

## 日本人大学生の英語教員観:Nativeness について

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### EFL students' perceptions of native and non-native speaking teachers

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#### 要旨 (Abstract)

この論文の目的は、日本人大学生の英語学習に対する意識を、授業担当者の nativeness (英語のネイティブ・スピーカーであるかどうか) の観点から調査することである。データは、3大学8グループ計270人の大学生を被験者に、6項目の質問から成るアンケートへの記述による解答から蒐集された。質問は英語運用力の自己評価、英語学習上の問題点、ネイティブと非ネイティブ教員の差異等を含み、その解答は数量的、質的に比較分析された。結果的に明らかになったのは、被験者の多数が、「本物」の英語、特に発音に触れ、口頭でのコミュニケーション能力を獲得するために、ネイティブ・スピーカーの教員を希望するということである。少数ながら日本人教員を評価する人たちは、その理由として教室での母語使用、EFL 学習への経験と理解、及びロールモデルとしての機能を上げた。

## **1. Introduction**

### **1. 1. Purpose of study**

The study explores how EFL (English as a foreign language) students in Japan perceive their language instructors in terms of nativeness and non-nativeness. It focuses on the perceived differences between the two types of teachers and their effects on language learning and teaching.

### **1. 2. Rationale**

Along with the spread of the Communicative Approach to English teaching and learning, whether language teachers are native-speakers of the target language or not has been considered to be one of the major issues in the field, especially outside the language community. In Japan, a typical EFL setting, the English education has started to place more emphasis on developing learners' communication skills, trying to solve its EFL difficulties by introducing more native speaking teachers into the language classes.

### **1. 3. Review of literature**

Crystal (1985,1997), describing a comprehensive history of the explosive spread of English as an international language, indicates that the non-native speakers of the language will outnumber the native speakers in the near future and that English will linguistically change into "new Englishes" (p. 130). Graddol (1997) also carries out a thorough survey over the past and the present of English language and proposes the reassessment of the future roles played by the United Kingdom and its language.

Kachru and other scholars call the English variation "World Englishes" and argue that the ownership of the language should move from exclusive

groups of native speakers to a far wider range of English users (Davies, 1989; Ferguson, 1992; Fishman, 1982; Kachru, 1982a, 1982b, 1992; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Nelson, 1982; Pakir, 1999; Swales, 1985). In the same light, Strevens (1982,1992) points out that there will be a greater need to produce effective forms of teaching and learning English in a more learner-centered way.

In the worldwide swell of English as a global language, as stated above, Japan has started to improve its English education, as part of a more comprehensive reform of school systems, by shifting the focus to more communication-oriented teaching and learning. Newly revised Courses of Study, national guidelines for elementary and secondary education, place more emphasis on developing oral communication skills and allow primary schools to teach English in a new framework "the Periods for Integrated Study" (Mext, 2001).

As for the drastically changing aspects of Japan's English education, Yano (1991) describes the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, the introduction of native-speaking teaching assistants to Japanese secondary schools, and maintains that the assistant native speaking teachers contribute to improving English education in Japan. Tajino & Tajino (2000) also discuss the benefits of joint teaching by native and non-native teachers of English. They explore how team-teaching has been practiced in actual English classes and suggest that it benefits best if it is "re-interpreted as team-learning" (p. 9) by all the participants.

In linguistic history, according to Phillipson (1992), the hegemonic status of native speakers as ideal ELT (English language teaching) teachers was explicitly confirmed at the Common Wealth Conference on the Teaching English as a Second Language held at Makerere, Uganda, in 1961 and remained virtually valid until quite recently. Paikeday (1992), however,

challenges the notion of native speakers as ideal users of the language by interviewing a significant number of prominent linguists and scholars of other related fields and points out that it is a historically constructed fiction. Through a comparative study on cross-cultural interpretation of foreign language and literature, Kramsch (1997) also questions the notion of native speakership and maintains that non-native speakers should have a potential privilege of obtaining multilingual perspectives. From his own non-native viewpoint, Medgyes (1992, 1994, 1999a, 1999b, 2001) insists distinctive differences between native and non-native ELT teachers and argues that non-native speaking teachers could serve as role models of EFL/ESL learners even though the instructors have disadvantages in linguistic competence.

