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English as an International Language

Japan: Accents in the Curriculum

1. Introduction

This paper will summarize the results of two surveys given in Japan to English language learners and language education professionals concerning attitudes towards various accents in the context of English language education. The survey results raise questions about which types of English accents should be considered appropriate for pedagogical purposes. An emerging focal point is the role of non-native or 'outer circle' (Kachru, 1985) accents in the curriculum. There exists a tension between providing an easily understood model accent for clarity, and the diversity of English and its users in a globalizing world where the learners' foreign language is supposed to function. This paper will focus on attitudes towards non-native accents and their speakers in the context of language education.

2. Literature Review

It is necessary to examine the identity of English in Japan in order to understand the attitudes towards accents reflected in this study. In Kachru's 'Concentric Circles' (Kachru, *ibid*), Japan lies in the 'Expanding Circle' meaning that English exists as an international language, is a 'performance variety' (Kachru, 1992), and is 'norm dependant' (*ibid.*), meaning it gets its model from metropolitan varieties of English used in 'Inner Circle' countries like the U.S. or England. This, apposed to the type of country that possesses a local, or institutionalized variety of English existing as a second or additional language, and has developed to some extent its own norms or varying registers as is often the case in 'Outer Circle' countries like the Philippines, India, or Kenya.

As an international language or language for wider communication,

English in Japan functions as a means of communication with countries from all three circles, so there is a difference between the role model and the multiple varieties of English accents that a language user from Japan could expect to encounter. When two speakers from different outer or expanding circle countries speak, one could easily imagine difficulties as each speaker's phonetic 'optimality' (Prince & Smolesky, 1993) would differ as linguistic background would naturally have an effect on how sounds were perceived and pronounced. Skill in dealing with these differences is part of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1971) in at least the form of 'tolerance for ambiguity', which Ruben (1976) identifies as a dimension of communicative competence important for intercultural adaptation, which is obviously key for any language for international communication. 'Negotiation for meaning' is a communication strategy that is part of communicative competence and would naturally be useful when dealing with unfamiliar accents. Gass and Varonis (1984) find that among other things, simple familiarity with non-native accents enhances their comprehensibility, and along the same lines Varonis and Gass (1985) find that negotiation for meaning exchanges are more frequent in non-native/non-native speech than in native/non-native speech. It could be said that non-native speech has a lot to offer the language learner.

Carter (1998) estimated at that time that 80 percent of exchanges in English are between non-natives. In 1997 Graddol (1997) predicted the number of non-native speakers of English would outnumber natives in a decade or so and according to Yano (2000), this number had already been reached, obviously pushing Carter's ratio up as well. As Yano (2000) succinctly states, in our increasingly interconnected world, "the close relationship between language, territory, and cultural identity is being challenged by global forces". This makes English much more of a tool for multilateral communication rather than a bilateral bridge between non-natives and natives. Mutual intelligibility needs to be maintained through common standards perhaps in more general areas of language such as the lexicon, but we know from second language acquisition research into the 'Critical Period Hypothesis' that second or foreign language learners

with native-like accents are extremely rare (Scovel, 1988). Foreign accents in English are a reality and becoming more so day-by-day.

However, in Japan, English has had an identity preventing it from being a multilateral tool and accents other than inner circle have signified something different than 'English'. Kachru (1998) summarizes Lummis (1976), and Tsuda's (1992) description of ideology embedded in 'eikaiwa' ('English conversation', i.e. commercial language schools in Japan) as: involving obsessive infatuation with Western, especially American culture, equating the ideal speaking partner with a white middle class American, including racist ideas from that culture, representing a mostly fraudulent idea of the native speaker, and exploiting these ideas for financial gain. Kubota (1998) criticizes ideas of English in the larger picture of society in Japan. In recent decades English, or the need for it, has been tied to the '*kokusaika*' (internationalization) movement that in turn was connected to the discourses of '*nihonjinron*' (the theory of the uniqueness of the Japanese). In sum, the purpose of 'internationalization' was to absorb the sophistication of the West and teach it about how Japanese were unique. The polemic discourse, while still part of '*nihonjinron*' saw 'internationalization', English education and English in general as a hegemonic intrusion by the West, threatening to erase national character or culture. This argument is similar to the 'English is linguistic imperialism' rhetoric of Pennycook (1998) or Phillipson (1992) save the fact that Japan was never colonized, is not a developing country, nor has its economic success come about as a result of adopting English. Whether English is, metaphorically speaking, supposed to be of use to gain a place at the table with the West, or whether the West should be asked to leave the table, outer or expanding circle countries are nowhere to be found in relation to the identity of English in this discourse.

As Kubota (1998) states:

"The non-native speaker of English, or the *Other*, is viewed as uncivilized and inferior to the Anglo speaker of English. Learning English, a language of the 'civilized' has been one of the means for the Japanese to identify themselves with Westerners."

These attitudes represent the more nationalistic views in society in Japan. They are intertwined with broader historical factors, and have changed somewhat in recent years. Still, we can see that they serve as a backdrop for present attitudes towards some accents in English and they limit the usefulness of English as an international language. Kubota (1998) sees the inclusion of a variety of English in the curriculum as a road to progress and Kachru (1998) advances a redefinition of the term 'native' to include 'functional native' or outer circle speakers. As we shall see in the results of the surveys, many learners and educators have similar views and progress has been made, but society in Japan still places barriers to a view of English more representative of its diverse reality.

3. Method

Two surveys were given. The first survey was completely open-ended and given to two different groups of participants in Japan, fifty high school students in the eleventh grade that included three 'returnee' students who had until recently been living in an English speaking country, and a selection of native Japanese speaking English teachers who work at high schools, two from one high school (Group A) and one from another (Individual B), in separate interviews. Participants listened to recordings of five speakers giving a small introduction of themselves in English. Responses were prompted by "Please give your impression of the accent", and then at the end, after hearing all of the accent samples, "When learning English, do you have a preference about which accent to hear?" for the students, or "What is your overall attitude about which accents are most appropriate for learning situations?" to the teachers. 'Individual B' chose to limit his comments to this last question, although he had heard all the samples.

