

Linguistic Ecosystems for Foreign-Language Learning in Canada and Japan: An International Comparison of Where Language-Learning Beliefs Come From

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We report on international research that compares linguistic ecosystems, that is, socially constructed public attitudes and ideologies concerned with foreign-language (FL) learning, in Canada and Japan. Analyzing responses to three interview questions from 125 interviews with five categories of respondent in each country, we suggest that there are a number of key differences between the linguistic ecosystems of the two countries, most notably that whereas Canada appears to promote the learning of foreign culture with little support for FL learning, Japan appears to promote FL learning without the learning of foreign culture.

Notre article porte sur la recherche internationale qui compare les écosystèmes linguistiques, c'est à dire les attitudes et idéologies publiques définies par la société et portant sur l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, du Canada à ceux du Japon. Une analyse des réponses à trois questions d'entrevue provenant de 125 entrevues avec cinq catégories de répondants de chaque pays nous porte à conclure qu'il existe quelques différences importantes entre les deux écosystèmes linguistiques des deux pays, notamment que le Canada semble promouvoir l'apprentissage d'une culture étrangère tout en fournissant peu d'appui pour l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, alors que le Japon semble promouvoir l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère sans l'apprentissage d'une culture étrangère.

Context of the Research

In this article, we report findings from research conducted in Japan and Canada that focused on people's perceptions of national linguistic ecosystems, systems within which languages have particular roles known as *niches* (Calvet, 1999). The assumption guiding the research project is that the linguistic ecosystem reflects socially constructed public attitudes, ideologies, and collective beliefs about language-learning. Sets of social conditions and cultural factors shape the relationships among languages, often visible in the linguistic landscape (Hult, 2009). These combine to create a dynamic, situationally conditioned (Sakui & Gaies, 1999) context that shapes the beliefs of individual language-learners, predisposing them to successful or unsuccessful foreign-language learning. Researchers in this orientation examine how the language choices of individuals construct, and are constructed by, the social environment at various levels, including the nation state.

Clifton, Williams, and Clancy (1990) suggested that cultural groups have distinctive value systems that stem from cultural, national, geographic, linguistic, racial, and religious beliefs, ultimately shaping people's aspirations and achievements. Such contextual factors include (a) the social and historical norms, including migration and colonization, which cause languages to gain minority status (Nieto, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994); (b) institutional and economic influences such as reward systems and perceived opportunities for multilinguals (Breton, 1998; Grosse, 2000); and (c) perceptions of public beliefs and collective values with regard to language-learning (Horwitz, 1988; Yamamoto, 2001), which can reciprocally affect language-teaching methods in that culture (Johnson, 1999; Markee, 1997, 2000).

Foreign-Language Knowledge as Cultural Capital

Following on work such as that by Shohamy and Gorter (2009), which examines the linguistic ecosystem through various forms of analysis of language visibility and use in the public sphere, we explore participants' perceptions of whether or how FL learning is valued in the linguistic ecosystem and their consequent language-learning beliefs. Although possibly related to individual motivation for (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985) and beliefs about language-learning (Horwitz, 1988), we here shift the focus from individual learners to the social context, and from assumptions that language-learning beliefs affect FL learning in a simple causal sequence, to understanding that cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) is inherent in learning FLs, resulting in what has been termed "social capital motivation" (Kouritzin, Piquemal, & Renaud, 2009). FL knowledge, like capital, can be viewed as a resource because it "provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and . . . may be transmitted from one generation to the next" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 567) primarily through education. As capital, it is subject to the rules and conditions described by Svendsen and Svendsen (2003): "Capital therefore implies investment strategies, both at the individual level as well as at the group level. It constitutes 'the games of society,' not only the purely economic game but also the more non-material, i.e., all the games" (p. 609). Couldry (2003) explains, working within Bourdieu's analysis of media and media power, how media both describe and prescribe modern life, reproducing and resulting from ideology.

