

Alphabet Soup: Explaining Japanese Language (Non)Policy

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The issue of language is perhaps one of the most understudied phenomena in political science. Traditionally, it has been taken for granted, assumed, and ignored, especially in periods following state and national construction, when nationalists attempt to construct a common national identity of which language is a part. It may also be the case that language seems so primal, so ingrained, that it is difficult to analyze independent of other factors. One need only mention bitter disputes over language such as the Quebecois in Canada and Gaelic speakers in Ireland, among others. Recent scholarship (May 2001, Bucken-Knapp 2003, among others) has sought to fill this void, but in has left another unexplored: the trans- and international components of language. My goals in this paper are threefold. First, I propose an integrated framework for studying the politics of language that takes not only the state and society into account, but also the role of the international context. This paper focuses on state and societal responses to global English. As such, analysis takes place at both the domestic, second, and international, third, levels (Waltz 1959). This research project fits into the “second image reversed” literature in which the international system, third, affects outcomes at the domestic, second, level (Gourevitch 1978). Second, I apply this framework to the case of Japan and show that when one is analyzing language policy one must examine the language(s) itself, which can have effects on policy and societal preferences¹ independent of other factors. Third, I seek to explain why some states and societies respond to global English and perceived language threats while others do not.

Globalization, which I briefly define following Barber’s (1995) *Jihad vs. McWorld*, as the increased rise of forces that push societies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and states closer together as well as those that pull them apart, plays a crucial role in language policy that is often underexplored in favor of domestic explanations. International organizations (IOs);

¹ Societal preferences are reflected in practice and popular attitudes independent of the state.

cultural homogenization, including Americanization/Westernization; and economic interdependence based on regimes and norms of free trade are examples of the first type of globalization, which, in turn, enter into a dialectic with the second type; the forces of tribal- and sectarianism, the ties that divide.

Some argue, based on economic grounds, that globalization is nothing new, if not an outright myth (Hirst and Thompson 1996, Wade 1996). Foreign direct investment (FDI), robust trade flows between states, and multinational corporations (MNCs) were features of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When cultural issues arise, however, these critics are noticeably mute, overlooking a relationship between culture and economics; the two are often intertwined. Feigenbaum's (2001) work on the globalization of the film industry and other instances of cultural production demonstrates this relationship. Language is another cultural issue with implications for economic matters. Fishman writes, "language becomes part of the secular religion, binding society together. Language is a powerful instrument for promoting internal cohesion and providing an ethnic or national identity. It contributes to values, identity, and a sense of peoplehood. A common vernacular also establishes effective boundaries between 'in-groups' and 'out-groups.'" (Schmid 2001) Regarding economics, Grin (2001, 66) argues that language is a social investment, an element of human capital, and a factor in wage discrimination.

One of the overlooked aspects of globalization is that it can reorder and reprioritize domestic issues (Frieden and Rogowski 1996, Rogowski 1989). This leads to two key errors on the part of scholars of language politics that I seek to correct. First, they all too often ignore international issues such the effects of global English on domestic politics. Second, they offer a false dichotomy between society and state; by privileging one over the other these scholars

disregard important factors like the interplay between state and society in the face of international issues. For example, recent scholarship by Laitin (1998) and Bucken-Knapp (2003) focus on post-Soviet society and the Norwegian state, respectively. Laitin looks at the societal incentives for language learning, and the effects of state construction on identity, while Bucken-Knapp examines language as used by elites, including those in political parties. As such, one's strength is the other's weakness, and visa versa. While Laitin privileges language over other factors, perhaps taking it too seriously as a source of identity, Bucken-Knapp's problem is the opposite. Language is clearly not just an elite tool in Norway, or else the elites would identify something with greater societal resonance and use that.

Laitin runs into trouble by giving precedence to the role of language in identity formation when evidence points to nationality.² Although Russian speakers may identify themselves as "Russian speakers," the titular majorities who control governments and media are often the ones constructing their identities. These majorities may view Russian as a colonial language. Examining post-Soviet states as well as societies may show this. By ignoring the societal level, Bucken-Knapp cannot account for why the elites go back to the same well of political capital, language, over and over again. His answer focuses solely on elite instrumentalism and has little, if anything to say about the role that language plays in Norwegian society. There is no role for language independent of elites, and no explanation is given for why elites continually use language as a tool rather than factors like class and region. As such, his study seemingly makes a functionalist "just so" argument. What is needed is a framework for studying language that takes both state and society into account, and also features international factors such as the rise of global English.

