

**More than a tape-recorder:**

**Negotiations of English Language Teacher Identities in the JET Program in Japan**

by

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## Abstract

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) is currently one of the largest government-sponsored programs for recruiting English language teachers in the world (Nagatomo, 2016). This year, 2017, marks the 30th anniversary since its launch, and the Japanese government has announced its plan to expand the scale of the program as a response to globalization (Uemura, Urabayashi, & Emoto, 2014). While the JET Programme's contribution to the internationalization of the Japanese education system has been recognized (McConnell, 2000), scholars have also pointed out a number of issues within the JET Programme, such as lack of inclusion of assistant language teachers (ALTs) (McConnell, 2000), frequent miscommunications between Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and ALTs (Muroi & Mochizuki, 2010), reinforcement of the perceived superiority of English over other languages (Kubota, 2002), and reinforcement of the essentialist view of culture (Kobayashi, 2011). However, few studies have investigated how the identities of ALTs are assigned, negotiated, and resisted.

Through Gee's (2014) D/discourse analysis, this study investigates how six ALTs construct their teacher identity—the way in which they come to understand themselves as teachers—during the program. This study highlights how issues within the JET Programme, such as the ones listed above, are discursively (re)produced. Drawing on Gee's (2015) notion of *Discourse* (with a capital *D*), this study pays particular attention to how ALTs participate in the meaning-making practice in their schools' community. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over Skype.

Fine-grained analysis of discourse illuminates the interaction between the macro-level discourse (i.e., *nihonjinron* [theory of Japaneseness] and *kokusaika* [internationalization]) and

language ideology (i.e., “monolingual bias”; Kachru, 1994), the meso-level structure of the JET Programme, and the micro-level practices at participants’ schools. The findings show various ways in which ALTs struggled to attain membership in their schools’ *Discursive* community due to their racial, gender, linguistic, and employment statuses. Even those who successfully attained a certain level of membership in their schools’ *Discourses* were under constant fear of delegitimatization because of their marked foreignness. Based on the findings, this study offers implications for the JET Programme and advocates macro-, meso-, and micro-level changes.

## **Lay Summary**

In the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme), the Japanese government hires approximately 5,000 foreign university graduates annually as assistant language teachers (ALTs). While this program has contributed to the internationalization of the Japanese school environment, scholars have pointed out a number of issues within the JET Programme, such as lack of inclusion of ALTs (McConnell, 2000), frequent miscommunications between Japanese teachers of English and ALTs (Muroi & Mochizuki, 2010), reinforcement of the perceived superiority of English over other languages (Kubota, 2002), and reinforcement of cultural stereotypes (Kobayashi, 2011).

Though an analysis of ALTs' stories collected through interviews, this study highlights how JET Programme participants construct their teacher identity during the program. By doing so, I illustrate the issues ALTs experience in the program with a particular focus on the challenges they face due to their linguistic, racial, gender, and employment statuses. Based on the findings, I provide some recommendations for improvement of the program.

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original work of the author, Yuya Takeda. Ethics approval was required for this research and provided by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) on December 20, 2016. The BREB number is H16-03015.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ALT = Assistant language teacher

BoE = Board of Education

HRT = Homeroom teacher

JET = Japan Exchange and Teaching

JTE = Japanese teacher of English

LTI = Language teacher identity

MEXT = Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

NEST = Native English speaker teacher

NNEST = Non-native English speaker teacher

TESOL = Teaching English to speakers of other languages

## Glossary

As per APA style, the first occurrence of a Japanese word is italicized with its translation in brackets.

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Eigo              | English language           |
| Eikaiwa           | English conversation       |
| Gaijin/Gaikokujin | Foreigner                  |
| Kokugo            | National language          |
| Kokusaika         | Internationalization       |
| Nihonjinron       | The theory of Japaneseness |
| Omiyage           | Souvenir                   |
| Yappari           | As [I] thought             |

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To my father and mother



## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) is currently one of the largest government-sponsored programs for recruiting English language teachers in the world (Nagatomo, 2016). With the aim “to promote grass-roots internationalization at the local level,” the Japanese government hires approximately 5,000 non-Japanese young college graduates annually. As of 2016, there have been over 62,000 participants from 65 countries since the launch of the program in 1987 (Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, CLAIR, 2016). This year, 2017, marks its 30th anniversary. The JET Programme is implemented by CLAIR in co-operation with local governments and three ministries: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

JET Programme participants are assigned to one of three positions: assistant language teacher (ALT), coordinator for international relations (CIR), or sports exchange advisor (SEA). More than 90% of the participants are hired as ALTs, and the vast majority of them work as English teachers (CLAIR, 2016). This study focuses on English ALTs.

In their letter to the Intercultural Exchange department manager and Board of Education section managers of each prefecture<sup>1</sup>, Urabayashi, Uemura, and Emoto<sup>2</sup> (2014) stated their plan to increase the number of ALTs from 4,952 in 2016 to more than 6,400 by 2019, “in order to

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<sup>1</sup> 外国語教育の充実、地域における国際交流の推進及び諸外国との相互理解の増進のためのJETプログラムによる外国語指導助手の活用促進について ( *gaikokugo kyōiku no jyūjitsu, chiiki ni okeru kokusaikouryū no suishin oyobi syogaikoku tonō sōgorikai no zoushin no tame no JET puroguramu ni yoru gaikokugo shidou zyoshu no katsuyō sokushin ni tsuite*, advanced utilization of JET Programme ALTs for enrichment of foreign language education, promotion of international exchange at the local level and enhancement of mutual understanding with foreign countries ) .

<sup>2</sup> These three authors were from MoFA, MIC, and MEXT, respectively.

establish an educational environment that responds to the globalization” (p. 2), especially because Tokyo will be hosting the Olympic Games in 2020. This suggests that many sectors of Japanese society—from the three ministries to local schools—heavily invest in the JET Programme with the aim to promote internationalization.

According to McConnell (2000), the JET Programme indeed brought about “extraordinary change” to Japan as an internationalization effort, because even in remote areas, every student gets the opportunity to “see, hear, and talk to a foreigner” (pp. 272–273). At the same time, scholars have pointed out a number of issues within the JET Programme, such as lack of inclusion of ALTs (McConnell, 2000), frequent miscommunications between Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and ALTs (Muroi & Mochizuki, 2010), reinforcement of the perceived superiority of English over other languages (Kubota, 2002), and reinforcement of the essentialist view of culture (Kobayashi, 2011). Among these, ALTs’ lack of inclusion has been problematized since the beginning of the program, and the term most frequently used to describe ALTs’ roles in the classroom, “a human tape-recorder,” still seems to persevere after 30 years.

This study aims to highlight these issues through analysis of six ALTs’ accounts with particular focus on their construction of teacher identity—the way in which they come to understand themselves as teachers. Qualitative interviews were conducted over Skype between Canada (where I was) and Japan (where the participants were), and interview accounts were analyzed through Gee’s (2014) version of D/discourse analysis. Discourse analysis enabled me to investigate how issues within the JET Programme, such as the ones listed above, were discursively produced and reproduced.

I incorporated James Paul Gee’s (2015) notion of *Discourse* (with a capital D) as a “saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combination” (p. 118) that people enact to make

a certain identity recognizable. *Discourses* are not discrete and fixed entities, but are constantly in a process of construction. Hence, through enactment of a *Discourse*, people participate in the construction of the *Discourse*. Gee distinguished capital *D Discourse* from small *d* discourse—“language-in-use or connected stretches of languages that make sense” (p. 118). I discuss the notion of *Discourse* in detail in Chapter 3. In this study, I use italics for capital *D Discourse* in order to further distinguish it from small *d* discourse. With this notion of *Discourse*, I define Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse* as ways of speaking (writing), doing, being, valuing, and believing that constitute the image of what teachers at Japanese schools should be like. Based on the idea that teacher identity construction is a process in which engagement in the practice and participation in meaning making are indispensable (Barkhuizen, 2016; Tsui, 2007), this study focuses on ALTs’ participation in their schools’ *Discourse*.

As critics of the JET Programme have pointed out, power disparities exist between Japanese teachers of English and JET Programme participants (e.g., non-native vs. native speakers of English, licensed teachers vs. unqualified assistants, formal subject teachers vs. informal conversational activity teachers; Miyazato, 2009; Nagatomo, 2016). These power differences may have a significant impact on ALTs’ identity construction, and thus, I pay particular attention to the issues of power manifested in participants’ accounts.

In this study, I pose the following two research questions:

1. How do the JET Programme participants construct their teacher identity through their participation in the Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse*?
2. How does their gender, racial, linguistic, and employment status influence their participation in the Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse*?

## **1.1 Significance of the Study**

Previous studies on the JET Programme provide valuable insight into how ALTs are situated in the complex site of power struggle and how it interacts with their identity construction. This is crucial because it is now widely understood that language teachers do not merely mechanically apply teaching methodologies, but they bring a sense of self that shapes both teaching and learning (Nagatomo, 2016). While research has demonstrated what problems exist and how they are manifested, how these problems are discursively maintained, challenged, and/or reinforced is yet to be clear. By investigating how ALTs construct their teacher identity through participation in their schools' *Discourses*, this study aims to highlight the ways in which issues within the JET Programme are discursively produced and reproduced.

## **1.2 Researcher Positionality**

My initial interest in this topic came from my personal background as a native Japanese language teacher in the United States. I started my teaching career in a foreign country with limited teacher training. As is often the case for young, inexperienced teachers, I struggled to convey myself as a legitimate teacher. I felt the process was further complicated by my seemingly contradicting desires—the desire to play a role as a cultural ambassador and the desire to attain greater membership in the local community. I confess that at that time, I had a naïve essentialist view of culture, and I was trying to perform the role of a cultural model that I had in mind. To put it differently, I was trying to express the value of my presence as an Other. At the same time, I wanted to behave and talk like locals did. I was struggling in-between the contradicting desires I constructed by dichotomizing the cultures as “ours” and “theirs.”

After I became a graduate student, I had an opportunity to reflect on and question such narrow views of culture. Through my study and self-reflection, it became clear to me that my

naïve idea about culture was derived from a variety of *Discourses* I had been exposed to—from formal education to entertainment. Then I began to see how foreign nationals in Japan are often discursively labeled as the Other. I started wondering, what kinds of experiences native English speaker teachers in Japan have and how they construct and negotiate their identities.

Because of my background, participants in this study seemed to recognize me as an “insider,” or a person who has had a similar experience but in a reverse way (i.e., native Japanese speaker teacher in an English-speaking country vs. native English speaker teachers in Japan). Yet, I am a male member of the dominant group of the society my participants were located in. Also, in this study, I was the researcher and my participants were researched. Although I did not perceive any sign of influence, I cannot rule out the possibility that this unequal relation of

### **1.3 Organization of Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on language teacher identities and the JET Programme. Chapter 3 explains in detail the theoretical framework and methodology of this study, including each participant’s background, and the method of data collection and data analysis. Then in Chapter 4, I present the findings in relation to the research questions. After that, in Chapter 5, I discuss the relevance of the findings to the previous literature introduced in Chapter 2. Finally, I conclude this thesis in Chapter 6 with practical implications and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I first discuss the literature on language teacher identities (LTIs). After that, I review the history of the JET Programme, followed by a discussion of the *Discourse of kokusaika* [internationalization]—the foundational Discourse that shapes the JET Programme. I then examine previous research concerning the power differences in which the JET Programme participants are positioned. Finally, I point out some gaps in the research that this study hopes to address.

### **2.2 Language Teacher Identities**

Research on LTIs has been gaining momentum in the last decade (Cheung, Said, & Park, 2015; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnston 2005; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, & Trent, 2016). The study of teacher identity has attracted much attention because it is now widely accepted that teaching is “a socially constructed activity that requires the interpretation and negotiation of meanings embedded within the context of the classroom” (Johnson, 1996, p. 24). Teachers’ identities play an important role in shaping teachers’ role in the classroom, the methodology they use, and how they deliver subject matter contents (Pennington, 2015).

Many scholars have discussed the pedagogical aspect of teacher identity, reflecting Farrell’s (2016) statement “who I am is what I teach” (p. 215). Zheng (2017), for example, investigated how international teaching assistants mobilized their translingual identity into teaching practice. Reflecting on an incident of ideological conflict with students in her classroom, Kubota (2016) stated, “in critical pedagogy, teacher identity is often located in a site where teachers and students struggle to negotiate their ideological difference” (p. 246). This

suggests that the negotiation of ideological difference itself can be a site of educational practice, as well as a place for teacher identity construction.

In general, contributions of LTI research can be categorized into the following three areas: (a) theoretical conceptualization, (b) social categories and struggles, and (c) diversification of methodological approaches. In what follows, I elaborate on each area.

### **2.2.1 Theorizing LTIs: Language Socialization, Agency, and LTIs as Process**

One of the first studies on LTIs was conducted by Duff and Uchida (1997) at a private language school in Japan. Duff and Uchida (1997) illustrated how teachers' "sociocultural identities" (p. 451) were constructed in the locus of their biographies, experiences, and contextual factors (e.g., the local classroom and the institutional culture, the textbooks, and the curriculum), and how their sociocultural identities were manifested in their teaching of cultural knowledge.

In her longitudinal study in China, Tsui (2007) identified three important sources of teachers' identity construction: (1) whether or not a teacher possesses competencies that the community values, (2) whether or not a teacher is given "legitimacy of access to practice" (p. 675), and (3) whether or not a teacher has "the ability to participate in the construction and negotiation of meanings and, to claim ownership of meaning" (p. 676). Her participant, Minfang, possessed a competency in communicative language teaching, and he was given legitimacy to access the teaching practice. However, he was unable to disclose his skepticism toward the communicative approach due to his fear of losing his position because this view directly conflicted with his institution's values. Hence, in this case, Minfang had competency and legitimacy of access to practice but lacked the ability to participate in the construction of meaning. This study demonstrated how teacher agency could be suppressed by institutional and

economic power. Agency, defined by Duff (2012) as “people’s ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation” (p. 413), has been one of the key concepts in the study of LTIs.

Similarly, a participant in Miller, Morgan, and Medina’s (2017) study, JC, an elementary school teacher in the United States, constructed his teacher identity based on an institutionally defined narrow view of “success” (i.e., test scores). These studies of LTIs construction demonstrated how societal and institutional discourses play a significant role in determining legitimacy and the kinds of teacher identity that are considered desirable, which influence the ways in which individual teachers construct their identities.

In contrast, a participant in Said’s (2015) study, Krystle, a 28-year-old Chinese teacher of English, demonstrated a greater level of agency. While Krystle indeed constructed her identity in relation to her surrounding *Discourses*, she did so by contrasting and repelling those *Discourses* created by her family, mentors, and colleagues. Likewise, Gu and Benson (2015) illustrated how Guandong and Hong Kong teachers exercised their agency by resisting the socially established “good teacher” image to form their identity. Yet, participants in this study also showed signs of influence from their immediate contextual factors, socioeconomic backgrounds, and social *Discourses* on teachers and the teaching profession in their identity formation.

In his edited volume, *Reflections on Language Teacher Identity Research*, Barkhuizen (2016) collected essays from 41 scholars in the field of applied linguistics and teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) reflecting on their view of LTIs. In the introduction, Barkhuizen (2016) provided an all-encompassing definition of LTI based on the content analysis of the essays in this volume:



Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time—discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online. (p. 12)

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that construction of LTIs is a *process* that is situated in the locus of broader social, political, and historical *Discourses*, local institutional culture, and individual agency. Drawing on the transdisciplinary framework of the Douglas Fir Group (DFG, 2016), De Costa and Norton (2017) conceptualized this dynamic process. They stated, “the relationship between ideology at the macro level, institutional practices at the meso level, and social activity at the micro level, are all highly inter-related,” and integration of those three levels of practice “ultimately determines which teacher identities are legitimated in relation to language proficiency, practices and skills” (p. 6).

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study conceptualizes teacher identity in relation to Gee’s (2014, 2015) notion of *Discourse*. By investigating how ALTs in the JET Programme participate in their schools’ *Discourse*, this study adds further complexity to the theory of LTIs. In Chapter 5, I incorporate the DFG’s (2016) transdisciplinary work and discuss the findings in relation to the other issues pointed out in this chapter.

### 2.2.2 LTI Research on Social Categories and Struggles

As discussed above, construction of teacher identity is a dynamic process that is situated within broader social, political, historical *Discourses*. Some teachers struggle with negotiating their legitimacy as a teacher because these *Discourses* position them as illegitimate. Some studies on LTIs highlight this issue and promote “bottom-up” change.

Varghese et al. (2005) illustrated the tension between the “claimed identity” and the “assigned identity” (p. 36) non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) experience. For example, one of the participants in their study, Marc, a female Mexican MA TESOL student in the United States, struggled to claim her legitimacy as an English teacher because of the assigned labels such as ESL learner, NNESTs, minority, and woman. A change took place when Marc joined the NNESTs Caucus at the TESOL convention and became able to attach positive meaning to her NNEST status.

Simon-Maeda (2004) and Nagatomo (2015) illustrated how female native English speakers in Japan challenged the dominant ideology, gender, and racial stereotypes and negotiated their professional identity as teachers. These studies did not provide “a unitary description of how gender intersects with English language teaching and learning” (Simon-Maeda, 2004, p. 405), but instead demonstrated the complexity of teacher identity construction and how gender and race, as variables, play a significant role in the process. Participants in these studies struggled with the normative expectations of gender roles in Japan, in which women are often expected to get married early and take a domestic housekeeping role, as they negotiate their professional identity as a teacher (Nagatomo, 2015; Simon-Maeda, 2004). Also, Simon-Maeda (2004) stated, “White native speakerism is valued by educational institutions; however, many educators who fit the preferred, stereotypical young, White, blue-eyed, 100% American category

are often prevented from participating fully in Japanese academic and social spheres” (p. 430). Their arguments resonate with Appleby’s (2016) claim that “privilege is not all-consuming, and power is not uni-directional” (p. 763). Hence, the privileged status of native English speaker teachers (NESTs) could function as a “double-edged identity sword” (Nagatomo, 2016, p. 187).

Asai’s (2006) study on the JET Programme participants’ identity construction highlighted the ways in which race plays a role in the process. For example, one of her participants, Emma, shared her struggles with the othering she experienced as a foreigner while acknowledging the privilege she had as a White native English speaker. On the other hand, a Japanese-American participant, Tomoko, discussed that while she can “blend in” (p. 63) in the Japanese community because of her indistinctive appearance, her school expected JET ALTs to be distinctively foreign, and she felt her Asianness was seen as a disadvantage by other Japanese people (Asai, 2006).

As discussed, studies on LTIs have highlighted issues of power and how certain groups of teachers have struggled to claim their legitimacy as teachers. This study also contributes to this area by highlighting both the privilege (e.g., native speaker status) and marginalization (e.g., minority, foreigner, assistant teacher status) that participants in the JET Programme are discursively given and how these factors play a role in (il)legitimizing their membership in their schoolteacher *Discourse*.

### **2.2.3 Diversification of Methodological Approaches to LTI Research**

As discussed, processes of LTI construction are dynamic and complex. Hence, the study of LTIs requires a creative methodological endeavour. In this section, I review the methodological tools scholars have utilized to study LTIs.

