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## Expertise across general and second language teaching

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### **Abstract**

In this article, I review literature on expertise studies in general education and second language teaching. This includes describing research methods that have commonly been used in expertise research and findings that describe behaviors indicating expert teaching in general education and L2 teaching. Specifically, this article examines the different types of knowledge and practices that expert teachers possess. Furthermore, Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1993) conception that distinguishes between expert and experienced nonexpert teachers is used to describe the developmental processes expert teachers undergo. Finally, I suggest directions for further research in L2 expertise studies in teaching.

### **I. Introduction**

Understanding what constitutes expertise in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is essential because foreign language teachers are expected to have a set of skills and knowledge that are distinct from other professors at Japanese universities. Non-foreign language professors need to demonstrate rich knowledge of their specialized area. In contrast, foreign language teachers are often required to demonstrate knowledge not only about the English language, but also about methods of teaching and learning. According to job advertisements on the Japan Research Career Information Network (JREC-In), an organization supported by the Japan Science and Technology Agency, the majority of Japanese universities require applicants to have a Masters or higher degree in English language education, such as TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), applied linguistics, and other related areas.

There are two reasons why EFL teachers are expected to have knowledge about both the subject content (English language) and teaching methods related to second language acquisition (SLA). First, EFL teachers deal with issues that other

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professors often do not, such as teaching students whose English proficiency varies overall and within different skills' areas. This makes the teaching of a target content or skill set more challenging. For example, EFL teachers need to set learning objectives that meet the needs and interests of students of varying proficiency levels, in addition to creating and planning activities that best facilitate learning for all students. The second aspect of EFL teaching has to do with the important role that EFL teachers play in the actual classroom. In most cases, professors have two different types of teaching responsibilities, with few exceptions. One is to give lectures to a large number of students in a lecture hall, and the other is to individually and closely assist their seminar course students in researching and thesis writing. The goal of most professors is to focus on providing students with knowledge in their specialized academic area. However, EFL teachers need to consider not only what to teach, but how to teach it. In a typical class of between 20–30 students, teachers not only consider complex issues of SLA, but also the affective influence that teachers have on students and that students have on each other. This supports the view that teaching is one of the most important aspects of EFL teachers' responsibilities at Japanese universities.

Regardless of these elements, there have been few studies examining the characteristics of effective EFL teaching and teachers in the Japanese context. Without understanding what underlies expert teaching at Japanese universities, it is difficult to create a model for good teaching. This is problematic because novice teachers will lack a clearly identifiable role model to follow with the aim of improving their teaching. In addition, understanding what shapes one's expertise is important even for those who have extensive years of teaching experience in order to continue to develop and improve their teaching. Therefore, I will first review some of the key literature on teaching expertise conducted in the field of general education, such as in primary and secondary school settings in North America. Then, I will examine expertise studies focusing on second language (L2) teachers that have mostly been conducted in ESL settings. In addition to reporting on the findings of these studies, I will discuss issues that need to be considered in conducting expertise studies, especially in the context of Japanese higher education. Finally, I will conclude the article by discussing gaps in the literature and suggest further research in the area of expertise studies in EFL teaching at Japanese universities.

## **II. Teacher Knowledge in General Teaching**

In order to understand what constitutes teaching expertise, researchers in general education have investigated the behaviors of excellent teaching. Participants in these studies consisted mostly of U.S. primary and secondary

school teachers of different kinds of subjects, such as English, science, mathematics, and physical education (e.g., Bullough & Baughman, 1993; Carter, Cushing, Sabers, Stein & Berliner, 1988; Housner & Griffey, 1985; Smith & Strahan, 2004). Researchers examined multiple aspects of teacher participants by analyzing their approaches to lesson planning, processes of decision-making, and teaching practice.

