A Critical Discourse Analysis of ELT Institutional Contradictions in Language Policy and Recruitment in Japan

Simon James Perry*

Center for Global Communication Strategies, College of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo 153-8902, JAPAN

Abstract
This paper analyses a series of websites of language institutions in Japan and highlights the consistent contradictions between the language policies advertised and the recruitment of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) conducted. I did a qualitative website study that involved an analysis of the most in-demand ELT companies and organizations in Japan. The websites were of ELT institutions, which were a mix of private institutions that teach for profit, and organisations that are mediators in supplying teachers (Assistant Language Teachers—ALTs) for schools around the country. The aim of this was to compare and contrast the discourse in language ideology with recruitment policies at these companies regarding NNESTs. Conducting a study of these companies’ websites enabled me to find and highlight trends in recruitment and language ideologies where I found a series of inconsistencies but also some encouraging trends in moves towards a more global outlook in teacher recruitment and discourse ideology. At the heart of the analysis was the question of whether a move towards more NNEST recruitment was due to changes in language ideology or economic necessity. The increase in non-native English-speaking teacher recruitment in Japan would be an encouraging development in attitudes and policy if it was related to a recognition of how the linguistic landscape in the 21st century is evolving but it seems apparent that economic factors are the motivating factor.

Keywords: English language teaching, non-native English-speaking teachers, language policy.

* Corresponding author, email: simonperry80@gmail.com


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1. INTRODUCTION

More non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) are being recruited at ELT institutions across Japan, ranging from small-scale eikawas\(^1\) to government-funded programs such as JET.\(^2\) It is salient to ask whether ideology or economic necessity is the driving force behind this recruitment drive at ELT institutions, which can reflect quite accurately changes in Asia on the whole. If the change can be deemed to be ideological then this is encouraging for the enfranchisement of NNESTs as the shifting sands of the global use of English is being reflected in the various institution’s policies, which will enhance the prestige and self-appreciation of NNESTs teaching both in their home countries and abroad. However, if it can be surmised that changes taking place are borne out of the desire for profit and other economic necessities, then it demonstrates that there is still a dichotomy of NS-NNS attitudes that need to be further challenged to bring about change at a macro level in the ELT industry in Asia. To gain insight into the mechanisms behind NNEST recruitment and the motivating factors behind it, I conducted an analysis of a series of websites of ELT institutions based in Japan.

At the heart of this paper lies the issue of the equity of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) within ELT and how this appears to be stalling in current ELT institutions. Kumaravadivelu (2016) poignantly mentions that:

> Seldom in the annals of an academic discipline have so many people toiled so hard for so long and achieved so little in their avowed attempt at disrupting the insidious structure of inequality in their chosen profession. (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 83)

I aim to address this insidious structure of inequality by highlighting how ELT institutions are increasingly recruiting NNESTs, but seemingly due to economics rather than a shift in ideology. Within ELT the native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are still the dominant partners in the dichotomous relationship with NNESTs, and despite evidence to show otherwise, is considered the better and more legitimate teachers (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Braine, 1999, 2010; Kiczkowiak, 2020; Liu & Zhang, 2007; Mahboob, 2003; Medgyes, 1994). This advantageous position results in better employment opportunities, higher pay, more work benefits, better conditions, and higher self-esteem. NNESTs continue to struggle in gaining employment, especially out of their home country, and when they do gain a position, it is often under conditions that by no means match the gains made by their NEST counterparts. Braine (1999, p. xvii) states how these discriminatory practices against NNESTs are:

> …highly ironic, considering the profession’s strident championing of multiculturalism, diversity, and other socio-political causes, often on behalf of ESL students and immigrants. Although ESL students are praised and admired for the multiculturalism and diversity they bring into language classes, non-native English teachers, who can contribute their rich multicultural, multilingual experiences, are often barred from the same classes. (Braine, 1999, p. xvii)

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\(^1\) Small independent English schools.

\(^2\) The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme.
These inconsistencies are highlighted in this paper where I demonstrate how the discourse espoused by ELT institutions in Japan does not align with their employment policies. Regarding recruitment, I analysed the text in the relevant sections to see how explicitly the requirements were indicated and how recruitment principles aligned with the goals of the company. I looked at the text that was situated in the recruitment requirements section and compared it with the discourse ideology of the institutions to identify inconsistencies. Numerous contradictions were clear, which indicated a trend toward more acceptance of NNESTs within these institutions is driven by economic factors rather than any explicit ideology that would be deemed favourable to NNESTs. The equity of NNESTs in ELT is at the heart of this research, which sought to establish whether signs of change were taking place in Japan.

The research questions for this study are:
1. In ELT institutions in Japan what is the prevalent discourse on the recruitment of NNESTs?
2. Are there inconsistencies between recruitment policies and discourse ideology within ELT institutions in Japan?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

ELT is a big and growing business. The ELT market was worth $33.5 billion in 2018, and that figure is expected to grow to $54.9 billion by 2027. The transnational educational element to the future growth of the ELT industry opens the doors to NNESTs seeking to either enter the industry or gain parity within it. However, NNESTs have traditionally been seen as inauthentic representatives of the English language in the monolingual environment of ELT. Their ability to benefit from the other languages they know has often been ignored or seen as leading to linguistic inaccuracy in the chosen language, and even contamination (Ellis, 2016; Selvi, 2011). Rather than exploit the strengths that exist in their portfolios NNESTs often need to mimic their NEST counterparts and adhere to principles that do not suit them.

