

# Teacher Cognition and the Dual System of English Education in Japan

William Green

## 1. Introduction

Teachers' classroom practices are influenced by cognitive structures and processes. These include the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, knowledge and principles that teachers have about their teaching. The study of teacher cognition involves investigating the origin, nature and evolution of these cognitive structures with a view to understanding the relationship between cognition and practice. Teacher cognition research has been conducted in general education for about 25 years, and in language teaching for the past 15 years.

The teacher cognition research which is reported in this paper was conducted in the English department at an institution of tertiary education in Japan. The students in the department have both Japanese teachers of English and native English-speaking teachers from Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA. The department is an example of one of the defining particularities of the English language education situation in Japan, in which students at secondary and tertiary levels are taught by both Japanese and expatriate teachers of English. These two sets of teachers are assumed to have different strengths and to make different contributions to language education. Curriculum decisions about courses, their content, and suitable teachers for the courses are predicated on these assumptions. Exploring how this dual system works in this department, and how teachers see their teaching as part of

it will illuminate an important part of the English language teaching landscape in Japan.

The main aim of the research is to discover what the assumptions and intentions implicit in the dual system are, and whether they are actually borne out in the classroom. A central assumption in the situation, for example, is that expatriate teachers (ETs) adopt a homogeneous way of teaching, which differs from the approach adopted by all the Japanese teachers (JTs). The research is designed to problematize assumptions of this type and to look at the complexity of the situation more critically than has been customary. This is done by examining the practices of the two groups of teachers, and their thinking about their teaching, with the students' reactions to their teaching playing a secondary role in the research. I am concerned with the experiences and cognition underlying teachers' classroom practices, and the ways in which cognition and practice are affected by teachers' perceptions of the dual system of teaching and their role within it.

In this paper first of all I present my current research questions in section 2. In section 3 I present a review of the literature on second language teachers' cognition. This informs my investigation of the teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities with regard to the dual system, and their perceptions of each other. I then report the study in which I interviewed four teachers (sections 4 and 5), and administered a questionnaire to a group of 34 students (section 6). The latter three sections include an analysis of the data gathered in the study, and finally in section 7 I draw conclusions and propose future directions for the research.

## 2. Research Questions

The aim of the research is to reach an interpretive understanding of the English language education system in the institution under study, which is a version of the system dominant in tertiary institutions in Japan, in which Japanese and expatriate teachers of English work alongside each other. I call this situation the "dual teaching system".

My first research question (RQ) is overarching, encapsulating the main aim of the research which is stated above.

\*RQ1: What does the dual teaching system involve in practice?

In order to answer this overarching research question it has been necessary to posit and answer a series of other questions. Research Questions 2 and 3 below have been addressed by analysing data resulting from a questionnaire administered to students in the department. I have interviewed four colleagues in the department in an attempt to answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 5 below.

### 2.1 RQs and the students' questionnaire

\*RQ2: To what extent are the assumptions and intentions implicit in the dual system borne out in the classroom?

Two key assumptions in the system are that the Japanese teachers (JTs) and expatriate teachers (ETs) form two different groups, and that each group has its own way of working which differs from the other. The membership of each group can be established with reference to the teachers' mother tongue (there are no bilingual teachers), but any pedagogical distinctions between the groups thus established

are only assumed to exist. My first task has been to question this assumption, which I did by administering a questionnaire to students (see section 6). The open-ended questionnaire items asked only about ETs, but the students' responses contrasted ETs' practices with those of the JTs, and I have taken this to mean that these two groups are pedagogically distinguishable in the perceptions of the students. At the same time, however, it has emerged from my analysis of the data that the students also perceived some differences among the practices of the ETs. This analysis has provided the students' perspective on the teaching situation, and suggested that assumptions about teachers' homogeneous approach to teaching may prove to be unfounded. The next stage in the research has been to investigate these assumptions from the viewpoint of the teachers.

## 2.2 RQs and the teachers' interviews

With the two groups established, the next assumption I have brought into question is that ETs work in a unitary way that differs from the way all the JTs teach.

\*RQ3: What differences and similarities emerge in the cognition and reported practices of ETs? What differences and similarities emerge in the cognition and reported practices of JTs?

These questions were approached using interviews in which four teachers (two Japanese teachers, JT1 and JT2; two expatriate teachers, ET1 and ET2) were asked to describe their own practices, explain the thinking behind them, and identify the similarities and differences that they perceived in the ways that JTs and ETs worked. The analysis of the teachers'

interview data has revealed more complexity in the situation than I had anticipated. I had expected the teachers to be working in similar ways within their group, and in different ways across groups. Although there are elements of these features in the interview data, a far more complex picture has emerged, which has defeated many of my own expectations. I have therefore set out to interrogate the interview data further to discover how the teachers characterized their colleagues, and where possible, themselves. I want to determine the assumptions and expectations of the teachers in the dual system to answer my next research question:

\*RQ4: What assumptions and expectations do JTs hold about ETs? What assumptions and expectations do ETs hold about JTs?

My analysis of the teachers' interview data (see Section 4 below) aims to reach a clearer understanding of the teachers' assumptions and expectations, and once this has been established, the next stage in the research is to discover whether these are borne out or defeated in the classroom.

\*RQ5: To what extent are teachers' assumptions and expectations supported or contradicted by teachers' reports of their own practices?

My analysis of the extensive reports of classroom practices that teachers made during their interviews is presented below in Section 5. I recognize that the teachers' reports may not be an accurate reflection of classroom events, and I am presently in the process of adding classroom observation to the research.

### 3. Literature Review

Teachers' practices are influenced by cognitive structures

and processes made up of thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, knowledge and principles that teachers have about teaching. Studying teacher cognition means looking at the origin, characteristics and development of these cognitive structures with the aim of understanding the relationship between cognition and practice. Teachers' perceptions of their situation and conceptualizations of their teaching and that of their colleagues form a central part of my research project; teacher cognition research is therefore very relevant to my own work.

There are three specific areas of the literature which relate to my research, and I take each of these in turn.

### 3.1 The role of context in forming teachers' cognitions

Context is structured on a number of levels, from the national educational system down to individual classrooms. Borg (2003: 106) argues that an awareness of context is crucial for a full understanding of the field:

Greater understandings of the contextual factors - e.g., institutional, social, instructional, physical - which shape what language teachers do are central to deeper insights into relationships between cognition and practice.

In her study of six ESL teachers working in Australia, Anne Burns (1996) discovered that "teachers' thinking cohered around interconnecting and interacting 'contextual' levels" (Burns 1996: 157) which were interdependent, interactive and mutually influential. The three levels were an institutional focus, a classroom focus, and an instructional focus. The institutional focus involved the teachers' perceptions of the educational philosophy of their workplace, and how language programmes

were designed and implemented there. At the classroom level, the teachers' personal philosophies with regard to language, learning and the students were influential in their course and lesson planning. The teachers' concerns with classroom management, resources and instructional techniques constituted the third contextual focus.

In my study, university teachers in Japan have used their perceptions of context as a rationale for their classroom actions. For example, one teacher used his beliefs about the nature of the English education received by Japanese students in high school in his definition of his own role as a teacher of university students:

Perhaps Japan, maybe Korea and Taiwan, are the only places in the world where most of the really hard work has been done for you beforehand. The work we're doing at colleges now is more bringing out the stuff that they've already got and developing it. (Interview with ET2, lines 129-33)

The major element of context, however, is the framework made up of the two groups of English teachers, Japanese and expatriates, but to date there has been no research that I can find about the influence of this dual system on teachers involved in it, nor very much about the influence on teachers of colleagues working in a different group. These are two areas of teacher cognition research which I hope to be able to illuminate.

In research reports the context of the study is usually described in some detail, but the relationship between it and teacher cognition is often left implicit. Here I look at those studies which make explicit the relationship between cognition

and context.