² Many scholars of international relations misuse the term "nation," equating it with "state." I define it following Barrington (1997), as a collective of people united by shared cultural features (myths, values, language, religion, among others) and the belief in the right to territorial self-determination.

This paper incorporates both internal and external dynamics into a framework for analyzing and explaining language policy and societal preferences.³ I hope to not only show the interaction between the international and the domestic, but also to bridge the gap between those who favor state and those who favor society in the study of language. Furthermore, I argue that language itself can play an explanatory role in analyzing language policy outcomes and societal preferences, as will be shown when the framework is applied to the case of Japan. Five factors, state-society relations, the role of language in society, the history of the state, economics, and the language(s) itself, can explain outcomes in the face of global English. These ideal type outcomes are acceptance, resistance, and syncretism.

The International Context

Global English self-evidently refers to the use of English across the world in both English and non-English speaking states. Lest one find the issue of global English trivial, consider that in 2000 the World Trade Organization (WTO) spent about a quarter of its budget and staff on language services (Economist 2001). Crystal (1997, 360) writes,

English is used as an official or semi-official language in over 60 countries, and has a prominent place in a further 20. It is either dominant or well-established in all six continents. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising. Over two-thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world's electronic retrieval systems, 80% is stored in English. People communicate on the Internet largely in English. English radio programmes are received by over 150 million in 120 countries. Over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level; over 80 million study it at secondary level...⁴

³ Different sectors of society may in fact welcome global English, perhaps minority groups who see global English as emancipatory in the face of a dominant majority language. This topic is under-researched and under-theorized.

⁴ Giving credit where credit is due, this quote appears in May 2001, 199.

Global English is both consciously and subconsciously spread. The conscious aim of global English is to create a common frame of reference for understanding across languages, with English as a default second option (Global English Network). Subconsciously, global English disseminates via print-capitalism par Anderson (1991). The Internet and other media, such as film, television, and music carry English to other linguistic environments and are not part of a conscious strategy by actors.

There are two views on the rise of global English, hegemony and transaction costs.⁵ These need not be mutually exclusive, but the overwhelming majority of work on this phenomenon falls into the former camp. Building on the work of Antonio Gramsci, and its application to international relations by Robert Cox (1983), this argument posits that global English is a hegemonic force that attempts to erase and negate other languages. By controlling the kind of language, one might observe that certain forms of thought and expression are possible while others are not. One scholar posits,

The expansion of English is partly a result of Americanisation in the media, commerce, youth culture et al., and is assisted by its status as the dominant foreign language in continental European education systems. While there is no simple correlation between the use of English and either British culture or U.S. corporate interests, these developments embody and entail hegemonising processes that tend to render the use of English 'natural' and 'normal', and to marginalise other languages. (Phillipson 2001, 191)

Such arguments often sound analogous to those regarding biodiversity:

If we only use one language to describe the world, we lose something. Languages are not just reflectors of the external world—they embody it. How we describe the world is crucially dependent on where we are and how we speak and write. The creation of a monolingual geography raises issues about what we are losing in terms of the range and subtlety of languages used to describe the world. (Short, et al. 2001, 10)

⁵ The handful of scholars who study global English do not frame this issue as I do, but tend to make more specific arguments that can be categorized as such.

Similarly, Phillipson (2001, 189) argues, “The continued use of many languages used in international fora is threatened by globalisation and those forces that strengthen English at the expense of other languages.” However, some scholars argue that the use of biodiversity metaphors “reinforce, by implication, a widely held view that language loss is an inevitable part of the cycle of social and linguistic evolution.” (May 2001, 3)

According to proponents of the transaction costs approach the rise of global English is commensurate with the rise of global economic interdependence, and using English as a global lingua franca will reduce linguistic transaction costs among businesses, states, NGOs, and IOs: “The globalization of business and economic relations may preferentially utilize English simply ‘because it is there,’ because it constitutes a ready-made worldwide communication channel.” (Fishman 1996a, 4) According to Short, et al., “Many non-English-speaking communities have explicitly adopted English as a way to connect with a global community.” (1) Thus, global English is an economic as well as cultural issue. Grin notes, “the relative position of a language, *ceteris paribus*, is positively correlated with the aggregate purchasing power of its speakers is highly plausible,” (68) and “the existence of a robust link between English language skills and earnings... constitutes a very strong presumption that these skills contribute to *explain* earnings, and that they can therefore be interpreted as a *cause* in a causal relationship.” (74)

