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Challenging Assumptions
Looking In, Looking Out

Talking about the roles of non-Japanese teachers of English

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Interest in issues of language teacher identity has grown in the TESOL field in recent years. This study has attempted, through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, to look at common roles that non-Japanese teachers of English (NJTEs) feel they play or are called to play, and their multifaceted understanding of these roles. Among the roles identified by the interviews are NJTE as entertainer, as a decoration, and as a counselor for student mental health issues. This study also addresses NJTE concerns over their lack of job security, and NJTE roles as constructivist educators. Finally, the author proposes some new directions for further research and inquiry.

近年TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) の分野で語学教師のアイデンティティーの問題への関心が強まっている。この調査は半構造インタビューによる質的調査で、日本語を母語としない英語教師 (non-Japanese teachers of English; 以下NJTE) が果たしていると自他が認識する共通の役割、又、これらの役割に対するNJTEの多面的解釈について考察を試みたものである。調査ではNJTEのエンターテイナー的役割、装飾的役割、そして学習者のカウンセラー的役割が明らかになった。更にこの調査では、NJTEに対する不十分な雇用保障や構成主義の理論にもとづく教育を実践する役割などへの関心にも焦点が当てられている。終わりに著者の更なる調査と研究の方向性が述べられている。

The focus of this study is whether and how non-Japanese teachers of English (NJTEs) feel they are expected to act as specifically *non*-Japanese teachers of English, following Law (1995), Shimizu (2000), McVeigh (2002), Hullah (2007) and Rivers (2007). While reviewing the initial survey data collected, three additional questions emerged: Do NJTEs feel they *must* be entertainers in class, and does this depend on teacher training? Do they feel they play any other roles? Finally, are there any connections between these roles and larger issues of employment and social participation of non-Japanese in Japan? Results indicate that the answer to all three is a qualified “yes.”

What are the primary discourses about NJTEs?

This study is situated between the emerging discourse of language teacher identity on the one hand, as described by Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) and as previously practiced in Japan by Duff and Uchida (1997) and Simon-Maeda (2004), and, on the other, discussions of how Japanese students expect NJTEs to act, versus how NJTEs see their own roles. McVeigh (2003) describes tertiary-level NJTE-led oral English classes as “simulated internationalization,” where students believe they will have fun, as opposed to strict, JTE-led courses. This “simulated internationalization” is a product of what McVeigh terms “fantasy English,” where students in private conversation schools, grade schools, and universities participate in learning activities that, regardless of whether they are pedagogically sound according to contemporary communicative language teaching paradigms, reinforce the idea that NJTE-led English classes can be ignored as serious learning activities, unlike instructivist, JTE-led classes. Note that this is apparently despite evidence that student resistance to learning is actually lower in tertiary foreign language courses led by NJ instructors (Escandon, 2004).

Shimizu (2000) and Hullah (2007) have documented the reality of “fantasy English” in tertiary and secondary schools, respectively. Shimizu noted that tertiary students rated knowledgeable, reliability and respectability as being the most important qualities of both non-Japanese and Japanese teachers of English. However, 28% surveyed said that the most important trait of NJTEs was how easy they were to get to know, and 26% said how entertaining NJTEs were. This contrasts with 34% of students saying

that the most important trait of JTEs was subject area knowledgeable.

Hullah conducted a nationwide survey of 285 university freshmen at rural and urban universities regarding their attitudes and preconceptions about native-led English classes. 31% of the respondents said that NJTE and JTE-led classes differed in that the former were “more enjoyable/fun” than “serious/strict/boring” JTE-led classes. Hullah also spoke with Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and high school JTEs from throughout Japan. The ALTs expressed frustration with the fact that, as one said, “The kids I teach seem to have a general ingrained perception of foreigners as frivolous clowns from the media which predates their interaction with their ALT.” The JTEs expressed similar frustrations: as one said, students “think what they do with the ALT is just play, while the serious study is what we do when only I am there.”

