

8-4-2020

## Translingual Practices in a 'Monolingual' Society: Discourses, Learners' Subjectivities and Language Choices

Reiko Kato  
*Kyushu Institute of Technology*

Yuri Kumagai  
*Smith College, ykumagai@smith.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.smith.edu/eas\\_facpubs](https://scholarworks.smith.edu/eas_facpubs)



Part of the [East Asian Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kato, Reiko and Kumagai, Yuri, "Translingual Practices in a 'Monolingual' Society: Discourses, Learners' Subjectivities and Language Choices" (2020). East Asian Languages & Cultures: Faculty Publications, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

[https://scholarworks.smith.edu/eas\\_facpubs/7](https://scholarworks.smith.edu/eas_facpubs/7)

This Article has been accepted for inclusion in East Asian Languages & Cultures: Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@smith.edu](mailto:scholarworks@smith.edu)

## **Translingual Practices in a “Monolingual” Society: Discourses, Learners’ Subjectivities and Language Choices**

Reiko Kato<sup>a</sup> and Yuri Kumagai<sup>b</sup>

*<sup>a</sup> Institute of Liberal Arts, Kyushu Institute of Technology, Iizuka, Japan; <sup>b</sup> East Asian Languages and Literatures, Smith College, Northampton, MA, USA*

Provide full correspondence details here including e-mail for the corresponding author

<sup>a</sup> Institute of Liberal Arts, Kyushu Institute of Technology, 680-4 Kawazu, Iizuka, Fukuoka 820-8502, Japan

email: [kato@lai.kyutech.ac.jp](mailto:kato@lai.kyutech.ac.jp)

<sup>b</sup> East Asian Languages and Literatures, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts 01063, USA

# **Translingual Practices in a “Monolingual” Society: Discourses, Learners’ Subjectivities and Language Choices**

This study explores how Japanese EFL students engaged in translingual practices during a telecollaborative project that connected two college classrooms in the US and Japan. The project aimed at encouraging the students’ creative uses of languages, promoting an appreciation for their multiple linguistic resources, and nurturing their sense of ownership of languages informed by translingual practices. Contrary to our expectations, students in Japan exhibited great efforts to write in monolingual English and/or Japanese, which prompted us to investigate the reasons behind their language choices. Based on data analyses drawing on poststructural theory of subjectivities, we argue that the students’ language practices were shaped by local discourses that value privileged English, single language uses, and embodiment of “Japaneseness.” As a result, students in Japan maintained single language uses in order to represent themselves in a positive light. Accordingly, they did not appreciate the language plurality demonstrated by their partners in the US. This result led us to contend that creating a local community that recognizes and appreciates linguistic diversity is essential in order for students to enjoy using multiple linguistic resources creatively and freely, and to gain confidence to claim ownership of their languages.

Keywords: translingual practice; telecollaboration; subjectivities; monolingualism; Japan

Subject classification codes:

## **Introduction**

Having been brought up with education based on the monolingual paradigm, separation of language is a very familiar concept to many of us. Teaching and learning named languages such as “English” or “Japanese” as a distinct, separate system has been an important part of our educational mission. However, as many scholars have argued, human communications have always been heterogeneous (Canagarajah, 2013; Doerr, 2009; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Translingualism, which takes the heterogeneous

nature of our language use as a core principle, urges us to revisit our language practices so as to recognize multiple linguistic resources that we naturally and constantly draw upon in order to communicate. When we understand languages as practices—“negotiation of mobile codes”—the term monolingual has only “an academic and ideological significance,” as Canagarajah (2013, p.8) argues.

The authors, inspired by premises of translingual practices, designed an intercultural telecollaborative project connecting two classrooms in Japan and the US in order to provide students with intercultural and plurilingual experiences. We hoped that students would enlist all linguistic (and other semiotic) resources that they possessed and engage in translingual practices in order to maximize their communication potential. However, when we examined the texts (written posts on online discussion forums) produced by students in Japan, we initially could not see their translingual practices. The students’ language behaviors seemed to adhere to single language uses, and their language practices appeared to be no different from the monolingual framework. We were, in effect, interpellated by the ideology of monolingualism, and looking for codemeshing (or mixtures of different named languages) as manifestations of translingual practices.

While examining the students’ efforts to adhere to monolingual English and/or Japanese, we, as teachers, realized that we did not have a clear image of what it would look like when translingual practices were brought into a classroom in a “monolingual” society. In this paper, we will describe the process by which we explored and made sense of the ways in which translingual practices were manifested when Japanese college students engaged in a telecollaborative project with students in the U.S.

In what follows, we first briefly describe cultural and language realities in Japan. We then discuss the notion of translingualism and poststructural theories of identity as

conceptual frameworks in order to illustrate our approaches to the study, followed by a description of our telecollaborative project, including the local context of the study, data collection, and methods of analysis. Next, we discuss our findings of three themes that impacted the students' language choices: privileged English, single language use, and embodiment of "Japaneseness." By demonstrating that even students who believe in monolingual practices are in fact engaging in translingual practices, we argue for the importance of acknowledging and appreciating linguistic and cultural diversity in order for students to nurture a translingual disposition that is characterized by an openness towards a variety of language uses, both by themselves and by others (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; Lee & Jenks, 2016).

### **"Monolingual" Society?: Multilingual and Multicultural Realities in Japan**

The image of Japan being a "monocultural" and "monolingual" society is a modernist construct of a national identity, which has been criticized for ignoring ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minorities in Japan. Oguma (1995) articulated how the myth of "mono-ethnic" Japan was constructed during the post-WWII era in sociological and political fields. Similarly, scholars such as Mashiko (2002) and Sasaki (2012) identify the multilingual realities of Japanese society. With recently accelerated global movements of people, multicultural/multilingual existences in Japanese society are gaining more and more recognition. Scholars are also discussing the fact that Japanese language has always been in contact with other languages (Doerr, 2009; Hirataka & Kimura, 2017; Mashiko, 2014), and translingual practices – one's natural and consistent drawing upon multiple linguistic resources – have been an important part of the development of "Japanese language."

