

Locality, Re-localization, Structure-to-Structure Localism and the TOEIC Test: Implications for English language education at tertiary level in Japan

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Abstract

The TOEIC is an English proficiency test popular in universities and businesses in Japan. While ostensibly a standardized test taken by students and office employees, the TOEIC is also an instantiation, enactment and commodification of spatiality and ideology among its Japanese stakeholders. In this paper, I will critically examine different TOEIC-related administrative procedures and practices together with their accompanying artifacts (namely, the question booklet and answer sheet) and how they ultimately enact different aspects of spatiality and ideology, particularly through power-borne ministrations, strategies and institutional behaviors. I will also draw on my lived experience as an EAP teacher to make further observations on how the TOEIC pans out in day-to-day practices within an institutional framework as well as how it mediates dehumanizing structure-to-structure practices within institutional portals. The observations in this paper have a bearing on the teaching and appropriation of the English language in higher education in Japan even as Japanese universities are now increasingly embarking on delivering content courses in English.

Keywords: language, ideology, standardized testing, critical literacy

The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is...based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads [people] to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power. (Freire, 2000, p. 77)

Cultural invasion, which serves the ends of conquest and the preservation of oppression, always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view upon another. (Freire, 2000, p. 160)

Introduction

The TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is a proficiency test used in Japanese higher education and business. To prepare for the test, test-takers go to night schools and cram schools. Universities run TOEIC classes to help students score better. Of late, Japanese universities have begun to conduct faculty content courses in English instead of in Japanese (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011) to boost flagging enrolments, strengthening the position of TOEIC as a means of gauging proficiency (Sasaki, 2008). TOEIC results are recognized for employment and promotion. Japanese English teachers typically include their TOEIC scores in their resumes.

While ostensibly a standardized test, my purpose in this paper is to argue the case that the TOEIC is also a commodification and enactment of spatiality, ideology and power among its Japanese stakeholders, accompanied by their implications for conceptualizations of locality, foreignness and Otherness as well as for language teaching and learning in higher education as humanizing activities. To do this, I will examine: (1)

TOEIC-related practices that became part of my lived experience as an English for academic purposes (EAP) teacher at a university in Kanagawa where liberal-arts courses are taught in English, together with (2) their accompanying artifacts (question booklet and answer sheet) and how they enact and reify different aspects of locality, ideology and power. Following this, I will draw on my experience as a Singaporean teacher resident in Japan to make further observations on how the TOEIC pans out in day-to-day work exigencies and how it mediates what McVeigh (2006) calls structure-to-structure practices. In so doing, I follow academic works that tap on teacher-generated narratives as a basis for professional praxis (Lillis, 2003; Tsui, 2007; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011).

To contextualize the discussion, I will first review some background literature. I will also demonstrate that alongside the TOEIC are spatial practices (Pennycook, 2010; Edwards & Usher, 2003; Gulson & Symes, 2007; Thrift, 2008) related to claims on:

- Locality – enactments of the ways TOEIC stakes and marks out local environs;
- Re-localization – enactments of ideologically-motivated reassignment or re-inscription of meanings as seen in particularized testing practices. These happen through the use of ideological tools like naturalization, reification, fragmentation and exclusion (Eagleton, 1991);
- Localism – enactments of hegemony through deeply-entrenched institutional structures and mechanisms.

My discussion is consistent with recent attention to: (1) contextualization in language teaching (e.g. Kubota, 2002; Rivers, 2010; Breckenridge & Erling, 2011); (2) the spatial turn in education and how space implies distribution of power and privilege (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Pennycook, 2010).

Uchi-Soto and the Sociology of Space

Questions of space are not innocuous or innocent (Gulson & Symes, 2007). Ideologies and inequalities in power relations are enacted through instantiations of space. Space can be mobilized for maneuvers of inclusion and exclusion (Massey, 1992; Edwards & Usher, 2003; Gulson & Symes, 2007). Space comes with evocative metaphors and semiotic meanings suggesting regulation, scrutiny and surveillance (Gulson & Symes, 2007) or as Massey (1992) observes, the emergent powers of space to monitor and modify lived practices, symbolic meanings, subsequent histories and distributions of power and privilege. Concerning ‘the sociology of space’, Edwards and Usher (2003) discuss the importance of ‘examining the spatial orderings in specific pedagogic practices and the forms of knowledge, learning and identity they include and exclude’ (p. 2). Matters concerning space and curriculum are linked to power relations: ‘to talk about space in relation to curriculum learning and knowledge production is also to talk about how power is distributed and exercised’ (Edwards & Usher, 2003, p. 3). To gloss over ‘the spatial...contexts of knowledge-making activities in relation of power’ is tantamount to be reductively ‘treating the curriculum as static and despatialized’ (Nespor, 2003, p. 94).

