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English Learning Motivation in Low-Proficiency Japanese Learners

Ikoma, Keith

Abstract

Following a previous study on English learning motivation, two low-proficiency participants were interviewed to provide a comparison between students who had achieved a high level of proficiency and those who had not. Narrative inquiry was used, and narrative texts were written using the interview data. The texts were then coded for themes. Lesson styles, proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English, tests, and teachers were four motivating and demotivating factors that emerged from the texts. Some factors were notably different from the higher proficiency learners in the previous studies, such as a lack of international posture in low-proficiency learners. Some factors were consistent among both groups, including proficiency, individual teachers, and lesson styles. Communicative language lessons were highly valued among all students, and despite the importance of exams, exam preparation English lessons were felt to be both demotivating and ineffective.

Keywords: English education, Japan, motivation, narrative inquiry, Second Language Acquisition.

1. Introduction

The issue of motivation in English language learning in Japan continues to be an important topic. In 2024, Japan placed 92nd in the EF Education First international index of English skills (Saito, 2024), which was Japan's lowest comparative ranking yet. Furthermore, with the introduction of English lessons earlier in elementary school, the number of elementary school students who do not like English has increased to almost one-third (Tamura, 2025). Decreasing relative proficiency and decreasing enjoyment of the subject seem to be the ongoing trends in Japan. Smith (2025) found that of Japanese high school students, 35% of students reported low engagement, 45% moderate engagement, and 20% high engagement in learning English: this is attributed to traditional test-oriented teaching methods and 60% of lesson time being dedicated to grammar-translation.

Following my previous studies, I wanted to compare Japanese students with different levels of English language proficiency as it relates to their motivation toward learning English. Having studied the stories of students who had had relative success in achieving a high level of English fluency, this study specifically targets students with English proficiency that is low relative to their peers. I wanted

to compare the stories, especially for themes of motivating and demotivating factors that may account for some of the difference in their achievement.

2. Literature Review

2-1. Language Learning Motivation Research in Japan

There is a rich history of research on the issue of language learning motivation in Japan. There are three texts that provide a good overview of the history of this topic: Al-Hoorie (2017) provides a general overview of second language learning motivation research, albeit not specific to Japan; Kikuchi and Hamada (2023) explore the issue specific to Japan; and Kikuchi (2015) has the most comprehensive work on the topic, specifically focusing on demotivation, and concludes that the six main factors that lead to demotivation in Japan are teachers, characteristics of classes, failure, the class environment, class materials, and lack of goals or interests.

2-2. Focus on Improving Motivation

Numerous studies continue to be published on methods to improve motivation, many of which use Dörnyei's (2009) seminal *L2 motivational self system*. Recently, Ogasawara and Prowant (2025) introduced an online lesson for technical college students (高等専門学校 students), introducing Japanese role models who could speak English. The goal was to improve students' L2 future self images. Another recent study in Japan used generative AI in class and showed improved motivation (Huang & Mizumoto, 2025), which agrees with Hennessey (2025), who found that AI used for writing activities had a positive influence on students' classroom motivation. Fujii and Inagaki (2025) used a standardized speaking assessment as a pedagogical intervention at the tertiary level, and while motivation levels did not improve, they were maintained relative to a comparison group in which motivation levels decreased.

In another approach, Isoda and Kondo (2022) focused on perceived needs in nursing students in relation to motivation. Their results showed that despite the practical needs of nursing students to use English for their careers, the students' learning needs were for "daily use," which included travel, listening to English, and daily conversation. Despite the perceived needs from instructors and programme administrators, students tended to see themselves as using English in a personal capacity in the future.

2-3. Narrative Inquiry and Language Learning Motivation in Japan

While narrative inquiry has been used in Japan, most recently by researchers such as Hiratsuka (2022), the only uses of narrative inquiry on the topic of language learning motivation are my own previous studies (Ikoma, 2022; 2025). Narrative inquiry is useful in providing depth and context to data on this issue, and my two previous studies focused on stories of people who had been successful

as English-language learners in Japan.

3. Methodology

To compare this study's data with the data from my previous studies (Ikoma, 2022; 2025), a similar research methodology was used. Narrative inquiry was used to allow a better understanding of the issue within its context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The research questions are the same two questions as in the aforementioned studies:

1. What stories do Japanese students construct of their experiences learning English in academic and non-academic settings?
2. What motivating and demotivating factors can students identify in their own stories of learning English?

The participants were selected through convenience sampling, and although four participants were originally selected, only two participants were interviewed. With the goal of selecting as participants university students with low proficiency relative to their peers, students who had low placement test scores or who were perceived by instructors to have relatively low proficiency were selected. The two participants who were interviewed were also asked about their English ability, and they were able to give evidence (test scores, placement tests, reading ability) as to why they thought their English was low compared to their peers.

The participants were interviewed in Japanese. The interview data were transcribed in Japanese and then used to create the narrative texts in English. Following narrative inquiry methodology, the participants were asked to *re-story* the texts by reading and making corrections or edits, but both texts were accepted without changes by the participants. The final texts were analyzed and coded for themes to understand the participants' experiences learning English and to identify motivating and demotivating factors in their stories. These themes were then compared to results from the previous studies.

4. Data

From the interviews, the following narrative texts were created. Each participant read their text and agreed that the story was accurate in representing their story. Pseudonyms have been used, and specific places or names in the interviews have been omitted.

4-1. Haruto's Story

Haruto grew up in a small residential area outside a large city in central Japan. He had no particular interest in English in elementary school. He began to have English classes in his fifth year in elementary school, and he enjoyed the lessons but was not interested in English as a subject. His motivation to study and use English in class was relatively high because the lessons were fun: lessons

included many singing activities, communication games, and question-and-answer lessons to practice basic communication. It was fun because compared to other elementary school lessons, there were many games and fun activities. The tasks were easy and there were no specific grammar activities. All lessons in elementary school were led by assistant language teachers (ALTs) from overseas. Other than lessons, Haruto had no significant experiences with English during this time.

In junior high school, his experience of English was more complicated. From his first year, his lessons consisted mainly of textbook activities with a focus on grammar and reading long passages. At first, although he was still not interested in English, the lessons were not so difficult. However, as he continued to learn, the content became more difficult, and the reading passages became longer. Haruto's listening skills were not bad, but he was not particular good at reading long texts or books in Japanese, so reading longer and longer passages in English was very challenging and boring. One enjoyable classroom activity in his first and second years of junior high school was that his teachers often used music in classes as warm-up activities. He was fortunate especially in his first and second years to have good teachers, because he knew other students in his school who had even worse experiences in English as a result of having boring teachers. In fact, Haruto's homeroom teacher in his second year was also an English teacher, so she encouraged her students to practice English every day. It was at this time that Haruto noticed the importance of teachers and teaching methods in helping students be motivated toward English.

Other than regular lessons, about once per month ALTs came to do communication activities in class, but these activities were not graded activities so there was no need for students to make effort in these lessons. There were sporadic communication activities in non-ALT lessons, but these were not used for assessment, either. Despite working hard, his test scores in English were not good. It was only because of having teachers who made lessons more interesting that his junior high school experience of English was not so bad. During junior high school, Haruto also started attending a cram school, mostly to help prepare for high school entrance exams. He studied English very hard at the cram school, mostly focusing on vocabulary, reading, and grammar. Although he studied, his English scores did not improve, so he started to focus on subjects in which he could succeed such as math and sciences. In his third year of junior high school, his classes at school also became more focused on test preparation; the boring lessons and his inability to improve his test scores led him to dislike English and have low motivation toward the subject. The high school entrance exams were a motivation to study hard, but, as with cram school, he tended to focus on subjects such as math where he could be successful. However, in his personal life, he started to become interested in music in English, especially influenced by social media posts that used English music.

In high school, Haruto really disliked English. He did not like his like his teachers. Teachers were too serious, and all lessons were heavily focused on university entrance exam preparation which included reading long texts, answering difficult questions, and learning vocabulary and grammar.

Students usually followed the textbook, did rote memorization, and answered fill-in-the-blank worksheets in class. In the third year of high school, Haruto's lessons included very long passages that were too difficult for him, and his scores were low. English lessons became progressively more difficult and that led Haruto to lose motivation in lessons. In his third year, in preparation for university entrance exams, Haruto began attending a cram school again. He had a good experience of English there because the lessons were done through video content and the videos and cram school teacher made the content easy to understand. Haruto focused on math, physics, and English in preparation for the entrance exam, but he did not see much improvement in English test scores, and his results tended to be low compared to other students. Outside class, his main interaction with English was music. Sometimes he would search online for the lyrics and translations of the lyrics into Japanese to try to understand what musicians were singing about. But, other than the time spent with English music and test preparation for entering university, his motivation for learning English was very low. Haruto believes that most students think that the English section of university entrance exams is too difficult; while some students may be good at English, for most students the tests do not match students' proficiencies.

Haruto was successful in entering university and is currently majoring in engineering. In university, he has a very positive attitude and works hard in English classes because there are speaking activities in the lessons. He knows that reading is an important skill, but in today's global society, he can more easily imagine the usefulness of speaking English in situations such as meeting international people in Japan. Furthermore, he has developed an interest in overseas travel, and he would like to be able to communicate—even if only at a basic level—with people, if he were to travel. He continues to have interest in music in English, and improving his listening skills increases his enjoyment of the music. But, while his classroom motivation is high, there is no longer any crucial test looming such as an entrance exam, so he does not spend time studying as he did in junior high school and high school. He thinks that taking a standardized test would be good for when he starts to search for work, but that does not seem to have an influence on his current effort, motivation, or study habits.

4-2. Yusuke's Story

Living in a suburb of a mid-sized city in the Hokuriku region of Japan, Yusuke's experience with English started from an early age. In preschool, at the age of five, he began English lessons such as singing ABCs. It was a fun experience although not particularly significant to Yusuke. Later, in his second year of elementary school, he traveled with his family to Hawaii, but although he was surrounded by English, he did not use English at all because of his young age, and the trip did not seem to have any effect on his English language learning. In grade three or four of elementary school, he began to have English lessons at school. About once per week, ALTs would do fun activities such as showing pictures of various items and then the students would learn the vocabulary in English. They

also had some basic communication or grammar lessons to learn things such as greetings or simple questions and answers. Other than his trip to Hawaii, he had no experiences of English outside school. He felt that he wanted to have the chance to talk to foreign people in English outside school if given the opportunity. Yusuke's elementary school experience of English was generally good, and his in-class motivation was very high. He thinks that it would have been better to spend more time learning English at that early age because it was easier to learn the language, and he feels that if he had had more exposure to the language in elementary school, better proficiency would have led to increased motivation later in his studies.

In junior high school, the nature of English lessons changed drastically. While ALTs still did lessons once per week, most lessons focused on much more difficult content, including grammar, vocabulary, and speaking. In his first year, his enjoyment and motivation toward English both continued to be at the same level as in elementary school despite the increasingly difficult lessons. There were some fun activities as well: for example, he had one teacher who asked students to make up stories and then translate them into English after which the teacher recorded the groups performing their stories and the best performances were shown in class.

As Yusuke progressed into his second year and then into his third year of junior high school, he found the content increasingly difficult, and he could not understand the texts that they read. He could not keep up with the lessons from his second year onward, his tests scores became low, and he realized that he was not good at English. By his third year, he hated English, so he did not want to study it at all. The only things that kept him studying English was that it is a required subject on high school entrance exams. Outside school, he had only one memorable experience with English, which was that a foreign person asked him for help at the local train station; Yusuke did not directly answer the person, however, and instead asked the station employee to help the person. Despite an early start with English and a positive attitude toward English until his first year of junior high school, by the end of junior high school, it was his least favourite subject.

After entering high school, his dislike of English subsided somewhat, and he hated it less than he had in junior high school. In high school, there were two types of English lessons: grammar lessons and communication lessons. The grammar lessons were boring because they were lecture-based classes. In the grammar lessons, students prepared for the lessons, and then reviewed the materials in class, but they seemed to spend the whole lesson just looking at the blackboard. The communication lessons followed a textbook, but students also did pair work and talked to their classmates. Also, they had fewer tests than in junior high school, and Yusuke felt these lessons were interesting and engaging. ALTs came to lessons about once per week, and they did communication activities, games, and competitions. He felt these ALT lessons were a valuable learning experience because they were enjoyable and because students were able to encounter language that was not found in the textbooks. In high school, he also had some exposure to English through movies; he watched many movies on

streaming services, and sometimes he would watch movies in English with Japanese subtitles. In his third year of high school, however, lessons became focused on exam preparation including a strong focus on reading long texts. Yusuke spent a lot of time practicing reading, but his English test scores were low. Despite two years of slightly increased interest and motivation in English, his test scores were not good; in his third year, he did not enjoy English and had no desire to study it but studied only to improve his test scores so that he could go to university.

After high school, Yusuke entered university, and he is currently majoring in engineering. Compared to high school, the amount of time he spends studying English is relatively low because there are fewer lessons and he has no sense that he will need to use English in his future. In class, he enjoys the lessons because there are many communication activities and since most other university classes are lectured based, English class is one of the few opportunities to talk to his classmates during class time. His motivation in lessons is high, and he puts in effort for lesson activities, but he is not at all motivated to do any English study outside class. Since elementary school, he has wanted to be able to speak English. This desire continues today, but other than in-class activities, he has little motivation to study or to improve his English skills outside class.