Paradoxically, however, globalization also works to strengthen the notion of

clear national borders and the renewed ideology of nationalism. Various immigration policies create a boundary between us/them and depict multiculturalism as a “problem” brought by the foreign nationals (Hatano, 2011). In everyday life in Japan, especially in rural areas, Japanese language is still the dominant language, multilingual reality is overlooked, and “non-Japanese” residents are considered to be temporary visitors who should assimilate into Japanese culture. The ideology of monolingualism dominates in society and in education in present-day Japan. For these reasons, in this paper, we use the term “monolingual” society with quotation marks.

### **Translingualism and Translingual Practices**

Translingualism is a paradigm that contests monolingualism. The notion of monolingualism and the ensuing policy of language separation was founded on a belief of language as a separate system. In challenging monolingualism, Canagarajah (2013) argues that “communication transcends individual languages,” and that “communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances” (p. 6). In other words, in our everyday use of languages, we utilize all available linguistic and other semiotic resources as a repertoire rather than adhering to one named language or another. Treating language as a separate system that stands free of other semiotic resources (including other languages) and is detached from its environment does not accurately describe how we engage in meaning-making practices. Canagarajah (2013) continues:

The term translingual conceives of language relationships in more dynamic terms. The semiotic resources in one’s repertoire or in society interact more closely, become part of an integrated resource, and enhance each other. The languages mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars (p.8).

What translanguaging questions, in essence, is the modernist myth of language separation, that languages maintain “their separate structures and identities even in contact” (Canagarajah 2013, p.22), and challenges how we understand language itself, from fixed set of linguistic structures to fluid practices in which meanings and forms are always negotiated.

Furthermore, translanguaging encourages people to reclaim the agency of language by bringing attention to our daily usage of languages. Monolingualism grants legitimacy and authority to “native” speakers so that they can own their “native” language, thereby positioning “non-native” language users as incompetent or inauthentic, and reinforcing the hierarchy between “native” and “non-native” speakers in society (Canagarajah, 2013; Doerr & Kumagai, 2009; Kramsch, 1997). Teachers who are concerned with monolingual orientation welcome translanguaging-oriented pedagogies, such as Translanguaging (Gracia & Li Wei, 2013; Li Wei, 2017). The idea of translanguaging practice has changed both scholars’ and practitioners’ views of language plurality from being a hindrance to being a resource in second/foreign language classrooms (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; Li Wei, 2017).

Language teachers attempt to facilitate students’ language learning by building on their existing linguistic resources, and also attempt to foster intercultural competence by encouraging students to develop “the ability to work across differences, not just of language but of disciplines and cultures” (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011, p. 312). From the perspective of translanguaging, one objective of learning a language involves increasing one’s linguistic repertoire. In this way, learners gain agency to use language creatively and become empowered to gain a sense of ownership of their own language uses. Pedagogy drawing on translanguaging attracts many scholars and

practitioners who wish to empower students by viewing them not as “borrowers” of languages who lack authority, but rather as creative users of languages (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Jain, 2014; Li Wei, 2011).

Because translingualism is a way to understand our everyday use of languages, translingual practice can be observed everywhere. For example, various manifestations of translingual practices can be seen in our daily lives, not only in classrooms and schools, but also in diasporic families and communities, workplaces where migrant workers are employed, and urban linguistic landscapes where multi-national populations gather (Mazzaferro, 2018). Li Wei (2017) writes that New Chinglish “includes ordinary English utterances being re-appropriated with entirely different meanings for communication between Chinese users of English as well as creations of words and expressions that adhere broadly to the morphological rules of English but with Chinese twists and meanings” (pp.11-12). Canagarajah (2013) discusses a Sri Lankan hip hop artist who expresses her intertwined experience in Sri Lanka and London Tamil by using a Tamil and English language mixture. Scholars researching the benefits of translingual practices for language learning have reported on how students expand their linguistic repertoires and how expressive individual language users can be when drawing on a variety of linguistic resources (Dovchin, Sultana, & Pennycook, 2015; García & Kano, 2014; Schreiber, 2015; etc.). Leonard (2013) discusses how multilingual immigrant writers shuttle between not only languages and locations, but also their own literacy and language histories:

When multilingual writers are allowed to draw on these resources in their writing, they express sharp insight into culture and language, are hyper aware of the audience, articulate similarities and differences among writing styles in



multiple languages, and often write themselves into new intellectual and professional status (p.30).

Translingual practices in everyday lives are “processual and interactional communicative practices” (Mazzaferro 2018, p.5) that speakers creatively and critically draw upon so as to construct their everyday interactions and communications.

Translingual practice is not only about shuttling between linguistic codes. Honor and Tetreault (2016) add another example of translingual practice in their article titled “Translation as (Global) Writing.” They highlight how translation “is an inevitable feature of all language practice insofar as the norm of such practice is not sameness but difference” instead of “a mechanical erasure of surface linguistic differences” (p.15). Canagarajah (2013) articulates the point eloquently:

Translingual practice applies more to the strategies of engaging with diverse codes, with the awareness that the shape of the final textual products will vary according to the contextual expectation. While translingual practice might find expression in codemeshing for multilinguals in certain contexts, in others it might find representation in a text that approximates and reconfigures “standard English” (p.8).

Translingual practices are also about “acquiring knowledge about the context and the participants involved in the interaction” (Mazzaferro 2018, p.5). Each communication involves different participants; therefore, translingual practice is everywhere and every practice has its own variation. We need to look into individual language uses in order to understand processes of translingual practices beyond the surface level of language use.

