

Metaphor and Metonymy in English Language Program Curriculum Discourse in Hawai‘i: Towards an Ecological Approach

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Introduction

“At first, some, some of students said Hawai‘i is not good in order to learn language. English language, I mean second language, because, because, they say some student is from Hawai‘i, and Hawaiian people cannot speak standard language, standard English. So if we have a conversation in English, I mean, listen to English, it’s different from mainland.”

This quote was taken from an interview with a Japanese woman studying at a private English language school in Hawai‘i as she answered a question about language policies at her school. Her comments triggered questions regarding educational and language policies pointing to particular worldviews. Our purpose in this paper is to explore the representational practices found in online curriculum policy discourse from three private English language programs in Hawai‘i. These representational practices, by highlighting particular ideologies and hiding others, attempt to position students “so that they are prepared for uncritical admission into sociocultural conditions discursively constructed well in advance of that admission” (Corson, 1995, p. 301). Furthermore, we hope to elaborate on a model of critical policymaking in order to raise awareness of the language in policy discourse. “When meaning is produced through language unreflectively to the extent that it gets sedimented into common-sense knowledge—which we call ideology—it tends to masquerade as ‘fixed truths’ or ‘existing facts’ about the social world, as if such facts were immune to particular relations of power or material interests” (Giroux & McLaren, 1992, p. 13).

In the case of Hawai‘i, ever since first Western contact, language and education policies “have as their common thread a hegemonic process initiated, instituted, and perpetuated by an English-speaking Caucasian establishment through which political and social power could be acquired and maintained” (Kawamoto, 1993, p. 204). This can be seen in such practices as the banning of Hawaiian in 1896 in schools when English became the official language of instruction, and, in the 1920s, the educational segregation of students based on English proficiency (Huebner, 1985; Kawamoto, 1993).

As a result of increasing linguistic diversity, and in order to address oppressive language policies, scholars have looked to school language policies as “an integral and necessary part of the administration and the curriculum practice of schools” (Corson, 1999, p. 1). A school language policy, or LPAC (Language Policies Across the Curriculum), is a policy document that addresses a school’s language needs and aims. The policy should target areas within

a particular school’s management, organization, pedagogy, and curriculum where specific language needs might exist. May (1997) defines a school language policy as, “an action statement outlining the solutions necessary for addressing the diverse language needs of a school” (p. 229).

School language policies may be traced back to Britain and the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A 1966 document entitled “Towards a Language Policy Across the Curriculum,” prepared by the members of the London Association for the Teaching of English, provided the theoretical underpinnings for the concept (Barnes et al., 1990). The LAC movement drew heavily on the work of contemporary curriculum theorists as well as work on language and learning from Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner.

Several texts emerged in the 1970s and 80s advocating in favor of school language policies. At the secondary school level (Marland, 1977; Knott, 1985) and the elementary school level (Maybin, 1985), these texts outlined the major tenets from the original document and how best to implement them at the individual school level. As a result, “In the United States, strong arguments were advanced for the idea that the school, rather than wider system entities like boards and ministries, is the key site for educational action and policymaking” (Corson, 1999, p. 2).

Corson (1990, 1995, 1999) provides one of the most comprehensive treatments of both theory and practice of school language policies. He also develops previous work on LAC by extending the original focus on first language concerns to include second language concerns and social justice issues. This is an important extension of the use of LACs and one that is crucial to our belief that (ESL) English language programs should consider drafting formal school language policies.

Corson explains that a specific language policy should address language issues under three broad headings: organization and management of the school, teacher approaches to language use, and the curriculum. Considering social justice issues in addressing these broad areas, he proposes a model of critical policymaking—a model with “a logical process of discovery and reform that also has emancipatory implications...” (Corson, 1999, p. 60). Corson’s model of critical policymaking draws heavily on the work of Bhaskar’s (1997) critical realist concept of discovery and Habermas’ (1990) discourse ethic. These theoretical concepts highlight the importance of consulting relevant actors in the policymaking process. Habermas, in particular, wants to “lessen the discursive randomness that typifies the management styles of organizations. In its place, he wants to instill a discourse arrangement for resolving conflicts of interpretation

as they develop, using a situation in which asymmetrical relations of power do not prevail or even operate” (Corson, 1995, p.136).