A number of scholars have approached research on LTIs through studying teacher

narratives (e.g., Miller et al., 2017; Nagatomo, 2016; Riordan & Farr, 2015; Tsui, 2007). The study of narratives, De Costa and Norton (2017) stated, “allow[s] us to analyze spatial and temporal scenarios that go beyond the here and now” (p. 6). Scholars have approached narrative data in a variety of ways. For example, Nagatomo (2016) analyzed narratives of female English teachers in Japan and illustrated how their degree of employment stability (e.g., tenured vs. contracted) and racialized and gendered status interacted to shape their professional identity.

Ethnographic studies have also been conducted in LTI research. Zheng (2017) conducted longitudinal ethnographic studies on international teaching assistants (ITAs) at a university in the United States and investigated how participants brought their translingual identity to teaching as a pedagogical tool.

Based on their conceptualization of LTIs as identities-in-practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Kanno and Stuart (2011) collected data in a variety of ways—“interviews, teaching journals, stimulated recalls, classroom observations, videotaping of classes, and documents” (p. 241)—and analyzed them on two levels, within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Their multidimensional approach enabled them to see the reciprocal relationship between identity and practice. Kanno and Stuart (2011) stated, “practice shapes identity, whereas identity, in turn, affects practice” (p. 245).

Aneja (2016) analyzed participants’ metacommentary—the ways in which “participants use language to comment on its features, use and situated legitimacy” (p. 579)—and investigated how four students in a teacher education program “[thought] and talk[ed] about (non)nativeness rather than what these categories are in an abstract, static sense” (p. 579). Because of its alignment with a poststructural approach to identity, according to Aneja, metacommentary allows researchers to analyze how participants reify and resist the ideologies that position them

as (non)native speakers.

As reviewed, researchers have utilized a variety of methodologies to investigate LTIs. Yet, a discourse analytic approach to LTIs has been underutilized. This study contributes to the area of LTIs by demonstrating how a discourse analytic approach can be an effective tool to investigate the ways in which JET Programme participants (re)produce, challenge, and negotiate the *Discourses* they are exposed to.

### **2.3 The JET Programme: A History**

The structure of the JET Programme, in which participants are assigned to be an assistant language teacher (ALT), is considered to be a result of the Hiraizumi-Watanabe Debate in 1974 (Wada, 1987). A politician, Wataru Hiraizumi, criticized the traditional approach to foreign language education, which was characterized by a heavy emphasis on teaching of grammar and translation, and advocated for radical reform through removing English from the university entrance examination and providing communicative English training for those who choose to study English<sup>3</sup>. Shoichi Watanabe, a university professor, defended the traditional approach, and their debate was published in a magazine (Wada, 1987). As a result of this debate, Watanabe started to advocate for hiring native English speakers and having them teach speaking and listening, while Japanese teachers would continue taking the role of the traditional approach to translation, grammar, and writing of English. This suggestion was reflected in policy, leading to the establishment of the Monbusho<sup>4</sup> English Fellow Program in 1977 (Wada, 1987).

Another program, the British English Teaching (BET) Programme, established in 1978,

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<sup>3</sup> Hiraizumi thought not all students needed to study English (Wada, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> 文部省 (*Monbusho*, Ministry of Education) is the forerunner of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and technology (MEXT).

was run jointly by the British Council and Japan's then Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was involved, the program was likely coordinated with diplomatic intentions. Through this program, British university graduates were hired as English teachers.

These two programs were combined and expanded to become the JET Programme in 1987. During this time, rapid growth of the Japanese economy was creating trade friction with the United States, and the JET Programme was launched as a diplomatic exchange strategy. McConnell (2000) argued that instead of overcoming the trade conflicts through balancing material exchange (e.g., increasing imports of computers and cars), the Japanese government decided to open its door to foreign college graduates (especially those from the United States) with an employment opportunity that would allow them to "see the truth directly" (i.e., not all Japanese are economic animals) and acquire a favourable image of Japan (p. 35). This was part of Japan's *kokusaika* process. Therefore, the JET Programme is closely tied to the *Discourse of kokusaika*, which I discuss below.

#### **2.4 The JET Programme and Discourse of *Kokusaika***

As Japan was expanding its economic power, the trade imbalance between Japan and the West (especially the United States) became conspicuous during the 1980s, which raised criticism toward Japan. Rather than pursuing its own hegemony in isolation, Japan's choice was to avoid conflict and join the Western industrialized community through international investments (Kubota, 2002). Hence, the slogan of *kokusaika* was introduced as a response to external pressure imposed on Japan to reduce the trade surplus (Kadokura, 1994) and was reflected in various spheres of political, economic, and educational policies. Two aspects of *kokusaika* are relevant to this study: (1) reinforcement of national identity and (2) promotion of English as the

international language.

Although internationalization “generally implies a government’s pledge to open its political economical and cultural door to the outside world” (Kobayashi, 2011, p. 4), it sounds rather paradoxical that the *Discourse* of *kokusaika* was used to reinforce Japanese national identity. However, by bringing the presence of an Other into awareness, the sense of Self is strengthened. As Japan’s economy grew, *kokusaika* became a symbol for Japanese people that Japan was internationally competent, and rapid growth was explained by its culture. McCullough (2008) stated, “the traditionalists saw in ‘internationalization’ an opportunity to restore patriotism and traditional values which had been greatly weakened in the post-war period” (p. 25). For this reason, *nihonjinron* [the theory of Japaneseness] was actively promoted as part of *kokusaika*. *Nihonjinron*, according to Befu (2001), deals with “Japan’s identity, attempting to establish Japan’s uniqueness and to differentiate Japan from other cultures” (p. 2). Through the promotion of an essentialist, homogeneous, and monolithic view of Japanese culture, Japan attempted to join the West “without actually becoming the West” (Tsukada, 2013, p. 32). Hence, “Japanese culture is made unique and exotic vis-à-vis the West” (Kubota, 2003, p. 74). In fact, *nihonjinron* often juxtaposes Japanese and Western culture in a binary way, such as in terms of collectivism versus individualism, high context versus low context, indirect versus direct, and so forth (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Another aspect of *kokusaika* is its promotion of English as the international language. Although other foreign languages are taught in some schools, a disproportional focus is put on English, especially Inner Circle varieties (varieties used in native-English-speaking countries; Kachru, 2005; Kubota, 2002). The emphasis on English is so enormous that “‘foreign language education’ as a subject can almost automatically be interpreted as ‘English education’”

(Hasegawa, 2013, p. 113). Kubota (2002) pointed out the two equations created by this condition: (1) foreign language is English, and (2) English learning leads to international and intercultural understanding. Kubota (2002) warned that this condition may be detrimental for international understanding because it tends to “promote a narrow view of world cultures and, furthermore, produce essentialized images of both Inner Circle countries and Japan” (p. 22).

A number of other scholars have also pointed out that the way English is promoted in Japan reinforces the dichotomy between the Japanese Self and the foreign Other rather than attaining intercultural understanding. For example, referring to Lummis (1976), Yoshino (2002) stated:

Many language teachers thus become reproducers and transmitters of discourse of cultural difference and national identity... in fact, it is increasingly in the realm of the English-conversation industry that discourses on Japanese cultural and behavioural distinctiveness, namely *nihonjinron* are reproduced and transmitted. (p. 139)

A recent example of this can be seen in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s (MEXT) 2013 English education reform plan. The reform plan was created “in order to establish an educational environment that adequately responds to globalization” (MEXT, 2013, p. 1). Reflecting the changes made to the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006 (Nakatani, 2007), the reform plan discusses how *kokugo* [national language] education, traditional culture and history education, and moral education will also be targets of the reform in order to “foster an identity as a Japanese person” living in the global society (MEXT, 2013, p. 7). It also states that one of the learning objectives of English education is to become able to “convey our national and local tradition and culture [to others] in English” (MEXT, 2013, p. 3). Referring to Suzuki (1995), Liddicoat (2007) stated, “*kokusaika* is concerned with spreading



Japanese culture, values and history internationally, and moving the Other to see the world from a Japanese perspective, in order to preserve Japan's interests and promote the 'correct understanding of Japan'" (p. 37).

## **2.5 The JET Programme: A Complex Power Dynamics**

As the initial motivation of the JET Programme, diplomatic exchange to demonstrate Japan's effort to reduce the trade surplus rather than educational reform (McConnell, 2000), there was a resistance from the MoE. McConnell (2000) argued that the initial resistance from the MoE was due to the fear that Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) would be threatened by native English speakers because of their lack of English proficiency and the idealized view of Inner Circle varieties of English (Kachru, 2005). Hence, the MoE supported the JET Programme only under the condition that the participants would be hired as *assistants* and not as teachers (McConnell, 2000), and that they would not be required to have educational and/or occupational experience in teaching (CLAIR, 2016). Due to this status as assistants, ALTs are not given the ability to make important decisions such as evaluation of students (Nagatomo, 2016). ALTs' lower professional status as assistants was presumably created to equalize the power imbalance generated from native and non-native speaker status (Miyazato, 2009). Therefore, although one of the common criticisms of the JET Programme is that ALTs are not sufficiently qualified as teachers, this status difference was created intentionally (Galloway, 2009).

Yet another layer of power balance between JTEs and ALTs exists. As Nagatomo (2016) pointed out, there is a divide between the teaching of *eigo* (English language) and *eikaiwa* (English conversation). While the former focuses on the structure of English for school entrance exams, the latter is considered essential for developing communication abilities. In the context of formal education, the latter is often neglected and considered a place to merely try out English

conversation rather than actually learning how to speak (Nagatomo, 2016). This dichotomy can be seen in the roles of team teaching (TT): JTEs are teachers of *eigo*, and ALTs are providers of *eikaiwa*. Studies have demonstrated ALTs' frustration with their status as an entertainer rather than professional teachers (e.g., Asai, 2006; Geluso, 2013; Miyazato, 2009). This dichotomy, Nagatomo (2016) argued, appears to also impact students' attitude and motivation to learn communicative English. She stated, "such attitudes toward native English speaking teachers may affect students' attitudes toward learning communicative English, because after becoming aware of their native English speaking teachers' lower status in the schools, they might develop attitudes that communicative English is unimportant" (p. 56). This desynchronization of these two types of learning, Nagatomo (2016) argued, is one of the causes of unsuccessful English education in Japan.

From these arguments, it is clear that there are complex power differences between JTEs and ALTs in the JET Programme: (1) inferior NNESTs versus superior NESTs, (2) licensed JTEs versus unqualified ALTs, and (3) *eigo* teachers versus *eikaiwa* teachers. Studies have highlighted the issues created by these complex power differences and the Self/Other dichotomy constructed by the *Discourse of kokusaika*. Galloway (2009) noted that JTEs value ALTs' expression of their cultural difference in the classroom. While such lessons of cultural difference are likely to contribute to expanding students' idea of cultural diversity, it could also be detrimental to expect ALTs to be different and treat them as a "specimens" of a foreign culture (Sergeant, 2009, p. 96). In fact, as McConnell (2000) pointed out, the JET Programme set a maximum length of contract renewal (currently five years<sup>5</sup>) in order to ensure the program "would forever be

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<sup>5</sup> Until 2006, the maximum length of contract renewal was three years.

positions for temporary outsiders” (pp. 103–104). For this reason, Kobayashi (2011) argued that JET Programme participants are systematically positioned as Other. Galloway (2009) also stated that some of his ALT participants felt they were not treated as valuable members of staff. This is likely due to their employment status and their inability to get involved in important decision-making.

Miyazato (2009) pointed out that ALTs’ native speaker status and their “exotic” image give them privilege. This privileging demonstrates that Japanese people still perceive native English speakers to be superior (Kubota, 1998). However, at the same time, Miyazato’s ALT participants “were regarded mostly as guests by the students, rather than authoritative teachers who have a strong effect on students’ school work and lives” (p. 47). Hence, as Nagatomo (2016) described, “the participants’ non-Japaneseness and their native-speakerness form, without a doubt, a double-edged identity sword” (p. 187). In addition, ALTs’ limited literacy skills in the local language and culture and their lower professional status as assistants made them feel powerless (Nagatomo, 2016).

Breckenridge and Erling (2011) also discussed these issues and argued that “the structure and ideology of the JET Programme result in systemic ‘utilization’ of ALTs” (p. 96). According to Breckenridge and Erling, based on an essentialized and idealized conception of NESTs, ALTs are brought into the classroom only for the sake of their emblematic presence as native speakers. As a result, these “exoticized natives” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 96) are dehumanized and utilized only as “artifacts of a foreign culture” (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 94). Breckenridge and Erling (2011) stated that ALTs “are not encouraged to change, grow, and develop” and that “this has negative effects on the ALTs’ sense of professionalism and desire to renew their contracts with the JET Programme and/or continue with a career in ELT” (p. 96).

## 2.6 Summary and Research Gaps

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on LTIs and discussed three areas (theoretical conceptualization, social categories and struggles, and diversification of methodological approaches) to which I aim to contribute in this study. The literature has suggested that construction of an LTI is a process, and engagement in practice is essential. However, this process is situated within the locus of macro-, meso-, and micro-level D/discourses, and access to practices is socially gated.

The overview of the JET Programme research suggests that JET ALTs are positioned in the locus of complex power differences that legitimize, illegitimate, and delegitimize their engagement in the teaching practice. This positioning is likely to have a significant impact on their construction of teacher identity. This is crucial because it is now widely understood that language teachers do not merely mechanically apply teaching methodologies, but they bring their sense of self to teaching, which shapes both teaching and learning (Nagatomo, 2016). Although previous studies have demonstrated what problems exist and how they are manifested, how these problems are discursively maintained, challenged, and/or reinforced is not yet clear.

This study takes a discourse analytic approach to investigating how JET Programme ALTs construct their teacher identity through participation in their schools' *Discourses*. By doing so, this study illuminates how *Discourses* and ideologies at the societal (macro) and institutional (meso) levels interact with micro-level practices at ALTs' schools and how issues such as lack of inclusion of ALTs (McConnell, 2000), reinforcement of the essentialist view of culture (Kobayashi, 2011), dichotomizing of *eigo* and *eikaiwa* (Nagatomo, 2016), and dehumanization of ALTs (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011) are discursively produced and reproduced.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology used in constructing and carrying out the research in this thesis. I first discuss the participant recruitment process and present brief biographies of each participant. After that, I discuss the data collection method. Then, I present the theoretical framework that informed this study followed by an explanation of how the data were analyzed using Gee's (2014) method of D/discourse analysis.

### **3.2 Participants and Data Collection**

Participants consisted of six female JET Programme participants who worked in three different prefectures. All of the participants' native language was English. All of them reported that they had some proficiency in Japanese, though their level of proficiency varied. Participant ages ranged between 23 and 30 years old, and their amount of time in the JET Programme ranged between two and five years. Each participant's biography is discussed in detail in the following section.

#### **3.2.1 Recruitment Method**

A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods was used to recruit participants through my personal connections. Initial recruitment was done through my former students who were alumni of the JET Programme, then some of the participants introduced me to their JET Programme peers who were interested in joining the research. After hearing about their interest in participating in the research and receiving their email addresses, I sent out an email introducing myself, my study, the necessary research commitment, and the consent form. Upon receiving their consent, I scheduled the first interview. The second and third interviews were scheduled at the end of the preceding interviews.

### 3.2.2 Summary of Participant Biographies

Table 3-1 gives a brief outline of participants' backgrounds. All names of individuals, cities, and prefectures are pseudonyms. In order to give a clearer view of the diverse backgrounds of the participants, I will provide brief biographies for each.

**Table 3-1: Summary of Participant Biographies**

| Pseudonym | Nationality | Age | Years in the JET Programme | School Prefecture | School Grades                          |
|-----------|-------------|-----|----------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Alicia    | USA         | 24  | 3                          | Āban              | High school                            |
| Melissa   | USA         | 23  | 2                          | Āban              | High school                            |
| Emma      | Australia   | 30  | 5                          | Inaho             | Junior high school                     |
| Cathrine  | Canada      | 29  | 5                          | Inaho             | Junior high school                     |
| Shannon   | Canada      | 23  | 2                          | Iwakawa           | Junior high school & elementary school |
| Ray       | UK          | 23  | 2                          | Iwakawa           | Junior high school & elementary school |

### 3.2.3 Alicia

Alicia was a 24-year-old Caucasian female from the United States. She spoke Japanese at an advanced level. She taught at a high school in Āban. In addition to her ALT duty, she had been assigned to become a prefectural advisor (PA) and worked in the prefectural government. There, she translated documents, participated in meetings with the Board of Education and other organizations, and provided support for other JET Programme participants in the prefecture.

Since she was a young child, she had had various connections with Japan. Her hometown had had a sister-city relationship with a district in Āban, and there was a two-week exchange program between them, so her family had hosted junior high school exchange students every

summer. This catalyzed her study of Japanese. Alicia thought being in an environment where they could not understand the language at such a young age must have been hard for the exchange students. Thus, she “started learning Japanese to try and help them.” Later, she had visited Japan for two weeks as a participant of the same exchange program.

During her undergraduate study, Alicia had majored in international relations and Japanese and participated in a one-year exchange program at a university in Åban. While she was there, she had joined an English conversation circle at the university and engaged in discussions about political and social issues.

After returning from the exchange program, she had started working as an intern at a Japanese government facility. There, she was in charge of programming to “teach elementary school groups about Japanese culture,” such as how to wear a kimono and how to play kendama<sup>6</sup>.

Her experiences and Japanese fluency suggested that she was familiar with various *Discourses* in Japan prior to the JET Programme.

### **3.2.4 Melissa**

Melissa was a 23-year-old Caucasian female from the United States. She taught at a high school in Tokyo where there were two JET ALTs including Melissa. Melissa evaluated her Japanese proficiency as intermediate. At the time of the interview, Melissa was in her second year in the JET Programme.

When Melissa was in university, she had studied abroad in a metropolitan city in China for one year. She said the experience was “really, really great,” and “I really wanted to go back,

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<sup>6</sup> A traditional Japanese toy.

but then I ended up here instead.” Throughout the interviews, Melissa often juxtaposed her experience in China and her experience in Japan, especially when the topic was about social inclusion and how people react to foreign nationals.

At her university, Melissa had majored in political science and had close relationships with Japanese professors in her faculty. Because of the professors’ critical stance toward Japan and its system, Melissa had had an “overly critical view of Japan” prior to the program.

One of her Japanese professors had encouraged her to join the JET Programme when Melissa consulted with her about her plan for after graduation. Because Melissa “really wanted to live abroad, somewhere,” and had an interest in Japan, she decided to participate in the JET Programme. Also, Melissa wanted to “try out teaching in a way that wasn’t as intense as being the only person in the classroom.” Because she did not have prior teaching experience and was not sure teaching was the career she wanted to pursue, Melissa thought the assistant teaching position “would be a good way to experience teaching without being totally responsible and also totally committed to becoming a teacher.”

### **3.2.5 Emma**

Emma was a 30-year-old Caucasian female from Australia. She taught at five different junior high schools in Inaho prefecture. During her first year, one of these junior high schools was her base school. However, because she had not received any classes to teach at that school, her main office had moved to the local Board of Education (BoE) office after the first year. At the time of the interviews, she was in her fifth year in the JET Programme.

She had started learning Japanese when she was in the seventh grade and was already fluent in Japanese upon arrival for the JET Programme. Emma evaluated her Japanese proficiency as advanced. Emma held a master’s degree in interpretation and translation.