In local contexts of language practices, we can find various negotiations and constraints. For example, Dovchin, Sultana and Pennycook (2016) discuss how one’s social class, wealth, and power in Mongolia and Bangladesh influence differences in the

usage of translingual Englishes. It has also been noted that while the translingual practice of Serbian students is greatly supported in non-academic writings, it is not appreciated in EFL classrooms by teachers (Schreiber, 2015). Furthermore, Marshal and Moore (2018) argue for the importance of understanding “plurilingual agency” in context:

With regard to a supposed static social-individual binary, it is important to remember that plurilingualism and plurilingual competence are about practice: everyday interactions, creativity, exercising agency, in ways that promote intercultural understandings and competence. So, rather than seeing plurilingualism as solely being about the individual, it is more about individuals making choices and interacting in specific contexts and situations, including those where their agency is constrained (p. 23).

That is, situational and contextual factors are critically important in understanding how students’ agency is negotiated and enacted in exercising their plurilingual competence.

For those living in a multilingual society, such as South Asia or the EU, or global mega cities, such as New York and Tokyo, where the existence of “different” languages is visible in everyday life,<sup>1</sup> the ways in which people engage in translingual practices may be different from those that are observed in a “monolingual” society where multilingualism is invisible or ignored. Translingual practices may have different implications on speakers’ and writers’ subjectivities, pose different constraints on people, and manifest differently on the surface language use. In order to understand how people employ various communication strategies, it is important to scrutinize our own language practices. Realizing our agency in language usages, such as choices we make or ways to deal with constraints in everyday interactions, may lead us to develop a sense

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that it does not mean all languages enjoy the same status and power.

of ownership of our language uses. To understand the ways in which the Japanese students in this project engaged in translingual practices, despite the surface manifestation of the monolingual framework, we must ask what types of negotiations the students went through, what types of constraints they faced, and how they shuttled between languages and cultures.

### **Poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, and positioning**

In poststructuralist theory, subjectivity and language are seen as mutually constitutive. Subjectivity is discursively constructed and always context-dependent (Block, 2007; Weedon, 1997). Unlike a modernist or liberal-humanist conception of identity, which presupposes that every person has an essential, unique, and coherent core, poststructuralist theories view subjectivity as multiple rather than unitary, prone to contestation, and changing over time (Baxter, 2016; Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Weedon, 1997). Subjectivity reflects the “position of processes through which outside forces make us a changing subject and imbue our position within ideologies” (García & Li Wei, 2013, p. 3). Thus, subjectivity and language are key to understanding how a language learner negotiates a sense of self within and across various sites at different points in time (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Weedon, 1997).

Jørgensen states that language users create, construct, and negotiate identities based on a range of semiotic resources that can be associated with meaning, further contending that “identities are performed, constructed, enacted, [and] produced but only in interaction with others” (ctd. in Creese & Blackledge, 2015, p. 25). In referring to the role that language diversity plays in the negotiation and construction of identity, García (2010) suggests that multilingual speakers “decide who they want to be and choose their language practices accordingly” (p. 524).

In a similar vein, Lemke (2002) regards identity as performance, thus presupposing that language users are active, competent, self-directed individuals in control of the signals they display, including the linguistic ones discussed in this paper. Whenever people speak or write, they are working on their identity and social image. Furthermore, it is not only the individual, but also the local community that initiates and influences identity work and our social image. Identity work can be defined as a negotiation of positions among participants in a community of practice. With their choice of language, speakers both position themselves and are positioned in interactions with others. Though not necessarily intentional or conscious, this positioning is continual and has the power to impact people's subjectivities (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014, p. 760).

## **The Study**

### ***Online discussion project***

The authors designed and implemented a telecollaborative project connecting a third-year Japanese language course at A College in the US and an “intercultural understanding” course at N University in Japan in the fall semester of 2013. Seven students at A College and 32 students at N University participated in the project<sup>2</sup>. These two courses were chosen because teacher-researchers in both classrooms had a common interest in bringing a real-world situation into the classroom and providing students with

---

<sup>2</sup> The difference in the number of students is not intentional. It is due to the different subjects of the courses (i.e., foreign language and social science) as well as different norms for class size in the US and Japan. Due to the disparity in classroom sizes, students from A College participated as individuals while students from N University formed groups of two or three and participated as groups.

“authentic” cross-cultural and cross-linguistic experiences. The goals for the project were twofold: to encourage participants in both classrooms to recognize their own rich linguistic and cultural resources, and to further expand communication repertoires in order to negotiate beyond cultural differences. Using an online Google Group discussion forum, each participant engaged in two rounds of discussion on self-selected social issues over the three months from October to December 2013<sup>3</sup>. Participation in the project was a requirement for both courses. For the first round (R1) of discussion, participants were instructed to conduct discussions in Japanese, as it was a class assignment for the Japanese language course at A College. It was also intended to provide opportunities for the N University students to recognize and experience World Japaneses (Fujinaga & Fujii, 2017). For the second round (R2), students were explicitly invited to use any/all available linguistic resources as well as other modes - such as visual and audio (The New London Group, 1996) - to communicate with each other. To encourage students to express their opinions and thoughts freely and candidly, the students were assured that the teachers would not be evaluating the content of their messages. The students in both classrooms successfully engaged with the assignments, and the project ended with a sense of satisfaction for both students and teachers.

### ***Research questions***

Following the project, the authors began to investigate the process of discussion (see Authors 2014, for analysis of the process) and the participants’ language practices. As participants were invited to utilize various linguistic resources, they engaged in

---

<sup>3</sup> The duration of the project was restricted by differences in the timing and duration of US and Japanese school sessions.

plurilingual communication. Their language use was varied, including various types of codemeshing, translation, and single language (Japanese or English) usage.

