

Improving Equity and Representation Within JALT: Raising Awareness Through Discussion

Eleanor Smith

Aichi University

Thomas Amundrud

Nara University of Education

Jackson Koon Yat Lee

Toyo University

Quenby Hoffman Aoki

Rikkyo University

At the JALT2020 International Conference, the Code of Conduct (CoC) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees deliberated on issues of equity for and representation of members within JALT. The topics of discussion included (a) wider representation, (b) native-speakerism, (c) professional development opportunities, (d) diversity and equity in teaching contexts, and (e) the effectiveness of JALT's current measures regarding representation and inclusivity for present and prospective members. The discussions elicited valuable feedback and proved beneficial in illuminating the way forward. By summarizing the main discussion points, this paper seeks to help JALT members better understand JALT's efforts to achieve greater equity within the organization and the teaching profession as a whole.

2020年に行われたJALT (全国語学教育学会) の国際会議において、行動規範委員会 (CoC) および多様性・機会均等委員会 (DEI) は、JALT 内部における機会均等ならびに代表制の問題について検討を行った。このラウンドテーブルでは、JALTにおける代表制拡大の問題点と可能性、ネイティブ・スピーカー偏重主義、専門性を深める機会へのアクセス、教育現場における多様性と機会均等の問題、そしてJALTが現在および将来の会員を代表し、且つ包括的な組織であることを保証するために現在用いられている様々な方法の有効性などがテーマに取り上げられた。議論の結果、今後の方向性が明確になり、JALTの会員からはこれまでのJALTの経験についてのフィードバックも得られるなど成果があった。本論では、JALTが組織内並びに会員それぞれの専門分野において、機会均等や公正さをより高めることが出来るようにこれらの議論の考察を行った。

As JALT continually strives to be a more inclusive organization, issues regarding equity for and diversity of membership at all levels require scrutiny. Prior inclusion-focused discussions have mainly centered on deficiencies within JALT

in terms of membership representation, access to professional development, and the prevalence of native-speakerism (e.g., McCandie, 2018; McCandie, 2019), begetting much-needed introspection. To that end, Amundrud et al. (2020) held a roundtable discussion at the JALT2020 conference to contemplate the progress still to be made in these areas. This paper invites consideration of JALT's current efforts to improve equity and representation and ways for the organization to move forward as well as reflection on practices within our own teaching contexts.

The Code of Conduct (CoC) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees exist to ensure that JALT is safe and inclusive. They work to identify areas where members have felt unwelcome or unfairly treated, in part by encouraging members to safely share their experiences. The DEI committee's primary concerns currently include native-speakerism, representation of non-university educators, child-care availability, accessibility, equitable treatment for non-binary members, and the demographics of invited speakers.

Although JALT endeavors to maintain respect and decency between its members, increasing diversity makes mistakes inevitable, as comments and actions can be unintentionally hurtful and damaging. The CoC Committee works to prevent such circumstances, largely through publications, presentations, and workshops that raise awareness of the shapes diversity takes (and the forms of harassment that sometimes follow). Considerable overlap of the aims of the CoC and DEI committees results in informal mutual collaboration supporting the development of a more equitable JALT.

At the JALT2020 roundtable, both committees identified numerous issues facing JALT. These included a need for greater representation and inclusivity within JALT; greater awareness of and measures against native-speakerism in ELT in Japan; greater equity in professional development opportunities; and concern for how we, as teachers, can raise awareness of representation and inclusivity in our classrooms. Below, these issues are ex-

amined in turn, giving voice to the ideas expressed at JALT2020 and to projects that the CoC and DEI committees are currently engaged in, with the hope of illuminating ways that JALT can become a more inclusive, diverse, and just organization.

Becoming More Inclusive: Organizational Factors That Hold JALT Back

One problem that JALT officers will always face is limited time. Having to sandwich JALT duties between the demands of family, work, and other commitments, current officers might understandably expect newcomers to learn on the job as they did themselves. For an organization of teachers, however, JALT could do a better job at teaching. By developing stable and robust pathways to mentor members in officer roles, JALT could eliminate the do-it-yourself-or-else mentality that has characterized the experiences of so many officers.

By helping all JALT members attain their full potential to contribute to the organization, we can better facilitate professional development, especially for those who have taken time off for caregiving duties and those whose personal and educational background may not align with the predominantly Anglophone norms (set based on the perspective of “native speakers”) that dominate academic work in JALT. To this end, initiatives by JALT President Dawn Lucovich to formally establish an organization-wide mentoring committee and officer liaison roles to connect experienced and new officers are to be commended.