Examining the effect decision-making has on various elements of teaching is one area that earlier researchers of teacher expertise have focused on (e.g., Borko & Livingston, 1989; Housner & Griffey, 1985). For example, Peterson, Marx, and Clark (1978) analyzed how decisions made by 12 experienced U.S. elementary school teachers in the process of lesson planning affected their teaching and student participants' learning of a particular content area. In this study, teacher participants taught three 50-minute sessions each day to three different groups of students. While teaching, they followed a lesson plan they had created based on a curriculum provided by the researchers. The analysis of think-aloud protocols conducted during the lesson planning process demonstrated that despite some individual differences, teacher participants generally considered two main aspects of teaching, namely, content (what to teach) and activities (how to teach it). Furthermore, the focus on these two aspects during lesson planning had a greater influence on actual classroom behaviors than others, such as setting the goals of the lesson. Finally, researchers reported no positive effects of teachers on student performance, which was measured based on an achievement test in each session and over the course of three sessions.

One of the key findings of these previous studies has been the importance of different types of knowledge that experienced teachers have. As discussed in the study by Peterson et al. (1978), experienced teachers consider issues related to what to teach and how best to teach the subject. Accordingly, Shulman (1986) proposed a theoretical framework of examining teacher knowledge that is essential to excellent teaching. First, he distinguished subject matter knowledge, or content knowledge, from pedagogical knowledge. The former indicates extensive knowledge of a subject, while the latter refers to knowledge of the act of teaching and learning. In addition, knowledge of both content and teaching, i.e., pedagogical content knowledge, allows teachers to deliver the subject in a comprehensible and effective manner, often through what Shulman identified as "powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations" (p. 9). Knowing a subject in addition to how to teach it is what is required for excellent teaching (Sternberg & Horvath, 1995).

Another important aspect of teacher knowledge is that the knowledge that expert teachers develop is domain- and context-bound (Berliner, 2001; Bullough &

Baughman, 1995). That is, expert teachers demonstrate their exceptional ability in their specialized area, and this ability is maximized within a familiar context. One of the reasons why the findings of the study by Peterson et al. (1978) demonstrated no positive effects on student outcomes may be related to two aspects. First, the teacher participants did not have a rich knowledge of the content. Elementary teacher participants in the study had only two occasions to read the social studies text materials before teaching the first sessions to junior high school students. This indicates that some of the teachers did not have sufficient time to develop rich content knowledge about the target content area. This may have affected their teaching behavior and the outcome of students' performance on achievement tests.

The other aspect relates to the lack of knowledge that teacher participants have about the context, including the students who had been randomly assigned to each class. Teachers taught classes over three days, and on each day they taught different students. Even though teachers taught for a total of 1.5 hours, it was an insufficient amount of time to develop knowledge about the student participants. Similarly, Berliner (2004) reported that the expert participants in one of his studies (Berliner, Stein, Sabers, Clarridge, Cushing & Pinnegar, 1988) described issues related to teaching student participants who were not their own students. Having rich knowledge about the learners is important for excellent teaching because it allows teachers to manage and monitor student learning with clear procedures (Smith & Strahan, 2004), and to make informed decisions about what content to teach and how to teach it (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). Teachers can best access domain-specific pedagogical content knowledge when they are in an environment in which they normally practice teaching.

### **III. Teacher Knowledge in L2 Teaching**

#### **Declarative knowledge through lesson planning**

Teacher knowledge also plays an important role in expertise studies of L2 teaching. The earliest research related to L2 expertise in teaching was conducted by Richards, Li, and Tang (1995), who examined different types of knowledge of ESL teachers in Hong Kong. First, the researchers analyzed the effect that experience has on the quality of knowledge by comparing the lesson plans produced by the participants at different career-developmental stages. One group comprised pre-service teachers, which included ten student teachers with little or no classroom experience. The other group consisted of experienced teachers, who had an average of five years of teaching experience, in addition to postgraduate TESOL qualifications. The results suggested that the experienced teachers created lesson plans more quickly than the pre-service teachers, and that these

teachers demonstrated a more holistic view of teaching. This includes using a learner-centered approach and setting not only linguistic objectives, but also broader objectives about the topic presented in the material.

The researchers also reported the importance of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge on developing lesson plans. 12 teachers were divided into three groups based on this assumption. One group consisted of teachers with a BA in English literature and experience of teaching literature in an ESL setting (content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge). The second group was made up of teachers with a BA in literature but with no experience of teaching it (only content knowledge). The last group comprised teachers with neither a BA in literature nor teaching experience (neither content knowledge nor pedagogical knowledge). Each group of teachers was given three sets of literary texts, each containing a short story. The teachers' task was to develop ESL lessons based on these texts. The participants then explained their approach to teaching and their attitudes toward literature and teaching literature in writing and verbally.