[Figure 1 near here]

[Figure 2 near here]

As can be seen in figure 1, we observed students creating two separate sections, one in English and the other for its translation in Japanese. There were also many posts with single language use (English or Japanese). We rarely saw a mixture of languages; when they occurred, they were within a very limited scope, such as the use of different languages in greeting or in a student's signature, as shown in figure 2. We noticed that Japanese students were less likely to use codemeshing. These language practices led us to question why and how the participants decided on their language choices, particularly in regard to the Japanese students. We thus decided to conduct a study with the following research questions:

- How did students in Japan choose language(s) and negotiate their subjectivities?
- What motivated or impeded their use of available linguistic resources?
- What discourses in local contexts might have influenced the students' language practices?

By examining these questions, we attempt to understand dynamic use of languages as demonstrated by the Japanese students from the perspective of translingual practices.

### ***Local context of study***

According to the Japanese Ministry of Justice (2019), foreign nationals or immigrants, who officially represent the “linguistic plurality” in Japanese society, comprised 1.62% of the total population in 2013 (about 2% in 2019). The majority of them lived in concentrated areas, most notably in the Tokyo metropolitan area and in other

industrialized areas throughout Japan. N University is located in a rural area in the North Kanto region, and its nearby area is considered to be one of the concentrated areas for foreign residents. However, most of the students who took part in this study came from different parts of the North Kanto region, where they rarely encountered foreign residents. Furthermore, even though immigrant children do study in schools in concentrated areas, they seldom attend universities<sup>4</sup>; therefore, the Japanese students in this study did not have much exposure to multicultural reality in their daily lives.

It is worthwhile to mention the discourse of Global Leadership promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which has great influence on language pedagogy in Japan. MEXT's educational agenda, which is to "educate students to be global citizens," places heavy emphasis on learning English (MEXT, 2012). It promotes the idea that "globalization" means "mastering English," thereby undermining the value of other world languages, even including Japanese. In addition, MEXT's "globalism" goes hand in hand with perpetuating the myth of "Japaneseness." Besides mastering English, the policy stresses the importance of "fostering a student's identity as a Japanese person" and instructs primary and secondary schools to increase instructional hours for National Language (Japanese language), Japanese History, and Moral Education ("Dōtoku Kyōiku"), which teaches children beliefs and principles such as courtesy (MEXT, 2013).

### ***Data collection and analysis***

Drawing on the theoretical framework discussed above, we analyzed multiple data sources. We made audio recordings of several classroom discussions and conducted

---

<sup>4</sup> For challenges that immigrant children face, see Aramaki et. al. (2017).

post-project questionnaires concerning the students' reflections on the project. After the semester was over and the students' grades were submitted, we also conducted one individual interview and two focus group interviews at N University, as well as three individual interviews at A College<sup>5</sup>. The teacher-researchers asked open-ended questions to elicit the participants' views of language use and how those views influenced their choice of language. All of the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for in-depth analysis. We frequently revisited the students' writings on the discussion boards during the process of data analysis. In this paper, our discussion of findings focuses on interviews with six N University students<sup>6</sup>. We first coded the data based on how the students positioned both themselves and their fellow students, in terms of being preferable/not-so-preferable students and capable/incapable students. In the process of recursive and inductive analysis of the interview data, we identified three themes: privileged English, single language use as a preferable language practice, and embodiment of "Japaneseness." We then revisited the data and found that occurrences of codemeshing contributed to the students positioning their partners negatively. We will discuss these occurrences in detail below.

### ***Interview participants and their language choices***

We discuss six students from N university in this study (all names are pseudonyms), shown in Table 1.

[Table 1 near here]

---

<sup>5</sup> Interviews with N university students were conducted in Japanese and translated into English by the authors.

<sup>6</sup> Even though we also conducted interviews with students from A College, given the difference in social contexts, we decided to focus on students in Japan in this study.



Yoko and Megumi were grouped together for the R2 discussion, as were Chiharu and Yuki. Keita and Kaoru participated in R2, but their groupmates did not participate in focus group interviews. Table 1 also shows their language choices, which shifted somewhat during the discussion forum. Yoko, Megumi, and Keita used both English and Japanese (in their second and third posts). However, their use of English and Japanese was restricted to translation.

### **Findings and discussion**

Our analyses of interview data suggest that the six N University students' adherence to a single language was an effect of complex power relations discursively constructed in the local context. As will become clear from the findings below, the students' language choices were primarily dictated by their concerns about how they would be perceived by their peers and by the local community, rather than by their desires to communicate fully with their partners abroad. However, in the process of choosing which language they should use, it became clear that they were engaged in translingual practice. In deciding the most appropriate and effective language choices in the given situation, the students negotiated various semiotic resources in their repertoire, as well as the context of producing a text.

### ***Privileged English***

The privileged status of English was represented in the students' self-positioning as good students and globally competent people. In Japan, foreign language (in reality, English) is a compulsory subject starting in lower secondary education (in 2020, it starts for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade pupils in primary education), and mastering English has been viewed as a key to success in global society (see discussion about the MEXT's global agenda above). Indeed, English fluency brings individuals more opportunities in their

professional and personal lives (Kubota, 2015). Since English is associated with higher social status, students tried to represent themselves positively as people who can speak and understand English by writing “standard” English (single language use) in their posts.

Yoko, Megumi, and Keita first wrote their messages in English and then translated them entirely into Japanese (see Figure 1, p.13). They explained their language choice as “a good opportunity to *study* English.”<sup>7</sup> Yoko, Megumi, and Keita called themselves “the English Group” during the interview, suggesting that they took pride in their ability to communicate in English and intended to create an image of themselves as good students. They aspired to become English teachers in their future careers, and indeed, two of them had successfully passed the employment exam for English teachers in public junior high schools at the time of the study.