### 3.1.1 Colleagues

Part of the context of most teaching situations is made up of one's colleagues. Crookes and Arakaki (1999) found that the colleagues of the teachers in their study were a constructive influence, coming second only to accumulated teaching experience as a source of teaching ideas. New ideas were most likely to be accepted from colleagues who had used and endorsed them, rather than from training or workshops. The results of this study show that colleagues can be an important influence on a teacher's classroom practice.

Deborah Binnie Smith (1996) found that colleagues were one of the contextual factors influential in teachers' classroom decision-making. In one of the three institutions Smith researched, the teachers worked in collaboration with colleagues in order to plan courses. At the other two institutions, she found that no such collaborative arrangements seemed to exist. Without further research in this area, Smith was left to speculate that the smaller size of the department where collaboration occurred was in some way responsible for this feature.

So far I have been unable to find any studies which examine the effects of teachers' perceptions of colleagues on their deeper cognition. This area is of particular interest to me as it is evident from interview data that teachers' perceptions of the other group's members contributes to their own sense of their pedagogical role. As far as I can ascertain, the influence of colleagues on teacher cognition has so far gone unstudied.



### 3.1.2 Curriculum

In my study, curricular decisions are predicated on the existence of two groups of teachers. Teachers' interpretations of the curriculum form a central feature of Woods' (1991) longitudinal study which aimed to examine the curricular, teaching and learning processes from the teacher's perspective. Woods reported on two teachers whom he interviewed regularly throughout an ESL course, also asking them to keep teaching logs, and conducting stimulus recall sessions. Woods found that the teachers' underlying beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning became apparent through a coherent series of themes in the data, and that these beliefs were key in the teachers' interpretations of the curriculum. For example, Woods characterized one of his subjects as preferring classroom decisions which would accomplish the goals of the curriculum, and the other as preferring decisions which responded to students' needs and wants. This individuality of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge led to very individual interpretations of the curriculum, and Woods warns that ELT programmes must allow for these individual interpretations.

Other studies have shown that curriculum may have less significance than Woods concludes. In her study into three ESL situations in Canada, Smith (1996) found that the curricular objectives of the courses were only loosely defined by the institutions concerned, and that this relative freedom allowed teachers to plan their own courses. Teachers felt that the institutions were providing just a "sense" of the course. Nunan (1992) also found that the curriculum, in its manifestation as programme goals and objectives, had little

influence on the decision-making processes of both experienced and inexperienced teachers. He found that the focus for both groups of teachers was on classroom management and on learning tasks, so that lessons evolved through the tasks chosen.

The curriculum is the aspect of institutional influence that one might surmise has greatest impact on teachers, but these studies show that it can in fact be virtually ignored while teachers concentrate on classroom and instructional elements of their teaching.

### 3.1.3 Students

Kathleen Bailey (1996) asked why teachers decide to depart from their lesson plans, and what principles guide their decision-making. Using classroom observation, interviews and stimulus recall sessions, Bailey gathered data from which she derived six principles on which teachers depart from their lesson plans:

1. To serve the common good, e.g. to answer a student's question because it will benefit the other students;
2. To teach to the moment, which means adopting an unplanned alternative that is timely;
3. To further the lesson, e.g. by reducing the number of students who are to write on the board in a given activity in order to speed things up;
4. To accommodate students' learning styles;
5. To promote students' involvement;
6. To distribute the wealth, i.e. aim to get approximately equal contributions from all the students by encouraging

the less forthcoming and curbing the more vocal.

As Bailey comments, these principles seem to be in keeping with current notions of learner-centred teaching; it is easy to imagine a set of teachers who do not embrace these notions so readily and whose principles would therefore be different. Bailey's results are not generalizable very far then, but she recognizes this disadvantage to her study.

Other research has backed up Bailey's findings, although it too was conducted with teachers and student-teachers working in the learner-centred tradition. Karen Johnson (1992) investigated the nature of the cues to which preservice ESL teachers responded in class, the nature of their responses, and the instructional decisions and prior knowledge that the teachers consider during teaching. Johnson found that over half of the decisions discussed in stimulus recall sessions were made either to increase students' understanding or to increase students' motivation and involvement, and these findings were supported by the student-teachers' written descriptions of the concerns they had felt in each class. Smith's (1996) study concluded that the most influential contextual factor in teacher decision-making was student characteristics, especially at the lesson level. Teachers perceived students' language level, learning needs, and affective states as having the most influence on them.

Analysis of the teachers' interview data also shows that teachers' perceptions of their students is an important factor at every level of designing and teaching courses; for example, one expatriate teacher reported his adoption of a teaching method and lesson content to match his students' perceived

strengths and weaknesses. There may be ways, however, in which the teachers in my study differ from those reported in the literature. For example, one of the teachers referred to himself (albeit facetiously) as "a kind of dictator" in the classroom, and another commented that he consciously did not give his students what he knew they wanted in class, because he believed that it would not facilitate their learning.

### 3.2 Pedagogic principles and other teachers' schemata

Pedagogic principles, personal practical knowledge (PPK) and beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK) are conceptualizations of teacher cognition that use different terms for the schemata underlying teachers' practice. They provide potential frameworks for structuring the cognition of the teachers in this study, and are therefore included here.

#### 3.2.1 Pedagogic principles

In his 1991 study, Breen aimed to discover the beliefs which underpin teachers' practices. He argues that both teachers and students have a "personal conceptualization of the teaching-learning process" (Breen 1991: 215) which is used as the basis and justification for their actions. The justifications that teachers give for their actions represent the meaning that they give to their work, and reveal their pedagogical principles, that is, knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning.

For this study, 106 teachers on an MA programme formed 21 teaching and learning groups each of which consisted of two native or fluent speakers of a language and three or more "learners" with no knowledge of the language. The native/

fluent speakers acted as teacher and observer. The teachers, students and observers were asked to keep confidential notes on the techniques used by the teacher and his/her (perceived) reasons for them. Breen aimed to discover whether there was a consensus in the justifications for classroom actions, and what implicit theories of teaching and learning existed. Within the 700 techniques and 1000 reasons, Breen found seven pedagogic concerns (1-7 below) in three areas (A-C).

(A) Focus on the learners (43% of all reasons given for teachers' techniques):

- (1) concern with students' affective involvement in the classroom;
- (2) concern with students' background (linguistic, pedagogical, etc.) knowledge;
- (3) concern with students' cognitive processes.

(B) Focus on the subject matter (31%):

- (4) concern with language as usage;
- (5) concern with language as use.

(C) Focus on the teacher (25.5%):

- (6) concern with guidance, referring to the teacher's perceived role as guide;
- (7) concern with classroom management.

The reflection that the MA students engaged in for this experiment would help their professional development. When conducted in the real world, such a study has additional benefits. First of all, if we know the reasons for teachers' actions, our classroom observations are enriched beyond description towards understanding and explanation. Secondly,

when innovation is introduced into a teaching situation the understanding provided by studying teacher cognition provides a solid platform for principled change. Thirdly, looking at the relationships between teachers' thoughts and their actions is a way of making grounded alternatives to accepted teaching methods and traditions.

Breen et al. (2001) studied how each of 18 ESL teachers worked in the classroom and the rationales that each teacher gave for her actions, in a series of classroom observations, interviews, and stimulus recall sessions. The resulting data revealed 200 principles; similar principles were grouped into categories, and five superordinate categories were adopted, which find parallels with the seven pedagogic concerns of the 1991 study. These were

- (1) a concern with how students undertake the learning process;
- (2) a concern with students' particular attributes;
- (3) a concern with how to use the classroom and human/material resources to optimize learning;
- (4) a concern with the subject matter of learning - with what is taught and learned;
- (5) a concern with the teacher's specific contributions.