This study

This research was an attempt to further examine how NJTEs themselves saw their own roles as self-defined. It started with a preliminary online survey, as described in Appendix 1, to find out the concerns of NJTEs regarding their classroom and institutional roles, vet possible interview candidates, and discern and define what questions should be asked in the interviews.

The following are the top three categories identified through discrete instances mentioned in the survey responses:

1. NJTEs are not taken seriously by their institutions or students (24 instances). Survey respondents stated that they felt they were not as valued as teaching professionals by their institutions or as respected as their Japanese colleagues by students.
2. NJTE as entertainer (21 instances). Respondents discussed their jobs in terms of entertaining their students, or of expectations that they are supposed to be entertainers, even if they do not see this as their role.
3. NJTE's professional role as (oral) English expert (18 instances). Confirming Law's (1995) description of the divide between communicative, oral communication classes led by NJTEs and instructivist, grammar-translation classes led by JTEs, most survey respondents specified their expertise as seen by their institutions as lying exclusively in teaching oral English skills.

Following the survey categorizations such as those above, I attempted in the interviews to make questions based upon the concerns of the respondents. I shall attempt to first describe my interview methodology, then share the results found.

Interview methodology

I used semi-structured interviews because they allowed answers to be probed for more detail (Arksey & Knight, 1999). My interview methodology was based on the notion of interviews as sites of co-created knowledge, as discussed

by Holstein and Gubrium (1995). As the interviews were between two members of the same professional community, though our positions and status differed, these relative positions helped determine how we presented our problems and ourselves (Block, 2000).

One invaluable tool used in my interviews was to relate to my interviewees my own experiences in the classroom and as an EFL professional in order to provoke a response. As ethnographic interviews are inextricably a part of their situated discourses, the descriptions of performed identities contained are thus those as constructed in the discourse of English teaching in Japan by and through those of us teaching English in Japan. This further reminds all involved that “communicative relations are situated in specific contexts and social institutions,” (Burbules, 1994). My use of my own narratives was inspired but also problematized by Davies (1999), in that “shared social statuses do not guarantee understanding or make possible a presumption of equality and associated openness with responses.” For instance, the dynamic differed when I interviewed someone wanting to become a tertiary-level instructor, versus when I spoke with someone who had considerable experience or authority at his or her workplace.

Following are some of the categories found, organized by instance frequency and relevance. All names and locations provided below are aliases except for “TA,” which stands for the author. Interviewee profiles may be found in Appendix 2.

NJTE as entertainer

NJTEs of all backgrounds reported they felt they needed or were expected to be entertainers, as previously discussed by Shimizu (2000) and Hullah (2007). Despite the negative experiences described by Shimizu and Hullah, many, though certainly not all, teachers described their use of humor, jokes, and banter as means to “lighten” the class mood, to deal with classroom management, to level hierarchies, and, most commonly, as a way to lower affective barriers to language learning, demonstrating the positive uses of this role.

For instance, Ron relayed this following instance of using humor to keep the class on task:

Ron: ...I made up what I told them was a new Japanese word, “chi-chu.” I wrote it in hiragana on the board and I said “That’s a new word and it means to be quiet.” So that’s kind of an example... it’s kinda goofy, but also very effective...

Adam described how he takes on a playful personality in class to motivate students and to reduce his authority as the teacher:

Adam: ...In the classroom, I...I feel like I have a different persona. It’s much more extrovert... slightly silly, kind of jokey personality. Because... I see that it’s necessary to motivate my students.

TA: Why do you think that it’s necessary?

Adam: Because I’m trying to create a learning environment where everybody’s equal, and...trying to reduce my status as an authority figure, and to bring myself down closer...to the level of the students.

