

Language ideologies and L2 speaker legitimacy: Native speaker bias in Japan

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(2024). UK: Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 200 pages

ISBN: 9781800414662

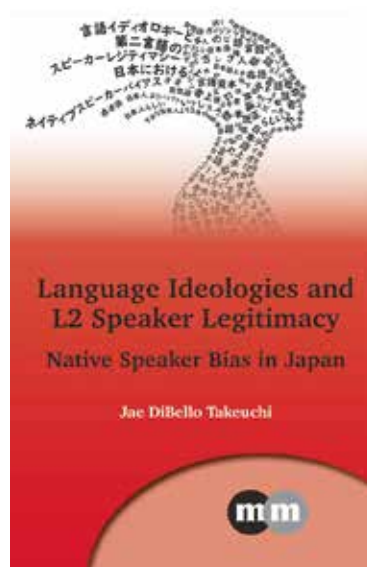
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi44.31829>

There is a bulk of evidence in support of the idea that language and ideology are intermingled and socio-culturally shaped (Cushing, 2023; Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2007). Ideologies are personal beliefs or feelings about languages that are used by people (Kroskrity, 2004). They are inextricably situated within social, cultural, and political specific settings (Cushing, 2021; Kiramba, 2018). The legitimacy of ideologies behind each utterance is also driven by social contexts and power relations. In educational arenas, knowledge production and construction are then determined and directed by the prevailing language ideologies (Kiramba, 2018; Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996). Along the same line, language Ideologies and L2 Speaker Legitimacy have long been significant and complex issues in academia given their role in establishing one's language attitudes, linguistic capital, and intercultural communication (Bacon, 2020; Barrett et al., 2022). Additionally, these concepts shape the accepted language norms of societies and their legitimacy across educational and occupational sectors (Ramberg, 2016). Despite attempts to make ideology and legitimacy the focal point of research and practice, many educational contexts still suffer from challenges and dilemmas considering second language (L2) legitimacy (Constantin-Dureci, 2022; Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000).

As a timely and eye-opening effort, this monograph entitled “*Language ideologies and L2 speaker legitimacy: Native speaker bias in Japan*” presents a nuanced analysis of “speaker legitimacy” and the ownership of language for L2 Japanese speakers in the context of Japan. Moreover, to challenge the prevailing assumptions about who “owns” a language, Takeuchi clarifies how and why Japanese L2 speakers should be simply seen as speakers rather than objects of judgment. Through the use of detailed ethnographic interviews, the author collected rich and empirical evidence on the language ideologies and legitimacy of L2-Japanese speakers’ outputs when interacting with their L1-Japanese-speaking peers. Thanks to its data-driven approach, this monograph is a significant endeavor and scholarly achievement that explains how speaker legitimacy is achieved and negotiated in language-specific ways through specific linguistic and social processes, particularly highlighting the impact



of L1 status. This book offers valuable insights for a wide range of audiences, including language practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers. It allows and empowers them to grasp the critical importance and multifaceted manifestations of language ideology and legitimacy, especially in multilingual contexts. As a case in point, language practitioners can obtain a deep understanding of how their own biases might influence their pedagogical approaches and can work to establish more equitable learning environments. Furthermore, policy-makers will get a nuanced awareness of how policy decisions can either extend or challenge current language hierarchies. In addition, researchers can obtain inspiration from this book to delve further into the complex interplay among language ideology, speaker legitimacy, bias, and so forth.

This thoughtful book includes seven chapters, which report persistent challenges to L2 Japanese speakers' legitimacy as speakers of Japanese. As an opener, Chapter 1 laconically depicts the current situation for L2 speakers in Japan. It also describes the influences of language ideologies that L2 speakers experience in Japan and how the current policies and practices in this country shape the interactions of immigrants and foreign workers. After defining key terms related to language ideologies, Takeuchi introduces three Japanese speech styles called *Keigo*, gendered language, and regional dialects, which are the core of the whole book. In Chapter 2, the author explicates beliefs and perceptions as a venue of research and justifies the use of interviews to explore language-related beliefs and perceptions. Next, she comprehensively describes the demographics, attributes, and skills of both L1 and L2 participants as well as their connections. Likewise, Takeuchi elaborates on the utilization of observations to figure out Japanese participants' linguistic contexts and the types of language use they face in their daily lives (i.e., workplaces and non-work communities). The relationship among the participants and its impact on their language ideology beliefs are also presented in this chapter.

To shift toward specific speech styles, Chapter 3 deals with *keigo*, which is the system of Japanese politeness language. It introduces some grammatical details related to *keigo* and reports on prior studies that see it a challenge for Japanese L2 learners. The author also illustrates the ideology of *keigo* and its criticality for L1-Japanese speakers to become mature 'members of society'. Takeuchi further describes how Japanese L2 speakers approach or resist using *keigo* that correspondingly affects their ideologies and beliefs. To support her arguments, the author presents findings from several participants, who possessed different beliefs about the legitimacy of *keigo* as a linguistic resource. The chapter concludes with a call for a more nuanced understanding of how *keigo* relates to Japanese L2 speakers' legitimacy.