The transaction costs argument can be subsumed into the hegemonic one because of the role that material factors play, and also in terms of who might benefit from global English. Supporters of the hegemonic argument absorb this approach for several reasons. First, international capital and multi- and transnational corporations (MNCs and TNCs) are concentrated in, if not English speaking countries, then countries that are in the North, which collectively have much higher rates of English speakers than those in the South. Additionally, the

North has greater access to educational resources vis a vis the South. Third, these countries tend to hold positions of power in IOs that also propagate global English. In the case of Singapore, briefly examined below, Rubdy (2001, 351) argues, “the most common rationale for the dominance of English by Singaporeans has been couched in terms of its usefulness and neutrality in serving Singapore’s practical needs, depoliticizing the language issue here in the process.”

However, given the “hidden” nature of evidence for Gramscians and neo-Marxists, it is difficult, if not impossible, to falsify the hegemonic argument. This does not mean one can ignore it, but in terms of research its non-falsifiability must be taken into account. If global English were a hegemonic force, one would expect a counter-hegemony. At the state level, this would manifest itself in policy outcomes that resist English encroachment. However, this has not been the case, at least not uniformly. Many states lack language policies that regulate global English, despite the urging of intellectuals who make the hegemonic argument. One could posit that, par Sklar (1976), a transnational class of capitalists puts business ahead of linguistic identity, and English is the language of business, but I have not seen this argument made. One of the purposes of this paper is to explain why some states enact language policies in the face of global English and perceived language threats while others do not. Regardless, it is interesting to observe Gramscians and neo-Marxists deplore the erasing of identity based on language and nationality; given their hostility to nationalism it is a not an argument that Marxists have historically worn well. Additionally, one would assume that a world population of English speakers would make the Revolution easier to spread. Again, hegemony and transaction costs need not be mutually exclusive. As we shall see below, perceptions within states on whether or not global English is hegemonic or a way of reducing transaction costs factor into language policy outcomes of resistance, acceptance, and syncretism.

Some scholars have argued that global English is epiphenomenal, a product of globalization that need not be necessary for the survival of globalization (Wallraff 2000, Kraidy 2001). Wallraff (66) argues, “the relationship between science or technology and English is, essentially, accidental. It is chiefly because the United States has long been in the vanguard of much scientific and technological research.... And if something as earthshaking as the Internet had been developed in, say, Japan, perhaps English would not now be dominant to the extent that it is.” But Wallraff misses the point, confusing what may be the “accidental” rise of English with the epiphenomenal. The two are not the same. The rise of global English, while perhaps not a constitutive element of globalization,⁶ has been brought about by a variety of factors, such as colonization; Anglo-American hegemony that provides public goods; the rise of international organizations (Koehn 1984); as well as international NGOs created in part by Westerners. The growth and density of IOs and NGOs evolved in a bipolar world in which the US played an integral role. These structures are “sticky,” not likely to be overturned any time soon. Even if there are more native speakers of Chinese than those who speak English, and even if the Internet becomes more linguistically fragmented as a result of modernization on the part of Less Developed Countries (LDCs), global English in terms of both hegemonic and transaction costs approaches is not going to fade away because it represents a default option for global communication. “Reference to English as a ‘global’ language has... much less to do with demography or geography than with decision-making in the contemporary global and political economic system,” writes Phillipson (2001, 189).⁷

⁶ The factors offered below may allow one to make a case that English is a constitutive factor in globalization, but I do not do so here.

⁷ The real argument to be made here lies not with the decline of global English, but with the decline of the United States’ soft power, getting others to want what you want, in the international system. Recent trends show a decline in the number of foreigners attending US colleges and universities, including business and medical schools, as well as visa entries for skilled foreigners (Gross 2004).

