Modular PhD in Applied Linguistics

Module 2

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PAPER 1

THE MYTH OF THE NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER

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This paper consists of approximately 8,000 words

ABSTRACT

This is the second of three modules concerned with narrative and identity in English language teaching. In Module 1, I introduced conversational narrative and examined ways in which descriptions of conversational narrative might be applicable to the development of pedagogic models for teaching English to learners in Japan. I concluded that there was a need to further explore narrative in the local context. This module does this, but takes a step back from the concern with pedagogical descriptions to consider narrative in the teaching context. It focuses on the native speaker as a central narrative concept within English language education, and explores the theoretical and practical role of the native speaker in Japan today. This module (Part 1) introduces theoretical perspectives, and considers the appropriation of the native speaker in Japanese high school textbooks. I argue that the ideological emphasis on the native speaker has been most significantly undermined by the development of English as an international language, and that the cultural discourse of the native speaker in Japanese textbooks implies a narrow brand of internationalisation that is closely related to nationalistic concerns with Japan's status in the world today. Part 2 focuses on native English speaking teachers (NESTs) in Japan. I consider the ways in which theoretical notions of the native speaker are reflected in the experience and attitudes of NESTs.

In loving memory of my sister, Louise Margaret Kiernan (1969-2005).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Paper 1

The Myth of the Native English Speaker

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1. 0   Introduction

Hail the Native Speaker,

He never can go wrong!

For by some process mystic,

Subliminal, sublinguistic,

And utterly spectacular,

He knows his own vernacular

To every last detail—

He simply cannot fail!   (Paikeday, 1985: 93)

This first part of Module 1 considers the native speaker as a mythical icon in applied linguistics and English language teaching (ELT). It looks at how the native speaker has been constructed as a narrative discourse within ELT and applied linguistics and highlights some examples of how this discourse has been reflected and elaborated within language teaching materials. It argues that both Western and Japanese publishers have tended to use the native speaker to promote their own brands of internationalisation, in ways which may be counterproductive to English education.

In foreign language teaching and learning there are few terms that carry the weight of authority as convincingly as *native speaker*. Linguists base their descriptions of language on native speaker usage; the ultimate (if almost unobtainable) target for the foreign language learner is typically assumed to be the native speaker; and language teachers, or translators in doubt about some linguistic point will often consult a native

speaker (a habit known as doing a *native check* in Japanese). The use of native speakers is also often seen as a way of improving language education and potentially diplomatic relations too (McConnell, 2000: 1-29). In Module 1 I discussed the need to develop models of spoken English by basing them on authentic usage. In practice much of the descriptive literature which I reviewed (Module 1, Chapter 3) was based on examples of native English speaker (NES) usage. However, there are a number of reasons why applied linguists and language teachers have had reason to question this emphasis on the NES.

In spite of the enduring paradigm favouring the native speaker, criticisms have been raised regarding the theoretical (Paikeday, 1985), historical (Phillipson, 1992a) and ideological role (Tsuda, 1986; Kubota, 1998) of the native speaker, particularly in the context of teaching English as an international language (EIL) (Kachru, 1990; Pennycook, 1994; Jenkins, 2003; Holliday, 2005). These scholars have deconstructed the historical development of English language teaching (ELT) to illustrate how it has been ideologically construed to favour teachers, publishers and educational institutions of the 'inner circle' (Kachru, 1985) English speaking countries (particularly Britain and the United States) with insufficient concern for local needs (Medgyes, 1992; 1999; Phillipson, 1992b; Canagarajah, 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Kubota, 1998; Mahboob, 2005). It has been argued that this ideological bias is largely achieved through an exaggerated focus on the native speaker as the cultural and linguistic target of ELT. Others have pointed out that in spite of attempts to establish a hegemony of the English language, it is increasingly used as a *lingua franca* in EIL among non-native speakers (Honna and Takeshita, 1998; Kachru, 2005: 9-28) and that English has

branched into local varieties around the world, lessening the influence of native speakers over the English language (McArthur, 1987). It has even been suggested that native speakers are less comprehensible in international contexts (Smith, 1992) than non-natives and proposed that native speakers would benefit from education in World Englishes used elsewhere (Kubota, 2001; Modiano, 1999b). But how have these perceptions of the English language and its native speakers affected the status of the native speaker in applied linguistics as a whole and what are the implications for pedagogical materials?

Even though the native speaker has been criticised from a variety of perspectives, the native English speaker has remained a dominant icon closely associated with power and prestige. This is partly due to the fact that the widespread use of English as a world language has helped native English speaking nations retain political and ideological influence (Tsuda, 1986: 59-87). The practical advantages implicit in being an NES in an English dominated world are not easily relinquished. The linguistic dominance of the United States as the largest population of NESs goes hand in hand with a cultural hegemony and economic and military dominance. At the same time acquiring English has been an important factor in economic success for nations such as Japan. Learning English made it possible both to adopt Western technology and sell to the wealthy NES countries (Tsuda, 1986: 45). The prestige of English in countries like Japan is therefore closely associated with its native speakers.

One way in which the English language has been spread as a communicative medium controlled by native speakers is through NES oriented English language pedagogy.

British and American publishers dominate a world market in ELT textbooks. The pedagogic materials produced by these publishers typically consist of texts, recordings and images representing glamorised models of native speakers and their culture, even where the target language usage may be less than authentic. A number of scholars have pointed out that native speaker culture and values are (implicitly, though not necessarily deliberately) promoted by ELT textbooks produced by inner circle publishers at the expense of the local context (Canagarajah, 1999: 79-101; Lowenberg, 1992: 107-144; Pennycook, 1994: 176). It has also been observed that the marketing of English textbooks as a global commodity supplied by Britain or the US itself rests on the assumption that the native speaker is the ultimate target for language learning (Gray, 2002; Phillipson, 1992b). The choice of one model for all—the native speaker one—has been related to the homogenizing influences of globalization for the convenience of commercial profit and efficiency (what Block and Cameron (2002) after Ritzer (2000) call 'McDonaldization') over local needs. Alptkin (1993) argues that the use of unfamiliar native contexts in teaching materials creates a barrier that could be avoided through the use of examples tailored to the local context. However, the native speaker in pedagogic materials has become a mythical icon positioning Britain and the US as the linguistic and cultural targets of English language learning.

The native speaker is equally apparent in textbooks produced in Japan. As one would expect these textbooks include the vocabulary of everyday life in Japan and so are better suited to the local context than foreign ELT textbooks. Yet in spite of this localisation Japanese textbooks also contain illustrations of native speakers, as well as dialogues and texts either featuring or concerned with the native speaker. Several Japanese scholars

have suggested that these representations of the native speaker exhibit an unhealthy preoccupation with NES culture (Kawamata, 2005; Tsuda,1986; Nakamura, 1997). But how is the native speaker portrayed and what are the ideological implications?

2. 0 The native speaker in applied linguistics

The word native has its origins in the Latin *nativus* meaning 'innate, produced by birth'. Early meanings of the word 'native' in English included 'person born in bondage' and later 'person who has always lived in a place' though in the 17th Century it was used to refer to the original inhabitants of non-European nations and soon became a derogatory term. However in applied linguistics and language teaching the term 'native speaker' has acquired positive connotations of authority. Longman's *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* noted that:

> *The intuition of a native speaker about the structure of his or her language is one basis for establishing or confirming the rules of grammar.* (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992: 241)

The COBUILD dictionary offered the following example:

> *Our language programme ensures daily opportunities to practice your language study with native speakers.* (Sinclair, 2001: 1022)

So the native speaker is assumed to be both the ultimate model for linguistic description and the best person with whom to use and study the language.

Rather than considering the native speaker as a term in isolation, it is important to consider how the term *native speaker* has been integrated into the discourse of applied linguistics. One field that makes extensive use of the concept of the native speaker is second language acquisition (SLA). Observations that certain features of morphology appeared to be acquired in a particular order, irrespective of whether a language is being learned as a first (L1) or second language (L2) (Dulay and Burt, 1974; Larsen-Freeman, 1975), have encouraged methodologies that focus on target language input (e.g. Krashen, 1987), playing down the importance of positive transfer from the L1. As a result the role of language transfer and what the learner brings with them to the classroom from previous language learning and life experiences has a tendency to be underplayed. Instead, the childhood learning of an L1 (first language acquisition) has often been the implicit model for L2 research (Bailey, Madden and Krashen, 1974). More importantly, within SLA language development has been discussed in terms of progress towards the 'target language' which is the language as used by native speakers. Learner language which falls short of this target has been referred to as 'interlanguage' (Selinker, 1972), and more significantly non-target like forms used by bilinguals have been stigmatised as 'fossilisation' (ibid) because they show evidence that the speaker continues to use forms that have not attained native norms. The problem with this approach is that it presumes that the learner's aim is to develop language ability comparable to a monolingual speaker of the target language, whereas the aim is typically to become a functional speaker in two languages, and to be able to make connections between them. Kachru (1992: 358) has suggested that non-native varieties themselves have tended to be referred to as *interlanguages* rather than legitimate varieties. In contrast, non-standard

forms used by native speakers have been assumed to have legitimacy as part of a native dialect.

Besides SLA there are other areas of applied linguistics which have been interpreted as calling for a greater focus on the native speaker. Three examples would include:

- The demand for authentic language: The emphasis on 'authentic' language has encouraged the development of materials that derive from, or closely model NES usage. (e.g. Carter and McCarthy, 1997)

- The development of Corpora: The use of prestigious corpora of NES texts in preparing learner dictionaries (Sinclair, 2001) or textbooks (e.g. McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005).

- The broadening of linguistics to include culture and discourse: The increased recognition of the integrated nature of language and discourse has encouraged some teachers to include pragmatic and discourse norms associated with native speakers as goals for foreign language teaching (e.g. Yoshida, 2000).

These developments imply that the native speaker is the linguistic and cultural target of English language teaching. They should perhaps be recognised as examples of the way in which Applied Linguistics has tended to remain preoccupied with the native speaker since they avoid other potential implications which might undermine the NES. 'Authentic use' by native speakers does not necessarily represent an ideal model for

English users in other parts of the world who may have different needs. One of the reasons that corpora are particularly useful is that they can uncover patterns of usage that native speakers are unable to identify intuitively. This highlights the potential shortcomings of relying on native speaker intuition alone in developing language descriptions. Finally, English language corpora do not need to be restricted to native speakers; international English corpora are already available (Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996).

Among other things, the native speaker has been used as a kind of linguist's Muse—the source of inspiration for linguistic descriptions. As with the poet, the linguist need not base descriptions on actual living people, yet some conception of a speaker who represents the source of a linguistic model has long been used as a conceptual device. Chomsky's syntactic descriptions were referenced to an idealised native speaker 'in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly' (Chomsky, 1965: 3). He implicitly situated his reader as sharing an ability to make intuitive grammatical judgements about language on the basis of being native speakers.

Such conceptions have been criticised as misleading abstractions. Paikeday (1985) dismissed the notion of an ideal native speaker as a nonsensical myth as fantastic as unicorns (ibid: 7) and observed that the native ability that people are born with is an aptitude for languages in general, not hardwiring for a particular language (ibid: 35). While the birthplace of a person is likely to be the predominant influence on which language(s) a person acquires, native acquisition is usually conditional on the person remaining in the language environment, and receiving education in that language. A

tacit acknowledgement of this is the qualification *educated* sometimes added to native speaker when considering the suitability of someone to make linguistic judgements or teach the language. Perhaps *nurtured speaker* would be a more suitable term.

The retention of, and emphasis on, the term native speaker in the context of EIL implicitly situates native speakers in a position of power, since to be a native speaker of a language is to be a stakeholder in the language. English is not only a widely used language, but one that is used in particularly prestigious international contexts. Bryson (1990) celebrates the dominance of English as follows:

> *...English has become the most global of languages, the lingua franca of business, science, education, politics and pop music. For the airlines of 157 nations (out of 168 in the world), it is the agreed international language of discourse. In India there are more than 3,000 newspapers in English. The six member nations of the European Free Trade Association conduct all their business in English, even though not one of them is an English speaking country.* (Bryson, 1990: 12)

While Bryson readily credited the prevalence of English to such intangible factors as the richness of English vocabulary (ibid: 13) he implied later that the number of competent speakers may be over inflated and argued instead that 'English is the most studied and emulated language in the world' (ibid: 182). Bryson also acknowledged that English is 'one of the world's great growth industries' (ibid: 13) but rather than relating this to the commercial spread of ELT (see Phillipson, 1992a: 173-222) used the phrase

metaphorically. He suggested that:

> *The Japanese are particular masters of the art of seizing a foreign word and alternately beating it and aerating it until it sounds something like a native product.* (Bryson, 1990: 183)

And that:

> *...if the Japanese were required to pay a license fee for every [English] word they used, the American trade deficit would vanish.* (Bryson, 1990: 185)

Through the use of this playful metaphor, Bryson was thus able to emphasise (i) that the English language is owned by its native speakers; (ii) that the Japanese in using English have taken something which (like industrial design) did not really belong to them; (iii) that they have refashioned English words in a brutal way so that they are no longer really English. What is left out in this metaphor is the enormous financial cost required to educate Japanese people in English so that they can acquire this English in the first place.

The spread of English is a topic that offers a potential mixture of pride and dismay to its native speaker heirs. Pride that the language has been so widely adopted and used around the world, but dismay that it has been freely adapted to local needs (Halliday, 1975; Honey, 1997). 'Spread' as Widdowson (2003: 45-46) has pointed out, is an ergative verb and therefore can be used to disguise or make plain who is doing the

spreading. So, he surmised that:

> *...you can take up one of two positions on the matter: either that the spread of the language just happened in the natural way of things or that somebody, some persons known or unknown did the spreading.* (Widdowson, 2003: 45)

Widdowson deftly dismissed the latter possibility on the basis that 'attempts at linguistic imperialism fail, and are doomed to do so from the start because of the nature of language' (*ibid*: 46), and therefore presumably took the position that the spread of English to a position of what Crystal (1997) has called 'international language dominance' (1997: 7) *just happened in the natural way of things.* However, this apparently flippant refusal to engage in a historical discussion of the circumstances may simply reflect disappointment that in spite of the efforts to promote English as a hegemonic tool, the English language has been taken and adapted to local needs. Crystal summed up this feeling in a way which reveals the possessive attitude that some native speakers may have towards the English language:

> *If English is your mother tongue, you may have mixed feelings about the way English is spreading around the world. You may feel pride, that your language is the one which has been so successful; but your pride may be tinged with concern, when you realise that people in other counties may not want to use language in the way that you do and are changing it to suit themselves.*
>
> Crystal (1997: 1-2)

Of course it is not only non-native speakers who change English to suit themselves, perhaps all speakers of any language do to some extent. However, in order for English to function as an international *lingua franca,* shared organisation and usage of language needs to be firmly established.