Prior to participation in the JET Programme, Emma had spent time in Japan twice: a two-week high school exchange program and a three-month working holiday in a rural area. After the working holiday, which took place during her undergraduate study, she had started working part-time at a ramen (Japanese noodle soup) restaurant in Sydney to continue practicing Japanese. At the restaurant, all the other employees were Japanese. Her work experiences in predominantly Japanese work environment suggested that she had likely been exposed to a Japanese workplace *Discourse* to some extent prior to the JET Programme.

In addition, Emma had taught English to high school students for a few weeks and karate for all ages for two years in Australia. According to Emma, she really enjoyed her karate teaching experience because she found it rewarding to see the children “grow and change.” Given her prior teaching experience, Emma said, she was “less nervous about teaching” because she was “used to be[ing] in that position.”

During the JET Programme, Emma married a Japanese person and gave birth to a daughter.

### **3.2.6 Cathrine**

Cathrine was a 29-year-old female from Quebec, Canada. She taught at five junior high schools in the Inaho prefecture. At the time of the interview, she was in her fifth year as an ALT.

Cathrine grew up in an English-French bilingual environment. When she was 5 years old, her family spent a year in France for her father’s work. After that, her family had visited there several more times. She had also traveled to Scotland and other European countries. During her third year in university, she had spent a month in Thailand as a volunteer at a wilderness centre. Before Cathrine applied to the JET Programme, she had visited Japan as part of a backpacking trip and stayed with her friend who was working in Japan as a JET ALT. Cathrine was inspired

by her friend and started studying Japanese upon returning to Canada.

Although she only had experience providing mathematics tutoring for a short period of time prior to her participation in the JET Programme, because her parents were both teachers and many of her relatives were teachers, she said she “knew about it more than some people might have had a chance.” According to Cathrine, having a “very teacherly family” made her want to experience teaching, and this was one of the reasons why she had decided to participate in the JET Programme.

Cathrine had been involved in JET Programme organizations such as the national Association of JET (AJET) and a prefectural JET association, and she had organized social events and provided support for other JET Programme participants.

### **3.2.7 Shannon**

Shannon was a 23-year-old Taiwanese-Canadian female. She taught at two junior high schools and three elementary schools in the Iwakawa prefecture. Shannon self-evaluated her Japanese proficiency as intermediate-advanced.

Shannon was born in Taiwan, and her family had moved to Canada when she was 10 years old. Despite the challenges she initially experienced as an ESL student, she came to consider herself as Canadian rather than Taiwanese because of her familiarity with the culture. According to Shannon, in Taiwan, “I look like everyone else. I speak like everyone else, but I feel like a minority, because I don’t understand the culture that well anymore.” In Canada, she considered herself as part of the majority because she “probably share[d] the same perspective on the world.” Also, because she lived in an area where there are many Asian Canadians, she felt like a “majority in terms of appearance” as well.

Although she had learned about the JET Programme only one month before the application deadline, Shannon immediately thought it was something she wanted to do from the “bottom of [her] heart.” As she happened to have prior teaching experience as a staff member at a youth summer camp and as a Mandarin tutor for university students, teaching was “something [she] knew [she] was capable of.” Participation in the JET Programme, Shannon thought, would allow her to “pursue other things,” such as improving her Japanese, immersing herself in Japanese culture, and taking time off from study to think about what she really wanted to do in the future.

### **3.2.8 Ray**

Ray was a 23-year-old Mauritian-British female. She taught at two junior high schools and three elementary schools in the Iwakawa prefecture. Both of her parents were Mauritian immigrants in the United Kingdom, and Ray had visited Mauritius a number of times. Because of this, she had been used to being in culturally different environments. For instance, she had visited China for a school trip, and her teacher had paid particular attention to students’ experience of culture shock. However, because she was “so used to going between England and Mauritius,” it did not have “any effect” on her.

Prior to the JET Programme, Ray had not studied Japanese language and had not had any teaching experience. At the time of the interview, Ray evaluated her Japanese proficiency as “beginner to intermediate.”

Ray participated in the JET Programme because she had been interested in living in Japan and she was unsure of what she wanted to do after graduating from university. Thus, her main purpose was to explore her life options through living abroad.

According to Ray, her father moved to the United Kingdom without much financial capital but quickly became successful and invested in Ray's education with a hope to "improve on what they've done in the U.K." However, as one of Ray's motivations for participating in the JET Programme was to live away from her parents, Ray had started questioning her parents' values and definition of success.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

I utilized semi-structured individual interviews as a primary means of data collection. I conducted all the interviews over Skype with video<sup>7</sup> between Japan, where the participants were, and Canada, where I was. In order to explore participants' accounts in depth and to build a rapport with participants I had never met before, I conducted three interviews for each participant: in the first interview, my questions focused on the participants' life history and predeparture experience; in the second interview, I asked about participants' experiences after arrival; and in the third interview, participants were asked to reflect on their previous experiences and to consider their present and future lives.

Each interview lasted between 30 and 100 minutes—the first interview tended to be brief and the second interview was the longest with all participants. Prior to the first interview, I gave the participants a preliminary questionnaire in order to collect basic demographic information, such as nationality, age, languages spoken, and the prefecture and grades of their schools. I recorded and transcribed all the interviews for analysis.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Interview on Skype**

In line with the notion of situated meaning (Gee, 2015), in which meanings are

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<sup>7</sup> An exception was made for the first two interviews with Shannon, in which she chose not to use the video. She was able to see me, but I was not able to see her in those interviews.

considered to be situated within a social interaction, I view the interview accounts as products of a joint discursive practice between the participants and me and as contingent on various factors such as emotional states, the wider social discourses of the particular time and space in which the interview took place, the interview environment (e.g., surrounding noise, Internet connection), and so on. Hence, I am aware that the interview accounts are not necessarily an objectively accurate description of what the participants have actually experienced and felt, but rather, those representations are situated narratives of the participants.

In addition, the utilization of Skype for interviews is likely to have influenced the interview outcomes. As stated above, due to geographical distance and financial constraint, all the interviews were conducted over Skype. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technologies such as Skype have become widely accessible to many people around the world due to “increased bandwidth and availability of inexpensive, relatively easy-to-use technologies” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p. 604). Although the literature discussing the utilization of VoIP technologies for qualitative interviews is limited, my reflection resonates with the existing literature. I would like to highlight some of the aspects that may have impacted on participants’ accounts.

First, as a male researcher interviewing six female participants, identification of an open interview space to ensure participants’ sense of security and comfort would have required much consideration if I were to conduct face-to-face interviews. Utilization of Skype enabled both the researcher and the participants to be in their own homes, which was the case for all participants, during the interviews without the presence of other people around them (except one participant, Emma, whose husband and child were next to her during the interviews).

Second, as Seitz (2016) pointed out, physical spatial distance and omission of some

nonverbal cues might have been obstacles to building a rapport with participants. In addition, in this study, there was a significant time difference between Japan and Canada (16 hours), which may have impacted the level of intimacy and engagement we could attain in the interviews. To build a closer relationship with participants, Seitz (2016) recommended exchanging emails with participants prior to the interview. In this research, I conducted three interviews with each participant to help me build a rapport with them. In fact, during the second and third interviews, I noticed myself and the participants making jokes and laughing more frequently than in the first interviews.

Third, because of the acoustic differences between face-to-face conversation and telephone conversation, overlapped utterances were harder to comprehend over Skype. Therefore, I was cautious not to overlap my utterances with those of the participants. Although we did not talk about this issue, the participants also appeared to be cautious about this. As recommended by Seitz (2015), I noticed myself using facial expressions and gestures “deliberately to convey understanding and emotion” (p. 4).

### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

This study incorporates Gee’s (1989, 2014, 2015) theory of *Discourse*. First, I discuss four key concepts of Gee’s (1989, 2014, 2015) view of language: situated meanings, social language, intertextuality, and figured worlds, followed by a discussion of Gee’s notion of capital *D Discourse*.

#### **3.4.1 Situated Meaning, Social Language, Intertextuality, and Figured Worlds**

According to Gee (2015), meaning is constructed as “the result of social interactions, negotiations, contestations and agreements among people” (p. 22). Thus, the meaning of a word does not actually exist in a fixed form in a dictionary, but rather exists in an intersubjective

space. Any word or structure in a language has a certain “meaning potential” (Gee, 2014, p. 158), and meaning is situated in actual use (Gee, 2014). For example, depending on the context, the meaning of the sentence “you are crazy” can be a compliment or an insult. In actual situations of use, language users generally have fairly specific ideas of what a word or sentence means based on the context and their previous experience.

Gee’s conceptualization of meaning resonates with that of Bakhtin (1981), who considered language as always “half someone else’s” (p. 497) and suggested that one appropriates and adds one’s own meaning in every utterance. Rommetveit (2003) described it as shareholdings, suggesting that language users as shareholders negotiate the meaning of semiotics with our own interests and intentions. It is important to note that power plays a crucial role here—those who hold greater power tend to have a bigger voice in meaning construction. The complex power relations JET Programme participants were situated in—as native speakers of English, assistant language teachers, and foreigners—likely complexify the ways in which they engaged in meaning construction.

Social languages refer to “styles or varieties of a language (or a mixture of languages) that enact and are associated with a particular social identity” (p. 162). English, for instance, consists of a variety of social languages such as dialects, African-American Vernacular English, professional/formal ways of speaking, and casual ways of speaking. Through the use of one or multiple social language(s), language users enact socially situated identities. For example, the ways in which schoolteachers speak to their students are likely to be different from the way they talk to their family members. Another example is code-switching. When one switches from English to Japanese during a conversation, for instance, one may be signifying one’s identity as a bilingual and/or expressing one’s affiliation to both linguistic communities.

Intertextuality refers to the act of quoting or alluding to texts or symbols other people have produced (Gee, 2014). Here, text means any stretch of spoken or written language, and symbols include images, sounds, gestures, and so on. Intertextuality occurs not only when someone directly refers to others (e.g., “I heard that restaurant is great”), but also when someone incorporates one style of social language into another. For example, when one “acts like a teacher,” one is intertextually incorporating the behavioural and linguistic characteristics of a teacher or teachers one has encountered before. This suggests that when one enacts a socially recognizable identity, at least some level of intertextuality is involved.

Another key concept in Gee’s (2014, 2015) theory is the “figured worlds.” Gee (2014), borrowed from Dorothy Holland, defined the figured world as “a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal” (p. 176). Of course, what is considered to be typical or normal differs by cultural and social group as well as time. Figured worlds “come to seem ‘inevitable’, ‘natural’, ‘normal’, ‘practical’, ‘common sense’, though other cultures and people at other times in history have found them ‘odd’, ‘unnatural’, violations of common sense” (Gee, 2015, p. 87). In the field of applied linguistics, for example, so-called “monolingual bias” is heavily criticized, and the value of non-native speaker teachers is recognized. Yet, research suggests that the ideal English teacher is still considered to be an Anglo American native English speaker (Rivers & Ross, 2013).

Through analysis of participants’ accounts, this study investigates “what typical stories or figured worlds the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting listeners to assume” (Gee, 2014, p. 177) and how participants talk about their encounters with differences and similarities between their figured world and those of their colleagues and students.



### 3.4.2 *Discourse*

Gee (1989, 2014, 2015) distinguished capital *D Discourse* from small *d discourse* (i.e., “language-in-use or connected stretches of languages that make sense,” p. 118). *Discourse*, according to Gee (2015):

is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting, as well as using various tools, technologies, or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’, to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’, or to signal that one is filling a social niche in a distinctively recognizable fashion. (p. 123)

*Discourses* are acquired only through social practices by becoming a member of a certain community. Gee (2015) stated that “all *Discourses* are the products of history” (p. 124), and the term *Discourse* illuminates the continuity of human collective being. The cultural and social practices embedded in a *Discourse* are passed on from generation to generation through communication across time and space while transforming themselves in the process.

As Gee acknowledged in his interview with Rogers (2004), his view of language and *Discourse* is partly inspired by Bakhtin. For this reason, I understand Gee’s notion of *Discourse* in relation to the Bakhtinian view of language. First, Bakhtin (1986) wrote, every human is born into a preexisting “chain of speech communion” (p. 79) because one learns to use language(s) others have already been using. Similarly, we are also born into *Discourses* that “predate us on the scene; they are the product of other people’s work” (Gee, 2015, p. 166). For example, *Discourses* of teachers are historic and social constructs that have existed before one participates in them. Second, with his notion of *heteroglossia*, Bakhtin (1981) argued that every utterance

consists of multiple voices (i.e., half someone else's and half the speaker's own). This is because every time we speak/write, we appropriate the meaning of the language that has been used by someone else. This suggests two things: (1) No matter how creatively we use semiotics, we cannot completely move away from the presence of others' voices in our utterances; hence, a person can derive the meaning of his or her own voice only in relation to others, and (2) because our being is always in a state of flux, every utterance is different; hence, the meaning of language is constantly updated by the members of the speech community. Similarly, when one says or does something, one enacts not only "the Discourse he or she is in at the time, but also the other Discourses that person is a member of" (Gee, 2015, p. 146). Hence, enactment of a certain *Discourse* involves multiple-voicedness, and the *Discourse* is continuously updated by the unique styles each member brings into the *Discourse*.

Given these similarities, my understanding of *Discourse* is inseparable from Bakhtinian view of language. Thus, I use the notion of *Discourse* as the network of semiotics (i.e., language and other meaningful symbols) that constitutes ideology and socially recognizable identity(ies), and use the word *proficiency* to describe one's familiarity with and control over a *Discourse*. Also, I use the term *teacher identity* to signify the socially constructed aspect of identity(ies) of teachers. Through enactment of the *Discourse* of teachers, one makes one's teacher identity recognizable to oneself and others in a particular *Discursive* field.

Gee's theory of language and *Discourse* captures the sociocultural and discursive aspects of language and identity, and his theory is cohesively constructed with his methodological framework of discourse analysis.

### **3.5 Data Analysis: Building Tasks D/discourse Analysis**

I incorporate Gee's (2011) version of D/discourse analysis, referred to as "building tasks"

analysis. In this approach, it is considered that “people use language in purposeful ways, situated within social, historical, and political contexts” (Rogers & Wetzel, 2014, p. 57). This approach to D/discourse analysis brings Gee’s theory into life. As Gee (2011) stated,

Situating meanings, social languages, figured worlds, and Discourses move us from the ground of specific uses of language in specific contexts (situated meanings) unto the world of identities and institutions in time and space (Discourses) through varieties of language (social languages) and people’s taken-for-granted theories of the world (figured worlds). This progression is, in my view, the point of discourse (or better d/Discourse) analysis. (p. 43)

According to Gee (2011), “whenever we speak or write, we always and simultaneously build one of seven things or seven areas of ‘reality’” (p. 94), which include significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge. Through analysis of these building tasks, four theoretical concepts of Gee’s unfold. Table 3-2 shows what each building task means.

**Table 3-2: Building Task D/discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014)**

| Building task              | Description  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Significance               | The ways in which something is made significant through language.  |
| Activities                 | The ways in which language is used to engage in a certain activity.  |
| Identities                 | The ways in which certain identity(ies) are enacted through the use of language.   |
| Relationships              | The ways in which relationships are built, sustained, or deconstructed through the use of language.                                    |
| Politics                   | The ways in which social goods (i.e., socially constructed value of something) are built and/or destroyed through the use of language. |
| Connections                | The ways in which connection(s) between things are rendered (in)visible through the use of language.                                   |
| Sign systems and knowledge | The ways in which certain sign systems and forms of knowledge are privileged or disprivileged.   |

As Rogers and Wetzel (2014) discussed, not all building tasks are relevant to all texts, but rather, researchers can use these tasks to guide their analysis. The encompassing question in the building task analysis is, “what linguistic resources are being used to accomplish these social goals?” (Rogers & Wetzel, 2014, p. 58).

### **3.5.1 Analytic Process**

After transcribing the recorded interviews for the first time and before applying the transcript conventions and perfecting the transcript, I started the first analysis of the data. I am aware that this may be problematic because the ways in which interview accounts are represented in the transcript impact the analysis (Gibson, Webb, & vom Lehn, 2014). However, (1) in order to determine what transcript convention was most appropriate for this research, and (2) due to the time constraint, I decided to conduct the initial analysis prior to the application of transcript conventions.

In the first analysis, using Gee’s (2014) seven building tasks as a framework, I focused on the structure of the language and how particular meanings were constructed. By doing so, I was able to identify some of the themes that captured important elements in relation to the research questions. While some of the themes presented were prevalent and recurrent across the interview accounts, other themes were unique to specific participants. After applying Schiffrin’s (1987) transcript conventions and correcting the errors on the transcripts, I revisited the data and identified parts of the accounts that best represented the themes.

I then conducted a closer linguistic analysis of the identified parts. In order to analyze how participants rhetorically structured their narratives and organize the meanings, I segmented the texts into lines. Each line contains a single topic. This segmentation is slightly different from

Gee's (2014) use of stanza. While stanza is useful for identifying the stylistic characteristics of texts, I chose to segment the texts with lines to focus on the underlying assumptions of the speakers and the ways in which their logics were constructed as well as the tasks participants built with their use of language.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the relevant themes in connection to this study's research questions. Most of the excerpts answer both research questions, which demonstrates how issues are interconnected. The answers to specific questions (e.g., how participants' race (il)legitimizes their participation in the school *Discourse*) are discussed in Chapter 5. I indicate the types of tasks participants build with their use of language in square brackets.

### 4.2 Illegitimized Participation in the *Discourse*

The following excerpts demonstrate participants' experience of being illegitimized as a member of their schools' *Discourses*.

#### 4.2.1 Ray: My Opinion Doesn't Really Matter

In the following excerpt, Ray responded to my question "do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?" Ray shared how she struggled to attain legitimacy in the *Discursive* community at her junior high school.

#### Excerpt 1: Ray, Interview 2

194. I'm usually there [her base junior high school] on the day that they [JTEs] have the English meeting, but they don't ask me to join or anything, so I don't really know what's going on.
195. Umm, with English or, like anything really. So, it kind of, yeah like, it doesn't help me,
196. because I don't know really what the teachers want from the lessons,
197. and how was it constraint. It's kind of a constraint because I feel like, I don't know, I always felt my opinion isn't very valued at my base school.
198. Umm like the teachers might ask me for my opinion, but I feel like if it's not the opinion that they want, it doesn't really matter.

This is a part of Ray's response to my question "do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?" In this excerpt, Ray clearly positioned herself separately from JTEs, as expressed in her use of pronouns "I" and "they" [relationship]. Ray also implied her limited sense of agency in two ways. First, in lines 194-196, Ray suggested that it was the JTEs who had control over her participation in the English meeting (line 194) and the information she received about "what teachers want from the lessons" (line 196) [connections]. Second, in lines 197-198, Ray claimed that her voice was not heard unless her opinion complied with JTEs' opinion [politics]. From these points, it is inferred that her access to the dialogue (i.e., meeting) and information, and her participation in the *Discourse*, were systematically constrained, if not denied, by her status as an assistant.

The following is the continuation of the previous excerpt. Ray shared her interpretation of her situation discussed above.