In Japan, space evokes cultural and political meanings. Terms like *uchi* (the inside) and *soto* (the outside) exploit space and proximity to classify, include and exclude people (Makino, 2002). Notions of Japaneseness and foreignness largely involve space. Yamagami and Tollefson (2011) highlight the psyche of Japan’s island status and how politicians speak about stopping the tide of foreign evils at water’s edge. Massey (1992) in her discussion on space and gender speaks about reductionist dualisms where values and attributes are either ‘a’ or ‘not-a’. In such dualisms, the female is often given a ‘not-a’ labeling. Massey (1992) observes that the spatial culture of modern cities is pertinent more to the male than the female. A parallel can be drawn with *uchi* and *soto*, insider and outsider juxtapositions, where the spatial culture of Japanese institutions has been said to disadvantage foreigners and things foreign (e.g. McVeigh, 2006; Rivers, 2010; Makino, 2002; Lie, 2001). Things foreign receive a ‘not-a’ labeling.

Japan, Japanese Space and the English Language

Japan has had its fair share of concerns with the English language. Much of these have had to do with the preservation of Japanese socio-cultural space and how English has been regarded as a threat to Japanese identity (Hashimoto, 2007; Seargeant, 2009; Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011). Japanese socio-cultural space is thought to be the reserve of the Yamato people. The Japanese economic miracle was attributed to their exquisitely unique qualities, vividly described in a genre of literature that celebrates Japanese uniqueness – *nihonjinron* literature (Dower, 1999; Befu, 2001; Lie, 2001). In the years of the Pacific War and being the language of the enemy (Oda, 2007), English conjured up the threat of territorial invasion.

While there have been initiatives to expose students to more English (Kubota, 2002; Sakata, 2008 Breckenridge & Erling, 2011), resistance and counter-arguments have accompanied these initiatives (Hashimoto, 2007; Rivers, 2010; Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011). Such counter-arguments concern struggles with ‘national identity...and problems with Japan’s place in the modern world’ (Stanlaw, 2004, p. 268) including uncomfortable questions about globalization and the growing presence of foreigners on Japanese soil (Kubota & McKay, 2009; Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011).

Japan’s struggles with English involve periodic resurgences of nationalism (Hashimoto, 2007). The ‘Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century’ published at the turn of the millennium came with a spatially significant subtitle ‘The Frontier Within’ and its literal translation: ‘Japan’s frontier lies within Japan’ (2007, p. 30). Hashimoto notes that the report treats globalization negatively, observing how:

it suggests that if “the good qualities of Japanese” become “universal,” Japan can solve problems within Japan without seeking help from the outside. In other words, if Japan manages to gain world recognition of the positive qualities of its people and society, Japan can work on its problems within the country without subjecting itself to the powerful forces of globalization. (Hashimoto, 2007, p. 30)

More commonly, discussions about globalization and higher education follow two competing versions: globalization-as-opportunity and globalization-as-threat (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011). The former is pitched at attracting overseas students by universities offering content courses in English and promotes the belief that English opens up a brave new world of promising opportunities. The latter, however, tends to attract greater publicity because it has been harnessed by public figures for political ends (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011). Globalization-as-threat exploits images of foreigners upsetting Japanese lifestyle with un-Japanese habits, attracting xenophobic comments from politicians fanning fears of cultural erosion (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011; Heimlich, 2013). Its proponents also argue that ‘English takes time away from Japanese language study and citizenship education’ and consequently, ‘national unity and Japanese national identity are being undermined by a focus on English (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011, p. 31).

