The Native Speaker in Language Education in Japan Today

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Despite the importance that is often attached to the native speaker in language teaching, a number of criticisms have threatened to undermine this status. Some critics have pointed to idealised connotations that the term *native speaker* has acquired in applied linguistics (Paikeday, 1985). Others have suggested that English foreign language (EFL) teaching deliberately promotes the superiority of the native teachers, elevating their importance unfairly over local teachers (Phillipson, 1992). Moreover it has been proposed that this emphasis on the native speaker may be particularly inappropriate in the case of English taught as a language for international communication (Honna, 2002). Nevertheless, English teachers from overseas continue to find employment here in part due to their status as native speakers. What then is the role of the native English teacher in English language education in Japan today? This paper considers this question through a survey of immigrant teachers currently working in Japan.

英語を母国語とする人、いわゆる「ネイティブスピーカー」は、言語学の理論に無くてはならない存在である。しかし、その定義については誤解されやすいとも言われている(Paikeday, 1985)。ＥＦＬ(欧米の英語を外国語として教える方針)の英語教育の原則は、英語のみを話すネイティブ教師の重要さを強調した教師側の利点を優先とするものとの声もある。(Phillipson, 1992)。更に、英語が国際的な共通語となり、多種多様な英語が発生した今日においても、これまでどおり英米の文化や言葉使いを中心とするＥＦＬの教育体制を疑問とする意見も聞かれるようになってきた(本名信行2002年)。しかしネイティブということで、多くの外国人は、英語の教師として就職が出来る。そこで、ネイティブの英語教員は、日本の英語教育でどんな役割を果たしているのだろうか。この質問に答えるためこの論文は、外国人英語教員に対するアンケートやインタビューによる研究を報告する。

Hail the Native Speaker,
He never can go wrong!
For by some process mystic,
Subliminal, sublinguistic,
And utterly spectacular,
He knows his own vernacular
To every last detail—
He simply cannot fail! (Paikeday, 1985, p. 93)

In foreign language learning and teaching there are few terms that carry the weight of authority as convincingly as *native speaker*. Linguists have long based their descriptions on native speakers, whether they are idealised ones such as Chomsky's "speaker-listener in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly" (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3) or the collective usage of actual native speakers represented in the computer corpuses more common today (Sinclair, 1991). Moreover, foreign language learning goals are generally expressed in terms of their

relation to the target language and culture. The implicit target is always the native speaker and attempts that fall short or miss this target are generally referred to as learners' developing *interlanguage*, or more bluntly *errors* or *mistakes*. Then who better to correct these mistakes than a native speaker? So prevalent is this assumed supremacy of the native speaker as expert of their own language in Japan today, that the loanword compound *native check* has been coined in Japanese to refer to the business of having a mother tongue speaker of the language proof-read a document written in a foreign language (usually English).

However, the authoritative position of the native English speaker has come in for considerable criticism on a number of counts. Davies (2003) offers a detailed overview of the theoretical literature discussing the native speaker. It is important to have a general understanding of this in order to asses the actual and ideal contribution of native speaker teachers to English education in Japan today. This paper explores the native speaker, not so much to asses what Crooks (2004) has called the *threat* to native speaker English teachers, but rather to better understand the role of English teachers from overseas in Japan, with a view to making recommendations to improve this role.

What is a native speaker?

It has been pointed out that the term native speaker is simply misleading. *Native* has the meaning of something *belonging naturally* or *innate*; as in *native ability* or *native talent.* However Paikeday (1985, p. 35) observes that the native ability that people are born with as native speakers is an aptitude for languages in general, not hardwiring for a particular language. While the birthplace of a person is likely to be the predominant influence on which language(s) a person acquires, native acquisition is usually conditional on the person remaining in the language environment, and receiving education in that language. A tacit acknowledgement of this is the qualification *educated* sometimes added to native speaker when considering the suitability of someone to make linguistic judgements or teach the language. Perhaps *nurtured speaker* would be a more suitable term.