The results demonstrate the importance of both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for effective lesson planning. Whereas teachers who lack either type of knowledge struggled to interpret certain concepts that were abstract and ambiguous, teachers with content knowledge demonstrated deeper understanding of the texts. In addition, teachers with content knowledge analyzed the texts more critically and creatively. Moreover, teachers with both content and pedagogical knowledge proposed a greater variety of activities than teachers in other groups, such as pre-reading activities to activate students' schemata of the themes of the texts. This study did not document how teachers taught a class based on the lesson plan they had created. However, it demonstrates that rich content and pedagogical knowledge accumulated through extensive years of teaching allow teachers to plan a lesson more efficiently and effectively.

### **Declarative knowledge and practice**

Other studies revealed how teachers who differ in years of teaching experience internalize their actual practice. Gattbonton (1999, 2008) investigated the pedagogical knowledge that two groups of teachers possessed. One consisted of four novice teachers, who had less than two years experience; the other group was made up of four experienced teachers, who had at least ten years of teaching experience. These participants were asked to recollect aloud what they were thinking while teaching classes to ESL adult learners as they viewed their videotaped lessons. The researcher used mixed methods to analyze the interview data and found similarities and differences between these two groups of teachers. First, the contents of the reports by the two groups were categorized separately

based on shared themes. Next, the frequency of the resulting themes in each teacher's interview and each group of teachers' interviews was examined. Finally, the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies of the two groups were compared. Interestingly, regardless of experience, the novice teachers described 20 of the 21 major pedagogical categories discussed by experienced teachers. However, their frequency ranking differed. Whereas novice teachers most frequently reported paying attention to students' behaviors and reactions, experienced teachers most often attended to language learning, which is the ultimate goal of L2 learning. The findings suggested that in contrast to novice teachers, experienced teachers focus on ensuring that language learning takes place, rather than being sensitive to any negative reactions of students.

Several other studies provide evidence of the differences between experienced and novice teachers in the classroom. Farrell and Bennis (2013) examined the relationship between the beliefs and teaching practices of a novice and an experienced teacher at an adult language academy in Canada. The novice teacher had two and a half years of teaching experience, and the experienced teacher had been an ESL teacher for over 19 years. Data collection included a background survey, three one-hour class observations, and interviews before and after the lessons with each participant. The findings confirmed Gatbonton's (1999, 2008) conclusion that experienced and novice teachers make instructional decisions based on different priorities. Whereas the novice teachers focused more on students' affective factors, such as making them happy, the experienced teacher prioritized students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, the experienced teacher's practices corresponded more to what he or she had stated in an interview than the practices of the novice teacher. The researchers explained that the convergences between what teachers say and do exist more for experienced teachers because they tend to have beliefs that are informed by teaching experience.

### **Procedural knowledge of experienced teachers**

L2 researchers also examined similarities among experienced teachers by analyzing how they justify and explain teaching practices in the classroom. In case studies of four experienced ESL grammar teachers at a university in the United States, Johnston and Goettsch (2000) used two grammar lessons and follow-up interviews to analyze and classify the different types of knowledge that participants demonstrated. First, the researchers identified that the participants had rich content knowledge of grammar, which the participants claimed was developed through their education and teaching experience. These teachers discussed a system that they developed where they could store, sort, and access their content knowledge efficiently, both physically and mentally. Furthermore,

rich knowledge about grammar not only made them effective, but also confident teachers.

Secondly, the researchers examined these ESL grammar teachers' pedagogical content knowledge related to explaining grammar points. The analysis of data recorded during class demonstrated that participants used examples rather than rules to facilitate understanding among students. This was confirmed in the follow-up interview, in which they stated that examples are important to providing good grammar explanations. In addition, participants demonstrated behaviors to initiate student involvement in explaining grammar points, such as facilitating students' discussions and questions. When asked how participants evaluated students' learning and the effectiveness of their explanations, they described different methods. Examples include picking up non-verbal clues from students, such as eye contact and facial expressions, and asking questions that would facilitate students' production of sentences using a specific grammatical feature. In addition to relying on these immediate clues, the teachers also provided delayed feedback by giving the students opportunities to ask questions after class or in grammar journals. This study indicates that sophisticated pedagogical content knowledge (how to teach English grammar in the most effective way) allows for a variety of approaches to teaching aimed at facilitating students' learning.

