

# Policy Barriers to Ainu Language Revitalization in Japan: When Globalization Means English

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For over a century the Ainu language has been threatened with disappearance as a result of language policies imposed by the Japanese following colonization of Ainu Mosir (now known as Hokkaidō), the Indigenous Ainu homeland. With recent legal and political victories, the Ainu have begun to reclaim their Indigenous culture and language within local communities, on the wider national stage, and internationally. However, while Ainu revitalization efforts continue, discourses of globalization in Japan have contributed to a dramatic increase in the status of English-as-a-foreign-language education, eclipsing other foreign and minority languages at all levels. Examining current policies, both *de jure* and *de facto* (see, e.g., Johnson, 2013; Schiffman, 1996), this paper explores how the disproportionate focus on English in contemporary Japanese education, reflected in societal and policy discourses regarding language and globalization, may be contributing to the closing down of *ideological* and *implementational spaces* (Hornberger, 2002, 2005, 2006; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) for Ainu language education, thereby negatively impacting the continued revitalization of the Ainu language. The paper concludes by implicating opposing discursive orientations to globalization within Japanese society, and Japanese educational language policy specifically, in the lack of explicit attention to Ainu language revitalization efforts in national policy, and suggests that more critical examination of the role of English in Japanese education is needed if these efforts are to continue to succeed.

In December 2013, Japan's highest governing body responsible for education policy, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), released an official announcement entitled *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization* (henceforth: *Reform Plan*). This seven-page document outlines a number of proposed changes designed to increase the efficacy of current educational language policy targeting English by the 2020 Olympic Games to be held in Tōkyō. The title suggests that these modifications are intended to improve current policy in light of the needs of globalization, but in the one-page English-language version released in January 2014,<sup>1</sup> we can see that this is not quite the case. Instead of merely modifying existing policy with respect to the external processes of globalization, the opening sentence strongly suggests that English language education is part and parcel of globalization: "In order to promote the

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<sup>1</sup> The 2014 English-language version of the *Reform Plan* is a direct translation of the first page of the 2013 *Reform Plan*. For the purposes of this analysis the 2014 version will be used for any citations. Curiously, no official full translation of the entire document exists. As such, any quotes presented from pages other than the first will be my own translations of the 2013 Japanese-language version. All other unattributed translations in this article are also my own.

establishment of an educational environment which corresponds to globalization from the elementary to lower / upper secondary education stage, MEXT is working to enhance English education..." (MEXT, 2014). For Japanese policy makers then, it appears that English is a fundamental and critical component in building a globalized educational environment.

As Yamagami and Tollefson (2011) point out, this conceptualization of English as the language of globalization is by no means restricted to Japan. However, in their analysis of education policy and discourses of globalization in Japan, the authors find evidence of two competing representations: *globalization-as-opportunity* and *globalization-as-threat*. In brief, the *-as-opportunity* representation is strongly linked to positive images of English and its use, while the *-as-threat* representation positions globalization as detrimental to the commonly-touted supposed racial, cultural, and linguistic homogeneity of the Japanese people. Such an oppositional orientation to globalization has resulted in an educational system that simultaneously asserts the necessity of learning English while stressing efforts to minimize its impact on a monolithic Japanese identity. This is demonstrated clearly in the *MEXT Reform Plan* (2013, 2014), which includes two important bullet points under the first section, entitled "New English Education corresponding to Globalization." Both appear to summarize the primary intent of the reforms outlined in the rest of the document: "To ensure nurturing English communication skills..." and "[e]nrich educational content in relation to nurturing individual's sense of Japanese identity" (p. 1).

What is of interest here is the primacy that Japanese educational language policy places on not only English for communication in response to "globalization," but also the Japanese language as a core component of Japanese identity. Nowhere in the document is there any mention of languages other than Japanese and English.<sup>2</sup> Taking it on its own, it gives the impression that Japanese and English are the only languages of concern to MEXT (and by extension, the Japanese Government). Japan is unsurprisingly, however, home to speakers of a variety of languages, both those languages having origins elsewhere (e.g., Korean) and those considered native to the area (e.g., Okinawan). Where, then, do these languages come into play in Japanese education? Do they receive any attention at all in national language policy?

As it stands, only three languages have been the subject of explicit, top-down educational language policy in Japan: Japanese, English, and the Indigenous Ainu language of northern Japan (Gottlieb, 2008, p. 28). Intriguingly, despite the disproportionate attention Ainu receives in comparison to other languages widely spoken in Japan (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, etc.), it is not a curricular subject nor language of instruction at any public school in any community at any level of education through senior high school (grade 12) (Maher, 1997, p. 117; Martin, 2011, p. 69). Additionally, unlike Japanese and English, Ainu is classified as a critically endangered language (Moseley, 2010). Centuries of assimilation practices have left Ainu a historical relic in the eyes of many—a language now largely restricted to use in Ainu heritage museums and only taught in infrequent private language classes.

<sup>2</sup> Even when the generic term 外国語 ("foreign language") is used (and in this case, only in a mock elementary school schedule to demonstrate how some schools might structure their curricula in accordance with the stated reforms), it is immediately followed by 英語 ("English") in parentheses, implying that in the majority of cases, curricular time set aside for foreign language education should be spent teaching English specifically.