In this study, Breen et al. went beyond establishing the pedagogic principles of teachers to find the relationships between shared principles and particular classroom practices across the whole group of teachers. They found that the relationships between the principles and practices of individual teachers differed from one another both in terms of content and patterns within the relationships, and this was the case even though the teachers were working with similar students

in the same institution. However, when Breen et al. looked at the 12 principles which were shared by most teachers they discovered some interesting patterns. Each of the 12 shared principles seemed to have its own set of associated practices which was mostly different from the set of practices associated with each of the other principles.

### 3.2.2 Personal practical knowledge

Paula Golombek (1998) investigated the construction and reconstruction of knowledge by teachers in response to their experiences and the contexts of their classrooms. She took the notion of personal practical knowledge (PPK) from mainstream educational research, and set out to discover what the characteristics of second language teachers' PPK are, and how this knowledge informs practice. To do this, she observed and interviewed two teacher trainers, and conducted one stimulus recall session with each. From the resulting data she established four categories for the content of the teachers' PPK:

- (1) Knowledge of self: described in terms of the identities teachers referred to when they reconstructed their experience, e.g. learner, teacher, spouse;
- (2) Knowledge of subject matter: derived from readings, the classes of other teachers, experience filtered through their interpretive framework;
- (3) Knowledge of instruction: general and specific pedagogical knowledge, including teacher and student roles, classroom and naturalistic settings, lesson plans, objectives, interaction with students, and evaluation and assessment of students;

- (4) Knowledge of contexts: institutional and sociopolitical setting, plus the time, place and the actors within the setting.

Golombek notes that there is overlap and interaction between these categories, which are neither comprehensive nor prescriptive. They are, however, similar to the constituent categories of PPK identified in the first language teaching literature. PPK is an interpretive framework for experience, filtering it so that teachers reconstruct it in a certain way. It also informs practice; it is teachers' "knowledge in action" (Golombek 1998: 459). So "L2 teachers' PPK shapes and is shaped by understandings of teaching and learning" (ibid.).

### 3.2.3 Beliefs, assumptions and knowledge

Woods (1996) reports a longitudinal study in which he followed eight ESL teachers as they planned, taught and assessed a variety of language courses in Canadian universities. Data were collected in interviews, teaching logs and in stimulus recall sessions. The data were analysed by finding statements relevant to the research questions first of all, and then identifying recurring themes and their relationships within the data and to the cultural context. Woods found coherence in these recurring themes which tell about underlying values and beliefs and the informants' perceptions. These beliefs, assumptions and knowledge are about what language is, how it is learned and how it should be taught: three areas relevant to deciding what to do in the language classroom. Woods asks what a teacher's knowledge in these areas needs to be in order to facilitate teaching, and whether the knowledge needs to be conscious; on looking at



his teachers' data, Woods found that:

In many cases it cannot be clearly determined whether the interpretations of the events are based on what the teacher knows, what the teacher believes, or what the teacher believes s/he knows. (Woods 1996:192)

Woods proposes BAK, to stand for beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, as a construct analagous to schema, but which emphasizes these three components. He notes that it is hard to separate out teachers' references to knowledge and beliefs, and so argues that the three elements should be thought of as points on a spectrum instead of distinct entities.

BAK works as an interpretive framework for teachers' work, informing their decisions with regard to classroom events, the curriculum, pedagogical concepts, approaches to planning and so on. BAK also evolves in response to teachers' interpretations of their experience, such that there is a dynamic interplay between planning, teaching and BAK in a mutually influential and mutually constructing relationship.

### 3.3 Teachers' prior language learning and teaching experiences

Two of the four teachers in my study have no training, and the third took only a short introductory course in TEFL, and so in this review I have given priority to the role of prior language learning experience (PLLE) in cognition rather than the role of teacher education programmes. However, the research on teacher education often includes investigation into the PLLE of the student-teachers, and these studies have been covered here. Judging from the research, the two Japanese teachers in my study are unusual in not having had any teacher training. Their cognition is therefore based only on

PLLE and their teaching experience. Despite their absence from the literature, I suspect that English language teachers with this background are common in universities around the world.

Teachers' experiences as learners were first called a "13,000 hour apprenticeship of observation" by Lortie (1975), and are considered to be a formative influence on teachers' practices. The PLLE of student teacher-trainers was explicitly examined during an MA course run by Kathleen Bailey, during which the course members were asked to write language learning autobiographies which were discussed in class. Bailey and her students (Bailey, Bergthold et al. 1996) found that teaching style and a relaxed classroom atmosphere were more memorable and more important in good teaching than methods or materials; that the student-teachers' conceptions of their teachers helped them to form notions of how they did and did not want to teach; that teachers' respect for, and high expectations of students were seen as key factors in good teaching; and that students' own motivation to learn a language had served to compensate for any deficiencies in the teaching. This reflection enabled the authors to begin to understand their own theories of teaching, and trace their origins to their own learning experiences.

Participants in Carol Numrich's (1996) study were members of an MA in TESOL. They also wrote a personal history of their learning and teaching experiences before beginning their teaching practice, in this case concentrating on the most and least useful techniques they had come across in their own learning of an L2, and identifying their beliefs and values about teaching and learning languages. Once the

teaching practice started, the student-teachers wrote a diary entry after each hour of teaching detailing their concerns and comments on the class. Comparing prior learning experience histories with the diaries, Numrich discovered both transfer and rejection of teaching methods and techniques used in the student-teachers' own language learning. Making lessons personally relevant to students was one feature that student-teachers consciously imported into their classrooms because of their appreciation of them in their own learning. Error correction was one technique that was rejected.

Karen Johnson (1994) found similar patterns of rejection in her study, in which she worked with four preservice ESL teachers on their teaching practice. None of the student-teachers had any teaching experience, but they all had PLLE. By analysing data from student-teachers' journals and interviews, Johnson identified four types of image held by the student-teachers: (1) images of formal language learning experiences; (2) images of informal language learning experiences; (3) images of oneself as a teacher; (4) images of the teacher preparation programme. She notes that:

Probably the most striking pattern that emerged from these data is the apparent power that images from prior experiences within formal language classrooms had on these teachers' images of themselves as teachers, teaching, and their perceptions of their own instructional practices. (Johnson 1994: 449)

Many of the images held by student-teachers were not wanted in their own practice because they were teacher-fronted, traditional models of language teaching. Instead, student-teachers called on alternative images from their informal

language learning experiences. Because these models had been experienced as learners in an informal context, they were not clear images of teaching. The student-teachers found it hard to overcome the influence of what they saw as undesirable images of teaching in their past, without fully articulated alternative models available for experimentation and as replacements.

Gutierrez Almarza (1996) found that the pre-training knowledge of four foreign language student-teachers on a PGCE course was also derived from formal and informal learning situations. In the classroom, language was seen as a formal system that was mainly written and learned by rote; in the natural context, language was seen as a means of predominantly spoken interpersonal communication. The student-teachers were instructed in a version of the direct method during the PGCE, which they all used in some form in their teaching practice. When Gutierrez Almarza came to analyse the relationship between the pre-training and post-training knowledge of the participants, she found that:

Despite the homogenizing effect of the teaching method on student teachers' performance during teaching practice, the fact was that at the end of the course, they left with different kinds of knowledge about the dynamics of teaching and learning languages. To a considerable extent these variations were rooted in their pre-training knowledge. (Gutierrez Almarza 1996: 69)

She concludes that to ignore student-teachers' conceptualizations of language, learning and teaching is to assume that they are the same as the teacher trainers'; an erroneous assumption that ultimately leads to training programmes

which fail the student-teachers.

Farrell (1999) recognized that beliefs derived from PLLE are resistant to change. He argued that raising student-teachers' awareness of their own beliefs helps them to evaluate and compare alternatives presented to them on teacher education programmes. In his study, student-teachers who had followed a grammar teaching methods course were asked to write a detailed account of their past experiences of learning grammar, together with their personal approach to teaching grammar. The student-teachers had only experienced deductive grammar teaching, although one of the five reported by Farrell was an enthusiastic exponent of inductive techniques. The student-teachers then planned and taught a grammar lesson using inductive methods. In post-lesson reflections, the student-teachers all recognized the advantages and uses of both deductive and inductive techniques. Farrell concluded that this awareness-raising, reflective exercise had been successful, and combined with selected readings it had led his student-teachers to recognize and question the influence of their PLLE on their own practices.