Global English may present problems for national languages, especially those in states that are highly integrated into the world economy. This is so because, as Sonntag puts it, “The more globalization, the more the issue of global English is politicized locally.” (2004, 1) The economic and cultural flora flowing out of native English countries into others can pose problems by threatening the domestic hegemony of a national language, and as a result, also threaten national identity. “Globalization has significantly altered the function of language/culture as a determining factor in the construction of ‘nationhood.’” (Buttigieg 1999, 49) Terms like “e-mail,” “Internet,” “hamburger,” and “air conditioning” have been introduced, in English, into states where English is not the native language. Target states, as well as societal actors, have three options when encountering global English: resistance, acceptance, and syncretism. I take each of these ideal types in turn below and define them by their practices.

The Dependent Variable: Outcomes of Resistance, Acceptance, Syncretism

In this paper I propose a framework for understanding language policy outcomes in the face of globalization, and in particular, the rise of global English. Some scholars have begun work on this. Kachru (1992, 356) poses a three-tiered system of “World English” with an Inner Circle made up of the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand because these states are “norm-providers” of World English. An Outer Circle of states that are “norm-developing” includes India, Nigeria, and Singapore, among others, in which English is often a second language (ESL). Third, an Expanding Circle of states treats English as a foreign language (EFL) such as China, Israel, Japan, and Russia. Kachru’s model, initially developed in the late 1980s, is already out of date. Many of the states he describes as belonging to the Outer Circle are transitioning to the Inner, and Expanding Circle states are moving into the Outer Circle. Scandinavian states like

Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden teach ESL rather than EFL, and many in India grow up speaking English. A more fluid framework is needed. Moreover, his model does not take pidgin Englishes into account: there is no syncretism or resistance, defined in the following paragraphs, because he assumes acceptance and accommodation of World English. I discuss the case of Singapore's pidgin "Singlish" below.

Resistance occurs when powerful domestic actors view the preservation of the domestic hegemonic language(s) as a priority. As such, policy outcomes are directed at resisting global English, often via language laws and language boards created to stem the perceived tide of global English. For example, France is the paramount example of resistance because its language policy is geared towards resisting an influx of foreign words. The French state has gone as far as setting up legal filters to protect French; a board issues French words to stymie the use of English. Although "there is loudly proclaimed official concern about the influence of English language and culture on French language and culture, in fact, apparently French citizens do not share that concern." (Conrad 1996, 26) The state does not act against the wishes of society, but because the latter takes a *laissez faire* approach to language and cultural issues the perceptions of French policy-makers trump those of society. Here we can see that although resistance is the outcome because the French state perceives English as a hegemonic force that is to be resisted it is by no means a widely held view in society.

Another example is not a state, but the nation/province of Quebec, in multinational Canada, which enacts similar policies. Lest we think that this is just a Francophone issue, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Israel translate English words into Korean (Hangul) and Hebrew, respectively, in a manner similar to that of the French.

Acceptance occurs not only when global English is not resisted, but also when it is actively welcomed. Language laws and policies exist, but they give English a place at the table along with other state and national languages. Here it is important to note the role that colonization by an English speaking country can play, a factor that may lend credence to the hegemonic argument. However, Fishman notes, “English in most former British and American colonies and spheres of interest is now no longer as much a reflection of externally imposed hegemony (certainly not a hegemony maintained by force, let alone by foreign forces) as it is part of the everyday discourse of various now substantially autonomous societies, all of whom are essentially following their own ‘commonsense needs and desires.’” (Fishman 1996b, 639) Both India and Singapore fit this bill.⁸ English in India enjoys “associate status,” beneath the national language of Hindi and fourteen others. Similarly, English is an official language of Singapore, alongside Chinese and Tamil. Malay is the national language.

In Singapore, English “is the de facto national language of the Republic, the sole medium of education, legal and administrative systems, international and interregional trade and commerce, the bulk of interethnic and fast growing sectors of intraethnic communication.” (Tickoo 1996, 431) It is important to note that there is no official language policy in Singapore, instead there are “continually evolving top-down plans,” (Tickoo, 432) that “usually appear in ministerial statements, translated in Ministry of Education guidelines, which are then implemented in school. In addition, the media are regularly used for public service announcements, to promote and create an acceptance of government policies and to influence language behavior.” (Rubdy 342) At the domestic level, English is a compromise because potentially divisive ethnic differences are mitigated by using English rather than a language like

⁸ The CIA World Factbook is the source for the following information on official languages.
<<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>>.