Meanwhile, Yuki and Chiharu said that their choice of language was influenced by their classmates.

Yuki: At that time, Keita and others were quite excited about their exchanges with foreign students...I overheard them discussing how to write their post in English, and I realized that they were writing in English. Then I thought, Oh, *it's better for us to write ours in English* too. So I decided to use English, at that time. (laugh)

Kato: It was peer pressure, then.

Yuki: I was influenced by others.

Chiharu:*It is better to write the post in English.*

Kato: Is that so?

Yuki: Some people were quite excited.

Comments by both Yuki (“Oh, it’s better for us to write ours in English”) and Chiharu

---

<sup>7</sup> Students’ utterances in data (transcription) that are the foci of discussions are italicized.

("It is better to write the post in English") seem to suggest that they perceived those students who were excited about using English (i.e., Keita and others) as good students. They were keen to follow the example set by Keita and his groupmates, which shows that they understood that the use of English is highly regarded in a local classroom setting. Elsewhere, Yuki said that she "decided to try a little harder" to represent herself in a positive way.

Drawing on the dominant discourse of global leadership education in Japan, which depicts English speakers as "globally competent persons," the students strategically chose English as their means of communication in order to position themselves as such. Yuki indicated that she felt compelled to use English "because this project was an assignment of the 'Intercultural Understanding' course," a feeling that was also shared by Yoko. The word "intercultural" was perceived as automatically suggesting the use of English, even though all classroom instructions and activities were conducted in Japanese, and there was no mention of English usage as a requirement (nor were students even encouraged to use English). In other words, Yuki and Yoko believed that in order to achieve intercultural understanding – a quality supposedly possessed by "globally competent persons" - one must be able to use English.

Meanwhile, one of Kaoru's messages expressed more complex feelings, as seen in Figure 2 (p. 13). This post was a response to her US partner, whose message was written in English. Kaoru started her message with a greeting in English but used Japanese for her partner's name; in fact, the rest of the message was in Japanese. During the interview, she described her changing feelings as reflected in the shift of her language choice from English to Japanese. At first, Kaoru felt "glad" and flattered that her US partner had written a message in English because she interpreted this to mean that her partner viewed her as a "global" person who understands English. Thinking that

she should accept this identity, she opened her message with an English greeting.

However, her feelings quickly changed as she proceeded:

Kaoru: Because I *can't write well in English*, I asked T [her group member] for help, but she also *gave up* and....

Kaoru wanted to write her post in English strongly enough to ask her groupmate to help her. However, she was still unable to write her message in English, which forced her to accept the fact that, in her view, she was not adequately a global person. For her, writing in Japanese was a result of “giving up,” an expression that reveals her belief that, in the given context, writing in English was better than writing in Japanese. (The reason she did not codemesh will be discussed below.) The discourse of English superiority reinforces a sense of inferiority in those who have not “mastered” English or have not done well on English exams. Even though Kaoru mostly used Japanese linguistic resources, her posts can be understood as one of the manifestations of translingual practice because she was aware of how her texts would be viewed in her local community.

The notion of privileged English played out in multifaceted ways as the Japanese students established relationships with their US partners. Although Yoko, Megumi, and Keita successfully represented themselves as “good students” with global competence in the university classroom (as shown above), such subjectivity became a source of conflict and struggle once they left the classroom. In the excerpt below, they responded to the teacher-researcher’s question regarding their codemeshing practice outside the classroom.

Yoko: When I am with my friends from high school, when we talk, *if I mix English words, then they may think that I am showing off...*

Kato: Ah...

Yoko: They may make comments like, ‘You are studying English’ or something like that.

Keita: That happens.

Yoko: I don’t want to hear such comments, so when I’m with [the “English Group” at the university], sometimes I mix languages, but when I’m with others, I’m like, *oh, bad, bad, I should not mix them...*

Keita: (laugh)

Kato: I see.

Yoko: *I worry that they may think I’m showing off.*

Keita: Same here, I know the feeling. (laugh)

Yoko: Right? Like in this class, when I’m relaxed, I mix English words sometimes, but...when I talk to others, *I don’t want them to think I can understand English.*

Kato: You don’t want others to think you can speak English?

Yoko: Well, it seems like *I’m showing off* or...

Kato: Ah...

Keita: That’s right.

Yoko: *Or parading.*

Megumi: The others feel that way.

Yoko: They may think that *I’m snobby.*

Codemeshing of Japanese and English may position the speaker as “snobby” or a “show-off” person, flaunting superiority over those who cannot use English successfully. The use of English linguistic resources in daily conversation can work in negative ways, depending on the local context of each communicative event. For example, students’ language choices can sometimes be attributed to their struggles in performing their identities. They have strategically chosen languages with an awareness of the consequences they might bring to them in their society.

### ***Single language use as a preferable practice of language***

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was the supremacy of single

language use. In interviews, students expressed the view that mixing of languages is a sign of “not trying hard enough.” Here, we will examine students’ negative feelings about codemeshing to demonstrate how they perceived single language use as a “pure” form of language, and thus a better language practice.

First, students view mixing of languages as an “imperfect” or “wrong” use of language. Keita and Yoko described their perceptions on this point:

Keita: I want to be *perfect*.

Yoko: Yeah. That’s why it has to be in English completely. It is a must.

Kato: Is that so? Why do you think that way?

Keita: Maybe I think it is *wrong*.

Kato: Ah...

Yoko: Maybe *I don’t want people to think I can’t*.