The derogatory *native* used historically to refer to the locals by British colonialists (now found in terms such as *Native American*) is a usage that is almost the opposite of native speaker, for by this definition *native English teacher* in Japan would refer to Japanese nationals who teach English. Instead *native speaker* is used as a term of respect for immigrant or visiting teachers in contrast to less flattering referents such as foreigner or *gaijin.*

From myth to reality

Whatever objections might be raised with regard to the term native speaker, the existence of native English teachers as a phenomenon in Japan today is difficult to deny. The teaching of English as a foreign language by native speakers has become a worldwide industry supported by publishers and educational institutions, and resulting in a remarkable exodus of mother tongue English speakers travelling abroad to teach English (Sommers, 2002). For some commentators the spread of English is confirmation of the superiority of English (Halliday, 1975), for others the result of being in the right place at the right time (Crystal, 1997, p. 110). However some of the most serious criticisms have been levelled at

the very way in which the native speaker has been promoted as an agent of what Phillipson (1992) has dubbed *linguistic imperialism*. Phillipson proposes that the whole practice of EFL teaching has been formulated according to a number of implicit principles designed to favour native speaker teachers and the institutions supporting them at the expense of local language policy. These principles are as follows:

(1) English is best taught monolingually.

(2) The ideal teacher of English is the native speaker.

(3) The earlier English is taught, the better the results.

(4) The more English is taught, the better the results.

(5) If other languages are used much, standards of English will drop.

(Phillipson, 1992, p. 185)

Phillipson suggests that the emphasis on teaching English monolingually is more geared to accommodating monolingual native English teachers than recognising the importance of positive and negative transfer from languages already learnt by the students. The emphasis on the native speaker teacher overlooks the important knowledge and experience of the successful bilingual that the non-native teacher brings with them to the classroom. The remaining principles, of starting younger, spending more time on English and emphasising English above the local language or alternatives to English, ignore the many other important factors that are also necessary to learn a language (such as opportunities to use it), and the need to spread resources evenly in education as a whole.

Kachru (1992) offers a similar list of fallacies associated with what he represents as the false importance attached to native speakers and their institutions in developing English language education overseas. Others (for example Pennycook, 1994) have suggested that implicit in the aims of EFL teaching is the promotion of a brand of globalization dominated by Anglo-American culture. EFL texts aimed at a global market are one example of this. Instead of learning to describe the world around them in English, learners are presented with a sanitised version of native speaker culture (see discussion in Gray, 2002). Conversations are typically between native speakers and vocabulary is US (or UK) oriented—people eat bagels and hot dogs and measure in miles and Fahrenheit. Such unfamiliarity can be distracting to students and reinforce their impression that English is a language spoken only by native speakers. However, this exclusive focus on the native English speaker is increasingly seen as inappropriate where the principle need for English is as an intra-national or international lingua franca (Jenkins, 2000). Instead the growing recognition of non-native varieties of English is beginning to challenge native speaker ownership (see almost any article in the journal *World Englishes*).

Japan and the native English speaker

But how far is the imperialist model of native English teachers abroad relevant to the Japanese context? After all, far from being exploited by colonial powers, Japan has actively promoted the learning of English and other foreign languages since the beginning of the Meiji era (1863) and native speakers have been encouraged to play a part in this.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that Japan has an unhealthy propensity for gearing its English education system to native speakers that is out of step with Japan's need for English as a language of international communication (Honna and Takeshita, 1998). One reflection of this is that Japan has come to be thought of as a desirable destination for native English teachers, a factor nicely captured in the following quote from a guidebook aimed at would be English teachers:

> *Just as diplomats hope for a posting to New York not Nigeria and international bankers would prefer to work in Switzerland than Swaziland, travelling teachers dream of Japan. While considering themselves lucky if their modest earnings in dinars or pesos are actually handed over at the end of the working week, they imagine their colleagues in Kyoto are reliably paid an unimaginable number of yen.* (Griffith, 1997, p. 315.)

In order to learn something of how native speakers viewed their role here in Japan as well as look into the experience of being a native speaker the author conducted an online questionnaire and follow up interviews with native English teachers working in a variety of teaching situations.

Project outline

The research discussed below was part of a three part project. The first part looked at the attitudes of native teachers themselves. The second part compared attitudes of Japanese high school teachers of English with those of visiting native English Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). The final part sought to asses the attitudes of university students to native and non-native teachers. This paper discusses the first part, considering the results of an online questionnaire advertised though a public emailing list used for discussions among native English teachers (see ETJ), and a restricted list for students and graduates of the Birmingham MA distance program in TEFL/TESL with some reference to comments made in follow up interviews.