A critical policymaking model should “consult directly with sectional groups and respond as best it can to their concerns, while balancing them against other interests” (Corson, 1999, p. 64). However, he warns against simply using a survey, vote, or referendum to inform policy decisions as majority vote may be used in justifying something unjust. Furthermore, Corson (1999) notes, “referenda usually ignore the impact of structural factors that oppress sectional groups, because the majority do not understand or feel the impact of those structural factors on their own lives” (ibid, p. 64).

Concerned, too, with social justice issues and the implicit structural factors that oppress, we believe that what is missing in Corson’s critical policymaking model is a critical awareness of the *language* of such policies. We aim to extend this critical model, then, by initiating a discussion of how policy discourse points to particular ideologies in the discourses woven around English language teaching (ELT). Despite the efforts of policy models to combat explicit hegemonic practices, we feel such models need to consider the *implicit* ways in which policy and discourse highlight certain worldviews. The moment in which discourse moves from ideological struggle to common sense is when explicit ideology becomes implicit. Fairclough (2001) explains that, “a dominant discourse is subject to a process of naturalization, in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and become the common-sense practice of the institution. Thus when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be ideology; this is itself an ideological effect, for ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised” (p. 89).

In order to extend Corson’s model, we find it useful to supplement critical approaches with linguistic analysis. In discussing new approaches to educational policy analysis, Heck (2004) points out that “Despite the usefulness of critical theory in identifying oppressive social arrangements, there is some debate over the extent to which it actually entails advocacy and change—that is, a commitment to challenging existing relationships and using research to reach a certain end” (p. 165). He recommends focusing on smaller scale studies of the policy process—one such method being “the deconstruction of the language and intent of existing policies” (p. 167). We hope an analysis of this kind might lead us to a better understanding of the beliefs expressed in the quote at the beginning of this article from the Japanese student of English. As Alford (2005) notes: “Values presented in policy documents are mediated by words and are therefore, by necessity, distilled or coalesced representations of much more complex positions and assumptions and value systems” (p. 2).

Conceptual Metaphor And Metonymy

Metaphor

An important distinction in metaphor studies made by Lakoff and Turner is that “metaphor resides in thought, not just in words” (1989, p. 2). Metaphor has traditionally been seen as a figurative

device used by writers to create a sense of the literary within their work. Original, striking metaphors are one of the marks of great literature, however the everyday uses of metaphor that become part of our very means of conceptualizing events and experiences are also of much interest to linguists. The importance of metaphor to human thought has been established primarily by work done by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987). In *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors demonstrate that metaphor is not simply an interesting part of speech, but actually reflects and shapes how we see the very world in which we live—“our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 3). This is a key concept because it tells us that metaphor is not neutral, it actively shapes how we perceive that which is around us. We think in metaphoric ways by structuring our thought, and conceptualizing one object or perception in terms of another. This idea has been developed in subsequent work by Lakoff (1987), in which this central suggestion about the way in which we shape our experience through metaphor, metonymy and “imaginative categories” is described further and applied to various domains of language use. Indeed, the growing body of research that applies metaphor theory to discourse analysis (e.g. Charteris-Black, 2006), and language pedagogy (e.g. Boers, 2000; 2003) for example, illustrates clearly that, “far from being merely a matter of words, metaphor is a matter of thought – all kinds of thought: thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about the nature of life and death. It is indispensable not only to our imagination but also to our reason (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. xi). Without metaphor it would indeed be impossible for us to make sense of the world around us.

Furthermore, their claim is that not only do we see the world a certain way because of metaphor, but as the title of the book suggests, we also live our lives as if these categories were true. The example cited by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) to illustrate this point is with the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. In this example, the concrete concept of “war” is mapped onto the abstract idea of argument—this conceptual framework allows us to understand what argument is about and, more than that, influences how we actually approach and “do” an argument. So that the surface idioms and idiomatic phrases that this metaphor produces in English such as “she held her position” are only surface manifestations of a cognitive way of seeing the world. Lakoff and Johnson make the point that if we conceptualize argument as a dance between two partners (and there is no reason why a culture couldn’t see it this way), then not only would our language be different, but also that our values about argument and our behavior in arguing would be different. The fact that these metaphors now seem such a routine part of our daily lives is what gives them their power to shape our thoughts.