Galloway (2014) offered an insight into this indiscréeet discrimination in a study of a qualified multilingual NNEST in Japan, who has been forced to take on a ‘fake American’ identity as a strategy to avoid the perils of being an NNEST in Japan. This serves as an example of what lengths are sometimes necessary to ‘fit in’ and paddle downstream in the current ELT trends. Another example of this mimicking comes from Perry’s (2021) research into a Filipino NNEST working in China who adopted an Australian accent, encouraged by his employers, to seem more ‘native’. The participant began to believe himself in this adopted identity and felt shame towards his non-nativeness as a teacher.

Identity has been a well-explored theme in NNEST research, where there is a sense of ‘impostor syndrome’ (Bernat, 2008). This vacuum was explored more by Medgyes (2017) who writes of the binary nature of NNESTS in that they are both learners and teachers, so this dichotomy of realities naturally creates a pessimistic sense of self that manifests itself in resignation and complicity with the institutional

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3 18 March 2021 06h30 HE | Source: Meticulous Market Research Pvt. Ltd.
standards. Choe (2005) portrayed the NS dominance in Korea and how this affected the self-identity of Korean NNESTs, who were always comparing themselves to this apparent yardstick. Similarly, in Turkey, Dogancay-Aktuna (2008) found that NNESTs had negative self-esteem and viewed other NNESTs in a negative light. They insisted upon the need for them to learn more idiomatic expressions and improve their conversational abilities. Phillipson (1992) also mentions how NNESTs self-doubt their own expertise and judgement, a feeling born from the unjust environment in which they are required to conduct their professional lives. Institutional discourse in ELT speaks of globalism and equality but on the ground, this is seldom translated into reality for the increasing number of NNESTs working in ELT.

At the heart of discrimination against NNESTs is the employment issue and how NESTs are routinely given preferential treatment in matters of employment. Research has demonstrated that there is an element of demographic sorting within ELT. An example of this comes from a questionnaire survey study by Clark and Paran (2007), who found that 72% of English language teaching institutions in the UK made hiring decisions based on perceived native/non-native speaker distinctions in their recruitment. Ruecker and Ives (2014) found similar results through a study conducted on 59 recruitment websites which showed a clear majority of ELT institutions in Southeast Asia were explicitly focused on employing mostly white NESTs. More recently, Kiczkowiak (2020) discovered, through a survey study, that the issue of being ‘non-native’ still carried weight in employment motivations, although he claims it appears to be diminishing slightly. All these apparent barriers placed before NNESTs in recruitment happen despite the ever-increasing necessity and demand for NNESTs (Graddol, 2006). According to Braine (2013, p. 13), “for many NNS English teachers, qualifications, ability, and experience were of little help in the job market where the invisible rule appeared to be No NNS need apply”.

This is demonstrated in Japan and China where in the visa requirements it is often stated that being a native speaker is required. Although NNESTs can get visas in these countries to work as teachers it is often through an agency that charges expensive fees and then continues to take money from the teachers as they renew contracts throughout their period of employment (Perry, 2021).

What other prejudiced product is openly marketed just because of customer demand? Many job ads explicitly or implicitly suggest that the ideal candidate is young, white, and Western-looking (Ruecker & Ives, 2014). Holliday (2008) stated,

I have heard influential employers [in the ELT industry] in Britain say that while they would abolish the discriminatory differentiation between ‘native speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers’ tomorrow, they can’t because their customers demand it. (Holliday, 2008, p. 121)

Kramadibrata (2016) claims there is no rational justification for students preferring NESTs. In private schools’ students are paying higher costs due to employers targeting exclusively NESTs, and paying them higher wages, in order to advertise that there are native teachers, and then this subsequently attracts more students to the school. Kramadibrata (2016) puts students’ preference for NESTs down to subconscious cognitive bias, or what he describes as the Halo Effect. This bias is based on no empirical evidence nor practical outputs, meaning it is possible to counteract and dispel. The research conducted for this paper identified that NNESTs
are being recruited in increasing numbers, however, NNESTs being employed based on their acceptance of a lower salary must not be acceptable for this ignores the professional skills and global positioning that make them equal assets with, and in some cases more than equal with, NESTs.

2.2 ELT Pedagogy

An issue in current ELT pedagogy is that 21st century linguistic realities are not being represented in ELT classrooms (and thus, institutions) globally, which consequently is not allowing NNESTs to professionally take advantage of their potential. Kramsch (2014) summarizes the situation aptly by stating,

There has never been a time when language teaching and learning has been more interactive and more imaginative than today…and yet there has never been a greater tension between what is taught in the classroom and what the students will need in the real world once they have left the classroom. In the last decades, that world has changed to such an extent that language teachers are no longer sure of what they are supposed to teach nor what real world situations they are supposed to prepare their students for. (Kramsch, 2014, p. 296)

Attitudes in research have drifted from a monolingual approach to language teaching to an acceptance that learners possess wide-ranging repertoires of communicative abilities that need to be utilized and it is important to translate this to classroom practices. A shift in ideology within ELT institutions towards more hybrid language policies would be a welcome move that would enhance the legitimacy of NNESTs and ensure that they were recruited in greater numbers on equal terms.