Preparation and administration

A questionnaire was prepared based on feedback from pilot versions. The final version consisted of three sections: the first elicited basic biographical information regarding the teacher's background, teaching experience, and current situation. The second section contained a number of open questions of a very general nature such as "What do you like about Japan?" and "What is the role of native English teachers in Japan today?" The final section consisted of a series of statements, based on Phillipson's tenets discussed above, but expressed in terms of the situation in Japan. These were set alongside some alternative views derived from the literature that has been critical of the native speaker, mentioned above. For this section respondents were simply asked to reply using a five point Likert-scale that ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, with a middle response of *neither agree nor disagree* to allow for respondents to register ambivalence to the statement itself. Questions used in all sections and a summary of results appear as the Appendix at the end of this paper.

The completed questionnaire was put online and advertised on the emailing lists. At the end of the questionnaire there was a request for participants to offer

further cooperation by participating in an interview. Because of the nature of the email forums on which the questionnaire was advertised, respondents came from around Japan. Interview respondents who were outside Tokyo, where the researcher was based, were interviewed over the telephone. The interviews were open style interviews, aimed at looking more deeply into the participants' experiences of becoming a native English teacher in Japan, and finding out what exactly this meant to them. Formative questions such as "How did you first get into teaching English?" or "What made you come to Japan?" were used as a frame to elicit something of the life experience of being a native English teacher. Early interviews were recorded using a Walkman recorder and microphone but on the advice of one participant the researcher upgraded to a digital recorder (Sony ICD-SX20) and used a specialised phone link for telephone conversations. This improved recording quality and reduced physical storage space.

Results and discussion

Out of a total of 2,300 members registered on the ETJ list plus an unknown number on the Birmingham list, 71 responses were received over a three week period. Of these 71 respondents, 35 indicated willingness to participate in an interview, and 26 were actually interviewed (some in pairs) resulting in over 25 hours of recorded data. Typically interviews lasted for one hour, though busy or less experienced teachers wrapped up in as short as 20 minutes, and some more experienced teachers spoke for two hours or more. The original intention was to transcribe, and summarise each interview, but time limitations have so far allowed for only an overall synopsis of recurring themes and there is only space in this paper for a few illustrative examples.

Section 1: Personal Data

The respondents taught in a variety of contexts, and age and experience varied considerably (see Appendix for statistics). Respondents were 56% male to 44% female. Ages ranged from under 30 (20%) to the 51-60 age band (11%) though no teachers were over 60 and 51% fell into the 31-40 age range. Although a significant proportion (around 87%) hailed from the US (42%), Britain and other "inner circle" English speaking countries, 13% came from elsewhere perhaps a reflection of the gradual diversification of English speakers accepted even on the JET program (see McConnell, 2000 for discussion and the CLAIR webpage for up to date figures on the nationality of participants). With 65% teaching for 6 or more years and 37% over 10 this survey may tend to reflect the voices of experience. Respondents taught learners of all ages, from primary (18%) to tertiary (24%) institutions and in commercial language schools (34%). Responses provided under *other* revealed that teachers were involved in teaching at kindergartens, in private corporations and teaching privately or even running their own schools. The total for all types adds up to 168% reflecting the fact that many teachers taught at more than one kind of institution. While not necessarily representative of all native teachers in Japan, such a sample allowed for a broad variety of perspectives.