Interest in the power of metaphor to shape conceptual understanding and consequent action in the world has sparked the wide interest of discourse analysts. Lakoff (1992) examined metaphor in the news in framing the discourse of “the enemy” and

in offering a rationale for the invasion of Iraq during the Gulf Wars. He suggested that such discourse played an important part in the acceptance of these conflicts by the U.S. population in general. Santa Ana (1999) examined the use of metaphor in news media discourse in describing Mexican immigrants and found that the overriding metaphors were pejorative. This was linked to actual political changes in how Mexicans were dealt with by the legal system. Such critical approaches are also being undertaken in fields such as environmental policy analysis. Sharp and Richardson (2001), using a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach, note that “policy discourse can be understood as the bundle of exchanges that give shape through metaphors and practices to a particular policy-making process or debate” (p. 195).

Turner (1993) highlights the importance of metaphor to academic discourse and suggests that it is crucial that ESL students master the conventions of the target discourse community. He recommends explicit instruction. Barletta et al. (2006) examined the uses of metaphor and metonymy in the discourse of teaching materials. They found that they were important in establishing expectations and policies for individual teachers as well as for the department in question. In fact, throughout history, metaphors of education have reflected wider societal tendencies. For example, Charlton (1984) describes the metaphorical discourse of sixteenth century education: “In a society that was still predominately rural, it is not surprising that what, all-embracingly, might be called horticultural metaphors abound” (p. 58). Historically speaking, metaphors “partly constitute what it is possible to say about education at a particular historical moment and therefore what education can be. In fact, conventional metaphors have a more important part to play here than original metaphors, precisely because they have become accepted as normal ways of talking about and conceptualizing education” (Goatly, 2002, p. 265).

Metonymy

If metaphor allows us to use meanings implicit in one area of thought and map them onto another area, then metonymy reveals how we manipulate and organize large and complex categories. Whereas metaphor is based on relations of similarity between elements based on notions of comparison, metonymy is based on contiguity or nearness. Ungerer and Schmidt (1996) point to the key difference between these two features in how they structure abstract categories, noting that “while metaphor involves a mapping across different cognitive models, metonymy is a mapping within the same model” (p. 128). Indeed, metonymy, as the expression of part of a category to represent a whole, is used to highlight features of that category to which it belongs. For example, in the conventionalized metonymy examples cited by Ungerer and Schmidt, *We need a couple of strong bodies for our team* and *We need some new faces around here*, a relevant aspect of a human being is highlighted so that the model PHYSICAL STRENGTH is related to the category BODY in the first example, and the model INTELLIGENCE is related to the category of HEAD in the second (1996, p.129). As Johnson and Lakoff (1980) make clear, “...metonymies that are

grounded in our physical experience provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts” (40).

In a study conducted in Japan, Matsuda (2002) found that for many Japanese students, “the terms foreign countries and abroad were synonymous with ‘the West’—specifically, North America and Western Europe” (p. 436). In addition, Kubota (2002) identifies how metonymy, such as the term “English” standing for “foreign language” in the broader educational discourse, is perhaps partly responsible for less than 1 percent enrollment in languages other than English in high school language classes (p. 19). This finding was replicated by Barletta et al (2006), who found that metonymic expressions were a very important aspect of the ideology of instruction and composition that were ultimately created by teaching philosophies and syllabi. For example, they describe the regular use of the metonym “this essay will” in which the *essay* comes to stand for the entire experience of the students writing in the course, and ultimately shapes a particular view of what academic writing is. Ducar (2006) revealed how the metonymic representation of Heritage Language Learners in Heritage Spanish Language textbooks may contribute to a negative subject position for the very learners for whom the texts were intended.

English Language Program Discourse In Hawai‘i

The analysis offered below must be seen as an introductory one. As Pennycook (2001) makes clear, without any evidence of the effect of discourse on the people coming into contact with that discourse, we are left with “a particular reading of a particular text” (p. 93). Further research, such as ethnographic investigation of resistance to subject positions (i.e. Canagarajah, 2004), is needed to see how these discourses are maintained, consumed, challenged, and resisted within the institutions themselves. This should take place both at the institutional level and at the more personal level of the classroom where interpersonal discourse takes place. Nevertheless we feel it is important and valuable to take the first step in highlighting some of the ways in which the discourse of English language operates, notably in the medium of the Internet.