5. Discussions

Lesson styles, proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English, tests, and teachers were four main motivational factor themes emerging from the two narrative texts. Although there were minor themes of English usage outside the classroom and perceived future usage, they did not seem to have resulted in significant changes in motivation toward learning English. Both participants' stories end with a desire to be able to speak English, but there is no resulting action from that vague interest. More likely, it is a wish that their educational experiences had provided basic communicative competency.

5-1. Lesson Styles: Communicative and fun lessons increase motivation

The lesson styles described by both Haruto and Yusuke in elementary school motivated both students. In Haruto's early experiences with English, although he had no interest in the language, the lessons were fun and engaging. He did not have any motivation for learning English, but his effort in the lessons was high because the lessons were fun. Yusuke describes his elementary school years as the time when his motivation was at its highest with language activities such as vocabulary learning and communication practice; the lesson styles made him feel that learning English was easy. From junior high school through to university, positive experiences of English generally related to communicative or creative lesson activities. The clearest example is in Yusuke's high school years when he had two different English courses: the one he enjoyed followed a textbook, but they had opportunities to talk with classmates and do pair work, whereas the one he had not enjoyed was

grammar based and passive, where “they seemed to spend the whole lesson just looking at the blackboard.” Most of his negative experiences of English relating to lesson styles were test preparation lessons using passive learning and focusing on reading long texts or grammar. The fact that both students’ motivation increased in university lessons due to the lesson style demonstrates that effective lesson styles can increase motivation even for students who have hated English in the past.

5-2. Proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English: poor results lead to poor motivation

Unsurprisingly, as both Haruto and Yusuke experienced increasing difficulty in understanding English lesson content, their test results became worse, which resulted in lower motivation. Only in elementary school were they able to experience good results and feel that English was not difficult. This is possibly because there did not seem to be any assessment activities, or, as Yusuke suggests, younger learners are more willing and able to learn English. Even though Yusuke believes his proficiency is relatively low now, it is easy to empathize with the regret in Yusuke’s story that if only he had had more exposure to English in elementary school, maybe he would not have had such poor results later in his academic experiences. By junior high school and high school, in both narrative texts, the perceived difficulty of English features prominently. Yusuke, in fact, hated English, and it was his least favourite subject in junior high school. In Haruto’s story, we can see the spiraling effect of studying hard only to yield poor results, leading to lower motivation and less effort, which perpetuated poor results in English.

5-3. Tests: short-term effort at the cost of long-term motivation

Haruto and Yusuke both spent time studying hard for English in preparation for high school and university entrance exams. In Haruto’s year of preparing for the university entrance exam, English was one of three subjects on which he focused. They both seemed to have increased motivation for English as it related to the exams, but their attitude was negative and their persistence only extended as far as the test day. Furthermore, poor test results simply reinforced the self-perception that they had low proficiency, leading to less interest in making effort outside test preparation.

5-4. Teachers and Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs): effect extends beyond lesson style

Although Yusuke’s story includes several mentions of ALTs, there is no sense that ALTs had any direct effect on his English motivation, although in elementary school the lessons seemed to be taught by ALTs, and his elementary school language-learning experience was positive. ALT lessons were also mentioned in Yusuke’s junior high school and high school experiences, but the focus was on the communicative aspect of the lesson rather than the teacher. Other than that, Yusuke’s story does not include details about teachers. Haruto’s story, however, has strong emotional connections to teachers. He had positive experiences with teachers in junior high school who helped him with English

despite English being a difficult subject for Haruto. His teacher at cram school was a positive influence on his English, helping Haruto to feel that he was able to understand English content. The way that Haruto felt about his high school teachers is not only related to teaching style or academics but also to personality: Haruto did not like his English teachers because they were “too serious.” There is a remarkable difference in Haruto’s expressed feelings about his junior high school teachers, who he felt helped him and encouraged his studying efforts, his cram school teacher who made English easy to understand, and his high school teachers who were too serious. This excessively serious attitude, for Haruto, seemed to have a negative effect on his English motivation and proficiency. This relates well to Haruto’s belief that teachers are a crucial factor in the motivation of students toward English.

5-5. Comparison with students with higher proficiency and success in learning English

In my previous studies (Ikoma, 2022; 2025), participants were selected who had achieved a relatively high level of success in learning English. Tangibly, the previous research interviews were able to be conducted primarily in English, while interviews for this research had to be done in Japanese. How were the experiences of students with success in learning English different from those who were not able to achieve a high level of proficiency?

Previous research (Ikoma, 2025) found five main themes of motivating factors to include lesson styles, teachers, personal activities, career-related goals, and international posture. Furthermore, proficiency was a factor that was found in the narrative texts of research from 2022 (Ikoma). The relationship between proficiency and motivation in the 2022 study was complex because self-perceived success in using English led to increased motivation, but a self-perceived lack of proficiency also led to increased motivation because the individuals desired to be able to use English fluently. In the current study, lesson styles, proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English, tests, and teachers were the four main factors in motivation.

I will discuss the three themes that the previous studies and the current studies have in common, but in students with higher proficiency, personal activities, career-related goals, and international posture were also strong themes. Notably, these were all highly motivating factors in all narrative texts, and they led the students to spend more time and effort in learning English toward those ends; for example, students who want to become English teachers have a clear career-related purpose to learn English. Conversely, in the stories of students with lower proficiency, tests featured prominently as the sole goal. This divergence may demonstrate the perceived goal of English usage: is English for use beyond the immediate classroom environment or is it just meant to be rote memorized for tests?

5.-5-1. Lesson styles

Comparing the narrative texts of the two low-proficiency learners and the two learners who aim to become English teachers, there is almost no difference in the motivational factors related to

lesson styles. Communicative activities motivated the learners, while passive, grammar-based, test-preparation lessons were demotivating. It is concerning that despite their prevalence, test-preparation lessons were demotivating, and they did not help the learners to improve their test scores.

5-5-2. Teachers

Haruto expressed a strong feeling that teachers heavily influenced his motivation toward English. Pedagogical ability featured implicitly through the importance of lesson style, but factors related to personality are evident. Haruto variously had teachers who were caring, interesting, boring, and too serious. In my previous study (Ikoma, 2025), a similar connection emerged between motivation and personal feelings about teachers' personalities.

5-5-3. Proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English

Of my two previous studies, one (2025) had no specific theme related to proficiency although it was evident that both participants worked hard to improve their skills and they achieved better results than their peers. In my earlier study (2022), proficiency was important to the participants, with two of the participants meeting with early success relative to their peers; even when those participants met with the challenges of difficult language or situations where their English was insufficient, they were able to overcome those challenges due to their future goals for using English. With Haruto and Yusuke, however, when they encountered difficult English or felt that their proficiency was lower than their classmates, they seemed to have less perseverance because their main goal for English was to get higher scores on tests.

6. Conclusion

From the two stories of this study, the four main motivational factors that emerged were lesson styles, proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English, tests, and teachers. As discussed, lesson styles, teachers, and proficiency and the perceived difficulty of English were three themes that this study had in common with my previous research. Notably, international posture, personal activities outside class, and future goals, which were all themes from previous research, were not found in the two stories of this study, which might be expected from students with lower motivation and proficiency.

Lesson styles were found to be a strong motivating and demotivating factor for both Haruto and Yusuke. There is a continuing need to move toward communicative language teaching (CLT) as the main teaching methodology. It is concerning that 60% of lesson time is still dedicated to grammar translation, whereas only 15% is dedicated to communicative activities in high school (Smith, 2025). Given the desire of learners of varying proficiency and motivation levels to engage in communication in English, it is counterproductive to continue to spend so much time on grammar translation since

learners are unlikely to be receptive to such tasks. The lack of serious communication assessment is also a hinderance when one considers the paramount importance of reading and translation in entrance exams. As Haruto felt, even though he was more interested in communicative activities than reading practice, there was no need to take communicative activities seriously because there was no assessment of consequence for speaking. Teachers may need more time and training resources to be able to conduct communicative activities that also help students to prepare for exams.

Teachers were the one factor that Haruto believes make the most significant difference in students' English learning experience. Some of the reason is their lesson styles, but also teacher personality and relationships with students were extremely important. Even in a student-centred, CLT English class, the very nature of second language studies means that the teacher becomes the agent of the subject and the personification of what is being studied. The range of emotions expressed by Haruto toward teachers seems to strongly connect with his English-language learning experience and with English itself.

The lack of international posture (Yashima, 2002) or strong imagining of their future L2 selves seem to strongly influence the two learners because there was no purpose to learning English beyond test scores. Projects such as introducing Japanese role models who speak English well (Ogasawara & Prowant, 2025) could improve students' imaginations about how they might use English in the future. Ogasawara and Prowant's project used a Japanese person from the world of gaming, but certainly a wide variety of people from various fields such as music, sports, business, science, or arts could be helpful especially for young learners to have a concrete image of how English could be used in their futures. Having a stronger emphasis on cultural elements from other countries which are interesting to students would also help improve their international posture.

Finally, there are some challenges ahead for student motivation in English. The advancement of technology and tools available to students may lead to questions as to why learning English is important. Furthermore, as Japanese elementary schools adapt to increased English activities and lessons, it should be expected that it will not improve student motivation unless teachers have enough time and training to prepare for lessons. Therefore, it will be important for more funding and training to be available to address these needs.

7. Limitations and Further Research

Including the two previous studies, the number of participants totals only seven individuals. Due to convenience sampling, the participants tended to have some similarities in backgrounds: in the current study, for example, both participants were engineering students of the same age and gender. For narrative inquiry, seven narrative texts provide a large amount of data, but these data would be more effective if they were complemented with other types of data, such as quantitative survey data or narrative texts from younger participants.

For further research, as in my previous studies, ALTs appeared frequently in the narrative texts, yet there are very few major critical studies of the effectiveness of ALTs in Japanese English education (Hiratsuka, 2022). It would be helpful to study the relationship between ALTs and student motivation in learning English. Also, given the themes that emerged from this study, two possible future research directions could be pursued. First, a similar narrative inquiry study could be done with younger participants to understand if the current study's themes are consistent with students at the primary and secondary levels of education. Second, a large-scale survey could be conducted to confirm if these themes are generally consistent with the wider student population in Japan.

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日本で英語能力の低い学習者の英語学習モチベーション

イコマ キース

本研究では、英語学習に対するモチベーションに関する先行研究を踏まえ、英語習熟度の低い2名の参加者にインタビューを実施し、習熟度の高い学生との比較を行った。「ナラティブ研究（ナラティブ・インタビュー）」の手法を用いてインタビューのデータに基づいて語りの記録を作成した。次に、参加者の経験を物語として書き起こし、テーマごとにコード化した。テキストの分析から、授業スタイル、習熟度と英語に対する難易度認識、試験、教師という4つの要素がモチベーションの低下および向上に関わる要因として浮かび上がった。習熟度の低い学習者には、国際的志向性の欠如など、習熟度の高い学習者とは顕著に異なる要因が認められた。一方で、習熟度、教師、授業スタイルといった要因は、両グループに共通していた。また、コミュニケーション中心の授業はすべての学生から高く評価されていた。一方で、試験の重要性は認識されていたにもかかわらず、試験対策型の英語授業はモチベーションを低下させるとともに、効果的ではないと認識されていた。

キーワード：英語教育、日本、モチベーション、ナラティブ的探究、第二言語習得

ALTs' Preconceived Expectations of the JET Programme Compared to the Lived Reality

Simon Woodgett

Abstract

Under the auspices of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), thousands of university graduates are employed as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in government-run junior high schools (JHS) and senior high schools (SHS). This qualitative study explores the extent to which ALTs' pre-employment expectations aligned or contrasted with the lived reality of their professional roles. A review of the existing literature describes the foundational objectives and ethos of the four organisations that facilitate the programme and how these interrelate with the current expectations and lived reality of ALTs' professional lives. Finally, an in-depth analysis of working within the often ambiguous and ill-defined parameters of the ALTs' role will be provided.

Adopting a constructionist paradigm with a relativist perspective, the study employed semi-structured one-hour interviews with six ALTs working under the same contracting organisation (CO). The data was analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to identify recurrent and emergent themes.

The results displayed that, without a defined and uniform consensus of the two core ALT assignments (JHS and SHS), ALTs experienced a discordance between expectations and reality which frequently undermined participants' sense of professional value. Nevertheless, two thirds of the participants reported an overall positive experience residing in Japan. The study concludes that a consistent and concise description of the two main positions needs to be developed and clearly communicated to prospective JET ALTs. Furthermore, detailed attention paid to ALTs' professional backgrounds and aspirations is essential when assigning them to either JHS or SHS.

