Engagements with English in Japan: Ideological Constitutions of the Language and Its Speakers

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Misako Tajima

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ideological constitutions of English and its speakers in Japan, drawing on language ideology theory. The theory, which originates from linguistic anthropology, views ideologies as people's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about language rather than as top-down forces. The thesis therefore aims to examine how people engaging with English in Japan understand the language, and what language ideologies constitute or are constituted by their engagements with and understandings of English.

As research sites where people engage with English, the thesis focuses on self-help English language learning (ELL) books, Philippines-based Skype English conversation (*eikaiwa*) lessons, and English as an official corporate language (EOCL) policies in Japan-based enterprises. Through a lens of critical multimodal discourse analysis (CMDA), different types of data collected from these three research sites, such as the contents of the self-help ELL books, promotional materials produced by Philippines-based Skype *eikaiwa* providers, online customer reviews on the books and providers, and interview findings regarding EOCL policies are analyzed. By doing this, the thesis untangles the complicated intersection of people's engagements with English, what they think of the language and its speakers, and what kinds of beliefs and feelings they have toward them.

The findings suggest several important considerations. First, they show that my participants are involved in English or ELL far more divergently than what language use and language learning mean in the conventional sense. To further

explore this phenomenon, the thesis proposes two new ideas ('engagements with English for self-development' and 'engagements with English for male gratification'), asserting the need to reconsider the notions of language use and language learning. The findings also demonstrate that in the course of engaging with English or ELL, the participants conceptualize the language and its speakers in specific ways. The native speaker, for example, is often considered as someone who is qualified to judge whether particular English is 'correct' or not, based on his/her intuition. However, the findings simultaneously indicate that this sort of conceptualization is not fixed but rather is constantly negotiated; the notion of the native speaker is socially, culturally, and ideologically constituted through people's discursive practices, and the glorification of 'native English' is not absolute.

The thesis contributes to providing more comprehensive understandings of English and ELL by developing the idea of 'engagement' instead of utilizing the more traditional notions of 'use' and 'learning.' The thesis also advances the theorization of language ideologies within critical inquiries in language studies, helping usher in significant changes in both Japan's and the world's language education.