The media are both a production process with specific internal characteristics (possibly a field of such processes) and a source of taken-for-granted frameworks for understanding the reality they represent (an influence, on action in all fields). (p. 653)

This influence, Couldry suggests, gives to media what he claims Bourdieu and Passeron called *meta-capital*, that is, definitional power over symbolic and institutional systems including the education system and other functions of the government. Therefore, we chose to examine throughout the multi-stage research project images of FL study, bilinguals, and bilingualism projected by the media and how these images are translated into public attitudes toward and beliefs about FL learning. Specifically, we examine elements of the linguistic ecosystem to see how they interact to construct beliefs about FL learning.

Linguistic Ecosystems in Canada and Japan

Turning to the linguistic ecosystems in the two nations under study, we note that on the surface, Canada presents itself to the world as a multicultural society that embraces bilingualism, one with a healthy, vibrant, and facilitative linguistic ecosystem for FL-learning. Fueling this perception, research has analyzed the reasons for the success of adult immigrant learners of English (Cervatiuc, 2009); Statistics Canada (2004) has determined that French immersion students outperform non-immersion students in English reading, and Canada has official policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism. Yet although Canadians laugh at what Hofman (2000) calls the “classic American mistake of talking slowly and loudly, and assuming people would understand” (p. 161), Cummins (1996, 1989) has established that a similar monolingual reality prevails in Canada. As an example, during a visit to Japan, the first author met three middle-aged men from Ontario who worked for Toyota and were in Japan for three weeks on business. Over breakfast one morning, they discussed something that they had observed at the Japanese Toyota plant. One commented, “I’m not sure about those figures though *because they don’t speak English well enough yet.*” The others nodded in agreement. Given that these men worked for a Japanese company and were on business in Japan, it did not seem reasonable that they expected their hosts to speak English to them, and this reflected the monolingual bias (English) of Anglophone Canadians.

Various researchers have charged that this monolingual bias is problematic for Canada because “cross-national and cross-cultural cooperation is crucial for economic, scientific, and environmental progress” and demands “more two-way communication among cultures” (Cummins & Sayers, 1995, p. 10). Others have noted that the educational and social benefits of speaking more than one language appear unknown to Canadians outside language-teaching circles (Kouritzin, 2008; Kouritzin, Piquemal, & Nakagawa, 2007). In fact, a substantial proportion of the population still believes that learning a FL can negatively affect the learning of other subjects (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Although French language-learning enjoys a level of prestige in Canada not normally accorded to other languages, Anglophone Canadians’ beliefs about learning even their second official language are related to use and usefulness, particularly in an economic sense (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

The Japanese linguistic ecosystem, on the contrary, is most commonly viewed as somewhat inhibitory for foreign and minority languages. English-language teachers regularly engage in conversations about how poor the Japanese are as language-learners, citing in-class silence, poor pronunciation skills, or lack of communicative fluency (Mulvey, 1998). Recently, the *Japan Times* published an article blaming “group psychosis” for the poor FL facility of Japanese learners (Arudou, 2010) and tracing this group psychosis to what is identifiably the linguistic ecosystem. Japanese students themselves also often participate in conversations about the Japanese inability to learn FLs (Sakui & Gaies, 1999); their entrenched self-defeating attitudes toward FL learning are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome (Doyon, 2003). Self-defeating language-learning attitudes have even found their way into a celebratory book about baseball hero Ichiro:

Stock prices are falling and Japan’s long recession continues. Violence and crime appear to be on the rise as a result. Yet, today’s athletes—active overseas in greater numbers and in more sports than ever before—have made us remember the confidence and the pride we have lost. Maybe we can make it through these hard times after all. Maybe the world will finally accept us for what we truly are,

regardless of whether we are good or bad at foreign languages. (Masajima Midori, 2002, sports journalist)

In addition, some members of the Japanese press and some teachers have made political hay with international TOEFL results that indicate that Japan is near the bottom in English-language ability in Asia (Reedy, 2000).