Waiching Enid Mok (1994) studied 12 teachers' reflective writing about their practices, and followed this up with an interview to probe the teachers' current thinking. Although Mok could not identify differences in the cognitions of experienced and inexperienced teachers, she was able to categorize the teachers' writings. She found that the teachers' conceptions of teaching were shaped and modified by research, theory, practice, personal experience, and general knowledge about human interaction. Of these, personal teaching and learning experiences had the strongest influence on teachers'

beliefs and theories of and about teaching.

In his study into second language teachers' use of grammatical terminology in class, Borg (1999) found that prior language learning was an influential factor in teachers' practices. Of the four teachers Borg observed in class and interviewed, three spoke of their prior language learning as influencing their own teaching. One teacher's reading about learner styles during his RSA Diploma caused him to re-introduce into his teaching some of the grammar translation techniques he had experienced as a learner, as potentially beneficial for some students, but the other two teachers used little or no grammatical terminology in their classes because their unsuccessful education in French had been entirely grammar based.

A combination of grammar translation methods in her own language learning background, together with a training in behaviourist methodology, had led Katherine, the subject of Moran's (1996) study, to become "pretty stagnant" in her own teaching. To overcome this stagnation she enrolled in an MA in teaching, as a result of which Katherine became in her own mind, a "legitimate" teacher with a sense of self-respect and pride in her teaching. Seeing and experiencing other models of teaching had enabled Katherine to teach in those ways; she looked for compatibility between the method and her beliefs about teaching and learning:

all teaching is ultimately moral. So, however it is, that's the basis of things. That permeates everything. It's just not manipulating techniques, whatever the techniques happen to be. (Moran 1996: 145)

These are beliefs outside the educational; they are Katherine's

conscience. Her prior language learning and teaching experiences had not provided her with the ability to teach in the way that her conscience demanded she teach; this was only facilitated by the MAT.

Polly Ulichny's (1996) case study of a US university ESL teacher, Wendy, found similarly personal factors driving the teacher. Ulichny writes that Wendy's sensitive and nurturing nature led her to support her students outside the class as well as inside. As a shy, working-class student she had felt herself to be an outsider at university, finding it difficult to participate in seminar discussions. Even though she now worked in a university, Wendy still did not feel that as an ESL teacher she was a part of the academic mainstream. She identified with her ESL students whom she also perceived as outsiders. This type of personality-based belief which works as a filter on teaching, takes us closer to the more inclusive realm of personal practical knowledge.

The influence of PLLE on teachers' cognition and practice has been covered in some depth in the literature, and I find interesting examples of this type of influence on especially the Japanese teachers in my study. It is interesting to note that PLLE is considered particularly influential on novice teachers or those teachers who are still engaged in pre-service training programmes. The two JTs in my study have no language teaching training at all, but are both experienced teachers. Their interviews show that PLLE is a central source of their very different conceptions of their teaching, with one drawing on his university English classes, and the other basing his teaching on a radio programme designed to teach English conversation. PLLE in the work of untrained but experienced

teachers has gone largely unstudied, and this is an area in which my work could make a contribution.

#### 4. The study

As I noted in my introduction to this paper, the dual system of language education consists of a group of Japanese teachers (JTs) working alongside a group of expatriate teachers (ETs) who are native speakers of English. The two groups are supposed to have different characteristics, and these assumed characteristics are used as the basis for decisions about courses, and allocating courses to teachers. The purpose of the study is to problematize the assumptions of differences across the groups and unity within groups, and to illuminate the complexity of this teaching system. This is done by first of all examining in the preliminary study the conceptualizations that participants in the system have of their situation. This study was designed and conducted in two parts: a short, exploratory questionnaire with open-ended questions asking the students about the classroom practices of their expatriate teachers (the questionnaire is in Appendix 1), and semi-structured interviews in which I asked two expatriate and two Japanese teachers about their practices, the reasons behind them, and their conceptualizations of their colleagues (the interview schedule is in Appendix 2).

The data that I collected in this way are analysed below. In section 4 I look at some of the general conceptualizations the teachers hold of themselves and each other, and in section 5 I examine some of the specific thinking and reported practices of teachers which the data reveal, to see to what extent these match general concepts. In section 6 I analyse



some of the data from the students' questionnaire, in order to show their perceptions of similarities and differences among the ETs' classroom practices, and of differences between the ETs and JTs. These data play a supporting role in the study as a whole, throwing light on the situation from a different perspective.

#### 4.1 Introduction to the teachers' interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with two expatriate teachers and two Japanese teachers in late 2002 and early 2003. I asked them to describe their classroom practices and explain why they chose to work in such a way. I also asked them for their perceptions of their colleagues in the other group.

Here I analyse teachers' views of themselves and their colleagues in the remainder of Section 4, in order to establish a picture of what participants in the dual system believe to be happening. In Section 5 I look at a number of examples of how teachers' reports of their own practices confirm or contradict the expectations previously established. The presence of similar pedagogic thinking and practices across groups, and differences within groups, in contradiction of general expectations, may not be surprising. The nature of these contradictions remains interesting however, and even more interesting is the discovery of contradictions between the expectations of teachers working in this situation and its actuality.

#### 4.2 JTs' perceptions of typical JTs

JT1 talks unprompted about "typical" Japanese teachers

and teaching in the context of the university and schools in Japan. He says that "construction analysis" characterizes a typical approach, which begins with the teacher identifying the subject and predicate of each sentence in the text being studied. Typically, the lesson would continue with more detailed analysis of "for example, this is the antecedent and this is an example of the deletion of a relative pronoun" (Interview with JT1: ll. 62-3). JT1 exemplifies his conceptualization of the typical JT by reference to his own school language learning experiences. Indeed, JT1 seems to associate typical pedagogic practices with high school teachers who provide students with full grammatical analysis, translations and comparative explanations. JT1 said that his own methods (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2 for a description) do not involve full grammatical analysis, but when I suggested later in the interview that his approach was therefore unusual he disagreed, saying his approach was similar to his university professors' methods. While JT1 perceives high school teachers as embodying the "typical" Japanese approach, he distinguishes this from the practices of university teachers which although common are not considered to be "typical". The existence of these two constructs indicates an unexpected complexity in the situation.

JT2 identifies the typical answer to a question about differences between JTs and ETs:

People say Japanese teachers are interested in teaching grammar or something right, and native or expatriate teachers teach how to communicate. That's the typical answer right? So for me maybe the same, yeah, for the most part. (Interview with JT2: ll. 556-9)

In addition to teaching grammar, JT2 thinks that it is "important and good" for JTs to provide students with translations, because this is something that ETs find difficult. But beyond this point, JT2 does not explicitly describe what he considers to be a typical Japanese teacher; in response to my question on this he repeats the question to himself, and then talks about two of his high school teachers who impressed him by doing their own research and publishing articles. He suggests this is unusual, and that he had met a lot of high school teachers who were more representative of the norm, and who

demand a lot from their students just 'study hard study something this is the assignment' I wasn't impressed by those kind of teachers, but maybe because I was not a typical Japanese student [laughter]. (ll. 541-544)

JT2 thinks of high school teachers when questioned about typical JTs, in the same way that JT1 associated typical teachers with high schools. JT1 differentiated between the classroom practices of high school and university teachers of English, and JT2 contrasts high school teachers' common behaviour (telling their students to study hard) with the less usual research activities of some high school teachers, activities more normally associated with university teachers. He makes it very clear that his preferences are (and were) with those teachers who engaged in research and so matched the academic model of teaching which JT2 adopts in his own practices.

Both JTs make a distinction between university and school teaching, equating school teaching with "typical" Japanese teaching while at the same time distancing themselves from

this. Instead, they align themselves with university teaching and its associated practices.