Keywords: JET Programme, team-teaching, ALTs, ALT roles, ALT experience

1. Introduction

The JET Programme launched in 1987 via the amalgamation of the Monbusho English Fellows Program and British English Teachers Scheme as a means to advance the aspirations of the Ministry of Home & Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to improve internationalisation efforts and the Ministry of

Education (now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology or MEXT) to improve language education in government funded schools (Olson, 2019, p. 35). JET has grown from 848 participants from four countries at its inception to 5,933 participants hailing from 54 countries as of 2025 (CLAIR, 2015b). Currently, JET is administered by four different government authorities: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC), who hold the overall responsibility for the operation of JET; the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), who operate the day-to-day administration; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), who are tasked with the provision of guidelines and materials for JET team-teaching; and MOFA, who in conjunction with overseas consulates administrate the recruitment procedures. CLAIR currently state that “The JET Programme aims to promote internationalisation in Japan’s local communities by improving foreign language education and fostering international exchange at the community level” (2015c). The core teaching practice is referred to as team-teaching, in which a qualified Japanese teacher of English (JTE) holds responsibility for the class but is assisted by a foreign assistant language teacher (ALT) on a one-year contract that can be renewed a maximum of four times. ALTs can be dispatched to elementary schools and private schools, but the majority are assigned to government-financed public junior high (JHS) and senior high schools (SHS) (CLAIR, 2015c).

Existing studies and academic papers concerning the JET Programme often concentrate on the disconnect between the objectives of the four governing authorities that administer the program (MIC, MOFA, MEXT, and CLAIR), the regional Boards of Education (BoE), and the institutions to which ALTs are directly assigned, and how this fragmentation can detrimentally affect the utilization of ALTs (Galloway, 2009).

The majority of these studies conclude by recognising the need for wide-scale systemic and structural reform to facilitate meaningful change (Olson, 2019). However, these perennial debates continue ad infinitum whilst the needle on the dial of progress barely moves (Metzgar, 2017; Smith, 2023). A neglected aspect, therefore, is the dearth of studies that provide a voice for the ALTs (Igawa, 2009) specifically in representing their lived reality within the ongoing and invariable situation they find themselves assigned to. Therefore, this study aims to give voice to the lived experience of ALTs in order to provide all parties with a bespoke understanding of the ALTs’ existence in the current context.

2. Concepts Explained

ALT: Although the “A” in ALT refers to “assistant” the term in Japan generally has become synonymous with “foreign language teacher” who can also be utilised as lead teachers (Mahoney, 2004). Therefore, the acronyms T1 and T2 will be used to differentiate between their respective roles as lead teacher and assistant within the team-teaching dynamic.

T1 and T2: T1 refers to the lead teacher in team-teaching, predominantly assumed by the JTE (in some SHS the JTE and ALT roles can be reversed). T2 refers to an assistant role (generally assumed by the ALT, especially in JHS).

JET Governing Bodies (additional info): JET is governed by four main bodies, MIC, MOFA, MEXT, and CLAIR. The most active role being assumed by CLAIR which "...performs a wide range of duties, including the placement of participants, promotional activities, and the implementation of conferences" (Borg, 2018). However, the direct employer of a JET ALT is their local contracting organisation (CO), which is either a local government or "designated city" authority (CLAIR, 2023; McConnell, 2000). In this study, the participants' CO is their local BoE; therefore, the two terms are synonymous in this study.

3. Literature Review

To understand the official role expectations of a JET ALT, it is important to understand why JET was created and the founding ethos. Cominos (1991), who worked for a regional BoE, posited that JET was created due to governmental recognition that English language teaching in Japan was woefully below par compared to world standards. However, McConnell (2000), in his seminal and widely cited book, paints a different picture by claiming JET was born as a political offering to appease the US during the trade war between Japan and the US in the mid-1980s—essentially a political pawn used as a show of goodwill "to rectify the imbalance in the flow of goods and personnel" (p. 17).

Several scholars, such as Borg (2008, 2018), Gannon (2011), Metzgar (2012), and Estampador-Hughson (2017), have since expounded on this view by proclaiming that the aims are more aligned towards a political soft-power play than a desire to tackle lacklustre English proficiency — the true value is in employing promising graduates and ensuring they foster a fondness for their host so if they return home to influential political roles this will benefit Japan's international relations (Borg, 2008, p. 239). Estampador-Hughson theorises that post-JET, "memory and nostalgia are a valuable process for soft power" and that is especially effective because JET employs young and impressionable graduates (2017, p. 9). Gannon (2011, np) concurs, stating "it is clear that the JET Program has been a triumph of soft power" but also believes, contrary to McConnell (2000), Borg (2008), and Metzgar (2012), that it has been an effective means of improving English language ability. This soft-power sentiment continues to be a key concern for some government authorities involved with JET (Yoshida, 2015, p. 31), evident when MOFA (2023) states as part of its foreign policy that,

After returning to their home countries, [ALTs] play active roles in various fields as a pro-Japan group of a new kind which has a different orientation from researchers on Japan. They thereby act as a valuable bridge between Japan and their home countries. Some members

are currently working as diplomats in the foreign missions of Japan.

This claim is strengthened by the five-year maximum JET tenure mandated by CLAIR (2015a): JET is deliberately a finite experience, then once indoctrinated, it is time for participants to return home as a pseudo-sleeper missionary. However, the more public-facing official line makes scant reference to these politically pragmatic objectives. On the official JET Programme website administered by CLAIR (2015c), the public proclamations attest to a more mutually beneficial objective by stating, “The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is aimed at promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations.” Although international exchange can be seen to relate to soft-power political aims, in support of Cominos (1991), CLAIR’s official line continues by emphasising teaching-related objectives by stating that ALTs should be primarily “involved in foreign language education” (2015c). However, Metzgar’s comments, concluded from the analysis of a 2011 survey of over 500 American JET ALTs, cast doubt upon the official public-facing JET objectives, suggesting that JET is actually a “public diplomacy program that is marketed to the majority of participants as a teaching exchange program” (2012, p. 42).

Further obfuscation is evidenced again by CLAIR themselves in the General Information Handbook (GIH) provided to ALTs as the official decree on their duties. Under the Work Duties section, the GIH (CLAIR, 2023, p. 85, emphases added) states, “The main duty of an ALT is to *engage in team teaching* with Japanese teachers of foreign language (JTL) in foreign language classes in Japanese schools,” further stating that ALTs can be expected to actively “*plan lessons*” and take the “*lead teacher role*.” Therefore, the literature shows that ALTs are receiving mixed messages even from the same official source, with Clavel (2014) claiming ALTs often find themselves in confusing situations due to receiving conflicting messages concerning their role expectations. Borg concluded, from his interview study, that ALTs are often unaware of the objectives officially stated by JET and ultimately construct their own based on their perceptions and experiences (2008, p. 242). A counter argument, as evidenced by Mahoney’s (2004) survey of over 400 ALTs who reported having over 40 different duties, is that because the expectations of ALTs are multifaceted, different occasions or different mediums focus on promoting only one specific aspect of their roles.

The common experience of many ALTs is being placed midstream into a busy educational environment centred on high school or university entrance exam preparation. The pedagogical priorities focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading practice above all else, despite recent national curriculum updates that underscore communication as the key to modern English teaching (Underwood, 2017). This reality is at odds with the ALTs’ expectations of being utilised to facilitate the cultural-exchange elements advertised by CLAIR. Turnbull argues that until there is a (highly unlikely) systemic change, this pervasive educational culture will endure and therefore “[i]t is important that ALTs are aware and accepting of the education system in use in Japan, and the

cultural and societal norms that underpin its employment" (2018, p. 98). Essentially, ALTs must dismiss any expectations constructed from the mixed messaging and instead embrace the educational reality entrenched into the fabric of day-to-day teaching in Japanese schools.

Another key aspect of the reality of being an ALT relates to the ubiquitous team-teaching process that JET mandates for all ALT lessons. Jones and Clynes argued that it is vital for JTEs and ALTs to engage in meaningful communication to facilitate successful and coordinated lesson planning and team-teaching, whereas in reality these opportunities are severely restricted due to JTEs being regrettably overworked (2021, p. 27). This in turn leads to ALTs frequently reporting a reality of being underutilised as supported by Turnbull's study that showed nearly a third (30.98%) of ALTs reported being underutilised and nearly half (44.42%) desired increased utilisation (2018, p. 94). Rutson-Griffiths (2012) posited that the predominant contributor to this is the necessity and pressures of the non-ALT related language education aimed towards grammar, exams, and finishing textbooks on time which ultimately renders the ALT communicative lessons (as decreed by MEXT and their COs) an inconsequential hindrance. Ogawa states these elements of exclusion within the classroom can stymie any sense or prospect of self-development for ALTs and extend beyond teaching to ALTs reporting being excluded from meetings and observation classes leading to feelings of being othered or under-appreciated (2011, p. 478). Hiratsuka's (2025) research study reported that some ALTs felt their professional aspirations were being hindered by the inadequate provision of professional-development opportunities, especially those involving the JTEs they are tasked to work alongside. Furthermore, Hiratsuka reported that the ALTs desired greater clarity on their roles, their JTEs' teaching process, and the JET Programme's objectives, lamenting the "sharp disparity between governmental aspirations and the realities of language education and cultural exchange dynamics at the grassroots level" (2025, p. 16).

In summary, the literature shows that the policy origins of JET and the involvement of multiple authorities result in ideological discordance. The government values JET for its political soft-power influence, whilst MEXT (and regional BoEs) value it as a means to stay apace with globalisation by using it to further their communicative language teaching (CLT) goals. CLAIR delivers mixed messages but predominantly champions grassroots internationalisation as well as team-teaching. However, the front-line reality is that an ALT's school predominantly focuses on grammar teaching and entrance-exam preparation. These competing ideologies ultimately create confusion for ALTs in their attempts to synthesise their role expectations and thereby can prove to be incongruent with the reality of their lived experience.

4. Methodology

The qualitative data for this research was obtained via a case study. The ALTs' lived experience was explored through the analysis of six semi-structured interviews. The results were thematically

analysed, culminating in an in-depth representation of how ALTs' expectations correlate with the lived reality of being a JET ALT.

Participants were drawn from 106 ALTs employed by a regional CO in a small, central Japanese prefecture. They were invited, via email, to join an educational research project. Six volunteered to be interviewed: five via online video calls and one (Hannah) by email as they wanted to provide a more reflective response. The email interview involved three exchanges — an introduction, core questions, and follow-up clarifications.

The names of all participants were anonymised to assuage trepidation of professional repercussions; however, contextual details (nationality, age, teaching experience, and JET tenure) were permitted to be used by the participants. These variables are summarised in Table 1 using self-reported scales, demonstrating a diverse range which supports the validity and generalisability of the findings (European Research Council, 2024). An existing professional relationship existed with the ALTs that I interviewed which strengthened the reliability through the trust and rapport established (Flick, 2022). This approach supported a collaborative process and mitigated a common critique of interviews — namely, that a lack of rapport can limit the richness and authenticity of data (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 136).

Table 1
Participants' Basic Background & Experience

		Age	Level	JET Year	Teaching Experience	Interest in Teaching	Interest in Japan	Expectations of Role	Re-contracting	Regard for Current Situation
George	UK	Mid 20s	JHS	1 st	TEFL	Low	Medium	Specific	Yes	Positive
Hannah	USA	Late 20s	JHS	3 rd	Casual	High	High	Specific	No	Disillusioned
Tom	USA	Late 20s	JHS	5 th	TEFL	High	High	Specific	No	Disillusioned
Farah	SA	Late 20s	SHS	1 st	Casual	High	Neutral	Somewhat unclear	Yes	Positive
Niall	UK	Mid 20s	SHS	2 nd	TEFL	Low	Neutral	Ill-defined	No	Positive
Kate	SA	Late 20s	SHS	2 nd	Casual	Medium	Neutral	Ill-defined	Yes	Positive

The data were collected via Google Meet, which also generated automatic transcripts. Interviews followed an informal, discussion-based format using eight core questions [see Other Reference Materials] addressing key research themes — expectations, utilisation, and role awareness — as well as emerging topics from the literature such as professional development, self-worth, and identity. To minimise researcher bias, each question was divided into two parts: an open-ended prompt encouraging free reflection, followed by clarifying probes (Seidman, 2006).

The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis (TA) framework (see Figure 1), aimed at identifying "repeated patterns of meaning" (2006, p. 86). During Phase 1,

transcripts were corrected and colour-coded to highlight initial themes. In Phases 2 and 3, similar ideas were “chunked” into broader categories linked to the research questions (Vears & Gillam, 2022), including pre-JET expectations, lived realities, contrasts, and implications. Phases 4 and 5 involved developing a thematic map of five key categories to verify alignment with the research aims. Finally, in keeping with the study’s interpretative approach, latent themes—such as ALTs’ feelings of isolation and desire for stronger connection—were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Figure 1

Braun & Clarke’s 6-Phases of TA (2006, p.87)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

5-1. Background and Motivation for Applying for JET

The first core question inquired about the participants’ background prior to JET and their motivation for applying. George and Niall both left well-paying jobs and only mentioned a passing interest in Japan. George was in finance, but desiring new experiences, he applied after hearing “JET was a good gig” from a Japanese friend living in the UK. Niall was working in an Australian mine but wanted to travel more before settling down. Kate, Farah, Hannah, and Tom all cited an interest in teaching. Kate taught as an assistant at a school and online. She applied primarily to experience living alone rather than specifically wanting to live in Japan. Farah had obtained a B.Sc. degree and taught Islamic theology at her local Mosque where she developed a passion for teaching, but only chose JET because it was the first programme to present her with a deadline: “It didn’t matter if I was teaching in Japan or if I was teaching in Timbuktu. All I wanted to do was teach.”