Japanese Space, Fears of Encroachment and the Politics of Foreignness

Historically, Japan has sought to manage and manicure its socio-cultural spaces (Befu, 2001). While Allied occupiers came with zealous ideals for democratization and demilitarization in 1945, the advent of Cold War politics ultimately thwarted greater openness to new ideas about culture and political change (Caprio & Sugita, 2007). War-time leaders and corporatist mercantilists were de-purged to bulwark a Japan, Inc. under conservative governance (Dower, 1999; Caprio & Sugita, 2007). A Japan where overwhelmingly conservative ideas would prevail and where emancipatory ideas of equality and openness would be systemically repressed through the purging of activists, liberal academics and reformist thinkers, became strategically more useful against the surging tide of Communist ideology (Dower, 1999). Conditions were set for an inward-looking Japan, which would, in the ensuing years of economic prosperity, fuel the narcissistic paranoia of *nihonjinron* (Japanese uniqueness) ideology, while perpetuating the prejudices that came with continued accentuation of *gaijin* (outsider) stereotypes (Befu, 2001; Lie, 2001). Alongside stereotyped renditions of *gaijin* subjectivities, English would be reified as a *sine qua non* of foreignness (McVeigh, 2006). Hence, English native speaker subjectivities continue to be heavily racialized (Kubota, 2002) and determined by an exclusionist cultural politics that polarizes Self and Other. Recalling earlier discussion on space and reductionist dualisms, the foreign English speaker invariably comes under the ‘not-a’ classification (Massey, 1992).

Deconstructing the Locality of TOEIC

The above discussion provides the backdrop to my quest for a deeper understanding of the TOEIC. Towards this end, I sought to triangulate information from two sources available to me. I examined TOEIC-related artifacts (the answer sheet and question booklet) while drawing on observations of TOEIC-related administrative practices that became part of my lived experience as EAP teacher.

The Locality of TOEIC

The TOEIC was started in the late 1970's by a group of local businessmen and bureaucrats (Kubota, 2011). In 2008, it was taken 1.7 million times (McCrostie, 2009). Its very popularity attracts deeper scrutiny over how it carves out a niche for itself given the cultural and ideological dilemmas previously discussed. In this section, I will discuss matters relating to the 'locality' of TOEIC and how it reifies local spaces.

To begin with an analogy, announcements over station loudspeakers create the instance and spatiality of Japanese train stations, instantiating their locality. Such locality is captured and reified in the repetitiveness of warnings to stand behind the yellow line when trains are approaching or remonstrations about not forcing one's way through the closing doors of a departing train. The first realizes the spatial reality that there are no protective panels separating platform and track on many train lines and the second captures the time-space reality that Japanese trains are punctual to the minute in a fast-paced society where three minutes to the next train could mean a difference between lateness and punctuality.

In the same vein, Pennycook (2010) describes how the local is constructed through what people 'do and say' (p. 56) and is created and 'constituted through actions' (Edwards & Usher, 2003, p.7). Locality is a claim on local spaces, not least through maintaining a declaratory presence across public spaces or as described in Pennycook (2010, p. 128), 'everything happens locally' if one looks at 'local ways of knowing', even how the local is 'about change, movement and the production of space, the ways in which...practices...create the space in which they happen' (Pennycook, 2010, p. 128).

Similarly, the TOEIC reifies local spaces with its accompaniment of artifacts, icons and day-to-day practices. TOEIC notices appear in universities and cram schools alike. Besides cyber space, TOEIC advertisements penetrate physical spaces linked to public transport, the overhead compartments of buses and trains, or sign boards on platforms and station precincts. TOEIC handbills instantiate Japanese suburbia as much as weekly special offers at local supermarkets and glossy pizza or realtor advertisements. Within university hallways, seating and room allocations are displayed on notice boards announcing the imminence of TOEIC test day, a case of TOEIC being part of 'proclaiming', 'announcing', instantiating and reifying the locality of the Japanese university campus. Moreover, TOEIC matters take up (and use up) time-space at long-drawn university meetings while TOEIC scores and statistics immanently preoccupy the minds (i.e. the cranial or cerebral spaces) of hard-pressed university administrators.

One interesting and defining aspect of locality is the banal or mundane – the sight of proctors pacing the aisles or TOEIC advertisements in local community newsletters. The banal and mundane are symptomatic of locality (Pennycook, 2010). As will be further described, TOEIC penetrates, infiltrates and constructs the local with its gamut of activities and practices. The relationship between TOEIC and its locality in time and space is a mutually reinforcing one, as time and space become 'part of the doing' of TOEIC and are sustained in its practices (Pennycook, 2010, p. 56).