In order to make English accessible to learners, but also to make it possible to use English as a common means of international communication, it is desirable that there is a standard language. Learners may tend to assume that this standard is the language spoken by native speakers. As one Japanese student taking an English course as part of her degree in architecture at a Japanese university put it in an essay on the topic:

> *...there are unique dialects such as Akita dialect, Okinawa dialect[1] and there is dialect for common language. English born country, British or American English is appropriate when I think that standard language for English is necessary in the same way.* (Author's data)

For this student the unwritten alternative to British or American standards was presumably Japanese English. There is some truth in this because British and American English have standard varieties which are often used as the target when creating pedagogies. However, it is questionable how far either of these varieties should be the

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[1] Akita and Okinawa are two areas of Japan known for their strong regional dialects. Akita is a northern rice growing prefecture, and Okinawa the Southernmost cluster of islands.

target for learners. One of her classmates suggests that the attainment of native level proficiency may be setting his sights too high.

> *No doubt, if we can use English like American or British, we can conversation with earth people, and take communication enough. It is very great. But it is very difficult to us.* (Author's data)

These student perspectives nevertheless suggest that native speaker varieties, particularly American and British may be considered desirable because they are believed to be the standard varieties and presumably in widespread use. However in the case of British English, Trudgill (1999) estimated that the standard variety is used by only 12-15% of British English speakers. The percentage is considerably lower for speakers who pronounce it with a Received Pronunciation (RP) accent, the textbook 'standard' pronunciation model (see Roach, 1991).

Some scholars have shown that other varieties of English also have their own legitimate histories both in Britain (Wales, 2002) and abroad (Gordon and Sudbury, 2002; Mesthrie, 2002; Trudgill, 2002). The reason these other varieties get overlooked is that they are not the dialects of those who had the power to create a standard. Milroy (2002: 19-24) has also argued that the similarities between Old, Middle and Modern English have been exaggerated to give English a literary pedigree it does not deserve. Kachru

(1990: 88) points out that the 'norm' provided by representatives of the Raj was not always the standard variety of English. Native varieties may continue to hold prestige but models of English as a world language suggest that there is a need for a standard English which is not the exclusive property of native speakers.

An important influence in the reconceptualisation of the native speaker has been the development of models of English as a world language. A variety of models have appeared emphasising that:

(i) English has spread and developed distinct local varieties that have outgrown the parent native varieties (Strevens, 1980: 86);

(ii) non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers and are on the increase (Bailey and Görlag, 1983, inside cover; Kachru, 1992, 356);

(iii) there is an emerging variety of international English which functions as a lingua franca in international contexts (McArthur, 1987: 11; Modiano,1999a: 25; 1999b: 10);

(iv) proficiency in EIL is a goal over and above native proficiency Modiano, 1999b: 10).

The key point that all these models share is the displacement of the native speaker as the ultimate authority on the English language (see also McArthur, 1998). Taken cumulatively as they are set out above, the implication is that British or American English should, or already is being replaced by EIL. Though, what this EIL consists of

in practice is a matter in need of more concrete linguistic description (but see Jenkins, 2000). In all these models there is also an implicit tension between what is presented as the 'core' that is the standard language recognised by speakers from different linguistic backgrounds; and the Englishes that make up the language as a whole. One important implication for language teaching is that all English speakers (native and non-native) who wish to communicate in international contexts need to be aware of and able to use this core as distinct from their own local variety. Failure to recognise and be able to use this core is as likely to result in communication problems for native speakers as it is for non-natives. At the same time speakers in international contexts are likely to benefit from a broader knowledge of English varieties. An inclusive pedagogy of EIL might seek not to exclude localised usages, but rather to include common usages associated with particular countries. This may sound rather idealistic, but the inclusion of popular English expressions used by Japan's Asian neighbours in courses in EIL does not seem out of the question. Studies such as Honna's (2002) guide to the usage of English in Asia or papers published in *English Today* or *World Englishes* could be used to develop such pedagogy.

The native speaker is a concept that has been, and continues to be, central to applied linguistics, yet it is also one that has been manipulated to suit the theory in vogue at the time and remains problematic. The idealisation of the native speaker implicit in syntactic grammar, and the modelling of L2 learner development each recast the native speaker in accordance with their respective models of language and language learning. However, as with perhaps any approach which focuses exclusively on the native

speaker as its model, they are problematic because they fail to acknowledge what a learner from a particular L1 brings with them to the task. While considerable progress has been made in linguistics in moving to a better understanding of what constitutes native speaker usage through corpus work and discourse analysis, EIL appears to have the potential to undermine native speaker status altogether. But how are these changing images of the native speaker reflected in ELT textbooks? What happens to representations of the native speaker when they are localised in the form of government authorised textbooks? These questions will be addressed in the following sections.

3.0   The native speaker in ELT textbooks

Man: What is my future? What is going to happen?

Fortune Teller: You will meet an interesting woman.

M: An interesting woman?

FT: Yes. Very beautiful but she won't be rich.

M: Tell me more.

FT: She will be American.

M: American? Will I find true love?

FT: Sorry. You're not going to love her, but you will learn a lot of English.

(Helgeson, Brown, & Kahny, 2000: 72)

This model conversation from an ELT textbook illustrates how ideas about native speakers are embedded into pedagogic materials. In a few lines the conversation implicitly evokes an idealised English teacher who is a native English speaker (ideally

American?), who is interesting, beautiful and an effective teacher despite a low salary. Indeed, the conversation hints that the teacher may be so attractive that the learner might be in danger of developing a romantic attachment to her. While it could be read in other ways, these assumptions are required to appreciate the intended humour. More generally, it has been suggested that ELT textbooks marketed by Western publishers to second or foreign language learners abroad have 'hidden curricula' (Canagarajah, 1999: 85); in other words that the pedagogical materials teach not only the English language, but promote a native speaker ideology in a way which may be at odds with the local culture. Canagarajah (1999: 85-101) illustrated this with reference to his own teaching situation in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. By drawing on such evidence as the students' textbook doodles, he highlighted the mismatch between the traditional but war torn world of his students and the affluent permissive world portrayed in the text. He identified the following as areas where the subliminal messages of the text seemed to be missing their mark:

1) Grammar is presented autonomously obscuring its own ideological origins and ignoring the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
2) Native speaker 'Western urbanised' culture is treated as a familiar norm.
3) Patterns of conversation and genres of talk represent discourse conventions of the West.
4) Narratives in the textbooks employ partisan values.

(based on Canagarajah, 1999: 87).

According to Canagarajah (ibid) these features taken together 'represent a hidden

curriculum of controversial values and ideologies' (ibid), a kind of Trojan horse—offering great promise but wreaking havoc in periphery educational contexts. Anderson (2003) and Baxter (2003) summarised in Holliday (2005) illustrated how this ideological control can extend into classroom methodologies. The values and ideologies depend on situating the native speaker as the linguistic and cultural target of English learners. In a more recent paper Canagarajah (2002) has suggested that these internal expressions of native speaker ideology are reflected in the external ideological forces at work in the ELT market in general:

> *Just as the technologically and economically developed nations of the West (or centre) hold an unfair monopoly over less developed (or periphery) communities in industrial products, similar relations characterize the marketing of language teaching methods.* (Canagarajah, 2002: 135)

In Canagarajah's (1999) situation in Sri Lanka textbooks were donated. They were the only material available, and therefore, in a sense, enforced on local teachers and students. The textbook discussed was clearly not designed with his students in mind and deconstructive adaptation of the kind proposed by Canagarajah (1999: 173-197) is the only realistic solution to resisting the native speaker oriented ideology. The suggestion that economic and technological development and the ideological domination go hand in hand with the marketing of ELT raises the question of how these influences are played out in non-Western economically and technologically developed countries such as Japan.

3.1 ELT Textbooks in Japan

In wealthy nations like Japan, where learning English is popular, English textbooks are big business. In even the smallest bookshop, it is possible to find a wide range of English textbooks published by local educational publishers. Japanese teachers of English generally use textbooks by these publishers, which contain translations and explanations in Japanese. In contrast Western ELT textbooks, which are only to be found in the foreign books sections of large bookstores in major cities, are monolingual and generally adopted by native English speaker teachers (NESTs) in universities or language schools. Even so it has been estimated that the market for these ELT textbooks in Japan is worth some €307 million (£212 million) annually or 65% of the total Asian market (AEP, 2002). The fact that NESTs are effectively the target users may help explain the prominence of native speakers in these textbooks. Nevertheless publishers and writers have taken different approaches to representing the native speaker, often reflecting their approach to marketing.

The British publisher MacMillan set up MacMillan Language House (MLH) in 1986 as a Japan based producer of ELT materials, including those by locally situated authors, aimed specifically at Japanese learners. Kenny and Woo (2004) provide Japan oriented vocabulary, and help Japanese learners talk about familiar topics. Audio material includes a mix of native and non-native voices. The principle model is nevertheless American as captured by the title of the book "Nice Talking With You Too" and target expressions such as "How ya doin'?" or "You're kidding!" Other publications by (MLH) focus directly on the issue of World Englishes (Goodwright and Olearski, 1998; McLean, 1995). Goodwright and Olearski (ibid) offer a content based course which

consists of potted histories of English speaking countries followed by writing and listening extracts in the local variety of English. There are also occasional offerings from British/US publishers which specifically target Japan (e.g. Lee, Yoshida and Ziolkowski, 2000), and many textbooks are piloted or reviewed in Japan. Nevertheless, the flagship products of mainstream publishers (e.g. Richards, Hull and Proctor, 2005; Soars and Soars, 2001) continue to focus on the native speaker. The 'international corpus' of English developed by Cambridge University Press for *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten and Sandiford: 2005) is actually a corpus of American English. A unit in this textbook entitled 'Favorite people' [sic] focuses on Western celebrities and model conversations inform readers that the American actor Sean Penn is 'good looking' (McCarthy et al, 2005: 22); the New York based country singer Norah Jones has an 'amazing voice' (ibid) and that the American tennis duo the Williams sisters are 'always exciting' (ibid). One of the grammar practice mini dialogues runs as follows:

> A: *Nicole Kidman's new movie is really great.*
>
> B: *Yeah? Her movies are always good.*
>
> A: *I know she's my favorite actor.*   (McCarthy et al, 2005:23)

All of these celebrities are illustrated with photographs to emphasise their glamour and importance. The expressions used provide elementary structures suitable for low level learners to comment on their favourite celebrities (which in the classes I teach are dominated by Japanese names). In spite of this the meta-message of textbooks like this seems to be that the native speaker is both the linguistic and cultural target of English language learning. Admittedly the American cultural element is attractive to some

Japanese learners, but the same basic problem identified by Canagarajah (op. cit) remains; the learners own cultural identity is ignored. English is effectively presented not so much as a language for international communication, but as the language of an internationally dominant NES culture, emanating from the United States.

Publishers are well aware these days that ideological content can potentially alienate students, but the standards applied to resolving this issue may have more to do with Western notions of decorum than local needs. Gray (2002) explains how consideration of ideological features has become an institutionalised part of textbook production through the use of guidelines on 'inclusivity' and 'inappropriacy' that writers are obliged to follow. Inclusivity refers to the need for a kind of positive discrimination in balancing the race and sex of the characters appearing in textbooks. Inappropriacy guidelines lay out the rules for political correctness so as not to offend, which include proscription of what is informally referred to as PARSNIP (politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms and pork). The presence of such guidelines presumably shows sensitivity on the part of publishers to criticisms of stereotyping and cultural bias in earlier textbooks, however this cosmetic censorship may ultimately be just another example of the imposition of native speaker oriented cultural values. Local publishers should be in a much better position to address these needs. What then would be the implication for representations of the native English speaker and the associated culture?

4.0 The native speaker in Japanese High School textbooks

In April 2005 there were a number of anti-Japan demonstrations in China (Japan Times 2005a). One of the issues said to have spurred the anti-Japanese feeling was the revision

of a Japanese junior high school history textbook which both glossed over Japan's atrocities during World War II and asserted Japan's claim over some disputed islands (Nakamura, 2005 Japan Times 2005b). However, history textbooks are not the only educational materials to play a part in the formulation of national identity in Japan. English language textbooks also offer images of Japan and its relationship with the outside world. This is done in a number of different ways. Sometimes this is implicit in the choice of texts, or the use of illustrations, at other times the message itself is quite explicit, but given as a grammatical example.

After World War II, English was closely associated with the importation of Western scientific knowledge. School textbooks accordingly focus on the glorification of Western technology and by implication its native speakers. Consider the following example:

The population of the world has trebled in the past 160 years. The farmers of the last centuries could not have fed the world of today.

Two centuries ago farmers sowed and reaped with hand implements. McCormick invented his horse-drawn reaping machine in 1834. Now in great wheat fields, airplanes sow seeds and giant combines, drawn by tractors and driven by gasoline engines, reap and thresh the grain in one operation. Even if the early farmers could have grown such wheat crops they could not have moved or stored them.

Besides the great wheat fields of Canada and the United States were then the land of Buffaloes and Indians. The wheat fields of Argentina and Australia

were unknown. Corn the most valuable crop in the United States was known

merely as something the Indians grew. (Hagiwara, 1953: 72)

Unlike the history books which have been criticised for offering a Japan oriented perspective, this typical early post-occupational English textbook offered one that glorified American technological progress, partly because it derives from an American source, but also presumably because Japan also aspired to adopting this technology. American agricultural technology was represented as being the key to feeding the world. The superiority of the 'great wheat fields' of the United States was explicitly contrasted with the primitive lifestyle of the 'wild Indians'. Since coming into the hands of the white man even the crop itself has implicitly been elevated from 'merely something the wild Indians grew' to 'the most valuable crop in the United States.'

Sometimes the English language itself is represented as a kind of superior technology. A passage on the story of the alphabet explains:

Before the invention of the alphabet, people had very clumsy ways of writing. The Egyptians had to draw pictures. The Babylonians made writing like chicken tracks. (Hagiwara, 1953: 3)

Japanese students must surely reflect that Japanese like Egyptian, is a pictograph based script. Does this mean that it too is primitive? Another approach to emphasising the superiority of English is provided by the *Bright English* series (Yano, Simada and Ikeda, 1956a; 1956b; 1956c). It features the map in Figure 1.