Hannah was working in a corporate office but held aspirations of becoming an English teacher and had studied Asian Studies as a minor, so she was intrigued by the prospect of teaching in Japan. She felt JET offered credibility and legitimacy: “I was told the JET program was through the government, so that felt safer to me.” Tom also had a specific interest in Japan, and this formed his main reason for applying. Tom had previously worked as an ALT in Japan for a dispatch company,

Interac, where he felt underutilised. He applied for JET after meeting local SHS JETs from whom he learned that the programme offered more professionalism through preferable work conditions and a more hands-on teaching opportunity.

5-2. Expectations of Being a JET ALT

Similar to Hannah and Tom, George initially understood JET to be an elite opportunity and “the most prestigious highest paying English teaching job in Japan.” However, from Reddit forums and his JET job interview, he came to understand that “...as long as you’re an English speaker and you’re likeable, they’ll hire you.” In the weeks prior to arrival, online information from current JET ALTs realigned his expectations once more and he expected to be faced with students unmotivated to learn English and to be “...desk-warming all day.”

As an experienced and confident traveller, Niall went in with an open mindset aware that too many expectations can be misleading: “I like getting thrown into the deep end. That’s just my style.”. When probed further if he had received official information about the ALT experience, he quoted the infamous JET mantra of ESID (every situation is different) and said, “They kind of allude to the fact you can’t really predict where you’ll be or what’ll you’ll be doing.”

Similar to Niall, Kate embarked upon her JET journey with an open mindset commenting, “I’m actually a little embarrassed to admit this, but I had no expectations” She thought it seemed like a good job, “I was like, okay, I’ll do it. Whatever I have to do. I’ll do that” When probed if she had expectations of what working in the classroom might consist of, she said she had watched online videos and understood she would mostly be an assistant in the T2 role doing short activities. Farah held similar expectations of fulfilling an assistant role saying, “I’d sort of taken the JET programme’s description of the job at face value” She also mentioned she thought she “would in some way sort of facilitate cultural exchange and internationalisation.”

Hannah’s understanding was more centred on JET as a “grassroots movement” specifically concerning cultural exchange and community work. However, despite understanding “it was not necessarily an *ALT’s role*” she hoped, similar to Tom, that she could satisfy her desire to teach and “also have a more hands-on role in regard to teaching.”

Tom “expected to be fairly busy planning lessons and doing you know — quote on quote [*sic*] actual teaching — leading lessons. T1 kinda stuff” but also felt anxious at this prospect because his previous experience as an ALT (with a different organisation) was mostly as a “voice box” (or human tape-recorder, a situation in which the ALT is primarily utilised as a voice model for pronunciation practice).

5-3. T2 JHS ALTs’ Expectations Compared to Reality

George, assigned to a small-sized JHS, was surprised by the reality of his role: “I wasn’t anticipating

the team-teaching aspect of the role. I think in my imagination it was me standing up in front of the class alone." However, he rationalised that the "A" in ALT does represent *assistant* after all, so he did not feel he had been misled. Hannah, assigned to a medium-sized JHS, felt considerable discordance with the reality of her experience as she was expecting to be predominantly involved with the cultural exchange and internationalisation aspects: "The program advertises that we aren't really here to teach English, but for cultural exchange. So, I think this is where the contradictions begin, and ultimately why there is inconsistency. It's also difficult because ALTs are not English teachers, and yet there are blurred boundaries regarding what ALTs' duties are and what the role means."

Tom, assigned to a large JHS, also found the reality was incongruous with the expectations that he had garnered from previous JETs. He had believed he would be busy teaching as a T1 but instead felt like a largely underutilised assistant: "I don't really do much. I sit in the room and kinda wait for teachers to come to the room and ask me to do something." He reasoned this may be due to the contrast in how his CO defined the roles and responsibilities of the JHS ALTs as assistants and SHS ALTs as lead teachers.

5-4. T1 SHS ALTs' Expectations Compared to Reality

Despite not having concrete expectations, Niall, assigned to a large SHS, was still surprised to find himself positioned as the lead teacher even though he lacked experience, saying, "In my school, I'm always T1." When asked how he felt, he answered, "A little scared, but mostly excited" and happy to take on the extra responsibilities and embrace the challenge. He went on to say he felt overwhelmed in the first few weeks, but the saving grace was how supportive his school was.

Kate's experience, assigned to a large SHS, mirrored Niall's. She expected to be an assistant but essentially found herself with the duties of a qualified teacher: "I got to the school and it's like, no, T1 all the way, you create your own material, you do everything, so that was a little bit of an eye opener." However, she was also unperturbed by this reality and saw the responsibility as a challenge that she relished. Farah, assigned to a large SHS initially found her expectations of being an assistant, from the official JET website (CLAIR, 2015c), were realised, though gradually felt her JTEs were pushing her into the role of a T1: "Over time I sort of moved, being promoted in a sense from T2 to T1." She felt she had to demonstrate her competence before being granted the T1 responsibilities. Similar to Niall, Farah said the support from her school helped her navigate the initial uncertainty.

5-5. T1 SHS ALTs' Sense of Value

Niall clearly felt valued and trusted as an educator from the very first lesson. He reported, "We did the introduction and then [the JTE] turns to me and went, 'Okay, go and teach.'" However, the strong sense of value granted by this trust and autonomy became a double-edged sword because after essentially being given qualified-teacher responsibilities, he commented, "There's no more room for

me to grow because I'm in charge of my lessons ... There's no feedback or a sense of what they want me to do more. It's like they forgot I was still, you know, in the learning process, that I wasn't even a qualified teacher." Interestingly, this sense of professional value did not extend beyond the classroom, as he reported being excluded from important meetings and the only staff member not on the internal e-mailing list: "It becomes quite obvious at that stage. Oh, so like we are also English teachers, but we're not a full English teacher in their eyes." He also felt a sense of othering when it was proposed that he and the other ALT at his school should be moved out of the main staffroom: "They wanted to move just me and Jill by ourselves to the International Room. And I said, 'No, don't do that. I love being in the main staff room.'" When probed further, he rationalised it may be due to their lack of Japanese language ability and the inherent transience of JETs that prevents full acceptance as part of the group. Overall, he reported enjoying his time in Japan but would not re-contract after completing two years as it was always meant to be a sojourn.

Farah also felt a sense of disconnect, a sense of "being out of the loop": "I will always feel like the fish out of water ... obviously it's because I'm the outsider." She felt it had eroded her sense of value to an extent, and it was an oversight not to include her in the day-to-day matters beyond the classroom: "I believe that regardless of the role that you play within an educational institution, you must have knowledge of how that educational institution runs from A to Z". Overall, Farah reported enjoying her time in Japan and planned to re-contract for "probably just one more year" for a two-year tenure.

Kate, however, reported a high level of both professional and personal sense of value and inclusion at her school because everyone had time to talk to her and ask questions about her country. Furthermore, the JTEs often seek her out to ask English grammar questions, and non-English language teaching staff ask her to attend other subject lessons. She reported that her 20-month experience so far was "100% positive," citing the people and connections she has made as the principal reason. Kate said she is planning to re-contract to start her third year and stay for as long as possible after that.

5-6. T2 JHS ALTs' Sense of Value

George, a first-year ALT, felt that whilst the *person* may be valued, the *role* and *function* of an ALT are not. However, aware of his lack of teaching credentials, he accepted the often lamented and limited role of being "mostly the walking tape recorder" (providing 'repeat after me' pronunciation modelling only) without complaint. He said he found a sense of value through just being there and providing students with exposure to a different culture. However, some days he felt as though he had done nothing and so he would "just go home and scratch those days off" and try not to think about them too much. Life outside work was good, and so he planned to re-contract for at least one more year.

Tom, a fifth-year ALT, also reported feeling largely underutilised; he said he had become disillusioned, lacking a sense of value and connection because there was limited opportunity for

professional growth. Commenting on how his colleagues regard him, he said, "I very much feel like an ALT rather than one of the team at the school." Similar to Niall, he had been moved out of the main staff room into a smaller room for non-teaching support staff: "I did feel like they were trying to push me out of the main office. Still, it made me feel like I'm not a teacher, I'm an ALT. It made me feel less, or less important than the you know—the real teachers." Furthermore, he had felt isolated before being moved from the main staff room, explaining, "They kinda pushed me into the corner of the room. I was still kind of in an island to myself." He also felt it was disrespectful when the JTEs were no longer mandated to attend the annual skills development training conference and their attendance dramatically decreased: "I remember talking, like at the conference—just to friends—so it's like that is it? There's no appetite from their side to do team-teaching together. I guess that's just how important we are really." Tom wanted to learn and grow as an educator but also felt that they were seen as being on vacation and would soon leave. Tom was coming to the end of his five-year tenure as a JET but said he planned to stay on in Japan; however, he thought he may look to pivot to non-teaching employment.

Hannah, a third-year ALT, had also grown incredibly disillusioned and cited the mixed messages, lack of available growth as an educator, and lack of respect for the ALT position. Her CO frequently directed ALTs to focus on CLT, whereas the immediate demands of her school focussed upon grammar, exam revision, and finishing the textbook on time. She felt that, "There needs to be structural change in order for ALTs to enact such duties" as those requested by her CO. Despite recognising "many virtues" of the programme and receiving positive comments from her school, she still felt she "was constantly fighting an uphill battle" and ultimately the lows outweighed the highs, leading to a profound sense of loss: "It's heartbreaking because youth-work is my passion, and so much of it has been stripped from me from my time here. This semester was difficult because I was so disappointed to leave. I was grieving because I felt that I was lied to—what you make of this program is what you get. [But] That's not true. Because I put in so much and got diminishing returns in many respects." Hannah said she has been left grieving for the lost opportunity that was promised to her in being a JET ALT. She felt there needed to be a common consensus of what an ALT is: "Either we are viewed as part-time foreigners who are here for cultural and conversation exchange, or we are full-time part-of-the-staff members teaching English. There needs to be more transparency regarding our place, because the program says one thing, [the CO] says another, and it makes it difficult to grow when you don't know what your job is and other ALTs are either seemingly more successful or are tremendously doing a disservice to the name of 'ALT.'" After three years, Hannah was more than ready to return home to seek professional development in a familiar setting and system.

6. Conclusions

All of the interviewed participants experienced some form of role confusion resulting from the

discrepancies between the expectations of life as a JET and the lived reality of being a JET. This correlates with scholars such as McConnell (2000), Mahoney (2004), and Borg (2008) who evidenced a macro level disconnect between the messaging of the various organising authorities as to what the programme's core objectives are and what the role of the ALT is within these ambiguous and sometimes conflicting parameters. This study further highlighted discrepancies at a micro level too, where the JHS (compulsory education) institutions' utilisation (or often underutilisation) of ALTs in the classroom is in discordance with the CLT curriculum expectations directly communicated to them by MEXT via their CO, as evidenced by scholars such as Rutson-Griffiths (2012), Underwood (2017), and Hiratsuka (2025). This is succinctly encapsulated by Hannah's reflection, "There needs to be more transparency regarding our place, because the program says one thing, the [CO] says another."

How this then affected the ALTs' lived experiences largely depended on their personal context and how invested they were in their preconceived expectations, as well as the context they were assigned to. For those not considering a long-term career in education, the situation did not present a considerable challenge to their self-perception, as exemplified by George and Niall. Caza and Creary (2016) argue that one is better equipped to adapt, accept, and rationalise a situation when their background and established identity are already anchored in other meaningful fields. However, for Hannah and Tom, who both harboured the desire and expectation of being more involved with the teaching aspect of the position, the discordance between expectation and reality and resulting role confusion created an unstable foundation from which they struggled to build a sense of purpose and work-life identity (Caza & Creary, 2016). This ultimately left them feeling frustrated, disillusioned, and as if they had missed out on an opportunity. Both of them recognised that other assigned situations (SHS) may have been more suitable for their desires and needs and may have garnered more satisfactory results.

Niall, Farah, and Kate, all assigned to SHS, experienced significant disparity between their expectation of performing a T2 assistant role and the reality of their T1 position. Farah and Kate were able to construct positive identities as they were granted agency and autonomy in achieving their teaching goals and Niall had the life experience and confidence to adapt and meet the challenge despite not having strong teaching-related aspirations. Like Tom and Hannah (JHS), Farah had a strong desire to teach and found herself initially positioned as T2. However, she had expected to perform this assistant role, and the less pressurised environment of non-compulsory education in SHS permitted a sense of professional progress, as she felt she gradually earned the right to be positioned as a T1. The JHS ALTs all felt somewhat stagnated in their limited and sometimes underutilised role as the T2 assistant. The clear distinction between the T2 assistant role within the more rigid demands of JHS compulsory education and the T1 lead-teacher role in the less exam focussed and therefore less pressurised environment of the non-compulsory SHS education appears to be a crucial factor in the ALTs' reported success and satisfaction with their lived reality. It suggests that COs

need to carefully assess ALTs' teaching-related aspirations and background, to ensure those who are invested in teaching are assigned to a SHS T1 role in which they have a greater possibility to thrive. Those who are less invested in teaching and understand and accept their status as T2 would be better suited to JHS.

All participants (except for Tom) were surprised by the pedagogical focus and pressures. They had been expecting to be more involved in social aspects such as cross-culturalisation and grassroots internationalisation as championed by CLAIR. Therefore, the barriers to achieving a sense of human connection and equality with their colleagues (with the exception of Kate) proved to be a source of discordance. Interestingly, achieving a sense of social connection outside the professional sphere was not reported as an issue—and in some cases, such as George and Farah, the connection achieved with people outside the workplace served as a redeeming feature of their overall experience.