A Re-Localization of Ideologies in Confines and Controls

The locality of TOEIC is not innocuous or accidental. It is ideological not least because it involves a re-inscription, re-appropriation, reassignment, or otherwise a re-localization of meanings and values, all ascribable

to the working of ideology. To better understand this, I will (1) first explain my approach which follows Thrift's (2008) observations on spatiality and then (2) examine two TOEIC-related artifacts to make a case that power and power relations are 're-localized' through space-related projects and designs, legitimated through the workings of ideology. I will also comment on how such ideologies bear on the cultural politics of Japanese society at large.

My approach in this section is guided by observations on spatiality in Thrift (2008), who in turn draws on perceptions found in Chapters 7 and 8 of de Certeau's (1984) widely-read work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* called 'Walking in the City' (retitled 'Practices of Space' in Blonsky's (1985) edited collection *On Signs*) about the experience of spatial practices in the modern city and 'Railway Navigation and Incarceration' which concerns among other matters, how totalizing regimentation can put people in a state of enforced passivity. Specifically, I will trace two important motifs that Thrift (2008) extrapolates from de Certeau: walking through strategically organized spaces (Chapter 7) and enforced order and 'immobility' (Chapter 8).

Thrift (2008) quotes from de Certeau's description of how, viewed 1,350 feet above from New York's World Trade Center, 'millions of walking bodies'

follow the cursives and strokes of an urban 'text' they write without reading. These practitioners employ spaces that are not self-aware; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of one body for another...The paths that interconnect in this network, strange poems of which each body is an element down by and among many others, elude being read. Everything happens as though some blindness were the hallmark of the process. (de Certeau's 'Practices of Space' as cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 76)

This powerful and almost ethereal stream of (un)consciousness provides a useful starting point from which to 'walk' through two TOEIC-related artifacts: the answer sheet and question booklet. One is reminded that they are used by literally a million test-takers a year, people who willy-nilly help to write the TOEIC 'text' without so much as reading into its spatiality and power-laden ideology. This is what I seek to do here.

Like the millions of bodies weaving through de Certeau's panoptical urban spaces, test-takers are arguably in a virtual state of non-awareness. The spatiality enacted in the answer sheet and question booklet remains strange poems that elude being read – something I hope will no longer be the case by the end of this analysis.

The Answer Sheet

While I want to avoid copyright issues that come with reproducing a copy of the answer sheet, it is nevertheless important that the answer sheet be examined for what it reveals. The version examined is the popular TOEIC (Institutional Program) answer sheet used for the 120-minute test of listening (45 minutes, 100 questions) and reading (75 minutes, 100 questions). The listening section has multiple-choice questions covering picture recognition, conversations, monologues and short talks. The reading section comprises questions on grammar, vocabulary and passages covering different genres (emails, advertisements, news reports). Test-takers indicate their responses by pencil-shading appropriate spaces. The sheets are machine-scored.

Topography of the Answer Sheet

The answer sheet has 2 sides (A and B). Side A has 12 sections asking for personal information (date-of-birth, gender, registration number), institutional information (institutional and department numbers), and survey responses. Test answers are shaded on Side B. Test-takers fill their names 3 times, twice on side A, once on B.

The survey has questions on:

- Matriculation, whether through: the Admissions Office, the Academy Entrance Examination, the Returnee Entrance Examination, Public Recommendation, Qualification or Certification, High School Recommendation, Faculty Entrance Examination, All-Faculties Entrance Examination, the Centralized Examination or Special Society's Examination

- Study major and test-taking history (STEP, TOEFL etc.)
- English language experience: years of study, Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening skill-levels, time spent using English, difficulties with English, experience living overseas and reason for living overseas
- TOEIC experience: number of times, date of last test, reasons for taking test (job application, promotion, graduation requirement, evaluation of program effectiveness, needs diagnosis).

Critiquing Answer Sheet Topography and Ideology

The answer sheet is a facsimile of rows, columns and grids. Its gridded distribution resembles the spatial, particularly mapping, strategies evoked in de Certeau:

Can the vast texturology beneath our gaze be anything but a representation? An optical artifact. The analogue to the facsimile which, through a kind of distancing, produces the space planner, the city planner, or the map-maker. (de Certeau, 1985, p. 124)

The repeated requirement to fill one's name resembles documents of regulation and control like immigration forms at border-crossings, where something as representative of humanity as one's name has to be scribed repetitively within boxed demarcations. Ideologically, this re-localizes the TOEIC as an instrument of regulation.