**Excerpt 2: Ray, Interview 2**

205. which yeah like I can see it's kind of fair enough from like a teacher's perspective,  
206. cuz you know, I'm just a native speaker. I'm in a classroom like  
207. I have a TEFL certification, but I don't know. Like maybe they [JTEs] don't see that as  
enough or anything.  
208. Like I'm not very familiar with the Japanese education system. Maybe, for them.  
209. So like I think as well, they have like a lot more deadlines and things that they have to do with  
the class.  
210. Whereas, as an ALT, you kind of like you just see it from the perspective of you wanna make  
good English speakers and the kids understand English, you wanna improve all that,  
211. whereas the teachers have like test requirements and targets to meet where they need to get  
students at a certain level, umm,

212. which for ALTs isn't as important. Umm if that makes sense.

In lines 205-208, Ray attempted to provide three reasons why she did not have access to her school *Discourse*: (1) because she was “just” a native speaker (line 206), (2) because she was unqualified (line 207), and (3) because she lacked familiarity with the Japanese education system (line 208) [connections]. All of these reasons can be linked to other texts and discourses. As Breckenridge and Erling (2011) pointed out, native speaker status is often seen as the primary function of ALTs' presence in the classroom, and this is one of the main reasons why the JET Programme does not require a teaching-related degree or qualification or teaching experience, despite the fact that this policy has been questioned by a number of scholars (e.g., Galloway, 2009; Miyazato, 2009). Also, as McConnell (2000) argued, the JET Programme set the maximum length of contract to ensure that its participants would forever be temporary outsiders, and any degree of familiarity with the local culture would presumably be regarded as a negative factor (Kobayashi, 2011). For these reasons, ALTs' active participation in the *Discourse* appears not to be expected and/or may not be desired.

In lines 209-212, Ray expanded the discussion about the Japanese education system and juxtaposed the roles of JTEs and ALTs [identities], which resonates with Nagatomo's (2016) distinction between *eigo* (English) and *eikaiwa* (English conversation) education. While JTEs are responsible for ensuring that their classes cover the objectives in the curriculum and prepare students for the examinations, the ALTs' role is to provide conversational activities that are not considered to have much impact on students' test scores. Interestingly, Ray's juxtaposition of JTEs and ALTs appears to have an ironic texture; she stated that ALTs “wanna make good English speakers and the kids understand English, you wanna improve all that” (line 210), whereas JTEs are focusing on exams, which are often criticized as ineffective for cultivating communicative language abilities [connections, politics, identities]. In fact, elsewhere in the interview, Ray took a critical stance toward



the tendency of Japanese English education to put much focus on the study of grammar rather than “creating language” (line 356). It is possible that JTEs perceive this critical stance as a threat to their practice.

While Ray shared her difficulty with her inaccessibility to the dialogues with JTEs and the information about what JTEs wanted from lessons, Shannon and Melissa struggled with their students, who underestimated their ability as a teacher.

#### **4.2.2 Shannon: Involving Homeroom Teachers at Elementary Schools**

In the previous discussion, Ray discussed her experience in her junior high schools. What became clear in this study is that there is a sharp difference between elementary schools and secondary schools in terms of the roles ALTs are expected to play. In junior and high schools, there are teachers who are specialized in English as a subject. They are usually trained and have experience in teaching the subject matter. Hence, JET participants generally take the *assistant* role in and outside of the classroom<sup>8</sup>.

However, at elementary schools, homeroom teachers (HRTs) teach most of the subjects. Since English was adopted in the elementary school curriculum as a “foreign language activity” in 2008 (not a subject as of 2017), many elementary school teachers have not had sufficient English teacher education and experiences. Because of this, JET ALTs at elementary schools often take a leading role in classroom and lesson planning. In fact, both Ray and Shannon often took the leading role at their elementary schools.

In the following excerpt, Shannon responded to the question “how do you describe your relationship with Japanese teachers of English?” and talked about her experience during her first year

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<sup>8</sup> At competitive high schools, some English classes are carried out predominantly in English. In this study, Alicia and Melissa said they sometimes took a leading role in the classroom.

at her elementary schools, where HRTs often stayed in the back of the classroom or even left for the staff room while she was teaching. According to Shannon, her predecessor was a certified teacher in his home country, and HRTs at her elementary school became comfortable having ALTs take almost full lead in the classroom and lesson planning.

**Excerpt 3: Shannon, Interview 2**

92. S: I don't wanna be just, we are always told that we are guests in the teachers' classroom, and it should, because we are *assistant* language teachers, so it's really important that we have, you know, we, we respect the teacher in a way they discipline their class in a way they want to run things,
93. Y: Uh-huh
94. S: and I realized in my first year, I was a bit, just like, "okay, I'm gonna walk in, do whatever I want, and walk away."
95. Y: Uh-huh
96. S: And, that meant, I was okay explaining things both in English and little bit of Japanese to the point where the homeroom teacher, even though they are relieved and they sure can relax, they think that, you know I don't need them, they are not needed, so then they retreat to the back or even like to the staff room.

In line 92, Shannon shared how ALTs were told, presumably at the orientations, that they are "guests" in teachers' rooms and signified her role as an assistant [identities]. Because of her status, she was problematizing ALTs' taking of a full leading role, as she realized that she was doing during her first year [politics].

She critically reflected on the attitude she had in her first year when she said she would "do whatever I want, and walk away" (line 94). In other words, Shannon problematized her attitude

by making it significant. This implies two things: (1) Shannon had a great level of freedom in her lessons, and (2) ALTs are rootless and may lack responsibility. As discussed below, Shannon often planned her lessons and taught them by herself. Since JET ALTs only have a temporary position<sup>9</sup>, they often perceive themselves and are perceived by Japanese teachers as ones who come and go. That is why they are considered “guests” (line 92). In this case, Shannon was struggling with the contradiction that a guest was taking the leading role and the “host” (i.e., HRT) was not involved [politics].

What Shannon problematized here was not only the contradiction, but also the way teachers thought of their role as a result of Shannon’s taking of the leading role. As discussed in line 96, Shannon thought she was capable of “explaining things both in English and a little bit of Japanese” [identities]. However, her capability in turn made the HRTs think “they are not needed” in the classroom [connections]. The following excerpt is the continuation of the excerpt above. Shannon talked about the impact of HRTs’ presence in the classroom:

**Excerpt 4: Shannon, Interview 2**

98. S: That’s really, really, uh really bad for me because I do need the home teacher to be there.
99. You know, he or she is a presence that I can never compare to.
100. If they are there, the students are more likely to listen and understand, and they can be such a huge, huge help.
101. Just discipline the students and tell them what to do, and give them more confidence, you know, encouraging them.
102. Y: Uh-huh.

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<sup>9</sup> The maximum contract renewal is 5 years.

103. T: And also, the degree of difficulty in the activity that I do really depends on the homeroom teacher's mindset of the activity. So the homeroom teacher thinks, "oh, this is too difficult," and if I run the activity the students can feel that the homeroom teacher thinks "this is not doable," so they won't do it. They won't try. But if the homeroom teacher thinks, "oh, let's give it a try. Let's challenge this" and encourages students like, "oh, you can do this," then it will really motivate the students to, you know, step up.
104. Y: Uh-huh.
105. T: So it's really, it's a really quite delicate situation to build a relationship with homeroom teachers in elementary school, because it's so important.
106. And I realized that I was losing that, some of the disciplinary power that they had, when I've been teaching like for a long time, on my own.
107. So that's why this year, I'm like, "okay, now I need to talk to them, and be like 'oh, you know I'm doing this activity, can you help me with this and this and this.'" So it's, I think it's improved a lot this year.

Shannon's words in line 98, such as repeating the word "really" three times and "do" in "I do need homeroom teachers" expressed her strong feeling about this issue because it impacts students' attitude toward learning and learning outcomes (line 100) [significance].

In line 101, Shannon implied her understanding that some HRTs do not feel comfortable teaching English. In fact, elsewhere in the interview, Shannon shared an episode when an HRT told her about a lack of confidence in speaking English, and Shannon started to communicate with the teacher predominantly in Japanese. Because of this, Shannon was suggesting the roles HRTs could take in the classroom: provide encouragement of and discipline for students.

As discussed in line 103, HRTs' perception of the degree of difficulty either encouraged or

discouraged students' engagement in the classroom activities. It implies that students perceived their authority differently and attributed less "disciplinary power" (line 106) to Shannon [relationships, connections]. This line also implies that there was no discussion between Shannon and the HRTs about the lesson plan prior to the lesson.

Some of the participants in this study (i.e., Ray, Alicia, Emma) also mentioned the issue of discipline. According to the program rules, JET ALTs are prohibited from disciplining the students, and according to the participants, this was explicitly mentioned in their program orientations. While this policy protects ALTs from potentially serious issues such as complaints from parents and lawsuits, it has its downsides as well. First, as in Shannon's case when ALTs teach the class solely by themselves, it is often unrealistic to do so without exercising any discipline. As Shannon said in line 8, students' level of engagement in the classroom decreased when HRTs were not present [connections].

Second, inability to discipline students also has a potentially detrimental effect from the perspective of intercultural education. The systematic deprivation of the "disciplinary power" from ALTs implies that at a school—in which students engage in social practices in order to cultivate their proficiency in the dominant societal *Discourse* to function smoothly in the society—the ideal teachers are considered to be members of the dominant *Discursive* group. Hence, the prohibition of ALTs from engagement in disciplining of students may normalize the illegitimation of foreigners as teachers, which potentially reinforces students' perception of foreigners as outsiders of *Discourses* in Japan. In Shannon's case, her racialized identity as an Asian English teacher further complicated this condition, which is discussed later.

For the above reasons, Shannon exercised her agency and tried to invite the HRTs to her lessons in her second year. It is possible to think that she gained proficiency in the English teacher

*Discourse* in her first year, and that is one of the reasons why she could effectively ask the HRTs to participate in her lessons. As her words (“I’m doing this activity, can you help me with this and this and this” [line 107]) suggest, Shannon was asking the HRTs to take the role of assistant [relationships].

### **4.2.3 Melissa: People Don’t Take Me Seriously**

In the previous excerpt, Shannon shared her perspective about how her students perceived her “disciplinary power” differently from that of the HRTs. In the following excerpt, Melissa responded to my question “do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?” She also talked about how her ability as a teacher was overlooked by students.

#### **Excerpt 5: Melissa, Interview 2**

126. Umm yeah, I feel like sometimes people don’t take me really seriously, and sometimes the students as well.
127. Like in the English club in particular, when they need to, when the students need to get something done, that requires like asking a teacher, or like any person in authority,
128. they kind of bypass me and my co-JET and just go straight for the JTEs,
129. which frustrates both of us a lot,
130. because like I’ve been at the school for a while, or long enough now, that we can help the English club kids with anything that they need, we can talk to the other teachers to reserve the room or work out the schedules with the school, that kind of thing,
131. but they just kind of like don’t communicate important information to us,
132. is I guess, we are just the assistant teachers.

In this excerpt, Melissa provided an example of when she felt her students did not take ALTs seriously. As discussed below, Melissa had attained a certain level of recognition in terms of her

membership in her school *Discourse* through her dedication to work. In line 130, she clearly positioned herself as a competent teacher who was capable of handling “anything that they need” [identities]. Her interpretation of why students disregarded her and her co-JET’s legitimacy in this particular context was because of their status as assistant teachers. Hence, she positioned herself as a collective “we” JET ALTs (line 129, 130, 131, 132) [identities].

Since she was asked to talk about the constraints she had experienced as an assistant, Melissa did not foreground her foreigner status in her response here, but it is possible to think that students associate JETs’ foreignness with an assistant status because, in most cases, assistant teachers are only foreign nationals. Based on the literature review (e.g., Asai, 2006; Nagatomo, 2016) and participants’ accounts in this study, it was evident that JET participants’ assistant status was made clear to the students in the classroom practice. Hence, it is potentially detrimental as an educational practice for students if treating foreign nationals differently from the dominant group is unwittingly normalized. In fact, the literature suggests that there are stereotypes that foreigners in Japan are unreliable, less committed, and so forth (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011). The JET Programme may systematically contribute to the reproduction of such stereotypes.

As was demonstrated above, some JET Programme participants experience constraint in their participation in the *Discourse* at their school due to their status as an assistant: Ray’s participation in the teachers’ meetings in deciding what should be taught in the classroom and how was limited, Shannon could not exercise her “disciplinary power” as her HRTs did, and Melissa’s opportunity to exercise her ability as a teacher was dismissed by students because she was considered illegitimate. As Gee (2015) argued, one cultivates a particular *Discourse* by participating in the social practice. Therefore, their limited access to the practice inevitably leads to deprivation of their opportunity to construct their *Discourse* as a teacher.

### 4.3 Disregarded Intelligence & Dehumanization

As discussed above, some participants shared their struggle with getting their legitimacy recognized by teachers and students because of their status as an assistant. In the following section, Alicia shared her interpretation of how her statuses as a foreigner and a non-native Japanese speaker might have impacted JTEs' perception of Alicia's intelligence.

### 4.4 Alicia: Expected to be Silly

The following excerpt is Alicia's response to my question "what challenges do you experience as an ALT?" Alicia talked about how her intelligence had often been disregarded.

#### Excerpt 6: Alicia, Interview 2

214. Umm well, it's, it's less as an ALT, but more as like being a foreigner, being an outsider, it's umm, it's almost sort of subconscious I think,
215. but they expect you to be really, really good at English, but nothing else, really. Umm and like they'll be surprised if you show knowledge about like a different field besides English or
216. like sometimes like my teachers will occasionally like, especially the one like Ueda-sensei, she will occasionally say things like "oh, you are actually quite smart, aren't you?"
217. It's like [sigh] I know, I know that I'm like not perfectly fluent in Japanese, sometimes I make mistakes and sometimes makes me sound stupid,
218. but "yes, I am a fully functioning human." So it's a,
219. and they do this in the U.S. too, I've noticed they are like, just because you, you know, don't speak the language perfectly or you have an accent or something, they expect you to be like silly or, [sigh] not serious and they underestimate your intelligence a little bit,
220. and I find that happens here.



Alicia provided two possible reasons why this was the case: (1) because of her lack of Japanese proficiency (line 217) and (2) because of her foreigner status (line 214) [connections]. These two factors resonate with linguistic stereotyping (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960), and reverse linguistic stereotyping (Kang & Rubin, 2009) respectively. Linguistic stereotyping is an act of attributing negative characteristics to a speaker of a certain linguistic variety that is deemed to be associated with low-prestige groups (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960), and reverse linguistic stereotyping is a distorted perception of a speaker's language style or proficiency triggered by attribution of the speaker's group membership (Kang & Rubin, 2009, p. 442).

In this case, Alicia claimed that her lack of Japanese proficiency triggered underestimation of her intelligence by JTEs, and she supported her interpretation by providing an intertextual reference to the same phenomenon happening in the United States in line 219 [connections]. Her account also suggested that the disregard of her intelligence was triggered by her foreigner status as well (line 1) [connections].

Through interpretation of her account, it is possible to think that her “visible” foreignness as a White person triggered a distorted perception of her lower Japanese proficiency (reverse linguistic stereotyping), and the perception of low Japanese proficiency was attributed to her lower intelligence (linguistic stereotyping). As a consequence, ALTs are often expected “to be really, really good at English, but nothing else (line 215)” and ALTs’ presence in the classroom is deemed to be merely as a “living artifact belonging to a foreign culture” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 56). This is one of the sources of “dehumanizing effects” (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 93), which create a situation in which ALTs are constantly “utilized” as “a human tape-recorder” (Cathrine, Emma, Shannon), “a walking dictionary” (Emma), and “accessories JTEs bring to the classroom” (Alicia), despite criticisms the

JET Programme has received since its launch.

#### **4.5 Signifying the Different Roles**

As discussed above, some JET Programme participants struggled with how they were positioned by JTEs and their students and negotiated their legitimacy to participate in the *Discourse*. At the same time, some JET participants signified the different responsibilities ALTs and other regular teachers had.

##### **4.5.1 Cathrine: Pros and Cons of an Assistant Status**

When I asked, “do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?”, Cathrine provided both positive and negative aspects of having a different role from other Japanese teachers.

##### **Excerpt 7: Cathrine, Interview 2**

245. And so I don't really get the responsibilities at time to me that everyone else does,  
246. like they don't really think to ask me um to do certain things often um  
247. like I'm there and I'm capable but they don't think that, I guess first of all probably cuz  
my Japanese isn't perfect.  
248. Asking me to help out with things like a music festival or whatever.  
249. On the other hand, it's really the opposite of restricting because I'm kind of outside the  
system and so there's a lot of things that I can do that they can't.  
250. Um and th, I think it applies to ALTs in general.  
251. I have a friend um also in Yagami city who lives a couple of towns south of me who's  
much more outspoken than I am.  
252. Um he has lots of opinions about the Japanese school system,  
253. he can say them, whereas his teachers can't.

254. Um because he is not really part of it and he's not really, he doesn't have as much at stake, I guess, so he's really,

255. So this side as well it's kind of, yeah, there's pros and cons to it for sure.

In this excerpt, Cathrine provided both cons (lines 245-248) and pros (lines 249-254) of having a different status—she did not foreground “assistant” status in her response.

First, Cathrine signified that she did not have the same level of membership as “everyone else does” (line 245), because she was not asked to participate in “certain things” (line 246) such as extracurricular activities like music festivals (line 248) [connections]. Interestingly, she reasoned that was not because of her assistant status, but because of her Japanese proficiency (line 247) [connections]. This was possibly because of her strong sense of efficacy as demonstrated in her words “I am there and I am capable” [identities]. Elsewhere in the interview, Cathrine said that she was sometimes asked to teach a class by herself when the teacher was sick and absent. This suggests that she was confident that she had attained trust from other teachers in terms of her English teaching. Hence, her explanation for why she was not asked to take part in extracurricular activities was not because of her status as an assistant but because of her lack of Japanese proficiency.

From line 249, Cathrine talked about the positive side of being “outside of the system” (line 5). It is notable how the agents shifted in lines 249-252: In line 249, it was Cathrine who could do things Japanese teachers could not do (“there's a lot of things that I can do that they can't”). The agent was generalized in line 250 (“it applies to ALTs in general”). Then in line 251, Cathrine introduced her friend, and by line 252, he became the solo agent in the story (“he has a lot of opinions”). Thus, Cathrine was taking a certain distance from the JET ALT who violated the Japanese teacher *Discourse* by saying things that were considered impossible for

Japanese teachers to say [identities]. It is presumable to think that it is a manifestation of Cathrine following the *Discourse* more closely or her desire to take a closer membership in the Japanese school *Discursive* community.

Her arguments here suggest that ALTs have fewer responsibilities than Japanese teachers (line 245), which makes them have less at stake (line 254) and enables them to critique the Japanese school *Discourse*. Hence, ALTs have the potential to become agents who bring changes into the system if their membership is sufficiently recognized.

#### **4.5.2 Emma: We are *Assistant Language Teachers***

The following excerpt is part of Emma's response to the question "how do you describe your relationships with other teachers (i.e., non-English teachers)?" Like Cathrine, Emma also signified her assistant status and different responsibilities ALTs were expected to fulfill.