Braine (1999) and other non-native scholars discuss a significant array of issues and problems related to the native and non-native dichotomy in the field, among which are discrimination in employment, lack of identity, and low self-confidence (Amin, 1999; Braine, 1999; Tang, 1997; Thomas, 1999; Rampton 1990). Liu, J (1999a, 1999b) conducts a study on the labels of native and nonnative speakers in the profession of TESOL, and discusses the related issues such as precedence vs. competence, cultural affiliation vs. dual identities, and socio-political and psychological impacts on the ESL/EFL classrooms and their participants. With regard to pre-service ELT teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions of non-nativeness, Samimy & Brutt-Griffler (1999) conduct a study over TESOL graduate students in the USA and argue that native and non-native dichotomy should be replaced by the question how EFL professionals should sharpen their expertise.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Subjects**

Two hundred and seventy university students participated in the study. They are composed of eight groups from three different colleges. The first group is 38 students attending English teacher education courses at a college (Group A) and the second group is 29 students majoring English language and literature at the same college (Group B). The students in the third through the fifth groups major in English in a foreign language department at another university. They are 20 seniors and juniors (Group C), 49 juniors (Group D), and 54 sophomores and freshers (Group E). The rest three groups are sophomore students majoring in social science such as law and economics at still another university. They are allocated to one of the seven proficiency-based classes: 24 students are in the top class (Group F), 29 students in the third class (Group G), and 27 students in the seventh class (Group H). Though the English proficiency levels of the subjects are varied from high beginner to upper-intermediate or pre-advanced, as Tables 2-2 and 2-3 show, the majority seems to be around intermediate level.

As for teaching, no subject has any experience of formal teaching, though a small number of them have experienced teaching as a private tutor. There are a small number of returnees or people who have experienced studying abroad in English-speaking countries or regions for more than one-year.

### **2.2. Instruments**

The data was collected through the written answers to the questionnaire composed of six questions regarding the nativeness and non-nativeness of their English language instructors. I employ the samples of

Samimy & Brutt-Griffler (1999) as a reference base. Following are the questions:

- 1) Have you ever experienced teaching English in formal settings?
- 2) How do you evaluate your own proficiency or command of English?  
What is your major difficulty in learning English?
- 3) Do you think that the proficiency of your English teacher influences on his or her lessons?
- 4) Is there any significant difference between native and non-native English speaking teachers? What is it, if any?
- 5) Which do you think is more successful in teaching EFL, native speaking teacher or non-native speaking teacher? Why or how?
- 6) What do you consider the main purposes or goals of learning English?

The questionnaire is accompanied with questions for background data of the participants such as duration of English learning, experience of going abroad, English-related qualification or test scores as well as age and gender. In this study, the participants remain anonymous. The questionnaire (in Japanese) is in Appendix 1.

### **2.3. Procedures**

The study was conducted in two stages. First, after asking the subjects of their experience of teaching English, Question 2 examines how the participants perceive themselves as students of English in terms of levels of proficiency or communicative competence and the areas of the major learning difficulties. How the English proficiency of teachers influences on their teaching and learning (Question 3) is also inquired. Then, Question 4 explores what perceptions and beliefs Japanese students have on the native speakership of EFL teachers before Question 5 asks the subjects which they prefer as EFL teachers between native and non-native speakers

of the language. The last question, Questions 6, deals with the students' goals and objectives of English learning and teaching.

At the second stage, the collected data is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. All the answers are counted in number and the numeric results are compared and analyzed in relation to the written accounts given to Questions 2, 4, 5, 6, and their relevant background data.

### **3. Results and discussions**

#### **3.1. Quantitative analysis**

Overall self-evaluation of English proficiency by the subjects is not very high. As Table 2-1 shows, 109 of 270 participants (40.4%) rate their command of English as *low* and 105 (39.1%) *average* while 9 (3%) regard themselves *good*. No one answers *excellent*. In terms of college major, non-English-major students are likely to assess their competence lower than English-related major students. In Groups F, G, and H, there is some resemblance between self-evaluation and the aforementioned class placement based on the proficiency levels. Also there is some correlation of the self-evaluation with the reported data on STEP (Society for Testing English Proficiency) tests. See Table 2-3 for the details.

With respect to the areas of the difficulties students encounter in learning English, as can be seen in Table 2-2, 54 of 270 (20%) participants refer to vocabulary, 51(19%) to speaking, and 46 (17%) to listening. Following the three are grammar (17; 6.3%), pronunciation (16; 5.9%), and communication (16; 5.9%). Roughly, oral communication and lexico-grammatical knowledge are the most troublesome areas for the students.

To the third question of the influence instructors' proficiency has on their teaching, 92 of 270 (34.1%) participants think that it affects *very much*, 87 (32.2%) answer *rather*, 55 (20.4%) say *extremely* while 30 (11.1%)

consider it has either *a little* or *no* effect on their lessons. See Table 3 for the details.

As Tables 4-1 and 4-2 show, the overwhelming majority of the subjects note the differences between native and non-native English speaking teachers. The main areas of differences are pronunciation, class atmosphere or motivation, and lesson focus or teaching methods.