The speakers recorded were all English language instructors in Japan but from various linguistic backgrounds. The speakers each represented a different variety of English. Three of the speakers were from 'inner circle'

countries, The U.S.A., England, and New Zealand, one was from an 'outer circle' country, Kenya, and one was from Japan, 'an expanding circle' country.

In the case of the high school students, the survey was done in class with limited time to respond. The option of responding in Japanese was left open, but answering in English was encouraged. Responses were collected on sheets of paper with no blanks for names to preserve anonymity, and then collated on computer file. As part of the collating process, responses were coded into a 'gist' form and if the responses from different participants were similar enough, counted as the same response.

With the groups of teachers, limited time was less of a factor and responses were verbal. The interviewer took notes summarizing comments and then read the summaries back to the participants to assure the comments had been represented accurately. The interviewer was careful not to respond to the comments except with neutral acknowledgements like "I see".

The second survey was more pointed and set out to answer some questions raised in the first survey and the literature. It was an online multiple-choice 'Likert scale' survey, typical of second language research (Dornyei, 2003) posted on two email lists whose members were English language educators based primarily in Japan. A listing of the distribution of the participants' countries, the detailed questions and the results of the survey can be found in appendix C.

The multiple choice scale selections were either accompanied by open-ended 'other' boxes attached to the individual question, or an open-ended box at the end of a section of questions that read "Do you have any thoughts that you'd like to clarify further?"

The questions (see appendix C) aimed at three areas:

- 1) Which variations of English are considered appropriate or advantageous to study in Japan and in what order? Choices to select from were: North American, British, Australian, New Zealand, and outer circle countries. Although this was criticized by a very small number of the respondents to

the survey, Canada was grouped with the U.S.A. because after speaking to several native speakers from the U.S. Canada, England, Australia and New Zealand, the consensus was that the difference in accent between the U.S. and Canada was almost indiscernible unless you were talking about very specific localities, whereas this was not the case with the others.

- 2) In the opinion of the English language education community in Japan sampled, would providing a singular model accent be better for learners, and related would being exposed to outer circle English be advantageous to learners?
- 3) Is English's identity in Japan tied so closely with its image of the inner circle countries that it would not occur to a large proportion of people to use it for international communication with people from outer circle or expanding countries, and connected to this are some educators discriminated against or undervalued because of accent, or even simply because of skin color, ethnicity, or country of citizenship when no 'deviant' accent is present? And finally, assuming that English has traditionally been seen as a gateway to the sophistication of the West rather than a tool for international communication, and this has hampered its usefulness as such, has this situation gotten better or worse in recent years?

4. Results

4.1 Survey one: fifty eleventh-grade high school students:

Details can be found in appendix B, but for sake of brevity, results will be presented in table form. Table 1 below lists comments that were found more than once in order of frequency for each speaker

Kenya	Hard to understand (10), Sounds like a Japanese speaker (8), Easily understood (6), Blurred /indistinct (4), Intermittent sounds/sounds pronounced one by one (3), Not clear, but OK (2), Pronunciation a little strange (2)
England	Easy to understand. (12), Fluent. (6), Clear. (4), Smooth (2), Heard a lot (2), Normal (2), High termination (2)
New Zealand	Easy to understand (6), Strong pronunciation (3), The same as British English (3), Volume rising and falling often (2), Slow (2), Friendly (2), Good pronunciation (2)
U.S.	Most familiar. (8), Easy to understand. (7), Fluent (3), Natural (2), Normal (2), Casual (2)
Japan	Easy to understand. (13), Thinking while speaking (2), Normal for a Japanese (2), Normal (2), Gloomy (2), Monotonous (2), Connections weak (2)

(Table 1: Frequent comments by speaker.)

All comments were divided into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral descriptive. Table 2 below summarizes the distribution by speaker.

	Kenya	England	New Zealand	U.S.	Japan
Positive	9	30	15	18	23
Negative	29	2	4	0	12
Neutral descriptive	14	13	17	24	10
Missing data	6	5	14	8	5

(Table 2: Total positive, negative, and neutral descriptive comments.)

Another interesting analysis that reveals more about how the accents were perceived was to list the comments that were unique to each speaker, eliminating same or similar comments across speakers. Results are summarized in table 3 below.

Kenya	like a Japanese speaker, strange pauses, has a stammer, speech is 'staccato', sounds like an Asian speaker, sounds like Middle Easterners, made an effort to speak.
England	particular to a district, high termination, 'au' sound is different, 'fast and then slow': uneven, different from U.S., beautiful, gentlemanly, polite, confident, distinct, irritating, usage of the word 'football' never ceases to amuse me/
New Zealand	diction short, better than Kenya, odd, peaceful*, too strong: angry, same as British.
The U.S.	emphasizing, formal, real, default in Japan, diction refined, most familiar, big ending, teenager-like, casual, easy for Japanese, best.
Japan	Not real, thinking while speaking, peaceful*, gloomy, like BrE, r/l indistinct, good for a Japanese, normal for a Japanese, like in class, 'park' sounds like Boston accent,
*While 'peaceful' is mentioned for both New Zealand and Japan, it did seem specific enough to include.	

(Table 3: Summary of unique descriptions.)

As described above, after hearing the four speakers and offering comment, the final question asked for general preferences for accent when learning English. Table four below lists comments that were found more than once.

Preference for accent to hear when learning English
I prefer to hear a U.S. accent (8)
I prefer to hear a British accent (6)
It is better to know many different accents, not only those of native speakers (4)

(Table 4: Overall preferences.)

We can see that beyond the obvious choices of American English or British English, there exists a desire to have a diversity of accents in the curriculum. This will be discussed in later sections. It is interesting to note that preferences for American or British English may simply be because they are

easy to understand, a frequent comment, but “It is better to know many...” implies something different.