Yoko further shared her reaction to US students’ use of both languages as follows:

Yoko: Well, maybe it is not a good way to say, but when I see this [US student’s codemeshing posts], I feel like it is okay *not to try hard*, maybe I can use Japanese whenever I feel like it or when it is difficult. I think it lightens my burdens.

Kato: It lightens your burdens, well, so you were trying hard.

Yoko: Yes, I tried so hard.

In Keita’s view, people “mix” languages because they “cannot” maintain one language, pointing to low language proficiency, rather than seeing it as a strategic and creative use of languages. Similarly, Yoko felt that mixing languages indicates “not trying hard.” In other words, they saw codemeshing – and ultimately their US partners who engaged in such practices - as not being diligent: if they were, they should have tried harder by making greater efforts, such as using a dictionary to translate their posts “correctly.” Keita and Yoko believed in the ideology of monolingualism, thus believing that mixing

languages would have a negative effect on their identity performance.

Kaoru, who used Japanese exclusively, also believed in the superiority of single language practices. Observing other classmates, she felt that she needed to write a lengthy comment in English. However, she could not do so; despite starting with a greeting in English, she ended up writing only in Japanese.

Kaoru: If I use English *strangely* in the middle of a [Japanese] sentence, if I were reading it, I would wonder why they use English there...

Kato: What do you mean?

Kaoru: Well, for example, in one sentence, you see Japanese [words], then suddenly English [words], and again Japanese [words], then *I am not sure if that is comprehensible*.

For Kaoru, codemeshing seemed “strange” and “not comprehensible.” With this belief, she thought it better to use only one language and refrained from using the English linguistic resources that she had, which limited both her chance to experience new language practices and her chance to enhance her ability to enlist all available linguistic resources in her communication.

Yoko’s and Kaoru’s beliefs illuminate the persistent and prevalent value of monolingualism in language education in Japan. Even though Yoko, Megumi, and Keita have confidence in their English abilities to a certain degree - enough to want to become English teachers - they still perceive themselves as English learners (“study”) and not as English users. For them, English is something “foreign” that they borrow, and they do not dare to use English in a creative way, because their creative use can be interpreted as a mistake. Consequently, the students’ agency and sense of ownership of a language are not fostered in this educational context.

Meanwhile, Japanese students' adherence to monolingual practices was achieved at the cost of their self-expression and meaning making. They faced the dilemma of being unable to fully express what they wanted to say.

Keita: I have to *compromise*, in English.

Yoko: Yeah.

Kato: Compromise... (laugh)

Keita: Always.

Yoko: Like I want to say like this, but...

Keita: Yeah.

Yoko: For example, *I want to say it indirectly*,

Kato: Yeah.

Yoko: *but straightforward*... like that.

(multiple voices): (laugh)

Keita: That's it.

Megumi: Like, maybe *unique nuance of Japanese*?

Yoko: Umm...

Megumi: *Can't express it well in English*.

Keita: I *compromise on that point*. Always like that, like when practicing speaking English.

Megumi: Me, too

Keita: It's as usual.

Kato: As usual? (laugh)

Keita: It's usual that I *compromise*.

Yoko: We are speaking while compromising.

By limiting the use of linguistic resources to one language and attempting to maintain a monolingual practice, the students "compromised" what they could communicate. Yuki, who used only English, also felt that her message became somehow "simpler" than what she would have liked. Believing monolingualism to be the correct way to use languages, the students were preoccupied with linguistic forms more than contents. Thus, despite their obvious efforts to represent themselves as good students (i.e., "trying



hard”) with their choice of language, they simultaneously constructed themselves as people with simple ideas. In this project, it is clear that they engaged in multi-layers of translingual practices between English and Japanese, between academic and social norms, and between various positionings that are constructed by competing discourses.

### ***Embodiment of “Japaneseness”***

The third theme that influenced the students’ language choices involves stereotypes that they internalized about Japanese people and language: “considerate Japanese,” “polite Japanese,” and “Japanese language is uniquely difficult for foreigners to learn.”

All of the participants remarked that they thought it was more “considerate” to use their partners’ strong language (English) than to force them to use a foreign language (Japanese). At the same time, Yoko and Megumi said that they had translated their messages into Japanese because their partners were studying Japanese and “it was a good opportunity for them to learn as well.” They used both English and Japanese in their messages, not to elaborate on their ideas or facilitate better communication, but rather to present themselves as “considerate” Japanese.

“Polite” was another word used repeatedly in the interviews. Yuki and Chiharu recalled their surprise at the casualness in their partner’s message.

Yuki: Because it was the first time, I couldn’t be so friendly to start with.

Chiharu: Yeah, I agree.

Yuki: We had never met her before, but Dennie (from A College) was like, ‘Hi, Nice to meet you, It’s Dennie here!’ and I was surprised at first. Well, I was surprised and even though she was so frank, I couldn’t be like ‘Hi I’m Yuki.’

Kato: Is that so?

Yuki: Well...I thought it might be rude, so I should behave *humbly*...

Chiharu: *Politely*.

Yuki: We should be *polite*. Others felt the same, too, I think. They were surprised when they saw messages; I heard others talking like ‘they are quite [i.e., too] friendly...’

Yuki and Chiharu agreed that their partner’s message seemed very frank, so much so that they hesitated to follow its lead. Likewise, they saw the practice of mixing languages as too “informal” to represent themselves as “polite” or “good students who are taking the assignment seriously”; thus, it was not a viable option. Similarly, Yoko and Megumi pointed out the issue of “formality.” While Yoko recalled talking to her Nepalese friend on campus using the strategy of codemeshing, she felt that doing so with her online discussion partners as a part of a class task was too informal and thus inappropriate. Yoko might also have felt that written communication (as in online discussion) should be more formal than spoken communication. In both cases, it shows the importance that the students attached to maintaining formality with their (non-friend) discussion partners influenced their language choices.