Related to this point, Johnston and Goettsch (2000) also stress the importance of the teachers' knowledge of the learners. They define such knowledge as "teachers' beliefs about how learners learn and what they know," which influences their teaching strategies (p. 455). One of the participants described how she paid attention to the facial expressions of one of her students that she had become familiar with as well the utterances that he habitually made as he came to understand a new concept. In addition, participants described how students needed to transfer their declarative knowledge about grammar to procedural knowledge in which they could use the forms and meanings correctly and appropriately. Such insights had resulted from extensive years of teaching this particular cohort of students at an institution where students had consistently demonstrated a gap between what they knew and what they were able to use in their writing and speaking. Pedagogical content knowledge includes not only knowledge of content and pedagogy, but also of the learners themselves, which influences the teachers' approach to teaching the subject.

#### **IV. Expert Teachers**

##### **Experts and experienced nonexperts**

As seen in previous studies in general as well as in the area of L2 expertise, in order to understand excellent teaching, researchers often examine the behaviors

and knowledge of experienced teachers. Some researchers have compared novice teachers to experienced teachers in the attempt to understand what accumulated experiences allow teachers to understand and do. Others have investigated the knowledge and behaviors of experienced teachers more closely to understand what they have in common. Even though these findings provide important implications, to truly understand expertise in teaching, it is critical to understand that not all experienced teachers are, in fact, experts (Berliner, 1986; Johnson, 2005; Tsui, 2005).

Accordingly, Berliner (1988, 2004) distinguishes experts from nonexpert teachers by discussing five stages of teacher development: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert teachers. The behavior of the novices is usually inflexible and rationalized. They follow general rules rather than contextualized ones about teaching, such as giving praise for correct answers from students and not criticizing them personally. Advanced beginner teachers have some experience that they can rely on and know what to do unless they encounter an unfamiliar situation. However, advanced beginners can still lack knowledge about what is important or the ability to predict what will happen. Competent teachers have clear goals and know the steps they need to take to help students to reach them. However, these teachers still have slow, deliberative, and inflexible behaviors. Proficient teachers have developed intuition and a holistic perspective to recognize similarities among different events. This ability allows them how to predict classroom events more precisely. However, their behavior is still analytic and deliberate when deciding what to do.

The final stage that only a few teachers reach is the stage of being an expert. The behavior of experts is nonanalytic and nondeliberative. Their performance is fluid and flexible. Teaching seems to be done unconsciously in a way that is similar to walking and breathing. Moreover, experts have knowledge based on underlying principles of learning and teaching that allows them to remember, understand, and recognize relevant events in a classroom in a principled manner. As shown in his descriptions of teachers at different developmental stages, Berliner (2004) makes a clear distinction between competent or proficient teachers and expert teachers. Therefore, examining where these differences come from is important to better understanding expert teaching.

### **Development of Expertise**

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) define and distinguish two types of professionals at different stages of development: experts and experienced nonexperts. They explained that experience alone is insufficient to make someone an expert teacher because some experienced teachers may repeat what they do



over years, rather than to continue to develop. Furthermore, they describe an important process that experts engage in. It occurs when experienced teachers develop automaticity in teaching practices after accumulating extensive years of experience. Consequently, this automaticity frees up their mental resources. Contrary to experienced nonexpert teachers, expert teachers use the extra space created by automaticity to tackle new challenges in their career. They refer to this process as “progressive problem solving” (p. 96), which involves experts focusing on the complexity of fundamental problems in their domain. This process enhances their development of expertise.