All the participants, again except for Kate, reported experiencing a sense of othering and being considered “only/just the ALT” (George, Niall, Tom, Farah) and not a valid educator or “real teacher” (Tom, Farah). George related to the common analogy from their JET-world of feeling like the family pet — ultimately loved and often garnering undue attention but when it came to the important matters not considered a full-functioning member of the family. This is supported by Rutson Griffiths' (2012) argument that the ALT-related teaching plays second fiddle to the exorbitant pressures of the grammar and exam-orientated “real” teaching, which often leaves the ALTs all too aware of their reduced value and status. However, Tom and Niall also felt a sense of workplace isolation that extended beyond the classroom, specifically by the attempts to remove them from the main teaching staffroom. Tom, Niall, and George all acknowledged that the transient nature of the ALT's existence probably contributes to this feeling of being excluded. It is also something that accords with the original pseudo-missionary soft-power objectives theory of MOFA (2023) proposed by Borg (2008, 2018), Gannon (2011), Metzgar (2012), and Estampador-Hughson (2017). However, despite Tom, Niall, and George's ability to rationalise this, the issues of value, connection, and isolation still emerged from all participants, except Kate, so clearly it is a prevalent and contentious issue of the ALT lived reality that they had not expected to encounter and contend with.

ALTs and the JET Programme would benefit from the establishment of a concise consensus on what is expected of an ALT and how this may differ between the JHS and SHS roles. This should then be explicitly expressed to all parties: the COs, the schools, and the JTEs, to reduce the current discordance that the ALTs in this study reported. Greater clarity on the main ALT role expectations could also enhance their sense of self-worth and connection to their professional life. As the main administrators of the JET Programme, CLAIR, would be best positioned to compile concise role descriptions and facilitate their widescale adoption by the regional COs. A key factor would be ensuring the COs understand the importance and positive impact that such an endeavour could achieve, as highlighted by this research study. Unified and consistent messaging from all involved

parties could greatly improve the lived reality of the ALTs.

A further area for research could be to investigate the potential impact of establishing concise and consistent role descriptions on factors including job satisfaction, retention rates, and the mental well-being of the ALTs. Also, comparing the findings of a similar research study conducted on non-JET ALTs working for comparable programmes in Japan and globally.

Acknowledged limitations are the use of a convenience sample drawn from one area which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the subjective nature of the data collection often relies on self-reporting and the (potentially selective) memory of the participants, thereby introducing the possibility of bias and reliability issues (Bassey, 1999; Flick, 2022). However, interpretivist research is not seeking to prove facts or to provide indisputable evidence but rather intends to explore and expand the understanding of a social phenomenon, such as seeking insight into ALTs' experiences regarding the relationship between expectations and reality.

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JETプログラムで雇用されるALTの先入観と現実の一致・対照に関する考察

ウッドゲット サイモン

JETプログラム (Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme) の支援の下、数千人の大学卒業生が公立中学校・高等学校において外国語指導助手 (ALT) として雇用されている。本研究では、ALTが雇用前に抱いていた期待が、実際の職務経験とどの程度一致しているか、または異なっているかを明らかにすることを目的としている。本研究では、既存の文献をもとに、プログラムを支援する4つの団体の基本的な目的と理念をまとめる。そのうえで、それらがALTの期待や実際の職務とどのようにつながっているかを考察し、はっきりと定義されていない業務内容について理解を深めることを目指す。本研究では、相対主義的な視点を持つ構成主義パラダイムを採用し、同一の契約団体 (CO) で働く6人のALTに対し、約半構造化1時間のインタビューを実施した。データは、BraunとClarke (2006) の6段階フレームワークを用いてテーマ別に分析され、反復的および出現的なテーマが特定された。

調査結果によると、中等教育 (JHS) と高等教育 (SHS) という2つの主要なALTの配置について明確かつ統一された合意が得られていないため、ALTは期待と現実の乖離を経験し、その結果、職業的価値観が損なわれることがしばしばあった。しかしながら、参加者の3分の2は、日本での滞在経験は概ね良好であると回答した。本研究では、2つの主要な職務内容について、統一的かつ簡潔な説明を作成し、将来のJETプログラムALT候補者に明確に伝える必要があると結論付けている。さらに、ALTを中等教育または高等教育に配置する際には、ALTの専門的経歴と志望内容を綿密に検討することが不可欠である。

キーワード : JETプログラム、ティームティーチング、ALT、ALTの役割、ALTの経験

Other Reference Materials

Initial Interview questions:

Q1. Please tell me about your professional background prior to applying to become a JET ALT?

Q.2 What was the extent of your knowledge and expectations of working as a JET prior to coming to Japan?

Q.3 Please tell me about how prepared you felt for working as a JET ALT in Japan?

Q.4 Please tell me what it is like being an ALT working in a Japanese school?

Q.5 How does this experience compare to your prior expectations?

Q.6 Can you talk about how valued you feel at your school?

Q.7 Can you discuss the process of assimilating to life working in Japan?

Q.8 What do you think is/has been your biggest struggle as an ALT in Japan?

生成AIを用いた初級EFL学習者の英語ライティング指導の効果と課題

ヘネシー 絵美

要 旨

本稿では、2024年度前期に大学のEFL初級学習者を対象に実施した生成AI活用による英語ライティング授業実践を基に、2024年度後期に行った発展的取り組みについて報告する。工学部1年生2クラスを対象に、英語ライティング課題の自己編集活動に生成AI（ChatGPT）を活用し、さらにライティング内容の音声化や授業内発表までの段階的学習活動を実施した。2クラスを実験群（AIの使用を義務付け、使用方法を明示的に指導）と統制群（AIの使用は任意、指導なし）に分け、学習者の情意的側面とライティング能力の変化を検証した。その結果、短期間では語数など量的指標に群間差は明確でなかったが、多くの学生に学習意欲や自己効力感の向上が認められ、AIが初級学習者の試行錯誤を支える心理的支援として機能した可能性が示された。一方、AI依存の懸念や質的評価の詳細分析の必要性も明らかとなり、課題設計の工夫と批判的判断力育成の重要性が示された。

キーワード：EFL、授業改善、ライティング、外国語教育とテクノロジー、生成AI

1. はじめに

1-1. 背景

対話型AI「ChatGPT」の登場以降、生成AIは技術の進化とともに急速に普及し、私たちの生活に浸透している。日本の教育現場においても、文部科学省は「初等中等教育段階における生成AIの利活用に関するガイドライン」において、「AI時代を生きる子供たちが生成AIをはじめとするテクノロジーをツールとして使いこなし、一人一人が才能を開花できるようになることは重要であり、生成AIの学校における利活用はそのための助けになり得るものである」（文部科学省初等中等教育局, 2024）と明記しており、生成AIを教育における支援ツールとして積極的に位置付けている。

一方で、高等教育における生成AIの取扱いは各教育機関の判断に委ねられている（文部科学省, 2023）。しかし、上述の考えに基づけば、大学の外国語教育においても、生成AIの適切な活用が教育の一助となり得るのではないか。筆者はこの点を検証するため、「生成AIを利用して英語学習を効率化し、効果を上げることにより、初級レベルの学生が学習のモチベーションを向上できるような課題設計はできないか」という問いを立て、2024年度前期に地方国立大学の英語授業において、英語ライティング課題における自己編集活動に生成AIを活用する実践を行った（ヘネシー, 2025）。

その結果、多くの学生が知的好奇心を維持しながら学習に取り組む様子が観察され、情意的側面（主

観的経験)や言語産出量(ライティングの語数)に関して一定の肯定的な傾向が示唆された。ただし、これは一授業における事前・事後テストの結果に基づく限定的な知見であり、生成AIの活用が学習者に及ぼす影響をより精緻に検討するためには、さらなる実践的検証が必要と考えられる。

1-2. 先行研究と課題

外国語として英語を学ぶ学習者(EFL)のライティング活動における生成AI活用の効果については、すでに複数の先行研究が報告されている。たとえば、Song & Song (2023)は中国の大学生を対象としたアカデミック・ライティングの授業において生成AIを導入し、質・量の両面からライティング能力および学習動機の向上を確認している。また、Huu Hoang (2025)によるベトナムの大学生を対象とした研究でも同様の結果が示されている。これらの研究は、ChatGPTを活用した実験群と従来型指導による統制群を比較し、生成AIが学習動機の向上といった学習者の情意的側面および言語発達の双方に肯定的な変化をもたらしたと結論づけている。

これらの研究の対象は英語専攻の学生等、一定の英語力を有する学生が中心であった。一方、筆者の授業の履修学生は非英語専攻の初級学習者であり、被験者の英語学習歴や英語力が大きく異なる。そのため、先行研究を参考にしつつも、初級学習者におけるAI活用の効果については別途検証が必要である。

日本国内の大学での事例としては、児玉(2025)が経営学部生を対象にChatGPTを用いた英語ライティング指導を報告し、ライティング能力の向上を確認している。また、吉田(2025)は生成AIツールを活用することで「文章力と自律性の育成」が促されたと述べている。これらの実践はいずれも学部1年生を対象に短文エッセイの添削に生成AIを用いたものであり、筆者の授業実践と共通点が多いが、Song & Song (2023)やHuu Hoang (2025)が行ったような学習者の情意的側面および言語発達に関する詳細な分析は報告されていない。日本の大学におけるEFL初級学習者を対象とした生成AI活用の効果に関する体系的な実証研究はなお限られているといえる。

1-3. 本研究の目的と位置付け

以上の課題を踏まえ、2024年度後期には、2024年度前期の実践で得られた知見を踏まえ、より発展的な取り組みを行った。本研究の目的は、英語ライティング課題における自己編集作業に生成AI(ChatGPT)を導入することが、学習者の情意的側面および言語発達にどのような影響を及ぼすかを、授業実践を通して検討することである。近年、生成AIの教育現場への導入が急速に進む一方で、その具体的な活用方法や指導の在り方については十分な合意が形成されているとは言い難い。特に、学習者が生成AIをどのように用いれば学習効果に繋がるのかについては、実践的知見の蓄積が求められている。

本研究は、生成AIの使用を単に許可するのではなく、英語ライティングの自己編集作業において生成AIの使用条件を異にする二つのクラスを設定し、授業実践を設計した点に特徴がある。本稿では、この授業実践を教育実践研究として位置付け、質的および量的手法を用い、学習者の情意的側面および言語発達への影響をそれぞれ異なる観点から検討する。本研究における検討を通して、生成AIを活

用した英語ライティング指導の可能性と課題を明らかにし、今後の大学英語教育における実践的示唆を提供することを目指す。

2. 授業実践の概要

2-1. 授業の概要および対象学生

本研究は、筆者が2024年10月から翌年1月末まで担当した共通教育科目の英語の授業（必修）で実施した。対象は工学部の2学科に所属する1年生であり、学科ごとに週2回（各90分）の授業を計30回実施した。授業設計は教員の裁量に基づき、特定のスキルに特化しない一般英語科目として実施された。学科Aは28名（男子19名・女子9名）、学科Bは26名（男子24名・女子2名）であった。

学期開始時に、学習者の基本情報および英語学習における生成AIの使用経験等に関する質問紙調査を行った。その結果によると、英検準2級～2級取得者は学科Aで10名、学科Bで8名、その他は英検3級または未受験者であった。英語への苦手意識を持つ学生が多い一方で、「英語学習は楽しいか」という問いに対しては、約半数の学生が「楽しい」と回答した。両クラスの顕著な違いとしては、AIの使用経験が挙げられる。英語学習における生成AIの使用経験が「ある」または「よく使う」と回答した学生は、学科Aの32%に対し、学科Bでは88%であった。学科Bはプログラミングに関心のある学生が多く、AI技術に関する知識や興味も多い傾向が見られた。ただし、「今後、英語学習において機械翻訳やAIを活用していきたいか」との問いにはいずれの学科も88%以上の学生が「活用したい」と回答し、また「機械翻訳やAIを活用した効果的な英語学習法があれば、知りたいと思うか」との問いにはいずれも96%の学生が「知りたい」と回答した。

2-2. 授業設計と生成AIの活用方法

授業内容および進度は両学科で統一した。授業は主にCEFR A1～A2レベル向けの教科書を用いたコミュニケーション中心の対面授業であったが、その中で、教科書のテーマを基に学生自身の経験や考えを表現する機会として、30分間の英語ライティング活動を学期中に5回実施した。学生は、指定されたテーマについて30分間辞書のみを用いて手書きで英文エッセイを書き、終了後に記述内容を写真に撮り、紙の原稿は教員に提出した。英語ライティングの次の授業はオンデマンド形式で実施した。学生は授業中に書いた英語ライティング課題を指定の様式にタイピングした後、生成AIや翻訳サイト等を使用してエッセイ内容の自己編集作業を行い（2学科間での使用条件の違いについては、第3章にて詳述する）、最終化したエッセイを指定の様式に反映した。