Figure 1
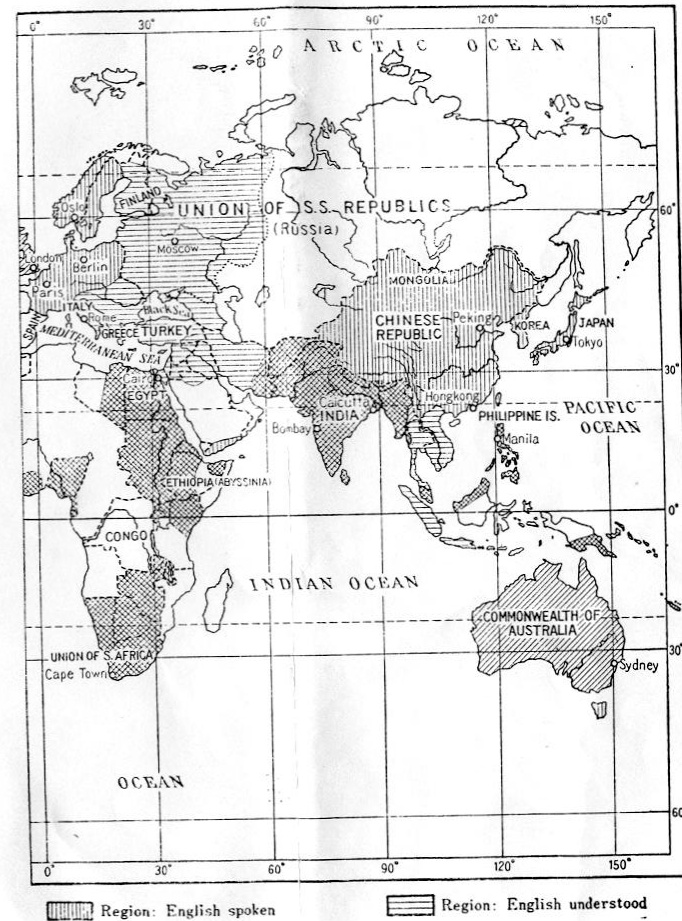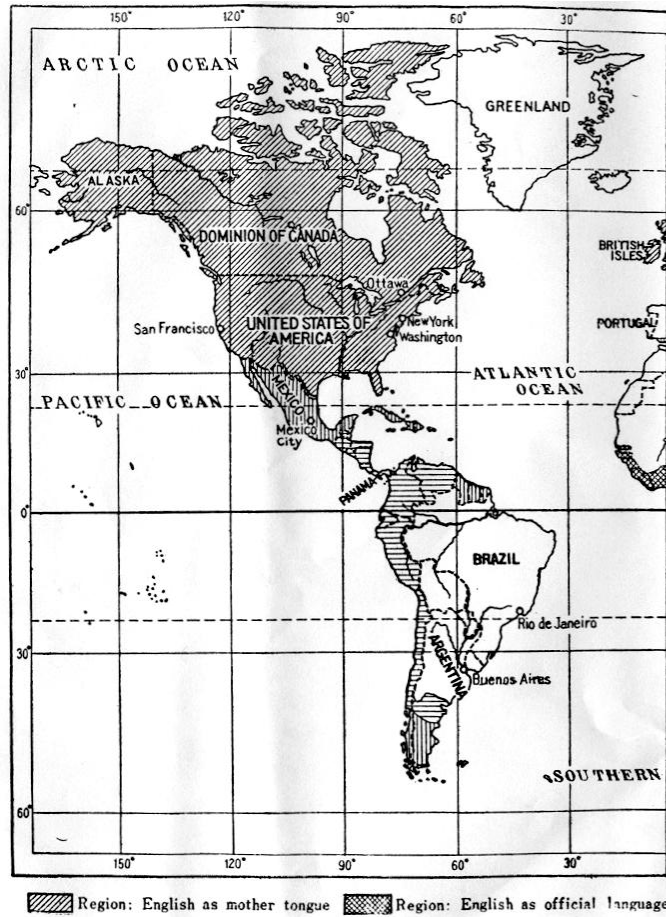
Map of the English speaking world as it appeared in *Bright English* (Yano, Simada and Ikeda, 1956a; 1956b; 1956c)

This map appears on the inside cover. It is shaded to illustrate the spread and use of English in the world on the following scale: 1) English is spoken as a mother tongue; 2) English as an official language; 3) English spoken; 4) English understood. Ideological messages are also given explicitly in the form of grammatical examples:

> We learn a foreign language with two objects: one is *to come into contact with foreign culture through it* and the other is *to make our own culture known to foreigners.* (Yano, Simada and Ikeda, 1956c: 67 [italics in original])

On the one hand English is for learning about other cultures, but at the same time English is essential for diplomatic self-promotion—to teach the rest of the world about Japan. This is a similar sentiment to the official English policy of the Japanese education ministry today:

> *For children living in the 21*st *century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language. In addition, English abilities are important in terms of linking our country with the rest of the world, obtaining the world's understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation.* (Toyama, 2003)

Far from indicating a preoccupation with English native speaker culture this statement is a reminder that the English language is an important medium for securing Japan's place in the international community. Moreover, English is not talked about as the language of the West, or the US but as 'a common international language'. The

domination of English is also mentioned in Unit 10 of the text:

> *The English language, which is the mother tongue of the English people, is spoken not only in Britain, but also in the United States, Canada, Australia and many other parts of the world. It is more widely used than any other language. **It is** not Esperanto but English **that** is actually used as an international language today.*
>
> (Yano et al. 1956c: 69 emphases in original)

This passage highlights the dominance of English as a world language, with Britain as the historical source. Despite the implicit emphasis on the importance of English and its native speakers the message is not necessarily one that calls on Japanese people to adopt native speaker culture and modes of thought. Unit 11 of the same text opens with a picture of what appear to be some Japanese students staring at a world map and the comment:

> *The Western way of thinking and customs and manners are so different from ours that it is very difficult for the East and West to understand each other thoroughly.* (Yano et al. 1956c: 72)

As was discussed in Module 1, this belief that Japanese culture exists in opposition to Western culture is a central feature of *Nipponjinron,* and as McVeigh (2002: 148-179) has pointed out, this definition of the outside world through language teaching may also be a way of emphasising national difference.

In more recent textbooks, conversations focus self-consciously on the relationship between Japanese people and English native speakers. During the 1980's economic boom ('bubble economy') when tourism abroad took off, conversations like the following appear:

> *Bob: We see more and more tourists from Japan.*
>
> *Ichiro: That's true. Yesterday, when I visited Golden Gate Park, I felt as if I were back in Japan. There were so many of them in groups.*
>
> *Bob: Isn't that funny? Why do Japanese tourists travel in a group?*
>
> (Hazumi, 1988: 73)

Ichiro explains that tours are a cheap and efficient way to travel and that people feel safer with a group who speak the same language, even on honeymoon. However, he suggests that Japan is also beginning to show the effects of foreign influence.

> *Ichiro: ...young people today are getting more independent in doing things.*
>
> *Bob: That's the American way. We value independence and individuality.*
>
> *Ichiro: And the Japanese value harmony among themselves.*
>
> *Bob: Can't we share these opposing characteristics?* (Ibid)

The suggestion that Americans and Japanese may have things to share is represented as a result of cultural difference. The American way is set up as the antithesis of the Japanese way. Figure 2 shows the illustration which accompanies the dialogue.

Figure 2

Illustration to conversation about Japanese tourists in Hazumi, 1988: 71.

Both picture and dialogue associate the learning of English with the study of the native speaker, who is non-Japanese. The illustration to the dialogue between Ichiro and Bob visually contrasts the orderly Japanese group (shown in the three frames on the left) with the disorganised American one (bottom right). As no labels are provided, the reader is expected to identify the Japanese (including Ichiro) by their black hair in contrast to the American 'blondes'. Both picture and dialogue seem to invite reflection on what it means to be Japanese.

Visually today's high school English textbooks have become more colourful and often play out interactions between home stay or exchange students and AET teachers.

Eri: Is my English good enough to make friends?

Ms. White: Yuji, don't worry. Just smile and say 'Hi!' in a cheerful voice.

Eri: That's easy. Hi, Ms. White.

Ms. White: Good! Please try that when you meet your host family.

Eri: I will.

Ms. White: They'll give you a big hug, too

Eri: A big hu ...?

Ms. White: A big hug. They'll wrap their arms around you like this.

Eri: Wow! I don't know what to do.

Ms. White: Just relax and accept it. It's just a different way of communication.   (Negishi, M. et al, 2002: 26)

Such texts reflect an ongoing fictional narrative of the native speaker that posits a

relationship between Japan and the outside world. This outside world is one generally dominated by native speakers of English including fictional counterparts (like Ms. White) to the real native speakers who now teach in Japan's high schools or play host to Japanese students abroad. These dialogues show an enduring self-conscious sense of anxiety about outside perceptions. Despite Ms. White's reassurance, the implication is that it is normal for Japanese students to feel inadequate about their English ability. Some learners may be happy to embrace both English and its foreign native speakers. Others may sense that English proficiency constitutes a threat to their national identity.

ELT textbooks have sometimes become the model for Japanese high school textbooks. However, these borrowings have been carefully adapted to suit the Japanese context. The style of the picture dictionary section in *Open Door* (Suenaga, 2002) is almost identical to that of the *Oxford Picture Dictionary* (OPD) (Parnwell, 1990). Although the layout in *Open Door* is remarkably similar to OPD the choice of vocabulary has been Japanised. Pages for sport and hobbies (Parnwell, 1990: 92) (Figure 3) have instead become the names of Japanese school club activities (Suenaga, 2002: 68-69) (Figure 4). For some pictures there is no equivalent in OPD. A summer festival depicts a highly traditional scene, but also one very familiar to students (Figure 5). English equivalents are given for such culturally specific items as *mikoshi* (a portable shrine carried at festivals); *zouri* (Japanese sandals); *sensu* (a Japanese folding fan); and *hachimaki* (a bandana traditionally worn at festivals).

Figure 3

チームスポーツ

野球	**Baseball**	ソフトボール	**Softball**	バスケットボール/	**Basketball**
審判/主審/	1. umpire	ソフトボールの球	10. softball	籠球	
アンパイアー/		野球帽	11. cap	バックボード/背板	19. backboard
アンパイヤー		グラブ/グローブ	12. glove	バスケットネット	20. basket
捕手/キャッチャー	2. catcher			バスケットボールの球	21. basketball
キャッチャーマスク	3. catcher's mask	アメリカンフットボール	**Football**		
キャッチャーミット	4. catcher's mitt	フットボールの球	13. football	バレーボール/	**Volleyball**
バット	5. bat	ヘルメット	14. helmet	排球	
ヘルメット	6. batting helmet			バレーボールの球	22. volleyball
打者/バッター	7. batter	ラクロス	**Lacrosse**	ネット	23. net
		顔面保護マスク	15. face guard		
リトルリーグ	**Little League**	ラクロスのスティック	16. lacrosse stick	サッカー/蹴球	**Soccer**
	Baseball			ゴールキーパー	24. goalie
リトルリーグの選手	8. Little Leaguer	アイスホッケー	**Ice Hockey**	ゴール	25. goal
ユニフォーム	9. uniform	パック/ゴム製円盤	17. puck	サッカーボール	26. soccer ball
		ホッケーのスティック	18. hockey stick		

Sports as illustrated in *The New Oxford Picture Dictionary: English-Japanese* *(Oxford American English).* **(Parnwell, 1990: 92).**

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Figure 4

部活動（→LESSON 3）

【運動部】

① badminton club　バドミントン部
② baseball team　野球部
③ basketball team　バスケットボール部
④ gymnastics club　体操部
⑤ Japanese archery ciub　弓道部
⑥ rugby team　ラグビー部
⑦ soccer team　サッカー部
⑧ swimming club　水泳部
⑨ table tennis club　卓球部
⑩ tennis club　テニス部
⑪ track and field club　陸上部
⑫ volleyball team　バレーボール部

Club activities (sports) as illustrated in *Open Door to Oral Communication*. Suenaga, 2002: 68.

Figure 5

夏祭り・キャンプ (→LESSON 4)

【夏祭り】

② fireworks

⑧ night booth

⑨ pinwheel

① cotton candy

⑩ portable shrine

⑤ Japanese fan

③ goldfish

④ headband

⑥ Japanese sandals
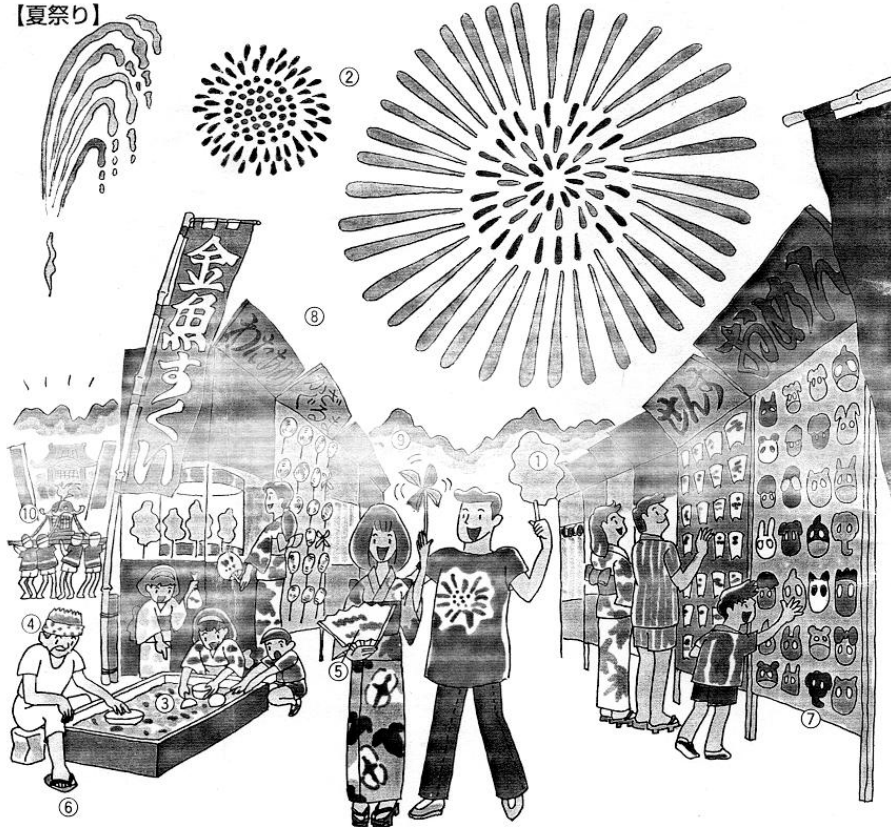
⑦ mask

① cotton candy 綿菓子
② fireworks 花火
③ goldfish 金魚
④ headband はち巻き
⑤ Japanese fan せんす

⑥ Japanese sandals ぞうり
⑦ mask お面
⑧ night booth 夜店
⑨ pinwheel かざぐるま
⑩ portable shrine みこし

70—PICTURE DICTIONARY

Summer festival as illustrated in *Open Door to Oral Communication.* Suenaga, 2002: 70.

Localizing vocabulary in this way borrows the ELT technology but replaces the native speaker world with a Japanese one. It also implicitly prepares Japanese learners to explain Japanese culture to the outside world. This does not mean that the native speaker is excluded altogether, but representations of the native speaker are managed to suit a Japanese perspective. Sometimes this means offering idealised representations of visiting native Assistant English Teachers (AET) or homestay families. *English Now 1* (Ishii, 2002), for example, narrates the progress of a fictional model AET called Catherine Taylor who is everything the program organisers could wish an AET to be (Ishii, 2002: 12-13). Catherine is enthusiastic about Japanese culture and provides positive cultural information about her own country through the description of her father's work as a flying doctor. Common topics include popular Hollywood movies, foreign sporting heroes or moral exemplums like Mother Teresa, themes which add a touch of glamour and exoticism to English and its native speakers. Most high school textbooks include at least one native speaker in the list of credits. One of the few examples of a Japanese HS textbook principally authored by a native speaker is *Empathy* (Bowers, 2002). This text approaches the representation of foreigners differently by making them the focus of a lesson entitled: 'What can we do to support foreign residents in our community?' (Bowers, 2002: 80-87). In this lesson readers are exposed to the voices of foreign residents in Japan such as a Filipino woman who experienced problems adjusting to life in Japan. There is also a 'letter to the editor' by a new resident who suggests a need for more translation into community languages of everyday information such as garbage collection schedules. Finally, the lesson leads into a discussion of how such foreign residents could be assisted and a survey reporting

difficulties experienced by foreign residents.