Language politics have to date been prominent in the linguistic ecosystem in Japan. Although it must be cautioned that even in a theoretically homogeneous nation such as Japan, there are differences in cultures, understandings, belief systems, values, and mores (Bostwich, 2001; Kubota, 2003) so that any study that attempts to describe socially constructed values runs the risk of merely stating and perpetuating stereotypes, there are nonetheless certain public discourses that are a part of nation-building, self-consciously political inventions that manifest in some forms of a national identity (Tai, 2003). For example, with reference to policy and practice, researchers have convincingly argued that the Japanese idea of *kokugo* (national language) is an invented tradition, important to nation-building and colonization, disseminated through the public school system, and fundamental to the development of the concept of *Nihonjinron*, Japanese national character (Tai, 2003). Yamamoto (2001) suggests that “several crucial foreign and language policy measures” (p. 25) have led to ignorance and to the invisibility of the Japanese multilingual linguistic context. In particular, Noguchi (2001b) notes that the influence of the Japanese national curriculum and the “adoption of a standard national language” (p. 6) has led to an ideology of linguistic and cultural sameness that is only now beginning to crumble in the face of internationalization.

We must also be cautious in our comparisons. Methodologically, Noguchi (2001a) notes that comparing Western and Japanese data on those language-learning beliefs that promote active bilingualism is frustrated by data forms; whereas Japanese data on language learning beliefs are primarily surveys, those in the West are dominated by case study report. Although we note some exceptions to this rule, we were unable to locate any earlier studies that empirically compared beliefs about FL learning in Canada and Japan. Therefore, the research reported here fills an important gap.

Method

In both Japan and Canada from 2004 to 2007, using an interview protocol produced from analysis of a previously distributed survey (Kouritzin et al., 2008), 125 interviews were conducted with participants representing five categories of respondent: (a) *Administrators* category: representatives of business and government associations, managers of small or mid-sized businesses, elected officials; (b) *Teacher* category: representatives from language-teaching and academic organizations, (c) *Student* category: graduate and undergraduate students studying FLs, (d) *Student category*: graduate and undergraduate students *not* studying FLs, and (e) *Random* category: volunteers recruited in public places not fitting into the above categories.

Research Participants

Interviewees were selected from major urban regions in each country. Canadian interviewees were predominantly Anglophone and recruited from a large, mid-Canadian urban center, whereas those in Japan were predominantly Japanese-speaking from a large urban center west

of Osaka; however, in neither country were people excluded because of ethnic or linguistic origin, nor were interviewees excluded if they did not live in those centers. No attempt was made to obtain a random, generalizable sample from each of the categories in either country. Interviewees responded to volunteer recruitment signs posted in a variety of public locations and word of mouth. In Canada, data were collected in a predominantly Anglophone city that nonetheless has a large and vibrant French-speaking population. Francophone volunteers were not excluded. Because language study is required in university in Japan, a sample of university students not studying FLs could not be obtained. Consequently, 50 interviews were conducted with students, roughly half graduate students and half undergraduate students. In this article, the categories are conflated to the *student* category. In both Canada and Japan, *administrator* category interviewees often had to be telephoned through cold contact, following which, with their help, we were able to gain further participants through snowball sampling.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted by ourselves (in Japan and Canada) and by two research assistants (in Canada only) following a standardized interview protocol. In Japan, the interviewees were permitted to choose whether they would prefer to have their interviews in Japanese or English, a choice that proved unnecessary in Canada. In line with ethical review protocols from the University of Manitoba, also approved by authorities at Kwansai Gakuin University in Japan, free and informed consent in Japanese or English as preferred by the interviewee was obtained and interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews conducted in English were transcribed and analyzed; interviews conducted in Japanese were translated by the second author. Once the interviews had been transcribed, we coded all responses and then analyzed them thematically for comparisons between and within each country. We discussed the results and resolved any differences.

Data Analysis

In this article, we compare responses from Canada and Japan in response to three revealing questions about the linguistic ecosystem. The responses are representative of most responses to each question. These questions are: (a) How is learning FLs encouraged in Japan/Canada? (b) [How] does the media in Japan/Canada affect people's attitudes toward learning FLs? (c) Can you name three well-known Japanese/Canadians who speak more than one language? (prompt: other than politicians). We chose to focus on these three questions because their results provide some illuminating points of contrast for discussion.