The accepted use of fun to lower affective filters figured prominently. After I had asked whether the use of fun activities to get students speaking helped perpetuate a belief amongst students that grammar and translation-based classes taught by Japanese faculty have higher status than classes taught by NJTEs, Marion responded:

Marion: Frankly I think speaking is a high risk activity, and it’s more difficult for students than doing grammar translation...so I think it’s important that we make the classes fun to lower the affective filter.

Many interviewees said that being an entertainer was an expected part of working at language schools in particular, as opposed to more serious teaching in secondary and tertiary schools. According to Beatrice, who had previously taught at a language school before her current position as a junior high school teacher:

Beatrice: But *eikaiwa* is different. Students are paying for a product...not for serious language study in most cases.

On the other hand, two other interviewees said they avoided being “silly,” except on special occasions. Take Andrea, who teaches primarily at a junior high school:

TA: Have you ever felt students were expecting you to just be a silly entertainer? You said that the Japanese teachers had originally thought that.

Andrea: No. I went into the class on the first lesson and let students know there is silly time and there is learning time. I don’t like the word “silly.” I let

students do fun exercises, but not being a clown. I would not do that. But I do dress up for Halloween and Christmas.

Tiffany, who is currently working at a three-year research position at an ex-national university after over a decade teaching communicative English classes, explicitly repudiated any role as an entertainer in class:

Tiffany: I try to be more myself in content. Communication I probably have to put on a jolly face.

TA: Can you share your jolly face with us?

Tiffany: No! The jolly face? It's an excessive rictus, excessive smiling and happy tones and telling little jokes and sharing personal anecdotes.... I mean it's not typical of the teaching I do now or ever want to do again.... I'm really seriously worried that I might *have* to do that kind of stuff again... Cast out from heaven and I have to go and teach at Geos or something.

So, while many teachers interviewed have personal and theoretical justifications for using an entertaining manner in class, some did feel that they were expected by their students to act against how they actually believed they should be teaching. This would appear to partially support the findings of Shimizu (2000) and Hullah (2007) in that instructors interviewed felt this expectation; however, in contrast to the findings reported by Shimizu and Hullah, not all instructors interviewed felt that being entertaining was necessarily a bad thing.

NJTE as decoration

This category included situations where NJTEs were used in a way they described as ornaments to and in the marketing of language schools, tertiary and grade schools. The interviewees described their use in both positive and negative tones. Many interviewees did not mind, or even enjoyed, their use in, for instance, the publicity brochures for their school's English program. However, others felt their use was as representatives of an aesthetic or particular type of internationalization of the smiling, white, blue-eyed, blonde-haired *gaijin* as discussed by Rivers (2007), McVeigh (2002) and Law (1995). Furthermore, this category includes situations involving physical attractiveness and different expectations for male and female NJTEs.

Many interviewees relayed experiences of their decorative function at language schools. Sandra described what standards of attractiveness she felt she was measured against unflatteringly at Nova:

TA: ...who are the people that get good schedules?

Sandra: And that's the people, blond hair, blue eyes...young...And, they had good personalities... but they're the ones that got all of the...promotions, or who could advance.

A much more blunt example of "looks" being the determining factor in one's language school employment was relayed by Lisa:

Lisa: I was once hired by a language school in which they said, "We'll hire you but it's a limited

contract.” I said, “Limited to what?” “Limited until a handsome guy walks in”...And I said, “Because?” They said, “Because, most of our population are girls. We’re here by the *eki*, the girls come, they really want a handsome kid their age so that they can dream about marrying him.”

In fairness, most interviewees did not share similar instances of their decorative capacities overshadowing their professional abilities. For instance, Marion said that, although all four of the full-time NJTEs at her small public university are white, they would not fit standard notions of attractiveness:

Marion: I don’t think any of us looks like a picture-book foreigner and, in fact, some pictures they put of me in the brochure are very unflattering.

Three interviewees, two female and one male, who said their likeness had been used to sell their programs found the experience of being used in marketing to be positive, or at least neutral. Beatrice stated that her likeness is used on many of the materials used at her school, which emphasizes their English program:

TA: So you’ve always been a part of the marketing, then?