Recent policy reforms have altered this positioning, however, and Ainu is beginning to gain more attention on local, national, and international scales. Interestingly, there is no current policy explicitly permitting nor restricting the use of Ainu in public education, but all the same, Ainu revitalization efforts have yet to move the language into public schooling, despite much research demonstrating the powerful role schools can play in such efforts (see, e.g., Hornberger, 2008a). This paper positions the extraordinary focus on Japanese and English in educational language policy in Japan as one of a variety of critical challenges to this opportunity for further revitalization. In order to examine the extent to which Ainu language revitalization and education opportunities are affected by the focus on English and Japanese in Japanese educational language policy, I begin by reviewing concepts from the field of language planning and policy (LPP) to situate historical and current Japanese educational language policy as either *de facto* or *de jure*, while also looking at their impact on potential for implementation in compulsory schooling. After a brief look at the historical developments that have led to the purported decline and near extinction of the Ainu, I will discuss recent changes to the policy landscape in more detail. Then, in order to explicate how the focus on Japanese and English in *de jure* policy may be limiting opportunities for Ainu language instruction in schools, I will provide an overview of the demands of both Japanese and English instruction in the national curriculum as well as a look at discourses of globalization.

### *De jure/De facto* Policy and the Limitation of Implementational Spaces

In this paper I have opted for Johnson's (2013) term *educational language policy* to describe those "official and unofficial policies that are created across multiple layers and institutional contexts (from national organizations to classrooms) that impact language use in classrooms and schools" (p. 54). In part, this is to escape the particularities of various terminologies that have appeared in recent decades of LPP scholarship to describe policies relating to language education,<sup>3</sup> but it is also my hope in doing so to recognize the importance of policy as it is created at both the macro (e.g., ministries of education) as well as the micro (e.g., classroom practice) levels. As noted by Hornberger and Johnson (2007) there is often an "(over)emphasis on the hegemonic power of policies obfuscat[ing] the potentially agentive role of local educators as they interpret and implement the policies" (p. 510). Despite the general focus of this paper on the effects of such large-scale, top-down policies, I do not wish to do so in a way that diminishes the agency of more micro-level policy makers and implementers.

At its core, this paper conceptualizes much of the top-down educational language policy affecting Ainu communities within Japan as comprising two broad categories: *de jure* and *de facto*. These terms, as defined by Johnson (2013),<sup>4</sup> distinguish policies from one another by virtue of their alignment between law and practice, respectively. Here, *de jure* policies are those disseminated in legal proclamations, typically being "officially documented in writing" (p. 10). By

<sup>3</sup> e.g., Cooper's (1989) *acquisition planning*, Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) *language-in-education planning*, García and Menken's (2010) *language-in-education policy* and *language education policy*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Although Schiffman (1996) first describes policies in terms of *de jure* and *de facto*, here I use Johnson's (2013) conceptualization as I find it more clearly delineates the differences between *de jure* / *de facto* and overt/covert policy types, which are broadly lumped together in Schiffman's description (see, e.g., Schiffman, 1996, p. 2).

contrast, *de facto* policy describes those policies that exist in *practice*, crucially, without legal provenance or even *in spite of* existing *de jure* policies.<sup>5</sup> Importantly, *de facto* policy can have both intended and unintended repercussions within communities. A prominent example of intended outcomes from *de facto* policy can be seen in American Indian Boarding Schools during the turn of the 20th century. Although one of the schools' many goals was ostensibly to give students "a thorough knowledge of the use of the English language" (United States Department of the Interior, 1886, p. 4), the *de facto* policy was to prohibit students' use of Indigenous languages while living at the school such that an entire generation of Indigenous children were forcibly assimilated into Western cultural practices through, in part, the erasure of their Indigenous languages.

Menken (2008) provides a particularly useful investigation of educational language policy as a base for exploring the potential for misalignment between *de jure* and *de facto* policy and the resulting unintended consequences. Her analysis of standardized testing policies created through implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) in the United States demonstrates how *de jure* policy that targets *all* students uniformly can create an environment in which resultant *de facto* policy negatively impacts the quality of education for certain groups of students. Despite the U.S. Government's stated intent to improve the quality of education for all students, the resulting *de facto* policy of teaching to the test had ultimately resulted in curricula that put learning test-relevant English before the test content, severely limiting student achievement and further marginalizing so-called English language learners (ELLs). Also addressing the effects of NCLB, Hornberger and Johnson (2007) find that changes to *de jure* policy appeared to impact *ideological* and *implementational spaces* (see also Hornberger, 2002, 2005, 2006) in the School District of Philadelphia. Such spaces might be best defined here as the degree of differentiation between patterns of discourse seen to refer to some ideology or implementational intervention. For example, Hornberger and Johnson argue that the removal of the word "bilingual" from the NCLB's policy text closes down ideological space for bilingual education by effectively focusing policy discourse around language learning solely on the acquisition of English. Despite this, the authors also find that divergent interpretations of wording in that same text by different stakeholders left open crucial implementational space, in some cases allowing for enactment of multilingual pedagogy, albeit in a different manner than had been possible before. Thus, ideological and implementational spaces are mutually constitutive; by opening up and filling ideological spaces regarding education of language-minoritized students, policy actors can create crucial implementational spaces to the benefit of language learners.