Globalization has been influential in making the field of sociolinguistics shift towards a study of mobile, trans-global networks and linguistic resources (Blommaert, 2012). The traditional concept of language and Saussurean ideals have been further dismantled and moved toward the social matrix and function of language (Hymes, 1989). Linguistically, multilingualism is at the heart of globalization and the trans-global issues that accompany it. Multilingualism in its mobile global context is not a neatly packaged assortment of resources used uniformly throughout time and space, but it instead moves us away from the local when we consider language use across space and time. Blommaert (2012) proposes “truncated” multilingualism (p. 23), in which repertoires of language use are composed of specialized but often underdeveloped resources. These are not “flat” and “smooth” repertoires but ‘chequered’ and representative of the unstable trajectories of the people who possess them (Blommaert, 2012, p. 23). They are grounded in historical events, social systems, and informal learning processes. These chequered repertoires will gradually make most English uses appear to be deviant from the traditional ‘standard’ as the truncated use of English in mobile settings will have evolved. When referring to a multilingual’s repertoire, it is worth specifying what this encompasses. Hall (2019, p. 86) uses the

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Data is difficult to demonstrate regarding financial issues due to the sensitivities involved but research by Saengngoen (2014), Griffith (2015), and Jung (2014) demonstrates disparities in salaries between NESTs and NNESTs in Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea respectively.

Hybrid language policies can be defined as embracing multiple linguistic concepts that serve the same communicative objective. Examples are English as a lingua franca and translanguaging.
term repertoire “to refer to the totality of an individual’s language knowledge” meaning flexibility and not an adherence to a binary notion of competence or not in a language. Multilingual competencies within their repertoires are used according to situational contexts and are thus adaptable and fluid in their nature, something that will be increasingly important in the evolution of ELT pedagogy.

With regards to multilingual pedagogy, Flores and Aneja (2017) propose more immediate attention being drawn to introducing a multilingual perspective into TESOL teacher education and into the classroom. This enhances positivity in their self-identity and encourages them to embrace their multilingualism. Cummins (2007, p. 222) is a proponent of bilingual teaching strategies “that acknowledge the reality of, and strongly promote, two-way cross-language transfer”. This concept is taken further by Garcia and Li (2014) whose research on translanguaging also seeks fluid practices that represent teachers’ and students’ full linguistic repertoires. We need inclusive curriculums that are shaped by the students’ and teachers’ social and cultural backgrounds. Genealogy as an analytical framework is useful here as we cannot take for granted the discourse of current curriculums. We must look at the lineage of how and why the current ELT curriculums exact the principles that they do, and problematise accepted terminology and images within curriculums, and indeed the marketing of ELT. Regarding intercultural communication, where multilingualism is such an asset, Taglialatela (2022) calls for the integration of an English as a lingua franca (ELF)–oriented approach into traditional ELT to develop learners’ full intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence. Interestingly, this involves a dual teaching model, in which there is a structural section (based on native-speaker norms) and an intercultural section (using ELF principles). Baker (2020) is also a proponent of incorporating ELF into ELT pedagogy to increase the sociocultural dimension of communication by using multilingual linguistic resources.

3. METHODS

I analysed websites of ELT institutions in Japan, which were a mix of private institutions that teach for profit, and organisations that are mediators in supplying teachers (Assistant Language Teachers–ALTs) for schools around the country (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JET</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERAC</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECC</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>300 approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEON</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>250 approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GABA</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlitz (Japan)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exponential use of the internet made it an inevitable source of enquiry for my research project as it was apparent the websites used by various ELT institutions were sites of invaluable data that could be used to define trends in NNEST recruitment and discourse ideology. It could be more accurately described as content analysis of
web-based content for the focus of the analysis is on web content as socio-cultural "texts", which can be analysed and interpreted. Describing and exploring the content from a qualitative perspective allowed me to uncover underlying meaning and significance. Essentially, I was examining why the creators of the websites, namely the institutions themselves, have created the content and what are the underlying reasons behind it. What can this content tell us about attitudes to NNESTs and whether these are genuinely changing or not? It was imperative for me to critically examine the meaning of the content to discuss whether it is economics or ideology that is driving changes in teacher demographics at these institutions.

Content analysis was used to apply the theory and principle being examined in my study. Krippendorff (1980) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (p. 21). In describing the advantages of content analysis, Krippendorff (1980) also states that investigation of the text is free from the bias and researcher influence that can plague questionnaire surveys, interviews, and other projective tests. The low costs involved, convenience, and easy accessibility made website analysis an attractive proposition to the project too. However, although not having to engage with users is an advantage of content analysis, I was keen to reach out to various actors in the institutions on whom the websites were based, so as to gather additional data to support my content analysis. I also wanted to clarify my interpretations against the explanations given by those who were determining the policies dictated in the texts. This would prove useful in gathering more data, such as teacher demographic statistics.