Beatrice: Yes, but it is done *around* me... photographers come into my class, copywriters may interview me, I teach some demos. But most of what I do is teach...

So, while some interviewees described their ornamental use in terms similar to those employed by Rivers, McVeigh and Law, this was by no means universal.

NJTEs as constructivist educators

All interviewees, and numerous survey respondents, described their pedagogy in student-centered, constructivist terms. This was opposed to the instructivist norm they feel dominates Japanese education, though many acknowledged that there are JTEs using constructivist methods. Unlike other roles described, which were largely the results of how interviewees felt they were expected to act by their institutions or students, this role was self-defined.

Michael talked about his experiences with constructivist methods when I asked him about whether their use was a specifically non-Japanese role:

Michael: Anytime we are teaching, whether it be a language, how to play a game, anything, our role includes being an instructor, mentor, evaluator... as opposed to the comments I have heard about my Japanese colleagues who seem to stand there and give a lecture... At the moment, I am doing a teacher training program with junior high school and high school teachers and they have little knowledge of communicative teaching.

Informed by her research on training JTEs in communicative English methods, Marion had this to say on why students might find NJTE’s classes easier:

Marion: They think our classes are easier, because our teaching methods are more effective. So it's easier for the students to input information – they associate learning with pain because they suffered from mostly poor teaching in a random manner.

“Like spark plugs to be replaced”

All interviewees expressed dismay at the replaceability of NJTEs and their lack of communication with Japanese colleagues and staff. Many interviewees were also dissatisfied with existing term limits. This confirmed findings by Simon-Maeda (2004), the University Teachers Union survey (2004), McVeigh (2002), as well as numerous anecdotal conversations. Nevertheless, many expressed awareness of their relative privilege, especially compared to other non-Japanese in Japan.

Cynthia, the only tenured interviewee, said that it was only through luck that the full-time NJTEs at her small institution gained equal tenure with their Japanese colleagues:

Cynthia: ...Actually when I started we had contracts...and after six years they said, look – the foreign teachers at that time were doing the same work...so, let's make them equal, and we just got tenure like that. Which was very lucky...

Alex relayed a more indicative example of his experience of recently finishing a three-year limited-term contract when I asked how he felt non-Japanese instructors were treated:

Alex: Like spark plugs that need to be replaced. Like for example at Maruyama U., you're there for three years and – Oh! Time's up! Bye! – That's kinda how they treat you – Oh! Time! Bye!...It's quite impersonal...but that is kind of what happens you'll find when it comes time to go.

Ron reflected upon his replaceability as a part-timer like this:

Ron: But here it's like, you know I'm very disposable. As I get older I become less attractive... Here it's like, yeah you're working for us, this is your one-year contract, and if you're good you can renew it next year, but at some point, it's not gonna be renewed.

Burroughs (2007) confirmed that there are no laws in Japan against age discrimination, and teachers, like any employee, can be let go for any reason at the end of their contract. However, this may have changed as the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare recently prohibited age discrimination in employment (2007, October). How widely or uniformly such reforms will be enforced, especially for non-Japanese workers in Japan, remains to be seen.

Even given the restrictions mentioned in the previous two examples, many interviewees nevertheless stated that they knew they were much better off than other recent immigrants to Japan. Tiffany, who is an active member of a union primarily composed of non-Japanese workers, said this about her experiences with friends in a nearby Peruvian community:

Tiffany: I've seen what life is like for those people who are working for sub-contractors...They are working without health care, without any kind of social care...So, really, when we do union activities, I feel a bit uneasy, because I know there are people in worse situations...

Dealing with tertiary students' mental health issues

Finally, six tertiary-level interviewees said they often had to help students deal with mental health problems. While common for educators in any formal institutional setting, the interviewees also stated that there was scant institutional support for this role.