Calling the answer sheet as such is half a misnomer because it is also a survey form. The survey questions reveal particularized mindsets and ideologies about English and higher education. The question on matriculation surreptitiously naturalizes TOEIC's attachment to higher education, whereas it will be seen (below) that its bit-item format actually runs counter to the dynamics of academic literacy (Lillis, 2003). The question on test-taking experience naturalizes standardized bit-item testing (TOEIC, STEP or TOEFL) as 'routine' and 'normal'. The question on overseas experience insinuates TOEIC as a means to a wide world of opportunities, evoking globalization-as-opportunity ideology (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011). The mention of the bespoke 4-skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) positions the TOEIC within extremely particularized TESOL-TEFL conceptualizations of English teaching which Holliday (2005) considers professionally narrow and reductionist.

The way test-takers' responses are compressed into one sheet of grids and boxes suggests conceptual reductionism. For academic literacies scholars, such testing is as disempowering as it is stiflingly monologic. These scholars recognize knowledge and meaning as discursively constructed and negotiated through language (Lillis, 2003; Street, 2003), not apparent within the strictures of bit-item testing where meanings are 'fixed' in right or wrong answers rather than through thoughtful negotiation.

Ironically, the TOEIC is seen (and exculpated) officially as a 'progressive' test. Sasaki (2008), in her seminal piece on 150 years of English assessment in Japan, describes how changes in policy after 2002 have been informed by a 'continuing progress of globalization' leading to the government's 'announcement of *A Strategic Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"*' (p. 76). The one-hundred 'Super English Language High Schools' scheme (Sasaki, 2008, p. 77) was promptly launched where teachers had to attain 730 in TOEIC. The government also persuaded universities to 'replace part of their entrance examinations with commercially based tests (e.g. TOEIC)' (Sasaki, 2008, p. 77). TOEIC became part of millennial initiatives heralding and auguring progress. One is reminded of an astute piece of wisdom by a noted academic literacies writer:

If we want learners to develop and enhance the richness and complexity of literacy practices...we need curricula and assessment that are themselves rich and complex...In order to develop rich and complex curricula and assessment for literacy, we need models of literacy and pedagogy that capture the richness and complexity of actual literacy practices. (Street, 2003, p. 84)

Moreover, De Certeau's observations from above Manhattan bear repetition here because they parallel how teachers and students are subjected to 'follow[ing] the cursives and strokes of an urban 'text' they write without reading. [They] employ spaces that are not self-aware; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of one body for another' (de Certeau, 1984, as cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 76).

The Question Booklet, Processes and Procedures

The previous section uncovered the ideological nature of TOEIC as borne out in the answer sheet. Beginning with observations about the question booklet, this section traces TOEIC's processes and procedures.

Questioning the Sealed Question Booklet

On the booklet cover are boxes designated for test-takers' names and registration numbers. This is despite the rule that nothing should ever be written in it, no notes or scribbling. Having test-takers (once again) write their names and identify themselves on the booklet is therefore contradictory. One reason may be to deter note taking. My own feeling about such regulation is that it demonstrates a tendency towards over-management, indicating structure-to-structure hegemonic practices (discussed later).

The question booklet exemplifies circumscribed or prohibited space. Each booklet is tape-sealed – test-takers undo the seal only when the order to do so is given. Proctors are allowed access to one booklet to monitor the test in case of problems with the sound recording. This booklet is to be marked 'For test-administrator's use', and must be duly returned along with the test-takers' copies, which cannot be taken away for self-study. Proctors are required to account for their exact numbers.

Tracking the Process: Mass Transportation and Incarceration

Before the test, proctors are briefed on a whole choreography of procedures by staff from the university administration. It is ironic how TOEIC, a language test, becomes the manifest concern of office administrators. On test days, a 'control center' is set up in an adjacent room. Bureaucrats from academic-affairs preside somberly over the days' proceedings, up to the final counting of booklets and answer sheets before everything is hurriedly couriered away in sealed boxes for scoring.

