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**J. Bouchard, *Ideology, Agency, and Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan*, Springer, 2017**

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On one level, *Ideology, Agency, and Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan* is concerned with English as a Foreign Language (EFL), examining from a sociological angle whether and how ideology has an impact on EFL pedagogy in Japan. To answer a student's question *I am Japanese, so why do I need to learn English?*, Bouchard uses an ethnographic approach to examine English education in four junior high schools in Sapporo, Japan. His concerns are: How is intercultural communicative competence (ICC) addressed in secondary EFL? How do the ideologies of *nihonjinron* (the uniqueness of Japanese culture) and *native-speakerism* constrain ICC education? On a much deeper level, however, this book is about the epistemological shift in the study of language learning from *proficiency* to *criticality* and about the study of ideologies in general, with an eye to "a broader understanding of ideology in relation to structural, cultural, and agentive processes" (p. 353).

The first chapter provides a background to EFL education in Japanese junior high schools. In a brief historical sketch, Bouchard shows that English education has been marked by booms and backlashes against perceived Western imperialism, an idea that will resurface when explaining the ideology of *nihonjinron*. Classroom discourse, socialization, and power are then briefly introduced in the contexts of traditional and communicative oriented classrooms. Finally, detailed information is provided about Japanese junior high schools, teachers, and students. The reader would be advised here to peruse only those sections in which he or she lacks expertise, as these are essentially overviews. Bouchard concludes by rejecting the common, simplistic characterization of Japanese EFL as being test-driven, noting that some of its problems can be explained by the ways that different actors (teachers, students, etc.) are differently invested regarding conflicting goals, a conclusion that likely sums up much of education in any context.

In the second chapter, Bouchard defines three concepts fundamental to his book: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), *nihonjinron*, and native-speakerism. This is a lot of territory to cover, and readers new to these areas will need to take the time to carefully digest each carefully-constructed argument in order to follow his reasoning. Bouchard claims that ICC, at least at the university level, should be not purely proficiency-based (i.e., knowledge about other cultures), but should be based on Critical Cultural Awareness, the ability to evaluate on the basis of specific criteria, the viewpoints, practices and products in one's own culture and in other cultures. After summarizing five models of ICC, Bouchard draws elements from them to propose an ICC model usable in Japanese JHS classes. This section is, unfortunately, rather under-developed, as it is not explained which elements from his model are drawn from which models, and it is not clear how his model would reflect ICC content in current textbooks and MEXT documents as he claims it does. In the remainder of the chapter, Bouchard discusses how *nihonjinron* and native-speakerism have been defined and consumed, and he discusses problems in the critiques against *nihonjinron*. Although one might argue that a focus on native-speakerism alone would have been sufficient, Bouchard effectively demonstrates that these two ideologies share many ontological attributes and may thus impact EFL and ICC education in similar ways. This chapter can be recommended for anyone involved in EFL in Japan; as a teacher of pronunciation, I found myself constantly relating the discussion on native-speakerism to similar concerns in current pronunciation theory and pedagogy.

In the third chapter, "Theoretical Groundwork", Bouchard displays his passion for intellectual analysis as he lays the theoretical groundwork for the concepts of ideology, agency, and culture. Although many readers of this book will already be familiar with related theoretical issues, readers new to these areas will need to take the time to digest this dense chapter in order to follow his reasoning. Bouchard embraces parts of Archer's (1996, 2004, 2012) social realist perspective of culture, which involves two layers: the Cultural System (cultural knowledge, beliefs, language, myth, etc.) and the Socio-Cultural Domain (how people adapt, reproduce, or resist the Cultural System). Bouchard proposes that in intercultural communication, individuals strive to find middle ground in the Socio-Cultural Domain, which is mediated through human agency. He also claims that the concepts of socialization and habitus are insufficient to explain ideology, but that human reflexivity can do so. Archer had posited four types of reflexivity, and Bouchard tentatively proposes that individuals who are fractured reflexives may be particularly prone to ideological effects. Finally, Bouchard questions the post-modern tendency in ideological research to posit ideology exclusively as a constraining force, with

criticality as its only remedy. He argues that if all discourse forms are products of particular historical conditions, then the discourse of the critique is also “inherently historical, and therefore ideological” (p. 98). As an alternative approach, he proposes a stratified approach that examines the complex relationship between structure, culture, and agency, with a very strong emphasis on agency. Thus, he achieves his stated purpose for this chapter, which is to (a) locate conceptual problems in contemporary ideology critique, (b) look at core issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, and (c) provide viable theoretical and methodological alternatives.