To the fifth question, "who do you think is more successful in teaching EFL?" 118 of 270 (43.7%) respond *native*, 55 (20.4%) answer *non-native*, and 50 (18.5%) say *both*. As Tables 5-1 and 5-2 show, native speaking teachers are perceived to be far more preferable mainly because of their authentic language use and pronunciation though a small number of students appreciate non-native speaking instructors mainly because of their L1 (Japanese) use.

With regard to the main aims and objectives of English education or learning, 72 of 270 participants (26.7%) respond that their primary goal is to acquire an ability to communicate or communicative competence; 27 (10%) state that their purpose is to receive cultural information or knowledge. Among other answers are *learning basics*, *developing linguistic skills*, and *preparing for future occupations*.

### **3.2 Qualitative analysis**

A closer look at the quality of our data including the background information about the subjects reveals that the Japanese college students find differences between native and non-native speaking English teachers. As Table 4-2 shows, the major difference is in pronunciation. According to the written accounts by the subjects, as Table 5-2 indicates, they regard the sound quality of native speakers as real or authentic. Among the other differences are class atmosphere, which raises EFL learners' motivation to



learning, and lesson focuses or teaching methods, which are different from the traditional way of teaching English in Japan. Most of the participants prefer native speakers of English as their teachers and tend to consider their English lessons to be rare opportunities for exposure to the foreign language and culture. Therefore, authentic or true English, especially in pronunciation, is the major advantage of native speaking teachers.

On the contrary, as shown in Table 5-3, non-native English speaking teachers are appreciated, though small in number, mainly in two ways. One is that they could use Japanese, the first language of both students and teachers, if necessary. In relation to the result of Table 2-3, it might be said that the lower the students' proficiency levels are, the more non-native teachers and their L1 use are preferred. The other is that non-native speaking teachers might be more sensitive to learners' needs than the native speaking counterparts because the former shares the same experiences in language learning with the students. Some of the subjects regard non-native English speaking teachers from the same socio-cultural background as insightful advisors and role models for them.

Although the native speaker fallacy has been challenged in the field of English teaching these few decades, the above results seem to indicate that the majority of Japanese EFL students still believe in the persistent notion of native speakers as ideal teachers. A cause for such preference for native speakers could be traced back to the traditional English education in Japan, which has long emphasized learning written language, especially grammar rules. However, as a few of the pre-service teachers and the returnee students point out (personal communication), being a native speaker does not necessary means his or her excellency in teaching the language. As Braine (1999a) maintains, successful teaching and learning should depend on various factors such as learning goals, learning styles, learners'

personalities, employed methods and techniques as well as instructors' competence and expertise, and non-native teachers could be fairly appreciated if they are qualified and competent experts (p. xvi). Then, the issue of nativeness would be totally obsolete.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The exploration into the EFL students' perceptions of their English teachers in terms of nativeness or native speakership reflects the current situations of college English classes in Japan. The participants evaluate their own command of the target language rather low and find their learning difficulties mainly in vocabulary and oral skills. They regard the teachers' proficiency as a very influential factor on teaching and learning. Although the majority of the EFL instructors are still non-native speakers of the language, most of the students prefer native speaking teachers of English to their non-native counterparts because the former is superior in pronunciation, authenticity, and class atmosphere. A small number of subjects appreciate non-native speaking teachers chiefly because they could use their L1, Japanese, and also because they could be sensitive to students' needs.

There are a number of limitations to this study. First, more careful consideration should have been given to the questionnaire. Especially, the questions should take a more solid standpoint of students, not of teachers. Secondly, more thorough and objective way of quantifying the proficiency levels of the subjects is essential to making the study more meaningful and persuasive. Thirdly, there is more room for improvement in categorizing subjects because the lines among the subject groups might be clearer. Lastly, follow-up interviews of students could raise the quality level as well as increase the amount of the collected data.

In order to improve Japan's English education to meet the urgent and diverse demands of the present and future generations, heighten their motivation, and develop their autonomy, we teachers of English, native or non-native, should realize what and how our students perceive and expect of our lessons and ourselves. This surely is the starting point for the prospective improvement.

**Note:** This is a revised version of the paper orally presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of The Japan Society of English Usage and Style (JASEUS), at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, on June 29, 2002.

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## Appendix 2

Table 1. English Teaching Experience

Q.1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
a.Yes	1	9	7	3	4	3	0	1	28
b.No	37	18	13	46	50	20	29	26	239
N.E.	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Key: 1) A and B are students of English education major and minor; 2) C, D, and E are students of English major; 3) F, G, and H are students of social science major; 4) N.E. stands for entry.