Continuing Improvement to Reflect Changing Times

JALT strives to embrace diversity; yet the organization has struggled to keep up as social landscapes have evolved. Society often teaches us that, in any hierarchical system, those in power should be feared or rebelled against (Van Kleef & Lange, 2020). Applied to JALT, general members might perceive officers as intimidating, or officers might feel similarly towards the Board of Directors (BoD). To prevent these types of situations, it is important to remember that those above us are in place to work with, not against, us. JALT needs to continue fostering deep bidirectional support to increase awareness of equity and representation issues that are not normally on the radars of those in decision-making positions. General members can make Special Interest Group (SIG) and chapter officers aware of issues pertaining to diversity, equity, and conduct. These officers can subsequently inform the CoC or DEI, which then deal with these issues accordingly while

also supporting the BoD by increasing its awareness of different perspectives that should be acknowledged.

For such communication to effectively ensue, members need clarity on what constitutes diversity. Identifying and filling gaps where insufficient awareness, and potentially resistance, exists would guide JALT towards ensuring systems are in place to protect members' safety, thus, propelling it towards truer representation. Overcoming our own biases is done through exposure, solidarity, education, and endeavoring to support individuals experiencing discomfort as well as possible (Tropp & Godsil, 2015). The CoC and DEI efforts toward these goals are discussed later in the paper.

Issues of Native-Speakerism in Japanese ELT

Within ELT contexts, the term *native speaker* usually refers to an L1 English speaker born and raised in what Kachru (1985) described as *inner circle* countries, where the language is deemed norm-providing. *Native-speakerism* refers to an ideology asserting that a native speaker should be representative of any of the inner circle countries (Holliday, 2006). It problematically “presumes Anglophones as the custodians of English” (Ishikawa, 2018, p. 9) and promulgates professional inequalities by suggesting L1 English speakers are somehow inherently more knowledgeable than their non-L1 English-speaking counterparts.

Presenting oneself as a *non-native English speaker* (NNES) has disadvantages regardless of one's qualifications or teaching capabilities. For instance, some institutions in Japan continue to include “native speaker” as an application requirement, essentially pedestalling place of birth over teaching ability. Institutions may view this prerequisite as a way to stay competitive and attract students without realizing its discriminatory nature. Other issues that NNES can face include lower salaries (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014), less favorable treatment (Kavanagh, 2016), and being asked to adopt a false nationality and name (Galloway, 2014).

NNES teachers who speak out on these issues, whether at the workplace or in the classroom, could potentially highlight an attribute of theirs that prospective employers and students might consider detrimental. Therefore, change cannot be implemented solely by the disadvantaged. Instead, the authors hope for well-positioned English-speaking teachers, including L1 users, to feel empowered to (a) enable policy change at the institutional level, (b) educate students regarding misconceptions of the supposed superiority of L1 English native speakers,

and (c) help educators and learners alike to appreciate teachers for their ability to teach rather than their birthplace or appearance. These issues need to be on the radars of those who have not had any aspect of their professional lives threatened on account of their L1. Both the CoC and DEI committees should increase awareness of the repercussions of native-speakerism, work towards education within JALT to eliminate native-speakerism, and promote more equitable teaching and professional development practices. The methods through which the latter is achieved, however, require consideration. Native-speakerism influences ELT research and practices that, in Japan, remain embedded in a western-centric lens, including within JALT. For instance, Hollenback (2021) illuminates the propensity of ELT research published in *The Language Teacher* over the past decade to (implicitly and explicitly) deem the use of non-western approaches in Japan as inferior and calls for a more thorough questioning of the assumed superiority of “Western” pedagogy in Japanese teaching contexts.

Assessing Opportunities for Professional Development Within JALT

Diversity can take invisible forms. When considering equitable practices to encourage professional development, accessibility should be at the forefront. For example, since 2019, childcare provision for caregivers attending in-person conferences has become a central part of conference planning. This is a positive step towards increasing presentation opportunities, which caregivers need in order to remain competitive in the job market (see Aronson, 2015). Event scheduling, however, will never be perfect. While some find it easier to participate on weekends, caregivers must often reserve these days for their families. Likewise, members outside of university contexts will be hard-pressed to attend weekday or evening events. Though providing recordings of events is one solution, matters of privacy and confidentiality regarding their distribution remain a crucial consideration.

Access to financial support, such as the JALT Research Grant or the many grants and scholarships awarded annually by JALT chapters and SIGs (see JALT, 2021) deserves greater consideration. Working with the Grants Committee, we must continue to promote grant availability so that everyone has an equal opportunity to apply. Avenues to advertise chapter or SIG budgets could be pursued more vigorously so that they can continue to be used in ways that best serve the JALT membership. Additionally, redistributing funding to prioritize having less established participants present at in-person con-

ferences with more veteran participants presenting online could favor those who would benefit from the professional development that being spotlighted at conferences provides.