4.2 Survey one: Japanese native speaking teachers of English: Group A.

The summarized script of the interviews can be found in appendix A. Listening to the individual speakers, Group A commented that the British speaker would be easy for students to understand and that the vowels were distinct. They felt that the New Zealand speaker pronounced every word separately and had very clear word-final voiceless stops. For the U.S. speaker they commented that while they were used to it, it may be more difficult for students because the word-final consonant can be elided, ‘get’ sounding like ‘ge-’. For the Japanese speaker, like the high school students, the comments were more judgmental than descriptive. After complimenting her skill, the comments became rather introspective as they realized that most of the criticism they had to offer, they also thought about in their own English, namely mistakes in the L/R distinction, word-final voiceless stops, and prepositions. They thought that perhaps they weren’t qualified to criticize and weren’t sure if these mistakes were real or imagined since they too shared the same concerns.

The responses to the last question about overall preferences for accents in language education centered around the speaker from Kenya as we shall see, but comments on the accent itself were also more focused. They perceived the ‘F’ and ‘B’ sound to be weak, and said that his language used many elisions, perhaps in contrast to the England and New Zealand speaker’s distinct voiceless stops in word-final position. They also said that his L/R distinction was weak, similar to the typical native Japanese speaker. Also, the way he said ‘Sunday’ sounded more like ‘SundEy’, and the way he said ‘most of’ sounded like ‘moZed of’. In general, they found him more difficult to understand than the others and commented that he didn’t sound native. His English sounded like a different language to them because, they guessed, his

accent was influenced by his mother tongue.

Turning to general preferences for accent in learning, the responses seemed framed towards the merits or demerits of having a diversity of accents in the curriculum, particularly concerning outer circle varieties as represented by the speaker from Kenya.

Among reasons for not including outer circle varieties, one interviewee in group A noted that the listening test recently added to the 'Senta' unified university entrance exam uses inner circle varieties, so focusing on those exclusively might be more appropriate in high school English language education. Another interviewee in group A stated the reason for the U.S. accent being so prevalent in Japan was simply because the majority of the listening materials available in the past had been of that variety. However, from his own experience, accents do transfer from teacher to learner and he thought that presenting a variety of accents, especially World Englishes, to low-level learners such as elementary school children would cause confusion. The first interviewee in group A stated that for her, imitation was key. In the past, she had experimented with imitating Hollywood actresses. Local varieties of English would be confusing at first for a learner who traveled to a certain area, but adjusted to easily enough as was the case for her when visiting Australia.

Turning to reasons why presenting exclusively inner circle accents might be dangerous, one member in group A said that she thought it may give the impression that only those were 'right' and other Englishes would be deemed invalid. By extending this train of thought, her own English, as a non-native speaker would also be invalid, and her students too would by definition never be able to speak 'valid' English. There are many reasons to focus on inner circle accents, but excluding outer circle accents from the curriculum has serious implications regarding motivation.

4.3 Survey one: Japanese native speaking teachers of English: Individual B.

Individual B, a teacher from a different high school had comments totally focusing on this issue after hearing the speaker samples and identifying for himself the Kenyan speaker's English as the central focus. Unlike group A, he offered no support for limiting accents to inner circle for practical reasons. Instead he felt that it was necessary for the learners in Japan to be more exposed to accents other than inner circle in order to, from the beginning, cultivate awareness that English is an international language rather than the old stereotype in Japan that it is a language to be used only with people from the U.S. or England. He felt that the ministry of education (MEXT) needed to make diversity a goal when hiring ALTs (assistant language teachers) for their nation-wide system of putting language teachers from other countries in the schools. They should hire more from places like the Philippines or India. He said that there has been a change in recent decades in the ministry-approved textbooks and listening material in terms of not only accents, but also content; there is more variety, but there still exists prejudice and undervaluation of language teachers from outer circle or expanding circle countries. He says however that this situation has gotten better recently.

The issues identified in Survey One created the content for Survey Two and will also be discussed in sections below.

4.4 Survey Two: English language educators in Japan: Issues emerging from Survey One.

Survey results can be found in appendix C. The first section of the survey asks participants to rank in order which accents were considered in Japan to be most appropriate or advantageous to study. Selections were 1) North American, 2) British, 3) Australian, 4) New Zealand, 5) Outer Circle. Not surprisingly, more than sixty percent responded that this was in fact the

order, with the most variation concerning whether Australian or New Zealand should be third after British.

On the issue of whether diversity of accents in the curriculum is advantageous or counterproductive, more than ninety percent of the respondents did not agree that having a single accent in learning materials would be a good idea or that mixing accents causes confusion. Along the same lines roughly sixty five percent agree that learning from a teacher from an outer circle country or being exposed to listening materials of the like would be advantageous for the learner. This compared to twelve percent who thought it would be disadvantageous, all of those respondents choosing the weakest choice on the 'disadvantageous' side of the scale, 'somewhat disadvantageous'. Twelve percent refused the framing of the question and, responding with the 'other' box, a majority of them wrote that it would depend on the English ability or teaching skills of the individual teacher rather than country of origin.

On issues surrounding the identity of English in Japan, and stereotypes embedded in this identity, fifty four percent of respondents agreed that in their judgment, English is so closely identified with the West that to most people in Japan, it wouldn't even occur to them to use English to speak to someone from Asia. Thirty percent disagree, and among the 'other' responses it was commented that this was the old way of thinking and things have changed recently. Eighty one percent agree that, assuming this stereotype has pigeon-holed English in Japan and hampered it's usefulness in society until now, the situation has gotten better in recent years and English is beginning to be seen more as a mode of communication between cultures rather than merely a gateway to the West. This reinforces the 'other' comment from the preceding question.