Regarding the format of the methodology, I proceeded with the following steps:

1. I formulated the research questions relevant to this research procedure (as presented in the Introduction of this article).
2. I identified variables in the texts across the differing websites.
   This involved analysing the websites to establish which sections were relevant to my research questions and whether there was consistency in my methods across the different institutional websites.
3. I created a coding system.
   The coding system was categorised by:
   a) Recruitment
   b) Discourse ideology
   c) Advertising
   d) Curriculums
   e) Materials
4. I confirmed the sampling.
   The number of websites used was limited to institutions with numerous schools and students, and those with large revenues. This was established by reviewing each institution’s public records.
5. I conducted text analysis.
   I used critical discourse analysis techniques examine and analyse the texts from the websites. CDA is being used to complement content analysis on this project as it enables me to delve into ideological notions that lie beyond the text, which is crucial to my understanding of NNEST enfranchisement. The choice of wording on the websites is deliberate and crucial to answering my questions of the economic or ideological leanings of the companies in their decision to employ more NNESTs. Using Wodak’s (2001) framework of systematically collecting text samples, I could
determine the interrelationship of discourses that exist on the websites. I could thus analyse the ideologies involved in the sets of discourses on the websites highlighting the contradictions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Prevalent Discourse on the Recruitment of NNESTs in ELT Institutions in Japan

In the analysis of recruitment policies, there were three groups of ELT companies that I analysed. Two companies that recruit Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), are ELT schools aimed at adults, and ELT schools aimed at children. Firstly, I examined two companies, JET, and INTERAC, that employ ALTs to be placed in public schools across Japan. On the Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET) website, it states in Part 6 of the general applicant criteria the candidate must:

(1) Be adept in contemporary standard pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation in the designated language and possess excellent language ability that can be applied accurately and appropriately; have the ability to form sentences in a comprehensive and logical manner.

When I enquired about how they define ‘standard pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation’ the answer was that it:

(2) Just simply refers to the standard language as opposed to a dialect. In the Japanese version it says 「現代の標準的な発音、リズム、イントネーション」, but it basically just means having an excellent ability of the standard language.

The issue of native-speakerism continues in the requirements when stated:

(3) In the case of English-speaking countries (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, South Africa, Philippines, Singapore, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, etc.) the designated language is English.

Interestingly the Philippines has been designated as an English-speaking country, despite Filipino, a form of Tagalog, being the most widely spoken national language and unofficial lingua franca. English is an official language, but this is different from being considered a native language, which is widely considered to be Filipino. Article XIV Section 6 of the Philippines 1987 constitution declares that:

(4) The National language of the Philippines is Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages.

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6 http://jetprogramme.org/en
7 Translation: Standard modern pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.
8 Taken from an email on 06/01/2022 in correspondence with jet-aa@clair.or.jp.
9 http://jetprogramme.org/en/eligibility/
This does not appear to be in line with JET’s claim for it being a designated ‘native’ language, which would indicate that the company is justifying its increasing recruitment there under ‘native-speaker’ standards.

The ambiguity of whether NNESTs meet the requirements is also present in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the website where one of the listed questions asks:

(5) I am not from an English-speaking country, but I majored in English and have experience as an English teacher. Can I apply to become an ALT?

The answer states:

(6) Depending on your situation, you may be eligible to participate as an ALT. Please contact the Embassy or Consulate General of Japan in your country of citizenship for further information.11

Looking at the Japanese embassy in Manila, the Philippines, it repeats the JET website’s requirement that applicants must be adept in contemporary standard pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation in English. However, to clarify this, it is also stated that:

(7) An applicant’s ability to use the English language accurately and appropriately will be assessed based on the information he or she will provide in the application documents, as well as the results of an in-house English exam.12

This does not seem to be consistent with applicants in the Philippines being designated as ‘native-speakers’ by the JET program as it is deemed necessary for them to conduct a demonstration of their English ability, something not done in the USA, UK, Australia, etc.

INTERAC13 is another company that recruits ALTs for public schools in Japan, although it is not a governmental organisation and operates for profit. The requirements to be an ALT, as advertised on their website, state that applicants must:

(8) Be a native-level speaker of English
And:
Have studied a second language at school or university14

Highlighted are two interesting excerpts from the requirements. Firstly, “Be a native-level speaker of English” is significant because it moves beyond the requirement of “native-speaker”. Adding ‘level’ indicates that NNESTs, particularly from Kachru’s outer and expanding circles are seemingly welcome to apply and consider themselves eligible. As with Kiczkowiak’s (2020) study into NNEST employment no official definitions were offered on the website to be more specific about this, but it appeared to be a positive development regarding NNEST recruitment policy. The second interesting requirement, listed as less important than the previous, is that it would help if the applicants, “Have studied a second language at school or

11 http://jetprogramme.org/en/faq01/
12 https://www.ph.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/00_000147.html
13 https://interacnetwork.com
14 https://interacnetwork.com/how-to-apply/requirements/
university”. This broadens the scope of recruitment significantly and opens up enquiries from a wider range of potential NNESTs.

For the recruitment of Filipino teachers, INTERAC uses Chesham Recruitment Inc.,15 which is a Philippines-based agent, licensed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. There are extra requirements for the potential ALTS coming through this agency. For example, video demonstrations are required in the recruitment process as a way to filter those who are deemed to have a suitable level of English. This video test also assesses accents with a ‘native’ English-speaking employee being the assessor as to whether it will suffice. Chesham proudly states in its job advertisement for Filipino ALTs that:

(9) THE ALT CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING THE COMPENSATION PACKAGE ON OFFER, IS PRECISELY THE SAME AS THAT OFFERED TO NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING LANGUAGE TEACHERS RECRUITED FROM THE WEST.16

This indicates that the NEST-NNEST dichotomy is being used as a marketing tool. Regarding accent, Chesham stringently requires that candidates must have:

(10) THE ABILITY TO TEACH ENGLISH WITH A SUSTAINED NEUTRALIZED ACCENT.