In a number of cases, interviewees reported that students actively sought them for help specifically because they were not Japanese. Alex discussed one case where this occurred:

Alex: ...My student came up and, I looked at him and said, "You look like hell! What's wrong with you?" And he said, "I can't sleep...My dancing partner jumped in front of the train..." Because they were both in the dance club and he was her partner. He could talk to me about that. ...I asked him, "Can you talk about it to your dance club?" He said no. So here's a definite case where he felt he could talk to a foreign instructor about a personal problem but he did not feel he could talk to...his fellow students.... But they won't ask the JPN professor this...because you are kind of outside the system, so they feel they can bring this to you.

Limitations of this study

The respondents and interviewees were overwhelmingly self-identified Caucasians. No demographics could be found to check to what extent this nearly ethnically homogenous sample was representative of NJTEs as a whole. Any possible effects that ethnicity may have on language teacher

identity amongst NJTEs cannot be discerned from this sample.

Also, possibly due to the author's employment, this study was heavily weighted towards tertiary-level instructors, even though participation had been open to any NJTE who had taught EFL in Japan in the last five years. This imbalance may also have contributed to an artificial evening of differences in status and job requirements. As a number of interviewees commented after the interview, the task of mapping, discussing and possibly theorizing teacher identity in Japan might be better served by discrete studies on each sector.

In addition, I was not able to find many academic articles dealing with the situation of language teachers in conversation schools. This may be due to any of several possible reasons, such as high instructor turnover, or a lack of instructor or proprietor interest in participating in academic studies. Nevertheless, greater effort should be made to research this large, influential segment of the language teaching industry.

Finally, this study did not include enough fluent Japanese speakers and readers. Inability to fluently speak or understand Japanese presumably restricts NJTEs' ability to make connections with Japanese colleagues who cannot, or may not want to, speak English with them. This is important because lack of Japanese fluency almost certainly impacts how teachers think they are seen, what jobs they may be eligible for, and how they are treated by Japanese supervisors, colleagues, and staff.

Discussion and implications for future research

While these limitations may compromise the conclusions that can be drawn from this study, the interviews do indicate that NJTEs definitely feel called on to take roles that are unique to their status as *non*-Japanese teachers of English. Furthermore, as the majority of participants hold qualifications in the field, feeling pressured to be an entertainer in class is not limited to teachers who lack training.

The mounting evidence that NJTEs feel expected to entertain, and that students expect entertainment in their NJTE classes has serious implications for the use of communicative teaching methodologies in Japanese classrooms. Given the findings of Law (1995), Shimizu (2000), McVeigh (2002), Hullah (2007), Burroughs (2007), and others, how does the use of communicative techniques that, as Burroughs says, emphasize “creativity and problem-solving,” result in unintentionally reinforcing student attitudes towards NJTEs? Even so, it should be remembered that many teachers do not find their status as entertainers a problem, and indeed feel it an asset to their teaching. Comparison with educators elsewhere, both within and outside of EFL/ESL, would also be useful in further clarifying how educators feel themselves called on to be entertainers in class, and by whom.

Similarly, more research is needed on how the decorative use of NJTEs affects what goes on in the classroom. As Alex speculated, the prevalence of “blond-haired, blue-eyed smiling foreigners” in language school advertising must affect how students view their actual teachers. Such research should also consider ethnicity, age and gender in student expectations for NJTEs.

Interviewees described a lack of stable, career-track employment as a fact of life for NJTEs in Japan in general, and for tertiary-level instructors in particular. However, while discrimination is one likely factor, employment instability is increasingly the norm for workers throughout developed countries, including Japan.

Furthermore, what will be the effect of the spread of limited-term contracts to Japanese academics, even though they were resisted for over a decade after their introduction for tertiary-level NJTEs (Burroughs, 2007)? Even if the use of limited-term contracts in Japanese tertiary-institutions is eventually curtailed, how this would affect the status of language teachers is debatable, since language teaching still has a tenuous professional status at best (Johnston, 1997).