The idea that “Japanese language is uniquely difficult to learn” also influenced the students’ language choices. In the process of learning English, they said that they learned (incorrectly) that Japanese is “richer in vocabulary” than English.

Yoko: Like, how do I say, like *Japanese has many words*, haven’t you heard? Well, like, this and this [different words in Japanese] all become the same word in English, like that.

Keita: Ahh...

Yoko: In Japanese, like, this nuance, can’t think of an example, but this and this all are expressed with the same word in English...

Keita: *Japanese is more expressive.*

Because of this (mis)belief, they thought that Japanese allows for more nuanced and precise expressions than English does, and assumed that it must be difficult for foreigners to learn Japanese. The students also believed that Japanese is a unique

language in comparison to English:

Chiharu: Because English is the world's common language, people can understand even if we mix it, *but Japanese is not like that*, people who don't know Japanese don't understand...

Chiharu believed that unlike English, which is considered a lingua franca, people rarely know Japanese. Even though she knew that her partners were students of Japanese language and had communicated in Japanese during the first round of discussion, her stereotypical idea of the “unique Japanese language” was so persistent that she saw the use of Japanese words as unsuitable for intercultural communication.

The students' self-positioning as Japanese persons seems to echo stereotypical images of “Japaneseness” promoted by the discourse of global leadership education through MEXT, which urges them to become globally competent citizens (read: fluent in English) and embody “Japaneseness” (read: politeness, considerateness, humility). In any case, students performing their identity as model “Japanese” and their language practice shows their awareness of social expectation in Japan, which therefore can be understood as a result of translingual practices.

### ***Discussion***

Initially, we did not recognize the ways in which the N University students engaged in translingual practice simply because their texts had almost no instances of codemeshing – a typical and most noticeable manifestation of translingual practice. However, as we listened to the students' explanations of their language choices, it became clear that they in fact engaged in a certain style of translingual practices. N University students in this study, who had grown up in a society where the ability to use English grants privilege and monolingualism is valued in everyday language classes, did not appreciate

codemeshing. However, as we discussed above, their maintaining of single language use was a result of negotiating between languages and social norms. They understood clearly the social norm in the local context, which values monolingualism as a more sophisticated and appropriate use of academic language. Consequently, they avoided codemeshing because that would have put them in conflict with their performing identity.

However, having internalized dominant ideologies (e.g., languages as separate systems; there is a correct way to use languages), the students were unable to appreciate various language practices (e.g., creative and strategic use of multiple languages to negotiate identities), as shown by their negative views towards the various translingual practices enacted by their US partners. By engaging in and assigning higher value to monolingual language practices, the Japanese students may have successfully presented their identities positively in their local community (i.e., in their own classroom). While doing so, they positioned A College students, who actively engaged in codemeshing as one form of translingual practice, as “not diligent” and “(overly) friendly” Americans who needed help in their (Japanese) language learning. They misconstrued that their counterparts’ Japanese proficiency was lower than their English proficiency, simply because of the US students’ use of multiple linguistic resources (enacted as translingual practices) in their messages. Not appreciating their partners’ codemeshing style of language practices, however, was also the result of the Japanese students’ translingual practice in which they assessed the balance between social norms and competing discourses. In order for students to be able to appreciate various forms of language practices, it is essential to change not only individual attitudes towards languages, but to change the associated social norms as well.

## Conclusions

Society has always been multilingual; humans have always navigated through multilingual societies to communicate with each other and negotiate meanings among themselves. Translingualism acknowledges and values this very multilingual aspect of communication. If we, as language and culture educators, were to promote students' appreciation for the various ways in which people make meaning without making judgments based on the students' own local norms and values, and to support students' development of translingual disposition, it is necessary to actively promote and encourage translingual practices in our classrooms.

This study also confirms the importance of providing students with opportunities to reflect critically on their own language practices so as to recognize and appreciate multiple linguistic resources that they themselves and others can draw on. By doing so, we can encourage students to develop a sense of ownership of languages. Such educational practice would not only empower students to enhance their agency as "language users" without a fear of being positioned as "snobs," but also lead them to acknowledge and appreciate differences in language and culture practices.

## References:

- Aramaki, S., Enoi, Y., Ehara, H., Kojima, Y., Shimizu, K., Minamino, N., Miyajima, T., & Yamano, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Gaikokujin no Kodomo Hakusho* [The state of the foreign children]. Tokyo: Akashishoten.
- Baxter, J. (2016). Positioning language and identity: Poststructuralist perspectives. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 60-75). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Block, D. (2007). *Second Language Identities*. New York, NY: Continuum.

- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The modern language journal*, 94(1), 103-115.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2015). Translanguaging and identity in educational settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 20-35.
- Doerr, N. (2009). Investigating “native speaker effects”: Toward a new model of analyzing “native speaker” ideologies. In N. Doerr (Ed.), *The Native Speaker Concept: Ethnographic Investigations of Native Speaker Effects (pp.15-46)*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Doerr, N. & Kumagai, Y. (2009). Towards a critical orientation in second language education. In N. Doerr (Ed.), *The Native Speaker Concept: Ethnographic Investigations of Native Speaker Effects (pp.299-317)*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dovchin, S., Sultana, S., & Pennycook, A. (2015). Relocalizing the translingual practices of young adults in Mongolia and Bangladesh. *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts*, 1(1), 4-26.
- Dovchin, S., Sultana, S., & Pennycook, A. (2016). Unequal translingual Englishes in the Asian peripheries. *Asian Englishes*, 18(2), 92-108
- Fujinaga, K., & Fujii, S. (2017). Negotiating Pragmatics of Student’s Writing through Tutorials: A Case Study for Exploring World Japaneses. *Sains Humanika*, 9(4-2), 75-80
- García, O. (2010). Languaging and ethnifying. In J.A. Fishman & O. García (Eds.), *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity: Disciplinary and Regional Perspectives, Vol. 1 (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 519-534). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- García, O., & Kano, N. (2014). Translanguaging as process and pedagogy: Developing the English writing of Japanese students in the US. In J. Conteh & G. Meier (Eds.), *The multilingual turn in languages education: Opportunities and challenges* (pp. 258-277). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- García, O., & Wei, Li. (2013). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Hatano, L. T. (2011). “Kyōsei” no ura ni mieru mō hitotsu no “kyōsei” [“Coerced” multiculturalism behind Multicultural “coexistence”]. In H. Mabuchi (Ed.), “Tabunka kyōsei” wa kanō ka [Is “Multicultural Coexistence” possible?] (pp.127-148). Tokyo: Keiso Shobo
- Hirataka, F., & Kimura G. C., (2017). *Tagengo shugi shakai ni mukete* [Towards Multilingual Society]. Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.
- Horner, B., Lu, M. Z., Royster, J.J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Language difference in writing: Toward a translanguaging approach. *College English* 73(3), 303–321.
- Horner, B., & Tetreault, L. (2016). Translation as (global) writing. *Composition Studies*, 44(1), 13-30.
- Jain, R. (2014). Global Englishes, translanguistic identities, and translanguaging practices in a community college ESL classroom: A practitioner researcher reports. *TESOL Journal*, 5(3), 490-522.
- Kramsch, C. (1997). The privilege of the intercultural speaker. In M. Byram & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language learning in intercultural perspective: Approaches through drama and ethnography* (pp.16-31). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kubota, R. (2015). *Grōbaru ka shakai to gengo kyōiku: Kuritikaru na shiten kara* [Language education in an era of globalization: Critical perspectives]. Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.

- Kumagai, Y., & Kato, R. (2014). Developing a telecollaborative third space: “Self-disclosure” and “self-investment” to achieve co-construction of meanings. *Gengo Bunka Kyōiku Kenkyū* [Studies of language and cultural education] 12, 148–165.
- Lee, J. W., & Jenks, C. (2016). Doing translingual dispositions. *College Composition and Communication*, 68(2), 317-344.
- Lemke, J. (2002). Language development and identity: Multiple timescales in the social ecology of learning. In C. Kramsch (Ed.), *Language acquisition and language socialization* (pp. 68–87). New York, NY: Continuum.
- Leonard, R. L. (2013). Traveling Literacies: Multilingual Writing on the Move. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 48(1), 13-39.
- Marshall, S., & Moore, D. (2018). Plurilingualism amid the panoply of lingualisms: addressing critiques and misconceptions in education. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 15(1), 19-34.
- Mashiko, H. (2002). *Nihon-jin to iu jigazō: Ideorog ī to shite no “Nihon” Saikō* [Self-portraits of Japanese: Rethinking Japan as an Ideorogy]. Tokyo: Sangensha.
- Mashiko, H. (2014). *Kotoba no seiji shakaigaku* [The Political Sociology of Language]. Tokyo: Sangensha.
- Mazzaferro, G. (2018). Translanguaging as Everyday Practice: An Introduction. In G. Mazzaferro (Ed.) *Translanguaging as Everyday Practice* (pp. 1-12). Springer
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2013). Gurōbaru ka ni taiō shita eigo kyōiku kaikaku jisshi keikaku [English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization]. Retrieved from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/01/31/1343704\\_01.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/01/31/1343704_01.pdf)
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2012). Gurōbaru jinzai no ikusei ni tsuite [On Global Human Resources Development]. Retrieved from



[http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/047/siryo/\\_icsFiles/afiel\\_dfile/2012/02/14/1316067\\_01.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/047/siryo/_icsFiles/afiel_dfile/2012/02/14/1316067_01.pdf)

Ministry of Justice. (2019). Kokuseki/chiiki betsu zairyū gaikokujinsū no suii [Change in the number of registered foreign nationals by original counties/areas]. Retrieved from <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001289225.pdf>

The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard educational review*66(1), 60-93.

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching* 44(4), 412–446.

Oguma, E. (1995). *Tanitsu Minzoku Shinwa no Kigen: “Nihon jin” no jigazō no keifu* [The Origin of the Myth of Ethnic Homogeneity: The Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images]. Tokyo: Shinyosha.

Palmer, D. K., Martínez, R. A., Mateus, S. G., & Henderson, K. (2014). Reframing the debate on language separation: Toward a vision for translanguaging pedagogies in the dual language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*98(3), 757–772.

Pennycook, A., & Otsuji, E. (2015). *Metrolingualism: Language in the city*. New York: Routledge.

Sasaki, M. (2012). *Rōsha kara Mita “Tabunka Kyōsei” :Mō hitotu no Gengoteki Mainorit ī* [Multicultural Society from the view of Deaf community: Another linguistic minority]. Tokyo: Koko Shuppan

Schreiber, B.R. (2015). “I am what I am”: Multilingual identity and digital translanguaging. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(3), 69-87.

Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Wei, Li. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of pragmatics*, 43(5), 1222-1235.

Wei, L. (2017). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied linguistics* 39(1), 9-30.

Table 1. Language choices of each posting.

Interview Groups	Names of Participants	Languages Used in Each Post on the Discussion Forum
Focus Group 1	Yoko, Megumi, Keita	1st post: English 2nd post: English with Japanese translation 3rd post: English with Japanese translation
Focus Group 2	Chiharu, Yuki	1st post: Japanese 2nd post: English
Individual Interview	Kaoru	1st post: Japanese 2nd post: Greeting in English, then Japanese

Figure 1: An example of the students' posts (Megumi and Yoko) around here

Figure 2: An example of the students' posts (Kaoru)