In terms of these stereotypes materializing in the form of discrimination towards educators, when asked if they had ever seen or heard of a situation where an educator was discriminated against or undervalued because of accent, sixty seven percent answered 'on occasion' or 'often', the top two positive responses on a scale of four followed by 'rarely' and then 'almost never' when combined got less than ten percent. Among 'other' it was noted

that this is more of a factor in the private sector at conversation schools where accommodating to stereotypes leads to a more profitable business. The same question was put to respondents but this time assuming that the educator's English was native or comparable. Had they heard of or seen instances of educators being discriminated against or undervalued because of skin color, ethnicity, or country of citizenship, not accent? Again the feedback was positive with sixty four percent in the top two categories compared to eleven percent in the bottom two, this time 'often' increasing by four percent. Included in the 'other' respondents was a long reply telling the story of an Asian American who after having several bad experiences interviewing for ALT positions, threatened legal action and after being let in, gained a very good reputation among students, parents, and other educators.

5. Discussion

Common sense tells us that in terms of listening materials, inner circle accent models will continue to dominate the arena in 'norm-depending' expanding circle countries, and Japan is no exception. The students' first two preferences were for inner circle varieties perhaps because they found them more comprehensible, but the teacher in group A's opinion about imitation is also pertinent. Although we know language learners rarely end up with native-like accents, a language learner would undoubtedly have mixed feelings if they perceived they were approximating an approximation, or if they felt that another country's accent was present in the model they were trying to imitate. A respondent to Survey Two says that learners in Japan feel they are going to the source by learning from Westerners. For the teacher from Group A, her accent models were Hollywood actresses. A different respondent to Survey Two as well comments, "Hollywood movies are everywhere." Along the same lines, another teacher from group A sees North American English ubiquity in Japan as resulting from listening materials in the past. In either case it's a matter of frequency in input and it is the status quo. It is the standard, and for high school students like the

ones polled, comprehension of this standard will be important if they take the unified university entrance examinations, as a teacher from Group A notes.

But focusing exclusively on this standard in Japan perpetuates what Lummis (1976) and Kubota (1998) observe is a troubling worldview. A worldview that, as the teacher in group A comments, denies the validity of the English of the outer circle, the English of the native Japanese speaking language instructor, and the English of the language learners themselves. It denies English as a tool for communication between various peoples and denies the reality of its diversity. We see from the results of Survey Two that this worldview concerns not only which accents are considered valid, but which skin colors, ethnicities, or nationalities are considered valid for language learning purposes as well. In the private sector, acquiescing to this type of ignorance may make good business sense, but in high school education there is certainly an imperative to attempt to make the world a better place by not encouraging these false preconceptions.

Among teachers and learners we see a desire in the survey results to have a variety of accents in the curriculum. The students expressed as their third overall preference, learning many types of accents. The majority of educators polled in Survey Two also considered it advantageous to learn from an outer circle teacher. The teacher, Individual B, comments that students should learn English from the beginning as an international language and this means not only including a variety of accents in the curriculum, but exposing students to a variety of language instructors from diverse English speaking backgrounds.

The benefits to be gained from this trend are numerous, but could be classified into three types. First, society in general: by including various accents into the curriculum from early schooling, incidental knowledge about the speakers of those accents and their backgrounds would become more a part of the realm of common knowledge in Japan. It would clear up to some extent what Kubota (*ibid.*) terms Japan's "...ambivalent view of language, race, and culture...". Gradually, a more cosmopolitan view of the world should take hold. English education can act as a vehicle for this, and it

should -English as an international language. Secondly, there are advantages for the learners' foreign language faculties. The research mentioned before (see literature review) shows that familiarity with various accents increases their comprehensibility, which is necessary for tests like TOEIC, and interaction with non-natives helps develop communication strategies. Foreign, or 'functional native' accents of English (Krachu, 1998) are increasingly common both inside Japan and out -the accents of English as an international language. Thirdly and finally, it is my opinion that it's the language learner in Japan's self-image as an English speaker that is to be benefited. Focusing exclusively on inner circle accents presents an unattainable goal and suggests that there is something wrong with having a non-native accent, as virtually all learners in Japan, and for that matter, the majority of English speakers in the world do and forever will. Learners in Japan need to understand that speakers from various linguistic backgrounds are successful communicators in spite of non-native accents. They need role models in accordance with what they could expect to achieve. Not presenting these role models ignores the whole group of practitioners they are trying to join -speakers of English as an international language.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have summarized some of the issues surrounding non-native accents of English in Japan and outlined some reasons why English hasn't realized its potential as a means for multilateral communication in an ever more diverse world of English speakers. There is a dissemblance between the pedagogic model presented in Japan and the realities of English as an international language. The survey results reveal that preferences were for clarity and diversity simultaneously, but misguided conceptions of what accents are valid have slowed change. The trend is for more diversity and the future of English language education in Japan will see many benefits from including more non-native English into the learning curriculum.

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Appendix A: Survey one: Native Japanese speaking high school English teachers:

Ms. G., Mr. L (Group A):

England:

His accent is similar to the type of English students in Japan are used to. It's easy to understand. Students could also understand easily. Vowel sounds are distinct. The way he says 'everybody' was very clear.

New Zealand:

It's difficult to comment on accent because I just listen for meaning. I know him and am used to his speech. It's very similar to British English. He says, 'ah' to fill in between words a lot. He pronounces each word separately. His word-final voiceless stops are very distinct. His accent is lovely.

Kenya:

He's more difficult to listen to than British English or New Zealand English. Perhaps sounds like 'F' or 'B' are weak. He uses liaisons (elisions?)(my guess) often. He doesn't sound native. His accent comes from his mother tongue, I think. He said 'Sunday' like 'SundEy'. He said 'most of' like 'moZed of'. His speech sounds like music. It sounded like a different language. R/L pronunciation is like Japanese.

U.S.A.:

I'm used to listening to U.S. English. Sometimes it can be hard for students to understand. U.S. English has more stretching sounds. (vowels seem elongated?) (My estimate). It is hard to hear the final consonant, for example, in 'get'. The final consonant disappears (is elided)(My estimate).