This research helps to illuminate certain circumstances of Ainu language education in Japan as well. Similarly to the ELLs in Menken (2008), Ainu students, as Japanese citizens, are subject to the same testing standards as all other students in compulsory education in Japan. As will be shown later, these *de jure* demands create an educational environment which necessitates *de facto* policy requiring students to go to extraordinary lengths to achieve sufficient scores on high-

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted here that although I find it most useful to apply these broad categories to the policy landscape described in this paper, I do not mean to do so at the expense of other classifications (e.g., *overt* vs. *covert*, *explicit* vs. *implicit*, etc.). Any policies discussed herein, regardless of my classification as either *de jure* or *de facto*, could just as easily fall under alternative labels within the framework of another analysis.

stakes entry examinations to higher levels of schooling. As a consequence of this pressure to succeed, along with the ever-present discursive representations of globalization (both *-as-opportunity* and *-as-threat*), there is functionally little-to-no implementational space open within the compulsory education curriculum in which to include Ainu language instruction and to coordinate with revitalization efforts that are currently being attempted in other educational domains. Before moving on to a discussion of recent policy developments and the implications they may have for the future of Ainu language instruction and revitalization, it is important to contextualize the circumstances that surround education in Ainu communities today. In order to do so, I will briefly outline the historical development of Wajin<sup>6</sup>-Ainu relations in Japan until the end of the Second World War. This will be followed by a more detailed examination of policy developments over the last few decades.

### The Construction of a “Dying Race”

The Ainu are an Indigenous people who historically inhabited the lands of Ainu Mosir, a vast area comprising the regions known today as northern Japan (northern Honshū and the entire prefecture of Hokkaidō), the southern half of Sakhalin Island in Russia, and the disputed Kuril Islands as far north as the Kamchatka Peninsula (see Figure 1 for a detailed map). For centuries, despite extended contact with the Wajin to the south, and with the exception of occasional armed conflicts, the Ainu way of life went largely unrestricted (Maher, 2001; Martin, 2011), their territory considered to be sovereign (DeChicchis, 1995, p. 108). During this time Wajin established trading outposts and some small settlements in the south of Ainu Mosir, and while the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate<sup>7</sup> (1602–1868) kept the Ainu at a distance, it did not subject them to any linguistic assimilation preferring instead to limit Ainu access to learning Japanese (i.e., language practices of the Wajin) in order to emphasize their non-Wajin identity (Gottlieb, 2005, 2008). To the Wajin, the Ainu were Other-ed as a brutish people inhabiting the relatively unknown north, evidenced by the contemporary Japanese name for Ainu Mosir, *Yezochi* (“Land of Barbarians”). Even so, there was some level of multilingualism that emerged as Ainu learned Japanese and vice versa to facilitate trade between the two groups (Heinrich, 2012, p. 94).

This relationship would be dramatically altered, however, in 1868 with the inception of the Meiji Restoration. In the subsequent decade the so-called Restoration—a political project that sought to unify disparate societal factions of the archipelago by replicating the historical imperial system—was a time of tremendous social upheaval in Japan (Heinrich, 2012; Seargeant, 2009; Siddle, 1996): feudal domains were restructured into prefectural governments; common beauty practices (such as blackening teeth) were prohibited; domestic travel licenses were rendered unnecessary; and compulsory education was established (Heinrich, 2012, p. 21). In short, the goal was to create a unified Japanese nation-state that could compete with Western political powers. As a newly organized Japan began to solidify, so too did national concern surrounding the eastward expansion of the Russian Empire.

<sup>6</sup> *Wajin* is the generally accepted terminology used to refer to the ethnic majority of Japan, those Japanese citizens who are considered to be historically ethnically Japanese (i.e., not Ainu). Because *Japanese* is often used for ethnicity as well as nationality, this paper will use the term *Wajin* to distinguish Japanese citizens who identify as ethnically Japanese from those who identify as Ainu where necessary.

<sup>7</sup> A *shogunate* is a form of dynastic military government specific to feudal Japan.



Maps showing the historical and present distribution of Ainu in Japan and the Russian Federation

Figure 1. Maps of historical and contemporary distributions of Ainu populations.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Maps of Ainu territory," by Dallmann and Uzawa, 2007, in *Arctic Network for the Support of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic: English Edition*, No. 16, 10. ([http://ansipra.npolar.no/english/Index-pages/Back\\_issues.html#\\_16](http://ansipra.npolar.no/english/Index-pages/Back_issues.html#_16)). Reprinted with permission.

Japanese fears that Russia might begin to encroach upon their territory spurred the government to officially annex parts of Ainu Mosir, renaming the largest island from the former Wajin toponym *Yezogashima* (“Barbarian Island”) to *Hokkaidō* (“Northern Sea Circuit”) in the process (DeChicchis, 1995, p. 108). This rebranding enabled the new Meiji Government to position the island as a natural extension of its borders, but to facilitate and legitimate formal annexation the Ainu needed to be considered an integral part of Japan. To this end, resident Ainu were forced to take Japanese citizenship, thereby establishing a basis for Japanese sovereignty (Gottlieb, 2005, 2008). In the years that followed, the newly unified government would relocate some Ainu populations to reservations, separating communities and disrupting linguistic contact between groups of Ainu-speakers (Maher, 2001).

Fostered through extensive social restructuring, the strengthened Japanese national identity that followed in the wake of the Meiji Restoration led to dramatic shifts in language ideologies among the emerging elite. Where before there had been no conceptualization of Japanese as a national language in the modern sense, by the turn of the 20th century the successes of the *Genbun Ichhi*<sup>9</sup> movement—which sought to codify a national standard—would be “seminal in imagining a homogenous Japanese speech community” (Heinrich, 2012, p. 58; discussed in more detail below). Indeed, this movement proved so successful that the idea of a monolingual Japanese nation persists both domestically and internationally to this day (Heinrich, 2012; Lee, 1996/2010; see also Gottlieb, 2008). At the same time *Genbun Ichhi* was still gaining traction, the Ainu fell under increasing pressure to assimilate into the new Japanese society, both culturally and linguistically. Though the spread of the Japanese language within their communities was not particularly organized at the time, the redistribution of Ainu populations dramatically affected inter-community language practices (DeChicchis, 1995; Maher, 2001). Following the displacement of Ainu populations, the *Hokkaidō Former Aborigines Protection Act* of 1899 (henceforth: *Former Aborigines Act*) restricted land use rights, mandated Japanese-language education for all Ainu, and proscribed the use of the Ainu language (Gottlieb, 2008, 2012; Maher, 2001, p. 329). Subsequently, the *Regulations for the Education of Former Aboriginal Children* of 1901 segregated education for Wajin and Ainu, limiting the latter almost exclusively to Japanese-language education and reform of traditional customs (Dubinsky & Davies, 2013; Maher, 2001). This was particularly effective at inhibiting intergenerational transmission of the language within just a couple decades (Heinrich, 2012), and by the 1920s the Ainu language was spoken almost exclusively by older generations (Maher, 2001).