Section 2: Attitudes and experiences

Open questions or even those with a large number of choices do not lend themselves easily to statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. However, they do allow the researcher to pick up the tone of the respondents' input and register responses that might not otherwise have been thought of. Despite that fact that only 21% of teachers were English teachers before they came to Japan(Q11), only 11% came with the primary purpose of gaining experience teaching English(Q12). The principle attraction of Japan was cultural (32%). The attractions of Japan (Q13) can be summarised as convenience, safety and efficiency, as well as the personal warmth of Japanese people. The negative aspects (Q14) consisted mainly of racism and bureaucracy in various forms, and problems with Japanese society ranging from serious concerns such as environmental destruction to trivial ones like (irresponsible use of) mobile phones. Nevertheless 25% of participants said they associated mostly with Japanese people and 56% a balance of Japanese and foreigners indicating a relatively high integration with the local community by these teachers(Q15). 60% of respondents rated English in Japan as *disappointing* (46%) or *terrible* (14%) (Q16). The most common reasons given for Japanese students' problems learning English (Q17) were the way English is taught (69%) and the lack of opportunity to use English (62%). *Differences between Japanese and English* was chosen by only 27%. In terms of classroom methodology (Q18), *pair / group work* was rated the highest, though many respondents suggested other alternatives. Not one respondent chose translation exercises. Overall, 23% suggested improving English education (Q19) through teacher training, particularly of Japanese English teachers (15%). Also popular (14%) were suggestions to revise or abolish the English section of the university entrance exam, or to encourage English teaching to break away from the exam oriented curriculum. A few replies anticipated section 3 calling for teaching English younger (8%) and avoiding *katakana* (English loanwords in Japanese). The response to improvements to the teaching situation (Q20) was disappointing as the largest group (15%) chose *other*, but were unable to say what in this case. Finally the open question (Q21) regarding the role of the native speaker (a critical question for this survey) brought the most cynical responses 24% of which saw the role of native English teachers as trivial, as encapsulated in responses such as "novelty item" or "tape-recorder". This was followed by being models of native speaker use (or pronunciation) (17%); raising awareness of foreign culture (also 17%) and supporting Japanese teachers (14%) (though again often expressed in a cynical way). Other roles included conversational partner (8%), student motivator (8%) and teacher of communicative English or oral communication (7%).

Section 3: Native speakers and the tenets of EFL

Overall the results to Section 3 indicated that the native speaker teachers did not agree with the tenets in any straightforward way, and a mean of almost 26% answered neither agree nor disagree to questions in this section.

Barely 30% of participants (7% strongly) agreed with the exclusive use of English in the classroom (Q22). While most either disagreed (39%) or remained ambivalent

(27%). Comments in interviews suggested that while it was widely felt to be desirable to teach in the target language, it depended on the class concerned. The use of L1 was seen as saving time for things like introducing new words. Moreover, in many junior and senior high school classes (with the exception of those with a high educational reputation) L1 was considered necessary for maintaining student rapport (or discipline), and Japanese staff often needed to act as translators. Opinion was divided on the importance of native speakers knowing the learners L1 (Q23). However, 44% agreed (9% strongly) that it was important for teachers to be able to understand and use Japanese well, though as many as 35% were ambivalent. Few responses to either statement indicated strong agreement (Q22, 7%; Q23, 9%) or disagreement (Q22, 4%; Q23, 3%), perhaps indicating that these were not seen to be clear cut issues. It should also be remembered that 69% of the respondents to this survey rated themselves as intermediate (51%) or advanced (18%) speakers of Japanese (Q7).

Only 15% of the native speakers who responded to this survey agreed that the monolingual native speaker with EFL training would be an ideal teacher (Q24) (including 4% strongly) and 51% disagreed (16% strongly). The pattern for those who agreed that the Japanese fluent bilingual teacher of English would be the ideal teacher (Q25) was exactly the reverse: 49% (15% strongly) favoured the Japanese teacher compared with only 18% who disagreed (1% strongly). Nevertheless many respondents were indifferent to either model (Q24: trained native monolingual 31%; Q25: fluent Japanese bilingual 32%). This may seem a rather modest assessment on behalf of the native teachers, but some teachers in follow up interviews pointed out that Japanese teachers not only had the advantage of being able to use L1 in the classroom, but also had the experience of having successfully learned English themselves, and been through the schooling system, allowing them to have a considerably better understanding of the students' perspective. A few interviewees had stories of Japanese teachers they particularly respected for their skill in the classroom. However there were also many who either directly or indirectly criticised Japanese colleagues, who did not have sufficient language ability, limited their teaching to an exam oriented agenda, or even took advantage of their more influential positions. One interviewee described how he lost a TOEFL course that he had set up to jealous Japanese colleagues, finishing in exasperation "But you could never prove they wouldn't respond better to a Japanese teacher." Since this was the argument he was faced with.

Question 26 which sought to test belief that the younger students study English the better, stimulated a stronger agreement than any other statement in Section 3 (66% agreed, 28% strongly). At the same time there was a relatively low ambivalence (20%) and only 18% disagreed (1% strongly). Similarly 87% disagreed (54% strongly) that English may interfere with the development of Japanese (Q27). Only 9% (1% strongly agreed with Q27, and only 1% plus 3% blank showed any ambivalence. This is a view that seems to be supported to some extent by the Ministry of Education (MEXT) who recently introduced English education at elementary school level. While some teachers in interviews saw this as a positive move "things *are* changing" others described it as "a mess" pointing out that some

teachers "can't even speak English themselves" and others noted that junior and senior high schools were not changing their curriculum to accommodate the changes.