Ensuring JALT’s Representativeness

For our evolving understanding of diversity to become second nature, ensuring representation requires persistent work. The DEI Committee includes passionate JALT members from various backgrounds who are also active in other executive and local roles. This helps the committee gain a comprehensive view of trends in diversity-related issues and a multiplicity of perspectives on how to promote resolutions and change at various levels and on different scales. Likewise, CoC committee members work to ensure that JALT members are aware of evolving understandings of diversity to prevent unintended comments or actions that risk putting JALT participants in unsafe environments.

Vigilance in maintaining awareness of visible and invisible diversity is paramount to preserving a non-confrontational environment that encourages members to speak out on overlooked, complex, or sensitive issues (such as the assumption that all members come from a similar background with similar experiences). Both the DEI and CoC committees prioritize the need for our own education on issues raised before proposing solutions. Members actively engage in professional presentations on diversity issues throughout the year, as audience members (directly learning from and connecting with experts) and presenters (exploring diversity-related topics in depth, learning from the analysis of existing data, and reinforcing JALT members’ awareness and knowledge). Where possible, individuals with experience on specific issues are consulted to invite outside perspectives. With the aim of fostering trust from the JALT membership, the two committees must endeavor to be representative, informed, and transparent. Trust begets honest dialogue from JALT members, spotlighting concerns and suggestions on diversity and equity issues that we are not yet aware of and, thus, scaffolding further informed action.

Innovations in Awareness-Raising: Bringing It Back to Teaching

To teach effectively, we must remain open to learning about issues that we may never have had to consider before. Workshops and presentations are an effective method of highlighting important issues, but we also need to consider the possibility of more innovative ways to raise our awareness as

members of an organization whilst simultaneously fostering our development as effective teachers. In addition to succinctly defining terms for participants to feel supported in moving forward, an alternative method suggested at the roundtable was to hold events that center on inviting ideas for teaching practices that stimulate awareness of diversity- and conduct-related issues within our students. By sharing approaches extending beyond a western-centric teaching lens (as per Hollenback, 2021), members can glean practical takeaways for their teaching contexts and feel encouraged to reflect on their own practices within JALT and voice concerns around issues they have noticed within the organization. To illustrate, this year Kyoto JALT hosted an online “Teaching Global Englishes” event with workshops and presentations focusing on native-speakerism in Japanese ELT. Additionally, Tuttle (2022), hosted by Gifu JALT, addressed implications of ambiguity towards diversity in the EFL classroom and provided practical awareness-raising strategies for teachers to implement. The DEI and CoC invite chapters and SIGs to inform them of upcoming awareness-raising events in order to help advertise them or support those interested in holding such events.

Moving Forward

Attendee feedback at the JALT2020 roundtable was largely positive. One rural Japanese high school teacher who had been a member for two years commented that it was the first time that they had felt included and encouraged to participate more actively within the organization. Further effort, however, is needed to build on the good work already being done within JALT. The CoC and DEI committees need to establish means to assess the extent to which their methods effectively raise awareness of diversity and encourage proper conduct. Awareness of representation, inclusivity, native-speakerism, professional development accessibility, and the continued development and evaluation of awareness-raising activities should be consistently reflected upon across all chapters, committees, and SIGs for JALT to be considered a safe and productive environment for all members. We should be proactive about consulting with experienced individuals, groups, and organizations both within and outside JALT (e.g., those suggested by McCandie et al., 2022).

Conclusion

As JALT strives to improve its equity and representation, discussions on identifying and realizing

better methods to serve its members are rightly becoming a central focus. The JALT2020 roundtable revealed that despite commendable efforts, subsequently reflected in the diversity of plenary speakers at JALT2021, additional efforts are still needed regarding native-speakerism, diversity of representation, and equitable professional development. The DEI and CoC committees are passionately working on projects concerning these issues, and we welcome insight from the JALT membership regarding areas we have not yet given due attention. Those who wish to report an issue or join us in our efforts can contact conduct@jalt.org and dei@jalt.org.