Japan:

Her English is easy to understand. I know her. I think her English is similar to U.S. because she lives with you. (The speaker is the interviewer's wife). I'm not sure if her grammar was correct, especially the prepositions. I also have a hard time with prepositions. She added an inappropriate plural 'S', or perhaps it sounded that way because she has a hard time with word-final voiceless stops, typical for Japanese native speakers. I'm not sure if her L/R distinction was correct but I'm not sure about my own either. I can tell she's not a native.

Preferences for accents in language education in general:

Ms. G: Many types should be learned, but the 'Senta' (unified entrance exam for universities) listening test is based on inner circle English, so if you want to change the situation regarding accents in the curriculum, the tests would need to be changed.

Imitating is the easiest way to learn, so you need a model. I studied in the U.S. and imitated actresses on TV and movies. It's easy if there is a singular model. The reason we imitate U.S. English is that there are more people that speak it. I don't deny Kenyan English but I don't meet people from there often.

I want to learn based on one model and then take in others. I don't want the students to think one is more correct than the other, but they need a first model. In contrast, if I deny Kenyan English, I also deny my English and therefore my students' English. It's difficult to comment.

Mr. L: If elementary students heard too many types they would get confused. Inner circle, in particular American English is better for learners beginning to learn English. It easiest to learn American English first because there are many listening materials in Japan based on that.

I'm never sure if my English is correct. My Jr. high school teacher used BrE, but at high school it was AmE, then at college I met different Englishes. (Ms. G: Me too.) Now I'm trying to get used to Kenyan English!

Ms. G: Australian English was a shock but I got used to it soon.

Mr. L: My Korean used to sound Japanese-Korean, heavily influenced by North Korean accent prevalent in Japan, but now I have a South Korean teacher so my Korean accent is becoming closer to a South Korean accent. I often record my teacher and listen at home. The point I'm trying to make is that I think, for me at least, the teacher's accent has a big influence on the learner.

Mr. Y (Individual B), a teacher at a different high school than the Ms. G. and Mr. L. above:

Q: What is your overall attitude about which accent is most appropriate for learning situations? (After hearing the 5 samples.)

“English is for everybody. It is very important for our students to listen to English as an international language. When our students study, they have to learn it from the beginning as an international language, not only for use with people from the U.S. or England. We need to listen to more various types of English.

Also in terms of employment, when the government hires ALTs (assistant language teachers), they need to hire more instructors from places like the Philippines or India.

In terms of textbooks and listening material, there has been a change in what you see in the ministry-approved textbooks and listening material. 10 or 20 years ago accents in listening materials and content, like stories or current events in reading materials, were centered around the U.S. or England, but these days, you see a much more diverse selection. Stories or accents from places like New Zealand, Afghanistan, or India are all much more common now. It is true that sometimes people from these places can be discriminated against in language education, but this situation is getting better. Students in Japan need to learn English as an international language!”

Appendix B: Survey one: high school students

Kenya	England	New Zealand	US	Japan	Overall Preference for Language Ed	
hard to understand	irritating	monotonous	most familiar	gloomy	prefer U.S.	8
blurred, indistinct	too fast	odd	normal	monotonous	prefer British	6
intermittent/one by one	heard a lot	difficult to understand	casual	connections weak	better to know lots/not only for NS	4
pronoun little strange	normal	too strong/angry	emphasizing	a little broken	Japanese E easiest to understand	
slow	high termination	strong pronunciation	formal	not real	BrE or AmE are cool but Japanese English is easy	
bad intonation	fast and then slow uneven	same as BrE	default in Japan	not fluent	usa natural	
bad at speaking	AV sound is different	up down volume often	many intonation	r/	I aim for clear	
strange pauses	portentously	slow	big ending	a little blurred, indistinct	us is easiest br is polite	
has a stammer	diff from us	ordinary	strong,	not good	liked br because he spoke smoothly	
not fluent like US speaker	football? (laugh)	dictionary short	teenager-like	thinking while speaking	need E	
staccato,	particular to a discreet	peaceful	elongated	japanese normal	Accents are the countries symbol and beautiful	
U sound is different	fast	fast	lots of intonation	slow and easy	Don't like BrE	
does not clearly express himself	easily understood	elongated	used to him	peaceful	like BrE	
bad pronunciation	fluent	each sound separately	BrE but softer	like in class	hard and not soft	
sounds like a Japanese	clear	same as U.S.	no problem	perk' sounded like boston accent		
ordinary	smooth	easy to understand	easily understood	easy to understand		
sad	beautiful	friendly	fluent	normal		
like Black American	good speaker	good pronunciation	natural	real		
like an Asian speaker	natural	fast and smooth	very well	natural		
like a Middle East speaker	distinct	good speaker	dicton refined	straightforward int		
has a low voice	polite	better than Kenya	easiest to hear	fluent		
easy to understand	confident	smooth	easy for Japanese Sa	nice impression		
not clear but ok		nice impression	best	good for U/ not so Jish		
makes an effort in speaking				speak well		
				little accent		
				easiest to understand		
negative 29	negative 2	negative 4	negative 0	negative 12		
neutral descriptive 14	neutral descriptive 13	neutral descriptive 17	neutral descriptive 24	neutral descriptive 10		
positive 9	positive 30	positive 15	positive 18	positive 23		
8 multiple comments						
6 missing data	5 missing data	14 missing data	8 missing data	5 missing data		

Appendix C: Survey Two: English language educators in Japan.

Distributions of participants by country for survey two.

Britian	21
Canada	18
U.S.	10
Australia	5
Japan	4
UK	2
Scotland	2
France	2
Germany	2
Guam	2
Philippines	1
Inner Circle	58
Outer Circle	3
*Expanding Circle	8

*While Berns (1995) makes a distinction between Germany (Expanding/Outer Circle), and France (Expanding Circle), Germany, Japan, and France have been classified as Expanding Circle.