The Web Sites of three prominent language institutions operating in Hawai‘i were selected randomly from a web search in May of 2006. Metaphorical and metonymical expressions from each school were grouped together according to the cognitive structural mappings they represent. Examining other available sites reveals that the sites selected for analysis are in many ways typical in offering a variety of information, in text and graphic modality, regarding the programs offered and their own particular setting.

In this sense, the school websites offer a new and hybrid form of discourse. They simultaneously display both policy and advertising designed to attract students to their programs. This hybridity is further evidenced by the multimodal nature of these texts, incorporating a mixture of linear and non-linear texts and visual images. Hull and Nelson (2005) argue that the new multimodal texts that are becoming part of our everyday way of communicating are quantitatively different, and that “multimodality

can afford, not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning” (p. 225). In the same way that the printing press fundamentally changed the nature of social transmission and interaction with knowledge and information, it is argued that the computer is doing the same. It is important to note then, that these discourses on language policy are no longer confined to the institutions that create them, but can be seen as part of an evolving online discourse on what it means to study and speak the English language—simultaneously constituting and being constituted by prevailing attitudes towards the language and what it means to be a student and citizen in the age of globalization.

Upon examining in greater detail the textual elements of the online discourse of these institutions, one is immediately struck by the overwhelming use of metaphor and metonymy to describe and outline educational policy. These features of language are so commonplace, and such a part of how we use language, that they can become very difficult to separate out and codify for what they are—they truly have become invisible to us. And therein lies their power. Once separated out of the discourse and analyzed however, a clear picture of the kinds of ideology operating in Hawai'i emerges. It is important to note that language use is a matter of linguistic choice so that what may seem natural and “just the way we say that” is always capable of being expressed in an alternative form.

Specifically, the multimodality of these texts includes photographs, links, and text. The photographs on the program websites, it should be noted, may carry more than one meaning. The privileging of one *particular* meaning, then, relies on certain representational practices. For example, as Hall (1997) explains: “The ‘meaning’ of the photograph...does not lie exclusively in the image, but in the conjunction of image *and* text” (p. 326). On one school’s website, a picture of two attractive white females in bikinis jumping in the air is positioned over the caption: “Hurray! Transform your life at ICC!” On another school’s website, several small pictures show smiling students engaged in extracurricular activities such as bike riding or visiting an aquarium. Pegrum (2004) notes that although the “spirited, slightly hedonistic edge” to many of these photographs will attract many, the possibility of alienation exists as well, particularly in markets in East Asia, “which consist of students and their parents who see English...as a serious matter” (p. 6).

Contradicting such “hedonistic” visual images, text positioned immediately to the left of the photograph of the white females in bikinis emphasizes the “strict” policies of English-only which they “enforce” as a way for students to “improve their language.” These words evoke a semantic frame of social order, as Oxford et al. (1998) explain in their analysis on metaphors for classroom teachers. This social order frame includes metaphors that point to “strict control of students” and various “techniques of domination” (p. 24).

One prominent feature of all three programs is the way in which the discourses blend the pragmatic giving of information for educational purposes with the more business-oriented discourses of persuasion and sales. This finding reflects the finding of Fairclough (1995) in his analysis of a British university brochure. In our examples, this is achieved partly with the juxtaposing of different

forms of expression, or kinds of text, with attractive pictures of students looking happy and engaged in interesting activities. Metaphoric expression plays a part too. For example, the phrase “each member of the faculty is highly trained”, exemplifies the conceptual metaphor that UP (HIGH) IS GOOD and DOWN IS BAD. This is a small part of the way in which the owners of the school are able to persuade potential students, or customers, that this is the right program for them.