#### 4.3 ETs' perceptions of JTs

ET1 considers JTs' teaching to be "quite different" from the ETs' teaching. He describes his impression of the way that JTs work to be "pre-communicative", but notes that JTs do not teach "communication" classes. In fact, he seems to use this difference in class types to justify the JTs' "pre-communicative" approach: "No, they don't teach that way [communicatively] no, but they've got different kinds of classes, so..." (Interview with ET1: ll. 146-7). We did not discuss the term "communicative" in the interview, but ET1 called himself "a communicative teacher" and described students working on information gap tasks in pairs and groups as the dominant activity in his class, so it is perhaps reasonable to infer that such tasks and classroom configurations constitute a communicative lesson for ET1.

ET1's suggestion that the courses JTs are given affect their way of teaching provides an interesting alternative to the assumption that teachers are given courses to match their perceived strengths. JTs do not teach communicatively, ET1 argues, because they are not given communication courses to teach. This represents the opposite of what other teachers (including the JTs above) assume to be the reason for JTs not having communication classes; that is, that they are not given communication courses to teach because they do not teach communicatively. ET1's assumption here is that approaches to teaching are motivated by the type of course being taught, rather than courses being designed and assigned to teachers

on the basis of their perceived approach to teaching.

Together, ET1 and I agreed that the different kinds of classes that ETs and JTs teach make it difficult to compare their practices directly. However, once we identified writing classes as one type of class which both groups of teachers teach, ET1 was happier to compare JTs' and ETs' practices. About writing classes ET1 said:

I think certainly in the writing classes there's quite a difference ... I think a Japanese teacher would focus much more on you know structure and paraphrasing ... [but] ... I would say they'd be much better off getting them to write, produce language and work with that ... instead of analysing language which is I think probably too difficult for them (Interview with ET1: ll. 169-79)

My interpretation of ET1's view here is that he thinks Japanese teachers use texts which include language that is too difficult for the students. ET1's view of the JTs is that they focus on grammatical structure in English writing classes, and he refers to paraphrasing as a typical classroom technique. Paraphrases were at the front of his mind during the interview as he had found a JT's paraphrase exercise in the staffroom earlier in the day and brought it to the interview. We discussed this document, and I asked him why he thought JTs chose to do such exercises. ET1 was rather perplexed by this question:

ET1: Why do they choose to do? It's beyond me [laughter]. I think I, I don't know, is it trickle down? They think that it just trickles down, or maybe there's an exam at the end of it or something (ll. 197-202)

ET1 borrows the term "trickle down" from economics, in which

giving tax breaks to the rich (at the "top" of the hierarchy) is believed to stimulate the economy and so provide benefits for poorer members of society (perceived as lower down the hierarchy). Transferring this metaphor to language learning suggests that ET1 perceives language learning as a hierarchy with a series of difficulty levels. He implies that if JTs also believe that, then they might also believe that working at a high level in the hierarchy will somehow have positive effects on students who have not yet reached those high levels.

ET2 ascribes the JTs' teaching practices, as he perceives them, to their linguistic ability. The JTs concentrate on teaching "a strict form" and "the actual structure" of the language, which ET2 contrasts with how language is used; he also perceives JTs to work in written rather than spoken language, and suggests that they teach written usage because of their non-native knowledge of spoken language use. The causal relationship between the JTs' ability in spoken English and their teaching focus is unambiguous in ET2's view.

The ETs both perceive that JTs work primarily on grammatical structure, and have less English language ability than the ETs. They also agree that JTs work with written language rather than spoken. They differ to some extent in their views on the influences on teaching focus and practices: ET1 holds that course focus may affect teaching style, suggesting that if JTs were given communication classes then their teaching may become more "communicative"; ET2 sees the JTs' English language ability as the key factor in driving what and how the JTs choose to teach, and sees their abilities and their methods as being well-matched. ET1, on the other hand, notes a mismatch between JTs' English ability and a

specific teaching technique (paraphrasing), and implies that JTs teach productive skills at a similar level of linguistic difficulty as they teach receptive skills.

#### 4.4 ETs' perceptions of ETs

ET1's views on whether or not ETs work in roughly the same way change during the interview. His initial response to my question was to say that he didn't know, but when I met this with a non-committal response, he extended his answer to "I think people do things quite differently". But then when he asked for and I expressed my own opinion that teachers in our department worked in a similar way, he agreed with me, and added that the teachers who "do things quite differently" worked in other departments in the university (Interview with ET1: ll. 99-123). It should be noted that my intervention here may have influenced the ET's answer.

ET2 does not speak so explicitly about his general perceptions of the ETs' teaching. He talks about what he feels teachers in general ought to do: they ought to be trained as teachers; they ought to establish rapport with the students; and they ought to be open, approachable and flexible in the classroom. He does not talk about his perceptions of the general characteristics of ETs.

ETs comment less on their ET colleagues than on the JTs. My interview question about similarities and differences between JTs and ETs was largely answered with reference to the JTs, with far less information forthcoming about ETs' perceptions of typical ET practices. This may be because the ETs felt that I, as an expatriate teacher, shared their knowledge and assumptions, and therefore felt that

explanations would have been redundant. Unfortunately, at the time of these interviews I had not noticed this deficiency and tacitly agreed with the assumptions, leaving them unarticulated. This means that there is something of a gap in the research as it stands at present, and clearly indicates that I need to pay more attention to this aspect, if I am not to be left with only my own beliefs and assumptions with which to compare and contrast the actuality of the situation. In the next stage of the research, I plan to observe the teachers' classrooms and conduct follow-up interviews with the teachers; there will be an opportunity in these interviews to rectify this shortcoming.

#### 4.5 JTs' perceptions of ETs

When I asked the JTs in the study for their perceptions of ETs' teaching, their main responses were based on expectations rather than firsthand knowledge of the ETs' practices. I asked JT1 what he thought happened in the spoken communication classes in the department. These are taught twice a week to first-year students and are the flagship class for ETs, but JT1 had never seen a class and had "no idea" about how they were conducted. However, JT1 had a number of expectations about ETs' teaching, and I discuss these in a moment.

I put it to JT2 that the JTs believed that the ETs would improve the students' speaking and listening abilities, but they did not know whether this was achieved, and if so, how it was done. JT2 agreed with this comment, and added that "we decide what kind of texts the teachers should use, that's the only thing" (Interview with JT2: ll. 876-7). The JTs then



assumed that lessons followed from the selected textbook, but some students had told JT2 that some teachers did not follow the textbook at all; he acknowledged that this defeated the purpose of deciding on a textbook in the first place (ll. 880-4). JT2 had agreed earlier in the interview with what he identified as the general consensus on ETs: that they taught students "how to communicate", but he remained unaware of how this was done in the university and outside. He expressed an interest in the methods employed by ETs in the private English conversation schools in the city:

I've always wanted to know how the teachers at the schools in the city like *eikaiwa gakko* [=English conversation schools] teach. I don't know anything about how they teach, yeah, I think there there must be some textbooks or teaching system (ll. 891-3)

JT2 again assumes that teaching methods are derived from the textbook that is used in class. This mirrors what he says about his own practices, and the assumptions which lead to JTs selecting textbooks.

Despite their lack of firsthand knowledge, the JTs have expectations about how the ETs work. JT1 knew that their classes involved spoken communication, commenting that the students were happy to have "the chance to communicate or to speak in English to a real foreigner" (ll. 272-3). The expectation here is that the students engage in conversation with the ETs, although he has some doubts about the students' ability to do so. JT1 has further expectations which he explains like this:

Native speakers like you are expected to explain more about English culture, or background, or connotation of

the meaning of the word, not just the literal or superficial meaning, or the superficial construction of the sentence.

