

Negotiating Desire and Identity at English Immersion Preschools in Japan

Chisato Nonaka

International Student Center, Kyushu University

In Japan, English immersion preschools (EIPs) have become a popular choice for parents who wish to raise their children to be fluent in English. Despite their increasing share of the market, EIPs have received little scholarly attention. In this paper, I aim to help situate EIPs against the backdrop of Japan's English education market. In doing so, I draw from the concept of desire (cf. Motha & Lin, 2014), which has been widely discussed as one of the key facets to understand English language education in Japan. Specifically, this study showcases multiple dimensions of desire in the context of two EIPs, through the eyes and voices of teachers. Their narratives, coupled with seminal studies on desire (e.g., those on *akogare*), help demonstrate how and why desire may exist at EIPs. This study is intended to add a layer to the existing body of literature on desire while also providing a springboard for further research on EIPs in Japan and larger global contexts.

近年日本ではバイリンガル（日・英）教育を望む保護者の中で英語プリスクール（以下EIPsとする）が好評だ。このブームの一方、EIPsを対象とする研究はまだ萌芽期の段階である。本稿では、日本の英語教育を理解する上で度々用いられる「欲求」（cf. Motha & Lin, 2014）の概念を使用し英語教育産業におけるEIPsの位置付けを図る。具体的には、2校のEIPsを対象に教師の視点からどのような欲求が存在するか検証する。「憧れ」など様々な欲求の先行研究をベースに教師らのナラティブを分析し、EIPsにおける欲求の存在理由および方法を示す。よって、本稿は欲求をテーマとする研究分野の新たな知見に寄与し、日本だけでなくグローバルなコンテクストでのEIP研究のたたき台を提起する。

Keywords: desire; English immersion preschools (EIPs); identity; Japan; the West

In light of the fast-approaching 2020 Tokyo Olympics, the Japanese government has been advancing mega projects to “prepare the nation to welcome the world” (Prime Minister Abe, cited in Prime Minister’s Office of Japan, 2017). These projects include both architectural and ideological enterprises from erecting athletic complexes to training volunteers to brush up their *omotenashi* [Japanese hospitality] skills. Within these projects, the English language is frequently being treated as the default foreign language.

In fact, Japan has a long and complex history with the English language, to the extent that it was considered for official recognition as a national language in the late 1800s (Hall, 1999; Swale, 2000). More recently, the government implemented a major education reform which included the introduction of English as a formal school subject at an earlier grade level (MEXT, 2014). Although there is a long-standing debate over the developmentally appropriate age for foreign language acquisition, education-minded parents have already started sending their children to English immersion preschools (EIPs) to kick-start their exposure to English.

Despite their increasing share of the English education market of Japan in recent years, EIPs have received little scholarly attention. This study offers a response to this scholarly gap by presenting qualitative research findings on the EIPs in Japan. Specifically, utilizing the framework of desire (cf. Motha & Lin, 2014), I discuss and present multiple dimensions of desire and identity narratives collected from TESOL professionals at two EIPs in Japan. By so doing, the findings of this study add a new layer to the existing body of literature on desire while also providing a potential springboard for further research on EIPs in Japan and larger global contexts.

The Framework of Desire in the TESOL Field

While it still remains a relatively new construct within the TESOL field, more and more scholars are paying attention to desire for its powerful and complex effects on language learners and teachers (Benesch, 2012; Motha & Lin, 2014). Historically speaking, desire has been understood as an emotion and, as such, a broadly intrinsic characteristic (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Buss, 1994). However, one’s desire to belong to a community, which may derive from a shared sense of nationality, ethnicity, race, class, gender, or a combination of them, might even be an “imagined” one as argued by Anderson (1983/2006). This suggests that desire can be understood beyond the intrinsic realm. For instance, for a person of mixed heritage such as a *hafu* [person of half-Japanese heritage], their desire to belong to an imagined “Japanese” community might be both intrinsically and extrinsically

motivated. It might be intrinsic in that, if they themselves feel Japanese, they may wish to belong to such a community. It could also be extrinsic as they may benefit more by focusing on their Japanese heritage than not, for employment or tax purposes. As such, desire needs to be carefully examined while taking into account the context in which desire emerges, develops, or disappears.

In a recent TESOL study, Motha & Lin (2014) grappled with the concept of desire as being multilayered. Similar interpretations of desire are found in a number of TESOL studies (see next section), which mainly engage with the process of identity negotiation in English learning and/or teaching. These studies demonstrate how desires may be multilayered, thus requiring intersubjective understandings.