On a more positive note, the high number of interviewees identifying themselves with constructivist pedagogies could help bridge the isolation from Japanese colleagues that many interviewees noted if organizations or informal groupings can be formed where both JTEs and NJTEs interested in constructivist, student-centered education feel welcome and able to contribute in an equitable and linguistically comfortable atmosphere. Such collaborations might also enable NJTEs who identify with these pedagogies to make connections with like-minded Japanese colleagues at events open to both groups, such as the upcoming JALT/JACET conference in June 2008.

Finally, more institutional support is needed for NJTEs’ counseling role. NJTEs often work with students in activities involving a risk of public disclosure or embarrassment, like public speaking or personal journals, as well as at vulnerable times in the students’ academic careers such as the first year

of university. NJTEs are furthermore apparently already being sought for help. Tertiary institutions, and perhaps others, in Japan need to institute programs so NJTEs know where to go and what to do when confronted with a student who needs help beyond what even a qualified, experienced language teacher can provide. However, these institutions may not yet offer such support even for Japanese faculty in Japanese, or that support may not be well-publicized. Therefore, there are wider institutional priorities to be addressed before NJTEs who are not fluent in Japanese can expect full support in English as well.

Conclusion

As one colleague I was unable to interview has remarked, “anecdotal conversation is how we know the world.” The importance of such narrative-based research for EFL in Japan is indicated by how questions about issues that affect our teaching such as those discussed here can emerge anecdotally. Finding ways to actively use this knowledge, and to gather it from a wider range of voices than have been heard, will undoubtedly help teachers and researchers generate even more useful questions.

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Appendix 1

Participant composition

This study was conducted in two parts: an online survey to vet possible interviewees and questions, then semi-structured interviews. Respondents were solicited through personal invitations, as well as notices on two email lists for EFL professionals in Japan and an online union newsletter, to take part in research investigating the experiences of NJTEs in Japan. In order to limit possible variables related to employer bias against non-native speakers, I limited participation to self-identified native speakers. Initial respondents were then screened according to whether they had taught EFL in Japan in the past five years. I then contacted willing respondents for interviews that were conducted in person at various locations in the Kansai area, and as well as online through a popular internet chat service.

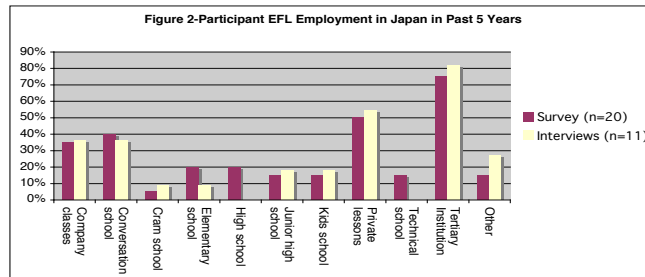
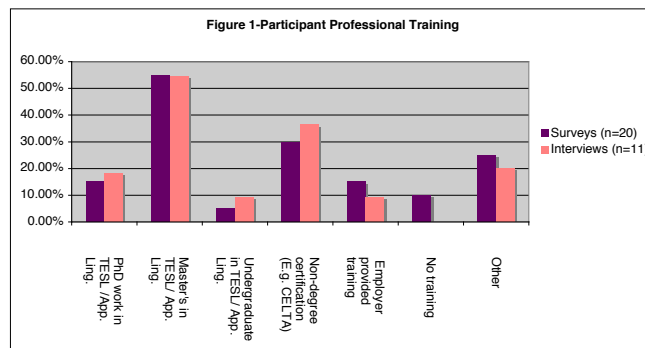
A total of 20 complete surveys were collected from a nearly ethnically homogenous group representing a variety of nationalities, ages, and both genders. The survey respondents were eleven Americans, four Canadians, three British nationals, and two Australians. I was able to

interview eleven of them: six Americans, two Canadians, two Australians, and one British national. 86% (17) of the respondents, and 91% (10) of the interviewees were Caucasian. Of the other respondents, one each chose the category of non-Japanese Asian/ Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or Multiracial, with only the non-Japanese Asian respondent interviewed. The mean age was 44.6, the youngest respondent/interviewee was 31 and the oldest was 64. Nine females and eleven males took part in the survey, while seven women and four men were interviewed.