Recruits are also informed:

(11) YOU WILL UNDERGO AN ACCENT ASSESSMENT TEST.

It also states that:

(12) Locally accented English is absolutely not acceptable, especially in a Japanese high school setting.17

There is another interesting passage in the recruitment advertisement that portrays attitudes among Filipinos about how they are seen abroad, exposing insecurities that can be deemed unnecessary. It states:

(13) In Japan, you will be judged not just on the delivery of your English lessons in the classroom, especially on your fluency and non-accented English in a High School setting, but also with regards to the quality of your English speaking and writing skills in your communications with your native English-speaking and other branch colleagues.18

This is not a discourse that would be expressed towards potential teachers from inner-circle countries and demonstrates the obstacles faced by NNESTs working in an environment abroad, especially when alongside NESTs. It supports Perry’s (2021) study of NNESTs working in China who needed to go through agencies to gain employment, a process that was lengthy and expensive.

Having examined the two major companies that provide ALTs to public schools in Japan, I now turn to private English language schools in Japan. Berlitz19 is a well-
known international ELT company with a large presence in Japan. Regarding recruitment, the most notable text comes in the FAQs section, where Question 11 is:

(14) I’m not a native English speaker. Can I still teach English at Berlitz?

The response is:

(15) We are looking for native or native-fluent instructors, as evidenced by our English instructors coming from over 70 different countries.20

At Berlitz, each individual opening has specific requirements laid out, but all English-teaching positions state requirements similar to the following:

(16) Our Language Centers (LCs) in the Kanto Area are looking for a diverse group of native (or native-fluent) English speakers for an immediate start.21

The recruitment website states that 1.7 thousand teachers are coming from over 70 countries with 17 different languages taught.22 Although not conclusive this could indicate that there are more teachers recruited to teach than from the number of countries in the inner circle. This is supported by their claim in the FAQ section that:

(17) Our English instructors coming from over 70 different countries.23

Further evidence is provided that NNESTs are employed in the visa requirements section, which states:

(18) Applicants from non-English speaking countries should provide detailed information on degrees held and proof of 12 years of education in a native English-speaking environment.24

On the student website for Berlitz in Japan, with a focus on English, a question is asked in the FAQ section:

(19) What is the nationality of the teacher?

To which the answer is:

(20) We employ teachers from all over the world, including America, Europe, and Asia. In order to provide more practical lessons, we actively employ teachers of various nationalities.

It further states that:

(21) In order to provide more practical lessons, we actively recruit teachers with high language skills from all over the world.25

20 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/faq/
21 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/
22 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/reputation/
23 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/faq/
24 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/apply/visa_support_requirement/
25 https://www.berlitz.com/ja-jp/faq
In this last answer, it becomes clear that Berlitz employs NNESTs and understandably justifies this as offering the students an international outlook of the English language. However, the ideology as advertised on their website contradicts this, as will be seen in the next section.

At AEON recruitment is done under the subsidiary AEON Intercultural USA. On the front page of the website, there is a multicultural group of teachers posing over the caption “Teachers from all around the world.”

Figure 1. AEON advertising photo.

This immediately sets the tone on the recruitment agenda for AEON and a NNEST enquiring into this company will be enthused as they observe the deliberately multi-ethnic image that welcomes potential teachers. This is seemingly an advancement from the research conducted by Ruecker and Ives (2014) who concluded that there is a ‘halo effect’ surrounding NESTs due to their being predominantly white and western looking, but as seen in Figure 2, this still appears to be prevalent in student recruitment advertising as opposed to teacher recruitment. In a similar vein, there is further encouragement within the text where it states:

(22) AEON recruits from several English-speaking countries around the world, as we realize that diversity is essential to the well-rounded education of our students.

This was confirmed in correspondence with AEON who stated:

(23) What we can say is that we hire candidates from all over the world, so we do have teachers that come from countries where English is not the primary language.

Regarding the specifics of the recruitment policy, it states that:

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26 https://www.aeonet.com
27 https://www.aeonet.com
28 https://www.aeonet.com
29 Taken from an email received on 20/08/2022 from aeonrecruiting@aeonet.com
All applicants must have a strong and masterful command of the English language and a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution.\(^{30}\)

To clarify further there is a question in the FAQ section that asks:

Is it a problem if I’m from a non-English-speaking country or I’m not a citizen of an English-speaking country?

In response, AEON states:

AEON requires a perfect command of the English language. Applicants from countries where English is not the native language (or not the only native language) must have a total of at least 10 years of education from schools where English is the primary mode of education, including a bachelor’s degree from an English-speaking country.\(^{31}\)

In contrast to the encouraging text on the teacher recruitment website regarding country of origin, the Japanese website for Japanese administrative staff states:

In principle, AEON recruits foreign teachers in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, and currently has two Personnel Centers (bases for hiring foreigners) in the United States.\(^{32}\)

As stated by Graddol (2006), there is a need for NNESTs within the industry and they are increasingly recruited but the discourse aimed at students leads them to believe that they will be taught by NESTs, which does not correspond with the recruitment policies.