To build upon the existing body of literature on desire while also exploring the understudied realm of EIPs in Japan, I utilize Motha and Lin's (2014) framework. The authors have developed the *desire as multilayered* framework to help us to study and understand desire within TESOL contexts. Their framework includes the following five interconnected layers:

1. desires of learners;
2. desires of communities in which learners are embedded, including parents of young learners;
3. desires of teachers, including their desires for students and their desires for themselves;
4. desires of institutions; and
5. desires of the state or government. (pp. 335-336)

As the authors argue, these layers should by no means be rigidly defined. Rather, each layer is fluid and in constant negotiation with the other four and must be treated flexibly and contextually. Additionally, on the importance of desire within the TESOL field, Motha and Lin (2014) state,

At the center of every English language learning moment lies desire: desire for the language; for the identities represented by particular accents and varieties of English; for capital, power, and images that are associated with English; for what is believed to lie beyond the doors that English unlocks. (p. 332)

Building upon this, desire can be viewed as a site of identity negotiation overlapping the above mentioned five layers. In this light, I leverage Motha and Lin's framework as a tool to examine, interpret, and report the data

collected for this study. In what follows, I review desire-related studies in the context of Japanese TESOL to establish why Motha and Lin's framework is suitable for this study.

Desiring “Native English Speakers” and “the West” in General as Well as in Japan

The relationship between English and desire started to attract scholarly attention in the late 1990s to early 2000s (e.g., Kelsky, 2001; Manderson & Jolly, 1997). More recently, an increasing number of studies in TESOL have explored the intersection of English, desire, and identity. For example, Cho (2012) reveals, through his interviews with Korean American male English teachers in South Korea, the conundrum of “to be or not to be a ‘native speaker’” (p. 227). He explores the identity complex of Korean American men who, on the one hand, receive an endless (and unprecedented) amount of female attention, and on the other, often feel “used up” as though they are “English prostitute[s]” (p. 233). Focusing on desire in the field of transnational higher education, Chowdhury and Phan (2014) expound at length on how multifaceted desires exist among the idea of English, learners or clients (international students), and service providers (universities). In her subsequent work, Phan (2016) further discusses the irony of hyperromanticized transnational education and questions the quality (i.e., mediocrity) of such transnational programs.

In Japanese TESOL, there have been a number of studies that examine layers of desire. From a historical perspective, the nation has long held a type of desire (i.e., *akogare*) for things and people seen as from the West including the English language, Christianity, and the United States (Ike, 1995). As an epitome of sociopolitically-instigated desire, there are historical accounts of the romantic relationships in postwar Japan between American soldiers who embodied victory and wealth and Japanese women who were in juxtaposition subservient and highly sexualized (Dower, 1999; Sakamoto, 2010). Applying this to the present day, Appleby (2014a) expands on how such historical experience and collective memory may have shaped the Japanese notion of Western masculinity and its implications for English education in Japan. Similar to the above study by Cho (2012), Western male English teachers in Japan are often perceived as masculine as well as *authentic* as English speakers (Appleby, 2014a).

This notion of authenticity is widely discussed by scholars, including Seargeant (2005), Rivers (2015), and Ruecker and Ives (2015). Based on their findings, one's nativeness or nonnativeness of English is often

perceived through one's appearance rather than linguistic background. In other words, those who look authentic as English speakers are idealized as *native* English teachers in Japan, because "authenticity need not necessarily equate with reality itself but with a quality that allows one to believe that something has the authority to truthfully represent reality" (Seargeant, 2005, p. 330).

However discursive, this imagination of authentic English speakers as native speakers seems to continually shape the Japanese desire for the West, which further informs dominant ideologies and specific practices of English education in Japan. For example, online job advertisements for native English teachers in Japan and its neighboring countries appear to target "young, White, enthusiastic native speaker[s] of English coming from a predominantly White country where English is the official language" (Ruecker & Ives, 2015, p. 2). This practice helps confirm the public's image of native speakers of English as being specific individuals while undermining other native speakers of English as less authentic or undesirable. On this note, from the perspective of those identified as native English-speaking teachers, other studies in Japan (see Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Kusaka, 2014) foregrounded how different Japanese American teachers' experiences are compared to those of White teachers.