Other researchers also claim that the process that expert teachers engage in for progressive problem solving is what distinguishes them from nonexperts (Tsui, 2003). For instance, nonexperts rely on practical knowledge attributed to personal experience, such as their own experience as a learner, regardless of its quality. However, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) argue that experts continuously formalize their informal knowledge based on theoretical rationales, such as theories, research, and publishing. In this way, experts identify and tackle critical issues that are constitutive in their domain. Consequently, this process furthers experts’ development as it forces them to expand their knowledge and raise their level of competence. Distinguishing expert teachers from experienced nonexpert teachers is critical to expertise studies in L2 teaching because these two types of teachers are fundamentally different.

In order to test this theory and understand what makes experienced teachers become experts, researchers have examined developmental processes of expert teachers. In a longitudinal case study, Bullough and Baughman (1995) examined an expert teacher who continued to engage in progressive problem solving. Their research focused on how the expert participant coped with a set of challenges at her new junior high school. Data collection included weekly classroom observations of two classes for one academic year and individual interviews with the expert teacher every three weeks. The findings indicated that expertise is not static, but a process. Specifically, the researchers believe that it is “more a matter of becoming, of pushing back boundaries here and there [...] as energy is made available for identifying and confronting new and more complicated problems” (p. 474). One of the challenges the participant faced was to plan a special program for gifted children. The participant needed to collaborate with more experienced teachers at the school by sharing ideas with them. She overcame this challenge by participating actively in discussions with veteran teachers, articulating her opinions, learning a new teaching model, and taking risks to improve her teaching. While a nonexpert teacher in the same program followed only the experienced

teachers' instructions, this expert participant continued to work at the edge of her competence, which resulted in the further development of her expertise.

The attempt to understand expert teaching was also made in L2 research. Tsui (2003) compared an L2 expert, a novice, and two experienced nonexpert teachers in her 18-month longitudinal case study of secondary school ESL teachers in Hong Kong. She examined the characteristics of an expert teacher and her development in contrast to other nonexpert teachers based on classroom observations, interviews with each participant, and artifacts (e.g., lesson plans and student work). Whereas the nonexpert participants relied on practical knowledge resulting from their experience as a learner, the expert participant continued to theorize her practical knowledge. In addition, the expert participant's theorized knowledge was transformed to practical knowledge "through the personal interpretation of formal knowledge in the teachers' own specific contexts of work" (p. 265). This process of theorizing her practical knowledge and practicalizing her theorized knowledge resulted in raising her level of competence. This included enriching her understanding of and ability to successfully play the role of a head of department to help other teachers in the department.

Although this study provided insight into expertise and its development, Tsui's process of determining one participant as an expert teacher influenced her data collection method. First, she defended her reason for selecting one expert teacher as follows:

(Marina was identified as an expert teacher) on the basis of the very positive comments on her as a teacher from her course tutors, her principal, her colleagues, and her students, as well as the reactions of fellow teachers on *TeleNex* (professional support computer network that the author set up). (p. 71.)

In addition, Tsui explained that the participant was the Head of the English Department, had eight years of teaching experience, and had been a good student of hers for five years. When describing the criteria she used in order to classify the two participants as experienced nonexperts, the researcher only mentioned that they had been teaching for five years, which is only three years shorter than the expert teacher.

Although Tsui (2003) spent three months observing the expert teacher, she only did a one-month observation of the three other nonexpert teachers. Moreover, the 11 students that she interviewed were from the expert teacher's class; none were from other teachers' classes. This aspect of the study raises questions over the degree to which the researcher might have been influenced by her participants prior to the research, and how much impact this might correspondingly have had on the investigation.

### **Identifying Expert Teachers**

If researchers attempt to understand expert teaching by examining the characteristics of expert teachers, then defining someone as an expert teacher is one of the most important aspects of expertise studies (Palmer, Stough, Burdenski, & Gonzales, 2005). However, it is also one of its most challenging aspects. For professionals in other fields, such as athletes, competing under the same conditions, rules, and measurements can be objective predictors that help to identify someone as an expert (Berliner, 2001). However, very few objective measures exist that can clearly identify expertise in teaching. Therefore, researchers have examined different factors to identify expert teacher participants in general education. In fact, performance-related judgments have been used in previous studies in general education (e.g., Carter et al., 1988; Smith & Strahan, 2004). Examples include one or a combination of the following aspects: observations of possible participants by researchers, recommendations by those who know participants well, or achievement of nationwide certification, such as NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards) in the U.S..