In each country, these three questions produced answers from each of the five categories of respondents that reflected a good deal of agreement. Indeed, the similarity in responses to these questions is encouraging, pointing to a certain form of resonance or stability in findings across various contexts in each country and confirming our theoretical assumptions that diverse linguistic ecosystems are products of institutionalized ideologies and collective beliefs. Comparing answers from each country against one another, however, seems to point toward national ideologies that inhere in linguistic ecosystems, also confirming our theoretical assumptions that linguistic ecosystems are created in differing ideologies and beliefs and lead to differing cultures of learning for FLs. Below we focus on the differences between the national ecosystems.

Findings

It is important to note that there was a great deal of consensus in the responses in both locations. Therefore, we caution that our results may be considered location-specific to the policy and practices that inhere in each urban center and cannot be considered generalizable to either nation. However, in conference presentations and other public venues, we have found considerable resonance with these findings across locations in each country. For ease of reference, and because we did not exclude participants from other regions in either country, we refer to participants as Canadian or Japanese in presenting the findings.

Public Encouragement

Answers to the question that was designed to elicit information about perceived meta-capital institutional and governmental support—How is learning FLs encouraged (educationally, economically, socially)?—were completely different in Canada and Japan. In interviews with Anglophone Canadians, there appeared to be near consensus that FL learning is not really encouraged in Canadian education, except possibly in French immersion programs. Respondents noted that French immersion programs were an optional rather than a mandatory method of schooling, not necessarily available in all rural school divisions, as illustrated in this teacher interview.

I don't think it is encouraged. In our little part of Canada and very specifically where we are; in our high school, our town, there is no second language offered after Grade 10. They say the numbers aren't there. If children want to continue they need to do it by correspondence and that's a dead language then. How do you do a language on paper? So I don't think its encouraged very much. (Canada, Teacher category, EJ)

The availability of immersion programs in languages other than French is completely dependent on context. One of the interviewees explained it best:

French wasn't required where I was. A second language wasn't compulsory when I went to school and it certainly wasn't for my kids and I think that's a mistake. Especially when they went through the school system when Canada was officially a bilingual country and they were just allowed to drop French at junior high level, they didn't even have to take it for all of junior high. I think that's wrong. I'm disappointed in the school system. I think they could be way more encouraging of people learning a second language. . . . But I guess it's left to someone to have a personal interest to do it. And, I'm not sure that kids in junior high understand that they're closing out a portion of their life if they don't learn a second language. (Canada, Administrator category, JE)

In response to prompting (e.g., “can you explain that?” which was a common prompt used for all questions), Canadian interviewees noted that university entrance requirements did not normally include study of a second language and that there were few economic incentives for speaking more than one language unless one was pursuing a career in the federal civil service. Interviewees noted that many jobs in the service sector favored those with facility in more than one language, but that they did not find service sector jobs particularly desirable. Some interviewees also commented that new immigrants did not seem to be encouraged to maintain their first languages, a further indication of lack of support for bilingualism.

There isn't a lot of support in society; it's not highly valued. It's tolerated, it's considered a good idea. . . . I think there's a general atmosphere that that's a good idea. The practical support for it is not as good, trying to find preschool programs, school programs where children can continue in that language, it's tough to find, and trying to sustain that language when the dominant culture is English is very difficult. You have to be very determined to do it. (Canada, Administrator category, SC)

In Japan, nearly all the interviewees cited multiple forms of encouragement to learn FLs, beginning with preschoolers. Popular language schools such as Yamaha advertise and encourage mothers and their toddlers to learn English together through songs and routines, emphasizing fun and socializing. In every interview, support for English (and increasingly French, German, Chinese, Spanish, and Korean) was mentioned; interviewees offered evidence of this support including mandatory English-language education beginning in junior high school when students are 13 years old, mandatory FL study in university, and competitive language-focused universities offering degree programs in over 25 FLs. Interviewees explained that there were now native speakers of English in public schools throughout Japan who had come through government programs or through individual school board contracts, mainly in English, but now also in French, Korean, and Mandarin. In support of this initiative, and in support of the new curriculum mandating English-language education beginning in primary school, interviewees pointed out, the Japanese government has to provide visas, working opportunities, funding, and other forms of support.