Malay or Tamil that is attached to an ethnicity. Internationally, Singapore's use of English has made it a flash point for discussions of hegemony versus transaction costs. On one hand, Singapore was a British colony that had English language and culture forced upon it. Additionally, the world economy dictates that Singapore use its language, English, if it is to be an economic power. On the other hand, Singapore gains economically by using English, cementing its status as a regional and world economic power.

Syncretism is trickier to define, but should not be mistaken for a residual category. Instead, syncretic states are ambivalent and unsure as to the necessity and efficacy of language policies and laws. Syncretic states localize global English, adapting it to local cultural patterns of usage, often without specific codified policies, a problem for scholars who argue that global English is a hegemonic force. "Not only has English expanded to become the dominant world-wide medium of communicative practice, it has also undergone considerable reinvention by nonnative speaking communities, many of who are now speaking English in their own way.... The Englishification process of the world is much more complicated than the simple dispersion of English from the US in a globalizing world." (Short, et al., 3) For example, Singapore's hybrid of English, termed "Singlish" was popular throughout society because it put a distinctly "native" twist on global English, but this also posed problems for the state. Using the Peoples' Republic of China's (PRC) "Speak Good Mandarin" campaign as a model, Singapore initiated a "Speak Good English" policy because

yesterday's Singapore needed English to help it trade in goods, to efficiently mobilize capital flow and manipulate the movement of cheap labour to make it one of the most dynamic of Asian economies, within this scenario, both standard English and Singlish had a place. Today, with labour having become more expensive, Singapore's sources of modernization have changed. Today's Singapore aspires to be a global city of a first world order that can hold its own in the forefront of information technology and attract a highly skilled service sector that can compete with the best in the world. Needless to say, Singlish has no place in the highly standardized communication structures of the New Economy. (Rubdy, 35)

Japan, discussed in further detail below, also fits this bill. It is highly integrated into the world economy, and would seemingly be a strong candidate for resistance much like the Republic of Korea and France. However, as will be shown below, features of the Japanese language, such as the *katakana* alphabet, predispose Japan towards not having a robust language policy. Up to this point I have written much more about outcomes than about processes. The following section examines the factors responsible for language policy outcomes, taking both society and state into account.

The Independent Variables: Explaining Language Policy Outcomes and Societal Preferences

One of three state and societal outcomes, resistance, acceptance, or syncretism, is a product of a constellation of factors: state-society relations, the role of language in state-society relations, history, economics, and the language itself. In combination, these five explanatory variables lead to the overall type of policy outcome discussed in the previous paragraphs. For the purposes of this paper, I weight each of these five factors equally because the goal of the framework is to uncover what is important in studying the politics of language; a skeletal arrangement is an important first step that can be augmented and altered by empirical case study research.

State-society relations is a broad label that seemingly encompasses most of political science as well as sociology, so further elaboration is needed. Looking at the interplay between state and society forces scholars like Laitin (1998), who examines society but not the state, to study the state as well. Similarly, Bucken-Knapp (2003) chooses to examine the state but not society must now account for why elites instrumentally use language rather than other factors that correlate, such as region and class. State-society relations also allows scholars to choose

between the analytical distinctness of each word outside the hyphen, or to argue, as some do, that keeping these concepts separate is impossible (Mitchell 1991).

One of the most important facets of this variable is the system of interest group representation used by the state, be it pluralism, interest-group liberalism, or some form of corporatism, democratic or otherwise. This is so because often language is a powerful issue that resonates in society much more so than it does in state apparatuses. As such, how access to the state is mediated and channeled can be a crucial factor in determining language policy. For example, Norway's democratic corporatism allows elites more leeway in policy issues than a pluralist system would, an issue left unexplored by Bucken-Knapp because he focuses on elites and parties rather than state-society relations. If he took societal preferences into account, he would see how much language matters. We can see similar effects with regards to international circumstances. In the case of Singapore the official languages reflect business interests as much as any colonial heritage. Singapore's system of interest group representation privileges business over others. The city-state occupies a pivotal economic position in Southeast Asia and has negotiated free trade agreements with many of its geographic peers as well as larger states. This framework allows one to hypothesize a relationship between the role of business in terms of state access and informal language policy.