The responses to Q28 and Q29 indicated that teachers were far less sure about the tenet of the more the better. 32% agreed (7% strongly) that students should spend more time at school learning English, but 26% (6% strongly) disagreed and 37% were ambivalent. At the same time 45% (7% strongly) agreed that English should not be studied at the expense of other subjects. Only 22% (9% strongly) disagreed with this (i.e. felt that English should be an absolute priority). Comments in interviews by those working in senior high schools generally reflected a concern with the way the time was used, particularly the failure to stream classes effectively, and the overemphasis on university exam preparation and grammar based teaching. However one experienced teacher argued that the university entrance exams could not be ignored and proposed that all foreigner teachers working in high schools should be familiarised with these exams and the important role they played in their students' lives. In spite of much talk in the media of the importance of spoken ability and communicative approaches, the failure to test oral components or communicative ability in the university entrance examinations has meant that native teachers in high schools generally have a relatively insignificant role. (See McConnell, 2000 on ALTs, and McVeigh, 2002, p. 123-147 for a critical look at the situation in Japanese universities.)

Some teachers also suggested in the survey and in interviews that English should be made an elective, because there were too many students being forced to study English against their will, leading teachers to experience very unmotivated students. This experience suggests one shortcoming to a policy of the more the better.

Despite the fact that 23 (32%) of the teachers had taken MAs or RSAs with British or American institutions only 17% (1% strongly) were ready to support the idea that these countries represented the primary source of EFL knowledge relevant to their practice(Q30). Instead the proposition that "the most important knowledge about teaching and learning comes from experience and research in language classrooms in Japan" (Q31) received 49% agreement (7% strongly). However this is less surprising when one considers that only 21% of respondents were English teachers when they came to Japan so that most of the teachers learned to teach in Japanese classrooms. The ETJ list on which this survey was advertised frequently discussed day to day classroom issues and all teachers interviewed spoke with enthusiasm about their own classrooms and students.

The responses to the two final questions on the survey (Q32 & Q33) showed a fairly mixed, and overall negative attitude to Japanese English. 27% (11% strongly) agreed that the use of Japanese English will lead to lower standards of English(Q32). 23% (2% strongly) disagreed. Meanwhile 20% agreed that Japanese English is a natural part of the spread and improvement of English in Japan, although 42% (10% strongly) disagreed. It may be that the idea of Japanese English as an international variety as proposed by Honna (2002) has tended to be restricted to academics, or simply that the most prevalent notion of Japanese English is actually the importation of English words into Japanese, rather than the development of an autonomous variety of English. To

make matters worse there are now a whole genre of books produced by Japanese publishers with titles such as *How Your English Sounds to Native Speakers* (Thayne & Koike, 2003) which stigmatise such expressions as "May I have a cup of coffee" as failing to conform to the supposed native norm of "I'll take a cup of coffee." (Ibid, p. 19).

Native speaker interviews

As indicated in the above discussion talking directly and at some length to native speaker teachers regarding their experience allowed for a clearer interpretation of some of the data provided in the questionnaire. The broad range of personal and professional issues that arose in the interviews do not make for neat or readily analysable data. The motivations, classroom and life experiences also varied considerably and the interviews concerned particular teachers working in specified teaching contexts. They also spanned from a few months experience to whole teaching careers. In spite of this three issues above and beyond what has been discussed above recurred so frequently that they deserve mention here: (1) the life changing experience of becoming a native teacher; (2) the lack of a career path for native English teachers and (3) the problem of whether, how and how far to integrate into the local society.

A life changing event

Almost all teachers interviewed situated their becoming an English teacher in Japan as the culmination of events which had a large impact on their life. This was true even of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program participants (See McConnell, 2000) I spoke to just prior to returning to their home countries. Among other things the "great experience" was related to "understanding people in another country". Longer term teachers who had often experienced more dramatic changes and had Japanese spouses and children to show for it seemed to find it harder to pin down particular changes in themselves. While some admitted to cultural influences "I've become less aggressive", others were quick to point out that "I'm not Japanese, I mean we're English, or whatever, aren't we". Another teacher suggested that it was easier to be himself here than it was in the part of the US he had emigrated from.