Many interviewees in Japan noted that language schools, particularly private ones, kept language-learning in the public eye through advertising. They reported that if students wished to study languages abroad, some prefectures offered financial support of up to 50% of the cost, not just for university study, but also for language-school study and for home-stay experiences. One interviewee talked at length about her overseas experiences learning Mongolian and her friend's overseas experiences learning the Thai language, describing their ability to garner governmental financial support for their studies. Another interviewee explained it in more general terms:

In terms of support for FL learning, when students go abroad in order to study and learn a FL, the government will help by paying half of the costs in some prefectures. One of my friends went to the United States using that plan, and reduced her financial load. In the school system, at a very early age, it is mandatory for students to learn English. (Japan, Student category)

In addition, after working for a company for more than five years, some interviewees reported that employees were able to make use of a social plan that would provide up to 75% of the tuition for study at a FL school as long as students' attendance was adequate. Whether English-language ability is necessary to business or not, many employers make it known that they will promote people with scores of 600-700 on the TOEIC, and many medium- to large-sized businesses will provide on-site opportunities for their employees. In short, interviewees noted that there was much information and even pressure in the public domain about languages in general, language study, language schools, FL travel and study tours, opportunities for bilingual people, or specialized courses of study. Although the primary focus was on English, an increasing focus on other FLs was also noted.

Media Emphasis

Immediately observable were qualitative differences in how Japanese and Canadian respondents answered the question “Does the media affect people’s attitudes toward FLs?” Respondents pointed out that Canadian television and radio shows were primarily of United States or British origin, with a somewhat typical comment being:

I guess because the media is largely English, that we’re exposed to anyways, so I guess it brings a more American or more English point of view. (Random category, WA)

When they focused on Canada, Canadians seemed to think first about the content of the news or of news stories and how people’s perceptions of FL speakers or visible minorities were shaped by the media. They interpreted the lack of emphasis on FLs as the media not having an effect, not as the media having a negative effect, with a typical-sounding response as follows.

I don’t know, just from my own experiences, watching TV or something, I don’t see any emphasis towards FLs or anything like that, so I don’t think media has much of an effect, you know? (Canada, Random category, SD)

Canadians also generally seemed to miss the *foreign language* part of the question, focusing instead on whether the media promoted multiculturalism or anti-racism by representing positive views of people visibly not of European heritage. Not one interviewee mentioned the French (or Tagalog, Mandarin, or Hindi, etc.) channels or programs on television, possibly because they were unaware of them or did not consider them mainstream enough to mention. Nonetheless, when Canadians were prompted to think about television programs, news coverage, radio broadcasts, sports events, and other forms of media, they normally responded that the media had a negative effect on the value of “Others”:

And I think the media doesn’t value the variety of people we have in Canada and every visual image you see does not represent the variety that we have and there’s still a lot of stereotyping about the type of photo images that are in the paper and that they tend to be negative stories, negative images for certain cultures, and positive for other cultures, and I don’t think it’s overt. It’s very subtle racism that people aren’t doing deliberately, I don’t think there is a lot of deliberate intent, but there’s a lot of subtle racism that goes on that people are not even aware of. They just become immune. (Canada, Administrator category, CS)

This kind of attitude was connected by a number of respondents to some languages being more glamorous than others, some accents more attractive, and some forms of bilingualism consequently more attractive and worth pursuing.

In Japan, most respondents replied that the media did affect people’s attitudes toward learning FLs. They went on to give examples from television, magazine, billboard, or radio advertising and often mentioned television programs that dealt with language-learning. Through the newspapers, magazines, and advertisements, almost all the interviewees reported having seen attention given to language schools and language-learning kits that came with testimonials from professors and scientists with doctorates.