Closely related to state-society relations, the role of language in society is important because language is often viewed primordially by those who speak it. The key difference between these two factors is the broadness of the first compared to the strict focus on language matters in the second. Terms like "mother tongue" and "native speaker" imply an attachment that is emotional, sentimental, and perhaps even spiritual. For some, it may be either the sole or most important constitutive factor in identity: "Most people value their language not only

instrumentally, as a tool, but also intrinsically, as a cultural inheritance and as a marker of identity.” (Reaume 2000, 251)⁹

In addition to ideational factors that may predispose people to think of language as sacred and deserving of protection, material factors, such as those described by Laitin (1998), may also play a role. The Estonian government has made Estonian the official language; job opportunities and government contracts require knowledge of Estonian. As a result, many ethnolinguistic Russians in Estonia are learning Estonian en masse. This example also demonstrates that state actors are aware of the power of language in society as well, and will not hesitate to use it. Bucken-Knapp (2003) points out one instance of instrumentalism in Norway. In the former Yugoslavia, what was once Serbocroatian with regional dialects became Serbian and Croatian upon the breakup of the multinational state. Both states took immediate steps to differentiate their new languages.¹⁰

With the rise of historical institutionalism (Steinmo, et al., 1992), that “history matters” has become a truism in political science. Two related historical factors are pertinent to our discussion of language policy: Anglo-American colonization and insertion into the world economy. As previously mentioned, colonization brought English to far-flung places such as Belize, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, and Singapore. Exposing these areas to English takes on a path-dependent quality in which colonization is a critical juncture, a point of departure for language issues. Colonization also plays a role in state-society relations given the governance structures set up by the colonizers. Often, local governments were staffed by a minority group, rather than a majority or plurality, which was able to dictate the terms of intrastate

⁹ Note the difference between the independent variable “the role of language in society” and the dependent variable “societal preferences.” The first takes place at T1, before the (attempted) penetration of global English. The latter takes place at T2 and is a response to global English.

¹⁰ The same can be said of the Czech Republic and Slovakia upon their “velvet divorce.”

communication. As such, colonization set the agenda for further debates over the role of language, as was the case in Nigeria in which Hausa/Yoruba, Fulani, and Ibo battle over domestic language policy (Laitin 1992). Additionally, because of the technological superiority of the colonizers, English became a symbol of modernization, the language of the colonial master, something to aspire to. Relatedly, colonization was also often the first means by which states were integrated into the world economy.¹¹ Many of these states developed “special relationships” with their colonizers that had both economic and cultural implications. In an analysis of post-colonial interstate relations Brysk, et al. (2002, 268) find that “Europeans consistently describe their ties with ex-colonies in the language of ‘family’, and this rhetoric is significant.” Special economic ties brought the post-colonial states into the world economy, and in many of these states English still has an official status because of not only colonization, but also the continuing relationship.

I identify two sub-factors regarding economics: entrance into the world economy and a state’s position in the world economy. Entrance into the world economy is a powerful factor because English is the dominant language of both world economics and world politics. Critics of global English who argue that there is no necessary link between English and US dominance (Wallraff, Kraidy) miss the point: English is the current language of the international system and “the rapid growth of English-language education around the world has occurred in conjunction with a global telecommunications dominated by US interests.” (Judy 1999, 8) Entrance into the world economy, especially for newer states, takes place in English because of the role that language plays. Like much of the history factor discussed above, colonization plays a role in this economic sub-factor. Additionally, while it is safe to assume there is no link between language and invention and innovation the global telecommunications that Judy refers to were built, and

¹¹ These colonized areas became states in the Westphalian sense following decolonization.

named by the US, thus barring resistance terms like “e-mail” and “Internet” enter into local discourse and speech patterns that most English speakers around the world recognize.

The size of the domestic market is another economic issue that should be taken into consideration because, broadly speaking, the smaller the size the greater the openness in terms of free trade (Katzenstein 1985). This also means that if companies that traffic in cultural goods, such as film, television, and music, want to export their products they must do so in a language that others can understand if they want to maximize profits:

Far from being a hindrance to the successful making of music for the export market, the small size of the domestic Swedish music market actually facilitates it, in that it encourages aspiring musicians to create music for the larger, global, U.S./U.K. market. In a country where thousands aspire to be professional musicians, it is readily evident that the country can only support a limited number of musicians performing in Swedish. Therefore, if they really want to be successful in Sweden, they need to develop and produce music that will sell well elsewhere, particularly in the U.S. and the U.K. (Sander 2001, 28)

