the Tale of Genji or the stylistic beauty of Soseki Natsume's "Kusamakura," one can be moved also by lyrics of Bob Dylan. She might spend a night at a bar with a glass of bourbon whiskey one night, while she may be having fun with friends with a

cup of *saké* at a Japanese-style bar the following week. Maher and Kawanishi (1993) explain this phenomenon by taking a Korean descendant in Japan (*Zainichi*), Nobuko Kan, as an example. Kan is a writer and essayist living in Japan. In spite of her ethnic background, she does not call herself “Zainichi Korean,” but “Nihongo-jin (Japanese language person).” Born and raised in Japan, Kan speaks Japanese as her native language and cannot speak Korean fluently. However, she recognizes both Korean and Japanese elements in herself and regards herself as “a Korean who was born in Japan and speaks Japanese” (p. 177). Maher and Kawanishi observe that those Zainichi Koreans in the current generation have begun to refuse a traditional view which enforces restoration of racial purity (“Since you are a Korean, speak Korean, learn its culture, raise racial consciousness, and use your original Korean name.”) or choice between the two (“Are you Korean or Japanese?”), but accept both flexibly (p. 177). This example implies the normal possibility that multiple identities can coexist in oneself. It is, therefore, impossible to squeeze a human being, a hybrid being, into such a mold.

Linguistic, Cultural, and National Borders.

Anti-ELI scholars argue that prohibition of English in Japan as well as promotion of the use of Japanese are justified from the viewpoint of “*Bogo-Soncho-shugi*” or “Mother Tongue Respectism.” According to Tsuda, the *Bogo-Soncho-Shugi* means to “respect mother tongues (as well as racial language or national language) of each other and to learn and use local languages in the areas where those languages are used.” He further states that this attitude contributes to the maintenance of language and culture, guarantees the “language

right (*Gengo-ken*)” of individuals and races, and reduces language discrimination and inequity in communication (Tsuda 1990, p. 200).

This idea is based on the dichotomy of “Japan-Japanese people-Japanese language” and “America (Britain)-American people (British)-English.” This distinction, however, is invalid, and would rather tend to promote linguistic discrimination. First of all, it is impossible because none of those scholars provide a clear definition of the “Japanese language.” Those scholars aim at the reestablishment of “Japanese racial identity” by the use of “Japanese” in Japan. They lament the use of the Roman alphabet for the names of public institutes, such as “JR” (Japan Railroad Company) or “JA” (Nokyo, or The Agricultural Cooperative Association of Japan), as a “corrosion of Nihongo” (Tsuda 1990, pp. 49-50). Judging from those facts, at the very best, they seem to take it for granted that there exists one linguistic system called “Nihongo”, which has been uniquely inherited by the Yamato race, and consists of three writing forms, i.e., Hiragana, Ka-takana, and Kanji (Chinese characters).

From a multilingual point of view, this close contiguity of linguistic, cultural, and national border is not supported by a theoretical basis. First, in a very precise sense, there is no such sole linguistic entity as “Japanese.” Rather, Japanese should be understood as a unit, which is compared to other units such as “English,” “Italian,” “Tibetan,” and so forth. It is merely a name designating a group of numerous lects and linguistic repertoires possessed by each person (dialects, speech styles, community language varieties and Japanese in Japan and around the world, genre employed by age groups, vocational groups, etc.). Anti-ELI scholars regard “Japanese” or “English” as a language of a particular country or a society. But this myth of “national language” can be easily revealed, observed from the view point of language use; the “mother tongue” of each person is a lan-

guage acquired in their own environment, therefore it differs from that of others. It follows that there is not a speaker of “Japanese”; what we have are speakers of various languages, who are categorized as “Japanese speakers” for the sake of convenience (Tanaka, 1992, p. 33).