In the fourth chapter, Bouchard lays the methodological groundwork for his realist approach and describes his data collection and analysis. He begins by pointing out that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an ontological perspective on discourse and not a methodology *per se*. He then follows by identifying weaknesses in CDA, and to his credit, he proposes strategies to deal with some of these issues. After discussing several approaches to Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA), Bouchard provides seven principles upon which his approach to research, a realist approach, is based. Educational research tends to take place either at the level of small-scale human interactions, for example, where teacher moves and student moves are analyzed, or at the level of large structural processes such as policy design; however, the present study, being stratified, does both. His data involve an intertextual analysis of classroom discourse, field notes, interviews, government policy documents, EFL textbooks, and other sources of discourse. The analysis takes place at the thematic and at the lexico-grammar level where processes such as passivization and nominalization can indicate the mystification of agency, a core analytical focus in both CDA and CCDA.

The fifth chapter, “*Nihonjinron*, Native-Speakerism, and Recent MEXT Policies on EFL Education”, is a discussion of Bouchard’s findings at the macro level. The data set is MEXT’s 2003 Plan (The Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”) and MEXT’s Five Proposals of 2011 that further address the relationship between globalization and English education. At the first stages of the linguistic analysis, Bouchard performed a corpus analysis of keywords such as “foreigner”, “teacher”, “should” and “globalization”, then performed a detailed text analysis of 22 segments of policy text, looking at ways in which syntax indicated processes such as causality, commitment, and agency. Although the same analysis performed on the original documents in Japanese, a language syntactically distant from English, would not likely produce the same results, Bouchard points out (personal communication) that many of the observations in this book echo those of Hashimoto (2009, 2012, 2013), who has studied MEXT policies in Japanese and who has come to similar conclusions regarding their ideological contents. In the final level of analysis, the

semantic content was examined in relation to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory. Bouchard did not find evidence that these documents were formulated as a result of *nihonjinron* or native-speaker approaches to policy; however, native-speakerism is clearly evident in these important government documents.

The sixth chapter enters territory in which EFL teachers will be most comfortable, a discussion of Bouchard's findings at the classroom level. Bouchard's data involved over 30 hours of audio recordings of English classes, field notes, textbooks, and teacher interviews at four junior high schools in Sapporo. With growing awareness of privacy issues in Japan in recent years, it has become more and more difficult to gain access to such classrooms, so this should be seen as a valuable data set. The data were analyzed for features such as code-switching, the teaching of culture, and explicit references to *nihonjinron* and native-speakerism. Four problematic depictions of culture were seen: culture as a conditioning force, culture as a marker of group identity, the prioritization of nativeness, and a conflation between culture and nation. Although the teachers recognized the value of teaching culture at the abstract level, they tended to view cultural teaching from an ethnocentric perspective, reduced culture to language-related concerns, constructed their views on culture teaching in patchwork fashion, and occasionally expressed *nihonjinron*-related views. At over one hundred pages, this chapter might have benefitted from being split into two chapters—one on language teaching and the other on culture teaching—so as to better highlight the author's important findings related to the teaching of culture.

In the concluding chapter, Bouchard discusses the gaps and contradictions in the data (most often in teacher interviews), and provides implications for ICC education in Japanese JHSs. On the individual teacher level, such contradictions within discourse and between discourse and practice should be viewed not as problems, but as inherent features of humans' reflexive engagements with structural and cultural forces. He returns to the distinction between structure and agency (however, the table on p. 341 indicates structure vs. *culture*) to show how ideologies such as *nihonjinron* and native-speakerism can be simultaneously promoted or rejected in the different domains of social setting, contextual resource, psychobiography, and situated activity (Layder, 1997; Carter, 2000). In short, he concludes that ideologies are not "engines of social class divisions" (p. 343), but emerging stages of understanding that can be discarded when they no longer match reality. Bouchard concludes with broad recommendations for moving toward ICC-oriented EFL education. While acknowledging the practical constraints on teaching ICC in JHS in Japan, he strongly rejects the fact-based teaching of cultures, and he recommends focusing on "clarifying underlying cultural processes found in

all cultures of the world, national or otherwise” (p. 347) using process-oriented approaches (e.g. Beltrán-Palanques, 2014). Readers hoping for more specific “how-to” ICC teaching recommendations will have to recognize that this level of generality is inevitable in a book of this scope and nature.

This scholarly book will be a welcome addition to the libraries of two distinct readerships, the first of which is language educators, teachers of intercultural communication, curriculum designers, and policy planners. (Disclosure: The author and I worked together extensively when redesigning an EFL curriculum to incorporate ICC and language criticality.) This audience will be challenged by the book’s emphasis on criticality over proficiency, by its insistence that ICC should be an integral part of students’ language learning, and by its attempt to deconstruct prominent native-speakerist tendencies in SLA research. The second readership, those with a background in sociology who are interested in the study of ideology and its relationship to other discourses and social practices, will find much to debate and learn from in terms of theory building. Although a few sections of the book seem to reflect the strain of writing for two such disparate audiences, *Ideology, Agency, and Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan* is overall a meticulous, thoughtful, and well-written book that will reward careful readers well.

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