The fifth variable is the role of the domestic language(s) itself. In particular, the ability of global English to “penetrate” the target language is an important factor. For example, the leap from French to English is not a difficult one, one reason French authorities took action to protect French from English. On the other hand, Korean authorities noted the strong differences between Hangul and English and concluded that because English terminology might win out, the relatively young Hangul had to be protected, an “infant industry” of language. On its face the above examples appear to be post hoc and indeterminate: we are presently lacking a theoretical connection between the language itself and language policy. As such, my goal here is to begin to focus on this potential correlation. As discussed below, Japanese has a separate alphabet, *katakana*, for foreign words, termed loan words, thus both state and society in Japan do not view English as a threat because it is imported via *katakana*. Japanese syncretism, driven by *katakana*,

is the subject of the remainder of this paper. My goal is to show how examining the language itself can explain, in part, language policy and societal outcomes, or the lack thereof.

Language as Explanatory Variable: The Case of Japan

Based on state-society relations as well as the role of language in society, Japan appears to be a candidate for a policy outcome of resistance: “Japan is considered to be one of the few non-Western countries to achieve remarkable economic success without sacrificing its traditional culture and language.” (Kubota 1998, 295). Indeed, Japan is unique in East Asia that it does not have such a policy, given the PRC and both Koreas, which have robust language policies that limit the penetration of English into their domestic spheres. Additionally, other states in similar positions in the world economy, as well as those with similar state-society relations,¹² such as France and Israel, have resistance policies.

With regards to the second factor, the role of language in society, there is a strong relationship between being and speaking Japanese that also points to a policy of resistance (Loveday 1982, 1986).¹³ Although to the best of my knowledge never formally calculated in the case of Japan, Greenberg’s H-index, “the probability that if two members of the population are chosen at random [in a certain community], they will have at least one language in common,” (1956, 112), would be quite high (close to 1 as 0 is the lowest). Some scholars have gone so far as to note that learning a second language is difficult in Japan due to the relationship between language and identity (Hall and Gudykunst 1986, Nisugi 1974), although this may be changing. Nonetheless, while the relationship between language and identity creates problems for those in

¹² Scholars have classified these states as “statist” rather than pluralist.

¹³ Portions of this argument previously appeared in Berg 2004.

Japan who do not speak Japanese, it is just as problematic for non-members of Japanese society who speak Japanese. Notes SanAntonio:

Since speaking Japanese is linked closely with ethnic identity, when a foreigner speaks Japanese well, the ethnic difference between foreigner and Japanese is reduced to the 'Asian-ness' of the Japanese (Miller, 1977). This creates problems because the Japanese do not base their identity on a notion of fellowship with other Asians, but consider themselves unique (Miller, 1977). The Japanese cultural hierarchy and identity *vis a vis* other Asian ethnic groups is threatened. If a foreigner speaks Japanese well, then the cultural attributes which enable an individual to claim Japanese identity are emphasized making it difficult for Japanese to retain the view of themselves as unique (1988).

Thus, the use of Japanese remains that of a border guard, part of a discourse of power (see Chomsky 1979, Fairclough 2001, Foucault 1979, Kedar 1987, Kelling 1975, Lakoff 1990), in this case the ability to in- and exclude, that trumps feelings of commonality based on race. There is a strong basis for, at least in part, the linguistic constitution of Japanese identity. Douglas MacArthur viewed language as so crucial to the Japanese that he decided that to replace it with English during the Occupation following the Pacific War would lead to long-standing feelings of hostility on the part of the Japanese towards the Americans. Given the above information, why does Japan lack a policy of resistance? I argue that the reason for Japan's non-policy can be found primarily in the fifth variable of the framework, the language itself.

However, it should be noted that English has played a role in language policy debates in Japan. Kubota points out, "In the late 19th century, Arinori Mori, the first Minister of Education, advocated the adoption of English as the language of Japan. Also, in 1947 and 1950, Gakudo Ozaki, a politician, advocated the adoption of English as a national language." (297) Nonetheless, these examples are the exception rather than the rule. Mori was a Meiji reformer who viewed English as a "modern" language that would help Japan industrialize, a view held by many outside Japan in today's world. Ozaki's suggestion of English took place during the US

Occupation following the Pacific War and was dismissed by MacArthur and the Occupation government, mentioned above.