References

- Amundrud, T., Hoffman Aoki, Q., Lee, J. K. Y., & Simmonds, B. (2020, November 18). *Raising awareness through discussion* [Video roundtable]. JALT2020, Japan. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRaK1ff-tQc>
- Aronsson, A. S. (2015). *Career women in contemporary Japan: Pursuing identities, fashioning lives*. Routledge.
- Galloway, N. (2014). “I get paid for my American accent”: The story of one Multilingual English Teacher (MET) in Japan. *Englishes in Practice*, 1(1), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.2478/eip-2014-0001>
- Hollenback, M. (2021). Exploring Orientalist discourse in ELT research in Japan. *Journal of Research Institute*, 62, 19-39. <http://id.nii.ac.jp/1085/00002432/>
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385-387. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030>
- Ishikawa, T. (2018). From English native-speakerism to multilingualism: A conceptual note. *JACET ELF SIG Journal*, 2, 9-17. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322096870_From_English_native-speakerism_to_multilingualism_A_conceptual_note
- Japan Association for Language Teaching (2021). *2021 JALT research grants*. <http://jalt.org/researchgrants>
- Japan Association for Language Teaching. (n.d.). *A brief history*. <https://jalt.org/main/history>
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk & H.G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-30). Cambridge University Press.
- Kavanagh, B. (2016). Native speakerism and English language education in Japan. *Bulletin of the Institute for Excellence in Higher Education Tohoku University*, 2(3), 201-209.
- McCandie, T. (2018, January 27). *Increasing diversity from within* [Paper presentation]. JALT Gifu, Gifu, Japan.
- McCandie, T. (2019, September 21). *Diversity & Equity ELT Japan* [Paper presentation]. JALT Gifu, Gifu, Japan.

- McCandie, T., Smith, E., & Simmonds, B. (2022). An introduction to the Japan Association for Language Teaching's Code of Conduct. *Journal and Proceedings of the Gender Awareness in Language Education Special Interest Group of the Japan Association for Language Teaching, 14*, 43–54.
- Tropp, L. R., & Godsil, R. D. (2015, June 23). Overcoming implicit bias and racial anxiety: Fighting subconscious bias takes effort—but it can be done. *The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sound-science-sound-policy/201501/overcoming-implicit-bias-and-racial-anxiety>
- Tuttle, T. (2022, March 26). *Communication and identity in the EFL classroom* [Paper presentation]. JALT Gifu, online. <https://jalt.org/event/gifu/22-03-26>
- Van Kleef, G. A., & Lange, J. (2020). How hierarchy shapes our emotional lives: Effects of power and status on emotional experience, expression, and responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 33*, 148–153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2019.07.009>
- Walkinshaw, I., & Oanh, D. H. (2014). Native and non-native English language teachers: Student perceptions in Vietnam and Japan. *SAGE Open, 4*(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014534451>



JALT2022 – Learning from Students,
Educating Teachers: Research and Practice
Fukuoka • Friday, Nov. 11 to Monday, Nov. 14 2022

Eleanor Smith is an assistant professor of Cultural Studies at Aichi University. Her research interests include classroom practices to foster engagement in global social issues and the application of yoga practices in foreign language learning. She was a member of the JALT COC Committee from 2020-2022.



Thomas Amundrud is an associate professor of English Education at Nara University of Education. He is currently an officer of the Kyoto chapter of JALT and a member of the DEI Committee.



Jackson Koon Yat Lee is a specially-appointed lecturer in the LEAP Program at Toyo University. He is the former chair of the DEI Committee as well as former president of the Gifu Chapter of JALT. His research interests include diversity in ELT, intercultural communication, and the Japanese English education system.



Quenby Hoffman Aoki is an associate lecturer at Rikkyo University. Her research interests include intersectional gender, race, and social class issues, language through literature, CLIL/Content-Based Instruction, fluency, and the writing process. She is Coordinator of JALT's Gender Awareness in Language Education SIG and a member of the DEI Committee.



[JALT PRAXIS] TLT INTERVIEWS



Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

TLT Interviews brings you direct insights from leaders in the field of language learning, teaching, and education—and you are invited to be an interviewer! If you have a pertinent issue you would like to explore and have access to an expert or specialist, please make a submission of 2,000 words or less.

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.interviews@jalt.org

Welcome colleagues! For the last issue of 2022, we are excited to bring you two fascinating interviews. The first interview is with Nicola Galloway, Senior Lecturer and Programme Director in Education (TESOL) at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on the pedagogical implications of the global spread of English and the global spread of English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education. She is the author of four books on Global Englishes and has two books on EMI (in press). She leads a global network that brings

together both fields and aims to create a global community of practice of teachers and researchers—*Teaching English and Teaching In English in Global Contexts*: <https://globalenglishes-emi.network/>. After her plenary speech at the JALT2021 International Conference, she was interviewed by John Galindo, who is currently a lecturer in English at Himeji Dokkyo University. He has an MA in Linguistics from Rice University. He has taught at universities in the Kansai area since 2019. His research interests include pronunciation pedagogy and tertiary

ARTICLES

JALT PRAXIS

JALT FOCUS