Another important feature of this discourse is the multiple examples of the “technologisation of discourse”, which Fairclough (1996) describes as the ways in which language becomes an economic commodity in discourse itself. Consider the following examples:

- ♦ The courses within the program concentrate on reading and writing [metonymy of courses standing for teachers, students and activities]
- ♦ Learn to construct and organize writing
- ♦ Demonstrate pronunciation skills
- ♦ Expand active vocabulary
- ♦ Build and refine skills
- ♦ Develop the critical thinking skills necessary for college
- ♦ Apply the skills you have
- ♦ Demonstrate an understanding; demonstrate a familiarity [metaphor of skills as trophies or objects to be created and displayed]

These technologies can then be bought and sold as any other commodity for sale on the educational market. Fairclough gives one pertinent example in how discourse has been managed to create changes in the way people interact and operate. He describes the way in which the discourses of business and advertising have been appropriated by education policy discourse, and he locates this change within an ongoing shift in educational priorities: “the competence and skills based approach harmonizes with the technologisation of discourse in a number of ways: it focuses on training in context-free techniques (skills), it is a pressure for standardization of practices, it fits with autonomous notions of self...” (p. 82). Cameron (2002) suggests ways in which the discourse of English language education has become commodified and homogenized in a way that promotes a single and accepted way forward for global communication. In this way, the discourse of English learning has come to resemble the discourse of self-improvement, itself a powerful ideological component of Western individualism. English then becomes synonymous with success and development and the de facto language of the global community.

The related discourse of sales and advertising is also prominent on the examined language school Web pages and is emphasized by the overwhelming focus upon English as a set of skills designed for individual development and progress. While this may seem commonplace and ideologically free, it must be understood in terms

of the wider discourse on globalization and the particular *ways of being in the world* that are being represented and promoted here. Consider these examples:

- ♦ *by helping them acquire skills* [course-for-process metonymy; language as a set of skills to be acquired]
- ♦ *the goal of instruction is to prepare the student to enter intermediate courses* [learning as goal driven enterprise which allow students to “enter” (access) further education/ courses]
- ♦ *give our students the best opportunity to improve their language*
- ♦ *students will learn to employ a process approach to writing and will progress from developing paragraphs* [learning English as progress and development]
- ♦ *formulating topic sentences worthy of further exploration/ sticking to the topic without getting sidetracked* [“good” English as worthy and valuable; learning as voyage metaphor; writing as a journey metaphor—a good journey goes straight and is direct]

The emphasis on each individual working on particular “skills” to make “progress” and “enter” into the realm of achievement, presents a very specific view of education and each person’s relationship to it. These pages offer very culturally and historically specific presentations of highly motivated individuals operating in the global, information-based economy of the twenty-first century. They are representations of the Western capitalist world. English is a skill and a tool for development and access to this world, and the norms of interaction within it are powerfully evoked by the repetition of phrases such as *course objectives* and *students will*. Phrases that emphasize the idea of achievement in certain clearly defined skills as the measure of educational success. For Pennycook (2001) these are part of a market driven culture that present “an economic view of the world that suggests a rational model of capital accumulation” (p. 126).

Further examples of this self-improvement discourse reflect a self-deficiency legacy described in Jenkins (2003). Several examples from the web pages of schools we analyzed highlight this:

- ♦ *give our students the best opportunity to improve their language*
- ♦ *life changing experience*
- ♦ *transform your life*
- ♦ *a stepping stone to promotion*

Jenkins (2003) identifies two previous periods of widespread diffusion of English. The first occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as English was transported to the “new world.” The second occurred at various points in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during the colonization of Asia and Africa. The legacy of these two periods is threefold: the endangering of many indigenous languages, the sense of linguistic inferiority assumed by the colonized, and the loss of ethnic identity. These examples parallel

Jenkins’ linguistic analysis and research in the literature, which demonstrates an ethos of the “disparagement of the non-Anglo ‘other’” (p. 51). She offers the following summary:

It is not surprising that, after centuries in which non-Anglo languages and cultures and local L2 varieties of English have been undermined in this way, a lack of confidence pervades many L2 speakers’ attitudes towards their use of English (p. 52).

The presentation of language as self-improvement and a set of skills not only provides us with a particular ideological view of the world but also a view of the nature of language itself. Such skills, it suggests, can be acquired, demonstrated, and then sold on the global job market. This is essentially a reductive view of language and language learning in which language is divorced from the context of its use, divided up into segments, and transmitted in manageable chunks to the learner. Van Lier (2004) contrasts this approach with an ecological approach to language that views language as fully situated within a cultural context, and learning language as a process characterized by increasing participation in cultural practices. In Hawai‘i, English is often presented as a homogenized artifact free from local concerns of the people of the state.