One of the advantages of locally produced texts is that English can be taught in relation to the local context. However, while there is a trend towards Japanisation of textbooks, the native speaker remains a prominent icon, often set up as an antithesis to Japaneseness. Much has been borrowed from the glamorisation of native speakers in global textbooks, but the icon has been reconfigured to suit a Japanese vision of international relations which places more emphasis on native English speaking countries than its Asian neighbours. This is perhaps a misguided approach when one considers the importance of EIL in Japan as the language for communicating with Asia and the rest of the world.

5.0   Conclusion

The myth of the native speaker is one that has evolved within applied linguistics and been influential in the promotion of ELT. Although the native speaker has continued to occupy a central role it has been challenged from a number of perspectives. Most pertinent among these challenges is the growing awareness of EIL. The principle implication of EIL is that the spread of English does not necessarily implicate the expansion of native speaker influence, but rather that English is now increasingly influenced by it non-native users. One sign of this is the development of local Englishes around the world. Another is the use of English as a lingua franca in international contexts, where no native speakers are present. Both the recognition of local varieties and EIL as a lingua franca amount to the acknowledgement that English can only really come into its own for international users when it is allowed to adapt to local demands.

Nevertheless, in spite of the academic recognition of the arguments for the importance of EIL, the native speaker has remained a central concept both in applied linguistics and language teaching. Even though, publishers seem to be well aware that ELT textbooks giving off the wrong ideological signals are a potential source of cultural conflict (hence the use of things like the PARSNIP censorship formula discussed above) the native speaker has remained a central icon in ELT textbooks. There still seems to be a belief that glamorising the native speaker is the way to sell textbooks, and even the English language itself. The consideration of the native speaker in Japanese high school textbooks suggests that the native speaker has equal validity in Japan, but the treatment of the native speaker itself has become an example of the way in which a cultural icon can be transformed once it integrated into another cultural context.

Among other things, the high school textbook seems to have become a place where reflections on native speakers and their relationship with Japanese people are played out. Many textbooks draw on a familiar cast of AETs and home-stay families to reflect the cross-cultural communications taking place between Japanese and native speakers of English as representatives of the outside world. These relations are trivialised and represented as unproblematic interactions with idealised foreigners from outside Japan—the foreign Other. In contrast Bowers' text *Empathy* (2002) in its chapter on helping foreigners in Japan suggests that English speakers and foreigners are not only to be found in exotic locations such as Hawaii, London, New York or Sydney but actually often much closer at hand. In this way, shifting the focus away from the glamorous native speakers abroad to foreigners close at hand Bowers is able to offer yet another twist on native speaker myth.

But how does this symbolic myth relate to the realities of the native speaker experience or the cross-cultural relationship that is underway, every time a native teacher steps into the English classroom in Japan? This is a question that will be explored in Paper 2 which concerns the 'reality' of the native English speaker.

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PAPER 2

LINGUISTIC IMPERIALIST OR CULTURAL AMBASSADOR?

THE NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHER IN JAPAN

By

Patrick James Kiernan

This paper consists of approximately 12,000 words

Contents

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GLOSSARY

AET	Assistant English Teacher
EIL	English as an International Language
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
IRET	Institute for Research in Teaching English (Tokyo)
JACET	The Japan Association of College English Teachers
JALT	The Japan Association for Language Teaching
JASELE	The Japan Society of English Language Education
JET	Japan Exchange and Teaching Program
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
NES	native English speaker
NEST	native English speaking teacher (pl. NESTs)
Non-NEST	non-native English speaking teacher (pl. non-NESTs)
TEFL	teaching English as a foreign language
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Japanese words

eikiawa	English conversation school
gaijin	abbreviated form of *gaikokujin* meaning foreigner which literally translates as 'outsider'

Note on transcripts

In the transcript extracts quoted in this paper all personal names and associated schools have been given aliases to protect anonymity. Rather than trying to represent details of the recording, the transcripts were prepared with a focus on readability. In this case three dots … are used to indicate a pause. Three dots in square brackets […] are used to indicate where a part of the transcript has been omitted. Square brackets [   ] are used to enclose explanatory comments.

1.0   Introduction

The native speaker is a myth but also a reality. The native speaker has been widely

discussed from a theoretical perspective (Davies, 2003; Honna and Takeshita, 1998;

Kachru, 1992; Paikeday; 1985; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992a; 1992b) however

consideration has tended to remain abstract because it has not concerned itself with

empirical research investigating the reality of native English speaking teachers (NESTs)

in specific educational contexts. In Part 1 of this module, I illustrated how the myth of the

native English speaker has permeated both applied linguistics and language teaching

materials. In this second part, I explore the reality of the native speaker as an element of

professional identity. The native speaker in Japan (as elsewhere around the world) has

become a reality in the sense that foreigners who come to Japan to teach English take on

the role of NEST. This experience often begins when teachers or would be teachers sign up

for the government sponsored Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET) to work as

Assistant English Teachers (AETs) in the public schooling system or respond to ads like

the following:

EFL POSITION

Exciting prospects exist for educated native English

speakers. Our benefits include paid training, a

competitive salary, career advancement and

accommodation assistance. Positions are available

for April/May/June 2006. Own visa preferred. Call

between 11 am and 7 pm.   (Japan Times, 2006: 10)

As can be seen from the ad, (placed by one of the largest English conversation schools or

'*eikaiwa'* in Japan) the principle qualification for the job is to be 'an educated native

English speaker'. Implicit in meeting this requirement are characteristics of the kind

identified by Davies (2003: 210) relating to language ability, though in practice nationality

and even race may be bound up with employee expectations. Ultimately though, what

constitutes native speakerness is a matter for potential applicants to interpret and their

employers to make final judgement on. In practice, the demand for NESTs has given rise to

a migrant or immigrant population of teachers (Sommers, 2006) mainly from the native

English speaking Centre countries. Research into this phenomena is still relatively sparse,

although some studies into NESTs in Japan in specific contexts have appeared in recent

years (e.g. McConnell, 2000 (AETs); Simon-Maeda, 2004 (Female college teachers)) and

Sommers (2002; 2006) has drawn attention to NESTs as a historical phenomenon in Asia.

Nevertheless there is a need to further explore the experiences of NESTs particularly as they relate to theoretical paradigms. This paper sets out to do this in relation to two potential theoretical constructs that of the Linguistic Imperialist and that of the Ambassador.

NESTs are sometimes seen as being the fortunate beneficiaries both of the growth of English as an international language and the emphasis within English Language Teaching (ELT) on the native speaker. As one guide book for would-be-teachers abroad has put it:

> *For whatever historical and economic reasons, English has come to dominate the world, the late twentieth century sequel to colonialism…This is bad news for all those Germans, Swedes and French Canadians who would like to market their language skills in order to fund a short or long stay abroad. But it is English speakers, mainly from Britain, Ireland, North American and Australia/New Zealand who accidentally find themselves in possession of such a sought after commodity.* (Griffith, 1997: 9)

Even though guidebooks of this kind are out to sell the language teaching experience, this extract tacitly supported Phillipson's (1992a; 1992b) claim that ELT is a kind of imperialist

exercise. Based on a historical review of the planning and development of ELT, Phillipson

(ibid) has argued that ELT was organised institutionally to reproduce the same kind of

relationship with countries learning English as the British had maintained with colonised

nations under British imperialist rule.

> *The architects of ELT considered the whole world their laboratory. Linguistic*
>
> *imperialism thus paralleled economic, political, and military imperialism. The*
>
> *structure of scientific and educational imperialism ensured that it was mainly in*
>
> *the Centre that expertise and theory building would accumulate (assisted by the*
>
> *brain drain which sucked Periphery scholars to the Centre). The structural*
>
> *relations between Centre and Periphery assured that all the beneficial spin-offs*
>
> *would accrue to the Centre as it built up research and training capacity…The*
>
> *international division of labour means that the Periphery supplies the raw*
>
> *materials, the Centre the finished products, whether manufactured goods, books*
>
> *or theories.*   (Phillipson, 1992a: 179)

The institutional network for this was provided by the universities who reorganised

themselves to train ELT professionals. Meanwhile the British Council provided links

between Centre and Periphery through its growing network of schools at home and abroad.

Japan has not been subjected to military colonial domination, and was not discussed by Phillipson (ibid), yet it has nevertheless acquired a reputation as a lucrative destination for native English speaking teachers. Indeed the guidebook quoted above claims that:

> *Just as diplomats hope for a posting to New York not Nigeria and international bankers would prefer to work in Switzerland rather than Swaziland, travelling teachers dream of Japan.* (Griffith, 1997: 315)

While the claim appears to be principally based on high rates of pay associated with the1980's economic boom ('the bubble' mentioned in part 1), Japan remains a major market for NEST employment. This raises the question of whether Japan might also be a victim of Linguistic Imperialism or whether there is some alternative explanation.

One possibility is that Japan may be promoting the use of NESTs in English teaching in accordance with an agenda of its own. This alternative role I will refer to is that of an 'Ambassador', that is to say a role which is more concerned with building diplomatic

relations than language learning per se. Particularly in the official policy discourse associated with the JET program, NESTs are represented as being involved in an exercise in Japanese diplomacy. One document explains that the creation of 'Japanese with English abilities' (Toyama, 2003:1) is seen as desirable for 'obtaining the world's understanding and trust, enhancing our [Japanese] international presence and further developing our nation [Japan]' (ibid). In other words while Phillipson (op. cit.) and others (Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) have suggested that the spread of ELT has been designed to benefit the inner circle native English speaking countries, there is another discourse in Japan whereby the adoption of English is seen as serving Japan's national interests. Just as the linguistic imperialist argument implies that the NESTs working abroad are building a cultural hegemony, in Japan NESTs are seen as an important part of the promotion of the understanding of Japan abroad. The introduction of native speakers in the form of ALTs working on the JET program has been described as curricular innovation to improve English language teaching (Wada, 2002). Meanwhile, this 'diplomatic' role is implicit not just in the job of teaching English but also in the invitation of foreigners to Japan in the first place. McConnell (2000) explains:

Conceived during the height of the U.S.-Japan trade war in the mid 1980s, the

proposal for the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program was first presented

as a 'gift' to the American delegation at the Ron-Yasu summit in 1986 between U.S.

President Ronald Regan and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

(McConnell, 2000: 1)

The first JET participants were indeed dubbed 'foreign ambassadors' both because of their symbolic role in Japan-US relations and the royal treatment they received during their first couple of days in Tokyo (McConnell, 2000: 2). Until recently JETs have also had a good pay package. McConnell (ibid) suggested that the program offered generous salaries in the hope of attracting young men and women from America's Ivy League schools who would return home to positions of influence having made positive connections with Japan.

Casting NESTs as ambassadors rather than teachers working within the system makes them into an outside Other. Some Japan based academics have argued, that the presence of NESTs in Japan amounts to a 'self-Orientalism through Occidentalism' McVeigh (2002: 148). In other words, the combined strategy of having Japanese teachers teach English through Japanese, with the use of foreigners who speak only English is seen as a way of building national identity, often at the expense of learning English (McVeigh, ibid; Bueno

and Caesar, 2003: 21).

The roles of Linguistic Imperialist and Ambassador may well be seen as two ends of a spectrum. Each role implies the promotion of English with a different ideological agenda. But how far have these roles influenced NESTs in practice? How do teachers come to terms with the implicit conflict in promoting their native language and culture and the expectation that they serve as diplomatic agents in Japan? The remainder of this paper explores the role and experience of the native speaker in relation to the constructs of Linguistic Imperialist and Ambassador through a historical overview of native English speaker influence in Japan, a discussion of a questionnaire administered to NESTs in Japan and follow-up interviews with some of the teachers.

2.0   The history of native English teacher in Japan

One of the earliest native speakers of English to arrive in Japan was William Adams (1564-1620), a navigator travelling on a Dutch vessel which was swept ashore by a typhoon at Bungo, (present day Usuki in Oita Prefecture) on the 19th of April 1600 (Corr, 1995). Adams impressed Tokugawa Ieyasu (the first Shogun of Japan) with his shipbuilding skills (European technology) but also his quick acquisition of Japanese and

sensitivity to Japanese etiquette. Through this Adams found himself highly favoured by Ieyasu, ultimately earning himself the honorary title of *Samurai* and allowing him to set up a British trading post at Hirado, north of Nagasaki (Farrington, 1992; Milton, 2004). As Britain was not a strong political force, Adams death was soon followed by the closing of the 'factory'.

The preferred foreign language of Japan has changed over time in accordance with Japan's perception of the power of its native speakers. Early on it was Chinese, during the 16th century Spanish and Portuguese, and through the period of isolation, Dutch. After an English ship attacked a Dutch storehouse in Nagasaki harbour, the shogun re-evaluated foreign language policy: six Dutch interpreters—*oranda-tsuuji*—were set to study English with the English speaking Dutch head assistant Jan Cook Bloomhoff (Stanlaw, 2004: 50). It is worth noting that (1) the need to learn English was stimulated by an act of aggression from the outside world; and (2) this first official appointment of an English teacher in Japan went to a foreign non-native teacher. Shortly after in 1811, the shogun set up the Official Office for the Translation of Barbarian Books into Japanese (the *Bansho-wage-goyoo*)—a name that nicely captures attitudes to the outside world at the time. It only took on the more dignified name of Institute for Western Learning/Institute for

Western Studies in 1855, following the arrival of Commodore Perry (Stanlaw, 2004: 51; TUFS, 2006).

On the 8th of July 1953 Commodore Perry sailed into Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay) with a fleet of ships and laid down demands to open up trading with Western powers. Japan initially refused the demands, but ultimately had little choice but to accept. They were well aware of the power of Western forces in the world at that time and must have been particularly shocked by the aggression demonstrated by the British in the Opium wars and China's failure to resist (Beasley, 1999: 188-192). The Kanagawa Treaty was signed on March 31st 1854. Shortly after, Admiral Sir James Stirling (1791-1865) secured a similar treaty for Great Britain (Beasley, 1995). The signing of the treaties with the United States and Britain brought Japan out of isolation, but also woke it up to the pressures of the outside world. Japan responded with a return to Imperial rule in the form of the Meiji government, and a commitment to modernise or catch up with the West. English and its native speakers suddenly became very important.