A career as a native English teacher

While it is relatively easy for native English speakers to become English teachers in Japan there is no comparable career structure of the kind that local teachers enjoy. The JET program lasts for three years. Even universities also often hire foreigners on limited term (3 or 5 year) contracts. Language schools offer few incentives geared to long-term employment such as ongoing pay increases, promotion or pension plans, and generally are too low paying for long-term teachers. A few of the teachers who were interviewed came to Japan with experience or qualifications and landed challenging and rewarding jobs from the outset. One such teacher spoke of the unqualified teachers as "riff-raff". Another teacher (who might well have been described at one time as an example of such riff-raff) came to Japan as a sculptor for an exhibition. He stayed on to study judo and because of "the girlfriend". He explained how he became an English teacher: "so I had the girlfriend, and I wanted to

stay with here … so I applied to N language school [a major chain] and got the visa through them." However this teacher is now married, has an MA in TESOL which he went back to the US and studied for, teaches at a number of universities in the Tokyo area and runs his own English school.

Another teacher who had taught English abroad before coming to Japan and was introduced to his first job here by a former employer in the UK, was taking time out from teaching when I interviewed him, to share a remote cottage in Fukushima with his girlfriend and her son. There he painted, enjoyed dramatic snowbound winters and went to attend Zen seminars. However he felt he had reached a point where there was little prospect of career development "…it is almost like I am too qualified now. I've got too much experience. I am perhaps not what people need. Having twenty years EFL experience, I feel there should be people out there, perhaps like S High School [his previous employer], who should be willing to pay a bit more for my expertise. And a lot of jobs, the ALTs are advertised with salaries of 250,000 or jobs advertised saying, one year's experience, and that is a bit of a conundrum for me, how that would all play out …"

Turning Japanese

Perhaps all of the native English teachers I spoke to would have agreed with the respondent quoted above who emphasised that he was not Japanese. Foreigners who steep themselves in local culture even acquiring Japanese mannerisms and associating almost exclusively with Japanese people are in danger of being regarded as abnormal by other foreigners who value their identity as ex-pats in Japan. Nevertheless, some interviewees pointed out that remaining in the assigned role of foreign guest can limit the potential for career development. For such teachers finding real satisfaction meant taking on responsibilities on a par with their hard working Japanese colleagues. One teacher had become a homeroom teacher in the private high school that she worked at. Another had worked his way onto educational committees. In both cases making the effort to learn Japanese and recognition of local customs and culture was crucial. These and other long term teachers suggested that there was a need for senior native speaker teachers who might act as guides and go betweens with short-term or new native English teachers.

Conclusion

The project described here set out to describe the role of the native speaker as a concrete phenomenon in Japan today. This was done through the use of a 3-section online questionnaire followed up by interviews to substantiate the results with more detailed perspectives on the life and experience of native speaker English teachers working in Japan. Due to the voluntary nature of participant selection it was anticipated that respondents would be limited to those with an interest in the topic under investigation, a possibility that seemed to be partly born out by the high proportion of experienced teachers and the interest in the outcome of the project expressed by interviewees. Nevertheless, participants represented a broad cross-section of experience reflected in a variety of perspectives found in the data.

The questions in Section 3 were aimed at testing the currency of principles which Phillipson (1992) had argued

were at the heart of early EFL planning policy. However, the results of this survey would seem to indicate that the only tenet that had a strong currency with the native English teachers in Japan questioned here was "the younger the better". Responses to the other statements suggest that native speaker teachers recognise the potential advantages that local teachers can bring to the classroom. There was also widespread ambivalence and a degree of overall disagreement with the tenets as they were reformulated here. This may reflect the fact that no neat set of principles can adequately capture the beliefs of a variety of teachers facing the everyday complications of particular classrooms. However, in spite of this the open and closed response questions in Section 2 of the questionnaire and the interviews touched on some recurring themes which set apart the perspective of the native speaker. In particular it appeared that while it remains possible for unqualified and inexperienced teachers to be hired largely on the basis of being a native speaker, there is relatively little in the way of a career path beyond this. Instead, while it is to be hoped that Japanese institutions will gradually recognise the importance of hiring or keeping on some more experienced native English teachers, the path for development for native English teacher may well lie both in gaining qualifications in teaching and EFL and acquiring a thorough knowledge of the local culture and language. A willingness to take on responsibilities normally reserved for local teachers may also be helpful. The role of the native speaker in Japan today while in some ways privileged is limited and fraught with complications, but it is one that is negotiable and may be helped by further reflection and research into the situation today.