A key difference in the Japanese responses was the number of people who reported observing a focus on bilingual people and a celebration of their bilingualism. It does not take

long for someone living in Japan to notice that TV commercials are often made using foreigners and popular sports heroes, which creates an image of glamor and exoticism for those who can speak more than one language. Some interviewees spoke of popular television programs that featured cultural information from every conceivable location in quiz-show format, increasing the visibility of other languages and cultures. Foreign words and phrases are often included in commercials, which attests to the abilities of Japanese sports or cultural heroes to use more than one language.

It does affect people's attitudes. It does this because while I'm watching TV programs the commercials use FLs. The story itself often deals with foreign countries or FLs; therefore, many people are affected by that, want to know more. (Japan, Student category)

In addition, over half the Japanese interviewees pointed out that many languages were being taught in language programs: English, German, French, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, and others. Some of the older interviewees suggested that 20 years ago, programming was only in English and only on the radio. At the time of the interviews, a popular children's program featured retired sumo grand champion Konishiki, originally Hawaiian, teaching cooking and interacting with children in Japanese mixed with basic English. Many interviewees in Japan suggested that they admired Konishiki for his involvement with the program, putting aside his ego and working for children's education and entertainment.

A few interviewees noted one negative aspect of this form of media coverage. They suggested that when celebrities used foreign words or phrases, especially prevalent in the English language, it gave a false impression. For example, the following interviewee noted that the English being modeled on television was not English, but rather a home-grown variety of English.

However, there is the existence of some English words becoming (and became) part of Japanese. Those words, originated in English, are often used in the media. I think these are not "real English" so if we are affected by them, then I do not think we are really affected by real English. If the media runs "real English" then almost no one can understand it without subtitles. (Japan, Random category)

This interviewee concluded that the media effect could, therefore, be negative rather than positive for language-learning.

Celebrity Bilinguals

In Canada, the question "Can you name three well-known Canadians [Japanese] who speak more than one language?" revealed the national consciousness; overwhelmingly, respondents would flounder and then cite "the Montreal Canadians" (a hockey team in Quebec, but not the individuals on the team), Celine Dion (the songstress from Quebec), the Prime Minister (who must be conversant with both official languages), or an answer along the lines of "everyone in Quebec," Canada's Francophone province. Other than the Prime Minister, it seems that few people were able to name anyone who could speak more than one language, for example, "anyone other than politicians, I don't know" (Canada, Student category, TD), or "Ha-ha, that's a good question. Okay, who speaks more than one language? I'd have to think about that. Can we come back to it?" (Canada, Administrator category, BP). A few people named David Suzuki (a

renowned Canadian environmentalist), knowing the countries of comparison in our research and believing that he was able to speak Japanese.

In Japan, on the other hand, almost all interviewees answered fairly effortlessly with the names of TV personalities, singers, newscasters, sports heroes, or talk show hosts. Others named well-respected people such as the Emperor and Empress, the Prime Minister, well-known professional translators or interpreters such as those who translated the newscast during the Apollo 12 moon mission and who also translated for Prince Charles and Princess Diana when they visited Japan (Student interview; Japan, Student interview), representatives for Japan to international organizations (representative to the World Wildlife Federation, representative to the United Nations, Japan, Student interview), authors, artists, or dignitaries. As much as possible, interviewees in Japan appeared to identify bilingual people who were of international, as opposed to national renown. They did so with seeming ease, though apparently spending time trying to choose the best three answers.

Discussion

It became immediately clear in our research that in neither Japan nor Canada is a wide variety of languages in the public eye. Therefore, in Canada, we repeatedly found that interviewees concentrated on the learning of French, and in Japan on the learning of English. Although we expected this to be the case, we did not expect it to be so difficult to get interviewees to respond to *direct* questions about other languages. Therefore, we caution that this is a limitation in this research.

The responses from Canadian interviewees indicated that the Canadian linguistic ecosystem provides *opportunities* to learn languages, particularly French, but not *encouragement* or *incentive*. Outside public school education, interviewees did not cite how language-learning is encouraged in Canada. Despite policies and official support for French-English bilingualism, meta-capital operationalization falls short in terms of proving to this group of citizens why languages other than English (and possibly French) are important.