The early traders developed a Japanese-English pidgin for communication known as the Yokohama dialect, though this was relatively short-lived due to the prestige associated with

the varieties spoken by native English speakers (Stanlaw, 2004: 57-59). Specialist advisors were brought over to aid the acquisition of Western science and technology. Sommers (2002) quoting Burke (1985) pointed out that due to the low level of English many of the foreign specialists themselves would have effectively been focused on a form of ELT, setting a precedent for the current NEST boom (McConnell, 2000: 11-12; Sommers, ibid).

Nevertheless, the role that English was to play in Japanese society was far from agreed. Intellectuals such as Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901) who visited the United States in 1860 were quick to recognise the need for Western science and English (Fukuzawa, 1980). Arinori Mori (1847-1889) the first Minister of Education, who had graduated from London University, even proposed replacing the Japanese language with English. Meanwhile xenophobes adopted the motto *sonnoo jooi* (revere the emperor and expel the barbarians) (Stanlaw, 2004: 56) and Sakuma Shozan (1811-1864) was assassinated by one of these radical anti-foreigner groups for advocating the opening of Japanese ports to foreigners.

At this point in the history of native English speakers in Japan, English clearly emerges as an important language as a direct result of the political and military dominance in the world by its native speakers—the British and Americans. However, even though Perry's

arrival in Japan amounted to forcing the doors of a country 'bitterly opposed to allowing foreigners into their land' (Reischauer, 2004: 95), it was the Japanese who subsequently took the initiative in inviting foreign experts so that they might be informed about the outside world and Western technology. Despite this, it is often suggested that Japan's failings with regard to English education (particularly the failure to develop oral communication) are due to a reticence in adopting the latest ELT technology or provide appropriate training (Sato, 2002). While this may be the case, there is at least one historical precedent that could be seen to cast a grave shadow of doubt over this question—Harold Palmer.

Harold Palmer (1877-1949) was invited to Tokyo in 1921 as Linguistic Advisor based on his reputation for developing ELT pedagogy and oral approaches in particular (Imura, 1997: 28-40). Palmer was later appointed as director of the Institute for Research in Teaching English (IRET) where he remained for 14 years developing and refining his approach which employed principles still relevant today (Howatt, 2004). During this time he attracted interest from local Japanese teachers and native speakers from Britain and America. Palmer also produced a prolific amount of work including his famous *Grammar of Spoken English* (Palmer, 1969) published in 1924. Smith (1999: 3) has pointed out that

much of his scholarly and pedagogic writing produced in Japan has received considerably more recognition in Japan, than elsewhere. No history of English language teaching in Japan could fail to mention Palmer, and the stature of his work is universally acknowledged.

In spite of this intellectual homage, his teaching practices seem to have failed to take root. Howatt (2004) recounted:

> *Traditional language teaching in Japan, as elsewhere, had been dominated by the study of grammar, and Palmer saw it as his task at IRET to shift the emphasis towards speech.* (Howatt, 2004: 267)

His methods for doing this proved remarkably successful. Even so, this statement might equally well apply to those entrusted with a mandate to reform English education today. Ironically in view of what he was recommending, Palmer's legacy appears to have remained more academic than practical. Howatt explains why:

> *To work properly, oral activities require both linguistic self-confidence and a*

certain amount of histrionic gusto. As a native speaker, Palmer did not have to

worry about the former, and as a keen amateur actor, he no doubt exhibited plenty

of the latter. To his Japanese colleagues, however, the task was rather more

daunting and many of them 'felt that the oral method was valid only when a native

English speaker conducted the class' (Yamamoto, 1978).

(Howatt, 2004: 267-268)

No doubt there are and have always been Japanese teachers who have the confidence and character to teach this kind of class, but the development of teaching methods that are more suited to flamboyant native speaker teachers may also have helped pigeonhole the territory of NESTs in Japan as primarily concerned with oral development.

While English served a variety of pragmatic uses as the language of the enemy during World War II, English education in Japan came to a standstill. Then, as with Commodore Perry, the arrival of General MacArthur (1880-1964) and the signing of the instruments of surrender brought a new influx of native English speakers. Once more pidgin varieties of English such as Bamboo English developed to cater to the occupational armies (Stanlaw, 2004: 70-73). Again English was needed for scientific and technical purposes, this time to

rebuild a war-torn nation. As Japan's wealth grew and education became more widespread, English gradually became both an educational need and a commodity.

English conversation schools or *eikaiwa*, including a number of corporations sprung up all over Japan offering classes taught by NESTs. Today one recent estimate puts the *eikaiwa* market at 710,000 (NOVA, 2006) which would suggest about 10,000 teachers. Meanwhile the JET program which began in 1987 with 848 college graduates from the US, Britain, Australia and New Zealand has swelled to 5,852 participants from 43 different countries (2005-2006 see CLAIR, 2006). Since the vast majority of these teach English this may indicate a trend towards a more international conception of native speakers. English teachers are to be found in schools from kindergarten to university graduate schools and educating corporate clients. Sommers (2006) quotes a 2002 survey which puts the total number of NESTs in Japan at 15,800.

The most important organisation for bringing NESTs together professionally in Japan is the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), which although open to Japanese and non-Japanese alike, is dominated by NESTs. JALT became an official organisation in 1977 but now has over 3,000 members and produces monthly (*The Language Teacher*) and

bi-annual (*JALT Journal*) refereed publications. The organisation's annual conference invites ELT celebrities from Centre countries and all major Western ELT publishers exhibit there. However, although an ex-pat dominated organisation like JALT could potentially be seen as an arm of linguistic imperialism, it seems more appropriate to view it as breaking with the imperialist assumption that knowledge about English and ELT is held by those at the Centre (Phillipson, op. cit.) Although much of the research and discussion appearing in JALT's journals and presented at the organisation's conferences is clearly influenced by paradigms associated with Britain, North America or Australia, JALT has also made it possible for teachers and researchers to address local issues. Moreover, in building ties with organisations overseas, JALT has made connections not with other centre-based organisations such as Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) but with other Asian organisations in South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and even Russia who share many of the same educational issues (see JALT, 2006). Other organisations for language teachers in Japan such as The Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) and The Japan Society of English Language Education (JASELE) conduct most of their business in Japanese and accordingly have few foreign members.

From a historical perspective then, there is some justification for suggesting that while

Japan has never been colonised by English speaking powers, the perceived need for

English in Japan has been directly related to the perception that native English speaking

countries represent a powerful force in the world. However, the spread and use of native

speakers in English education has been less a result of Linguistic Imperialist promotion by

the West and has more to do with Japan's active employment of NESTs. But how do

NESTs see their own role in Japanese education? Are they Linguistic Imperialists in

Ambassadorial clothing?

3.0   A research project into the role of NESTs in Japan

It has been suggested that the imperialist emphasis on a Centre-Periphery relationship is

maintained through a fundamental set of implicit principles which pervade the whole

academic content of ELT and applied linguistic knowledge (Phillipson, 1992a; Kachru,

1992). Phillipson has dubbed these principles 'The tenets of ELT' (1992a: 173-222), as

mentioned in Part 1 of this module. He specifically located them as being generated at such

early policy-making meetings as the Makerere conference (Makerere, 1961). The tenets are

as follows:

     1) English is best taught monolingually.

2)   The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.

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

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

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

<div align="right">(Phillipson, 1992a: 185-215)</div>

However, Phillipson (ibid) argued that, far from ensuring that effective language learning takes place, these tenets are misguided and instead only propagate false beliefs which favour the position of native speaker teachers, institutions, and publishers.

Kachru (1992) offers his own set of fallacies which underline how out of touch a native speaker oriented view of English language teaching may appear to those in the Periphery where English is largely used for international or intra-national purposes. He lists the following misconceptions:

1)   That in the Outer and Expanding Circles English is essentially learned to communicate with native speakers.

2)   That English is learned as a tool to understand and teach American or British

cultural values.

3) That the goal of learning and teaching English is to adopt the native models

of English.

4) That international non-native varieties of English are essentially

'interlanguages' striving to achieve native-like character.

5) That native speakers of English as teachers, administrators, and materials

developers provide a serious input in the global teaching of English.

6) That diversity and variation in English is necessarily an indicator of

linguistic decay.   (Kachru, 1992: 357-359)

Kachru argues that the internationalisation of English means that these native speaker

oriented assumptions are just not true. English is increasing used by non-native speakers to

communicate with other non-native speakers considerably reducing their importance.

But what of the native speaker teachers themselves, do they too believe in the tenets of

ELT? If ELT is based on an imperialist ideology, then are the teachers who employ the

methodologies (witting or unwitting) Linguistic Imperialists? If they are not then what

exactly is the role of NESTs? The Linguistic Imperialist model implies that linguistic

power relationships reproduce economic ones. If this is the case then is the role of NESTs in a strong economic country like Japan somehow different? One way into this problem seemed to be to try to find out how much currency Phillipson's tenets of ELT have with NESTs in Japan, and how they see their own position. The following sections will discuss the results of research carried out to explore this problem.

3.1 Method

A questionnaire was developed for distribution to NESTs in Japan. The final version consisted of three sections: the first section elicited basic biographical information regarding the teacher's background, teaching experience, and current situation. The second section contained a number of open questions of a very general nature such as 'What do you like about Japan?' and 'What is the role of native English teachers in Japan today?' The final section consisted of a series of statements, based on Phillipson's tenets discussed above, but expressed in terms of the situation in Japan. These were set alongside some alternative views derived from the literature that has been critical of the native speaker, including Kachru (op. cit.) For this section respondents were asked to reply using a five point Likert-scale that ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, with a middle response of *neither agree nor disagree* to allow for respondents to register ambivalence to

the statement itself. The questionnaire was put online and advertised on a Japan based ELT

emailing list (see ETJ, 2006). Out of a total of 2,300 members registered on the ETJ list 71

responses were received over a three week period. At the end of the questionnaire there

was a request for participants to offer further cooperation by taking part in an interview

discussed later on here.

3.2   Section1: Respondent data

The respondents taught in a variety of contexts, and age and experience varied

considerably (Table 1). Respondents were 56% male to 44% female. Ages ranged from

under 30 (20%) to the 51-60 age band (11%) though no teachers were over 60 and 51% fell

into the 31-40 age range. Although a significant proportion (around 87%) hailed from the

US (42%) and other 'inner circle' English speaking countries 8% came from elsewhere

(Figure 1).

Figure 1

A pie chart illustrating the breakdown of nationalities.

Question 3: Home Country

Other 8%
Australia /NZ 7%
US 42%
UK / Eire 23%
Canada 20%

Legend:
US
Canada
UK / Eire
Australia /NZ
Other
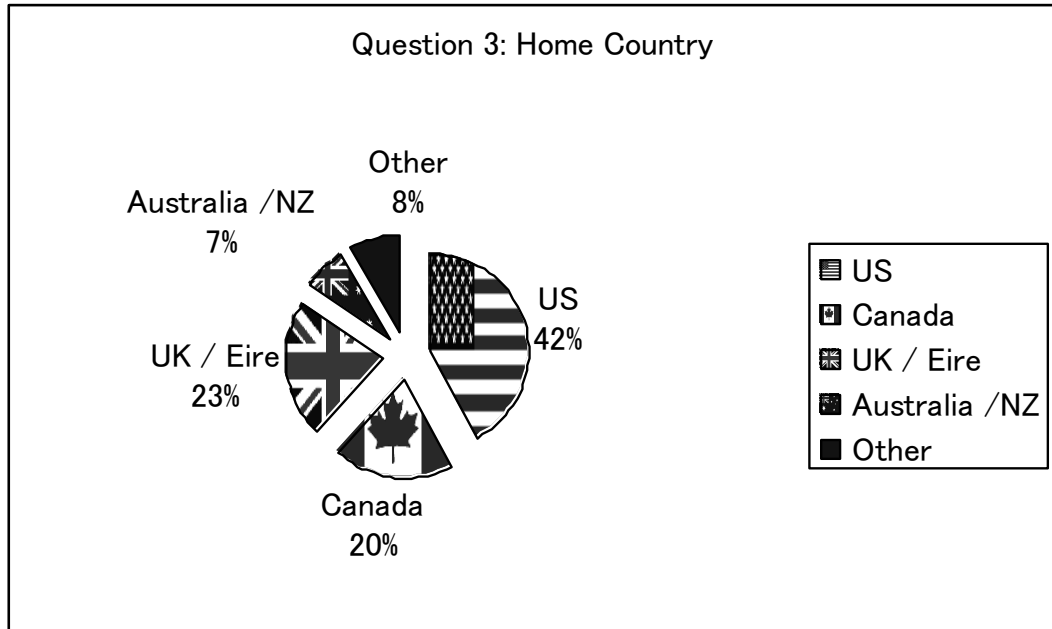
Figure 2

A pie chart illustrating the breakdown of teaching situations.

Question 9: Where do you teach?

Elementary school 11%
Other 17%
Junior high school 18%
Language school 20%
High school 20%
University 14%

Legend:
Elementary school
Junior high school
High school
University
Language school
Other
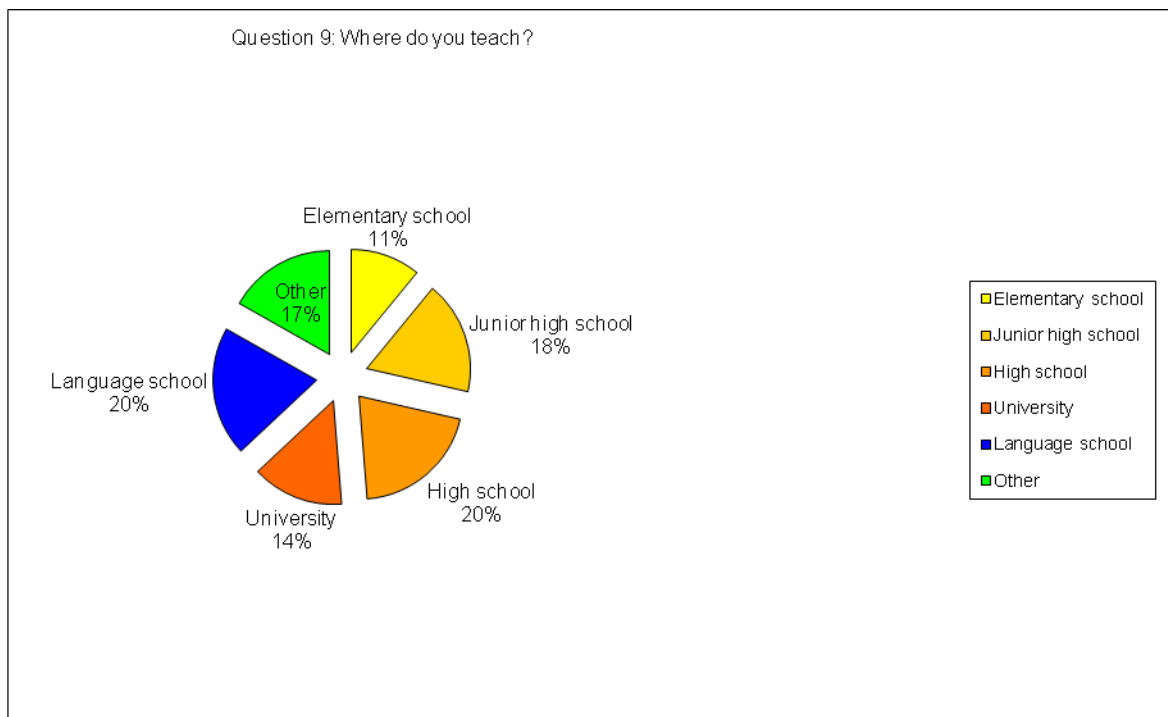
A majority of 69% of respondents rated their Japanese ability as intermediate or advanced. Considering that only 60% had lived in Japan for six or more years this sounds reasonable for ex-pat English teachers. However, less than half the number who had been in Japan for more than 10 years rated themselves as advanced. This may reflect the fact that not only is advanced knowledge of Japanese almost never expected by employers of NESTs, but is sometimes viewed as compromising the experience of having a NEST in the first place. As 65% of respondents had taught for 6 or more years and 37% over 10 this survey may tend to reflect the voices of experience. Respondents taught learners of all ages, from primary (18%) to tertiary (24%) institutions and in commercial language schools (34%). Responses provided under *other* revealed that teachers were involved in teaching at kindergartens, in private corporations and teaching privately or even running their own schools (Figure 2). The total for all types adds up to 168% reflecting the fact that many teachers taught at more than one kind of institution. Some possible reasons that might account for this would include teachers taking on side-jobs, ALTs being sent to a variety of schools, and *eikaiwa* schools who hire out their NESTs to schools and corporations. While not necessarily representative of all native teachers in Japan, such a sample allowed for a broad variety of perspectives.