Connecting the Japanese desire for the West with race and gender, scholars have also investigated romance between Western men and Japanese women (e.g., Appleby, 2013; Bailey, 2002; Kelsky, 2001; Takahashi, 2013). Depicted as free-spirited individuals living overseas, Japanese women in transnational contexts are occasionally understood as those who desire the West or are using English as leverage to mobilize their otherwise underprivileged womanhood in Japan (Kelsky, 2001). These women seem to desire White men as an embodiment of the liberating, empowering, and masculine West (Appleby, 2013; Takahashi, 2013). In the same vein, Kubota's (2011) study helps expand the understanding of desire beyond race and gender. She shows that "white native speakers are constructed as an exotic icon to be consumed" (p. 486) and carefully unpacks how a target of desire may be negotiated within the racial, cultural, and linguistic ideologies of the learner.

As a heuristic tool to understand empirical studies, Motha and Lin's (2014) framework encourages a critical engagement with how and why an embodiment of desire is enacted. Most importantly, their framework helps to visualize how even a seemingly gender-triggered (e.g., sexual) desire of the learner may be motivated by or consist of other complex desires that have been shaped by a set of ideologies of the learner or of the community.

Further, although the English word *desire* may often allude to something provocative, for the purpose of this study, I use the construct of desire in a more open manner. That is, for the most part, I discuss desire expressed by teachers and students in an asexual or platonic fashion. For example, it may be a desire for the teacher to provide the best learning experience for his or her students and, similarly, a child may desire to become a teacher's favorite student. With this expanded understanding of desire, I will now introduce the field of study: EIPs in Japan.

The EIPs in Japan

Broadly speaking, EIPs in Japan are early childhood education institutions where English is the primary language of instruction (ASSION, 2018; Imoto, 2011, 2015). Each institution varies in its legal standing: some are recognized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; others are licensed as nursery schools by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; and the rest are nonaccredited schools. Although there is no official report on EIPs, a little over 500 schools in Japan classify themselves as an EIP (ASSION, 2018). Because many EIPs operate outside government regulations, hence receiving few to no subsidies, one of the most prominent characteristics of EIPs is their relatively high tuition fees. Although most early childhood education institutions in Japan collect approximately \$100 to \$350 (US Dollars) per child as monthly tuition fees, EIPs charge significantly more, ranging from \$400 to \$1,300 per child per month (ALC, 2013; ASSION, 2018). The children attending EIPs, therefore, tend to be of high socioeconomic background.

Despite the skyrocketing popularity of English immersion programs (e.g., My Gym: Children's Fitness Center, n.d.) and EIPs in Japan (Nakamura, 2005; Toi, 2013), few scholarly works have documented them. Although there is some discussion of their business model (Kato, 2009) and their role in fostering a Japanese-English bilingual child (Babineau, 2013), Imoto's (2011, 2015) studies are distinct in offering ethnographic accounts of an EIP in Tokyo. Over the course of 12 months, Imoto conducted ethnographic fieldwork on the EIP where she worked as a Japanese bilingual assistant for 8 months. The findings suggest that although fostering the *international child* is a unanimously agreed mission of the EIP, its operation is much more complex, often involving multiple and competing language ideologies negotiated among the parents, teachers, and even children (Imoto, 2011, 2015). Imoto's studies concisely capture the complex apparatus of an EIP as a research subject in Japanese TESOL. Accordingly, the aim of this study

is to build upon Imoto's research and to invite further research on EIPs as a unique site of investigation.

The Study Participants and Methodology

For the study, Yoko and John, former English teachers with over five years of experience, were asked to reflect on their experience working at EIPs, using an instant messaging app through which private and reflective conversations were held over a period of two months. During this period, the author was granted access to the reflective writing (i.e., messages) exchanged between Yoko and John. About a month into the reflective writing period, a 90-minute face-to-face joint interview was arranged by the author and her research associate to follow up on Yoko and John's reflective writing. Overall, via the instant messaging app and 90-minute interview, Yoko and John shared with each other their experiences teaching at the EIPs in Japan, in which multiple aspects of English, desire, and identity were revealed and reiterated.

Yoko and John

Yoko (pseudonym) is in her 20s and was born and raised in Japan. The other study participant, John (pseudonym), is an Asian American male in his 20s with a background in Science. The two have been together for over 10 years and recently married.

John was already working at EIP-1 when Yoko came onboard. Because John rotated among three different campuses, he often endured a commute of over 2 hours one way. Yoko, on the other hand, was assigned to one campus where she gradually built close relationships with the students and their parents. The expectations for John as a self-identified native English-speaking (NES) teacher and Yoko as a self-identified nonnative English-speaking (NNES) Japanese teacher were different in nature and intensity. John was responsible for all lessons throughout the day whereas Yoko's duties ranged from teaching a lesson to changing young students' diapers. Although in an interview (see below for details) Yoko claimed she "worked as hard as John," her salary was barely 60% of what John was earning as an NES teacher. John eventually switched schools (to EIP-2) whereas Yoko, after working at the EIP-1, decided to seek a different career path.