In contrast, the linguistic ecosystem in Japan appears to create a motivating environment for language-learners. Many of Japan's language-promotion strategies (meta-capital) provide incentive and encouragement for learning languages because they create positive social contexts and encourage a focus on the increased value that comes from speaking more than one language. However, the desirability of FL acquisition often fails to materialize as FL facility because, as interviewees reasoned in response to questions, languages are taught as subjects rather than as means of communication and because Japan-ized forms of English are taught at the expense of standard forms of FLs. This, then, possibly serves to reinforce the national belief that the Japanese people are not good at learning FLs.

Not supporting children's minority first languages is a problem for both countries, a critique that emerged often in response to the question and prompts about how FL learning is encouraged. Canada is a country of immigrants that requires multiple first-language support in order to prevent the loss of first languages (Kouritzin, 1999). Japan too could do a much better job of supporting the languages that students returning from overseas have learned, or the nonstandard dialects that they speak in Japan (Osumi, 2001). From our interviews with teachers in Japan, we learned that a high school student who has become fluently bilingual in English in Canada must still master the grammar of English as it is taught in schools. Our research, therefore, points to a need in both countries for rationalization of the educational and political

purposes of minority-language education, making them consistent with practice and with the bilingualism that is valued in both countries.

It emerges from the research interviews as a whole that the linguistic ecosystem in Japan creates conditions for bilingualism without biculturalism; that is, there is tremendous support for learning an FL, but often little or no opportunity to use it. The cultural capital of FL knowledge inheres in the knowing rather than in the use; that is, FLs are regarded as subjects to know about rather than as tools for communication and understanding. The situation in Canada is no better: The linguistic ecosystem creates conditions for multiculturalism without multilingualism; that is, policies promoting multiculturalism are practiced in English (or French). Apart from French-English bilingualism, little cultural capital is attached to FL knowledge in Canada. As a result, people learn about cultures without learning the languages; multiculturalism is viewed as a subject rather than a practice or a foundation for thinking from within another world view.

There are at least two broad ways of looking at the implications of this research.

1. Both countries might find ways of supporting first or FLs that are already known by citizens, to find ways to maintain existing bilingualism. Tangible financial and social benefits for bilingual citizens are suggested, as well as policies and practices that support bilingual children in public classrooms.
2. Both countries might examine policies supporting FL learning for citizens who are not already bilingual. For example, public discourse about the advantages of bilingualism might be reformulated to focus on the disadvantages of monolingualism. Another policy implication regards equality of access to FL learning resources.

Conclusion

Our research attempts to illuminate the complex social construction of FL learning beliefs in Canada and Japan, attempting to examine why people believe as they do. We put this research in the context of international and national perceptions of how facilitative of FL-learning each nation is, concluding that perceptions of the Canadian linguistic ecosystem as facilitative and of the Japanese linguistic ecosystem as hindering are largely inaccurate in terms of actual FL learning opportunities and public attitudes toward people who can speak more than one language.

Second, if our research results hold in other nations, then it stands to reason that FL encouragement incentives and interventions might be focused at the level of institutional, educational, and governmental policy (meta-capital) in order to invoke facilitative beliefs as well as at the level of classroom pedagogy or individual learners. We suggest that if teachers were to focus on the well-established economic and individual advantages of FL learning and understand how language-learning beliefs are constructed in the linguistic ecosystem, it would be possible for them to assist learners to unpack self-defeating beliefs and realize their own agency in FL learning.

Finally, and at the same time, we know of a number of research questions that arise from this research project, most notably those of who decides when it is time to try to change a national ideology and why they make these decisions. Why have Canadian institutions focused on making official-language bilingualism a social imperative, whereas Japanese institutions

seem to operate on the basis of economic rewards? What in their unique ideological and social histories has allowed these two contrasting linguistic ecosystems to develop as they have? A final line of inquiry in future research could also try to establish clearer connections between the prevalent beliefs reflected in the linguistic ecosystem in a given country, the beliefs of language-learners, teachers, and other stakeholders, and actual language-learning outcomes.

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