Understanding the common characteristics of participants who have been recognized as experts has been attempted by some researchers in general education. Smith and Strahan (2004) conducted case studies of three elementary and middle school teachers to find prototypical characteristics of these expert teachers. The participants were certified by the NBPTS, which was developed by a panel of experts including teachers and educational researchers. In addition, NBPTS has been validated by research conducted by Hattie, Jaeger, Strahan, and Baker (1998), who examined 134 cases to determine if certified teachers differ from those who are not certified. Certification consisted of four components: written assessment of content knowledge, reflection on student artifacts, video and analysis of teaching practice, and documented impact and accomplishments as a teacher.

Finally, the researchers identified six common characteristics demonstrated by expert teachers based on class observations, interviews with the teachers, and a collection of artifacts, such as a portfolios that teachers had created. The characteristics of expert teachers were found to be that they: 1) have a sense of confidence in themselves and their teaching career, 2) talk about their classroom as a community of learners, 3) maximize the importance of building relationships with learners, 4) demonstrate student-centered classroom teaching, 5) contribute to the teaching community through leadership and service, and 6) show evidence that they are masters of their subject areas. These methodological procedures adopted by the researchers are essential to understanding the nature of expert teachers.

Identifying EFL expert teacher participants has been attempted by several researchers in L1 studies, but only to some degree in L2 studies. Educational background and teaching experience are two aspects that the majority of studies in L2 teaching expertise have relied on to select participants (e.g., Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Gatbonton, 1999, 2008; Richards et al., 1995). It is problematic that L2 research often does not differentiate between these two concepts by selecting participants based on years of experience (e.g., Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Gatbonton, 1999, 2008; Mok, 1994) and sometimes even uses the two terms, expertise and experienced, interchangeably (Cumming, 1990; Farrell, 2013). The inconsistent use of the term and selecting process of participants makes the generalizability and utility of the findings of previous studies problematic (Palmer et al., 2005).

There are still issues related to researching expert teachers in L2 teaching. In contrast to general education, there are no external sources of certification such as NBPTS to rely on in most L2 settings, especially in higher education. Even though L2 teachers are often expected to have teaching credentials and/or an advanced university degree in the area of English language teaching, certificates or awards that demonstrate excellent performance are not common in most contexts. In addition, using internal sources such as nomination of effective teachers by supervisors or examining the impact of teachers on student performance is often difficult at universities for two reasons. First, there are few opportunities for supervisors to conduct classroom observations. Lack of knowledge about teachers makes it difficult for supervisors to nominate expert teachers in their institutions. Second, understanding the impact that teachers have on student performance is difficult because there is often no requirement for university students to take standardized tests at the end of the semester. Because of these issues, previous researchers have selected and focused on experienced teachers who have approximately five or more years of teaching experience in their studies (e.g., Farrell, 2013; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Gatbonton, 1999, 2008; Richards et al., 1995).

## V. Discussion

Previous studies in teaching expertise have provided several important indications of excellent teaching. First, as teachers accumulate extensive years of teaching practice, they develop content knowledge about a target subject and pedagogical knowledge about teaching. Those who have sophisticated content knowledge can systematically organize and store information in their domain, which they can easily and efficiently access. Content knowledge also allows teachers to plan a lesson, which aims to expand a topic in meaningful ways for learners. In addition, pedagogical knowledge, which is related to knowledge about

teaching is an important aspect. Based on pedagogical knowledge, teachers plan lessons that are student-centered and maintain clear learning objectives. Additionally, teachers can justify their teaching practices, which prioritize helping students to reach the specific goals of the class.

Pedagogical content knowledge is integral to expert teaching. One crucial element of pedagogical content knowledge is that it is context-dependent. Excellent teaching more often occurs under circumstances in which teachers are familiar with the context, including the curriculum and the learners. In addition, there are more convergences between beliefs and practices for experienced teachers than novice teachers. One possible interpretation of this finding is that declarative knowledge about content and pedagogy interacts with procedural knowledge (pedagogical content knowledge). Therefore, as teachers gain more experience in teaching, they tend to fill the gap between what they know and what they do, because experience informs and stabilizes teacher knowledge.