Japanese has three alphabets, ideo/pictograms based on Chinese characters called *kanji*, a script system called *hiragana* that functions as a standard alphabet, and the *katakana* script used almost exclusively for loan words, those that are foreign in origin, the far majority of which are in English. Structurally, both *kanji* and *hiragana* make it difficult to import foreign words into Japanese, which would lead one to expect an outcome similar to that of Korea's Hangul: the difficulty in importing English leads policy makers, backed by wide swaths of society, to fear the use of English as a primary language, thus leading to a policy of resistance. However, because of *katakana*, Japan is able to import English syncratically into Japanese. It allows for English words and Japanese grammar patterns. At the end of this paper I briefly provide a selected list of *katakana* loan words to illustrate my point. Syncretism in Japan may slide towards acceptance, thus signaling the end of Japanese, and the rise of some hybrid in which the language spoken is mixture of English words with Japanese grammar patterns resembling Singapore's hybrid Singlish. There are several reasons why this may be the case.

First, the use of *katakana* is on the rise, and that of *kanji* is on the decline. Every time the Japanese government revisits the issue of *kanji* it contracts the number in circulation, deleting the characters deemed obscure from the Japanese language. "There are increasingly more English loan words written in *katakana*.... Further, the number of English words written in the alphabet used for advertising, product names, and titles for magazines and TV shows has also increased," writes Kubota (297). Second, aliteracy is on the rise. While Japan boasts one of the world's highest literacy rates, increasingly people choose not to read outside of *manga*, Japanese comics that tend to be light on words in *kanji* and *hiragana*, but heavier on *katakana*. According to one

survey taken in 1997, “15.0% of students at elementary school, 55.3% at junior high school, and 69.8% at high school read no books.” (Adachi 2001) Interestingly, Japanese society perceives little threat. When asked about “the usage of foreign languages and words of foreign origin in Japan,” 83% of respondents characterized the use of such words as “unavoidable.” (NHK 1995a) Over two-thirds of Japanese respondents answered that the government should not prevent the spread of foreign words (NHK 1995b), and 49% of respondents thought, “[Foreign] Words express concepts that couldn't be expressed before.” (NHK 1995c) The final response points to a much larger, third, problem, that of linguistic capital. With Japan’s economy mired in a decade-long slump, Japanese invention and innovation has declined as well. As a result, there has been a marked rise in the number of concepts that can only be expressed in *katakana*, especially those pertaining to information technologies. Relatedly, although no quantitative data exists, there is a certain “cool factor” with global English in Japan. There is a perfectly good word for “baseball” in Japanese *kanji*, but in both print and electronic media the *katakana* word is used consistently, and urban youth often use so much *katakana* that a discerning English ear can understand what is being said. What will happen to Japanese identity when the Japan that can say no is doing so increasingly in English? It will be interesting to see what unfolds on this front.

It is ironic that an alphabet that was created to keep foreign words and concepts distinct from those that are Asian or Japanese is leading to the decline, and perhaps the demise, of both spoken and written Japanese. It is interesting that despite much discussion over the role that English should play in Japan, the role of *katakana* is never mentioned. For example, in Kubota’s (297-299) excellent and comprehensive Japanese-language literature review not one scholar mentions how this alphabet might factor into the rise of English at the expense of Japanese. *Katakana* explains why Japan lacks a coherent language policy, why Japanese society does not

perceive a threat from global English as other states in similar structural positions do, and why globalization has not led to a domestic reordering and reprioritizing of what is important, what is sacred, and what is to be protected, as globalization has elsewhere.

I have argued that the keys to understanding the politics of language begin with a constellation of factors: state-society relations, the way language is viewed by society and the state, a state's history, economics, and the ability of global English to penetrate the target language. The interaction of these five variables results in outcome of resistance, acceptance, or syncretism in state and society. This framework is an important and much-needed step in studying language policy because it gives scholars with different research strategies, different disciplinary backgrounds, and different viewpoints a common tool to work with, as well as a way to generate testable hypotheses. This paper has not only provided a framework for understanding language policy in the age of globalization, but also has shown how the language itself matters. Together, and only together, we can move the field forward.

Loan words:

English

Katakana

McDonald's

Makudo

Hot dog

hotto dogu

Baseball

beisuboru

Beer

biiru

Mass communications

masu comi

Pan (Dutch for "bread)

pan

Peanut

pinatsu

E-mail

e-mairu

Internet

intaneto

Air conditioner

aea con

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