Participants were predominantly long-term residents with limited Japanese ability. Seventeen (81%) survey respondents, and eight (73%) interviewees, stated that they had been in Japan over seven years. However, only one respondent rated their Japanese speaking ability as fluent. Furthermore, no respondents stated they had native or near-native Japanese reading ability.

All respondents reported holding a Bachelor's degree. Twelve respondents and eight interviewees stated their highest level of education was a Master's. Six respondents, two of whom were interviewed, stated that they had started or partially completed a doctorate. One respondent reported holding a Ph.D.

Almost all reported having specific training in the field (Figure 1). Eleven respondents (55%) and six interviewees (54.55%) stated they had completed a Master's in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, three respondents (15%) and two interviewees (18.18%) had doctoral work in the field, and one respondent was halfway through a Master's in TESOL. Furthermore, six respondents (30%) and four interviewees (36.36%) reported holding non-degree TESOL certifications



such as the CELTA. Finally, three respondents and one interviewee stated they had received on-the-job training from their employer. Only two respondents and no interviewees stated they had received no ESL/EFL training.

Finally, while the respondents described a wide variety of work experiences teaching EFL in Japan (Figure 2), a majority of participants in both the survey (15 respondents, 75%) and interview (8 interviewees, 81.82%) stated that they were teaching or had taught EFL at tertiary-level institutions. Half of all respondents and six of the eleven interviewees

stated that they had taught or were teaching private lessons. Conversations schools were the third-most reported category, with eight respondents (40%) and four interviewees (36.36%). Seven respondents (35%) and four interviewees (36.36%) also reported teaching or having taught company classes. Few participants reported employment at grade schools, with only four respondents and one interviewee at elementary schools, four respondents and no interviewees at high schools, and three respondents and two interviewees at junior high schools.

Appendix 2

Interviewee profiles

Adam is an Australian, and has been in Japan for 11 years. He is currently working on a doctorate, and is a lecturer at a major private university in Kansai.

Alex is an American who has worked as a language school and tertiary-level instructor throughout Japan, as well as Thailand, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia since 1989. He holds a master's degree and a TEFL teaching certificate.

Andrea is an American, and has been in Japan for eleven years. She has taught primarily at junior high schools, high schools, and universities.

Beatrice is an American teacher at a private junior high school in Eastern Japan, and holds a master's degree in Education. She has been in Japan for three years.

Cynthia is from the United States, but has lived and worked in Japan for over 30 years. She is a professor of English at a private women's university in Western Japan.

Lisa is an American, and has been in Japan for over 20 years. She has doctoral work in TESL, and currently teaches at universities throughout the Chubu region.

Marion is a Canadian who has been living in Japan for about 11 years and has worked at four universities as a full- and part-time lecturer. Presently, she works at a small prefectural university in Kyushu.

Michael is an Australian and has lived in Japan for 11-15 years. He teaches at tertiary-level institutions and language schools in the Kanto region, and holds a master's degree and a Trinity CertTESOL.

Ron is an American holding a master's degree in TESL. He has been in Japan for over five years, and teaches part-time at universities in the Kansai area.

Sandra is a Canadian and has lived in Japan for four and a half years. She is currently working on a master's degree in Education, and teaches at language schools in the Kansai area.

Tiffany is from the UK, and has been in Japan for 12 years. She holds a master's degree, a CELTA, and is currently working on a doctorate. She is currently a guest researcher at a former national university in Kansai.