Details on Methodology

To maintain the anonymity of the study participants as well as that of the schools (i.e., EIP-1 and EIP-2), I must omit some key information such as

how I recruited the study participants or why I was granted access to their personal (reflective) writing on the instant messaging app. Nevertheless, I emphasize that I, as an NNES Japanese female myself, have worked in multiple English education contexts in Japan over the course of several years which prompted me to employ both emic and etic positionalities throughout this study.

To follow up on Yoko and John's reflective writing (in the form of instant messages, labeled as IM hereinafter) using the instant messaging app, I, along with a research associate who was present to ensure the ethics and integrity of the research, held a 90-minute joint interview with Yoko and John. During the interview, I was allowed to take notes, which were used to reconstruct the narratives of Yoko and John for analysis. The narratives labeled as IC (i.e., interview conversation) hereinafter are from the interview and have been confirmed with Yoko and John for accuracy. After the interview session, Yoko and John resumed their reflective writing to elaborate on some of the topics that surfaced during the interview.

In one of the follow-up emails, Yoko and John communicated to the author that they "enjoyed the whole process where [they] could openly discuss and challenge one another." Although their openness and reflectiveness may have been affected by the research arrangements (e.g., their reflective writing to be used as data and joint interview instead of one-on-one), for this study, I placed emphasis on the *collaborative process* in which Yoko and John reviewed and evaluated specific incidents rather spontaneously. This spontaneity appeared to stem largely from the dynamics of Yoko and John's relationship over the years from working together to maturing as a couple.

In what follows, I present some of the findings from my analysis of Yoko's and John's reflective writing as well as of the narratives reconstructed based on my notes from the interview.

Findings: Layers of Desire at the Two EIPs in Japan

Drawing from Motha and Lin's (2014) theorization of desire and Imoto's (2015) contextualization of an EIP, desire in this study is to be examined as a product of a larger "ideology of internationalism that places the 'West' (and 'authentically' western international schools) as the superior and authentic Other" (Imoto, 2015, p. 94). Indeed, this ideology of internationalism is both discursively and nondiscursively shaping social, cultural, economic, and political practices within the nation (Sergeant, 2009). In this section, I focus on the context of select EIPs and delve into Yoko's and John's desire and identity narratives starting from the macro levels.

Operating under a framework similar to what Imoto (2011, 2015) calls the “*authentically*” *western international school* model, the two EIPs in Japan seem to manifest institutional desires through their employment processes. Specifically, the criteria for potential NES teachers appear somewhat erratic because previous teaching experiences of the applicants were not necessarily the highest priority. John commented on this point as follows:

Obviously, it would be better [for schools] to have [a licensed NES] teacher. But are there even that many *real* [emphasis added] English teachers in Japan? I was probably in the minority [of those with a teaching certificate], and English was not even my area [of expertise]. (IM: John)

Being a so-called “native” English speaker from the United States seemed to have legitimized John as an English teacher in Japan more than did his teaching certificate.¹ Also interestingly, although the *racialization* of NES teachers within Japanese TESOL contexts has been widely discussed (e.g., Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Rivers & Ross, 2013), John as an Asian American male did not recall a firsthand experience in which he felt disadvantaged being of Asian descent nor did he recall his privilege of being an “emasculated Asian American” male (Cho, 2012, p. 220):

I never felt privileged or disadvantaged, sometimes I felt bad knowing that I was getting paid more than the Japanese teachers . . . NES teachers need to be paid enough not to leave. Even then, there’s no guarantee they’ll stick around. (IM: John)

Although Yoko as an NNES female experienced difficulty finding a teaching position at EIPs, John’s above comment suggests that NES teachers are, on the other hand, in high demand and provided with competitive salaries. On being an Asian American teacher in Japan, John continued:

I’m somewhat skeptical [about the racialized tradition of Japanese TESOL]. But I wouldn’t be too surprised if that was a factor in Japan. (IM: John)

When asked why he felt this way, John responded:

That’s just the way I *imagine* [emphasis added] they operate and what I heard or maybe read. And it makes perfect sense. The schools are businesses and foreign teachers are part of the product they are trying to sell. (IC: John)

Without firsthand experience, John expressed his mixed feelings about how EIPs may perceive their teachers' race. Certainly, John's lack of a racialized experience should not be taken at face value as his nationality, gender, age, and other factors may have influenced his overall experience. Also, John's perceptions may have been shaped by participating in this study and by Yoko's insight.