On test days, test-takers (and proctors) are spirited into a 120-minute time-space reminiscent of the passive immobility that de Certeau (1984, as cited in Thrift, 2008) observes in people confined within the carriages of mass transportation. Thrift (2008) notes that for de Certeau, 'the train (and the bus)...is a "travelling incarceration" in which human bodies are able to be ordered; though the carriage is mobile, the passengers are immobile' (p. 78):

Only a rationalized cell travels. A bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity (de Certeau, 1984, as cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 78)

Thrift (2008) further highlights De Certeau's description of the contrived experience of people inside the carriage (or test, in this case):

There is an immobility of an order...Everything is in its place...Every being is placed there like a piece of printer's type on a page arranged in military order. This order [is] an organization system (de Certeau, 1984, as cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 79).

The incarceration metaphor applies not only to test-takers. Proctors maintain a heightened state of somber vigilance, pacing enclosed areas half the size of an indoor pool. Unfortunately, there was this case of an experienced proctor who tripped over one of the tiers of a lecture hall ending up in hospital with stitches, falling haplessly while literally pacing the spaces of TOEIC.

Re-localized Ideologies

So what is the purpose of putting test-takers through such a surrealistic paranormal (and I would argue, para-educational) experience? Why are test-takers willingly complaint within such a reticulation of contrived arrangements? What hidden secrets and agendas lie behind TOEIC that ratifies its almost mythical status?

English-as-Opportunity Ideology

To answer these questions, an important observation should be made about the workings of ideology. If people are to be herded into compliance, there has to be some fairly powerful magic, ideology or mythology, or in de Certeau's (1985, p. 127) words, 'mythifying' that needs to go on: like how TOEIC opens a wonderful new galaxy of employment opportunities, high salaries and personal self-esteem (Kubota, 2011). Such promises are what de Certeau (1985, p. 127) identifies as 'a finite number of stable and isolatable elements, each articulated to the other' – rationalized, acontextual and unchangeable advantages feeding on each other and on the credulity of people. Paralleling globalization-as-opportunity ideology (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011), the myth is told that life will be great if one takes the TOEIC. Left uncontested, the mythical ideological correlation between TOEIC, glamor, success and overseas living is naturalized as common sense.

TOEIC is re-localized within the trappings of the good life.

English-as-Threat Ideology

Contrasting the good life is a somewhat darker aspect of the matter. In my experience, TOEIC is administered to EAP students as part of their *EAP* grading. Discrete right-or-wrong answers do not match the challenges of using language for academic inquiry (Lillis, 2003). Neither can academic English be found in truncated voiceovers of phone messages, airports announcements or picture descriptions. The fragmenting of language into itemized and atomized bits and the decontextualized nature of the test passages suggest (violent) acts of fragmentation through selection, truncation and censorship, stifling English as a resource for study and sense making (Seargeant, 2009).

What comes across is a feeling that English must be restricted and controlled, its potential as an academic resource, curtailed. The question booklet itself epitomizes over-management and exclusion, from its tape-sealing to the paranoia of its abrupt repossession after the test. TOEIC is re-localized into the spaces of English's foreignness, a language that must be controlled, curtailed and Othered vis-à-vis the incumbency of the Japanese language, not meant to be real or meaningful for the Japanese (Seargeant, 2009). For this very reason, TOEIC has to be caged within the contrived and clinicized confines of pedantic test items, gridded sheets and sealed booklets, besides the crassness and sterility of over-managed procedures. It is as if the Japanese cannot (or actually do not want to) allow English the space it needs to function as an academic language, despite how Japanese universities are now wanting to use it for delivery of content courses (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011)

Thus, TOEIC becomes an enactment and project(ion) of the re-localization of English, a brainchild of Japan, Inc. (McCrostie, 2009) and a corporatized (and deliberately sterilized) expression of what English proficiency is supposedly about in Japanese 'education'. At another level, it is what McNamara and Roever (2006), writing about the social implications of language testing, call a cue of identity, a tool of resistance through ideological acts of exclusion, a mutated form that stifles authentic construction and negotiation of knowledge and meaning (Lillis, 2003). Recalling earlier discussion, *uchi* is said to be 'the space for close, intimate relations', speaking 'of involvement' (Makino, 2002, p. 31). *Soto* on the other hand, represents *terra incognita*, the foreign, the frightening and the unfamiliar (Makino, 2002). TOEIC as a commodity form of Japan, Inc. re-localizes English as both foreign and *soto*. Its choreographed processes and practices dramatize an ideology that relegates English to being an alien language. Viewed as such, TOEIC is a triumph of form over function, both a distractor and decoy for English as a language for academic inquiry, keeping EAP at bay and rendering it dysfunctional.