#### **Excerpt 8: Emma, Interview 2**

172. There are some teachers who think like, they think we don't work hard enough  
173. which, is largely not our fault, because it's not our responsibility to design classes, we are  
*assistant* language teachers, not teachers on their own,  
174. but some teachers would be like we take, paid leave like, easily? More easily than they  
do, we take sick leave or we leave on time, like no, no over times,  
175. so some teachers maybe are, I don't know, jealous? Or feel like we don't work as hard as they  
do or something.

What is striking here is that her response was entirely about how ALTs were perceived by Japanese teachers in terms of their relationships. It suggests that their relationship depended on how members of the dominant group (i.e., Japanese teachers) accept ALTs.

Here, Emma was signifying the different responsibilities ALTs and other "teachers on their

own” (line 173) had [connections]. Emma’s use of the first-person plural “we” positioned her as part of *assistants* and distanced that group from “them”—the Japanese teachers [identities]. In line 3, Emma listed the three possible factors that made Japanese teachers think ALTs were not working hard enough: not designing classes, taking paid leaves and sick leaves more easily than Japanese teachers do, and not working overtime. Except for designing classes, the last two factors are not explicitly stated responsibilities for Japanese teachers either, but are *de facto* pervasively assumed responsibilities. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013) reported that, on average, Japanese teachers in lower secondary education work 53.9 hours/week—the longest among the 34 participating countries. This means the average overtime work is roughly 2.8 hours/day.

As Emma argued, it is presumable that those differences in responsibility reinforced the Japanese teachers’ idea of ALTs as not working hard enough (line 172), and therefore ALTs were not taken seriously. Interestingly, the following excerpt demonstrates how Melissa attained a certain level of membership in her school *Discourse* through overtime work.

#### **4.6 Successful Participation in the Japanese Schoolteacher *Discourse***

Two of the participants in this study (Melissa and Alicia) signified their success in attaining membership in their schoolteacher *Discourse*.

##### **4.6.1 Melissa: Working Overtime**

When I asked Melissa about how she communicated with JTEs, she told me that she could find time to communicate with them after the regular working hours. The following excerpt is Melissa’s response to my question “was that from the beginning, you were staying after the regular working hours?”

### Excerpt 9: Melissa, Interview 2

110. M: Yeah I heard like, I can't even remember where, I think from previous JETs probably that staying past working hours is one way to show that you are really serious about the job, instead of just like showing up only for the working hours, if you stay a little bit later, it shows you actually have real dedication or like
111. not that you are not dedicated if you don't stay late,
112. but it shows you have more dedication maybe,
113. so I started doing it, just as kind of a gesture
114. and I ended up having so much work that if I wanted to go home, I probably couldn't, so, here we are.
115. Y: Oh, I see. So those jobs were kind of, you ended up receiving because you built that trust or you showed your dedication to the work?
116. M: I suppose.

In this excerpt, Melissa shared how she had attained a certain level of trust and recognition as a serious colleague at her school. As she said in line 110, following the advice she received from (probably) a former JET Programme participant, she started staying overtime as “a gesture” to demonstrate her seriousness and dedication to work. Although Melissa said this was just “one way” (line 110) to show her seriousness toward work and not staying overtime does not necessarily mean one is not dedicated to work (line 111), her “gesture” seems to have had a significant impact on how she thought she was perceived by other teachers.

As she admitted in line 116, it was highly likely that the reason she “ended up having so much work” was a result of the membership in the professional *Discourse* she had attained. In fact, after the regular working hours was when Melissa participated in dialogue with JTEs, as she said in another

part of the interview, “after 6 [o’clock], usually. People’d just be sitting around and there is always enough time to ask them about something.”

Her sense of belonging to her schoolteacher *Discursive* community was clearly manifested in her positioning vis-à-vis another JET ALT at her school. Melissa said, “he actually goes home 4:45 everyday. He actually has a life, unlike the rest of us” (lines 121-122)[identities, connections]. The contrast of the third-person singular “him” and the first-person plural “us” is signifying her membership in the schoolteacher community and distancing herself from the ALT. Strikingly, the membership criterion here is overtime work, which resonates with Emma’s account of how it may be a defining factor in whether one is “working hard enough” or not.

#### **4.6.2 Alicia: Tangible Proof of Effectiveness & Prefectural Government Work**

Like Melissa, Alicia also appeared to be successful in terms of attaining recognition of her professional identity at the school. In the following excerpt, Alicia responded to my question about how she built trust and attained a higher level of expectation at her school. In her case, there were two factors that manifested in Alicia’s account.

##### **Excerpt 10: Alicia, Interview 3**

63. A: They had a baseline expectation because they had dealt with ALTs, non-JET ALTs, before, so they suspected that I would be, uh similar,
64. and I think right away, a young, a very young teacher, she is, she is having her baby now, but she immediately wanted to work with me, and bring me into her classes every day,
65. and her enthusiasm really showed the other teachers that I could be useful in the classroom,
66. and the students who were in our class actually had much better scores on English tests than the other classes,

67. so they really kind of appreciated the fact that this type of English isn't just fun and games.  
It's actually learning.

In line 63, Alicia said that her school initially expected her to be similar to previous JET ALTs the school had had. The word “suspected” hints that Alicia exceeded their expectation. As Alicia discussed from line 64 onward, it was a young female teacher who helped in promoting recognition of her competence by demonstrating how “useful” Alicia was (line 65). As shown in line 66, there was a tangible result to prove how team teaching could be an effective approach.

There is an interesting intertextuality in line 67. Where Alicia said, “this type of English isn't just fun and games. It's actually learning,” she is presumably referring to and negating the discourse of *eikaiwa*, which, as Nagatomo (2016) discussed, is seen as a fun activity that does not help students to prepare for the university entrance exams [connections, politics].

Alicia continued to talk about another factor that helped in recognition of her competence at her school in the following excerpt.

**Excerpt 11: Alicia, Interview 3**

69. A: And I think also they were impressed that the prefectural government wanted me to work there,

70. cuz their image is that the prefectural government is very important, and high-level people are the only ones who work there,

71. so the fact that I was chosen to work there really kind of proved to them that I was serious.

According to Alicia, the fact that she was chosen to serve as a prefectural advisor and work at the prefectural government helped her to convince Japanese teachers about her legitimacy because prefectural government officers are considered to be “high-level people” (line 70). Her expressions “the prefectural government wanted me to work there” (line 69), and “I was chosen” (line 71)



indicate her sense of pride. Also, her use of third-person plural “them” to describe schoolteachers suggests that Alicia was taking some distance from the schoolteacher community [identities]. It may be possible to interpret that Alicia’s sense of membership in the Japanese professional *Discourse* was derived from the multiple roles she took in the JET Programme.

#### **4.7 Shifting Subjective Positions**

As discussed above, Alicia’s highly regarded PA role helped her to negotiate her legitimacy in her school’s *Discourse*. The following excerpt demonstrates how Alicia shifted across subjective positions and played a role as a mediator between JET ALTs, JTEs, and the JET Programme organizers.

##### **4.7.1 Alicia: Mediating Between JTEs, ALTs, and JET Programme Organizers**

When I asked Alicia about the difficulties ALTs had initiating communication with JTEs because of their busyness, Alicia shared an episode when she discovered a major miscommunication happening between JTEs and ALTs.

##### **Excerpt 12: Alicia, Interview 2**

197. Like of course they are busy, but there are sort of longer-than-average stretches of downtime where if you know their schedule you can absolutely initiate a conversation with them if it’s productive,

198. but I do feel that when you come onto JET, as soon as you are accepted you are pretty much inundated with “your teachers are busy. They don’t have enough time to talk to you. They are busy, don’t talk to them!” like

199. and so you kind of come into the situation feeling like “I’m not important enough to ask for their time,” so you *don’t*,

200. and then the teachers think I actually taught at symposium on how to work with JETs. My

role as PA<sup>10</sup>, for JTEs and a lot of the teachers,

201. Japanese teachers were surprised to know that we are told *not* to talk to them, because they are busy. They said, “oh, we always thought it was hard to talk to you guys, because you look so busy yourselves.”

202. So I found out that there is this huge miscommunication going on and a lot of JETs are just, they give up trying to start communication with their JTEs pretty much as soon as they join.

In lines 197-199, Alicia used the third-person plural “they” for JTEs and indefinite “you” for JET ALTs, and in line 200, she was speaking as a PA and using the first-person singular “I.” This suggests that Alicia was distancing herself from both JTEs and ALTs and positioning herself as a mediator between JTEs, ALTs, and the JET Programme organizers [activities, identities].

Importantly, this was enabled by her multiple insider statuses: (1) a recognized member of the Japanese schoolteacher *Discursive* community, (2) a JET ALT, and (3) an officer at a prefectural government as a PA. Rather than simply taking her PA role, her insider statuses in all these three groups enhanced the legitimacy of her argument. As discussed above, Alicia’s account demonstrated that she was recognized as an effective member at her school. This is why she could confidently state that she could initiate a conversation with JTEs (line 197) [activities].

She was also demonstrating her insider JET ALT status not only by including herself in “we” ALTs in line 201, but also by intertextually referring to the communication issue commonly discussed among JET Programme participants—in fact, all of the other participants in this study (except for Melissa, who finds time to communicate with JTEs after regular work hours) mentioned that they had difficulty communicating with JTEs because of the busyness of

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<sup>10</sup> Prefectural advisor

JTEs—and showing her understanding of how ALTs became hesitant to talk to JTEs (lines 198-199) [activities, connections].

Finally, Alicia’s status as a PA enabled her to speak to JTEs with a voice of authority (i.e., teaching JTEs at a symposium [line 200]) while still being recognized as an effective member at a Japanese school as an ALT.

#### **4.8 Fear of Delegitimization**

As discussed above, some JET Programme participants seem to attain a certain level of legitimacy and membership in their school *Discourse*. Melissa demonstrated her dedication and seriousness to work through overtime work, and Alicia’s potency was recognized after one JTE exemplified how team teaching is an effective approach for students’ learning, while her role as a PA further supported her legitimacy. Yet, some participants shared how they were constantly in a state of anxiety about having their foreigner label resurface and being delegitimized as a member of the society.

##### **4.8.1 Emma: I’m Not the Kind of Foreigner You Think I Am**

In the following excerpt, Emma responded to a question “have you experienced any change in your sense of self since your arrival?” Through sharing her experience of traveling back to Karakura prefecture, where she stayed for her working holiday, Emma discussed how her subjective position had changed after living in Japan for five years. Emma said she got culture shock when she encountered other Australian travelers.

##### **Excerpt 13: Emma, Interview 2**

414. E: Cuz I lived there when there was no foreigners there, and now it’s like all Australian people,

415. and, I saw like I didn’t wanna identify with the Australian people who were there, I

- wanted to identify myself as a Japanese tourist, because I was traveling from Inaho (prefecture), not traveling from overseas, traveling from Inaho. And wanting to identify myself in that way. I felt the same way when I went to Hirano (prefecture) as well,
416. like I'm a foreigner but I'm not the kind of foreigner you think I am.
417. Y: Uh-huh.
418. E: I live here.
419. Like, and also feeling like some of the Australians that were in Karakura when I was there were not very well behaved, and I was like seeing that side of the culture as well was just like, shocking?
420. but also like I understood it but at the same time I didn't like it.
421. Y: Uh-huh.
422. E: And being standing near those people and being immediately associated with them, bothered me a lot.

In this excerpt, Emma shared an episode when she realized her personality change. Emma's desire to be identified "as a Japanese tourist" rather than as a foreign tourist when she visited different parts of Japan (line 415) came from her familiarity with Japanese *Discourses*. Emma's statement, "I'm a foreigner but I'm not the kind of foreigner you think I am" (line 416) expresses her strong refusal to be categorized into "the kind of foreigner"—a stereotypical image of foreigners that Japanese people have [identities].

Interestingly, her refusal to be "associated with them [other foreigners]" (line 422) came not only from her familiarity with Japanese *Discourses*, but her sensitivity to the differences between *Discourses*. As she said, "I understood it but at the same time I didn't like it" (line 420), she understood why Australian travellers behaved in a certain way that Emma found troubling.

In fact, in a different part of the interview, Emma said, “when you are changing countries, because you get a bird’s-eye view of your own culture and of yourself, and of the culture you’ve joined in a way” (line 386) and she had become more aware of the norms that were once invisible. Emma said, “things that are taken for granted are no longer there, so it forces you to be more self-aware” (lines 360-361). Emma’s greater level of meta-understanding of *Discourses* acquired through crossing the *Discursive* fields made her more sensitive to other foreigners’ violation of norms, and she found it troubling when she was “immediately associated with them” (line 422) [identities].

Such association occurred just by “standing near those people” (line 422) because of her appearance as a White person. This suggests that no matter how one is proficient in the Japanese *Discourses*, his/her membership can easily be threatened by the presence of other foreigners who are less proficient in the *Discourse*. A similar sentiment was shared by Alicia.

#### **4.8.2 Alicia: As I Thought, You Are Gaijin**

The following excerpt is part of Alicia’s response to my question “what is your strategy to overcome those challenges (in her case, as discussed above, her intelligence being disregarded)?” Alicia talked about how important it is to “know who you are yourself, and not let other people’s idea of you define or change how you see yourself.” Yet, she shared her sensitivity to how she was seen by Japanese people.

#### **Excerpt 14: Alicia, Interview 2**

245. Some people will say, like, “Alicia, your thought process is so Japanese,” or like, “you are exactly like a Japanese person,”
246. and that. Kind of plays into, cuz I know I’m not a Japanese person, they know I’m not a Japanese person.

247. What they are saying is “you fit in so well, even though you are foreign,”
248. and I know that’s supposed to be a complement and I should be like really happy that I am seamlessly integrating into a society,
249. but I also feel like “oh no, I’m gonna do something wrong and they are gonna figure it out,” and they are gonna be like 「おおやっぱり外人だ」 (*Ō yappari gaijin da*, oh, as I thought, she is a foreigner after all) and so,
250. that has like given me a lot of anxieties especially in public, like if I hang out with a bunch of other 外国人 (*gaikokujin*, foreigners) like we are drinking on the train or something or like being noisy, I feel really like anxious about everyone watching us and like being like “uggh 外人 (*gaijin*, foreigners), they are so annoying.”
251. and so it has kind of been a little bit confining and I, I feel like super conscious of like how other people are looking at me.

Because of her various experiences interacting with Japanese people (e.g., hosting junior high school students at home, participating in an exchange program at a Japanese university), Alicia had a high level of fluency in Japanese *Discourses*, and as line 1 showed, this was recognized by her friends.

However, she did not take their comments at face value (lines 246-247). Alicia was aware that her foreigner status could easily resurface and her membership in the community would be questioned again once she did “something wrong” and Japanese people “figure[ed] it out” (line 249). Her choice of the word “やっぱり” (*yappari*, as I thought) demonstrates her constant fear as if she was under surveillance. Elsewhere in the interview she stated, “you *do* feel like most people are watching you and waiting for you to like make a mistake or something” (interview 3, line 150). Like Emma, Alicia felt most anxious when she was with other foreigners who were

less proficient in the Japanese *Discourses* (line 250).

Although the particular “saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combination” (Gee, 2015, p. 118) that members of a particular *Discursive* group are expected to enact in a given social situation is negotiable and constantly modified as members act within it, it is possible to argue that the “membership criteria” of the Japanese *Discourses* are often more strictly set for visible foreigners. Emma and Alicia’s constant fear of being delegitimized as a member comes from their appearance as a non-mainstream member of the society rather than their lack of proficiency in the *Discourses*.

Once they violated a certain expectation as a member of a *Discourse*, such as speaking loudly on a train, members of the dominant group of the *Discourse* (i.e., Japanese people) would rationalize this as the act of a foreigner (“As I thought, she is a foreigner”). Hence, their foreigner label would resurface.

This may be analogous to immigrants’ legal status in most countries. When immigrants violate the law in a host country, they could easily be deported. Their membership in the society heavily depends on how compliant they are with the law, while citizenship holders’ right to remain in the country is usually never threatened by their acts. In some cases, the law might even be questioned or revised if a violator’s act were deemed justifiable.

In this case, a violation of the norms by a foreigner leads to delegitimization of him/her as a member of the Japanese *Discursive* community. His/her violation is rationalized because foreigners are expected to have no way of understanding the complex Japanese culture (Manabe & Befu, 1992). Hence, regardless of how justifiable his/her action was, it would not likely lead to modification of the *Discourse*.

This suggests that participation in the Japanese *Discourses* by ALTs neither leads to

diversification of the voices within the *Discourses* nor does it increase the possibility for change. Rather, it functions to reinforce the existing *Discursive* structure by leading foreigners to feel they must comply with the *Discourses* more strictly than mainstream members of society. This resonates with Ray's comment above, "the teachers might ask me for my opinion, but I feel like if it's not the opinion that they want, it doesn't really matter."

#### **4.9 Criticizing "Stereotypical ALT[s]"**

In what follows, I highlight an instance when Melissa, as an ALT who appeared to attain a certain level of membership in her school's *Discourse*, took a critical stance toward what she called "stereotypical ALT[s]" who had a lot of criticisms toward the Japanese education system and tried to change it.

##### **4.9.1 Melissa: Don't Come With an Agenda**

In the following excerpt, Melissa responded to the question "What is your advice to future JET participants?"

##### **Excerpt 15: Melissa, Interview 3**

195. Umm I would say like not to go to Japan with any kind of agenda,  
196. like maybe a personal agenda of wanting to become a better teacher, or like learn how to  
work in a really big office environment, or like live independently. Those are good goals,  
197. but like any ideas about like changing the Japanese education system or like changing the  
school that you work at, I think is umm not irresponsible, but unnecessary.  
198. I guess, like I'm sure schools can learn a lot from their JETs and change with a JET's  
influence,  
199. but basically like Japan in my opinion doesn't need like a whole fleet of foreigners rolling  
up like trying to change the country,



200. and I think that like at best at school, we just kind of like accept advice and maybe change a bit,
201. and at worst, like if the school only has one JET and that's the JET that the school has for years and that's their only experience with JET and the person, that kind of like stereotypical ALT, like wants to change everything, it has a ton of criticisms about Japan and Japanese society
202. like that's gonna do so: much more damage than if they didn't have a JET at all, or like they have like a normal person who was a JET.
203. Umm so I think it's like coming in with a ton of humility and willingness to listen,
204. even if you think the advice you are being given isn't helpful or even if you think your school doesn't really understand where you are coming from,
205. like just make it you first listen, try to imagine how they see you, not how you want them to see you.

Since this was advice to future JET Programme participants, Melissa took a senior ALT role and created a certain distance from other JET participants [identities]. This can be observed in her use of the indefinite “you” to refer to prospective ALTs. Overall, Melissa positioned herself more toward the Japanese school system. This demonstrates her sense of membership in her school's *Discursive* community. At the same time, as an ALT, she acknowledged some of the difficulties ALTs may encounter (line 204).

    Melissa argued that agendas for personal growth “are good goals” (line 196), but any agenda that aims for social and institutional change is “not irresponsible but unnecessary” (line 197) [politics]. While acknowledging that the schools potentially learn from a JET's influence (line 198), Melissa stated that is not something Japan needs (line 199). Line 199 is particularly

striking because it indicates the ideology the JET Programme operates within: Japan brings in “a whole fleet of foreigners” for the sake of emblematic presence of native speakers in the classrooms without expecting them to change the system. In other words, what Japan expects to receive, as suggested by this excerpt, is the instrumental function of the native speakers, but not as human beings with their own opinions.