There is a common understanding that Japanese has three types of characters, Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji (Chinese characters). However, this common understanding also lacks a legal or theoretical basis. Contrary to this understanding, there are various other characters used in writing. The Roman alphabet can be seen in various places such as advertisement, titles of magazines, company names, etc. Use of the Roman alphabet is so common a practice of Japanese people that the alphabet is indeed an important part of Japanese writing system. Satake (1995) observes a new writing strategy to make written text look conversational by use of Katakana instead of Hiragana 「運動はダメ、口先ではエラソーなことばかり」² or use of symbols such as stars 「あたっ☆」, exclamation marks 「どかん!!」, or facial expression (^_^) /, (;_);. This new colloquial style in written Japanese, *Shin-Genbun-Icchitai*, according to Satake, has been developed among e-mail users who want to write as they talk with friends (p. 54). From the major districts in the city of Shinjuku, Tokyo to a small shopping area in Yotsukaido, Chiba, more and more Hindi, Thai, Korean, as well as Roman alphabets, can be seen on the signs of restaurants. Those who work for those restaurants, of whatever nationality, likely use both Japanese and another language on a daily basis. For those who became interested in mastering English, for instance, after several years in Australia, or for a 70 year old person who goes to a language school out of interest, English is an important part of their sense of self, personal identity. Anti-ELI scholars, therefore, deny those daily linguistic practices of people as the “erosion of Japanese language” and try to impose a mythic “Nihongo,” which does not even have

speakers. This denial per se is against the *Bogo-Soncho-Shugi*, which they themselves advocate.

The assumption that “Nihongo” is a unique heritage of the Yamato race is not free from fatal flaws, because the existence of the Yamato is not proven. This fact is obvious when we observe numerous discussions over the origin of the Japanese. While many scholars have attempted to link the Japanese by a single line with other races (Korean origin, Ainu origin, Polynesian origin, etc.), Maher (1991) considers the origin of the Japanese as the mixture of many flows. He argues that archaeological and demographic evidence alone supports a multi-racial / multilingual interpretation of the nature of the Japan archipelago in the Yayoi era. There were frequent contacts among Palaeo-Siberian from the North, Malayo-Polynesian from the South, and old Chinese and Korean from the Continent. According to this view, Japanese has likely derived from language contact, a pidginization-creolization of languages. The view of “Nihongo” as the unique and pure heritage of the Yamato race, therefore, is highly problematic.

Petit Nationalism: A Social Oedipus Complex

The construction of images of a “national language” or “racial language” is not a recent tendency, but has been repeatedly carried out throughout history. It was highly marked in the nineteenth century when centralized governments used the illusion of a national uniform language as the basis for unifying the whole nation. Japan was of course no exception. The government made every effort to promote the notion of a standard language and provide justification for it. Kazutoshi Ueda, a leading linguist at that time, was one of the scholars who played an important role in this movement. After

three-year long study in Germany, he took the position of professor of linguistics at Tokyo Imperial University in June 1894. In October, he addressed his lecture titled “National Language and Nation” to Japanese citizens. In this lecture, Ueda called Japanese language “the spiritual blood to unite nation.” In 1895, when he published this lecture as a book “For the National Language,” he asserted that the “National language is a guardian of the Imperial House. National Language is an affectionate mother of nation” on the title page (Lee, 1994, p. 58). This notion of national language had been maintained in various ways since then, and has been emphasized whenever necessary to fan nationalism among the people. Takao Yamada, for example, published his article, titled ‘What is National Language?’ in 1941, at the dawn of World War II. He said in this article that “what we recognize as our national language was utilized as a tool to express and understand the thoughts of the Yamato race, the mainstream of the Japan Empire, is used now, and is the language with which we progress in future. This national language has been developed among the Yamato tribe and is a common language of the citizens of the Great Japan Empire. In short, it is the standard language of the Great Japan Empire.” At the end of the twentieth century, this notion of “Japanese” as a racial language is still firmly rooted in Japanese society. However, as aforementioned, the notion is riddled with contradiction.

Anti-ELI scholars assert that the Japanese have lost their esteem as Japanese because they tend to regard the English language and its accompanying culture as superior to that of Japanese. The admiration for Western culture has deprived the Japanese, we are told, of their fundamental selves. Tsuda (1993) urges that Japanese abandon English in order to restore the esteem and awareness as the “yellow skinned race” (pp. 52-53). He also argues that especially Japanese intellectuals

should not only import Western knowledge but also work hard to establish independence, uniqueness, and autonomy of Japanese culture and scholarship (1993, p. 36).