Ironically, content courses in English are vaunted as a top selling point in university advertising campaigns, very crucial for institutional survival as universities clamber for more enrolments given Japan's bespoken low birthrate (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011).

Structure-to-Structure Localism

Unfortunately, such renegade versions of re-localization reinforce the institutional structures and ideologies that help police them. The outcome is a form of localism that unrelentingly affirms bureaucratic structures. Canagarajah (2005) notes that localism is a consequence of the paranoia of external challenges which drive local concerns to 'retreat further into more stubborn and unreasonable position(s) in...desperate attempt(s) to maintain...independence' (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 12), something reminiscent of the determined drive toward inward frontiers (Hashimoto, 2007). This is also a reminder of 'educational enterprises of fundamentalist circles...developing controlled forms of...schooling' while 'suppressing...critical thinking' (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 12). Canagarajah (2005) acknowledges that such controls are perpetuated to uphold established or traditional structures, but lead unfortunately 'to an extreme form of localism' (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 12). Pernicious and even chauvinistic forms of localism exist where institutional structures, agendas and ideologies (here associated with English and the TOEIC) take priority over emancipatory outcomes like open-mindedness, fairness and humanization (Freire, 2000).

In this connection, the following observation from McVeigh (2006) is very thought-provoking: 'If higher education is an extension of a polity's bureaucratic machinery...then it is all too easy to prioritize administration (structures) over academics...And when academics succumbs to over-administration, it is only a short step to getting caught in the cycle of "from structure back again to structure" and forgetting the original purpose of structures. Strategic visions, plans, and organizational charts begin to take on a reality of their own' (McVeigh, 2006, p. 139).

I have observed such structure-to-structure localism at close call. From student recruitment to the traditional job-hunting exercise some four years later, TOEIC's 'arithmetical particularism' (Carlson & Apple, 1998, p. 9) mediates each stage, in conveyor-belt fashion. Recruitment advertisements and campus open-days are part of the fierce bid for students, given Japan's infamously low birthrate. Recruitment advertisements typically use TOEIC classes as selling point alongside the 'promise' of attaining high scores. Students, once enrolled, are quickly placed on the conveyor-belt of TOEIC tests and classes. Even EAP lesson time, slated supposedly for the engenderment of academic literacies, is portioned out for TOEIC practice. TOEIC scores are factored into students' EAP grade, upending the teaching of academic literacies. EAP students are grouped and streamed according to TOEIC scores. At faculty meetings, TOEIC scores are measured against national and regional averages. Come job-hunting, TOEIC scores are tendered as a testimony of fine English. All of these indicate the tyranny of structure-to-structure localism.

Ironically, despite careful over-management, parents and students may still be confused. Content courses in English, EAP and TOEIC are often conflated – in the mistaken assumption that studying content courses in English automatically leads to higher TOEIC scores, while higher TOEIC scores get mistaken for heightened academic ability. Such confusion viciously reinforces another mistaken assumption that students weak in TOEIC will benefit from studying academic courses in English as a backhandedly roundabout way to higher TOEIC scores, much to the consternation of faculty professors who do not see themselves as surrogate TOEIC teachers. The honest truth, which is that TOEIC, EAP and content courses in English are vastly different in curricular and pedagogical epistemologies, is hidden in the dissimulating nature of ideology and the formidably imposing nature of structure-to-structure relations.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought a deeper understanding of spatial, territorial and hence ideological meanings of the TOEIC test, their enactments and their ramifications in Japanese educational and socio-political spaces. Apart from the dehumanizing aspects of structure-to-structure localism, my analysis has revealed a re-localization of ideologies resulting in seriously misplaced educational priorities, virtually a case of a mis-localization rather than a re-localization of ideologies. Coupled with the fact that TOEIC is a mercantilist entity that derives for itself a voracious marketplace appetite for language testing, the need for critical reflection among educators and policy makers becomes very urgent. Reflexive voices will need to contest and destabilize existing ideologies as well as inequitable and para-credible practices by engaging in critical discussions in the professional domains available. Hopefully, such critical reflection will eventually bring about more ethical and professionally accountable practices.

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