(Interview with JT1: ll. 214-8)

Later in the interview, JT1 summarizes his view of what ETs are expected to teach as being everything "beyond the grammatical constructions", which he sees as being the JTs' domain. The ETs are therefore expected to complement the JTs' teaching, filling in aspects of language and culture which the JTs do not teach. JT1's comments in the above extract about ETs teaching the connotations of words, and aspects of sentences beyond their "superficial" meanings also indicate that he assumes that ETs base their classroom teaching on vocabulary and sentences, and thus work in a similar way to him; assisting his students to understand individual sentences in a reading text is JT1's primary pedagogic goal, and he estimates that his students work through about twenty sentences in each lesson.

JT2 makes a similar assumption in his expectations of the ETs. He bases his own lessons on the memorization and adaptation of model sentences, and expects ETs to work in the same way, before extending the conversations and texts that the students have produced in this way. He imagines himself teaching Japanese as a foreign language, and thus being a native-speaker teacher. He would still, he says, teach model sentences and have the students adapt them for their own purposes. But as a native speaker he would have more confidence to extend the resulting conversations in a natural way:

I can continue the conversation [in Japanese] maybe, that's not what I can do, I think, in English. So I yeah,

I expect the native speakers to ... teach how to continue such a conversation as far as the students can go.

(Interview with JT2: ll. 940-3)

JT2 expects ETs to teach conversation and communication; he knows the students are keen to improve their spoken language skills by speaking with the ETs. He is less clear on how ETs would go about teaching conversation, and bases his supposition on his own practices.

Both the JTs have similar perceptions of what the ETs do. They believe that ETs talk to the students, teach them how to communicate in spoken English, and that the ETs bring background cultural and linguistic knowledge to their classes. They are less clear about the classroom techniques employed by the ETs, and base their guesses about these on their own classroom practices.

#### 4.6 Summary of the section

This section has attempted to show the conceptualizations that the JTs and ETs I interviewed have of their own group and the other group, in terms of teaching focus and methods. The JTs expect "spoken communication" and "cultural background" from the ETs, and ETs expect "grammatical structures" and text-based teaching in the JTs' classes. The JTs contrast their own practices with the stereotype of JTs they present as working in schools, and this hints at a complexity in the situation which the ETs' conceptualization of the JTs is unlikely to capture. These stereotypical conceptualizations are pervasive, turned to automatically by participants in the situation. Used by both groups to classify their world, these concepts need to be problematized if a full

understanding of the situation is to be reached.

## 5. Aspects of the teachers' work

What follows is an analysis of how the teachers in question look at aspects of their work, with a view to showing to what extent stereotypes of the kind outlined above are confirmed or disproved by the data.

### 5.1 Grammatical explanations

JT1 describes a reading class in which he gives students short texts of about 20 sentences to read. JT1 identifies the subject and predicate in each sentence for his students, but restricts his grammatical analysis to this. He comments that more detailed analysis (e.g. identifying antecedents or examples of deleted relative pronouns) is "too much", and is "harmful" to the students.

I don't want students to feel just information or dead analysis of the sentence, rather I want them to feel something more than information. I mean, if you say connotation or cultural background or speaker's attitude or something like that. Anyway, we don't have to make English sentences inhuman by too much grammatical explanation, instead we have to make them more human by following the natural flow of the sentence. (JT1's interview: lines 5-10)

JT1's recognition of social and pragmatic aspects of language here is accompanied by the belief that grammatical analysis will not help highlight or explain these aspects. So JT1 minimizes grammar analysis, and gives his students time to read the sentences to themselves, in the hope that this will

allow them to develop an "appreciation" of the connotations, speaker's attitude and so on. His intention is to "let the students understand the sentence" (l. 23) and "let them feel the natural sequence of English" (l. 27). Working in this way "helps [them] to feel the natural rhythm ... it helps them to recognize whether they understand the sentence or not" (ll. 78-9). It seems that JT1 recruits the students' intuition or feel for the language in helping them to understand. One might assume that the understanding and appreciation which JT1 aims to facilitate include the socio-pragmatic aspects of language which do not respond to grammatical analysis. This assumption seems to be borne out in JT1's further description of his class, in which he circulates to answer students' questions. In this extract (JT1's interview: ll. 104-127) I ask JT1 if the students' questions are "traditional" by which I mean (and JT1 understands) about grammar and vocabulary. JT1 gives a couple of example questions and also suggests that he would be asked to translate vocabulary; so his minimal grammatical analysis early in the lesson is supplemented by his responses to students' questions. The interesting point here, in the light of the above discussion, is that JT1 returns to the topic of students' questions to tell me, unsolicited, that students also ask questions from a "cultural point of view". This suggests that the students are indeed engaging with the socio-pragmatic aspects of language in the way that JT1 hopes they will.

Rather than the lengthy, lockstep grammatical explanations of the stereotype, JT1 minimizes his grammatical input to the whole class in an attempt to foster a more personalized and holistic understanding among his students.

## 5.2 Text-based lessons

JT1 argues that the students and not the teacher are the main characters in class, and that "teachers can only assist [the students] at their own level" (l. 144). He recognizes the students' various levels and wants to respond individually. In order to do this, he selects and prepares a text to teach; his preparation involves anticipating students' questions about the text, whether they be grammatical, lexical, pragmatic, or sociocultural, and ensuring he knows the answers. He then asks students to read the text in class, helping them to identify the subject and predicate of each sentence in the text, and then leaving them to read the sentences by themselves. JT1 states that students' full understanding is only reached if they work at their own level, recognize their own problems and formulate questions for the teacher which will help resolve these problems. He sees the teacher's role as assisting students individually and having enough prepared knowledge to be able to do this, but JT1 comments that this knowledge should not be forced on all the students in a teacher-fronted, lockstep approach. He disapproves of the teacher who "explains super cool things to us but most of us can't understand" (l. 181). Instead, JT1 moves around the classroom as the students read the text, watching for signs from the students that they have questions for him, and then responding individually. This backgrounds the teacher, centres the lesson on the students, increases their involvement and, JT1 believes, their learning. While working within the confines of a teacher-selected text, JT1's approach is based on the individual needs of the students in his class.

From the point of view of this pedagogical approach,

it becomes evident that the Japanese teacher's extensive preparation is done so that the teacher can answer all imaginable questions from the students. The teacher is therefore able to function as a "resource person" in much the same way that a native-speaker teacher in the communicative and/or learner-centred tradition might see herself (see for example Nunan (1998)). By selecting a text in advance, the non-native-speaker teacher is able to limit and to some extent predict the resources that students will require during class. In contradiction of the teacher-centredness which the common interpretation of a textbook-centred approach would predicate, it seems that the fixedness and structure of the text enables the teacher to adopt a flexible approach in which individualized teaching is central.

ET2's perceptions of his students' needs lead him in a different direction from JT1. He believes that students do not like talking about themselves: "in the past I've found that students don't like talking about themselves it's just a big turnoff" (Interview with ET2: ll. 101-2) and so introduces project work which becomes the subject of conversations and drills in his lessons.

This last semester I did [project work] for pretty much the whole semester. So I had lots of different news articles and internet sites set out ... [and] ... the students know that throughout the term at any given time during the class they have to actually talk about stuff like that ... and I keep bringing in information on the [project].  
(Interview with ET2: ll. 52-61)

It seems to be the case that ET2 has begun by attempting to base his lessons on the students' own lives, but found that the

students dislike this and so he provides alternative topics of conversation in the form of projects. The topics ET2 introduces are selected by him, and bring a lot of textual material into the class. This parallels the Japanese teachers' selection of a textbook; JT2, for example, considers the provision of good texts to be crucial in determining the success of his lessons. Students discussing textual material together also seems to defeat the expectations of JT1, who assumes that students are enjoying conversations with native-speakers of English, rather than with their Japanese-speaking peers.