Table 1: Personal data (Section 1)

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

n = 71, percentages (in parentheses) rounded to whole numbers

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

∗ Respondents were allowed to choose all applicable so the total number of responses is

higher than the number or respondents.

3.3   Section2: Attitudes and experiences

Open questions or even those with a large number of choices do not lend themselves easily

to statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. However, they do allow the researcher to pick

up the tone of the respondents' input and register responses that might not otherwise have

been thought of (see Table 2 for summary of Section 2). Comments like the following

response to Question 21 'What is the role of the native speaker in Japan?' cannot easily be

coded but are nevertheless highly informative:

> *Depends on the situation. Choose from cultural resource、 raising awareness of*
>
> *world/global issues、 model of grammatical/spoken rectitude、 all the way down*
>
> *to trendy babysitter.*
>
> (Author's data.).

The respondent indicates that there are multiple roles that can vary from serious to trivial.

The image of 'the trendy babysitter' alludes to the superficial glamour associated with

native speaker teaching positions. There also seems to be an overall tone of irony in the use

of the word 'rectitude', hinting that it is more contrived than simple 'correctness'.

Despite the fact that only 21% of teachers were English teachers before they came to Japan (Q11), a mere 11% came with the primary purpose of gaining experience teaching English (Q12). Burton (2005) exploring options for NESTs returning from Japan, makes no mention of the possibility of continuing to teach English, a reminder that ELT is still seen by some as more a holiday job than a profession. The principle attraction of Japan was cultural (32%), with other attractions comprising of features that can be summarised as convenience, safety and efficiency, as well as the personal warmth of Japanese people. The negative aspects (Q14) consisted mainly of racism and bureaucracy in various forms, and problems with Japanese society ranging from serious concerns such as environmental destruction to trivial ones like (irresponsible use of) mobile phones. Nevertheless 25% of participants said they associated mostly with Japanese people and 56% a balance of Japanese and foreigners indicating a relatively high integration with the local community by these teachers (Q15). 60% of respondents rated English in Japan as *disappointing* (46%) or *terrible* (14%) (Q16). The most common reasons given for Japanese students' problems learning English (Q17) were the way English is taught (69%) and the lack of opportunity to use English (62%). *Differences between Japanese and English* was chosen by only 27%.

In terms of classroom methodology (Q18), *pair / group work* was rated the highest, though

many respondents suggested other alternatives. Not one respondent chose translation exercises, a practice associated with local non-native methodology. Overall, 23% suggested improving English education (Q19) through teacher training, particularly of Japanese teachers (15%). Revising or abolishing the English section of the university entrance exam, or breaking away from the exam oriented curriculum were also popular (14%). A few replies anticipated Section 3 calling for teaching English younger (8%) and avoiding *katakana* (English loan words). The response to improvements to the teaching situation (Q20) was disappointing as the largest group (15%) chose *other*, but were unable to say what in this case. Finally the open question (Q21) regarding the role of the native speaker (a key question for this survey) brought the most cynical responses: 24% saw the role of NESTs as trivial as encapsulated in responses such as 'novelty item' or 'tape-recorder'. This was followed by being models of native speaker use (or pronunciation) (17%); raising awareness of foreign culture (also 17%) and supporting Japanese teachers (14%). Though again often expressed in a cynical way. Other roles included conversational partner (8%), student motivator (8%) and teacher of communicative English or oral communication (7%).

Table 2: Attitudes and experience of teaching English in Japan (Section 2)

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

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

13. What do you like about Japan?

14. What do you dislike about Japan?

15. Who do you associate with most in Japan?
mostly Japanese people 18 (25%)   mostly foreigners 13 (18%)   a balance of both 40 (56%)

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

17. What are the main causes of Japanese students' problems with learning English?

18. What do you consider as the most important classroom activities for Japanese learners of English?			
pair / group work	32 (45%)	reading aloud	2 (3%)
language games	12 (17%)	written exercises	1 (1%)
listening exercises	11 (15%)	choral repetition	1 (1%)
student presentations	8 (11%)	translation exercises	0
grammar study	4 (_6%)	other	0

19. How do you think English education in Japan could be improved?

20. What would have the best influence on improving your teaching situation?

21. What do you think is the role of native English teachers in Japan?

3.4 Section 3: NESTs and the tenets of ELT

Overall the results to Section 3 (Table 3) indicated that the native speaker teachers did not agree with the tenets in any straightforward way, and a mean of almost 26% answered neither agree nor disagree to questions in this section. Nevertheless in so far as the results can be interpreted as meaningful they do provide some interesting food for thought. Barely 30% of participants (7% strongly) agreed with the exclusive use of English in the classroom (Q22). While most either disagreed (39%) or remained ambivalent (27%). Comments in interviews suggested that while it was widely felt to be desirable to teach in the target language, it depended on the class concerned. The use of L1 was seen as saving time for things like introducing new words. Moreover, in many junior and senior high school classes (with the exception of those with a high educational reputation) L1 was considered necessary for maintaining student rapport (or discipline), and Japanese staff often needed to act as translators. Opinion was divided on the importance of native speakers knowing the learners L1 (Q23). However, 44% agreed (9% strongly) that it was important for teachers to be able to understand and use Japanese well, though as many as 35% were ambivalent. Few responses to either statement showed strong agreement (Q22, 7%; Q23, 9%) or disagreement (Q22, 4%; Q23, 3%), perhaps indicating that these were not seen to be clear cut issues.

Table 3: Attitudes to the tenets of ELT (Section 3)

strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	strongly disagree	Blank
Q22. It is important that English teachers teach classes entirely in English.					
5 (7.0%)	16 (22.5%)	19 (26.7%)	28 (39.4%)	3 (4.2%)	0
Q23. It is important that non-Japanese English teachers in Japan can understand and use Japanese well.					
6 (8.5%)	25 (35.2%)	25 (35.2%)	13 (18.3%)	2 (2.8%)	0
Q24. The ideal teacher of English in Japan is an educated monolingual native speaker with EFL training.					
3 (4.2%)	8 (11.3%)	22 (31.0%)	25 (35.2%)	12 (16.9%)	1 (1.4%)
Q25. The ideal teacher of English in Japan is a Japanese teacher with excellent English, overseas experience and a background in English education.					
10 (14.1%)	25 (35.2%)	23 (32.4%)	12 (16.9%)	1 (1.4%)	0
Q26. The younger the students start learning English the better.					
27 (38.0%)	20 (28.2%)	14 (19.7%)	9 (12.7%)	1 (1.4%)	0
Q27. Learning English too early may interfere with the development of Japanese ability.					
1 (1.4%)	6 (8.45%)	1 (1.4%)	23 (32.4%)	38 (53.5%)	2 (2.8%)
Q28. Japanese students should spend more time at school learning English.					
5 (7%)	22 (31.0%)	26 (36.6%)	14 (19.7%)	4 (5.6%)	0
Q29. Japanese students should not study English at the expense of other important subjects such as maths, science or Japanese.					
5 (7.0%)	27 (38.0%)	23 (32.4%)	9 (12.7%)	6 (8.5%)	1 (1.45)
Q30. The most important knowledge about teaching and learning English comes from research and theory developed in the US and / or Britain.					
1 (1.4%)	11 (15.5%)	29 (40.8%)	21 (29.6%)	9 (12.7%)	0
Q31. The most important knowledge about teaching and learning English comes from experience and research in Language classrooms in Japan.					
5 (7.0%)	30 (42.3%)	23 (32.4)	9 (12.7%)	4 (5.6%)	0
Q32. The development and use of Japanese English will lead to lower standards of English in Japan.					
16 (11.4%)	23 (16.3%)	14 (19.7%)	14 (19.7%	2 (2.8%)	2 (2.8%)
Q33. The development of Japanese English is a natural part of the spread and improvement of English in Japan.					
4 (5.6%)	19 (13.5%)	17 (23.9%)	23 (32.4%)	7 (9.9%)	1 (1.4%)

Only 15% of respondents agreed that the monolingual native speaker with English as a foreign language (EFL) training would be an ideal teacher (Q24) (including 4% strongly) and 51% disagreed (16% strongly). The pattern for those who agreed that the Japanese fluent bilingual teacher of English would be the ideal teacher (Q25) was exactly the reverse: 49% (15% strongly) favoured the Japanese teacher compared with only 18% who disagreed (1% strongly). Nevertheless many respondents were indifferent to either model. (Q24: trained native monolingual 31%; Q25: fluent Japanese bilingual 32%) (Figure 3). This may seem a rather modest assessment on behalf of the NESTs, but some teachers in follow up interviews pointed out that Japanese teachers had advantages such as being able to use L1 in the classroom, having successfully learned English themselves, and familiarity with the schooling system and students background. A few interviewees had stories of Japanese teachers they particularly respected for their skill in the classroom. However there were also many who either directly or indirectly criticised Japanese colleagues, who did not have sufficient language ability, limited their teaching to an exam oriented agenda, or even took advantage of their more influential positions.

Figure 3

Bar graphs showing the responses to statements regarding the ideal English teacher

1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=disagree; 5=strongly disagree

The ideal teacher of English in Japan is an educated monolingual native speaker with EFL training.

The ideal teacher of English in Japan is a Japanese teacher with excellent English, overseas experience and a background in English education.
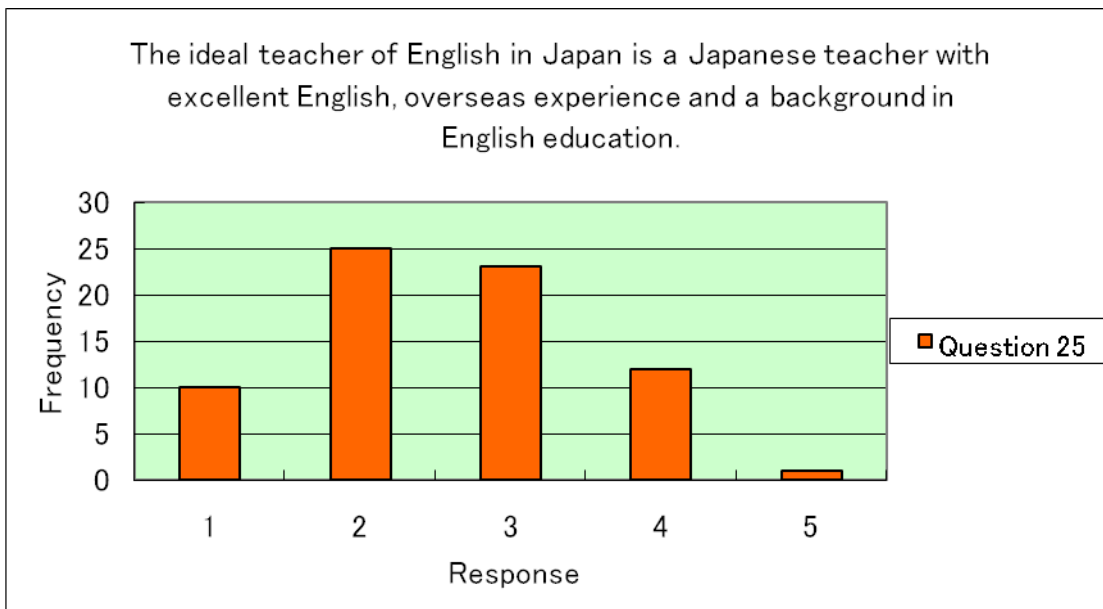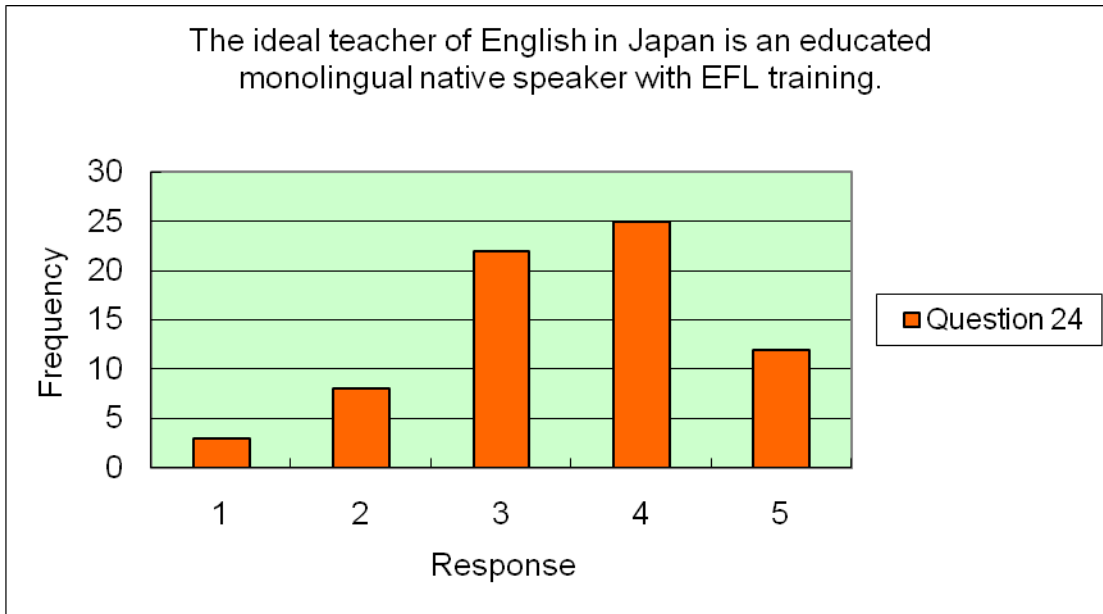
Figures indicate the number of responses (n=71)

The belief in the advantages of getting an early start stimulated a stronger agreement than any other statement in Section 3 (66% agreed, 28% strongly) confirmed by relatively low ambivalence (20%) and disagreement 18% (1% strongly). Similarly 87% disagreed (54% strongly) that English may interfere with the development of Japanese (Q27). Only 9% (1% strongly) agreed with Q27, and only 1% plus 3% blank showed any ambivalence. This is a view that seems to be supported to some extent by the Ministry of Education (MEXT) who recently introduced English education at elementary school level (Toyama, 2003; MEXT, 2001). In general it seems that the main concerns about this policy come from the elementary school teachers who have no training in English teaching (Fukushima, 2004).