Nevertheless, within the scope of Yoko's and John's experiences at the EIPs, the NES or NNES status does appear to privilege or condemn the teacher. Yoko added how NNES Japanese female teachers were treated at EIP-1 as follows:

I felt exploited at times. My pay was much lower [than that of NES teachers] which really doesn't make sense because [in comparison] Japanese teachers work harder, taking the job seriously and putting in longer hours. (IM: Yoko)

This comment resonates with the sentiments shared by the Japanese female teachers in Imoto's (2011, 2015) ethnographic studies who questioned the abilities and work ethics of NES teachers. Although John noted that Yoko could probably have "passed as an NES teacher" (IM: John), the sense of being on the NES–NNES border greatly influenced Yoko's professional identity. Though discursively constructed, the native speaker ideology not only manifested itself in the two EIPs' institutional desires for *idealized* English teachers (Rivers & Ross, 2013), but it also rewarded some (e.g., John earning 1.7 times more than his Japanese colleagues) while undermining others (e.g., Yoko being stripped of the right to earn as much as John).

Moreover, ideologies concerning the West and its authenticity were not only consumed by the EIPs, resultantly shaping an institutional desire for NES teachers with specific backgrounds, but they were also intertwined with the identity construction of Yoko as a teacher who in one way or another consumed, resisted, and worked around such ideologies.

Desire Surrounding Attractive Parents and Teachers

In what follows, I would like to pay close attention to the desires of individuals and their communities such as teachers and parents as outlined in Motha and Lin's (2014) framework. At the same time, I aim to carefully acknowledge the interconnectedness of different layers.

Delving into desire narratives, Yoko and John recounted private conversations with their colleagues at work. For example, it was common for

male teachers of different nationalities including American, Australian, British, Canadian, and Japanese to engage in the “whose (which student’s) mom is hot?” conversation at the two EIPs. Such gossip occurred among colleagues in private spaces and in an amicable manner, rarely to be taken seriously:

Yeah, [the male teachers] are amazingly observant of the “hot moms” and we would joke about their length of skirts or figure-revealing clothes, especially in the summer. I mean, some of those moms are around our age or younger. It’s perfectly natural. And yeah, some moms are pretty That’s what we talk about. (IC: John)

To John, gossiping seemed to mean *bonding* with his colleagues and bosses. Nevertheless, there had been an exception wherein a single mother of a student at an EIP became romantically involved with an NES teacher at the school. After this event came to light, the principal put in place solid measures and the NES teacher in question eventually resigned from the school. The series of such events implicitly helped to police the desires that may otherwise be deemed unprofessional and unethical in school settings.

Yet to add to the gender-triggered desire in TESOL, another case was shared by John. Paul (pseudonym) was the most popular teacher at one of the two EIPs. Although he met all the criteria of being what might be understood as the *ideal* NES teacher (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Rivers & Ross, 2013), John felt that it was not a simple matter of Paul being an NES teacher from the West:

John: He was pretty funny. I think he was a good entertainer and he was a fairly good-looking guy.

Yoko: Yeah, for [house] wives, he must’ve been eye-candy and proudly “single.”

John: I guess. It probably helped most that he was better looking than everyone else. We made him look better, haha. (IM: John & Yoko)

If stripped of his NES teacher profile, Paul was a handsome, sweet, and witty young man. He was naturally attractive to the mothers at the EIP. During the interview, John described another teacher at the same EIP who was “popular” among the Japanese female teachers and mothers:

I think the Japanese PE teacher was also popular. He was a young guy and handsome enough, I suppose. (IC: John)

Whether in preschool settings or not, NES or NNES, when the stage is set, romantic attractions, feelings, and behaviors seem to surface. This gently reminds us that one's NES-ness is simply one of the many qualities of the person (such as the personality, sense of humor, or age) that come into play in the workings of desire.