The desire to protect the mother tongue is not a unique phenomenon among Japanese anti-ELlists. A “Cultural guard” is sometimes employed by various countries that feel the threat of American culture. France requires theaters to reserve 20 weeks of screen time a year for French feature films. Australia demands that 55% of a television broadcaster’s schedule be filled with domestic programs (“Canadian cultural,” 1999, p. 26). In Canada, there is a government imposed requirement for its radio stations that 35 percent of its daytime playlist must be devoted to Canadian content. In order to be regarded as a Canadian content, artwork must fulfilled the MAPL system, i.e., a Canadian must be predominantly involved in at least two of the following categories, music, artist, production, lyrics. According to this, Celine Dion’s smash hit “My Heart Will Go On” is not Canadian because it fulfills only “artist” category (“Canadian cultural,” 1999, p. 26). However, this sentiment of fear emerges because of the myth of looking at a national border as a cultural border. People’s preference, interests, or identities, on the other hand, usually extends over national borders. So, Ivan Fecan, the president of CTV, the largest Canadian TV network, is wise when he admits that this regulation has its limits because “popular culture must be popular,” and proposes that both Canadian and American products be provided as the choice (“Canadian cultural,” 1999, p. 26).

Also, paying respect to a particular language is not a recent phenomenon, but has occurred several times in the history of Japan. Maher (1993) observes that Japan had maintained ‘diglossia’ since ancient times. Diglossia, according to Ferguson (1959), is a sociolinguistic phenomenon, in which two linguistic systems with different functions

coexist. Usually one of those languages is a high (H) form, more complex, respected, and used for writing. The other one is a low (L) form, which tend to be used in a spoken language. The language in the H form in ancient Japan was Chinese. Japan imported Buddhism, medicine, and philosophy from China. Scholars at that time studied those disciplines by medical books written in Chinese or Chinese translated version of sutras. Famous literary works such as *Manyoshu* or official documents were mostly written in Chinese. Not until the Taisho era when literary attempts to write novels in a spoken form appeared, did the written form approach spoken Japanese (Maher, 1993, p. 39). Two other writing systems, Hiragana and Katakana, were derived from Chinese characters and are currently recognized as standard written form of Japanese language. The influx of languages accompanying cultures is, therefore, not a unique phenomenon concerning English. If the interest of the Japanese in the English language is criticized as a “loss of Japanese identity,” then Japanese admiration for cultures from the Continent can be criticized as a “loss of the Yamato Spirit.” Anti-ELI scholars have not realized that massive influences from China have been much stronger than that of English. They are blind to their own contradictions. They accept Chinese characters and Kana-alphabets as Japanese and appreciate their beauty in literature. But when it comes to the use of English, they criticize it as a “corrosion of Japanese.” What makes this contradiction unnoticed by anti-ELIists is their petit nationalism, or social Oedipus complex, i.e., the mentality to cling to an imaginary “mother” language, culture, and country, and to eliminate something exotic. In the end, it denies diversity, or richness of society as well as self.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to confirm the following three conclusions. First, identity as the Japanese, one of the presuppositions on which the anti-ELI ideology is based, is a sterile if not practically impossible concept since identity is ultimately a personal choice. Government or other authority cannot (and should not) force individual to wear an artificial identity. Besides, the existence of multiple identities within the self is a possible and everyday reality. Second, the other presupposition, the alleged contiguity of linguistic, cultural, and national borders, must be also rejected, because the “Japanese language” does not exist in a strict sense and there is no rationale to enshrine only Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji as the orthography of Japanese. Third, the ideology of anti-ELI is quite similar to that of the 19 century imperialistic national ideology, which is based, I suggest, on a kind of social Oedipus complex. Anti-ELI sentiment is mere petit nationalism.

These results imply some important suggestions for those who are interested in the matters of English language education and international understanding, namely, a remedy for the inclination toward European languages at schools and a more sound way to promote international understanding. Those matters are also concerns for anti-ELI scholars as well. However, the suggestion that I will make here may provide a better perspective to look at the issue.

Toward a sound remedy for better language education

The inclination toward European languages in the language education of schools has been noted for a long time. A new bill con-

cerning the Ainu people, presented by the Hokkaido Utari Association, demands the foundation of Ainu language classes at universities (Maher, 1991b, p. 168). Korean descendants in Japan are also working hard to promote Korean education. According to a survey by the Keidan-ren (the Federation of Economic Organization) in 1993, Japanese business people under 40 years old rated Korean language as the third important language in the future (after English and Chinese). However, while 495 universities teach English and 471 universities teach German in 1996, Korean is taught at only 54 universities (Maher 1996, p. 14).