Certainly, it is important to note that the kind of person Melissa was criticizing here is what she called “a stereotypical ALT” who “wants to change everything” and “has a ton of criticisms about Japan and Japanese society” (line 201). It is possible that such ALTs have a linear idea of social progress and judge the Japanese education system based on their own perspectives. As in the case of Cathrine’s friend discussed above, these ALTs may express their opinions by positioning themselves as outsiders who do not “have as much at stake” (Cathrine, interview 2, line 254). In that case, it is unlikely for such criticisms to lead to the modification of the *Discourse*, as Gee (2015) stated that “viewpoints that seriously undermine them defines one as being outside them,” and “the *Discourse* itself defines what counts as acceptable criticisms” (p. 123).

In fact, in line 205, Melissa stated, “you first listen, try to imagine how they see you, not how you want them to see you.” This suggests that Melissa was claiming the importance of ALTs’ ability to see themselves from the perspective of other people in their schools and locate themselves within the *Discourses* of their schools first before acceptably voicing criticism.

Interestingly, elsewhere in the same interview, Melissa shared her experience of directly telling a JTE she worked with about the difficulty she had working with him. Melissa said she “went over to his desk and said, ‘I really do like working with you. I’m learning a lot, but you really don’t understand, you scare a lot of the kids and you are a really difficult person’ [laughter]” (line 168). According to

Melissa, their “relationship actually got a lot better after that” (line 173) This episode suggests that Melissa was recognized as a member of her school’s *Discursive* community, and thus her criticism was deemed acceptable by the JTE. This further supports that a membership in the *Discourse* is crucial for one’s opinion to be legitimized.

#### **4.10 Not Distinctively Foreign: Another Double-Edged Identity Sword**

As discussed, participants struggled with the stereotypes associated with foreigners, such as “not serious” (Melissa) and “not working hard enough” (Emma), and even if they had achieved a certain level of recognition and membership in their school’s *Discursive* community, they were under constant fear of delegitimation because of their “visible” foreignness. Shannon, the only Asian participant in this study, added some complexity to this situation.

##### **4.10.1 Shannon: Not Foreign Enough**

When I asked Shannon if she could see herself in the Japanese society in the future, Shannon talked about the challenge of being an Asian foreigner in Japan. Shannon said,

people here tend to stereotype 外国人 (*gaikokujin*, foreigner) a lot, and that if we don’t fall into that category, it’s interesting and also a bit awkward to navigate like social lifers here. Umm, and, so because I look like a Japanese, but I don’t act or speak, similarly, umm it’s hard to feel like I belong. (interview 3, lines 55-56)

Shannon expanded her discussion and talked about the value of her presence and changes as an Asian ALT in the classroom.

#### **Excerpt 16: Shannon, Interview 3**

63. My students, I’m happy that my students do think of me as a foreigner,
64. because that means that they at least accepted some extent that not all foreigners look, you know, like blond with blue eyes, and I think it’s really important for them to understand

- that even if they only see one nontypical looking foreigner in their whole entire life.
65. Umm but then, and students are, it's okay for students who think like that, but there is some students who don't find me as interesting and like I can't I can't command their attention as easily as other foreigners,
66. because to them, I'm not foreign enough.
67. It's sometimes a good asset to have, like as an English teacher, because you are just so different to look at, you know, you are just so different to view,
68. umm but I don't really have it, and for the more like, umm, overactive students, it's a bit difficult to tell them to pay attention to me. Like that.

In this excerpt, Shannon talked about the value of her presence as an Asian ALT at the school (lines 63-64) [identities] and the challenges she faced because of her nonforeign appearance (lines 65-68) [connections]. In line 64, she was intertextually referring to a discourse that considers the archetype of a foreigner to be a White American<sup>11</sup>, and Shannon thought her presence could question this image students might have.

Yet, Shannon said she faced difficulty with her classroom management because she thought she was perceived as “not foreign enough” (line 66) [connections]. Shannon repeatedly said, “I’m not foreign enough” during the interview [identities]. For example, when she talked about her hunt for jobs in Japan for after her JET Programme career, she shared her concern that she might be “not foreign enough” for those companies that were looking for people from overseas. As she said in line 67, for ALTs, a foreign appearance (or Whiteness) is “a good asset to have” [politics]. This further supports the arguments made in other studies that “white bias”

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<sup>11</sup> This intertextual reference was used by other participants (Emma, Cathrine) as well.

(Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 84) does exist in the JET Programme, that only White people are considered to be real and authentic native speakers of English, and their “exorcized native[ness]” (Seargeants, 2009, p. 96) is used to enhance students’ motivation and interest for learning (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011). Because of her non-White status, Shannon might be delegitimized as a native English ALT by some teachers and students.

Shannon further discussed that she felt she could not attract other teachers and her colleagues’ interest in talking with her either [connections]. She stated, “I don’t get the benefit of maybe having someone, wanting to strike up a conversation, or wanting to ask me about something, because I’m different” (line 72) [politics]. As she used the word “benefit,” Whiteness is commodified and considered to be an asset as a native speaker English teacher. “So yeah, I get that they want me to be foreign and some people do appreciate me for being foreign, some people don’t, because I don’t look foreign enough” (line 75) said Shannon.

As discussed above, Shannon struggled with her lack of “disciplinary power” vis-à-vis Japanese HRTs. Together with this excerpt, it is possible to think that her disciplinary power is disempowered by two layers of discourses that determine who the legitimate teachers are: (1) a school is an institution of discipline, so a legitimate teacher is a member of the dominant *Discourse* (i.e., Japanese), and (2) English is a language of White people; therefore, a legitimate English teacher is White. As a result, as Kubota (2002) and McConnell (2000) pointed out, non-White JET ALTs tend to experience racial prejudice.

#### **4.11 Resistance to Gender Specific Discourse & Issues of Race**

Congruent with what Simon-Maeda (2004) and Nagatomo (2016) pointed out, a number of participants discussed the gender stereotypes and expectations that existed in and outside of their work environment.

#### 4.11.1 Shannon: I'm Just Like Any Other Canadian Girl

In response to my question “what is it like for you to live as a female person in Japan?” Shannon said, “female employees [were] kind of assumed to be the ones to, do house-like chores, so for example, make tea, pass out *omiyage* [souvenirs], umm, usher guests, the more mundane kind of chores” (interview 2, line 405) What was “even more surprising,” Shannon said, was that “they [were] okay, they naturally [did] it, and it took me a while to realize that” (line 406). The following two excerpts demonstrate her resistance to participate in this *Discourse* and how her Asian appearance made it difficult for her to resist such expectations.

##### Excerpt 17: Shannon, Interview 2

413. To me that's, I guess that's something I never get used to.
414. Also, I probably never participate in,
415. because I'm too, my mindset is too different to become comfortable with you know, making tea for everyone, or, you know, passing out food for everyone.
416. Umm and in other aspects it's, I think, I don't know if, I don't remember an example,
417. but I notice that, if you are a female, umm there is more of an expectation to, for me to be, gentle and soft-spoken, umm and graceful.
418. All of which, I'm not.
419. So I tend to, and that includes, outside of work, you know just walking on the street in general,
420. you can tell, you know, you can tell the atmosphere from a person, the kind of the way they act.
421. And I'm just like any other Canadian girl, I don't really care about the way I walk, I'm quite clumsy, and I'm quite rude.

Shannon expressed her resistance to participate in the *Discourse* she thought Japanese women were

expected to operate within. To do so, Shannon was foregrounding her Canadian identity in order to signify the different *Discourse* she was enacting [identities].

In lines 413-414, Shannon expressed that she would never normalize (line 413) and “participate in” (line 414) this *Discourse*. In these lines, she talked about her imagined future and her desire not to internalize this *Discourse* [identities]. As mentioned above, Shannon was surprised to find out that this gender-specific role expectation was treated as a norm (“they naturally do it”) [significance]. Shannon thought she would never feel “comfortable with” (line 415) this *Discourse* because her “mindset [was] too different” (line 415) [identities]. This suggests that her meta-understanding of the *Discourse* was derived from her outsidership and her familiarity with different *Discourse(s)*, and her resistance to the *Discourse* was enabled by her meta-understanding of it.

In addition to the gender-specific role expectations, Shannon shared her awareness of the behavioural and speech style differences (line 417) and sharply differentiated herself from the image of a Japanese woman (line 418) by foregrounding her Canadian identity with her acknowledgement of how her behaviours were negatively perceived (line 421) [identities]. The following excerpt is the continuation of the excerpt above, in which Shannon discussed how her Asian appearance made her violation of the *Discourse* even more problematic compared to the behaviour of other visible foreigners.

**Excerpt 18: Shannon, Interview 2**

422. so when I do that in public, it attracts a lot of stares,  
423. especially because I look like a Japanese, and part of the disapproval comes from the  
assumption that they think I’m Japanese and I’m acting out of character, and that’s one thing,  
424. I realize that, umm, uniformity is considered attractive in Japan.

425. Especially for females as well. There is a given role to fill, and I'm breaking it.
426. Most of the ALTs break it, but it's okay, because they look foreign,
427. but not for me, because I don't look foreign, so I feel that pressure, yeah. I really do feel that pressure, yeah.
428. and I try to, I try to act better, and more demure and more soft-spoken when I go out actually. According to Shannon, because she "look[ed] like a Japanese," her violation of the *Discourse* was perceived with surprise, which led to more "disapproval." To support her argument, she intertextually referred to a Japanese cultural stereotype—"uniformity is considered attractive in Japan" (line 424) [politics, connections].

In line 426, she contrasted her experience with other ALTs who were more visibly foreign. Her argument was closely linked to her discussion of "gaijin smash" she shared elsewhere in the same interview. Shannon explained gaijin smash as follows: "[Foreigners] don't know the customs and for going maybe into a restaurant or to places and knowingly pushes the boundaries or breaks up the rules, but then, it's okay because we are foreigners" (line 224). In other words, a gaijin smash is an act of violation of the social norm by pretending to be ignorant. Apparently, a gaijin smash is a somewhat well-known intercultural communication strategy used by foreign nationals in Japan, as discussed by Kumagai and Sato (2009).

What is important here is that, similar to what Kumagai and Sato (2009) suggested, Shannon could not engage in gaijin smash. She said, "yeah it's really bad. I don't do it. My friends do it. Because I don't look like a foreigner, so I'll get in trouble" (line 231). While her foreign-looking ALT peers were assumed not to follow Japanese *Discourse*, because of her Asian appearance Shannon felt pressure (line 427) not to violate the *Discourse*, even if that *Discourse* includes an aspect that she did not wish to incorporate (i.e., gender-specific expectations).



Her excerpt demonstrates how issues of gender and race interact with each other to determine ALTs' participation in *Discourses*. While her Asian appearance enabled her to participate in the *Discourse* easily because she did not "stand out" (interview 2, line 243), it made it harder for her to resist the gender-specific *Discourse* she did not wish to participate in. As a result, immediately after the above excerpt, Shannon said,

because I bump into students, they bring their parents, and I don't wanna be seen as a, I don't know, like a rude kind of person, cuz I'm not. I try to, I actually think about it, and I try to like keep my head down and stuff (lines 430-431).

Hence, in order to avoid delegitimization as a teacher, Shannon adopted the gender-specific *Discourse* not only inside the school, but also outside it.

#### **4.11.2 Lack of Participation in the Discourse and Its Impact on LTI Construction**

As demonstrated, participants in this study experienced a number of obstacles to participation in their schools' *Discourse*. In what follows, I discuss how lack of participation in the schools' *Discourse* could negatively impact ALTs' construction of their teacher identity.

#### **4.11.3 Emma: I Don't Think I'll Teach After JET**

The following excerpt is part of Emma's response to my question "do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?" Emma first showed strong rejection of the idea of taking a leading role in her classroom by saying,

I don't really know what I'm doing if I was put in charge, Like, I have some minimal teacher training and the experience I have, but I don't, I don't wanna be in charge, so I don't think I feel constraint in that way (lines 256-258).

Yet, at the same time, Emma also shared her experience of feeling unsatisfactory due to her assistant status, which became a deciding factor in why she did not think she would pursue a teaching career

after finishing the JET Programme.

**Excerpt 19: Emma, Interview 2**

264. But that said, this assistant language teacher role is like not super fulfilling.

265. Like you are doing what someone else tells you to do most of the time,

266. so, like it's not super fulfilling or engaging.

267. I, I prefer to do other jobs, not teaching, where I can like work on my own,

268. so I don't think I'll teach after JET, for that reason.

As seen in excerpt 8, Emma signified her status as an assistant and the different responsibilities she had from regular teachers. Her positioning is also clearly demonstrated in her comment "I don't wanna be in charge" (line 257). However, this excerpt shows her contradictory feelings about the roles she played at her school.

Her words, "you are doing what someone else tells you to do most of the time" (line 265) suggest Emma's limited sense of agency. According to Emma, she had demonstrated rejection of the roles she was given in the past to JTEs, but she ultimately felt powerless. As a response to my question "are there any gaps between the roles you are expected to play and roles you want to play?", Emma said,

I don't like being a tape-recorder, but that's what some teachers require of me, and when I was a newer ALT I used to fight it a little bit, but as long as I don't feel the students are, like if I feel like teachers are doing such a poor job that students are losing out, I might tell the BoE, but if that's not the case, these days, I just go along with what is wanted from me, but *ideally*, I like being a team member, like working as partners (lines 236-240).

Her comment here demonstrates the big power difference between her and the JTEs and the

powerlessness Emma eventually felt. Her words “teachers require of me” show her passive role in responding to teachers’ commands. In addition, the way she would respond to the situation in which she found “students [were] losing out” was to tell the BoE rather than to communicate with JTEs or other teachers. This suggests that Emma felt an inability to raise her voice at her school. As she said, “*ideally*, I like being a team member, like working as partners,” Emma did not feel she was treated as a team member, but as an object (e.g., tape-recorder) in that the JTEs had total control over how she was utilized.

Because Emma thought she could not raise her voice, she did not find the ALT work “super fulfilling or engaging” (line 266), which led her to decide not to pursue a teaching career after the JET Programme (line 268). During the third interview, where she discussed her future plan, Emma shared her concern about finding a job that would meet her needs as a mother and a master’s degree holder, and she emphasized her preference not to take a teaching position, even though she acknowledged that a university instructor position might be where her master’s degree was valued. Hence, her rejection of the teaching career option appeared to be quite strong. This suggests that her construction of teacher identity was limited due to the lack of fulfillment she experienced from the ALT position.

Notably, none of the participants in this study said they would pursue a teaching career after the JET Programme. While there are numerous other variables to consider, it is possible to think their struggle to participate in their schools’ *Discourse* is one of the obstacles ALTs face in constructing their teacher identity. For example, as demonstrated in Excerpt 1, Ray frequently shared her struggle to make her voice heard by Japanese teachers at school. Ray appeared to develop a sense of apathy over the course of her experience.

#### 4.11.4 Ray: Why Bother?

The following excerpt is Ray's response to my question about the issues of communication she had encountered.

##### **Excerpt 20: Ray, Interview 2**

259. a lot of our classes just get canceled.
260. Like they scheduled maybe like a week in advance,
261. but then, I get to the class, and they are like "oh, it's canceled now."
262. Things like that just feel like, you know, your use isn't very important, and I don't know.
263. After that, you kind of get bit kind of like "why bother putting in the time to prepare something when it's gonna get canceled or it doesn't matter,"
264. so. I don't know, I find like I think a lot of ALTs struggle with keeping up that motivation to keep planning and doing creative lessons, because of that.

Here, Ray was talking not only about herself but ALTs in general. This can be seen in her use of the first-person plural "our" (line 259), and generalization of her experience to "a lot of ALTs" (line 264). Based on Ray's statement elsewhere in the interview that ALTs in her prefecture had a strong network, it is presumable that she had in fact talked about this issue with her peers.

As she said, Ray had received her course schedule "a week in advance" (line 260) and prepared for the lesson, but she was notified about the cancellation on the day she went to teach the class (line 261). Hence, it was not the cancellation of the class *per se* but the way it was cancelled that made Ray feel that the lesson she had prepared was unimportant. As a result, Ray developed a sense of apathy, which is expressed in her words, "why bother putting in the time to prepare something when it's gonna get canceled or it doesn't matter" (line 263).

As discussed in relation to Excerpt 1, Ray appeared to be aware of the division of teaching

roles between JTEs and ALTs. As teachers of *eigo*, JTEs have the responsibility to ensure the coverage of materials in the curriculum, and ALTs, as teachers of *eikaiwa*, provide conversational activities in the classroom. Because *eikaiwa* activities are not usually considered to have an impact on students' grades and entrance examination scores, *eikaiwa* is often treated as something informal or insignificant (Nagatomo, 2016). It is presumable that abrupt cancellations of her classes reinforced Ray's perception of her lessons as unimportant, which led her to think, "why bother" (line 263).

During the second interview, Ray shared her change in her sense of self during the JET Programme. According to her, Ray became more active in engaging in volunteer activities such as teaching *eikaiwa* lessons at a community centre and organizing beach cleaning. What is striking is that the impetus for her volunteer engagement was her perception that ALTs were underutilized. By acknowledging that ALTs are "paid pretty well" (line 268), Ray said she thought underutilization of them was "a big waste of money" (line 272). Thus, in order to give something back to the community, according to Ray, she started engaging in volunteering, and this led her to shape her future career plan. When I asked her about her plan after the JET Programme during the third interview, Ray said, "I think if I went back, I'd wanna do some community work or some charity work. Umm I don't really want to teach, and I don't really want an office job" (line 207). This suggests that Ray's construction of identity was enormously influenced by her engagement in the practice of volunteering, while her teacher identity construction was limited due to lack of access to her school's *Discourse*.

#### **4.12 Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the findings in relation to the research questions. The findings suggest that, in many cases, ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourses* is illegitimized and this was explained by the interaction of various factors like employment (i.e., assistant), linguistic,

racial, gender, and qualification statuses.

Some participants appeared to attain a certain level of membership in their schools' *Discursive* communities through overtime work (Melissa), demonstration of a tangible positive impact on students' test scores (Alicia), and possession of membership in a highly regarded job community (i.e., prefectural government; Alicia). Yet, due to their visible foreignness, some participants were under constant fear of delegitimatization (Emma, Alicia). Also, as she appeared to successfully attain insider status in her school's *Discursive* community, Melissa criticized those "stereotypical ALTs" who expressed opinions about the Japanese education system as outsiders.

The participants generally expressed their frustration about gender stereotypes and expected roles as females. Shannon's account demonstrated how she resisted adapting to this *Discourse*, but because of her Asian appearance, she felt additional pressure not to violate the *Discourse*. This suggests how issues of race and gender are interrelated.

Lack of access to participation in the schools' *Discourse* likely has a negative impact on ALTs' teacher identity construction. Emma's limited sense of fulfillment from ALT work and Ray's perception that her lessons were insignificant led them to decide not to pursue a teaching career. In the following chapter, I provide a discussion of the findings as compared to the literature on the JET Programme and LTIs by using DFG's (2016) transdisciplinary framework.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how JET ALTs construct their identity through participation in their schools' *Discourses* and to examine the factors that facilitate or prevent their participation in those *Discourses*. The findings highlight the various ways in which their participation in their schools' *Discourses* is legitimized, illegitimized, and/or delegitimized and how such (il)legitimizations are discursively produced and reproduced. In spite of the fact that this year marks the 30th anniversary since the launch of the JET Programme, some of the issues and criticisms the literature has pointed out still seem to persevere. A discourse analysis enabled me to illuminate how some of these issues are being reproduced. This study was guided by the following research questions: (a) How do the JET Programme participants construct their teacher identity through their participation in the Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse*? (b) How do their gender, racial, linguistic, and employment status influence their participation in the Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse*?