NOVA\(^{34}\) states in its requirements section that teachers must have native level English, although nationality requirements are conspicuous by their absence. Upon further enquiry on their LinkedIn profile, it states that they are:

Recruiting teachers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK and the US to teach English in Japan at Nova English schools.\(^{35}\)

This seems clear, but the NOVA LinkedIn page indicates in the people section that their teacher demographics are actually more diverse. There were profiles of NOVA teachers originating from the Philippines, Indonesia, and India.\(^{36}\)

At GABA\(^{37}\) in the requirements section of the recruitment website, it states potential teachers must possess:

\(^{30}\) https://www.aeonet.com/application-requirements/

\(^{31}\) https://www.aeonet.com/frequently-asked-questions/

\(^{32}\) Translation: In principle, AEON recruits foreign teachers in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, and currently has two Personnel Centers (bases for hiring foreigners) in the United States.

\(^{33}\) https://www.aeonet.co.jp/company/

\(^{34}\) https://nova-holdings.jp/teachinginjapan

\(^{35}\) https://www.linkedin.com/company/nova-holdings/)

\(^{36}\) https://www.linkedin.com/company/nova-holdings/people/

\(^{37}\) https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com
(29) Native-level English (all nationalities considered).

This is expanded upon when it states that potential teachers:

(30) Must have a fluent command of English (both spoken and written). 38

Furthermore, in the FAQ section, a question asks:

(31) What are the requirements to become a Gaba Instructor?

To which the answer is:

(32) You must speak, read, and write English fluently. While you do not need to be a native speaker, a confident command of the language is essential as lessons are taught entirely in English. 39

GABA is actively recruiting NNESTs as is reflected on the open positions page for candidates outside of Japan, which states:

(33) We accept applications all year round from applicants of any nationality and country of residence. 40

In general, an initial look at ELT recruitment websites in Japan would indicate that there has been progress in NNEST recruitment since studies conducted by Clarke and Paran (2007) and Ruecker and Ives (2014) demonstrated indiscreet discriminatory recruitment policies. It is encouraging to see that more NNESTs are being recruited, even if the websites do not explicitly state this, which is in step with current trends in English usage, and employment, but the methodology of most of these companies contradicts their recruitment policies, as discussed in the next section.

4.2 Inconsistencies between Recruitment Policies and Discourse Ideology within ELT Institutions in Japan

This section on discourse ideology analyses the ELT institutions’ websites and lays bare how the discourse does not align with the recruitment policies they are currently following. Analysing the texts closely offers significant indicators as to the image the companies wish to portray to their clients and potential employees, and it should align with their recruitment policies and methodologies but seldom does. The texts go beyond words and incorporate images and various social media. These all offer an interesting insight, not into the realities of how these ELT institutions carry out their business, but into how they think it is most beneficial to be portrayed. According to the mission statement of INTERAC:

(34) INTERAC teachers enrich the lives of hundreds of thousands of Japanese school children every year by delivering interactive and exciting English lessons, sharing their knowledge of English, and giving insights into other cultures. 41

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38 https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com/
39 https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com/faqs/
40 https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com/out-of-country-applicants/
41 https://interacnetwork.com/about-us/
The pluralisation of culture provides an insight into the developing mentality of the company as does the image of an ALT of Asian ethnic origin on the title page of the website besides the words “Make a world of difference”.42 There is no accident in the use of ‘world’ in describing the difference the ALTs could make. There is an effort to align themselves with a globalised world that is edging away from Kachru’s inner-circle English-speaking nations.

In the section of the website titled ‘What is an ALT?’ it states:

(35) ALTs serve as an ambassador to promote cultural understanding and international communication. Being an ALT is more than just teaching, you’re a window to the world for your students and community.43

We must consider the meaning behind this. Is this a genuine mindset and acceptance of linguistic globalization, or justification for evolving employment techniques, that will eventually see a pay freeze and lessening of conditions for the ALTs being employed? According to the website as of 2021, as an INTERAC ALT, you will most likely receive a gross annual salary of approximately ¥2.4–¥2.7 million per year, which is considered relatively low due to the various expenses and deductions that will be made. The employment review websites Indeed and Glassdoor reveal that the conditions are getting worse for employees of INTERAC. A current employee wrote:

(36) The contract is getting more and more ridiculous. It is so easy for them to replace any ALT. They always try to be in the gray line with the labor law. No benefits such as social insurance. Not even a proper health check.44

This is a sentiment shared across the websites, as demonstrated by another current employee with statements such as:

(37) INTERAC’s salary is very low, and opportunity for growth is severely limited. Very mediocre pay with a huge lack of opportunities to get raises. The salary is low comparable to other jobs in the same industry. The pay is not cutting it.45

Glassdoor summarises the satisfaction with INTERAC salary with a score of 2.1/546, which is considerably low compared to other education companies.

Switching to the independent ELT companies that profit directly from teaching English, we get a more accurate picture of apparent contradictions due to the drive for profit and marketing that accompanies it. Berlitz has a vast global presence, and it states on its recruitment website for Japan that teachers will “Be part of a global team”.47 This indicates a sense of globalism in its recruitment process, supported by its recruitment policies that ambiguously state that NNESTs would be welcome to apply. Students at Berlitz are informed that they will learn with:

42 https://interacnetwork.com/
43 https://interacnetwork.com/alt/
47 https://teach.berlitz.co.jp/
(38) Situations based on not only the language but also the culture.

This comes under the heading “Cross-cultural understanding,” aligning with Blommaert’s (2012) observations about transglobal networks and linguistic resources. The website also state that:

(39) To get the most out of your language skills, you need to understand the culture that uses the language.