Mothers' Desire to Speak English Fluently

While working at EIP-1, Yoko frequently experienced a sense of admiration from the students' mothers, many of whom were highly regarded professionals (e.g., medical doctors, diplomats, lawyers, university professors) or were at least married to one. Yoko was at first puzzled by these mothers' affections towards her and regarded their kind words as merely lip service. Over time, Yoko grew closer to some of the mothers who eventually confided in her that they wished they could speak English like her:

Some of the mothers treated me nicely. They complimented me like "*Kakkoi* [so cool]!" I wondered [if] without my English skills, they might not have liked me as much. (IM: Yoko)

These mothers' desire to "speak English like Yoko" seemed to have amplified their trust in Yoko despite her lack of childcare training or experience. Although most parents seemingly entrusted their children to Yoko's care, in one instance, Yoko recalls experiencing what could be described as harassment by a student's father because she was unable to properly handle the student's injury that had occurred at EIP-1:

Japanese teachers were always responsible [for accidents] even if the injury had been caused right in front of the [NES] teacher's eyes. It was unfair. I remember I was working with [a male NES teacher] and even though I BEGGED him to back me up [when the said father was threatening to sue Yoko for physical and emotional damage on his child], [the NES teacher] didn't step in to help me out of the situation. (IM: Yoko)

On one level, the desire of some parents helped to idealize Yoko as their children's bilingual teacher, allowing them to overlook her lack of childcare training. On another, Yoko was reprimanded if an accident occurred at school

while NES teachers were often excused from issues of liability (“because they were not *Japanese*,” said Yoko). What is critical here is not simply about the way in which the NNES Japanese teachers were held solely responsible for accidents or unexpected injuries. It also implies that NES teachers were merely expected to fulfill *performative* roles of English teachers (Kubota, 2011), implicitly being led to “hit the glass ceiling” (Garnova, 2015, para. 15) or be stripped of their professional integrity (cf. Appleby, 2014b).

Parents’ Desire for Children’s Well-Being

Another type of desire emerged from John’s narrative. Recollecting the time when one of the students’ mothers made a *kyaraben* of John (cf. Figure 1), he mentioned that “Most mothers were nice and friendly, and they seemed to like me” (IM: John). The mothers at both schools bestowed their children’s liking of a particular teacher by expressing gratitude through words or small gifts to the teacher. These were likely intended to sustain a good relationship between the child and his or her favorite teacher, on which John reflected:

I guess there were [students who favored John]. . . . Lots of kids would say they like me, but their English [was] limited . . . [and also] they would say that to almost everyone I think. Some kids may say they don’t like me possibly because I am large and look scary. They’re so honest at that age. (IC: John)

Showered with hand drawings, love letters, and other handmade crafts on a daily basis, John enjoyed being some students’ favorite teacher. Although this type of affection expressed by students may be temperamental, it was closely monitored and reinforced by their mothers who most likely harbor a desire for their children’s best learning experience.



Figure 1. Kyaraben of John (digitally reproduced based on the photo of the kyaraben shown by John). Kyaraben is a portmanteau of character and bento, a style of Japanese boxed lunch decorated to resemble famous anime characters, animals, or people.

Heterosexual Desire Among Teachers on a Valentine's Day

In the following accounts of Valentine's Day by John, I attempt to present another dimension of heterosexual desire negotiated at the EIPs. Romantically involved or not, it has become a custom for women to give chocolate to their peers, colleagues, or family members on Valentine's Day in Japan (cf. Appleby, 2013). This tradition has also served as an opportunity for the mothers at the EIPs to express gratitude to their children's teachers.

In the case of EIP-2, the Japanese female teachers collectively present chocolate gifts to their male colleagues each year. Although most NES male teachers at EIP-2 are married or in a serious relationship, many look forward to the special day of the year when they get to openly enjoy the attention from young Japanese female teachers. John excitedly shared one Valentine's Day in detail during the interview:

The Japanese [female] teachers anonymously rated [the male teachers] by connecting dots from "I wish you were my . . ." husband, boyfriend, friend, uncle, or whoever to our names (cf. Figure 2). Those heart-shaped papers were enclosed with the chocolate. Some of us were grumpy because they were chosen as "just a friend" or "coworker," but I cleaned up the popularity contest; most of the female teachers chose me as "husband" or "boyfriend." (IC: John)

Despite John being the "only Asian" NES male teacher at EIP-2 (IC: John), he managed to endear himself to the young Japanese female teachers.

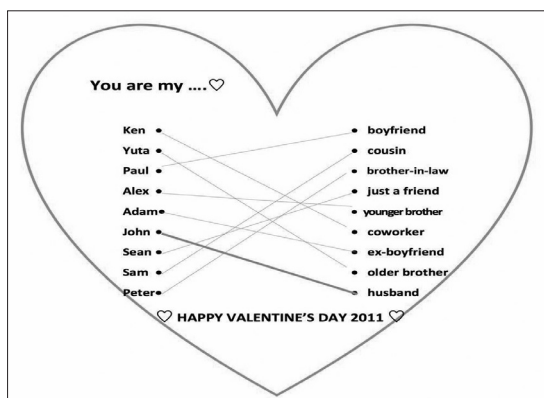


Figure 2. A sample of the Valentine's Day notes attached to chocolate prepared by the female teachers.