The opening quote in the introduction to this paper is interesting in this light. From the perspective of the market version, “standard English” may make sense to international students who are attracted to the idea of learning the “standard” form after exposure to the marketing machine that has promoted English as a global language. The perpetuation of standard English as the prestigious version of English, and the priority it gives in education to the “native speaker” takes a cyclical and mutually reinforcing form. Pennycook (2001) usefully describes this as, “the effects of the embodied linguistic/cultural capital of the native speaker, the power of the linguistic/cultural capital of the TOEFL and the draw of English because of the social and economic capital it promises” (p. 125). In this view, local versions become irrelevant (and even problematic); and in Hawai‘i this is a particularly notable deficit, given the history of the islands, especially with regard to the language of the Hawaiian people but also in reference to languages of other groups of immigrants who have contributed to the distinctive forms of English spoken here.

Reviewing these web pages again, the analysis of metonymy in particular reveals the way in which learning and language are conceptualized in this discourse. Several expressions and phrases are repeated throughout the texts, which share a metonymic conceptual framework. It is by means of metonymy that “institution” and “course” come to represent the entire academic and even life experience of the students who enter the program. The following textual examples illustrate this: *The courses within the program concentrate on reading and writing* and *The intensive ESL program allows students to study English*. What is happening in these examples is that the agency of teaching and learning are removed from the process. The concepts of course and program become

reified and divorced from the actual processes of teaching, studying, and learning. They suggest that learning English is simply a matter of taking the course or being admitted to the program. The word “allow,” for example, specifically carries a certain force in implying permission—in the sense of being permitted to join an exclusive club. Metonymy and metaphor are part of the narrative of persuasion presented by the texts—education, it is suggested, is a smooth transition from point A to point B. Point B represents progress, skills, and access to the new post-Fordist economy (see Gee, 2000 for discussion) that depends upon an increasingly network-based model, requiring workforce mobility and access to information. This point is underlined by the repeated heading that announces what students *will* be able to *do* by the end of each course—not what each student will have to learn, but what they will be able to do.

This use of language connects with the central metaphor running through these texts—that of writing or learning as building.

- ♦ *using facts to support opinions* [again, writing as construction requiring “support”]
- ♦ *construct and organize an outline* [writing as building metaphor]
- ♦ *ESL Reading/Writing is a course that builds and refines skills* [composition as building metaphor]

Again this may seem innocuous enough but the conceptual underpinning is revealing. The idea of WRITING AS BUILDING resonates in important ways with those of development and achievement found elsewhere in the text. Together they form a particular view of what it means to study English and enter such a program. By implication, the image of building suggests that those who are admitted will be part of a larger program that is in the process of construction, of being built, participation in which, it is suggested, will lead naturally on to the creation of positive futures. It also suggests that exclusion from progress and the global economy awaits those who are not admitted to the program. Other ways of being, and other, perhaps less utilitarian, educational motives and goals are excluded.

The notion of learner subjectivity and the influence this can have on a language learner has recently gained prominence, following Norton (1995). In Norton’s study, she followed a group of immigrant women in English-speaking Canada and tried to understand the reasons for the difficulties that these students were encountering. Norton describes in detail how the identity of a participant named Martina as mother and caregiver within her family “structured her relationship to both the public and private world and had a marked impact upon the ways she created opportunities to practice English” (p. 100).

Two other important studies reveal the potential importance that the construction of a subjective, and therefore limited, role in discourse can have for language learners. Siegal’s (1996) study of a western woman studying Japanese in Japan offers an interesting contrast and point of comparison with Norton’s work. The subjec-

tive role of a western female in Japan is such that the woman in this study was not expected to be able to speak appropriate Japanese, as the Japanese language demands a high level of pragmatic awareness in executing even the most basic of interactions. The study showed that because of this belief prevalent among her interlocutors, her Japanese proficiency suffered, and she received very little in the way of feedback or interactional scaffolding. As a western woman in Japan, she entered an ongoing discourse about the position of “the other” in relation to Japanese culture. These assumptions shaped the kinds of cooperative language activity that she engaged in. Her position was compounded by the fact that as a female she was also expected to speak in a very polite and what seemed, at least to her western sensibilities, in an overly humble and demure way. The subject of the study recognized this but chose to ignore it—opting for a more neutral yet ultimately less appropriate mode of discourse. Again this had implications for the kinds of interaction she could work with while in this culture. This study underlines the socially constructed nature of subjective states of mind that may operate subtly upon learners according to the discourses that they enter.