This relates to integrative motivation for the culture of the target language, which does not align with the recruitment of English teachers not from inner-circle countries. It also does not relate entirely to a ‘global’ environment for the culture associated with the English language is based on countries that are traditionally seen to be the standard. On the website, they claim that:

(40) Language and cross-cultural understanding contribute to the progress of mankind. That is Berlitz’s belief.

This seems to be selective in that the understanding of different cultures is restricted to the USA, UK, Australia, etc.

At AEON, in his message to potential students, the company president states:

(41) 昨今、急速にオンライン化が加速する中、これまで以上にグローバル化や多様性が求められる時代となりました。
In recent years, with the rapid acceleration of online work, we have entered an era in which globalization and diversity are required more than ever.

In this environment, AEON claim to offer:

(42) English education with authentic conversation practice to give them (students) the skills they’ll need to succeed.

It is left open to interpretation of what is meant by ‘authentic’, but it is no doubt synonymous with ‘native’, which again contradicts their employment practices. They also state on their website for potential students that they’ll be taught by a セイワイツイク外人教師 “native foreign teacher”. This is followed by an image that shows three white western-looking teachers interacting with students.

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48 https://www.berlitz.com/ja-jp
49 https://www.berlitz.com/ja-jp/why-berlitz
50 https://www.berlitz.com/ja-jp/about-berlitz
51 Translation: In recent years, with the rapid acceleration of online work, we have entered an era in which globalization and diversity are required more than ever.
52 https://www.aeonet.co.jp/company/aboutus/message.html
53 https://www.aeonet.com/english-education/students-expectations/
54 https://www.aeonet.co.jp/reason/teacher.html#point
55 https://www.aeonet.co.jp/reason/teacher.html#point
In the first text, which promises the students ‘native’ English, there is a depiction of an interaction where the teacher is teaching the idiomatic phrase “Can I take a rain check?” Thus, AEON is selling the students on idiomatic NS standard language that they claim will help them advance in their professional lives. The third caption gives a promise of cultural understanding for the target language and depicts a Western custom, demonstrating how the promise of cross-cultural understanding is not truly global but based on Western standards.

On the student’s website FAQ section, a question is:

(43) Where are the foreign teachers from?

To which the answer is:

(44) Foreign teachers are hired locally at overseas recruitment offices. Many of our foreign teachers are from North America, England, and Australia.56

The ambiguity is clear here and there is a refusal to declare that they are actively hiring NNESTs because this would not fit in with the ideology they are portraying. Instead, they refer to ‘many’ of their teachers being ‘native speakers’, and only mention three inner circle countries as examples. This website is aimed at potential students but should potential NNESTs also examine this website to gather more information about the company and its methods then they would surely suffer from what ‘imposter syndrome’ (Bernat, 2008).

AEON reveals that:

(45) While all of our students come to AEON because they want to learn and use English, a growing number are coming because they need to use English at work. They are looking to their teachers to guide and support them in reaching their goals.57

56 https://www.aeonet.co.jp/faq/
57 https://www.aeonet.com/english-education/students-expectations/
Whether AEON’s interpretation of what their students need at work responds to the growing realities is questionable. On the student’s website, they state:

(46) ビジネスシーンで使う英語は「きちんととした正確な英語で話すこと」が重要。58
When it comes to English used in business situations, it is important to speak in proper and accurate English.59

This does not seem to reflect the fact that most business transactions are with other non-native English speakers. At NOVA they run a seminar in their business English program designed for the ‘real world’ workplace called ‘cross-cultural adaptability’, despite stating that the teachers will only be native English speakers.60

The message seems to be that teachers from inner-circle countries are guaranteed for students that will attend NOVA schools but browsing on the NOVA LinkedIn recruitment page indicates that many NNESTs are currently working for NOVA or

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58 Translation: When it comes to English used in business situations, it is important to speak in proper and accurate English.
59 https://www.aeonet.co.jp/course/business/
60 https://www.nova.co.jp/biz/wp/
61 https://nova-holdings.jp/teachinjapan/
62 https://nova-holdings.jp/teachinjapan/aboutus.html#:~:text=All%20NOVA%20instructors%20are%20native,they%20start%20teaching%20for%20NOVA.
63 Translation: The countries of origin of the teachers are also different. By touching various “raw English”, “English ears” will grow.
64 https://nova-schoolblog.info/2022/08/22/%E3%80%90%E8%8B%B1%E4%BC%9A%E8%A9%B1-%E9%87%91%E6%B2%A2%E3%80%91%E2%9C%8A%20%E5%91%A8%E5%B9%B4%E8%A8%98%E5%BF%B5%E5%BC%81%E5%85%A5%E4%BC%9A%E3%82%AD%E3%83%A3%E3%83%B3%E3%83%9A%E3%83%BC/
have been until recently. There were teachers whose origin was Indonesia, the Philippines, Fiji, Vietnam, and India.\(^{65}\)

On the GABA website, it states:

(50) The need for English among our clients falls into two main categories – participating in global business, or for travel and hobby reasons.\(^{66}\)

The general message is that spoken communication is the aim for use on the international stage, which seems to be supported by the company’s promise of diversity and equity, which is highlighted on the website stating:

(51) Specifically, Gaba’s policy is to work with instructors to ensure fair treatment without regard to race, nationality, sex, religion, age, education, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and disability. In doing so we aim to ensure that all instructors, Gaba staff, and clients will continue to benefit from involvement in a learning environment with an extremely diverse group of participants. This policy applies to all of Gaba’s dealings with instructors. All decisions made by Gaba regarding recruitment, lesson remuneration, belting, certification, and all other matters related to its dealings with instructors will be made without bias. In addition, Gaba expects that all interactions between its staff, instructors, and clients will be fair, non-discriminatory, and consistent with this policy.\(^{67}\)

This is important in order to promote more equity at such companies, and it is backed up by the message to students, who are informed that:

(52) There are teachers from various countries of origin, so you can talk to instructors from many countries while staying in Japan.\(^{68}\)

However, they are referred to as ‘Carefully Selected Natural English Speakers’\(^ {69}\), which is not further explained. Furthermore, when explaining the benefits of their diverse range of teachers, students are informed it is beneficial for them if “they want to know local information when traveling to the United States, and so on”,\(^ {70}\) which is a convenient example to demonstrate integrative motivation that does not match the promise for a global outlook.

On the chosen ELT websites, the discourse regarding global outlooks both culturally and linguistically appears to counter Kramsch’s (2014) claims of a lack of real-world exposure in ELT classrooms. However, she was predominantly referring to the exposure to different ways of communicating in English among different cultures and nationalities, and the ambiguity still remains in that sense. We cannot separate economics from ideology in NNEST recruitment as it appears that the motivation behind NNEST recruitment is economic. Ideally, ideology representing globalism, multilingualism, and English for a transnational cliental would be based on the pedagogic change that reflects the strengths of NNESTs, but this is not evident nor likely to appear in the near future as the neoliberal influence on ELT ideology maintains that NS norms are the ideal arena in which to maximize profit. Toh (2019)

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\(^{65}\) https://www.linkedin.com/company/wearenova/people/
\(^{66}\) https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com/our-approach/
\(^{67}\) https://www.gabateachinginjapan.com/policies/
\(^{68}\) https://www.gaba.co.jp/
\(^{69}\) https://www.gaba.co.jp/aboutgaba/instructor.html
\(^{70}\) https://www.gaba.co.jp/aboutgaba/instructor.html
demonstrated in his study of a new ELF program being installed at a university in Japan, where ingrown and ingrained practices in English teaching were constant obstacles to change.

The texts on the websites analysed have nothing to indicate there has been an ideological shift, especially with regard to multilingualism or other NNEST capabilities. This would indicate that economic factors could be more prevalent in the upshift towards NNEST employment. This can be a result of two factors. The first, and likely most prominent, is that ELT institutions are seeking to cut costs and maximize profit. How this profit is distributed and the reasons behind wishing to increase it are beyond the scope of this paper, but it would be appearing to influence recruitment trends. The onset of COVID-19 and its impending consequences might serve to enhance this trend as companies seek to make up for financial losses and NESTs are more reluctant to travel so far from home. NNESTs are willing to work for less as low wages by Japanese standards still appear attractive to local wages in a country such as the Philippines. They may also stagnate wages as they employ more NNESTs as the NESTs currently working in these schools are easily replaceable by a steady stream of NNESTs willing and eager to move abroad for work.

5. CONCLUSION

It is evident that the increased recruitment of NNESTs by ELT institutions in Japan is based on economics and maximizing profits but the door to change can be opened. For change to happen, attitudes to pedagogical innovations that embrace multilingual concepts at these institutions, and how it is accurately advertised, would need to be changed, as would the materials used, which would be a big undertaking that requires commitment and the support of the teachers, management, and students. Change depends on the nature of the institution and to what degree profit is their motivation and whether the adoption of NNESTs is related to the profit made. Private institutions will be open to employing NNESTs as the market will dictate that they can save money by paying them less, and as a result, hybrid policies may be introduced to legitimize the teacher demographic at such institutions. At public institutions with less necessity to create profits, pedagogic ideologies will be more at the heart of change as research expands into the field. If there is profit in hybrid language ideologies, then this would also be a catalyst for change. As the growing amount of literature about multilingualism, ELF, translanguaging, and other hybrid policies has an impact on the psyche of language teaching there will be those in positions of power converted as they see trends that they wish to be on top of. However, behind the change, there are numerous obstacles associated with obscured practices, undisclosed agendas and financially and ideologically motivated (inter)actions of various actors.

The role NNESTs can play in enforcing change is crucial to their equity within ELT. As their numbers increase at these institutions, they will gain more autonomy to dictate how they wish to be perceived both among their colleagues and by the students they teach. They can be in control of these perceptions as they exploit their assets and attract credit for themselves. It is also vital to consider what the students will desire in the future of ELT. As more and more students experience English use in more regional contexts that do not involve perceived native-speakers of English they may come to realize that focusing on native-speaker ideologies is of no immediate benefit to them
and their everyday use of English. Their status and desires must be considered by ELT institutions that rely on them for profit.

To supplement this study, it would be useful for future research to focus on more quantitative methods to ascertain more accurate numbers of NNESTs being employed by ELT institutions in Japan. Without concrete facts and numbers, there is always a degree of speculation and hearsay. The study could be expanded to Taiwan, South Korea, China, and other Asian countries to gain more regional insight and this could lead to a comparative study with Europe, Australasia, and North America, which could demonstrate similarities and differences in how economic motivations are affecting recruitment drives. Events such as Brexit in the UK could be influencing more NNESTs being employed around the EU for example.

REFERENCES