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Appendix I

Section 1: Personal data on respondents

Questions	Response data					
1: sex	male	female				
	40 (56%)	31 (44%)				
2: Age	under 30	31-40	41-50	51-60	over 60	
	14 (20%)	36 (51%)	12 (17%)	8 (11%)	0	
3: Country	US	Canada	UK/Eire	Aus/NZ	Other	
	30 (42%)	14 (20%)	16 (23%)	2 (3%)	9 (13%)	
4: Education	School	University	Graduate / PhD			
	4 (6%)	37 (52%)	30 (42%)			
5: EFL qualifications?	Yes	No				
	37 (52%)	34 (48%)				
6: How long have you lived in Japan?	less than 1 year	1-5	6-10	over 10		
	1 (1%)	26 (79%)	18 (25%)	25 (35%)		
7: How good is your Japanese?	none	beginner	intermediate	advanced		
	1 (1%)	21 (30%)	36 (51%)	13 (18%)		
8: How long have you been teaching English?	less than 1 year	1-5	6-10	over 10		
	0	24 (34%)	20 (28%)	26 (37%)		
9: Where do you teach?*	Elementary school	Junior high school	High school	University	Language school	other
	13 (18%)	21 (30%)	24 (34%)	17 (24%)	24 (34%)	20 (28%)
10: What age students do you teach?*	under 12	12-14	15-17	18-22	Over 22	
	32 (45%)	36 (51%)	39 (55%)	34 (48%)	39 (55%)	

n = 71, percentages rounded to whole numbers

Where numbers do not add up to 71, other respondents skipped the question.

* Respondents were allowed to choose all applicable so the total number of responses is higher than the number or respondents.

Section 2: Attitudes and experience of teaching English in Japan

11. What was your occupation before you came to Japan?				
unemployed	student	housewife	English teacher	Other
0	15 (21%)	1 (1%)	15 (21%)	40 (56%)

12. What is the main reason you came to Japan?	
interest in Japanese culture	21 (32%)
personal / family reasons	11 (15%)
to earn and save money	4 (6%)
to gain experience teaching English	8 (11%)
part of travel to other countries	13 (18%)
other	13 (18%)

13. What do you like about Japan? (Summary of open responses)

Lifestyle: emphasis on detail, convenience, efficiency, predictability (e.g. transportation electronics, customer service); safety, low crime, foreigner friendly, freedom.

People: polite, non-aggressive, trustworthy, friendly, family, pretty girls

Work: money, opportunity.

Cultural: Japanese language, history "constant stimulation of living in a foreign country"

Other: weather, ski-resorts, food.

14. What do you dislike about Japan? (Summary of open responses)

Racism: gaijin stare, speaking English to foreigners, feel will never fit in, legal discrimination narrow mindedness, closed to Western approach to teaching

Bureaucracy: adherence to rules, slow to change, red tape, political apathy, "Japanese general inability to deal with anything"

Endurance: work ethic, high taxes and low rights.

Social problems: consumerism, environmental destruction, English education, abortion

Personality traits: Fear, shyness, indirectness.

Lifestyle: crowds, food, funerals, mortgages, drivers, mobile phones, TV, J-Pop.

15. Who do you associate with most in Japan?

mostly Japanese people 18 (25%) mostly foreigners 13 (18%) a balance of both 40 (56%)

16. How would you rate the standard of English in Japan?	
generally pretty good	4 (6%)
fine for a country like Japan	24 (34%)
disappointing	33 (46%)
terrible	10 (14%)

17. What are the main causes of Japanese students' problems with learning English?*	
The way English is taught	49 (69%)
Lack of opportunity to use English	44 (62%)
Lack of motivation by students	28 (39%)
Other	22 (31%)
Differences between Japanese and English	19 (27%)
The time spent teaching English	13 (18%)

18. What do you consider as the most important classroom activities for Japanese learners of English?			
translation exercises	0	pair / group work	32 (45%)
grammar study	4 (6%)	written exercises	1 (1%)
choral repetition	1 (1%)	language games	12 (17%)
listening exercises	11 (15%)	student presentations	8 (11%)
reading aloud	2 (3%)	other	0