As the Second World War drew to a close, redefined borders saw many Ainu residing on Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands expelled from their ancestral homeland by the occupying Soviet Union under accusations of collaboration with Japanese forces (Murashko, 2007) and subsequently repatriated as Japanese citizens to the island of Hokkaidō (Bukh, 2010).<sup>10</sup> This had profound effects on the vitality of the

<sup>9</sup> The term *genbun ichhi* translates to “unification of spoken and written language.”

<sup>10</sup> Murashko (2007) additionally notes that after 1945 there are no accounts of Ainu in Soviet censuses, likely indicating that either *all* Ainu were relocated to Hokkaidō or the few remaining Ainu on Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands purposefully concealed their ethnicity to avoid reprisal from a hostile government, eventually disappearing altogether. Reports in recent years of organized efforts by locals to register as Ainu in the Russian census (albeit unsuccessful) (see, e.g., “Ainy - drevnie i tainstvennyye,” 2013), as well as other calls for general political recognition (see, e.g., Tanaka, 2017) in the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, however, indicate the latter is more likely.

language, resulting in the undocumented extinction of the Kuril dialect of Ainu by 1963 and the gradual disappearance of Sakhalin Ainu until 1994 following the death of the last known speaker (Heinrich, 2012). With their language effectively stamped out—not even 1% of Ainu in Hokkaidō claimed proficiency by 1994 (Maher, 2001, p. 337)—over the course of a century the Ainu had come to be branded *horobiyuku minzoku* (“a dying race”) in national discourse (Siddle, 1995, 1996; Siddle & Kitahara, 1995), serving to further reify the notion of Japan as a monoethnic and, crucially, monolingual nation.

### Recent Policy Advancements

After decades of marginalization through *de jure* policy implementation designed to inhibit linguistic and cultural practices and facilitate the Japanization of the Ainu (Bukh, 2010), the 1980s saw a marked increase in efforts by the Ainu themselves to revitalize their language and assert an Indigenous identity in coordination with the emerging global Indigenous rights movement (Larson, Johnson, & Murphy, 2008; Maher, 2001). Maher (2001) notes that a major turning point in the way Ainu viewed revitalization and maintenance of their language came in 1986 in response to a now infamous statement by then Prime Minister Nakasone. As part of a speech, Nakasone asserted that Japan’s “high level of intellectual competence” could be attributed to the lack of minority populations present in the country and the fact that it is a “racially homogeneous nation” (as quoted in Maher, 2001, p. 330). The Ainu response to these assertions led to an increase in support for and development of *Ainugo kyōshitsu* (Ainu language classes/classrooms).

In 1984 the Hokkaidō Utari Association—a “social-welfare organization” originally established in 1946 as the Hokkaidō Ainu Association,<sup>11</sup> serving the purpose of “providing the Hokkaidō Government a single point of contact with the Ainu” (Larson et al., 2008, p. 58)—had already put forth recommendations helping to establish the first official *Ainugo kyōshitsu* (Maher, 2001, p. 330). In fact, by the time Nakasone came under scrutiny for his comments, one prototypical *Ainugo kyōshitsu* had already been created by Shigeru Kayano, a man who would later come to be the face of Ainu cultural revitalization. Established in 1983 in the rural Hokkaidō township of Nibutani, this language class was the first of its kind and would ultimately serve as the precursor to the first *Ainugo kyōshitsu* to be funded by the Hokkaidō Prefectural Government and the Japanese Government in 1987 (Anderson & Iwasaki-Goodman, 2001; Maher, 2001). Through recognition by the Utari Association, 13 additional *Ainugo kyōshitsu* in towns across Hokkaidō with considerable Ainu populations were added to the list of officially sponsored *kyōshitsu* through 1997 (Anderson & Iwasaki-Goodman, 2001). Today Ainu is taught at local community centers and in Ainu Association branch offices around the prefecture, though attendance remains low (Martin, 2011, p. 69). Importantly, however, these classes operate outside the purview of public education, and as such, rely on residents enrolling their children in addition to compulsory schooling.

<sup>11</sup> This institution replaced *Ainu* (“human being” in the Ainu language) with *Utari* (an Ainu word meaning “brethren” or “compatriot”) in 1960 due to negative associations with *Ainu* in Japanese society (Larson et al., 2008, p. 78). As of 2009, due in part to subsequent successes of the Indigenous rights movement, the name has been changed back to the Hokkaidō Ainu Association (“Utari Kyōkai, Ainu Kyōkai-ni”, 2008).