Teachers were far less sure about the tenet of the more the better (Q28 & Q29). 32% agreed (7% strongly) that students should spend more time at school learning English, but 26% (6% strongly) disagreed and 37% were ambivalent. At the same time 45% (7% strongly) agreed that English should not be studied at the expense of other subjects. Only 22% (9% strongly) disagreed with this (i.e. felt that English should be an absolute priority). Comments in interviews by those working in senior high schools generally reflected a concern with the way the time was used, particularly the failure to stream classes effectively, and the overemphasis on university exam preparation and grammar based

teaching. However one experienced teacher argued that the university entrance exams could not be ignored and proposed that all foreign teachers working in high schools should be familiarised with these exams and the important role they played in their students' lives.

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

Despite the fact that 23 (32%) of the teachers had taken MAs or RSAs with British or American institutions, only 17% (1% strongly) were ready to support the idea that these countries represented the primary source of ELT knowledge relevant to their practice (Q30). Instead the proposition that 'the most important knowledge about teaching and learning comes from experience and research in language classrooms in Japan' (Q31) received 49% agreement (7% strongly). However this is less surprising when one considers that only 21% of respondents were English teachers when they came to Japan so that most of the teachers learned to teach in Japanese classrooms.

The responses to the two final questions on the survey (Q32 & Q33) showed a fairly mixed,

and overall negative attitude to Japanese English. 27% (11% strongly) agreed that the use of Japanese English will lead to lower standards of English (Q32). 23% (2% strongly) disagreed. Meanwhile 20% agreed that Japanese English is a natural part of the spread and improvement of English in Japan, although 42% (10% strongly) disagreed. The idea of Japanese English as an international variety as proposed by Honna (2003) may not be widely appreciated since it is largely still seen as a part of Japanese rather than English (see Stanlaw, 2004).

To draw any strong conclusions from a questionnaire based on a small sample and displaying such ambivalence to the questions would be foolish. However, the ambivalence opens up the possibility that whatever may have been intended by the architects of ELT, the tenets are not fully endorsed by the teachers who would be implementing them. The most widely supported tenet was 'the younger the better', a belief that is in line with recent government policy, while the idealised Japanese teacher was generally favoured over the native one. However responses to the key question of the role of NESTs suggested neither ambassador nor imperialist and indicated a degree of cynicism. However in order to better understand the professional identity of these teachers it is worth exploring their experience further. The following sections do this through a consideration of follow-up interviews.

4.0   **Exploring narrative interviews**

Whereas the questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative data on participants and test out the currency of Phillipson's (1992a) tenets of linguistic imperialism, the follow-up study described below took a qualitative and exploratory approach to the analysis and discussion of interview data. The interview project investigated the identity of the NEST in Japan from the perspective of the teachers themselves as it emerged from their personal narratives. This section describes the study and introduces some general methodological observations. The following section explores NEST identities. The method of analysis used with these interviews was inspired by an approach to exploring human phenomena suggested by Polkinghorne:

> *According to a narrative theory of human existence, a study needs to focus its attention on existence as it is lived, experienced, and interpreted by the human person. This interpretation finally involved the process of language, as well as the order of meaning, which interacts with and brings to language the physical and organic orders.* (Polkinghorne, 1988: 125)

The aim was to investigate language teachers in relation to educational policy issues

through an analysis of the teachers' narrated experience in the course of the interviews.

Also influential in the analysis of the interview data was an approach that has been developed by those working within appraisal theory (Macken-Horarik, 2003; Martin, 2003; Sarangi, 2003; and White, 2001) which focuses on the ways in which speakers or writers construct attitudes and form allegiances through language. Considering the way in which attitudes are represented in an interview survey such as the one described below made it possible to look beyond surface messages to infer other meanings.

The interviews were based on a list of core questions designed to elicit a large 'life story' narrative embedded with narrative episodes. As Figure 4 illustrates the interviewees were encouraged to begin by describing the circumstances which led them to Japan, through early experiences to the present, and finally to reflect on their future. The questions were intended to move from experience to reflection, to the theoretical focus on the role of NESTs in Japan. In practice, questions varied considerably and many follow-up questions were needed to explore individual attitudes and experiences. I believe that being a NEST myself was a factor beneficial to understanding (rather than simply 'biasing') both the collection and interpretation of this kind of qualitative data. The interviewer-researcher's role in this project was to elicit, assimilate and, as far as possible, analyse and explain.

Figure 4: List of core questions used in the interviews.

How did you first come to Japan and start teaching English?

(What were you doing before?)

What was your first impression of Japan?

How did you get your first job and what was your experience there?
(How did you approach teaching?)

How long did you stay there?

What did you do after that?

How did you get your present job?

Have you experienced any problems living in Japan? What?

How good is your Japanese? How did you learn? Why didn't you learn?

Do you think you have changed in any way?

Tell me about your present teaching situation?

How do you see your future in Japan? (How much longer do you think you will stay in Japan.

What do you see as the role of the native speaker in Japan today?

Past   Personal Experience

Reflection

Present

Future

Theoretical
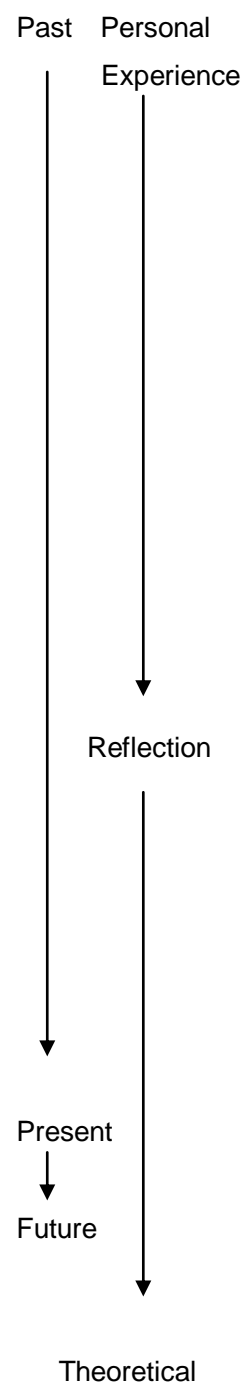
Due to the wide geographical spread of interviewees, some interviews were carried out over the telephone. Those in the Tokyo area were conducted face to face at the interviewee's home, at my office, in restaurants, coffee shops and even bars. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to over two hours (depending on the teachers experience and the time available), but most averaged around an hour. Altogether 26 teachers were interviewed (some in pairs). All interviews were recorded resulting in over 25 hours of recorded data. Interviews were either partially or fully transcribed.

Brief episodes used to highlight particular experiences were ubiquitous and generally fitted nicely into the 6-part format described by Labov and Waletzky (1967) as the Kindergarten Question extract in Table 4 illustrates.

Table 4:

The Kindergarten Question and the 6-part model of conversational narrative

ABSTRACT	*Well, I had Japanese neighbours growing up and since kindergarten I wanted to go to Japan.*
ORIENTATION	*Like our teacher interviewed us at Kindergarten*
COMPLICATING ACTION	*<u>'What do you want to do?'</u> and <u>I wanted to sail around the world and I wanted to go to Japan.</u> And she was like 'but your mother's from Holland. How about Holland?' No, I wanted to go to Japan. And my mother couldn't figure it out.*
EVALUATION	*So it was like I thought Japan was great since I was a kid…*
RESOLUTION/CODA	*And that's probably why I became a teacher so I could travel overseas and come to Japan.*

Reports like the kindergarten question were used by speakers to give emotional depth and conviction. Her teacher's words are quoted to foreground them, while her own words as a child are told using reported speech. This has the effect of making her childhood words into hearsay, as though she were repeating the story from a more reliable source (such as her mother). This gives authority to a key episode in framing her experience of coming to Japan to teach English as a fortune-filled destiny.

The overall structure of questioning in the interviews followed the interviewee's life history. For this reason the interviews displayed a narrative structure at a macro level, but not one that was strictly chronological. Figure 5 shows a schematic representation of the life story elements of one interviewee. The elements are laid out in accordance with an inferable order of events, though as the numbers in parentheses indicate this did not quite correspond to the order of narration.

Figure 5

A schematic representation of a NESTs career.

Numbers in parentheses indicate order of information in an interview with 29 points of information.

United States   Japan

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Kindergarten told teacher wanted to │
│ sail the world and come to Japan (5)│
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Want to become teacher to come to Japan.│
│ (6) (7) (18) (21)               │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
     │ Hired to teach at school near Mt. Fuji (2)│
     └─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Teacher training (put off Mt. Fuji post and│
│ eventually lost position) (2) (20)│
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Due to start teaching in San Diego but teachers'│
│ strike (3)                      │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
   ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
   │ Applied to JET program (4) and interviewed (in US) (19)│
   └─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ JET Program (South Osaka) (11) (4) (22)     │
        │ VIP treatment (10)                          │
        │ Lunch with the governor incident (11)       │
        │ Good experiences with students (11), (12) (13) (14)│
        │ Made friends with governor (also left-handed golfer) (15)│
        └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
              │ Ehime (25) Japanese countryside  │
              └──────────────────────────────────┘
                    ╱        ╲
┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Substitute teacher in California 6 months (24)│
└──────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ╲
                         ▼
                  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                  │ Subarashii Junior College, Tokyo (23)│
                  └──────────────────────────────────┘
                                │
                                ▼
**PRESENT** ⇨         ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                      │ Tokyo (26)                          │
                      │ Junior high school (18)             │
                      │ Junior College (27) (16) (17)       │
                      │ High level private students (19)    │
                      │ Other jobs (sold pace-makers and cheese) (26) (27)│
                      └─────────────────────────────────────┘

   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   │ Future dream: Work for Embassy or US Ministry of Defence stationed│
   │ in Japan (28) (29)                          │
   └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Interviewees used their narratives either implicitly or explicitly to position themselves in relation to other potential identities through careful use of evaluative language (see White, 2001). The following example was given as an illustration of the kind of difficulties the interviewee faced early on due to the fact that he came to Japan relatively unprepared:

Jim: I also remember going out with the governor. And he had invited all the Fukushima JETs and only two of us showed up. So it is like me and this guy who had been in Japan for ..., studied Japanese and was rattling off Japanese, and here's me with like my first waru- my first waribashi [disposable chopsticks] and I was like 'How do you do this?' And they were like...I ordered rolled cabbage and it's the most difficult thing to eat with chopsticks...even today I can't do it. I was like struggling to get pieces of cabbage off of it, just disaster.

Jackie: Oh, poor thing!

Jim: Anyway, this expert, you know, on Japan was just sitting there, you know rattling off his, you know, resume in Japanese to the governor. And I was just like don't look at me. I was struggling with my waribashi. (Author's data)

Jim uses this episode to establish his identity as a NEST in a variety of ways. First, since

he is being interviewed together with his friend Jackie, he contrasts his experience with Jackie's. Jackie had just described a glamorous encounter with her local governor. Jim highlights a distinctly unglamorous experience. At the same time he offers two images of the NEST in Japan: the novice and the expert. Jim is now a very experienced teacher in Japan and speaks Japanese well. By telling this story he positions himself as someone modest enough to share his humiliating experience as a joke. Nevertheless he evokes sympathy for the novice (Jackie comments 'Oh, poor thing!') and presents the expert in a disapproving light. Jim's comment 'even today I can't do it' suggest that while difficulty with using chopsticks may be something associated with newcomers the rolled cabbage was a particularly tough challenge. The implicit criticism of the 'expert' is handled though careful choice of critical vocabulary. He 'rattles off' his Japanese, suggesting this is a superficial performance rather than a conversation. He even rattles off his 'resume' implying that he is talking about himself, with the intention of impressing the governor, perhaps even in the hope of gaining influence to get a better job. At the same time personal details are discreetly omitted. He has no name, and even the length of his stay in Japan is blurred over. The evaluation in Jim's narrative is highly implicit as befits his critical purpose. Other interviewees offered more explicit evaluations of their experience.

One tenured university lecturer reflected on the differences between his current post and his previous work at an *eikaiwa*, beginning by outlining the advantages of *eikaiwa* work:

> John: *And you know the type of students you can get into the kind of nitty gritty, you know, the meat and potatoes and stuff when you are talking about things. Like different kind of things, especially you know, professionals that you're dealing with. But of course the hours are erratic, the pay is less… in the main and er longer hours. And then you move on to higher education level, college education and you are basically fixed, but the students again are a mixed group, so it's you know, you don't get that fulfilment anymore[…]* (Author's data)

John had already described some of his experiences, but here he offered an extended evaluation to make the point that despite the obvious advantages of college positions, *eikaiwa* teaching can be more rewarding. Unlike Jim's implicit criticism, his repeated use of 'you know' and the general 'you' appealed strongly to me the listener to agree with his assessment. John's evaluation was the result of reflection on his experiences, but beliefs can also influence the way experience is framed or created.

One particularly eloquent interviewee represented her experiences as being the result of her approach to cross-cultural communication which she specifically related to her academic background in cultural anthropology:

> Lucy: *I looked on this as an opportunity [...] to do educational fieldwork and I knew that this was a culture of by and large pretty shy people and I looked at this as an opportunity to get along with people. (A) I am going to have to learn the language, and (B) I am going to have to be more extroverted, and more getting used to them and letting them get to know me. So I had monthly parties at my house for the English Department, which had just never happened before. But we had things like tea parties, birthday parties and I did things like make the teachers tea and going round the department, basically net working [...]* (Author's data)

She framed her approach on the one hand in terms of her academic training ('educational fieldwork' and 'networking') and on the other in everyday terms ('an opportunity to get along with people'). Her decision to do '(A)… and (B)…' was intellectually phrased but implicated her emotionally. As will be described in the following section, by using this anthropology based frame for her experience she is able to break through other potentially

limiting frames.