自己編集作業にあたっては、新たに学んだ単語や表現を意識化する目的で、該当箇所を赤字に変換するよう指導した。また、知識の定着を図るため、最終化したエッセイの内容をオンラインの音声化ツールを利用して音声化し、音読練習を行うよう指導した。これは、次の対面授業時にペアで内容を発表し合うための練習として位置付け、実施状況の確認のため、発表練習の動画をビデオプレゼンテーション課題として先述の指定の様式とともに教員に提出してもらった。本研究では、以上の課題を学期中に5回実施し、筆者は全エッセイに目を通し、不自然な表現や文法的な誤りに対して学習者の理解を促す形でフィードバックを行った。

3. 研究方法

3-1. 研究デザイン

本研究では、生成AIを活用した英語ライティング学習が学習者の情意的側面および言語発達に及ぼす影響を多角的に検討するため、質的手法と量的手法を併用するマルチメソッド研究デザインを採用した。各調査においては、情意的側面および言語発達について、それぞれ直接的な因果説明を目的とせず、相補的な視点から研究課題を検証することにより、生成AIを用いた英語ライティング学習の教育的意義を多面的に検討することを目指した。

研究参加者は、先述の英語授業を履修する学科ABの54名であった。各学科の授業は別々に実施され、この2クラスを実験群（学科A）および統制群（学科B）として用いた。両群は授業内容および学習目標において同等であった。実験群は、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIの使用を義務付け、その具体的な使用方法（プロンプトの内容、修正提案の取捨選択、最終稿への反映方法等）について明示的な指導を行った。一方、統制群は、同作業における生成AIの使用を任意とし、使用方法に関する詳細な指導は行わなかった。学科Aを実験群とした理由は大きく二つある。第一に、同じ工学部内であっても学科間で履修者構成に差異が見られたため、条件差を考慮した比較が必要であった。第二に、学期開始時の質問紙調査によると、生成AIの使用経験が学科Bで相対的に多く、この影響を排除するため、使用経験が少ない学科Aに介入を行うことが本研究の目的に合致すると判断した。

3-2. 質的分析の方法

本研究では、質問紙調査を通じて、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIを使用することによる情意的側面への影響を把握することを試みた。質問紙調査は、Googleフォームを使用したオンライン上のアンケート方式で、「英語授業課題におけるAIや機械翻訳等の使用に関するアンケート」として学期中盤と終盤の2回、ほぼ同じ内容の質問への回答を得た。アンケートでは、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業における各種ツールの使用頻度、言語発達面での効果の自己評価、英語ライティング課題に対する自信や学習意欲の変化等について、選択回答方式での質問を行った。また、各種ツールについて、良い点や改善すべき点等について自由記述式での回答を得た。

これらの回答内容を分析することにより、学習者が生成AIをどのように受け止め、どのような心理的影響を経験したのかを明らかにした。自由記述回答については、内容の類似性に基づいて整理し、情意的変化に関する傾向を抽出した。本調査は、量的段階の結果を直接的に説明することを目的とするものではなく、生成AI活用学習における学習者の主観的経験を独立して把握することを目的とした。

3-3. 量的分析の方法

量的段階では、両群に対して学期開始時に事前テスト、学期終了時に事後テストを実施し、英語ライティング能力の変化を測定した。得られたテスト結果を用いて、生成AIの使用条件の違いが言語発達に及ぼす影響について統計的分析を行った。

事前・事後テストでは、学生は30分間、辞書のみを使用して指定されたテーマについて英語でエッ

全体的な授業者の主観的印象として、工学部1年生対象の授業に生成AIを活用する以前の授業に比べると、学生は2024年度前期と同じくより知的な好奇心を持って意欲的に授業や課題に取り組んでいた。一方で、アンケートの中には生成AIの活用に関して今後改善すべき点も挙げられていた。例えば「添削後の英文が自分の意図したニュアンスと異なる」「提案された英文が自分の言いたいことを表現できているかの判断ができない／難しい」「AIに頼りすぎないように注意したい」等である。今後は、これらの意見を踏まえ、学生がより納得感と自信を持って英語ライティングに取り組めるよう課題設計を工夫する必要がある。

4-2. 質的分析の結果

質的分析においては、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIを使用することによる情意的側面への影響を把握するため、学期中盤と終盤の2回実施した、「英語授業課題におけるAIや機械翻訳等の使用に関するアンケート」のうち、特に学期全体を通しての所感を反映する学期末アンケート結果について省察する。

同アンケート中、言語発達面での効果の自己評価、および英語ライティング課題に対する自信や学習意欲の変化等に関する選択回答方式の設問について、学科ABそれぞれの回答結果は、以下の図1～6のとおりであった。

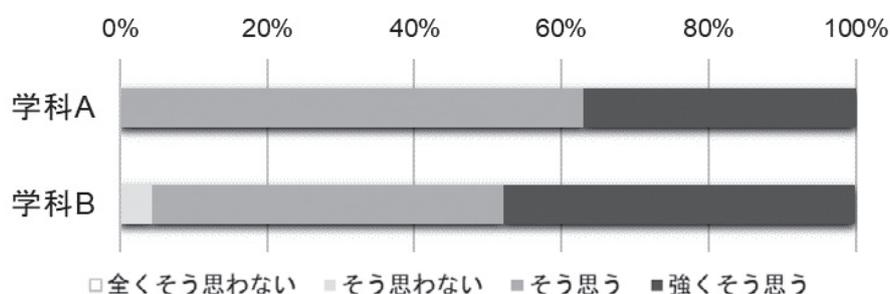


図1 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、新たな英単語や表現の習得に役立った。

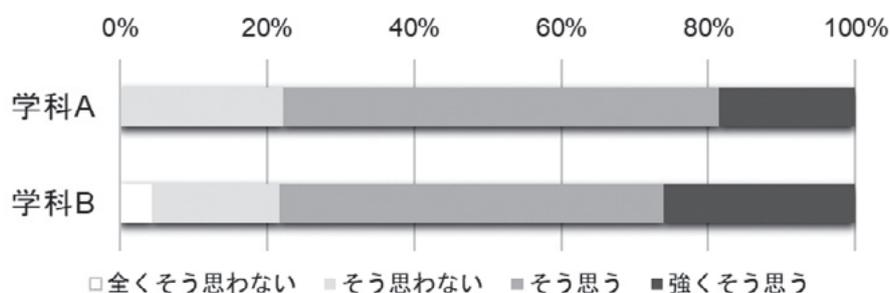


図2 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、自身の文法力の向上に役立った。

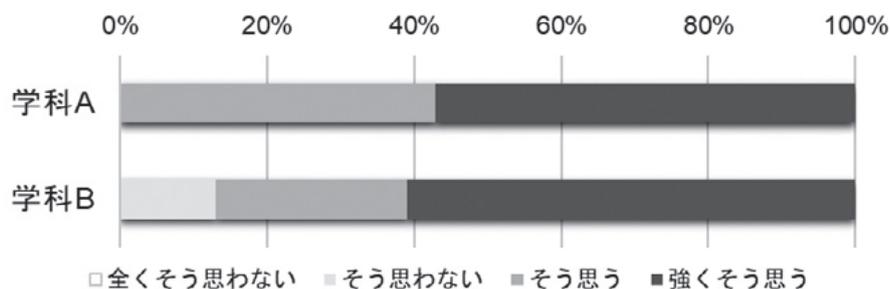


図3 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、エッセイの内容を深めることに役立った。

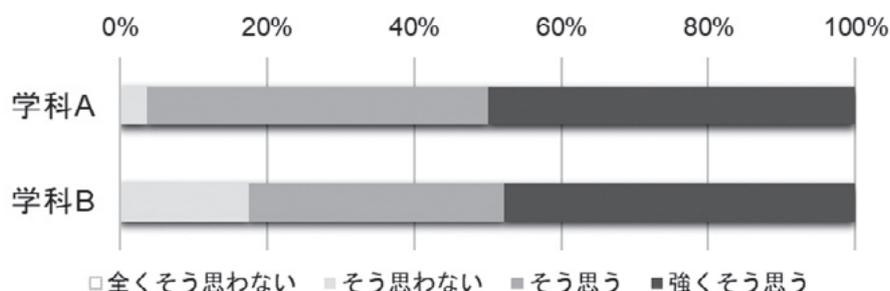


図4 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、編集後のライティング課題に対する自信に繋がった。

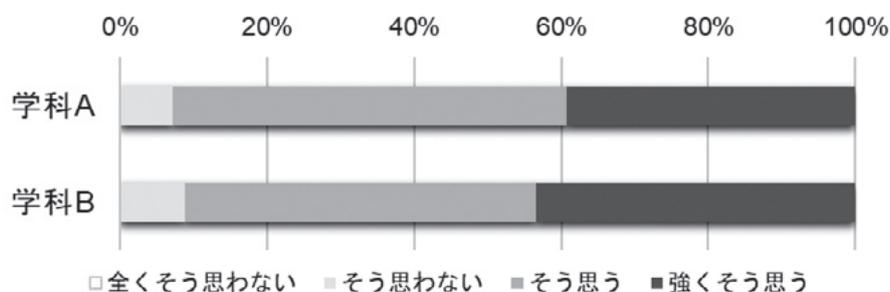


図5 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、学習意欲の向上に繋がった。

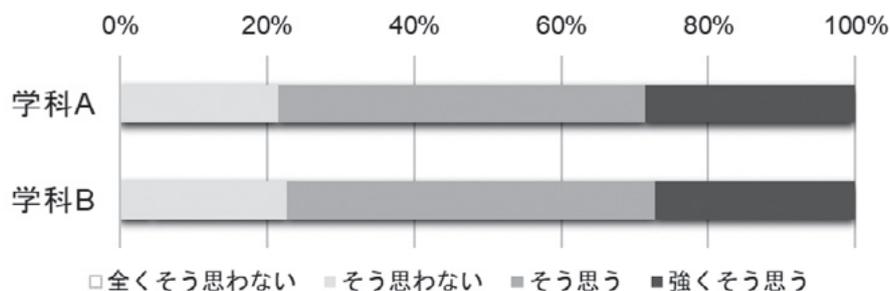


図6 学期末アンケートの結果：本授業の英語ライティング課題の編集においてAIを使用することが、自身の英語ライティング力の向上に役立った。

これらの6項目すべてにおいて、77%以上の学生が「そう思う」または「強くそう思う」と回答していることから、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIを使用することが、新たな英単語や表現の習得、自身の文法力の向上、エッセイの内容を深めることといった、言語発達面に関する自己評価の向上に概ね繋がっているとと言える。さらに、生成AIの活用が言語発達面での効果の実感や成果物に対する自信に繋がった結果として、学科Aは79%、学科Bは77%の学生が本取り組みを通して「英語ライティング力の向上」を感じたと回答している。また、「学習意欲の向上」については、「そう思う」または「強くそう思う」と回答した学生が両学科とも90%以上に達し、これは授業者の印象とも一致している。これらの結果から、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIを使用することは、学生の言語発達面における自己効力感や学習意欲の向上に貢献しており、すなわち学生の情意的側面に肯定的な影響をもたらした可能性が高いと考えられる。

4-3. 量的分析の結果

前項では、学期末アンケートの回答から、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において生成AIを使用することが、学生の言語発達面における自己効力感の向上に繋がっていると分析した。しかし、これが実質的な言語発達を伴うものであったかは、別途検証する必要がある。そこで、量的段階では、両群に対する事前・事後テストの結果について統計的分析を行うことにより、英語ライティング能力の変化を測定し、生成AIの使用条件の違いが言語発達に及ぼす影響について明らかにすることを試みた。

制限時間内に書かれたエッセイの語数に着目したところ、事前テストに比べ事後テストでは大きな伸びが見られた。学科A・B全体の事前テストにおける平均語数は108語であったのに対し、事後テストでは142語に増加した。語数について対応のあるt検定を行った結果、事前テスト時 ($M = 108, SD = 39.03$) よりも事後テスト時 ($M = 142, SD = 39.57$) の方が有意に増加していた ($t(49) = 5.88, p < .001$)。さらにこれを学科別に分析した結果、実験群(学科A)では事前テスト ($M = 102, SD = 37.54$) から事後テスト ($M = 141, SD = 36.92$) にかけて有意に増加していた ($t(24) = 4.93, p < .001$)。同様に、学科Bにおいても事前テスト ($M = 113, SD = 39.75$) から事後テスト ($M = 144, SD = 42.01$) へと有意に増加していた ($t(24) = 3.51, p < .01$)。一方、事後テスト時点における両群の平均語数を比較したところ、有意な差は認められなかった ($t(48) = 0.69, p = .50$)。この結果から、語数の増加が生成AIの使用条件の違いのみによるものではなく、授業全体でのライティング経験の蓄積による可能性も示唆される。

量的分析においては、さらに総合的な英語ライティング能力の変化を測るため、「6 Traits of Writing」に基づく採点によりルーブリックの評価値を算出し、それに基づく詳細な分析を進めている段階である。本稿では紙幅の都合上、語数分析を中心に報告し、ルーブリック評価に基づく質的側面の分析については今後の課題とする。

5. 考察

5-1. 学習者の変化に関する考察

本研究では、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業に生成AIを導入し、その使用条件の違いが学習者に与える影響について、質的・量的の両側面から検討を行った。第4章で示した結果から、本研究による学習者の変化は、短期間で測定可能な言語能力の差としてよりも、学習への関与や自己効力感といった情意的側面の変化として顕在化したと解釈することができる。