Although progress was underway, Ainu-related issues were still largely unknown to the vast majority of Wajin and those outside the prefecture of Hokkaidō. This would change dramatically, however, when Shigeru Kayano became the first Ainu to be elected to the National Diet<sup>12</sup> in 1994. At the time, Kayano was involved in an ongoing legal battle with the national government over the controversial Nibutani Dam construction project. Despite his efforts, Kayano's initial lawsuit was unsuccessful at halting the dam's construction and sacred Ainu land that had ostensibly been granted to the Ainu under the *Former Aborigines Act* was flooded (Iewallen, 2008). However, an appeal filed in 1995 claimed that the government had illegally expropriated the land, citing (among other documents) Article 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ratified by Japan in 1979), which states that "minorities 'shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language'" (Savage & Longo, 2013, p. 105). The Sapporo District Court<sup>13</sup> found the Japanese Government to be in violation of the Ainu's rights as *senjū minzoku* ("an Indigenous people"), and thus a minority in Japan, in the process serving as the first ever *de jure* judicial recognition of Ainu indigeneity (Siddle, 2002, p. 410).

Together with the calls from the Hokkaidō Utari Association and activists to replace the *Former Aborigines Act*, the legal precedent set by the court's ruling paved the way for the development and enactment of the *Act for the Promotion of Ainu Culture, Dissemination of Knowledge of Ainu Traditions, and Education Campaign* (also known as the *Cultural Promotion Act*, or CPA) in 1997. The new policy set forth four objectives to be implemented by the newly created Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC): "(1) promotion of research on the Ainu; (2) revival of the Ainu language; (3) revival of the Ainu culture; and (4) dissemination of, and education about, Ainu traditions" (Gayman, 2011, p. 21). FRPAC is therefore directly involved in governmental efforts to revitalize the Ainu language, and the CPA enables it to provide assistance in this goal through teacher training, offering advanced courses, and encouraging the "dissemination" of the language in various media (Savage & Longo, 2013). The first major development in *de jure* Ainu educational language policy in almost a hundred years, the CPA was widely touted as a victory in a decades-long struggle. This, however, does not mean it was accepted without reservation. Savage and Longo (2013) note that a common criticism by activists is that the CPA doesn't go far enough and lacks the necessary support structures to ensure its usefulness for the Ainu people (p. 108; see also Gayman, 2011). Siddle (2002) details shortcomings of the CPA, including that it was drafted by Wajin policymakers with Ainu generally having "almost non-existent" input on its development, the lack of acknowledgement of the history of colonization, and its explicit disavowal of rights on the basis of indigeneity (pp. 407–408). As a result, FRPAC-supported initiatives primarily focused on superficial promotion of Ainu culture, and confined public education about the Ainu to museums and cultural displays.

The fact that the CPA does not acknowledge Ainu indigeneity has been a sticking point for activists to this day. After a decade of struggle over this issue,

<sup>12</sup> The National Diet is Japan's national legislature.

<sup>13</sup> Sapporo is the prefectural capital of Hokkaidō, its most populous city, and the fourth most populous city in Japan.

the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) was passed with the support of the Japanese Government in 2007; although, among concerns raised during its development, Wajin representatives of the Japanese Government suggested that “proposed articles could give indigenous [*sic*] people collective political power that would be distinct from other Japanese citizens” (Cotterill, 2011). The passage of UNDRIP ultimately carried little in the way of legally binding language and did not require the Japanese Government to recognize any Indigenous groups within its borders. Some argue, though, that this political move along with the G8 Summit in Hokkaidō and the Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir (IPS) the following year put international pressure on the national government to publicly recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous people in Japan (Iewallen, 2008; Savage & Longo, 2013). Regardless of the impetus, 2008 proved to be a watershed moment for Ainu language and cultural revitalization as, on June 6th, both houses of the National Diet passed the *Resolution Calling for the Recognition of the Ainu People as an Indigenous People of Japan* (henceforth: the *Resolution*). Disappointingly, however, this resolution is non-binding, and as such does not obligate the Japanese Government to provide any legal basis for Indigenous rights to, among other things, language education.

The following month, the IPS put forth two press releases, *An Appeal to the Japanese Government* (henceforth: the *Appeal*) and the *Nibutani Declaration*, together recognizing the great advances in the passage of UNDRIP and the *Resolution*, while at the same time detailing issues and concerns still present in Ainu communities and calling for the G8 and Indigenous communities to act on a number of proposals. The *Appeal* is very explicit on the issue of language and education:

Education from early childhood, including those youth who will inherit the future, is important to all Japanese citizens, not only Ainu people. We urge the Japanese Government to promptly implement measures which emphasize youth education, such as adopting the Ainu language as one of the official languages of Japan, *making it available in compulsory education*, and creating history textbooks from Ainu perspectives. (Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir, 2008a, emphasis added)

The *Nibutani Declaration* does explicitly mention language education in its more detailed proposals as well, but it does so as part of a larger conversation around issues facing all Indigenous communities, not only those in Japan. For this reason many points are understandably vague with respect to issues of implementation, avoiding those that might differ from context to context; however, one point is very explicit on the subject of public education. In the section entitled “Proposals to Ourselves, Indigenous People,” proposal number 5 pushes communities to “[w]ork towards getting the UNDRIP integrated as part of the education curriculum of schools starting from pre-school to higher learning institutions” (Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir, 2008b, p. 6). Immediately following, number 6 encourages communities to set up “language nests” hoping to replicate the success of the Māori in New Zealand (p. 6), likely indicating support for a similar bilingual educational model to the one currently in place there.