The findings suggest that most of the participants in this study indeed struggled to attain membership in their schools' *Discursive* communities due to their employment, linguistic, racial, gender, qualification statuses. Even those who had successfully attained a certain level of membership in their schools' *Discourses* were under constant fear of delegitimization because of their marked foreign appearance.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to the previous literature on the JET Programme and LTIs. I incorporate DFG's (2016) transdisciplinary framework and examine the interplay of macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors that play a role in determining the legitimacy of ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourses*.

## 5.1 Division of Teaching Roles: *Eigo* vs. *Eikaiwa*

Nagatomo (2016) attributed the dichotomy between teaching of *eigo* (English language) and *eikaiwa* (English conversation) as the primary reason why “a cohesive English-language education system has not yet been successfully established” (p. 19). Typically, JTEs are considered to be teachers of *eigo* and focus on the subject matter for entrance examinations, whereas ALTs are regarded as teachers of *eikaiwa*—a communicative approach to English that is “often viewed more as a means for students to *touch* English than to actually learn how to speak it” (Nagatomo, 2016, p. 18). This different role distribution, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be traced back to the Hiraizumi-Watanabe Debate in 1974 (Wada, 1987) as a historically constructed practice. Because *eigo* is directly related to students’ grades and entrance examinations, it is attributed more legitimacy as a school subject, whereas *eikaiwa* is treated as a fun activity time (Nagatomo, 2016). To put this in relation to the DFG’s (2016) interdisciplinary framework, the macro-level structure of the entrance examination system and the need of communicative English learning shaped the meso-level team-teaching structure—or, more accurately, division of teaching roles—which led to dichotomized practice of JTEs and ALTs at the micro level.

The participants’ accounts in this study demonstrated this dichotomy as well. When Ray (excerpt 2) said, “as an ALT, you kind of like you just see it from the perspective of, you wanna make good English speakers and the kids understand English, you wanna improve all that” (interview 2, line 210), she was signifying ALTs’ role as a teacher of communicative English. In contrast, JTEs “have like test requirements and targets to meet where they need to get students at a certain level” (line 211). Because of abrupt cancellation of her classes, Ray (excerpt 20) felt that her *eikaiwa* lessons were considered unimportant, which appeared to negatively impact her



teacher identity construction.

Other participants' accounts also indicated this dichotomy. Many of them said their primary role in the classroom was to carry out activities and review games, while JTEs explained the grammar and vocabulary. What appears to be problematic is that this dichotomy is preventing cohesive team teaching from taking place. For example, Shannon said she was often asked to prepare a 10- to 20-minute activity on the day she taught, and her role was to teach within this fragmented part of the class that was disconnected from the whole classroom context. Shannon said, "those 20 minutes, I get to do whatever I want, but also a constraint, because I don't know what's going on" (interview 2, lines 216-217).

Participants including Alicia, Cathrine, Emma, and Shannon talked about what they thought of as "the best" teaching practice that happened when they taught with JTEs as a cohesive team. As discussed in relation to excerpt 19, Emma said, "*ideally*, I like being a team member, like working as partners" (interview 2, line 240). Emma did not feel like she was a team member because she was constantly utilized as a tape-recorder or played divided roles in the classroom. As a result, she found her work "not super fulfilling" (line 264) and decided not to pursue a teaching career. This demonstrates that the inclusion of ALTs as team members plays an important role in their teacher identity construction as well.

Alicia's account (excerpt 10) suggested a successful pattern of team teaching, where her teacher was very enthusiastic about working with her and brought her into the classroom every day. What is striking in Alicia's account is that, according to her, their team teaching actually resulted in students' higher test score achievement and had an impact on other teachers' perception of team teaching as well. Alicia said, "so they really kind of appreciated the fact that this type of English isn't just fun and games. It's actually learning" (interview 3, line 67). Her

words indicate Alicia's awareness about the discourse of *eikaiwa* and how "this type of English" was considered "just fun and games," but with the tangible result of improved test scores, she could claim that it was "actually learning."

Her account suggested that filling the gap between *eigo* and *eikaiwa* by incorporating cohesive team teaching could be an effective approach for higher achievement in the dominant objective of English as a school subject (i.e., entrance examinations), as well as for communicative English learning.

It is important to note that this outcome was possible because of the JTE who enthusiastically invited her into this practice. In other words, Alicia was given opportunities to participate in and enact the *Discourse* as a teacher. As the findings of this study demonstrate, there were various factors that illegitimized JET ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourses*. I would argue that the so-called "monolingual bias" (Kachru, 1994) is one of the macro-level factors that functions to prevent ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourses*.

## **5.2 Linguistic Status: Monolingual Bias, Assistant Status, and Dehumanization**

In the field of applied linguistics, the so-called monolingual bias has been vehemently criticized by a number of scholars (e.g., Cook, 1999, 2016; Kachru, 1994; May, 2011; Ortega, 2013). Under this bias, second and foreign-language speakers, regardless of the qualitative differences in their linguistic competencies, are treated as deficient versions of native speakers (Cook, 2016). Monolingual bias, which treats a language as a unified bounded entity and thereby privileges native speakers of standardized languages, not only negatively impacts language learners' conception of their linguistic competencies but also impacts who is considered an ideal language teacher.

In response to hiring practices that favour native English speaker teachers (NESTs),

scholars have conducted research to illuminate the pedagogical competencies of non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs; Medgyes, 1999) and demonstrate the positive experiences students of NNESTs have had (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002). NESTs, on the other hand, have been described as lacking pedagogical preparation and contextual awareness (Barratt & Kontra, 2000).

Breckenridge and Erling (2011) problematized these binary and dichotomized comparisons and stated, “some research that has attempted to empower non-native speaker English teachers and promote resistance to the global hegemony of English has had the adverse effect of promoting essentialized notions of the native speaker English teacher” (p. 83). Such essentialization, together with the *Discourse of kokusaika* and *nihonjinron* as reviewed in Chapter 2, appears to be prevalent in the JET Programme as well (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011). This essentialized and idealized image of NESTs is the primary reason why JET Programme participants are positioned as *assistant* language teachers. In other words, (macro-level) ideology and *Discourses* based on monolingual bias have shaped the (meso-level) structure of the JET Programme.

Given the perceived superiority of NESTs, then Ministry of Education thought the presence of an NEST in the classroom would threaten JTEs’ position (McConnell, 2000). This led to the assignment of assistant status to JET Programme participants, and a teaching background was therefore deemed unnecessary. Moreover, the maximum assignment of the JET Programme is set for five years, and participants are not given any upward mobility in terms of their status (Nagatomo, 2016). Hence, as McConnell (2000) pointed out, the JET Programme “would forever be positions for temporary outsiders” (p. 103). Put differently, the JET Programme participants are not expected to develop professionally through the JET Programme

(Breckenridge & Erling, 2011), but are expected to be present in the classroom as “specimens of the foreign culture” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 56). The structure of the JET Programme, therefore, contributes to reproducing the essentialist view of NESTs. Here, we see the interaction of the meso (program structure) and the macro (ideology).

The findings of this study further support this argument by adding (micro-level) JET ALTs’ accounts. The participants in this study shared their struggle to engage in practices as a teacher because of their status as a native speaker and an assistant.

Ray discussed the difficulty of finding her position in her school’s English teacher community and having her opinions heard by other teachers. Yet, Ray (excerpt 2) provided reasoning and justified this condition by saying, “it’s kind of fair enough from like a [Japanese] teacher’s perspective, cuz you know, I’m just a native speaker” (interview 2, line 205), and she also said she was unqualified as a teacher and lacking familiarity with the Japanese education system. Here, we can see the discursively constructed connections between being a native speaker and lacking teaching qualification and familiarity with the Japanese education system, whereby the essentialized view of NESTs is structurally and discursively reproduced at the micro-level practice.

Alicia’s (excerpt 6) account demonstrated how her intelligence was often disregarded by JTEs. As her statement, “they [JTEs] expect you [ALTs] to be really, really good at English but, nothing else, really” (interview 2, line 215), suggests, ALTs are expected to fulfill the emblematic role of the native speaker, but their subjectivity and intelligence are ignored. This indicates why participants in this study said, congruent with what the literature has repeatedly pointed out (e.g., Asai, 2006; Nagatomo, 2016), that they are “utilized” as “a human tape-recorder” (Cathrine, Emma, Shannon), “a walking dictionary” (Emma) and “accessories JTEs

bring to the classroom” (Alicia). In other words, ALTs are dehumanized and treated as objects.

My argument here is that the often-criticized tape-recorder role of the ALTs is generated not only by JTEs’ limited pedagogical repertoire, but also by a fundamental ideology that positions native speakers as artifacts that produce a “correct” form of language. Hence, macro-level ideology is influencing the micro-level practice in the classroom.

### **5.3 Employment Status: Systemic Exclusion From the *Discourse***

Scholars such as McConnell (2000), Miyazato (2009), and Nagatomo (2016) have pointed out that the participants in the JET Programme are given an assistant status in order to prevent them from threatening the JTE’s positionality in the classroom. As discussed above, this is largely due to the ideology that idealizes the native speakers’ varieties of English and privileges native speakers as English teachers. As Emma (excerpt 8) stated, “we are *assistant* teachers, not teachers on their own” (interview 2, line 173), and assistant status indeed prevented some participants from fully exercising their teacher role. However, rather than simply reducing their role in the classroom, participants’ assistant status functioned to exclude them from the *Discourse*. The findings demonstrated two distinctively different reactions of ALTs caused by this exclusion with a discussion of how it may reinforce JTEs’ stereotype about ALTs.

Shannon (excerpt 3) expressed hesitation to play a full teacher role in her class at an elementary school. She said,

We are always told that we are guests in the teachers’ classroom, and it should, because we are *assistant* language teachers, so it’s really important that we have, you know, we, we respect the teacher in the way they discipline their class in the way they want to run things (interview 2, line 92).

At her elementary school, Shannon said she usually planned lessons and taught the class by

herself, but because of her status as an assistant, she expressed a guilt-like feeling about exercising a full teacher role without having HRT participation. Shannon also talked about how she refrained from making suggestions at her junior high school. According to Shannon, there were two new JTEs at her school, and these JTEs were struggling with disciplining students in their classes. Through watching how other more experienced teachers disciplined students, Shannon had an idea of what these new teachers could do. However, she said, “it’s not my place to tell the teachers what to do. I can only support them in class” (interview 2, line 149). Her sensitivity to her assistant status, therefore, prevented her from more fully taking a teacher role. In other words, her enactment of the teacher *Discourse* was constricted by her assistant status.

While Shannon refrained from making suggestions to JTEs, some ALTs expressed their opinions *because of* their outsider status. In excerpt 7, Cathrine said, “it’s really the opposite of restricting because I’m kind of outside the system and so there’s a lot of things that I can do that they can’t” (interview 2, line 249). Referring to her friend as an example, Cathrine discussed how ALTs can critique the Japanese school system because they did not “have as much at stake” (interview 2, line 254). Hence, it is possible to think that the low-stake assistant status gave some ALTs an impression that they were outside the system, which enabled them to express their opinions in a way that violated the *Discourse*.

Although they had the opposite reactions, Shannon and Cathrine’s friend both positioned themselves as outsiders because of their status. As a result, their presence did not likely lead to modification of the *Discourse*. In Shannon’s case, she exercised self-censorship and refrained from fully participating in the *Discourse*. Hence, her opinions were systematically silenced. On the other hand, as Cathrine described, her friend said things “his teachers can’t” (interview 2, line 253), presumably positioning himself and being positioned by JTEs as outside of the *Discourse*.

As Gee (2015) stated, “uttering viewpoints that seriously undermine them defines one as being outside them” (p. 123) and “the Discourse itself defines what counts as acceptable criticisms” (p. 123). Such a critique from the outside would not likely be deemed acceptable by Cathrine’s friend’s school *Discursive* community. In other words, his criticisms were systematically pushed outside of the *Discourse* and were dismissed.

In addition to how ALTs positioned themselves differently from Japanese teachers, different responsibilities between JTEs and ALTs made it difficult for Japanese teachers to perceive ALTs as members of their *Discursive* community. One of the defining factors Emma (excerpt 8) discussed was overtime work. As ALTs are not expected to engage in overtime work, according to Emma, Japanese teachers “think we [ALTs] don’t work hard enough” (interview 2, line 172). The findings of this study suggested that overtime work did indeed appear to function as a membership criterion. In fact, as demonstrated in excerpt 9, Melissa successfully attained a high level of membership in her school *Discourse* as a result of overtime work she initially engaged in as “a gesture” (interview 2, line 113) to demonstrate her dedication to work.

Considering there is no upward mobility within the JET Programme, it is not realistic to expect many JET Programme participants to invest their time and energy as Melissa did. From this point, it is arguable that JET Programme participants are systematically positioned outside of the Japanese schoolteacher *Discourse*, which justifies the exclusion of their participation in it. In other words, the (meso-level) JET Programme structure shapes the (micro-level) practice at schools, and it reproduces (macro-level) stereotypes (e.g., “not working hard enough”).

#### **5.4 Racial Issues: Importing Diversity and Expectations of Differences**

As scholars have pointed out, one of the aspects of the *Discourse* of *kokusaika* was restoration/reinforcement of national identity by bringing the presence of the Other into

awareness (McCullough, 2008). As Yoshino (2002) pointed out, English teachers in Japan “often engage in *Nihonjinron*,” and “have become reproducers and transmitters of discourse of cultural difference” (p. 142). Kobayashi (2011) argued that the JET Programme too often engages in Othering by expecting ALTs to possess “ideal whiteness” (i.e., White native English speakers without any degree of familiarity with Japanese culture; p. 9). In fact, one of the eligibility requirements of the JET Programme is “not have lived in Japan for six or more years in total since 2006” (CLAIR, 2017). This suggests that those who have lived in Japan longer than six of the past 10 years are considered to be too familiar with Japanese culture. In this sense, as McConnell (2000) succinctly pointed out in his book *Importing Diversity*, the JET Programme presupposes its participants to bring in difference in a fixed sense, in order to fulfill the role as a “specimen of [the] foreign culture” (Seargeant, 2009, p. 56). In other words, participants’ foreigner status is commodified, and this creates “dehumanizing effects” (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 93).

This expectation of difference was most vividly manifested in Shannon’s account (excerpt 16). Similar to what one of Asai’s (2006) participants, Tomoko, experienced, Shannon thought her Asian appearance did not sufficiently signify the difference her students and teachers expected ALTs to possess. In fact, during her third interview, Shannon repeatedly stated, “I’m not foreign enough” (interview 3, lines 66, 75, 93). She said visible foreignness was “a good asset to have, like as an English teacher, because you are just so different to look at, you know, you are just so different to view” (interview 3, line 67). This commodification of difference (or Whiteness) likely has detrimental effects on students’ intercultural learning by promoting a narrow idea of what culture is.

Alicia (excerpt 14) talked about this issue in a different way. As discussed, Alicia’s



legitimacy as a member of her school's *Discourse* was well recognized as a result of her success in team teaching with a JTE and her appointment to a highly regarded PA position. In addition to that, because of her in-depth experience in Japanese culture, Alicia was proficient in broader Japanese *Discourse* as well, as indicated by Alicia's recollection of her friend's statements, "Alicia, your thought process is so Japanese" and "you are exactly like a Japanese person" (interview 2, line 245). However, such recognition put her into constant fear of delegitimatization, primarily because of her visible foreignness. She said, "you *do* feel like most people are watching you and waiting for you to like make a mistake or something" (interview 3, line 150). This resonates with the *Discourse* of *nihonjinron*, which considers Japanese culture to uniquely belong to the Japanese people so that non-Japanese people would not be able to fully understand it (Manabe & Befu, 1992). Hence, her familiarity with the Japanese *Discourse* is considered unusual, and once Alicia does "something wrong" it is immediately attributed to her foreignness, as Alicia puts it "やっぱり外人だ" [*yappari gaijin da*, as I thought, you are a foreigner] (interview 2, line 249). In other words, Alicia perceived Japanese people's desire for her to be different.

### **5.5 Gender Issues: Obstacles for Enacting Japanese *Discourse*?**

Congruent with what Simon-Maeda (2004) and Nagatomo (2016) pointed out, some participants talked about how gender stereotypes and role expectations existed at their schools. For example, like Shannon, Emma shared her frustration about the expected gender role. In her case, gender expectation was more vividly perceived because of her marital and maternal status. She said, "I find myself quite regularly frustrated by it. Especially since once I got pregnant and when I had my daughter, I'm at work and my husband's at home, and it confuses a lot of people" (interview 2, line 484). This expectation for a woman to be a housemaker or *ryousaikenbo* [good wife, wise mother] was pointed out by Simon-Maeda (2004) as well.

As Shannon's account (excerpt 17–18) showed, JET Programme participants may be sensitive to such gender-specific *Discourse* because they are familiar with other *Discourses* that problematize such inequality. As a result, like Shannon, they may resist participation in the *Discourse*. In other words, their awareness of the *Discourse* enables them to desire alternatives and resist the normative *Discourse*.

Shannon's account also demonstrated how issues of gender and race interact with each other in terms of participation in and resistance to the *Discourse*. In her case, Shannon's violation of the norm was more vividly perceived by Japanese people because of her Asian appearance, and she had to face the consequence of her violation—what Shannon called “disapproving stares” (interview 2, line 237)—while visible foreigners' violation was dismissed as a “gaijin smash.”

Importantly, ALTs' resistance to the gender-specific *Discourse* may have a negative impact on their participation in their schools' *Discourse* as a whole. *Discourses* are not discrete from each other. Societal expectations of what it means to be a woman are closely linked to how female teachers do their teaching work. Therefore, their resistance to the gender-specific *Discourse* may function as a source of othering, and their legitimacy to participate in their schools' *Discourse* may be damaged. In fact, Shannon talked about how she tries to follow behavioural expectations in order to avoid delegitimization from the parents of her students. She said:

because I bump into students, they bring their parents, and I don't wanna be seen as a, I don't know, like a rude kind of person, cuz I'm not. I try to, I actually think about it, and I try to like keep my head down and stuff (interview 2, lines 430-431).

Because she thinks she may “bump into students” outside of the school, she feels the need to follow

the expected behaviour as a woman even outside of her work environment to maintain her legitimacy as a teacher. Hence, macro-level gender *Discourse* was influencing Shannon's micro-level behaviour both in professional and private contexts.

## 5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings in relation to the previous literature on the JET Programme and LTIs. By incorporating DFG's (2016) transdisciplinary framework, I illustrated the interplay of macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors that play a role in determining the legitimacy of ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourse*.

As studies on LTIs have shown, engagement in practice and participation in meaning making are crucial aspects of teacher identity construction (Barkhuizen, 2016; Tsui, 2009). Because of this, the ways in which JET Programme ALTs participate in their schools' *Discourse* play a significant role in constructing their teacher identities.