量的分析においては、事前・事後テストの語数が両群ともに有意に増加した一方で、事後テスト時点における群間差は認められなかった。この結果は、英語ライティング活動を継続的に行ったこと自体が、初級学習者における産出量の増加に寄与した可能性を示している。すなわち、生成AIの使用条件の違いが、短期間の語数の差として明確に現れるほどの影響を与えたとは言い難い。

一方、質問紙調査の結果からは、生成AIを活用した英語エッセイの自己編集作業が、学習者の英語ライティングに対する自信や学習意欲の向上に繋がった可能性が示唆された。多くの学生が、新たな語彙や表現の習得、文法的誤りへの気づき、成果物の完成度に対する満足感を示しており、これらは英語で書くことへの心理的抵抗感を和らげる要因となったと考えられる。特に初級学習者にとって、英語でまとまった文章を書くことは負担が大きい活動である。その中で、生成AIによる即時的なフィードバックや表現の提案は、試行錯誤を支援する学習上の足場 (scaffolding) として機能し、「自分の英語が通じる」「改善できる」という感覚を学習者にもたらした可能性がある。このような自己効力感の高まりは、質問紙において高い割合で確認された学習意欲の向上とも整合的である。

なお、本研究では学科Aを実験群、学科Bを統制群として設定したが、質的結果においては両学科ともに生成AI活用に対して概ね肯定的な反応を示していた。このことから、生成AIの使用経験や使用条件の違いにかかわらず、英語ライティング課題における自己編集活動そのものが、学習者の情意的側面に一定の影響を与えた可能性も考えられる。ただし、実験群において生成AIの使用方法を明示的に指導したことが、学習者の生成AIに対する捉え方にどの程度影響したのかについては、本研究の枠組みでは十分に検証できておらず、今後の課題である。

以上より、本研究における学習者の変化は、短期的な言語発達の指標のみでは捉えきれない側面を含んでおり、特に学習への関与や自己効力感といった情意的側面において、生成AI活用の意義が認められたと考えられる。

5-2. 教育実践としての可能性と課題

本研究は、生成AIの使用を単に許可するのではなく、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業において実験群にはその使用を義務付け、かつ使用方法を明示的に指導する授業実践であった。この点において、本研究は、生成AIを英語教育における補助的ツールとしてどのように位置付け得るかを検討する、教育実践研究としての意義を有している。

教育実践としての可能性の一つは、初級学習者に対する心理的支援機能である。自由記述回答では、「すぐに添削してもらえる」「気軽に使える」といった意見が多く見られ、生成AIが教員の代替というよりも、学習過程を支える補助的存在として受け止められていたことがうかがえる。大人数授業や限

られた授業時間の中で、全ての学習者に十分な個別フィードバックを提供することが難しい状況において、生成AIは学習者の自律的な学習を促す一助となり得る。

また、本研究では、両群ともに自己編集後のエッセイを音声化し、発表活動へと展開する課題設計を行った。このように、生成AIを起点としつつも、学習活動をライティングに留めず、音読やスピーキングへと接続した点は、生成AI活用を単なる効率化に終わらせない工夫であったといえる。学習者が自ら修正した文章を実際に声に出して用いる過程は、表現の定着や言語使用への意識を高める機会となった可能性がある。

一方で、課題も明らかである。学生の中には、「提案された表現が自分の意図と異なる」「どこまで採用すべきか判断が難しい」と感じた者もあり、生成AIの出力を批判的に検討する力が十分でない場合、学習効果が限定的となる可能性が示唆された。この点から、生成AI活用においては、ツールの操作方法だけでなく、出力を吟味し、判断する視点を育成する指導が不可欠である。

また、本研究は短期間の実践に基づく分析であり、生成AI活用が長期的な言語発達や学習態度の変化にどのような影響を及ぼすかについては検討できていない。今後は、ルーブリック評価によるライティングの質的側面の分析や、より長期的な追跡調査を通して、生成AI活用の効果と限界を多角的に検討する必要がある。

6. 結論

本稿では、2024年度前期に行った生成AI活用による英語授業実践を発展させ、同年度後期に行った英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業に生成AIを導入した授業実践について報告した。前期の取り組みが、単一クラスにおける探索的実践であったのに対し、本研究では、生成AIの使用条件を異にする二つのクラスを設定し、学習者の情意的側面および言語発達への影響を、質的・量的手法を用いて検討した。

分析の結果、短期間においては、生成AIの使用条件の違いがライティングの語数といった量的指標に明確な差として現れることは確認されなかった。一方で、質問紙調査からは、英語ライティング課題の自己編集作業に生成AIを用いることが、学習者の英語学習に対する自信や学習意欲の向上といった情意的側面に肯定的な影響を与えた可能性が改めて示された。

これらの結果から、生成AIを活用した英語ライティング指導は、初級学習者に対して、短期的な言語能力の向上を直接的に保証するものではないものの、学習への関与を支え、学習継続の基盤となる情意的側面を涵養する点において、一定の教育的意義があると考えられる。

本研究は、生成AIを単に使用可能なツールとして位置付けるのではなく、授業内の学習活動の一部として組み込み、その活用方法を含めて設計した教育実践であった。今後は、生成AIからの提案に対する学習者の判断力や批判的思考を育成する視点を組み込んだ実践の発展を目指すとともに、ライティングの質的分析や長期的実践を通じて、生成AI活用が学習者の言語発達および学習態度に与える影響を、さらに精緻に検討していく必要がある。

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14

Effects and Challenges of Using Generative AI in English Writing Instruction for Beginner EFL Learners

HENNESSY Emi

This paper reports on an advanced implementation of English writing instruction using generative AI, building on a previous practice conducted in the first semester of 2024 with beginner-level university EFL learners. Two first-year engineering classes participated in scaffolded learning activities, including self-editing of writing tasks with generative AI (ChatGPT), audio conversion of texts, and in-class presentations. One class served as an experimental group, with mandatory AI use and explicit guidance on its use, while the other served as a control group, with optional AI use and no guidance. Learners' affective aspects and writing performance were examined through qualitative and quantitative methods. Results showed no significant short-term differences in quantitative measures such as word count between groups. However, many students reported increased motivation and self-efficacy, suggesting that AI supported trial-and-error learning and reduced psychological barriers in writing. At the same time, concerns about AI dependency and the need for detailed qualitative evaluation were identified, highlighting the importance of careful task design and fostering learners' critical judgment skills. These findings suggest that, with proper guidance, generative AI can serve as a supportive tool in beginner EFL writing instruction, enhancing learners' engagement and confidence while emphasizing the need for reflective and critical use of AI.

Keywords: EFL, classroom improvement, writing, technology and language teaching, generative AI

Linguistic Adaptation in Context: The Role of Dialect in Foreign Care Workers' Integration in Rural Japan

Christopher Hennessy

Abstract

Japan's aging population and labor shortages have made foreign care workers essential to sustaining regional eldercare systems. Yet often standard Japanese proficiency is emphasized while overlooking local dialects that dominate communication in rural care settings. Drawing from my doctoral dissertation *The Processes of Linguistic, Cultural, and Professional Adaptation of Foreign Workers in Japan's Workplaces and Daily Life* (Hennessy, 2025), this research note identifies dialect as a crucial factor in workplace adaptation and social belonging. In Fukui, foreign care workers encounter Fukui dialect daily in interactions with elderly residents, for whom dialect embodies identity and emotional comfort. Workers who use even limited dialect expressions build trust, confidence, and stronger interpersonal bonds. The ongoing research proposes extending this inquiry through an ethnographic study of Myanmar care workers in Fukui, combining interviews, participant observation, and documentation of dialect use in caregiving contexts at long-term care facilities. It will investigate how foreign care workers navigate dialect, interpret its social meanings, and develop communicative competence. The project's proposed applied outcome is the creation of Fukui dialect learning materials for caregiving communication. By reframing dialect as a central communicative resource, this study advances sociolinguistic understanding and supports inclusive, community-rooted caregiving in a multicultural rural Japan setting.

Keywords: foreign care workers, dialect, linguistic adaptation, workplace communication, multicultural regional Japan

1. Introduction

Japan increasingly relies on foreign care workers to sustain regional eldercare systems affected by rapid demographic change, declining birthrates, and persistent staffing shortages in long-term care facilities. National policies such as the EPA and the Specified Skilled Worker visa have expanded recruitment from countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and more recently India (Kusunoki, 2018). However, while government policy mechanisms to secure labor continue to grow, the

sociolinguistic realities shaping these workers' everyday participation remain insufficiently addressed.

Current education approaches for newcomers in Japan prioritize competency in standard Japanese, operationalized through testing benchmarks such as the JLPT. Yet workplace communication in regional care settings regularly draws on local dialects, especially in interactions with elderly residents for whom dialect embodies identity, comfort, and historical continuity (Asis & Carandang, 2020). The gap between language training and workplace reality results in foreign workers being well-prepared for textbook communication, while unprepared for the speech forms they encounter in everyday contexts in Japan (Takeuchi, 2015; Barke, 2018; Takeuchi, 2023).

My doctoral dissertation, *The Processes of Linguistic, Cultural, and Professional Adaptation of Foreign Workers in Japan's Workplaces and Daily Life*, examined how Indian care workers in rural Fukui negotiate this dissonance through a social-constructivist grounded theory approach. The analysis showed that care workers must navigate multiple Japanese varieties simultaneously, including polite forms, standard language, simplified Japanese, and most crucially, Fukui dialect (Hennessy, 2025).

Care workers described dialect as the most frequent source of communicative breakdown, especially in urgent or affective interactions such as expressions of pain, refusals, and task requests. Even when workers passed Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N3-equivalent training (a lower-intermediate level indicating basic communicative competence in standard Japanese) before arrival, dialectal vocabulary, phonological shifts, and pragmatic forms often went misunderstood, sometimes leading to care mistakes or relational distance from residents (Hennessy, 2025).

Dialect thus functions as both a barrier to communication and workplace legitimacy and an opportunity for social bonding and local belonging. Workers who acquired and used even small amounts of Fukui dialect reported gains in confidence, trust, and interpersonal connection, which can be thought of as dialect-mediated integration. The goal then is to shift the idea of "Japanese ability" toward linguistic pluralism in situated workplaces.

While my dissertation demonstrated that Indian care workers in rural Fukui must negotiate multiple Japanese language varieties, it only focused on one small subset of the foreign care worker community in rural Japan (Indian care workers), calling for further investigation into how linguistic and cultural adaptive processes operate across different linguistic and migratory backgrounds and institutional settings. Also, my dissertation did not delve into the real world setting of foreign care workers in a workplace setting, instead relying on participant testimony through interviews. This lack of real-world

observational data of foreign care workers in dialect-rich work environment creates a natural next step for research inquiry. Thus, for a new research project I seek to pursue the following research questions with a new set of participants, Myanmar care workers, at a different facility. This new focus on Myanmar care workers emerged through subsequent field access to a long-term care facility in Fukui that employed a significant number of Myanmar care workers. Accordingly, the project asks the following research questions:

1. What Fukui dialect forms do care workers encounter in daily care routines?
2. How do they navigate and negotiate dialect during caregiving and social interaction?
3. How do they interpret the social meaning of dialect regarding identity formation, professional legitimacy, and local community membership?

Methodologically, the new project integrates a grounded theory approach to semi-structured interviews and participant observation in long-term care facilities to document dialect use and track how foreign workers adapt interactionally. A central applied goal is the creation of Fukui dialect learning materials specifically designed for caregiving tasks in the northern region of Fukui.

In short, the dissertation established that dialect is a critical sociolinguistic variable shaping whether foreign care workers can be recognized as competent and caring professionals in rural Japan. The future research project takes this finding as its point of departure and shifts the analytical focus from model construction to the examination of dialect use in everyday caregiving practice, thereby motivating the research questions outlined above.

2. Dissertation Findings (Hennessy 2025)

The grounded theory analysis conducted in my doctoral dissertation revealed that foreign care workers in rural Japan do not perceive Japanese as a singular linguistic construct, such as a single ‘standard language’. Rather, they actively conceptualize their communicative environment as consisting of multiple co-existing Japanese varieties, each carrying different pragmatic, affective, and social meanings. These included standardized forms learned through classroom instruction (e.g., *keigo* and JLPT-targeted structures), task-oriented formal workplace discourse, simplified Japanese used to support mutual understanding, and critically, local Fukui dialect.

While standard Japanese symbolized professional legitimacy and educational attainment, dialect represented authentic connection with residents and community membership. Participants in the research described the necessity of shifting between these varieties depending on the interlocutor and the interactional purpose. In this way, dialect became a decisive and dynamic dimension of linguistic

adaptation, exerting strong influence on communicative success, peer relationships, and identity negotiation within workplace communities.

The dissertation demonstrated specific interactional challenges posed by dialect according to the participants, including vocabulary unfamiliar from textbooks, phonological features, sentence-final pragmatic markers, and semi-grammaticalized forms such as those used in refusals, persuasion, and care requests. For care workers still working towards standard Japanese competence, the sudden shift into dialect by residents generated real-time breakdowns in comprehension. These breakdowns could occur in high-stakes communicative environments, including mobility support, feeding, toileting care, and medication guidance. Residents' comfort expressions or emotionally urgent statements delivered in dialect could require fast, intuitive understanding that care workers had not been trained to handle.