Discussion: Reframing Desire in the Japanese EIP Contexts

In the above narrative, I have attempted to illuminate desire on or beyond the boundaries of gender in Japanese TESOL contexts. In addition, although I have examined different layers of desire based on Motha and Lin's (2014) framework, the ways in which desires were articulated and negotiated seem to vary greatly, suggesting the need for further investigation. For the scope of this study, however, I would like to focus on the following two facets through which desires may have been expressed at the two EIPs.

Desire as Performance

The lens of *gender as performance* (Butler, 1990) helps better explain John's participation in the whose mom is hot? gossip, which he claimed had more to do with forging male bonds (also see Appleby, 2014a) than with engaging in promiscuity. In the simplest sense, John may have been performing his hypersexual desire to fulfill his other desire, the desire to belong or cement bonds with his male colleagues.

Within and beyond the gender boundaries, the EIP-1 mothers' desire to speak English like Yoko may be understood as performance also. Although some parents may have sincerely wished to master the language, others may have been posturing to help build a positive parent-teacher relationship with Yoko, indirectly fulfilling their other desire for their children's best learning experience.

On a related note, mothers at EIP-2 have actively expressed gratitude to the teacher through words or small gifts (such as making a *kyaraben* of John) hoping to sustain a good relationship between the child and his or her favorite teacher. As such, based on the examples presented in this study, desire as performance may be both intentional and unintentional while at the same time remaining in a complex interplay of other desires.

Heterosexual Desire Beyond the Boundaries of Race or Language

Elucidated in the case of Paul (NES) and the Japanese PE teacher, young and attractive men seemingly appeal to their heterosexual counterparts, possibly mediating the otherwise overplayed racial or linguistic cards to explain desire in Japanese TESOL. In other words, although the existing desire discourse in Japanese TESOL tends to attribute such a heterosexual attraction to a rather simplified racial (white) and/or linguistic (NES) character of the desired target, Yoko's and John's desire and identity narratives helped to reveal a more complex picture.

Conclusion

In TESOL studies, scholars have increasingly paid attention to the popular discourse of desire (i.e., *akogare*), which most famously transpires between Japanese women and the West. To build upon the existing body of literature as well as to introduce the underexamined context of EIPs in Japan, I drew from Motha and Lin's (2014) framework of desire for this study. Based on the framework, desires at the EIPs were examined, interpreted, and reported on different and interconnected layers including those of learners, communities, and institutions.

As the findings show, sticking to labels such as NES or NNES may obscure the reality wherein desires are in fact constructed beyond the simple NES–NNES binary of the individuals involved. At the same time, in the case of Yoko, the NES–NNES label not only defined her professional identity but also debilitated her economic mobility. Japan's discursive desire for English, NES teachers, or for fluent English speaking constantly surfaced in Yoko's and John's narratives and seems to manifest itself at different interconnected spaces of the five layers (cf. Motha & Lin, 2014).

Finally, two specific facets through which desires may have been expressed at EIPs were proposed in this study. By reframing desire as performance or beyond the boundaries of race or language, this study not only added a layer to the existing body of literature on desire, but suggests that further research on EIPs as a unique site of investigation will benefit the wider TESOL community.

Note

1. To protect the identity of study participants, the specific subject John is licensed to teach has been withheld.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Phan Le Ha for inspiring me to take on this project and her words of encouragement throughout the process.

Chisato Nonaka is an Associate Professor in the International Student Center, Kyushu University, Japan. Her research interests include identity construction in transnational education contexts.

References

- ALC. (2013). 子ども英語カタログ2014 [*Children's English catalogue 2014*]. Tokyo: ALC.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). London, England: Verso. (Original work published 1983)
- Appleby, R. (2013). Desire in translation: White masculinity and TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47, 122-147. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.51>
- Appleby, R. (2014a). *Men and masculinities in global English language teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137331809>
- Appleby, R. (2014b). White Western male teachers constructing academic identities in Japanese higher education. *Gender and Education*, 7, 776-793. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2014.968530>
- ASSION. (2018). プリスクールナビ [Preschool navi]. Retrieved from <http://www.preschool-navi.jp/>
- Babineau, P. (2013). A recipe for bilingualism. *Journal of Poole Gakuin University*, 54, 89-104. Retrieved from http://www.poole.ac.jp/library/kiyo/Tosyo_Kiyo2013_5407.pdf
- Bailey, K. D. (2002). *Living in the eikaiwa wonderland: English language learning, socioeconomic transformation and gender alterities in modern Japan* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3070653)
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Benesch, S. (2012). *Considering emotions in critical English language teaching: Theories and praxis*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203848135>
- Buss, D. M. (1994). *The evolution of desire: Strategies of human mating*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cho, J. S. P. (2012). Global fatigue: Transnational markets, linguistic capital, and Korean-American male English teachers in South Korea. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 16, 218-237. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2011.00526.x>
- Chowdhury, R., & Phan, L. H. (2014). *Desiring TESOL and international education: Market abuse and exploitation*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783091492>