2. In Japan, in terms of variations of accents, what kind of English do you think is considered the MOST appropriate or advantageous to study? (The next question asks for number 2. You may click back at any time to edit your answers).

		Response Percent	Response Total
North American		80%	56
British		11.4%	8
Australian		2.9%	2
New Zealand		0%	0
Outer Circle (Philippines, Kenya, Singapore, etc, where English is institutionalized and is used regularly in certain domains in daily life.)		5.7%	4
Total Respondents			70
		(skipped this question)	3

3. In Japan, in terms of variations of accents, what kind of English do you think is considered the SECOND MOST appropriate or advantageous to study?

		Response Percent	Response Total
North American		12.9%	9
British		68.6%	48
Australian		8.6%	6
New Zealand		4.3%	3
Outer Circle (Philippines, Kenya, Singapore, etc, where English is institutionalized and is used regularly in certain domains in daily life.)		5.7%	4
Total Respondents			70
		(skipped this question)	3

4. In Japan, in terms of variations of accents, what kind of English do you think is considered the THIRD MOST appropriate or advantageous to study?

		Response Percent	Response Total
North American		2.9%	2
British		16.2%	11
Australian		63.2%	43
New Zealand		5.9%	4
Outer Circle (Philippines, Kenya, Singapore, etc, where English is institutionalized and is used regularly in certain domains in daily life.)		11.8%	8
Total Respondents			68
		(skipped this question)	5

5. In Japan, in terms of variations of accents, what kind of English do you think is considered the **FOURTH MOST** appropriate or advantageous to study?






		Response Percent	Response Total
North American		4.5%	3
British		1.5%	1
Australian		19.4%	13
New Zealand		65.7%	44
Outer Circle (Philippines, Kenya, Singapore, etc, where English is institutionalized and is used regularly in certain domains in daily life.)		9%	6
Total Respondents			67
(skipped this question)			6

6. In Japan, in terms of variations of accents, what kind of English do you think is considered the **FIFTH MOST** appropriate or advantageous to study?

		Response Percent	Response Total
North American		1.6%	1
British		3.2%	2
Australian		4.8%	3
New Zealand		20.6%	13
Outer Circle (Philippines, Kenya, Singapore, etc, where English is institutionalized and is used regularly in certain domains in daily life.)		69.8%	44
Total Respondents			63
(skipped this question)			10

7.) Would you agree with the statement: "for the purposes of studying English in Japan, listening materials, etc, it would be better to have a singular model accent, for example a North American or British English one. Mixing them creates confusion for the learner and inhibits their ability to emulate one or the other."

		Response Percent	Response Total
I absolutely agree.		4.2%	3
I agree.		2.8%	2
I sort of agree.		6.9%	5
I don't really agree.		18.1%	13
I disagree.		34.7%	25
I completely disagree.		33.3%	24
Total Respondents			72
(skipped this question)			1

1. Have you ever seen or heard about a situation in Japan where an educator (language teacher) was discriminated against or undervalued because of accent?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
This happens often.		18.6%	13
This happens on occasion.		48.6%	34
This rarely happens,		4.3%	3
This almost never happens.		5.7%	4
<input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please specify)		22.9%	16
Total Respondents			70
(skipped this question)			0

'Other' responses:

“I have never heard of this happening, although I am often told that my American English is clear and easy to understand.”

“ It's happened to me once in 9 years but I don't have enough information to form a view on the general frequency.”

“ I haven't heard about cases like this.”

“ I wouldn't exactly call it discrimination but I had a friend who was instructed to speak in an American accent for recording purposes.”

“ I see the opposite at times. There seems to be quite a few native speakers who revel in their 'pure' accent, who hold the Japanese back, and who would never entertain a form of Japlish to arrive... And some Japanese teachers fall into the trap of feeling inadequate in the face of pompous Queen's English speaking buffoons. ((I'm a Brit by the way.))”

“This happens on occasion. I find that Japanese who learn English through an American, they like American English. Same thing happened, if they learn from an Australian, British, Canadian or a New Zealander. I work with an Australian professor, and she told me that a few of her university students complaint about her Australian accent. I have not yet received any complaint yet. I'm an Asian American. And have been teaching English conversation for 13 years.”

“ No, but I've read about it.”

“I know it for a fact because my boss told me he would never hire anyone outside of N.A. because he doesn't understand what they are saying.”

“ I've heard of this happening, but have never seen it.”

“ Yes I know it happens. How often I can't really say with confidence. Does this question include Japanese teachers? It's not clear.”

“ I have no experience of this but I would presume it happens often.”

“ Never heard of this happening”

“I've never heard of this happening.”

“I have never heard this given as a reason for discrimination.”

2. Have you ever seen or heard of a situation in Japan where a teacher was unjustly discriminated against or undervalued because of their skin color, ethnicity, or country of citizenship, even when the teacher was competent in English to an extent that accent was not a real factor?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
This happens often.		22.9%	16
This happens on occasion.		41.4%	29
This rarely happens,		5.7%	4
This almost never happens.		5.7%	4
View Other (please specify)		24.3%	17
Total Respondents			70
(skipped this question)			0

‘Other’ responses:

“Yes, I think this happens quite a bit. I was not hired once because I was not Canadian, although the private school ended up hiring me the following year. A part-time teacher at the same school did not get the opening full-time position; we assumed it was because he is Hispanic. They hired a Canadian female.”

“I haven't seen or heard. I don't think I've heard credibly grounded anecdotes, even.”

“I don't have enough information to form a view about the general frequency.”

“I haven't heard about cases like this.”

“Never heard of this.”