Expert teachers do not simply fill the gap in their knowledge, but continue to seek possibilities to enhance their competence. The concept that there are expert teachers and experienced nonexperts suggests that it is important to understand what type of developmental processes expert teachers go through. One key aspect of expertise is progressive problem solving. In this process, experts continue to expand their knowledge rather than allow it to become fossilized by simply following their routines. This includes theorizing practical knowledge that is shaped from actual teaching, and practicalizing knowledge that they theorize or formalize through continuous learning about the area.

Finally, selecting expert teachers to understand characteristics of expertise is problematic. Currently, there are no external indicators, such as awards and certifications for evaluating teacher knowledge and performance at Japanese universities. Even though educational background and teaching experience indicate someone's expertise to a degree, relying simply on these elements does not distinguish an expert from an experienced nonexpert. Seeking recommendations from supervisors and administrators is also problematic in this context because classroom observations are not commonly practiced in most Japanese university settings.

## **VI. Implications for Researching L2 Teacher Expertise in Japanese Universities**

I will conclude this article with ideas on how further research in L2 teacher expertise can contribute to the literature. First, research that focuses on different aspects of expert teaching is necessary. Previous research in L2 expert teaching has attempted to describe a single aspect of teaching, such as examining lesson plans that teachers create. In order to fully understand what teaching involves, it

is necessary to consider the process that teachers engage in to teach a class, such as lesson planning, teaching performance, and reflections that they engage in during and after teaching. Schön's (1987) concept of reflective practice is relevant here, as integral to effective teaching. This can take two forms: one is reflection *in* action, in which teachers engage while teaching classes; the other is reflection *on* action, whereby teachers reflect on a class after teaching. Examining teacher reflections is crucial to understanding expertise (Tsui, 2009). Therefore, research that considers various elements of university teaching in Japan is an imperative.

Secondly, it is important to examine behaviors that indicate expertise, rather than focusing on the characteristics of expert teachers. Research in expertise is fraught with issues as to what constitutes an expert teacher and how to identify one. Especially, selecting and labeling someone as an expert teacher in Japanese universities is problematic. Therefore, rather than focusing on what "expert" teachers know and do, it is necessary to identify and describe characteristics that indicate expert teaching at Japanese universities. Analyzing common behaviors that indicate expert teaching among teachers of different levels of experience can provide important implications for understanding L2 expert teaching.

Finally, to document the developmental processes of expertise, it is necessary to take a longitudinal approach in researching expertise. Research focusing on L2 expertise in teaching often takes a cross-sectional approach in which data collection is conducted in a short period of time (e.g., Gatbonton, 1999, 2008). However, this does not document how teachers develop expertise over longer periods of time. For example, Richards et al. (1995) compared secondary school ESL teachers, who differ in teaching experience and educational background, through one lesson planning task followed by one interview. Other researchers have examined teaching practice through a few classroom observations consisting of one to three hours and analyzed the teaching through follow-up interviews (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). These researchers focused on capturing the state of expertise by examining behaviors of participants in a given moment. Therefore, further studies should aim to describe what processes and knowledge building teachers engage in at different stages of their career.

## VII. Conclusion

This paper set out to preview previous research on expertise studies in general education and second language teaching. In addition to describing research methods that have been commonly used, I described the important role that knowledge plays in expert teaching. Accordingly, teacher knowledge has been the focus of L2 researchers, especially in ESL settings. Furthermore, I discussed three aspects to be considered when conducting L2 expertise research in teaching.

First, it is important to understand and make the distinction between expert teachers and experienced nonexpert teachers. This is related to the second point of identifying expert teacher. The third aspect is to examine developmental process of expertise rather than viewing expertise as a state is important. Finally, I provided implications for further expertise research at Japanese universities. This includes longitudinally focusing on how teacher knowledge is reflected in various aspects, such as actual practices. In addition, rather than labeling someone as an expert teacher to examine his or her characteristics, investigating expert teaching is necessary to better understand the nature of expertise. It is essential for researchers to consider these aspects when conducting further research. I believe the development of expertise research in L2 field not only benefits teachers, but also L2 learners that these teachers have a significant impact on.

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