But where does that leave Ainu revitalization in the near decade now since the *Resolution* and the IPS? As mentioned before, despite extensive scholarship on the benefits of moving language revitalization efforts into schools and demands from

the communities themselves, there are still no dedicated Ainu language classes taught in compulsory education anywhere in Japan (Martin, 2011), not even in areas like Nibutani where more than 80 percent of the population self-identify as Ainu (Dallmann & Uzawa, 2007). If children (and adults alike) are to learn Ainu, it is currently only on the weekends or after school when the privately run FRPAC-supported *Ainugo kyōshitsu* operate (Anderson & Iwasaki-Goodman, 2001; Martin, 2011). Gayman (2011) implicates “internalized oppression” (see Duran & Duran, 1995, pp. 27–30) and lack of sufficient financial resources as primary barriers to the development of Ainu language education at pre-tertiary levels, but looking at the curricular demands of Japanese education suggests there are likely others. In order to better understand, from a curricular perspective, why the Ainu language might currently be outside the purview of compulsory education in Japan the next section will look at the demands placed upon curricula development, particularly those due to the inclusion of English language education.

### Globalization and English in Japan

As the idea of a modern Japanese nation-state began to materialize during the Meiji Restoration, so too did discourses about the role of English. Most notably, Mori Arinori, a Japanese Western-trained linguist and one of the first representatives of the new government of Japan in Washington, D.C., famously proposed in 1872 that “a simplified form of English” replace the disparate and non-standardized Japanese dialects across the archipelago in an effort to more closely align Japan with “the modern world” and distance itself from Orientalist discourses that portrayed other Asian countries as primitive or antiquated (Heinrich, 2012, p. 22, see also Lee, 1996/2010). Arinori’s proposal was considered by many to be too impractical, however, spurring him and others to embark on the codification of a national standard Japanese language. This was certainly no easy task, as due to historical prohibition of interaction between regional domains under the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japanese dialects at the time varied greatly across both geographical and socioeconomic divides, as well as written and spoken registers (Lee, 1996/2010). Unification of spoken and written language—*Genbun Icchi*—was seen as one of the best methods of bridging these gaps in the name of national unity, and education the primary vehicle for its dissemination.

Originating in the mid-1880s, *Genbun Icchi* caught on quickly among language planners of the time eager to escape what Japanese language scholars refer to as the “period of chaos” (1866–1886, wherein linguistic diversity was seen to stall nation-building efforts), giving way to the “period of experimentation” (1887–1900) (Clark, 2009, p. 55). It was during this experimentation that the regional dialect of the new imperial capital, Tōkyō, gradually gained prestige over others and became the basis for the linguistic reforms of *Genbun Icchi*. In 1900, just one year after the Ainu language proscriptions of the *Former Aborigines Act* and one year before the *Regulations for the Education of Former Aboriginal Children* mandating exclusive Japanese language education for Ainu children, the Imperial Board of Education created the *Genbun Icchi* Committee, which in 1901 presented the Meiji government with the *Petition for Actions towards Genbun Icchi*. Lee (1996/2010) quotes the first sentence of the petition:

We believe that *the independence, dissemination, and advancement of the nation's language is the first step to solidify the unity of the nation-state, to help the nation expand its power, and to expedite its advancement towards a flourishing future.* (p. 53, emphasis in original)

In the subsequent decade (1900–1912), the “period of establishment” (Clark, 2009, p. 55), the implementation of the new standard national language would be wildly successful, ultimately resulting in both the Japanese language as it is known today and the purposeful large-scale erasure of regional dialects (in addition to the Ainu and Okinawan languages, among others) across the archipelago (Carroll, 2001). Thus, one of the primary outcomes of *Genbun Icchi* was the successful dissemination through education of the ideology that Japanese national identity and the (now monolithic) Japanese language were inextricable.<sup>14</sup>

Although the proposal to install English as the national language was ultimately unsuccessful in the face of the *Genbun Icchi* movement, the notion of English as the key to becoming a legitimate participant on the global stage has persisted, much as it has in numerous other geopolitical contexts, with “[t]he idea that English is a global lingua franca...presupposed in policy discourse in Japan...” (Kubota, 2011, p. 104). Seargeant (2009) suggests that beyond the Meiji Restoration, the occupation of Japan by the United States at the end of the Second World War and educational reforms carried out in the mid-1980s should be considered “major transitional periods for ELT [English Language Teaching] in Japan,” with key reforms of English educational language policy introduced in 1947 being carried out by MEXT in 1989 and 2002 (p. 50). The 2013 *Reform Plan* is latest in this chain. He also notes that these reforms coincided with increasingly prominent discourses in the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL touting the benefits of Communicative Language Teaching over other historically popular approaches to language instruction such as the Grammar-Translation or Audio-Lingual methods.<sup>15</sup> And indeed, the *Reform Plan* carries on this pedagogical ideology of “the exchange of ideational meaning between parties as the chief purpose of language education” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 50) as the gold standard for language teaching, specifically targeting “communication” as one of its primary goals “corresponding to globalization” (MEXT, 2013, 2014).

Interestingly, this focus on communication in English educational language policy appears to have an alternative intention from what might commonly be inferred as the goal of communicatively-oriented pedagogies. Seargeant (2009) points out that, for decades, scholars of ELT in Japan have questioned the true intentions of policymakers, citing a mismatch between espoused goals and practical implementation of policy. Although he points out that this accusation has become less overt in recent years, the theme appears to recur, citing Okano and Tsuchiya (1999), who argue that the 1989 *Course of Study* curriculum “involved developing ‘self-awareness of being Japanese’” and “nurturing belief that Japan is an influential state in the global community” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 54). As mentioned earlier, the *Reform Plan* sets its goals as “nurturing” both “English communication skills” as well as an “individual’s sense of Japanese identity” (MEXT, 2014, p. 1). Even

<sup>14</sup> See Clark (2009) and Lee (1996/2010) for much more detail on the complex history of national language planning in Meiji-era Japan.