Chapter 4 focuses on ideologies about Japanese gendered language and elucidates how the wrong use of gendered language may affect L2 participants' language ownership. The author criticizes the continuation of stereotypical representations of gendered speech in media and pedagogical materials despite demands for changing the use of this speech style. Takeuchi brings examples of textbooks and talks to show the effect of gendered ideologies on L2-Japanese speakers and their lack of ownership as Japanese speakers. Concerning the third core (i.e., regional dialects), the author examines the residents of rural areas and their ideologies about standard language and dialects in Chapter 5. First, a brief introduction to Japanese dialects is presented in this chapter. Then the participants' perceptions of dialect and its relevance for L2 speakers are explained. Takeuchi also declares that all L2 participants living in non-urban areas face dialects and negotiate intricate linguistic choices about

their use. The chapter closes with an explanation of how dialect use or non-use influences L2 speakers' community membership and identity.

In Chapter 6, Takeuchi shifts from specific speech styles towards Japanese language use to explain how L1 speakers express their opinions and evaluations of L2 speakers' Japanese abilities. She uses empirical studies to pinpoint the impact of native speaker bias on L1 representations of L2 speakers' linguistic competence. The bias transfer of non-teacher L1 interlocutors and their misjudgments of L2 speakers is severely called into question in this chapter, too. In Chapter 7, Takeuchi gets back to the question of how L2 speakers face and negotiate language ideologies in Japan and reviews her scholarly contributions to this domain. She invites researchers to examine language ideology, ownership, and legitimacy in a variety of L2s rather than a Japanese-specific consideration. The author ends this monograph with the pitfalls of native speaker bias for L2 speakers living in Japan and summons a reconsideration of what it means to be a legitimate speaker of Japanese.

In sum, this book is praiseworthy on a number of grounds. First, the author coherently uses scientific evidence and empirical research to add credibility to her arguments and ideas. Second, the book includes both theory and practice to advocate for speaker legitimacy in contrast to the existing book, which is mainly theoretical and concept-based. The next advantage of this monograph is comparable chapter lengths showing the author's equal attention to all aspects of the book. Moreover, the academic and simple language used in the book is merit since it simplifies the understanding of complex terms related to ideology and legitimacy. In spite of these advantages, this monograph has some disadvantages, too. The first weakness is that all chapters are based on a single person's research and perspective. Such a limited view is unfortunate in this book. In other words, the diversity of experiences within the Japanese L2 learning context has been overlooked by the author. To counter-argue, it can be suggested that a deeper analysis of individual learners might have gone beyond the scope of this book and deviated from the author's core objective. This is debatable and could be the subject of further research.

Second, there is a lack of information about L2-specific language beliefs and how language ideologies function in particular situations and genres such as media, law, education, and discourse. This feature is easily noticeable and covered in Schieffelin et al.'s (1998) book on the same topic. Third, the relationship between language ideologies, bias, and legitimacy with public policies and individual practices is not clear in this book. To put it another way, the contributions of ideologies to policy and planning are weak, while other books such as that of Mar-Molinero et al. (2016) explicitly inform policy and planning. Furthermore, it would have been better if the author had added conclusions and suggestions for further reading/research to all chapters. Some chapters have conclusions, but not others. This shows inconsistency. The next drawback is that the book hardly includes pictures and schematic representations and all contents are textual. This makes readers' eyes tired. To address this problem, the next editions of the book should add pictorial representations to chapters, too. Space limitation may be the reason the author ignores this aspect. Another misfit of this resource concerns the absence of a glossary of concepts related to the critical turn in L2 education. Without knowing key concepts, the readers may find the topics difficult to grasp. Chapter-specific or an overall glossary can be provided to address this drawback. Finally, the author could have added some studies from other cultures, contexts, and languages instead of sticking to a single context and language. The broad nature of language ideology and the

role of cultural variations may have prevented the author from bringing ideas from other settings. This might also be due to the manageability concern of the author.

Despite these shortcomings, this illuminating book is still a thought-provoking piece of work that contributes to language education, especially in terms of ideology and legitimacy of L2 speakers. It also expands the scope of research on native speaker bias from academic to occupational contexts showing how L2 speakers wish to speak and how L1 speakers anticipate them to do so. The book also offers valuable insights and prompts for further discussion and investigation in the field of language education and beyond. It is of paramount significance for encouraging educators and researchers to step beyond the English language concerning critical terms such as ideology and legitimacy. Hence, it can assist both L1 and L2 teachers, learners, and policy-makers in understanding and coping with language ideology and legitimacy challenges and dilemmas in speaking a specific language.

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