Ibrahim (1999) also makes a useful contribution to the identity and language learning question. He describes, using a critical ethnographic approach, how non-English speaking African immigrants to Canada “become black” as they enter the racial discourses of North America, a space where they are “already imagined, constructed and thus treated as blacks” (p. 349). Ibrahim makes the point that prior to immigration when they lived in their own communities back home, their racial identity was not an issue and the students constructed themselves according to local social markers. He notes, “In becoming Black the African youths were interpellated by Black popular culture forms, rap and hip-hop as sites of identification” (p. 365). This ‘becoming’ is then manifested in the investment the students make in their own language learning which becomes part of their identity. The students learn Black stylized English as they access the cultural world around them suggesting that “one invests where one sees oneself mirrored” (p. 365), or as Ibrahim himself concludes, “Identity, as re- and preconfigured here, governs what ESL learners acquire and how they acquire it” (p. 366). Engagement with language, discourse, and cultures can be an important aspect of the process of identity re-formation that is an important aspect of living in a foreign land and learning a foreign language.

These significant studies relate to the data in these language school texts in important ways. A particular subjectivity, or identity, is being implicitly created and offered to students who enter these schools. It remains to be seen what effect this may have on potential and actual students and what form, if any, resistance may take to the worldview and subject positions being shaped.

Conclusion

Looking back once more to the quote in the introduction from the English language learner from Japan, it is evident much work remains in challenging such myths as that of the native-speaker as

language owner. Jenkins (2006) expresses the view that “belief in native speaker ownership persists among both native and nonnative speakers—teachers, teacher educators, and linguists alike, although it is often expressed with more subtlety than it was in the past” (p. 171). We hope that by describing the use of metaphor and metonymy in English language program policy, we have added a new dimension to a critical policymaking model—a dimension that takes a first step in illuminating such myths and other, possibly hegemonic, ideological positions. In Hawai‘i, where language policies have traditionally been oppressive, it is important to uncover these subtle and implicit ways in which policies highlight certain worldviews and to recognize that “metaphor with political connotations can evoke and justify a power hierarchy in the person who used it and in the groups that respond to it” (Edelman, 1984, p. 45). Furthermore, just as Corson extended the school language policy to include second language issues, we have extended the model to private English language programs, addressing a sector of education and ELT that is often ignored in educational policy studies. In Hawai‘i, this sector represents a large part of the English language teaching business. In so doing, we need to acknowledge the tension between critical positions such as the native speaker myth with its “dubious and colonially-derived notions that English is best taught monolingually and by native speakers” (Pegrum, 2004, p. 4) and practical positions emphasizing adult students’ needs for acquiring the skills to enter university or publish in a journal. As Bizzell (1987) puts it, “our dilemma is that we want to empower students to succeed in the dominant culture so that they can transform it from within; but we fear that if they do succeed, their thinking will be changed in such a way that they will no longer want to transform it”.

Without critical approaches to these issues, ideologies might present incomplete pictures of the English language that leads to “confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users or uses” (Matsuda, 2002, p. 438). In calling for a more “organic approach” to language and language policy, we find Corson’s (1999) suggestion in keeping with recent developments in language education that call for a more “ecological” approach (Kramsch, 2002; Van Lier, 2004). The essential point of such an approach is that language should be seen as fully situated in particular social contexts, with particular histories and ethnographies of communication. Our suggestion is that documents such as those analyzed in this paper should, wherever possible, reflect local realities and offer multiple and various possibilities for student engagement with the wider social world. We hope that the analysis offered here may provide a small first step in raising language awareness and engaging educators and policy makers with the possibilities offered by such an approach.

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