“This happens often. It happened to me. I'm an Asian American. I taught English conversation to Japanese for 3 years in America. I was an ALT for 1 year in Ishige-machi, Ibaraki-ken. I still didn't get any discrimination, yet. But when I continued my ALT position in Yamaguchi-city, Yamaguchi-ken, I can hear and feel the discrimination when I first applied for the position. One look at my photo, they refused to accept me. So, I threaten them with the law. The broad of education apologized and hired me right away. This discrimination continued at one of the 11 schools that I was assigned to in Yamaguchi city. At Shiraishi Elementary School teachers meeting, one of the teacher asked me, "How can I explained to my students that you are an American?" I told her, "Let me teach you first then you'll have no problem in telling your students about me." Well after the first lesson at all 4 JHS and 7 elementary schools in Yamaguchi city, all the teachers were very impressed with my professional manner that many teachers requested to teach them afterschool. I refused to do that extra work. One of the elementary school (Osaba Elementary School) even invited TV crews 3 times in my 2 years of teaching in Yamaguchi city. Numerous perspective English teachers from Yamaguchi University, came to observe my teaching. Every parents observation days, my lessons were packed with parents for the whole day. Now, I work at Yamaguchi Medical School and at Ube Frontier University Attached JHS and have all the respect as a professional English teacher.”

“Also male/female discrimination.”

“Seems to happen very often, given job listings I see.”

“I often face discrimination at my workplace, for example, not inviting me to staff parties.”

“I’ve heard of this happening, but have never seen it.”

“I have direct experience of it happening once, and I guess it might happen a lot - but I don't know which box I should check as a result.”

“I’ve never heard of this happening.”

“I have heard of two occasions: 1. An Irish JET ALT asked to change her accent which was apparently too strong. I am not sure if this is discriminatory or just practical. Perhaps it should be up to ALT to alter their voices as they seem fit, depending on the situation. (I know I speak extra clearly in class, for example, compared to down the pub with my mates!) 2. A teacher agency (that I currently work for part-time) supplied a teacher to a school which had requested a 'Whitney Houston look-a-like'. The teacher was soon sent back as she was apparently not the correct shade of brown! I was told this story by recruiters from a different branch of the agency during a three day training period before I started working for them. I think in an ideal world the agency would tell the school 'where to go', but of course, the reality of business is that the customer is always right...”

“I’ve heard of this happening before the teacher arrives. A BOE received the application of the native teacher and found out they were not a native speaker and from Africa. They rejected the application, even though this applicant also spoke Japanese!”

3. Would you say that learning from a teacher from an outer circle country, or being exposed to listening material of the like is advantageous or disadvantageous for the learner in Japan?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Very advantageous		8.8%	6
Advantageous		29.4%	20
Somewhat advantageous		26.5%	18
Somewhat disadvantageous		11.8%	8
Disadvantageous		0%	0
Very disadvantageous		0%	0
View Other (please specify)		23.5%	16
Total Respondents			68
(skipped this question)			2

'Other' responses:

“Depends on the goals of the learner.”

“I don't think it matters where the teacher comes from. Inner and outer circles don't come into it.”

“Where the teacher comes from is irrelevant. What's important is how good the teacher is.”

“It all depends on the spoken ability, Many teachers from "outer circle" countries are better teachers...”

“Somewhat disadvantageous. Again, as I have mentioned in the first survey, no country should be superior than the other country in regard to their native English ability. I really recommend that the Japanese Education Ministry should decide on North America English as the bases for English. However, students should be exposed to all kinds of English accent and usage, as well. Why I chose North America was because Hollywood movies are everywhere. Hollywood movies influenced the bases of English understanding and many people got used to listened to North American English.”

“It totally depends on the students' needs. I think students should be exposed to a variety of accents.”

“Can't answer. The value of the teaching would depend on the teacher's skills, not the teacher's nationality.”

“Too difficult for the majority of low level learners in Japan.”

“You make the learner so passive. I hate tapes/CDs, throw them away, get on the net! Go for your target communication audience/friends and research them.”

“As students progress, I would think being exposed to a number of accents would be beneficial.”

“Never talked to one, except indish people, which speak an totally horrible accent, uncommendable for teaching purposes.”

“It depends of course on why the student is learning English and what he or she plans to do with it.”

“I think it is advantageous because ultimately English is an international language. I have friends who needs English to talk to people in Thailand and Vietnam everyday, not for traveling to the US and the UK.”

4. Would you agree with the general statement: "in Japan, English is seen as a language to use with Westerners, so to a large proportion of people in Japan, it would not occur to them that speaking English would be an option when trying to communicate with someone from an Asian country"?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
I absolutely agree.		8.7%	6
I agree.		24.6%	17
I sort of agree.		21.7%	15
I don't really agree.		11.6%	8
I disagree.		15.9%	11
I completely disagree.		2.9%	2
View	Other (please specify)	14.5%	10
Total Respondents			69
(skipped this question)			1

‘Other’ responses:

“I completely disagree, but comments aren't allowed with that so I switched to other. That statement was true of conservative people 30 years ago.”

“Depends on who you're asking. Lots of company employees interact with other Asians. People at my company have lots of contact and trouble with Singaporean English.”

“I absolutely agree. 6 years ago, I was invited to an elementary school in Onoda city, Yamaguchi-ken for their international day festival. They ran short in foreigners, so I suggested to them how about a Malaysian, a Russian, and a Phillipino from my Japanese

class. They chose the Russian, because she is White. The Russian lady and I were the guest. Students and teachers expected the Russian lady to speak English and expect me to speak some kind of Asian language. My Russian friend was really angry, because she couldn't speak any English at all. I thought it was a very good learning experience for students and the teachers to learn on that day. I looked like Asian, but can speak American English only. The White Russian lady, can speak Japanese very well instead.”

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“I would disagree. In China, Japanese tourists sometimes use English. In Taiwan and India, they usually use English. In Korea, I'm not sure but I think they prefer to use English compared to Japanese.”

“Yes it is seen as a language to use with Westerners; not using English with other Asians - I really don't know.”

“Some people do, some don't. My son's school sends students to China Taiwan and Korea, not the US or Canada. Of course English will be used for communication there.”

“I feel that English is seen in Japan as a language to be LEARNED from westerners but USED with people from all countries around the world. I think when Japanese students of English say that they want a western teacher this is because they think they are "going to the source" for their education.”