These are two examples in which assumptions about teachers' use of texts in classrooms are brought into question and shown to be misfounded. The typical JT's use of a text is assumed to result in a teacher-fronted, lockstep class but in JT1's class is perceived by him to be a way of facilitating flexible responses to his students' individual needs. ET2 introduces texts into his spoken communication classes to provide content for discussion among students, a practice which defeats JT's expectations of ETs' approaches to teaching.

### 5.3 Reluctance and responsibility

JT2's description of his students memorizing and adapting model sentences according to his directions suggests that he might be working close to the teacher-fronted, lockstep approach of JT1's characterization of a "typical" JT. Also, by his own account, ET1's classes are characterized by communication between students and so match the typical image of an ET. Taken at face value, these two teachers' work seems to match typical perceptions of JT's and ETs'



practices. The cognition behind the practices, however, is not so predictable.

ET1 describes his aim in class as being to "get them speaking", and he argues that using a lot of pairwork, groupwork and information gap activities is "the best way of getting them talking ... which is a very good way of making people learn" (Interview with ET1: l. 27). Getting students to talk and "making people learn" implies reluctance on the part of the students, and ET1 considers part of his role as a teacher to be overcoming this reluctance to speak:

You know in the oral classes we have ... you've got to create the atmosphere that they want to talk. So I would say in the oral classes I try and be kind of cheerful and try and get them to get a bit of enthusiasm, and you know, try and whip them into shape [whipping motion with hand & laughter]. Just try and get them to talk a lot you know, I just think that the more they talk the better, it's as simple as that. (Interview with ET1: ll. 90-8)

It behoves ET1 to create an atmosphere conducive to talk, in response to the class type, and his view of how people learn a language. ET1's sense of his responsibility here is reinforced by the repetition of "try" in this extract, emphasizing his (possibly unsuccessful) efforts to enthuse the students to talk. The expression "try and whip them into shape", accompanied by a whipping hand motion and laughter, is a facetious indication of the amount of coercion required to overcome students' reluctance to talk. The physical movement into and out of pairs and groups which ET1 reports in his class is another part of this attempt to overcome reluctance; his intention is to "keep it lively, and then just pair work all the

time, threes and fours" (l. 24). The "typical" ET approach that seems to characterize ET1's lessons is therefore constructed in part as a response to his perception of his students' resistance to his teaching.

JT2, on the other hand, explicitly rejects this approach to teaching: "teachers don't have to be energetic or strict or encouraging or demanding" (Interview with JT2: ll. 476-7). JT2 argues that a teacher should be a role model for students, showing interest in learning himself. He tells two stories to illustrate this point. The first describes his own university teacher, whom JT2 observed working his way slowly through "thick books" until he finished them:

I'm not a good learner, so it's very very difficult for me to read through a thick book, but he showed me how to do that little by little. And he never told me to study harder or anything, no. I just looked at his back and learned how to study. (ll. 435-8)

JT2 adopts a similar approach in his own teaching, showing his students his continuing interest in learning, and expecting them to learn from his example. It seems that here the teacher is passing responsibility for learning on to the student, rather than taking on the duty of "making people learn" in the way that ET1 does. For JT2, this is not just an academic model of education. His second story is the example of children who live in Tokyo:

You know Tokyo is a horrible place for children, they have to go to a lot of *juku* [=cram] schools and I'm very sorry about their children, they have to learn and I think it's not a good way. The children have to feel the responsibility to learn by themselves, just demanding

is not a good way, I believe. So that's primary school students. (Interview with JT2: ll. 503-8)

It is difficult to square these views on education with the type of lesson that JT2 describes as central to his teaching approach, in which he has students learn and adapt model sentences to express their own meanings. However, once we see that this is the way that JT2 feels he learned English and is holding up this method as an example to the students to follow or not as they choose, then the picture becomes clearer. But the initial response to his classroom practices and the subsequent shock at discovering his views on education are salutary; assumptions about the cognitions that inform such practices are clearly erroneous. There is a complexity here which a stereotypical response to "typical" practices obscures, and which is deserving of further investigation.

## 6. Students' questionnaire

I administered a questionnaire about the ETs' practices to a groups of 34 first-year students, after first piloting it on a group of seven second-year students. The students' responses to the open-ended questions about their ETs' classes (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire items) established their perceptions of two groups of teachers, and shed further light on the perceived similarities and differences among the teachers, but naturally their comments are confined to observable practices rather than the cognition which is of central concern to me at this stage of the research. This means that at present I view the students' questionnaire data as taking up a secondary position in the research.

### 6.1 ETs as native-speakers not teachers

The questionnaire was originally conceived in response to my perception that students were losing interest in ETs' classes about six weeks into the first term. The questionnaire was administered in the second term and I expected negative responses to the ETs' classes, but instead got positive feedback. The questionnaire was framed in general terms, and the students' positive evaluation was for the most part related to the English native-speaker teachers as native-speakers, rather than as teachers. So the students saw the ETs' language as "the real thing", and their pronunciation as accurate. They felt they benefited from the large proportion of English that ETs use in the classroom, and the chance to meet foreigners and hear about their culture and background was considered a motivating factor for their study. These positive aspects had a flipside for some students, who felt that some teachers spoke too quickly in English, or were unable to explain clearly because of their poor Japanese ability. However, the response to the ETs was generally favourable. It should be noted, however, that this was directed more towards their characteristics as native-speakers than towards their classroom practices.

### 6.2 Similarities among the ETs

The students commented on four main similarities among the ETs which were not related to their status as native-speakers.

(i) The ETs' lessons are fun, light-hearted and humorous. Twelve students comment on this affective aspect of the ETs' classes. ETs "incorporate humour in their lessons"

(Student AK), are cheerful (AE & AX) and tell jokes (BE & BF). Student AA associates humour in the lessons with the teacher's personality coming through, and student BD makes a similar point: "They don't just teach you in a stiff and formal way, but make the lessons fun."

(ii) An emphasis on communication was identified by seven students as a feature shared by the ETs. Two of the students specified this as spoken communication, with the rest expressing themselves in more general terms.

(iii) ETs react to students individually. Four students commented on how ETs were concerned with the individual student. Student BA put it like this: "They are careful to take into account the individuality of each and every student" and AE agreed with this appraisal: "They engage with each individual student. (There are many). They remember your name." It seems that this aspect of the ETs' teaching has made an impact.

(iv) Materials. Three students noted that ETs "don't use textbooks so much" (student AW) suggesting a contrast with JTs. ETs also use pictures in their handouts, and use games in class.

I was surprised to find so few comments related to classroom techniques. In the pilot study for this questionnaire which I conducted with seven second-year students there had been more. In addition to comments similar to those reported above, the second-years noted that ETs use the blackboard less (than their JT colleagues, we are left to assume), ask the students to work with their fellow students in groups and pairs, and restrict the students' use of Japanese in class.

### 6.3 Differences between the ETs

The three main differences that students noted among the ETs were:

(i) The amount and type of direction that the students received from the teachers. Four students commented that some teachers explained slowly and clearly, while "others just race along"; error correction can come immediately from some teachers, while others wait until the students have finished. More interestingly perhaps, student AA wrote that "Some let you do what you want; others give you an explanation" which leaves one wondering about what "what you want" might involve. Differences in teachers' preferred study modes are described: "With some you study by yourself, but with others you study by talking with each other." (AN). Student BE wrote that "Some make you change seats, while others always make you sit in the same place" which like AN's and AA's comments is suggestive of different approaches to teaching.

(ii) Ways of communicating with the students. Within the emphasis on communication shared by ETs noted above, some students comment that teachers have different ways of communicating with the students. Unfortunately, the majority of these comments are rather cryptic (AH: "They are different in the way they communicate with the students"), but AP provides more detail: "The teacher participates in the communication activity of each group, and all the students try to communicate together." There is a suggestion here that while communication is a central concern of the ETs, the ways in which it is embodied in the classroom and the teachers' roles may differ.

(iii) Finally, an alternative view on the cheerful ETs comes

from three students, AD describing one difference between teachers as "How friendly they are", and AH and BA adding to this: "Some make the set 90-minute classes interesting and fun, while others give you a lot to learn in that time period" (BA); "whether they force the teaching on you or whether they make it fun" (AH).