<sup>15</sup> See Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) for a detailed comparison of these approaches.

the entire last page of the *Reform Plan* (which, as a whole, is ostensibly targeted at *English* education reform) is all about strengthening Japanese identity through various pedagogical practices and does not mention English<sup>16</sup> in a single instance. It would appear then that the *Reform Plan* is walking a fine line: on the one hand, it is tasked with answering calls to strengthen English language education outcomes; on the other, unchecked emphasis on English might mean a loss of Japanese identity. Hogan (2003), writing about the complex circumstances surrounding English education in Japan, quotes a rural farmer highlighting the tense relationship between necessary English and fragile Japanese that can be seen in the *Reform Plan*: “In the words of Ms. Ono... ‘I like English. I hate English. I don’t want English to invade the Japanese language, but English is necessary in our life’” (p. 57).

The picture Ms. Ono paints in this informative albeit brief statement—that of English as a potential danger to the Japanese language—can be seen in reactions to recent educational language policy developments as well. Since 2002, English has been a compulsory subject in schools at the junior and senior high levels (Gottlieb, 2008). It has also recently (as of 2011) been expanded into grades 5 and 6 at the elementary level (Gottlieb, 2012), and the *Reform Plan* discusses its continued expansion into grades 3 and 4 (MEXT, 2013, 2014). Although generally positive reactions came from parents and teachers, the decision to introduce English into elementary schools was not met with enthusiasm across the board (Kubota & McKay, 2009, p. 600). At the time of the proposed expansion into elementary grades the then Minister for Education expressed concerns about the curricular hours to be spent on English, arguing that this would siphon off crucial instructional time necessary for mastery of Japanese (Gottlieb, 2008, p. 47). As it stands, Japanese language education in every elementary and junior high school grade greatly eclipses all other subjects in its allocation of curricular hours. For example, the first year of elementary school sees 272 hours devoted to Japanese language, but less than half that amount (114 hours) for other subjects. Only by the final year of junior high school does Japanese reach curricular parity with other subjects at 105 hours (p. 39). With subjects other than Japanese and English already feeling curricular pressure, the increasingly early addition of English has only made concerns about children’s ability to become fully literate Japanese citizens that much more palpable.

Testing presents another curricular burden. Part of the push for earlier introduction of English language education has come from anxieties surrounding students’ ability to achieve high scores on the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency (also known as the STEP Test). Although not required for graduation, the STEP Test plays an essential role in determining which junior high school students will be accepted to which high schools, with higher scores often leading to increased opportunity to attend the best quality high schools. Lower scores often correlate with those students who do not continue to attend school past the final year of junior high school (the final year of compulsory education) or those who enroll in local agricultural or trade high schools, which do not commonly afford students much social capital in wider Japanese society. Pressure to get high scores often leads parents who have the money to enroll their children in after-school privately-run so-called cram schools where students sometimes tack on multiple hours to their already busy daily schedules. In much the same way Menken (2008)

<sup>16</sup> nor any “foreign language” (see footnote 2)

demonstrates how standardized testing policy has negatively impacted ELLs in the United States under NCLB, the pressure on students in Japan to achieve high enough scores to gain access to the best educational institutions adds a tremendous amount of support to the discourse that a quality education—and by extension, a higher quality of life—is not possible without achieving some expected proficiency in English thereby creating *de facto* testing policy that circuitously reifies the necessity of *de jure* English language instruction policy.

In addition to the tension between Japanese and English in school curricula, Yamagami and Tollefson (2011) note that much of MEXT's educational language policy since the 1980s addressing English has focused on the term *kokusaika* ("internationalization"). Citing Hashimoto (2000), who ties *kokusaika* to a nationalist project of Japanization of English learners, the authors argue that this policy use of *kokusaika* is merely a form of promoting Japanese identity, "designed to resist the formation of an integrated 'global' culture" (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011, p. 22). Kubota (1998) addresses this tension as well, discussing the entangled relationship between *kokusaika* and the earlier rise of discourses of anti-Westernization in the form of *nihonjinron* ("theories about the Japanese [people]") in the 1960s and 70s. Although *nihonjinron* centers on the biological, psychological, sociological, and linguistic distinctiveness of the Japanese, Kubota argues that it shares with *kokusaika* a focus on constructing a Japanese identity solely in relation to the West, "promot[ing] both strengthening Japanese identity based on nationalistic values and learning the communication mode of English" (p. 302). In this conceptualization, the notion of Japan as a nation-state perdures in policy as a distinct (and necessarily monolithic) entity—one whole among many other wholes (the groundwork for which can be observed to have been laid by *Genbun Ichhi*)—and English for communication is very importantly positioned as simultaneously necessary for, but external to, Japan.

As we have seen, however, the multiethnic, multilingual nature of Japan demonstrates this is far from reality. Yamagami and Tollefson also point out, however, that the distinct term *gurōbaruka* ("globalization") has become increasingly common in policies in recent years (see also Seargeant, 2009). Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the title of MEXT's (2013) *Reform Plan* explicitly situates the reform discussed within as "corresponding to globalization" ("*gurōbaruka-ni taiō-shita*," p. 1), and *kokusaika* as such is nowhere to be found.<sup>17</sup> One interpretation of this shift may point to movement away from discourses of internationalization in Japan's English educational language policy. The question then becomes, where is the focus shifting with increasing use of *gurōbaruka*? The answer may lie in an assessment of this shift by Seargeant (2009):

Put crudely... Japan's internationalization programme simply requires its citizens to be politer to foreigners and to travel abroad more often. What neither of these measures attempts to do is fundamentally alter Japanese culture to accommodate an evolving world model, or in any sense take an active role in shaping global culture. (p. 68)