Table 2-1. Self-rating of English Command

Q.2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
b	1	3	1	0	2	1	0	1	9
c	12	12	10	22	26	11	10	2	105
d	19	10	8	21	17	7	14	13	109
e	6	2	1	5	9	4	4	11	42
N.E.	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	5
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Key: 1) Answer a is excellent; 2) Answer b is good; 3) Answer c is average; 4) Answer d is poor; 5) Answer e is very poor:

Table 2-2. Areas of Main Difficulties in English Use

1	vocabulary	54	2	speaking	51	3	listening	46
4	grammar	17	5	pronunciation	16	5	communication	
7	reading, writing	12	8	environment/ exposure	6		others (teaching)	

No entry ...63



Table 2-3. English Proficiency Levels of Subjects: STEP

LEVEL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
2	9	14	12	33	20	4	2	0	94
Pre-2	4	6	1	4	13	10	4	3	45
3	11	0	2	0	3	0	6	5	27
4	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	8
5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOEIC*	0	1(2)	1(7)	0(10)	0(3)	0	0	0	2(12)
TOEFL*	0	1(1)	0(2)	0(5)	0(3)	0	0	0	1(11)
N.E.	10	7	2	11	17	10	16	14	87
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Key: 1) Figures of TOEIC and TOEFL are numbers of subjects who have only the scores of the tests; 2) TOEIC and TOEFL figures in parentheses include numbers of those who also have other tests' scores; 3) N.E. means no entry.

Table 3. How Teachers' Command Affects Teaching

Q.2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
a	7	6	3	9	11	9	5	5	55
b	18	9	10	17	17	7	6	8	92
c	11	9	5	16	20	5	12	9	87
d	1	3	2	5	6	2	5	4	28
e	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
N.E.	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	6
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Key: 1) Answer a is extremely; 2) Answer b is very much; 3) Answer c is quite a bit; 4) Answer d is a little; 5) Answer e is not at all.

Table 4-1. Perceptions of Differences between Native and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers

Q.1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
a.Yes	8	26	19	41	44	20	20	15	223
b.No	0	1	1	7	8	2	7	8	34
N.E.	0	2	0	1	2	1	2	4	13
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Table 4-2. Areas of NEST and NNEST Differences

1	pronunciation	84	2	atmosphere/ motivation	43	3	lesson focus/ teaching method	41
4	cultural information	25	5	speaking/ listening	18	6	use of Japanese security	15
7	levels	9	8	others	13		No entry	63

Table 5-1. More Successful EFL Teachers

Q.1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
a.NSET	10	8	12	33	27	11	12	8	118
b.NNSET	5	6	6	3	12	6	6	11	55
Both	0	11	1	11	12	2	7	5	49
N.E.	2	4	1	5	3	5	4	3	48
Sum	38	29	20	49	54	24	29	27	270

Table 5-2. Perceived Differences between  
Native and Non-native English Speaking Teachers

Q.5	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
pronunciation	3	4	3	5	2	3	3	0	23
authenticity	1	0	7	5	2	2	4	1	22
atmosphere	5	1	0	5	4	1	2	0	18
culture/info.	3	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	9
others	2	2	5	10	2	3	1	3	29
no entry	1	1	1	7	17	6	4	4	39

Table 5-3. Advantages of Non-native Teachers

Q.5	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
L1 use	1	5	0	1	3	3	4	6	13
approach	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	5
test/grammar	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
atmosphere	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
other	0	1	2	10	1	0	1	2	6
no entry	0	0	0	2	6	0	1	3	12

Table 5-3. Advantages of Non-native Teachers

Q.6	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Sum
communication	18	5	5	11	12	5	10	6	72
culture/info.	6	4	3	5	4	1	0	4	27
basics	1	2	5	4	4	4	1	1	22
skill develop	18	0	1	4	7	1	5	2	21
occupation	8	2	2	1	5	1	0	0	19
fluency	2	1	0	7	1	2	0	1	14
fun	2	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	9
self-develop	1	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	8
test prep.	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	4
others	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	8
no entry	2	11	1	13	23	8	13	11	82

Key:

- 1) communication stands for communication with foreigners;
- 2) culture/info. stands for cross-cultural understanding;
- 3) basics stands for practical use of English such as survival or travel English;
- 4) skill develop. stands for developing skills such as speaking and listening;
- 5) occupation stands for preparation for future occupations;
- 6) fluency stands for obtaining high oral proficiency of English;
- 7) fun stands for having fun through English;
- 8) self-develop. means self-development and self-enlightenment;
- 9) test prep. means preparation for tests, qualification, and certificates.