5. Author Ryuko Kubota in 1998 states that the identity of English in Japan is intertwined with historical factors. For example Japan's relationship with the west, perhaps wanting to identify with it as opposed to Asia, and Japan's economic dominance of the area. According to her, in Japan, this limits the usefulness of English as a tool for social transformation. World Englishes should be included in the curriculum in order to establish English as a mode of communication between cultures rather than as a gateway to a perceived sophistication of the West. In recent years, would you say this situation has gotten better?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Things have gotten much better		3%	2
Thing have gotten better		17.9%	12
Perhaps thing have gotten a little better.		59.7%	40
Perhaps thing have gotten a little worse.		3%	2
Thing have gotten worse.		0%	0
Thing have gotten much worse.		0%	0
View Other (please specify)		19.4%	13
Total Respondents			67
(skipped this question)			3

'Other' responses:

“As far as I can see the situation hasn't changed very much.”

“Kubota was probably just imitating a sophisticated Western fad of the time (Orientalism, World Englishes). Your question options presuppose that the statement was true. I don't think it was.”

“ I'm not sure English or any foreign language should be used as a tool for social transformation. And foreign languages in any country are intertwined with historical factors.”

“I really don't think that there has been a big change at all because many Japanese people (as educators) do not see the importance of learning English and they have a huge influence on students' feelings. If the other teachers are negative about it, the students will be, too. Also, MOST Japanese teachers of English can not even have a decent conversation in English. Their abilities are an absolute disgrace.”

“I haven't lived here long enough to have perceived a change. I do agree with Ryuyo Kubota's comments.”

“I don't accept or understand the premise of the question. How can English be 'a gateway to

a perceived sophistication of the West', and how could it not be 'a mode of communication between cultures' ? Is English 'a tool for social transformation' or simply a language? If it is regarded as such, doesn't that imply that Japanese is incapable of reform? Isn't that 'soft bigotry of low expectations'? Finally, what is 'World Englishes' ?”

“What do you mean by better? She is generalizing! English is not a positive tool of social transformation, it's a language of colonization and global domination.”

“I think the web has made this better.”

Open-ended responses to “Do you have any further thoughts you’d like to clarify?”

“About my choice of 'outer circle' English. Many Japanese now are comfortable with them because they are easier to hear despite being non-traditional.”

“If you are learning English, it will be very important to be able to understand any speaker of English. It would be helpful for the students to listen other accents”

“People learning need to hear different accents because people have different accents.”

“On part B I didn't know "Outer circle countries" but I realized later. I think it is very important to use these accents.”

“The questions asked "is considered": my answers accordingly reflect my view of public opinion here. My private view is that the question is silly and the accent doesn't matter.”

“There is no most appropriate or advantageous accent to study. Also, there are more EFL/ESL learners than native speakers in the world so shouldn't we be using non-native accents as well?”

“Students need to be exposed to different accents because that is what they will face in the world. As with learning anything, we should be encouraging critical learning.”

“Question 2-6, are not my correct answers. I want to say, that all English are important. I don't think any English is more superior than the other. The many kinds of English exposure the better.”

“In regard to question 7, I think it is better to have a mixture of accents with listening exercises as it creates a more realistic world scenario.”

“Students should be exposed to various accents. There should not be one paradigm.”

“Except for the very beginners, it is better for the students to be exposed to various accents of English.”

“Students who want to work or travel overseas need to be able to understand a variety of accents. The same can be said for materials using British English. The accent of the SE is not the only one.”

“I am not stating N.A. accents as being the best, however, students have told me (and teachers from other countries) that they prefer to hear N.A. accents.”

“There are many world Englishes. Students should aim for global comprehension. Japan should develop its own style of English, as in India with Indian English, based on their own linguistic style.”

“It's not clear what 'British' accent means- apparently there are several distinct variations within the UK. One reason I choose North American first is the Domination of Hollywood on movies.”

“90% unified, 10% outer? “

“Using a single accent sends out the idea that it is a model that the students should aim to

achieve. It sets them up to fail and to see themselves as deficient when compared to native speakers.”

“The kind of listening tapes don't provide an accent, they provide a kind of non-English, a bit like media English, so where is BBC actually from?”

“I don't think British or NA is better than the other. Q7 For beginners it is important to stay within one 'accent range' but for others, a variety of accents would be much better IMHO”

“Unless they are advanced, Japanese students (perhaps others too) cannot distinguish different accents. I've surveyed students while watching videos to see if they could tell which character was British. They couldn't.”

“It depends on the students purposes for using English”

“I think giving students access to multiple varieties of English is very important. This is especially true if they are learning for the purposes of traveling or use in multinational companies.”

“From my experiences of studying Thai and Japanese, I was not aware of accents of those around me. Perhaps this would change if I was learning these languages in Canada (ie. in a foreign language learning situation.”

“A mix is always good, unless it's ESP.”

“I was a bit uncomfortable choosing in Qs, 2 to 6. My choices were based on which Japanese learners on most likely to be exposed to in real life situations.”

“I am a teacher from the outer circle. I have had a ten-year first hand experience of the kind of perceptions this survey examines.”

“What discrimination there is likely to be in the big commercial conversation schools which have to cater to the paying customer's wants.”

“There are still ads wanted for "blue eyed blondes," some of which are even posted in government run international centres. Nothing is going to change overnight, but things are changing slowly.”

“The most salient experience I've had with discrimination of accent is the Australian pronunciation of "H" contrasted to the North American pronunciation.”

“Do accents facilitate or hinder teaching? How are accents linked to underlying cultural values? What is the purpose of studying English? I'm off to learn Spanish and Chinese...”

“Though this is not something that I encourage, my learners are interested in learning English from an inner circle teacher.”

“For beginner EFL students I think it's good they focus on one accent to prevent confusion, but it's good for higher level EFL students to learn about many other accents.”