Finally, one key variant across the interviews was tone. In particular, individual speaking styles varied from relatively formal to a highly informal style of speech. For example, some interviewees showed respect for the conventions of formal interviews by deliberately not naming institutions they felt critical of:

> Martin: *Mmm, I think it was in the top ten … er most financially successful English […] schools in Tokyo, when I was working there, but I would rather not identify it further.* (Author's data)

As befitting a university professor he is careful in his choice of words and expresses his implied criticism in a dignified way. The use of 'financially successful' rather than just 'successful' implies that it was not successful in other ways (such as educationally). At the other end of the scale in terms of personal style was a high school teacher who describes his introduction to *eikaiwa* as follows:

> Joe: *[…]I met this one geezer who er, I went to work for, he was running the, or*

was in the process of blagging off from some other geezer in the neighbourhood…

Pat: *So he was Japanese?*

Joe: *No, he was British probably. So I went to work for him, you know, in the eikaiwa scene in little Chofu, just right up the road. I was riding my bike there. Then I quickly met this other teacher who was blagging off to, back to America and had these two, and had this high school work and he turned me onto the Inaka High School gig […]* (Author's data)

The interviewee's casual use of slang ('geezer', 'blagging off', 'turned me onto', and 'gig') situates him in a world where teaching positions are traded through an underground foreigner network, highlighting the role of NESTs as a subculture which in this case he associates with a reggae bar where people from LA met to 'hang out'. However, it should be added that though some readers might associate this with a style of speech more or less stigmatised in academic circles, this proved to be a highly informative interview with observations made in a direct, 'no nonsense' way.

5.0   Career and national identity for NESTs in Japan

Among many recurring themes in the interviews there were two key interrelated issues that

bear directly on the role of NESTs in Japan and the paradigms of Linguistic Imperialist and Ambassador. The two issues are career development and foreigner identity. The typical career of an English teacher in Japan is a stay of between one and three years before returning home to do something else. The JET program which is limited to 3 years is deliberately organised to promote this and the lack of career structure for foreigners in most *eikaiwa* mediates towards it too. One factor may be that youth and energy tend to be valued over experience. However, an important part of the reasoning often given for favouring new arrivals in Japan is that they are closer to the native speaker norm of someone unfamiliar with Japanese language and culture. However, the majority of those interviewed for this study had taken the much less common choice of staying in Japan long term. It may be helpful conceptually to think of these teachers as falling along a spectrum from those whose careers have unfolded in a rather modest and unambitious way to those who have striven to develop their careers here.

At one end of this spectrum were teachers like Graham who came to Japan to marry his Japanese wife whom he met in Australia. He intended to take whatever job he could find and avoided teaching English until (6 months later) it seemed the only viable option. He finally took a job at an *eikaiwa* responding to an ad like the one at the beginning of this

paper. At the time of the interview he had been teaching there for almost 6 years. The only training he received was a 3 day induction into the house method. On the one hand he suggested that this was a ridiculously short induction period, on the other he commented that he had come to the conclusion that the method itself was ineffective:

> Graham: *...Most experienced teachers at Gaijin Eikaiwa think it is a load of old*
>
> *rubbish.*   (Author's data)

He creates solidarity for this position by casting it as the view of 'most experienced teachers'. His use of the down to earth criticism 'a load of old rubbish' is also in keeping with his representation of himself as a no-nonsense person. Accordingly he reported that he had refused offers of promotion which involved towing the corporate line for little financial incentive. However, Graham seemed to enjoy his work and the description of his classes suggested to me that he has evolved a style of teaching that is well suited to his situation:

> *You might have a focused discussion on a topic, for a high level lesson. Recently,*
>
> *for example the returnees from North Korea, or the Japanese self-defence force in*

Iraq is another good one. Stuff like that. You know they are all adults and quite

mature. Actually we do get one or two high school students in the high levels, so of

course they are less experienced so we have to guide them through and teach them

in a different way. But generally speaking they are mature people with opinions

and experiences. So getting them to express themselves in good natural English is

the goal. (Author's data)

His repetition of the word 'mature' is interesting here, as unlike many of the teachers

working in conversation schools Graham was neither a short stay visitor to Japan, nor a

young man. Accordingly the few of his colleagues that he had become friendly with were

older NESTs who saw Japan as a more or less permanent home.

What is noticeably different from teachers who either came into or acquired teaching

credentials was the lack of analytical approach, and use of technical terms. For example

Helen who came to Japan with an MA in teaching EFL (TEFL) and eventually found

herself planning a new curriculum for a school aimed at advanced students and translators

outlines her project as follows:

Helen: *We based it very heavily on the authentic. And it was skill based and so we looked at say for example at speaking and then we broke that down into skill areas.*

Pat: *In terms of speaking situations then or…?*

Helen: *In terms of like how you organise your thoughts, when you are speaking in a formal situation, or how to give an opinion, maybe some functional things, in terms of listening it might be something like notetaking, or um making outlines or things like paraphrasing or guessing a word from context.* (Author's data)

Unlike Graham, whose goal was 'good natural English'; Helen represents English teaching as a technically complex educational process by drawing on the vocabulary of ELT. Words like 'authentic', 'skill-based', 'functional things', 'paraphrasing' and 'guessing a word from context' identify her as someone who has mastered the professional jargon. Her focus on the language of curriculum design also reflects her professional role as Director of Studies.

Academic qualifications and a will to succeed were clearly useful, but several interviewees underlined the importance of working with the local culture and a degree of patience.

Through working with the system, Lucy not only succeeded in breaking a kind of glass ceiling to earn her a permanent position at a male dominated institution, but gradually negotiated less working hours and a greater share of the teaching. She explained:

Lucy: *This is such a conservative school that most women working at the school are either fired when they get married, or they just choose their career, but it took a lot of accommodation ability to try and integrate me into that.*

But she managed it. At the same time the English curriculum at this school with a high academic level that expects to send many of its graduates to Japan's top universities was initially dominated by the so called Centre Exam used for controlling enrolments to Japan's public universities. However, she was gradually able to negotiate a writing class of her own.

Lucy: *[…]it has been a slow and steady process of integration. I started with team teaching. I visited their class. Then it was twice a month and now this year, for the past two years, I have my own one period a week.* (Author's data)

Rather than criticise the discriminatory system of the conservative school, she represents it as a challenge to her powers of diplomacy to be overcome through her 'accommodation ability' and a 'slow, steady process of integration'. The sustained efforts that she put into negotiation and in a sense making herself a kind of ambassador to Japan she contrasts with what she calls the 'riff-raff'. At first I assumed this was simply a reference to less educated participants on the JET program but she clarified this with an example of an educated teacher who had nevertheless wound up at odds with the system. For her the challenge was to rise above this.

However, not all teachers were able to find satisfaction in their careers as NESTs in Japan. The previous section included a quote in which John reflected that despite having landed a comfortable and secure position at a university he missed the stimulation of the more mature and motivated students he had taught as an *eikaiwa* teacher. However, perhaps most striking of all were the comments made by Tom about the lack of a career structure for NESTs in Japan. Tom, in fact, was taking a year out living in a country cottage with a friend and commented on his job prospects:

Tom: *And so just to go back to the kind of jobs that I have seen, it is almost like I*

am too qualified now. I've got too much experience. I'm not perhaps what people

need. Having twenty years of EFL experience, I feel there should be people out

there, perhaps a bit like Yushu [the private high school where he had taught

previously] who should be willing to pay a bit more for my expertise. And lots of

jobs, the ALTs are advertised 250,000 [yen i.e. the legal minimum for NESTs

working full-time in Japan] or jobs advertised saying, one year's experience, two

years experience, and that's a bit of a conundrum for me how that would all play

out…from having all this experience. (Author's data)

His repetition of 'experience' underlines the fact that his teaching career has not brought him the kind of career advancement that he might have expected. Indeed, far from following any kind of career path the interviews gave me the impression that pursuing a career as a NEST in Japan long term was mainly a matter of creative adaptation and perseverance. This is unfortunate, as talking to these teachers about their careers was a strong reminder that teachers develop over time and that from an educational perspective an emphasis on youth and native speakerness is at the expense of experience and cultural understanding.

The second relevant theme in these interviews was the related question of the identity of NESTs in Japan. Here I found that I had to reinterpret the terms Linguistic Imperialist and Ambassador which I had associated with language policy. Instead, I felt that for a NEST to become an Ambassador meant learning to work effectively in the new culture while to be a Linguistic Imperialist was—at the other end of the spectrum from this—to adhere to and seek to promote the values of one's home culture. Both options involve recognising oneself as a *gaijin* (literally outsider) or foreigner. Long-term residents with a fluency in both language and cultural understanding sooner or later reach a level where some of their closest friends may be Japanese and it is tempting to conclude that they have somehow crossed a line and become more Japanese than foreigner. Kanno's (2003) study of returnees who were brought up both in Japan and abroad suggested that, whereas they tended to favour one side or the other to begin with, the returnees eventually settled down to a mid-way point between the two cultures. However, I am inclined to believe that this was neither possible nor desirable for the NESTs that I interviewed. Tom commented that while he was keen to avoid being stereotyped as anti-Japanese, as being here for the money or a partner (which other interviewees openly admitted to) he was also wary of becoming too Japanese:

Tom: *[…]but also being aware that I am a foreigner, and I am not Japanese, so I am not going to bow too low and I am not going to take on too many mannerisms perhaps you would expect from Japanese people. And I think of it in very much the same way; I mean I lived in Italy for three years, and I remember people in England saying that I became a bit more demonstrative and a little bit more Italian shall we say, and so I think something has happened. I also think back to having been in Japan a while and going back to England, sitting with friends in a pub and people coming and going and my friend sitting next to me saying to me 'Tom. Why do you keep bowing to people when they come in?' I was obviously giving some kind of bow to people.* (Author's data)

The reference to being 'back in England' and 'with friends' and his evaluation of himself as 'a foreigner' is a reminder that despite having spent much of his adult life abroad Tom feels himself to be British. This may be partly because unlike the returnee experiences described in Kanno's (2003), his travels began as an adult. Another aspect of the potential over-Japanisation of foreigners was raised by Joe. He suggested that while some foreigners in a sense act Japanese by pretending to ignore other foreigners he makes a point of catching their eye, giving them a nod or a wave or even a greeting of recognition.

Non-Asian foreigners even in Tokyo, stand out from Japanese people due to their racial appearance.

Nevertheless there were a number of different positions teachers took in situating themselves in relation to local culture. At one extreme there were those who revealed a degree of hostility to the local culture based on the way NESTs are situated as foreigners. After a couple of beers George confided:

> George: *I am now a minority. Minorities always get the shit end of the stick and they have to hold it and smile. Well, I am a minority now and I don't like it.*
>
> Pat: *And that's in a sense…?*
>
> George: *Well, that is what happens to the blacks in America.*
>
> Pat: *So you see it as pretty much the same situation?*
>
> George: *And I asked for it so why should I complain? Then if I don't like it, I should leave and go where all the whites rule. There are millions of cases where a white took something from a black person and sued it and became rich. Art. There's so many cases in our history. So why is Japan any different?*
>
> (Author's data)

George uses an American frame of reference to describe his experience of racism in Japan. He is able to paint a strongly negative picture of this experience by using taboo language 'the shit end of the stick' and opting for the racist terms 'black' and 'white' over politically correct equivalents. He argued that Japanese people are effectively stealing English language teaching techniques as the rhythms of African American music have been appropriated into American popular music. While none of the other interviewees quite had George's directness, there were some indirect criticisms of the attitudes of Japanese colleagues and even students. Helen drew attention to the role of economics in people's perception of foreigners. She explained:

Helen: *The bubble economy was still going on so I think [Japanese] people were still confident, and they had a very superior attitude because they knew that people like me had come to their country because our economies weren't doing very well, and they were proud of their own success [Helen then explains some other features of Japan at that time] [...]and because the economy has collapsed and everything's in a mess their attitude isn't quite so superior and smug any more.*

(Author's data)

Comments like these suggest that however much the publishers and academic institutions may be attempting to spread English language teaching in accordance with an imperialist model it does not quite come off in practice. Finally, one refreshing observation was made by Martin who commented:

Martin: *Perhaps it is not a good idea to assume that I want to integrate into society. Er…I guess I have only been integrated into American society and didn't find it a very nice experience.*

Instead he suggested that Japan offers a considerable degree of freedom to foreigners and he viewed Japan as far more tolerant in general in relation to religious and political freedom.

In these final two sections of this part of Module 2 I have discussed samples of the narrative interview data. Through this consideration I have attempted to get closer to the NEST as it was: 'lived, experienced and interpreted' (Polkinghorne, 1988: 125) by my interviewees. Through exploring evaluative recounts of individual experiences I have tried

to describe a broader narrative of the NEST in Japan. Although I have done so in a fairly loose way, I have illustrated that the evidence for this kind of analysis is to be found as much in the language used to describe and evaluate events, as in the events themselves. At the same time I have suggested that the experience of being a NEST in Japan is closely bound up with the inescapable experience of being a foreigner or *'gaijin'*.

6.0   Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the role of the NEST in English language education in Japan today. More explicitly it aimed to evaluate the relevance of that role in relation to the Linguistic Imperialist and Ambassador. I began by sketching out these roles as related to positions in language policy: the Linguistic Imperialist spreading English in a way designed to strengthen the hegemony of Centre countries; the Ambassador as a role designed to benefit Japanese nationalistic aims but not necessarily in a way committed to the most effective way of learning English. However, through the reflection on historical examples, and the consideration of the responses to the questionnaire and follow-up interview study described here, it has gradually become clearer how these two positions may manifest themselves among NESTs. In this study even those that had spent a considerable amount of their lives in Japan and were quite comfortable living here had not

become bicultural in terms of their identity in the way that returnees in Kanno's (2003) study appear to have done. Instead, as foreigners, *gaijin* or NESTs they had adopted a variety of stances towards the local culture based on their experience. The Linguistic Imperialist would represent one extreme and the Ambassador another. Those who remained overtly critical of English education in Japan, committed to Centre-based ELT paradigms, and ill at ease with the role of *gaijin* would belong at the Linguistic Imperialist end of the spectrum. On the other hand those who had at least intellectually come to understand the local culture (and anyway got used to it) and discovered effective ways of working with it are the Ambassadors. While one might assume that cultural adaptation is something that happens over time, the contrasting examples of George and Lucy suggest that another factor may be cultural education and the patience and determination to adapt outwardly to the local culture.

Overall in this paper and Paper 1 of this module, I have tried to explore the native speaker as a narrative entity in the realm of language policy. Whereas Paper 1 explored the native speaker as a myth, this paper has focused on the reality of experience in relation to the Linguistic Imperialist / Ambassador paradigms. However, these perspectives leave a lot of ground uncovered. Not only is there a need for more focused study into particular

segments of the NEST community (*eikaiwa* teachers, ALTs and higher education teachers) but there is a need to consider the perspectives of others in the education system, particularly Japanese teachers of English, administrators and students. How do their narratives interact with and offer reframings of issues raised here? At the same time there is a need to further develop the discussion of the role of native speakers in relation to creating effective pedagogy on the one hand and taking on the larger theoretical issues raised by the phenomenon of NESTs in Japan. Finally, another important area that has only really been touched on in this paper is the linguistic exploration and description of this kind of interview data. Going back to the interest in narrative data raised at the end of Module 1, the analysis and description of these interviews would also doubtless be enhanced by being considered alongside similar narratives from Japanese colleagues. These are all issues for potential exploration in Module 3.

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