Participant interview evidence indicated that, in actual caregiving interactions, dialect is the default rather than the exception. Elderly residents expressed pain, fear, gratitude, and humor through their native regional speech, revealing that dialect is deeply tied to emotional identity and therefore central to relational caregiving. Japanese coworkers choice to use dialect or not in the work environment sometimes unintentionally reinforced insider-outsider perceptions among the foreign care workers.

This situation creates what might be termed a double linguistic burden: to be perceived as competent professionals, foreign care workers must not only master standardized care worker Japanese but also become effective listeners and users of regional dialect. This aligns with prior sociolinguistic findings showing that workplace dynamics depend on locally valued linguistic capital (Barke, 2018; Takeuchi, 2015, 2023; Burgess, 2012).

3. Why Dialect Matters in Regional Care

Dialect in rural Japan is far more than a local linguistic feature. It functions as a powerful social semiotic that indexes familiarity, respect, solidarity, and emotional presence within interpersonal interactions (Takeuchi, 2015; Takeuchi, 2023). In long-term care facilities, where communication is inseparable from the care work, dialect is a primary vehicle through which identity, intimacy, and reassurance are conveyed. Based on interview accounts in my doctoral research, elderly residents tended to rely on their native dialect as the most natural medium for expressing needs, vulnerability, and humor (Hennessy, 2025).

For foreign care workers, successful workplace adaptation therefore requires more than textbook proficiency in standard Japanese. Rather, integration depends on their ability to interpret and

strategically participate in dialect-mediated interaction, particularly in emotionally charged moments, caregiving instructions and tasks, and social bonding rituals in which honorifics and formal Japanese feel “distant” for many older residents.

Dialect also shapes workplace hierarchies and credibility. Local coworkers often use dialect among themselves as a marker of shared cultural membership. When foreign care workers cannot follow or participate in these exchanges, even in a casual situation, they may be subtly positioned as peripheral participants in workplace communities (Takeuchi, 2015; Barke, 2018; Takeuchi, 2023). Such positioning may affect status (perceived capability and trustworthiness), evaluation (how managers assess readiness for responsibility), and opportunities (advancement, training, and stable employment prospects).

The dissertation’s findings showed that even high-proficiency speakers of standard Japanese may remain perceived as partial members of the workplace community when they cannot understand local speech. Conversely, care workers who adopt even a small repertoire of dialect expressions often receive affirmations that they are trying to “fit in” and care more deeply. These instances build mutual affection and eliminate social distance (Hennessy, 2025).

Dialect thus becomes simultaneously a barrier and a bridge. A barrier in that there may be incomprehension during urgent tasks, potential care errors, reinforcement of outsider identity, or reduced workplace influence. But a bridge in that there may be improved rapport and social cohesion, enhanced trust and resident comfort, visible effort toward belonging, or increased professional credibility. This dual nature aligns with global research showing that language varieties significantly shape migrant integration and social legitimacy in workplaces (Filliettaz, 2022; Yang & Yang, 2023).

Ultimately, the lesson from rural care environments suggests that without dialect awareness, foreign care workers risk social exclusion. With dialect engagement, they gain belonging and empowerment. This recognition underpins the central motivation of the future research phase which is to document dialectal environments and design targeted Fukui dialect teaching materials for foreign care workers, enabling linguistically and socially grounded caregiving practice in regional Japan.

4. Future Research Framework

The trajectory of my next research stage focuses on Myanmar care workers in northern Fukui Prefecture. Myanmar care workers constitute a relevant extension of my previous research on Indian care workers, as they differ in linguistic background, migration pathways, and prior exposure to Japanese, while working under similar institutional and regional conditions. Examining this group

makes it possible to assess how the dialect-related adaptation processes identified in my doctoral research operate across different linguistic and migratory profiles. This focus is further enabled by field access to a long-term care facility in Fukui employing a number of Myanmar care workers. Lastly, according to the most recent Fukui Prefecture foreign resident statistics, Myanmar nationals constitute one of the larger Southeast Asian foreign populations in the prefecture, and government statistics also indicate a measurable number of foreign residents registered under care worker occupations (Fukui Prefecture 2025). This demographic profile suggests that Myanmar care workers represent a sociolinguistically and socially relevant group for examining how dialect negotiation and professional integration unfold in a regional Japanese context. Accordingly, the forthcoming project aims to systematically document:

1. What Fukui dialect forms do foreign care workers encounter in daily care routines?
2. How do they navigate and negotiate dialect during caregiving and social interaction?
3. How do they interpret the social meaning of dialect regarding identity formation, professional legitimacy, local community membership?

By questioning the false dichotomy between standard language and perceived 'local dialect,' this research reframes dialect not as peripheral language, but as a central mediating language of inclusion, professional credibility, and communicative well-being for foreign care workers in rural Japan.

4-1 Methodology

To address these questions, the project employs a qualitative, ethnographically informed sociolinguistic methodology aligned with the grounded theory framework developed during the dissertation phase. Data collection will occur on-site at a long-term care facility in northern Fukui where Myanmar care workers are currently employed.

Data will be collected using a combination of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and linguistic documentation. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with three groups of participants: Myanmar care workers, Japanese coworkers, and facility managers. Interviews with Myanmar care workers will focus on experiences of dialect comprehension, coping strategies, and evaluations of local language support. Interviews with Japanese coworkers will address awareness of dialect use and perceptions of foreign care workers' linguistic adaptation, while interviews with facility managers will examine training expectations and the role of communication in performance evaluation.

In addition, participant observation will be carried out during everyday caregiving routines in

which dialect emerges naturally. The researcher will be present on site and will record fieldnotes documenting communicative successes, breakdowns, and repair sequences. Where appropriate, collaborative reflection sessions will be conducted following observed interactions to contextualize participants' perspectives.

Finally, linguistic documentation will involve the collection of dialect forms used in eldercare settings, including vocatives, reassurance expressions, refusals, emotional markers, and procedural instructions. These forms will be annotated with respect to their pragmatic functions and interactional contexts.

This triangulated design ensures both validity and analytic depth, capturing dialect use as an embodied sociological practice rather than a static lexical skill.

4-2 Participants and Research Context

The project focuses on Myanmar care workers who are newly employed in rural Fukui facilities under the Specified Skilled Worker framework. Drawing on findings from my doctoral research on foreign care workers more broadly, such workers typically arrive with basic standard Japanese ability (approximately JLPT N2 level, corresponding to upper-intermediate proficiency in standard Japanese) and therefore face immediate exposure to regional dialect upon entering their new work environment (Hennessy, 2025).

Table 1

Participant groups in proposed research project

Participant Group	Estimated N	Role in Study
Myanmar care workers	~5	Primary participants
Japanese coworkers	~3	Workplace interlocutors
Facility management	~2	Organizational perspectives

These participant groups were selected to capture both first-hand experiences of dialect use and the institutional and interactional contexts in which such use is evaluated. Observing facilities in Fukui's northern region where dialect use is deeply rooted and foreign care worker presence is steadily increasing will provide an ideal linguistic environment to observe actual real time adaptation processes and used forms of the local dialect.

4-3 Analytic Approach and Expected Outcomes

Collected data will be qualitatively coded following Charmaz's (2014) social constructivist grounded

theory framework, maintaining analytic continuity with the dissertation phase. Through this process, the research is expected to contribute in two primary ways. First, it aims to refine the theoretical model by clarifying how dialect functions as both a communicative resource and an index of identity in regional care workplaces. Second, it seeks to generate applied outcomes in the form of Fukui dialect learning materials grounded in observed caregiving interaction. Together, these outcomes address both academic knowledge gaps and regional integration challenges, supporting foreign care workers' linguistic, social, emotional, and professional participation in local communities.

5. Established and Expected Contributions

The emerging research project is positioned to advance sociolinguistic inquiry by extending upon insights established in my doctoral dissertation, which demonstrated that dialect functions not as peripheral variation but as a central mediator of integration in multilingual, regionally situated workplaces. While previous research on foreign workers in Japan has emphasized policy frameworks, language testing, and cultural adjustment, the dissertation identified a missing variable: the local linguistic environment in which communication actually occurs. Building on this established reframing, the present project examines how these dynamics can be further specified and operationalized.

5-1 Established Theoretical Contributions (from the Dissertation)

Based on the findings of my doctoral dissertation, this research contributes to sociolinguistics by demonstrating that dialect functions not as peripheral variation but as a central mediator of professional integration in regionally situated care workplaces. Drawing on Bourdieu-inspired perspectives, the dissertation shows that dialect competence can operate as locally valued linguistic capital, shaping perceptions of trust, competence, and occupational legitimacy among foreign care workers (Barke, 2018; Takeuchi, 2023; Hennessy, 2025).

In addition, the dissertation highlights how engagement with local dialect supports affective belonging and identity formation in long-term care settings, where emotionally grounded interaction is central to professional practice (Hennessy, 2025).

Together, these contributions advance a dialectally-informed theory of workplace second language socialization, expanding models of professional adaptation to include vernacular communicative competence.

5-2 Anticipated Applied Contributions (Future Project)

Building on these established theoretical insights, the forthcoming research project aims to

generate applied contributions that respond to practical challenges in regional caregiving contexts. In particular, the project is expected to inform the development of Fukui-specific dialect learning materials for foreign care workers, grounded in naturally occurring caregiving interaction. By addressing dialect comprehension in high-stakes care situations, the project seeks to support communicative accuracy, caregiving quality, and worker confidence.

More broadly, the project is intended to align sociolinguistic research with Japan's multicultural coexistence policies by promoting forms of linguistic inclusion that are locally grounded rather than centrally standardized.

6. Conclusion

The findings of my doctoral dissertation clearly reveal that dialect is a decisive factor shaping how foreign care workers adapt, belong, and contribute within rural caregiving environments in Japan. Dialect influences communicative success, workplace legitimacy, social inclusion, and emotional connection with care recipients. For care workers who enter Japan trained primarily in standardized language forms, the local linguistic environment introduces a second wave of adaptation which is deeply rooted in regional identity and interpersonal connection.

By identifying dialect as a crucial yet overlooked element in foreign care worker integration, the dissertation challenges any sociolinguistic assumptions that standard Japanese alone determines communicative competence. It demonstrates that regional speech varieties function as central communicative mediums in regional care facilities. In this way, dialect shapes both the everyday work of caregiving and the long-term formation of occupational identity among foreign workers.

The ongoing phase of research builds directly on these insights by translating theoretical contributions into applied intervention. The new project will engage with Myanmar care workers through on-site observation, interviews, and documentation of real communicative interactions in Fukui care facilities. One primary outcome is the creation of Fukui-specific dialect teaching resources, tailored to caregiving tasks, emotional needs, and safety-critical language. Such tools will support early adaptation, increase communicative confidence, and reduce friction in multilingual and multicultural workplaces.

At the broader societal level, this research aligns with Japan's ongoing shift toward multicultural coexistence, in which the goal is not simply to accept a foreign labor force, but to foster genuine participation in regional communities. When foreign care workers are empowered to understand and use dialect, language becomes a bridge to belonging rather than a barrier to participation. Improved

communication can strengthen trust between residents and care workers, support worker retention in rural areas, and help municipalities sustain aging-care infrastructures into the future. Ultimately, this research project aims to advancing sociolinguistic knowledge by theorizing dialect as a mediator of integration in professional settings as well as deliver immediate practical value by designing tools and insights that stakeholders can implement regionally

In conclusion, dialect competence is not a minor side-skill, but a core communicative resource through which professional credibility, human connection, and community attachment are built. By continuing to uncover how foreign care workers experience and mobilize dialect in their working lives, this research contributes to creating caregiving environments where linguistic diversity strengthens care, and where every worker is positioned not as an outsider, but as an invaluable member of Japan's evolving social fabric.

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文脈における言語的適応—日本の地方における外国人介護士の統合に果たす方言の役割

ヘネシー・クリストファー

日本の高齢化と人手不足により、外国人介護職員は地域の高齢者ケア体制を維持する上で欠かせない存在となっている。しかし、地域の介護現場で日常的に用いられている方言の重要性は見過ごされ、依然として標準日本語能力の習得が強調される傾向にある。筆者の博士論文『日本の職場および日常生活における外国人労働者の言語的・文化的・専門的適応のプロセス』(Hennessy, 2025)に基づき、本研究ノートは、方言が職場への適応および社会的帰属感の形成において重要な要素であることを明らかにする。福井では、外国人介護職員が高齢利用者とのやり取りの中で日常的に福井方言に接しており、方言は利用者にとって自己のアイデンティティや心の安らぎを表す言語である。限られた表現であっても方言を使用することで、信頼関係や自信、そして人間関係の深化が促されることが示された。現在進行中の研究では、ミャンマー人介護職員を対象とした民族誌的調査を実施しており、インタビュー、参与観察、介護現場での方言使用の記録を組み合わせる。本研究は、外国人介護職員が方言をどのように理解・運用し、その社会的意味をどのように解釈するかを明らかにすることを目的とする。応用的成果として、介護コミュニケーションに特化した「福井方言学習教材」の作成を提案する。本研究は、方言を中心的なコミュニケーション資源として再位置づけることにより、社会言語学的理解を深めるとともに、多文化が共生する地域社会に根ざした包括的な介護環境の構築に貢献するものである。

キーワード：外国人介護士、方言、日本語教育、職場におけるコミュニケーション、多文化共生

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