Considering cultural diversity of Japan, more efforts should be made to increase the opportunities to learn a variety of languages at schools. However, the inclination toward English language education should not be corrected by abandoning the use of English or increasing awareness of the racial identity as the Japanese. This archaic imperialistic ideology from the nineteenth century would not promote a sense of appreciation of other cultures, but rather deprive people of what little curiosity toward other cultures that they have. Also anti-ELI scholars should realize that contrary to their observation, current Japanese youth are not blind followers of “English culture.” They listen to such black-derived music as rap, reggae, and hip-hop, accept Jamaican dread locks, and enjoy conversation with friends at a Thai or Taiwanese restaurants in Shinjuku. They decorate their rooms with ornaments from Mexico, Africa, or Bali, and enjoy the fragrance of incense from India. Japanese students at this author’s school call their Korean or Chinese colleagues by their names in the original pronunciation. They are not ‘spoiled’ by European cultures but enjoy and celebrate cultural diversity in Japan.

Toward better promotion of international understanding

“International Understanding” and “Intercultural Understanding” are the two major goals that current language education in Japan tries to achieve. The Course of Study for High Schools, issued by the Ministry of Education, defines the purpose of language education as “to develop students’ ability to understand a foreign language and express themselves in it, to nurture their attitude to communicate positively in a foreign language, to enhance their interest in a language and culture, and to deepen international understanding” (Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 105). The idea behind the promotion of international understanding, however, is a reemphasis of Japanese national identity by the government, which differentiates “Japanese” and “others.” In the Explanation of the Course of Study for High Schools, the Ministry of Education defines the objective of international understanding as follows. “International understanding does not mean to understand foreign situations unilaterally. Since this term literally means understanding of relations between countries, it presupposes mutual understanding. Mutual understanding requires the basis for understanding others, and this basis is understanding of our own matters. Genuine understanding of our own country is the key to better understand other countries. In this sense, it is important to expose students to the matters in Japan whenever necessary” (Ministry of Education, 1989b. p. 105). What is implied here is the ethnocentrism of the Japanese race. They require people to be “Japanese” first and to observe the world from “the Japanese point of view.” For those of us who have acquired diverse cultural senses, this is a denial of their identities, and rather promotes stereotypes of “Japanese” and “foreigners,” which are counterproductive for international understanding. Okabe (1992) also criticizes this dichotomy

as an arrogant attitude: to view the world centered around Japan and view themselves as absolute (p. 10).

What is truly necessary in the promotion of equality in communication is to get rid of the archaic dichotomy of “Japanese / Japanese language / Japanese culture” and “American or British / English / European culture”, and to respect diversity within the self. As far as language is concerned, if somebody wants to talk to someone in English, she or he can do so even in the city of Tokyo. It is perfectly appropriate to have a conversation by mixing French and Japanese at a restaurant in Detroit or in an Ainu historical museum in Nibutani, Hokkaido, since it is quite natural for persons to have acquired various cultural aspects and use multiple languages. The paradigm of equating a national boundary to a cultural boundary was initiated by the government as part of an emergent imperialism in the nineteenth century, and has been reproduced by society, academia, and mass communication. If we, including anti-ELI scholars, would like to promote equality in communication and protect “language rights,” it is necessary to leave the traditional paradigm behind. Development, not abandonment, of diversity in the self rather leads to an understanding of diversity in others, and helps develop a good and humane attitude in communication with others.

Note

1. Oishi (1990), for example, calls Japanese complex toward English “Hakuchika (idiocy)” and their burden to learn English “Masochism” (p. 29). He proposes that Japanese ask Western countries to study Japanese to correct imbalances between East and West (p. 166). Suzuki (1975) warns of the danger of learning English

because Japanese will be dominated by American or British culture. He therefore proposes to learn “Englic”, a type of English that is free from any cultural implication as a means of international communication (p. 217). Mizuno (1993) tries to promote Esperanto instead of English for fair international communication (p. 156). Nakamura (1989) argues that schools should teach the history of domination by the Anglo-Saxons in order to promote awareness of English as a dominating language of the world (p. 210).

2. Underlined parts in Katakana are usually written in Hiragana in standard Japanese orthography.

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