This study highlighted the ways in which the macro-level ideology and education system interacted with the meso-level structure of the JET Programme and the micro-level local practices. The macro-level entrance examination system and the need of communicative English shaped the meso-level structure of the JET Programme, which appeared to play a role in sustaining the dichotomy between *eigo* and *eikaiwa* (Nagatomo, 2016), and it manifested in the division of the teaching roles that participants of this study described having experienced.

This study also highlighted the presence of monolingual bias, which treats a language as a fixed and bounded entity and privileges native varieties of standardized languages. This language ideology impacted the structure of the JET Programme and assignment of assistant status to its participants. Also, with this language ideology, ALTs' presence in the classroom was deemed to be merely for their native speaker status, which explained why some ALTs continued

to be “utilized” as artifacts such as “a human tape-recorder.”

Participants’ assistant status played a role in positioning them outside of their schools’ *Discourses*. While Shannon refrained from fully exercising teacher role and providing suggestions to JTEs, Cathrine talked about how ALTs are not restrained from stating opinions because they do not “have as much at stake” (interview 2, line 254). Also, different responsibilities between JTEs and ALTs, such as overtime work, might make it difficult for Japanese teachers to perceive ALTs as members of their *Discursive* community.

*Discourse of kokusaika* tends to refer to *Discourse of nihonjinron* and essentializes the Japanese Self and foreign Other. With this *Discourse*, the JET Programme too tends to reinforce Othering by expecting ALTs to possess “ideal whiteness.” Because of this, Shannon, an Asian ALT, felt she did not fulfill the racialized expectations that her students and Japanese colleagues had about ALTs. In contrast, Alicia, a Caucasian ALT, was in constant fear of her foreigner label to resurfacing in spite of her high proficiency in Japanese *Discourses*.

The societal *Discourse* of gender roles also had an impact on ALTs’ participation in the *Discourses* at their schools. Participants in this study resisted gendered *Discourses*. However, Shannon’s account demonstrated the interplay of gender and race. Due especially to her Asian appearance, Shannon felt the need to conform to gendered *Discourses* in order to maintain her legitimacy as a teacher.

This study also highlighted the diversity of ALTs’ experiences. For instance, exposure to Japanese *Discourses* prior to the participation in the JET Programme varied greatly among the participants. Ray had no prior exposure to Japanese *Discourses*, while Alicia had extensive exposure from her study abroad and work experience. While some participants distinguished the roles and responsibilities between ALTs and JTEs (e.g., Emma, Cathrine), Melissa was willing to

work overtime to demonstrate her dedication to her work and attained a great level of legitimacy as a member in her school's *Discourse*. Emma discussed her resistance toward being associated with other foreigners because she was sensitive to Japanese cultural norms and expectations. Shannon's Asian appearance made it difficult for her to resist the gender-specific *Discourse*, while other visibly foreign ALTs' violations of the *Discourse* were dismissed as "gaijin smash."

These examples show the danger of treating the JET ALTs as a homogeneous group. As this study demonstrates, macro- and meso-level factors play a role in conditioning the micro-level practices at school. However, micro-level factors such as school environment (e.g., size of the school, students' academic achievement), and individual differences among both JTEs and ALTs need to be analyzed closely in order to understand the dynamic process of ALTs' participation in their schools' *Discourses*.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The findings of this study offer implications for English language education through the JET Programme and suggest directions for future research. In this chapter, I first present implications to bridge the gaps between *eigo* and *eikaiwa*, followed by recommendations for future research. After that, I close the thesis with concluding remarks.

### 6.1 Implication for English Language Teaching in Japan

To discuss the implications for the JET Programme and English education in Japan, I would like to highlight Alicia's successful team teaching episode (excerpt 10). According to Alicia, she had a JTE who enthusiastically invited Alicia into her class every day. They planned the lesson together and provided cohesive team teaching. As a result, they not only demonstrated how ALTs "could be useful in the classroom" (interview 3, line 65), but they also had a tangible positive impact on students' academic achievement (i.e., test scores).

As Nagatomo (2016) argued, the dichotomy between *eigo* and *eikaiwa* is conspicuous in formal English teaching in Japan, and because of the image attached to *eikaiwa* (i.e., fun activities just to try out English conversation), students may perceive it as unimportant. Alicia's case suggests that integration of *eigo* and *eikaiwa* through team teaching, as opposed to division of teaching roles, has potential not only to improve communicative English skills but also to respond to the dominant needs of students (i.e., achievement of higher test scores).

Unfortunately, the participants suggested that in a majority of classes they taught, they had a divided teaching role from their JTEs. The findings of this study suggested that the dichotomy of *eigo* and *eikaiwa* also has negative impacts on ALTs' construction of teacher identity. For example, Emma (excerpt 19) shared her feeling of dissatisfaction caused by not being able to work as a team member, and as a result, she decided not to pursue a teaching career

after the JET Programme. Similarly, Ray (excerpt 20) demonstrated her perception of the *eikaiwa* segment of teaching being treated as unimportant, which led her to develop an apathetic attitude toward ALT work.

For the above reasons, I advocate a more integrated team teaching approach. In order to promote such an approach, I would propose changes at three levels (macro, meso, and micro) based on the findings of this research.

### **6.1.1 Macro Level**

What appears to be clear in this research is that the “monolingual bias” (Kachru, 1994) is still prevalent in the context of English teaching in Japan. Under this bias, NESTs are essentialized and idealized, and it has a reverse effect of preventing them from fully participating in the schools’ *Discourses*. To put it differently, the perceived superiority of NESTs is considered to be a potential threat to JTEs’ positionality in the classroom, thus ALTs’ participation is systematically prevented and their presence in the classroom is valued solely based on their native speaker status. In other words, they are commodified and instrumentalized as native speakers. For this reason, at the macro level, I suggest a change in language ideology.

The current language ideology in English education in Japan tends to treat language as a bounded and fixed entity. With this ideology, native speakers’ varieties of English are considered ideal. As scholars have argued, this ideology needs to be dismantled, and language should be reconceptualized as a social construct (Ortega, 2013). Through this ideological change, language learners’ goal will be to develop unique linguistic competency as a bi/multilingual (e.g., ability to code-switch between different linguistic repertoires), rather than to internalize additional monolingual linguistic competency within themselves.

### **6.1.2 Meso Level**

The findings of this study suggest that participants' assistant status prevented them from participation in the *Discourse*. As seen in Shannon's case when she said, "it's not my place to tell the teachers what to do" (interview 2, line 149), ALTs sometimes refrained from participating fully in the *Discourse*; therefore, they remained silent. Also, some participants signified their assistant status to claim different responsibilities from JTEs. As Emma said, "we are *assistant* language teachers, not teachers on their own" (interview 2, line 173). Cathrine and her friend also positioned themselves outside of the *Discourse* and said things JTEs couldn't (excerpt 7). It may be worthwhile to explore the options for structural reform and facilitate JET Programme participants' engagement in the *Discourse*. Based on the findings, I would recommend providing JET Programme participants with a status that is different from assistant. The title of assistant language teacher implies a role that is similar to a teaching assistant; the teaching does not presuppose cohesive team teaching practice, but rather roles are divided and assistants take a peripheral teaching role, such as leading reviews and games. To promote collaborative team teaching between JTEs and JET Programme participants, I would recommend the title of English teaching collaborator.

### **6.1.3 Micro Level**

As the findings of this study demonstrated, one of the reasons why JET Programme participants were prevented from participation in the *Discourse* was because of their lack of qualification and inexperience. While changing the eligibility criteria and accepting only those



who have teaching background may be an option<sup>12</sup>, to do so would require major structural changes to participants' salary, responsibilities (e.g., involvement in student grading and discipline), and the number of participants (i.e., doing so might make it difficult to hire the same number of people).

My recommendation here is to cultivate participants' teaching experience and teacher identity through having them engage in the practice. As Gee (2015) argued, one becomes proficient in a particular *Discourse* only through social practice within it. In this sense, in order for the JET Programme participants to become competent members of their school communities, they must have access to the social practice. Hence, ALTs should be given the opportunity to participate in dialogues (e.g., meetings, lesson planning) and encouraged to voice their opinions as members of the schools' *Discursive* community.

Also, as discussed in relation to Ray's (excerpt 1), Cathrine's (excerpt 7), and Melissa's (excerpt 15) accounts, some JET Programme participants appeared to be excluded from the *Discourse* because their criticisms were perceived as a serious threat to the *Discourse* and were deemed unacceptable. However, the very reason that the kind of ALTs Melissa criticized as the "stereotypical ALT[s]" (interview 3, line 201) can express their opinions and complaints in a way that Japanese teachers cannot is because they are "outside the system" (Cathrine, interview 2, line 249). If those ALTs were kept outside the *Discourse*, they would not be able to cultivate the socially appropriate manner to raise their voices within the *Discursive* community. In other words, if ALTs were actively included in the *Discourse*, they would likely become able to

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<sup>12</sup> Alicia and Melissa suggested this as a response to my question "what do you think the JET Programme can do to improve?"

express their voices in a constructive manner and come to be a valuable contributor to the school community.

## 6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The trend in research on LTIs has brought about development of a theoretical conceptualization of LTIs and diversification of methodological approaches to studying LTIs. This study contributed to both areas by utilizing D/discourse analysis to investigate ALTs' narratives.

With this approach, this study demonstrated the ways in which ALTs were (il)legitimized as members of their schools' *Discursive* community and how (il)legitimization was discursively produced and reproduced.

However, this study has a limitation in its scope in terms of the type of data and the length of time. Investigations of a wide range of data, such as ethnographic data, JTEs' narrative accounts, and JET Programme organizers' accounts, would certainly enhance the understanding of the issues discussed in this thesis. For instance, through ethnographic observation, a researcher might be able to investigate the actual practice of ALTs and gain some insight into the ways in which they participate in the *Discourse*. Also, exploration of different perspectives such as JTEs' and JET Programme organizers' accounts would likely provide further insight into the macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors of the JET Programme and issues and challenges at each level.

Another recommendation for future research is the use of a longitudinal approach to investigate the process of ALTs' identity construction over time. To the best of my knowledge, Asai's (2006) study, in which the researcher conducted ethnographic observation and interviews over the course of one year, has been the only study to take a longitudinal approach to investigate the issue of teacher identity in the JET Programme.

### 6.3 Concluding Remarks

In his book, Gee (2015) discussed how schools should be a space where diverse *Discourses* interact and foster students' ability to critique and reflect on their own *Discourses*: Schools ought to be about people reflecting on and critiquing the “Discourse maps” of their society and, indeed, the wider world. These Discourse maps—the ways in which *Discourses* interact with each other—constitute the social geography of a society. Schools ought to allow students to juxtapose diverse *Discourses* to each other so that they can understand them at a meta-level through a more encompassing language of critique and reflection. We humans always and everywhere live our lives in and through our diverse social identities. We cannot live without our *Discourses*, but should not always live comfortably and uncritically within them. (p. 168)

By inviting people who have lived in a *Discursive* community that is considerably different from the dominant *Discourse* of the society into the classroom, the JET Programme has tremendous potential to foster students' meta-level understanding of the *Discourse* and expand their possibility of imaginations. In order for that to happen, inviting the JET Programme participants into the classroom is not enough. They also need to be invited into the *Discourse* and allowed to participate in its construction.

The findings of this study suggest that the JET Programme has yet to unleash its potential. The difference ALTs bring to the classroom is observed from a distance, as people contemplate a specimen without touching it. Participants in this study demonstrated their struggle to participate in their schools' *Discourses*. As Gee (2015) said, “the exclusion of certain students' *Discourse* from the classroom seriously cheats and damages everyone. It lessens the map, loses chances for reflection and meta-level thinking and impoverishes the imagination of

all” (p. 169). Exclusion of ALTs from accessing the schools’ *Discourse* is also detrimental to the ability “to create new Discourses and to imagine better and more socially just ways of being in the world” (Gee, 2015, p. 169).

What the JET Programme brings into the classroom is people, not goods. The most valuable aspect of ALTs is the variety of *Discourses* they bring into the classroom, not their native speaker pronunciation or different appearance. I hope this study contributes to unleashing the potential of the JET Programme to be a space where imagination of a “more socially just way of being in the world” (Gee, 2015, p. 169) can occur.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Transcript Conventions

These transcript conventions were published in Schiffrin (1987) (as cited in Schiffrin, 1994).

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| .              | falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of declarative sentence)  |
| ?              | rising intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of interrogative sentence)   |
| ,              | continuing intonation: may be slight raise or fall in contour (less than “.” or “?”); may be followed by a pause (shorter than “.” or “?”) |
| !              | animated tone  |
| ...            | noticeable pause or break in rhythm without falling intonation (each half-second pause is marked as measured by stop watch)                |
| -              | self interruption with glottal stop  |
| :              | lengthened syllable  |
| <i>italics</i> | emphatic stress  |
| CAPS           | very emphatic stress   |

## Appendix B Preliminary Questionnaire

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
| Name:  | Age:   | Sex: |
| Nationality:   |  |      |
| 1. What language(s) do you speak? Please indicate your proficiency as well [e.g., English (native), Japanese (intermediate)].  |  |      |
| 2. Before participating in the JET Program, have you studied in Japan or outside of your home country? If so, where and for how long?  |  |      |
| 3. Did you have any teaching experience prior to the program?<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  | → If yes, please indicate the subject you taught, to what grade of students, and how long you have taught. |      |
| 4. Before arrival, how did you get information about JET Program? Please check everything that is applicable.<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> JET Program official pamphlet/website <input type="checkbox"/> Previous/current participants of the program<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Other media/websites (please specify: _____) |  |      |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Where do you teach? (Name of school, City, and Prefecture) |   |
| What grade(s) do you teach?                                | How many classes do you teach per week? |

## **Appendix C Interview Questions**

### Interview 1: About Home Country, Pre-departure, and Motivation to Participate in JET

1. Can you tell me little bit about yourself? For example, where you grew up and how?
2. In your hometown, do you consider yourself as a majority or a minority? What makes you think so?
3. According to the preliminary questionnaire, you have studied abroad in \_\_\_\_\_. What was your experience there like?
4. What was your image of Japan before you came?
5. (If the participant has previous teaching experience) What characteristics do you think you had as a teacher in the previous teaching position(s)? (If the participant does not have previous teaching experience) What kind of images did you have about teaching?
6. What motivated you to participate in the JET Program?
7. What did you think you would gain from the JET Program?
8. Did you think participation in the JET Program would change your personality in any way?

### Interview 2: After Arrival - Present

1. What were your initial impressions of the school(s) and the city?
2. How do you describe your relationships with Japanese teachers of English?
3. How do you describe your relationships with students?
4. How do you describe your relationships with other teachers and staffs at the school?
5. What role(s) do you think the Japanese teachers of English expect you to play?
6. Are there any gaps between the roles you are expected to play and the roles you want to play?
7. Do you feel any constraint because of your status as an assistant?



8. What are the challenges do you experience as an ALT?
9. What is your strategy to over come those challenges?
10. Have you experienced any change in your sense of self since your arrival? If so, how? Tell me about some memorable incidents, if any.
11. Have your understanding of Japan and its education system changed since your arrival? If so, how?
12. After arrival, have your view about your home country changed? If so, how?
13. What is it like for you to live as a (participant's nationality) in Japan?
14. Have you encountered any discrimination or prejudice?
15. What is it like for you to live as a male/female in Japan?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Previous Experience and Consideration of their Present & Future

1. Was there anything you wish you knew before participating in the program?
2. Do you see yourself in Japanese society in the future?
3. What is your plan after the JET program?
4. In what way do you think your experience of JET Program impact your future?
5. Do you recommend JET program to other people?
6. What is your advise to future JET program participants?

In addition to the above questions, additional follow up questions were asked.

## **Appendix D Advertisement for Recruitment of Participants**

The message below will be sent out to potential participants through Takeda's personal connections:

Hello. My name is Yuya Takeda.

I am currently studying at the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia.

For my master's thesis project, I will be researching about JET program participants' experience and their identity construction during the program. I am hoping to Skype interview current JET program participants who have been in the program at least 6 months.

The interview will be conducted once a week for three times. Each will take about 45-60 minutes. There might be some Japanese used, but interviews will be conducted in English. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission.

I am hoping to start interviewing sometime in December or January, and interview time will be arranged at your convenience. After the interview, I may contact you for a follow-up conversation (up to 30 minutes) or email exchanges in order to obtain clarification.

The participation will be entirely voluntary and you have the right to pull out of the study completely at any time without giving a reason.

There will be no monetary compensation, but I hope this study to be beneficial for you through reflection of your own experience.

Please contact Yuya Takeda if you are interested in joining the study or have any questions.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Best Regards,

Yuya Takeda  
MA student  
Department of Language and Literacy Education  
The University of British Columbia

## Appendix E Consent Form



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Language and Literacy Education  
Education Centre at Ponderosa Commons  
6445 University Boulevard  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z2  
Tel 604-822-5788  
Fax 604-822-3154

### Consent Form

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Ryuko Kubota, Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education

**Co-Investigator:** Yuya Takeda, MA student, Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education

**Title of the study:** JET Program Participants' Identity Construction: A Discourse Analysis

We want to learn about your experience during the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program. Especially, how the structure of the program has shaped your experience and how your sense of self has changed during the program.

#### **What is involved if you participate?**

You will be asked to participate in three 45 to 60-minute-long individual online interviews with Yuya. The interviews will be held between December 1, 2016 and January 31, 2017 using online video chat service (Skype, FaceTime, or Cyph). The interview will be conducted in English and will be audio-recorded with your permission. You can also ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time in the interview and decide not to answer to the questions you do not feel comfortable answering. The exact time of the interview will be arranged at your convenience. After the interview, Yuya may contact you for a follow-up conversation (up to 30 minutes long) or email exchanges in order to obtain clarification.

**What will be done with the information that is collected?**

The results of this study will be used in Yuya's master's thesis research. The results will be presented at conferences, and published in research journals. If you would like to know the results of this research, we will be happy to make the information available to you.

**What are the risks of participating?**

There are no known risks to your participation in this study. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to pull out of the study completely at any time without giving a reason. In addition, the data you provide will not be shared with your colleagues or supervisors.

**What are the benefits of participating?**

Your participation will help us deepen understanding of the JET program participants' experience, and may contribute to overall development of the program. In addition, you will be able to reflect on your own experience and may be able to integrate the reflection in your personal and professional development. There are no monetary benefits associated with participation in the study.

**How will we keep your identity safe?**

Your confidentiality will be protected both during and after data collection. Your name will be substituted with a different name. Also, any real names of the people, institutions, town and prefecture you discuss will not be used in any presentation or publication of this research. All data, including all digital audio recordings, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigator's (Dr. Kubota) UBC office for the minimum of five years after the study ends. Recorded audio interview data will be encrypted, and their transcription data will be password protected. All the translation and transcription will not contain any real names or other identifiers and will not be distributed to third parties.

**More questions or concerns?**

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact Yuya Takeda or Dr. Ryuko Kubota.

*If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.*

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY: Discourse Analysis on JET Program Participants' Identity Construction**

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason.

9. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
10. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant signing above

**Optional:**

If you wish to receive a summary of the research results, please write a phone number or email address in the space below:

E-mail address (optional):

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