Again the pilot study added usefully to these comments, second-year student PA noting that some ETs use textbooks while others don't, and PB seeing some teachers as centring their teaching on handouts, while others use conversation tapes as the focus. PB went on to write: "Some do their best to understand what we want to say and what we are saying in English", leaving us to infer that some teachers do not attempt to understand the students in their lessons. Student PC does not leave anything to doubt in her comment:

Some give a proper lesson, while others just chat for the full 90 minutes. I suppose you could say that's fun, but I don't think so. That way just doesn't suit me, personally. Moreover, those classes are compulsory and the textbooks are quite expensive. So if we have to do them, then I feel they should teach us properly! It cheeses me off when they don't do it properly.

Here are two strongly contrasting approaches to teaching which, if we assume equal professionalism on the part of the teachers, must derive from vastly divergent cognitions. Further research in this area would contribute to a better understanding of the situation; it seems unlikely that perceptions of ETs' typical practices would be detailed enough to capture both these versions of ETs' teaching.

#### 6.4 Comparisons between ETs and JTs

Although they were unsolicited, comparisons between ETs and JTs were also forthcoming. Students perceive JTs and ETs to be working on different content which they equate with working in different ways, and this is best captured in BB's comment: "Somehow, the pronunciation of the Japanese teachers is always different, and the way they teach is completely different too. Japanese teachers focus on grammar in their classes. Native speakers, on the other hand, tell you about their country and teach you the kind of English being used there now, which is good." It is difficult to separate out the content of the lesson from its mode of presentation in this extract, and there is certainly no description of the JTs' "completely different" way of teaching; despite the unsophisticated description of what goes on in the ETs' and JTs' classroom, it emerges that "somehow" there are differences. One student (BB) contrasts communicative activities in the ETs' classes with being told to read and write in, we are left to infer, the JTs' classes; I have already noted communication is seen to be a central feature of the ETs' classes, and one might conclude that this may be a cause of the perceived differences.

#### 6.5 Conclusions

- 1) Students perceive two groups of teachers, basing their distinction largely on mother tongue, and they also reinforce expectations about JTs teaching grammar and ETs teaching communication.
- 2) Within these groups, however, ETs' practices are not seen as uniform; there are differences that are not captured by



assumptions and expectations. This apparent complexity is worthy of further study.

- 3) Because the questionnaire was not directed specifically at the JTs' practices, less detailed information emerges about them, but it is perhaps fair to assume similar complexity in their group.
- 4) Analysis of the data has led me to investigate this situation in greater depth. My intentions were to establish the existence of two groups of teachers with this questionnaire, and then move on to examine teachers' practices with a view to designing appropriate methods for the ETs to use. Instead of this I now consider that the complexity of the dual system itself calls for further investigation.

After concluding the students' questionnaire, I carried out the teachers' interviews with questions about their classroom practices, their thinking, and their perceptions of their colleagues and their own role within the dual system, in an attempt to reach an interpretive understanding of the situation.

## 7. Conclusions and future directions

The analysis of the teachers' interviews has resulted in a complex description of the beliefs, assumptions and expectations held by participants in the dual teaching system. It includes descriptions of teachers' classroom practices by the teachers, but as the overall aim of the research is to illuminate the dual system in practice, the next stage of the research should involve classroom observation. The need for

observation is reinforced if we consider studies like Richards and Pennington (1998) in which teachers' professed beliefs and practices diverged widely from observed classroom practices. I have noted the role of teacher cognition research in informing observations, taking them beyond description towards interpretation and understanding, so future research will involve classroom observation with follow-up interaction with the teachers in order to access these participants' thinking.

In the analysis to date, the extent to which the given group of JTs and ETs can be distinguished in terms of each having their own distinct set of pedagogical views in common has been scrutinized. Classroom observation will provide another angle on the principles and practices of the teachers in the dual system, by providing a means of investigating how teachers respond to specific classes, and the thinking that lies behind specific classroom practices. The first concern will then be to examine the extent to which teachers' practices and principles reflect my analysis of teachers' interview data.

The second stage will be to look at how teachers respond to their different classes, and the principles which underlie their practices in these classes. Looking at the principles which underlie a variety of courses is a means of gaining further data which may reinforce or refute the notion of two groups of teachers with distinct sets of pedagogical views, but which in any case should shed additional light on the situation. While ETs are generally assigned "communication" classes and JTs have reading and grammar classes, there are sufficient divergences from this pattern to provide interesting comparisons. The teachers' practices, and the principles which emerge in teaching these classes "from the other side" should

provide further data to support or refute the notion of JTs' and ETs' unitary ways of teaching. This approach would help to establish if teachers are drawing on the same principles for each course they teach, or perhaps have subsets of principles for different course types, or perhaps put their principles to one side for certain types of course.

Another aspect of the dual system is the presence of a group of colleagues who are native speakers of a different language. Part of the analysis that I have done so far has been of the effects of teachers' perceptions of their colleagues on their cognition and reported practices. While conducting the analysis of the teachers' interview data I noticed a close relationship emerging between teachers' reported classroom practices and their conceptualizations of the practices of their colleagues in the other group. I noticed, for example, that JT1 expected ETs to base their lessons on sentences and vocabulary in a similar way to himself, but with the ETs focusing on cultural background, connotations and the like. ET2 suggested that his own approach was formed in response to students' knowledge of language usage, which resulted from JTs' focus on this aspect of language. The question arises as to whether it is possible to establish a direction in this type of relationship; that is, whether a teacher's concept of his colleagues' approach is a post hoc justification of his own approach, or a rationale for choosing a specific approach. Or is it, perhaps, that teachers have little idea of their colleagues' way of teaching, and base their conceptualizations of them on their own practices, for want of a more informed alternative.

Another area of interest arising from the analysis to date is what I have called the JTs' "academic" or university

model of teaching, in which responsibility for learning is placed with the students. For example, in JT1's reading class he expects students to read a text and formulate their own questions, which drive the lessons; in JT2's view responsibility for learning lies with the students, and it is not his task to encourage or drive them to study. In contrast with these attitudes, the ET1 feels it is his responsibility to overcome the students' reluctance and get them to talk, in order to "make them learn". A further direction for the research would be to ask specifically about the nature of students' responsibility for their own learning in the view of the JTs, the ETs, and the students themselves. There is a suggestion in the students' questionnaire data that teachers expect various amounts of responsibility from the students, for example letting them do what they like, or demanding a lot from them, or chatting for the entire lesson and "not doing it properly". Focusing on this area may help to inform classroom observations: how is the participants' view of responsibility for learning manifested in observable classroom events? How, for example, do teachers communicate their expectations about this to the students? As attitudes to responsibility may well be a feature which distinguishes the ETs from the JTs, it would also be a valuable addition to the overall picture of the dual system to reveal more about this aspect of teaching.

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## Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire and cover letter

### Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to help me. I am doing some research into how we teach and learn English in the college. This questionnaire is an important part of that research. I hope that with your help it will be possible to improve the English education at the college.

I'd like you to complete the questionnaire here today. Nobody, including me, will know what you have written, so please write what you really think. If there's something you don't understand, please ask.

Thank you again for your help.

1. What do you think about the English classes taught by foreign teachers? Please give reasons for your opinions.
2. What do you think are the similarities in the ways that the foreign teachers teach?
3. What do you think are the differences in the ways that the foreign teachers teach?
4. What effects do you think the way of teaching has on the English class?
5. Do you think the way of teaching helps or hinders your learning? How?
6. Do you have any other comments about the foreign teachers' classes or way of teaching, or about this questionnaire?

## Appendix 2: Teachers' interview schedule

- How do you teach? What do you do in class?
- Why do you work in this way?
- Do you think foreign teachers and Japanese teachers teach differently?
- If so, in what ways?

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