- Dower, J. W. (1999). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Garnova, O. (2015, March 23). Spare a thought for the Western men trapped in Japan. *The Japan Times Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/03/23/voices/spare-thought-western-men-trapped-japan/>
- Hall, I. P. (1999). *Mori Arinori*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ike, M. (1995). A historical review of English in Japan: 1600–1880. *World Englishes*, 14, 3-11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1995.tb00335.x>
- Imoto, Y. (2011). Producing the “international” child: Negotiations of language in an international preschool in Japan. *Ethnography and Education*, 6, 281-292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2011.610580>
- Imoto, Y. (2015). The “international preschool” as a translocal field. In S. Bollig, M.-S. Honig, S. Neumann, & C. Seele (Eds.), *MultiPluriTrans in educational ethnography: Approaching the multimodality, plurality and translocality of educational realities* (pp. 79-98). <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839427729-004>
- Kato, H. (2009). A new business model for intergenerational programs: “Elder/Kids Play Club.” *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 7, 45-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770802628976>
- Kelsky, K. (2001). *Women on the verge: Japanese women, Western dreams*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kubota, R. (2011). Learning a foreign language as leisure and consumption: Enjoyment, desire, and the business of eikaiwa. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14, 473-488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573069>
- Kubota, R., & Fujimoto, D. (2013). Racialized native speakers: Voices of Japanese American English language professionals. In S. A. Houghton & D. J. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 196-206). <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698704-018>
- Kusaka, L. L. (2014). *Negotiating identities: An interview study and autoethnography of six Japanese American TESOL professionals in Japan* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3623198)
- MEXT. (2014). *English education reform plan corresponding to globalization*. Retrieved from http://www.mext.go.jp/en/news/topics/detail/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/01/23/1343591_1.pdf
- Manderson, L., & Jolly, M. (Eds.). (1997). *Sites of desire/economies of pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Motha, S., & Lin, A. (2014). "Non-coercive rearrangements": Theorizing desire in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48, 331-359. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.126>
- My Gym: Children's Fitness Center. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.mygym.jp/pc/>
- Nakamura, A. (2005, December 28). English immersion of toddlers on the rise. *The Japan Times Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/12/28/national/english-immersion-of-toddlers-on-the-rise/#.XB2yls8zZE5>
- Phan, L.-H. (2016). *Transnational education crossing "Asia" and "the West": Adjusted desire, transformative mediocrity and neo-colonial disguise*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759098>
- Prime Minister's Office of Japan (2017, January 14). 日豪観光セミナー 安倍総理スピーチ [Japan-Australia Tourism Seminar speech made by Prime Minister Abe; Transcript]. Retrieved from https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/97_abe/statement/2017/0114tourism.html
- Rivers, D. J. (2015). Discursive representations of the native speaker as qualification for employment. Paper presented at the Joint Conference of AAAL and ACLA/CAAL, Toronto, Canada.
- Rivers, D. J., & Ross, A. S. (2013). Idealized English teachers: The implicit influence of race in Japan. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 12, 321-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2013.835575>
- Ruecker, T., & Ives, L. (2015). White native English speakers needed: The rhetorical construction of privilege in online teacher recruitment spaces. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49, 733-756. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.195>
- Sakamoto, R. (2010). Pan-pan girls: Humiliating liberation in postwar Japanese literature. *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 7(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.5130/portal.v7i2.1515>
- Seargeant, P. (2005). "More English than England itself": The simulation of authenticity in foreign language practice in Japan. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 326-345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2005.00094.x>
- Seargeant, P. (2009). *The idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the evolution of a global language*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847692030>
- Swale, A. (2000). *The political thought of Mori Arinori: A study in Meiji conservatism*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315073521>
- Takahashi, K. (2013). *Language learning, gender and desire: Japanese women on the move*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698551>

Toi, S. (2013, July 10). Parents give kids early start in English. *The Japan Times Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/10/national/parents-give-kids-early-start-in-english/>