19. How do you think English education in Japan could be improved? (Summary of open responses)

Improve teacher training: Japanese Teachers 11 (15%) Native teachers 4 (6%) Both 16 (23%)
Change, revise or abolish English section of university Entrance exams 10 (14%)
More "communicative" EFL (oral, learner centred etc.) less grammar 8 (11%)
Make English an elective 6 (8%)
Teach English younger 6 (8%)
Avoid katakana loan words 3 (4%)
Promote English use outside classroom 2 (3%); Improve / change (MEXT approved) texts 2 (3%)
Use more native teachers 2 (3%)
Don't use Japanese 1 (1%); improve discipline 1 (1%); improve physical environment 1(1%); don't use Japanese in the classroom 1(1%)

20. What would have the best influence on improving your teaching situation?	
Other	15 (21%)
Improved school policy	12 (17%)
Improved training opportunities	11 (15%)
Better job security	9 (13%)
Better pay/benefits	7 (10%)
More skilled/ cooperative colleagues	5 (7%)
More able/attentive students	4 (6%)
Better working conditions	3 (4%)

21. What do you think is the role of native English teachers in Japan? ***(Summary of open responses)***

Trivial: (novelty, puppet, tape recorder etc.): 13 (18%) + (entertainment & fun: 4 (6%)) = 17 (24%)
Models of NS use/ pronunciation: 12 (17%)
Internationalization (raise awareness of foreign culture/ global issues): 12 (17%)
Support JTEs (including teaching/ advising them about English): 10 (14%)
English conversational partner: 6 (8%)
Motivate students: 6 (8%)
Teach CLT (3)/ oral communication (2): 5 (7%)
Promoters of the English language: 1 (1%)
Mentor to NSs learning to teach English: 1 (1%)

n = 71, percentages rounded to whole numbers
Where numbers do not add up to 71, other respondents skipped the question.
* Respondents were allowed to choose all applicable so the total number of responses is higher than the number or respondents.

Section 3: Attitudes to the tenets of EFL

strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	strongly disagree	Blank
Q22. It is important that English teachers teach classes entirely in English.					
5 (7%)	16 (23%)	19 (27%)	28 (39%)	3 (4%)	0
Q23. It is important that non-Japanese English teachers in Japan can understand and use Japanese well.					
6 (9%)	25 (35%)	25 (35%)	13 (18%)	2 (3%)	0
Q24. The ideal teacher of English in Japan is an educated monolingual native speaker with EFL training.					
3 (4%)	8 (11%)	22 (31%)	25 (35%)	12 (16%)	1 (1%)
Q25. The ideal teacher of English in Japan is a Japanese teacher with excellent English, overseas experience and a background in English education.					
10 (14%)	25 (35%)	23 (32%)	12 (17%)	1 (1%)	0
Q26. The younger the students start learning English the better.					
27 (38%)	20 (28%)	14 (20%)	9 (13%)	1 (1%)	0
Q27. Learning English too early may interfere with the development of Japanese ability.					
1 (1%)	6 (8%)	1 (1%)	23 (32%)	38 (54%)	2 (3%)
Q28. Japanese students should spend more time at school learning English.					
5 (7%)	22 (31%)	26 (37%)	14 (20%)	4 (6%)	0
Q29. Japanese students should not study English at the expense of other important subjects such as maths, science or Japanese.					
5 (7%)	27 (38%)	23 (32%)	9 (13%)	6 (9%)	1 (1%)
Q30. The most important knowledge about teaching and learning English comes from research and theory developed in the US and / or Britain.					
1 (1%)	11 (16%)	29 (41%)	21 (30%)	9 (13%)	0
Q31. The most important knowledge about teaching and learning English comes from experience and research in Language classrooms in Japan.					
5 (7%)	30 (42%)	23 (32)	9 (13%)	4 (6%)	0
Q32. The development and use of Japanese English will lead to lower standards of English in Japan.					
16 (11%)	23 (16%)	14 (20%)	14 (20%	2 (3%)	2 (3%)
Q33. The development of Japanese English is a natural part of the spread and improvement of English in Japan.					
4 (6%)	19 (14%)	17 (24%)	23 (32%)	7 (10%)	1 (1%)

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