In other words, where *kokusaika* merely required a view of the world composed of pieces in which Japan was one, indivisible unto itself, *gurōbaruka* may be seen

<sup>17</sup> MEXT (2014) does, however, make mention of 国際交流 (*kokusai-kōryū*; "international exchange") as a goal in one instance, suggesting a continued nationalistic focus to at least some degree.

as a process that requires this “fundamental alteration” with respect to the other pieces, the end result of which would logically be the “integrated global culture” use of *kokusaika* was an attempt to avoid. Any alteration to what Seargeant refers to here as “Japanese culture” may be exacerbating fears like Ms. Ono’s—that English will “invade the Japanese language”—among policy makers, as may be inferred by the conspicuous inclusion of the final page of the 2013 *Reform Plan* explaining in much detail how to foster a sense of Japanese identity amid plans to bolster English language education.

### Concluding Thoughts

With the enactment of the CPA, the Japanese Government effectively shifted their orientation toward Ainu educational language policy. Prior to the CPA, the *Former Aborigines Act* could be described as a policy epitomizing a *repression-orientation* toward Ainu. Within Wiley’s (2002) expansion of Kloss’s (1977/1998) taxonomy of policy orientations, the *Former Aborigines Act* can be classified as such due to its encouragement of the eradication of the Ainu language in favor of Japanese. Although the CPA by comparison can be reasonably interpreted as a positive policy development and movement toward a *tolerance-orientation*, I argue that it may be simultaneously seen as what I will refer to here as a *de facto null* policy-orientation. In his description of the various orientations, Johnson (2013) quotes Kloss’s (1977/1998) description of the rights of minorities within a *tolerance-orientation*:

Tolerance-oriented minority rights are the sum of those legal norms, customary laws, and measures with which the state and the public institutions dependent upon it (especially the public schools) provide for the minorities and which, if need be, protect for the minorities the right to cultivate their language in a private sphere, namely, in the family and private organizations. (p. 34)

At first glance the CPA might seem to fall neatly into a *tolerance-orientation*, as it clearly does offer *de jure* protection of the Ainu’s “right to cultivate their language in a private sphere,” as has been previously discussed. However, MEXT’s increasing focus on the perceived necessity of English language education in order to engage with international discourses of globalization, as well as the ensuing curricular demands being placed on public schools by virtue of MEXT’s centralized structure, closes down implementational space for Ainu language instruction through the creation of *de facto* policy that effectively precludes it at any level. Without *de jure* policy directly and explicitly addressing the ability of Ainu leaders to push for the language’s presence in public schools, there is an essentially *null* policy-orientation on the part of the Japanese Government due to the “significant absence of policy recognizing minority languages” (Wiley, 2002, p. 49; see also Johnson, 2013, p. 35) with respect to compulsory education.

Additionally, given the reluctance of the Japanese Government to afford the Ainu globally recognized rights associated with Indigenous peoples, it is possible to view the Ainu language as falling within Yamagami and Tollefson’s (2011) *globalization-as-threat* representation. Its mere existence threatens the discourse that Japan is an ethnically homogenous nation, a discourse that still circulates

to this day. For example, as recently as August 2014 a member of the Sapporo Municipal Government tweeted: “There are no such people as the Ainu anymore, are there?... (But) they constantly demand rights they don’t deserve. How can this be reasonable?” (Yamayoshi, 2014). In participating in discourses of globalization, Japan continues to run up against Ainu communities that are using globalization practices to their advantage (see, e.g., Larson et al., 2008). Furthermore, as Savage and Longo (2013) note, UNESCO has for decades recognized the threatened nature of the world’s natural and cultural properties, including “linguistic diversity” which it views to be “an intangible resource” (p. 101). Considering the very globalized conversation around the importance of linguistic diversity, including the moves Japan has made on the international stage to support Indigenous groups (such as in the case of UNDRIP), it would seem that Japan’s focus on English over the linguistic diversity of its own citizens points to a very narrow definition of globalization; one that, crucially, does not align with organizations and agencies traditionally seen as globalizing institutions (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.). By not recognizing the Ainu as an Indigenous people in legally-binding *de jure* policy the Japanese Government shows its unwillingness to back up in practice its otherwise public stance on internationally recognized concerns, such as linguistic human rights, ultimately calling into doubt its alignment with international discourses on globalization.

In closing, I should reiterate that I do not aim to position the demands of English language education in Japan as the primary inhibiting factor in development of Ainu language education. Clearly, there are multiple and historically complex barriers to this goal that need to be untangled yet. Rather, I argue that the impact created by these demands can be considered to be a significant factor among numerous others. While many Ainu are still ambivalent about pushing for Indigenous rights (Onishi, 2008), Savage and Longo (2013) report that a significant percentage (close to 33%) of Ainu in Hokkaidō explicitly want Ainu to be a part of the pre-tertiary educational curriculum (p. 109). In addition to the barriers discussed by Gayman (2011), the lack of *de jure* policy around Ainu language education, and the discourse around the necessity of English as part and parcel of globalization, creates a context in which non-Japanese and non-English languages in Japan face *de facto* marginalization through the closing down of available implementational spaces in compulsory schooling. Unfortunately, it doesn’t appear that Japanese educational language policy is prepared to shift dramatically on this point just yet. However, in overcoming these barriers to inclusion of Ainu at pre-tertiary levels of education, and if Ainu language revitalization efforts are to continue and succeed in “pry[ing] open ideological spaces that are closed or closing” (Hornberger, 2008b, p. 3) in Japanese society, critically examining the role of English language education may be one of the more effective ways to begin tackling the problem.

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