The Roles of Native and Non-native Teachers
from a Perspective of EIL

Etsuko KAKIMOTO
Kyushu Sangyo University

Abstract

The recent trend along with the implementation of the revised Course of Education has endowed ALTs (Assistant Language Teacher) with even more significant roles in language education in Japan. In this paper, the roles of native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) teachers, including Japanese, are reconsidered from a perspective of English as an International Language (EIL). Two sets of questionnaires were administered to explore the possible differences in students’ attitudes toward NSs and NNSs and to analyze the students’ reactions to English instructions done in classroom by a Japanese teacher. According to the results, more anxiety was observed when with a NS, while the subjects admitted being able to talk "smoothly" with a NNS. They had a high expectation that a Japanese teacher should be empathetic to their needs and should use English as an instruction language in class.

1. Introduction

In 2002 with the launching of the new Course of Study (national standards for school curricula), English education at every elementary school throughout Japan became possible to be implemented within the framework of the "Period of Integrated Study." This change has accelerated even more the participation of ALTs in each classroom. In "Developing a strategic plan to cultivate 'Japanese With English Abilities'" (MEXT, 2002), MEXT (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) reported that the total number of ALTs hired both through the JET program and by regional authorities would amount to approximately 8400 in 2001/2002. Another measure MEXT proposed in the plan was the employment of 100 NSs as regular teachers every year for three years starting from 2003, which would make almost one out of four newly employed teachers NSs at junior-high schools.
Behind this movement there seems to be a deep-seated belief among Japanese people that experience of talking with a so-called "native" speaker would benefit students of English most. Among the previous literature proving various positive effects of having ALTs in the classroom, Kurahachi (1993:103) reported that Japanese students who had classes team-taught by ALTs and Japanese teachers achieved significantly better marks in written exams, and concluded that the students' motivation to learn was elevated by the participation of ALTs. Another report, Beebe (1983) showed that risk-taking was promoted with a NS interviewer, with more talking, volunteering, and more complex WH questions being observed. While with a NNS, more avoidance and higher accuracy were observed. But the tension self-observed by the students in the team-taught class in Kurahachi (1993)'s experiment was significantly higher than that in the Japanese teachers' class, and students achieved no better results in oral exams. Referring to the two kinds of anxieties, "facilitating anxiety" and "debilitating anxiety," classified by Kleinmann (1977), Kurahachi (1993:104) concluded that the "debilitating anxiety" caused the worse performance of the subject in oral exams.

In regard to intelligibility of spoken English, Smith and Rafiqzad (1979:375) reported rather unexpected and interesting results of their experiments in which "the native speaking American and the Hong Kong Chinese were always among the bottom three in degree of intelligibility while the Japanese was always among the top five." In this experiment, listeners were from eleven Asian countries while speakers were from eight Asian countries and one from the United States.

Here some questions remain and they are the focus of this paper: Should the speaker of English in the classroom always be NSs? Can they be NNSs who do not share any common language with Japanese learners, and therefore use English as the only means of communication? Do NNSs have the different or the same effects on learners' performance as NSs do? Do they provoke as much tension in students as NSs usually do?

2. The Present Study

2.1 Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to explore what type of roles each NS and NNS teacher should perform in English teaching. While it appears that only NS is highly appreciated as the model of an English speaker in Japan, there should be certain specialized roles for NNS teachers, as well as Japanese teachers. In considering these roles, it is crucial to have a perspective of EIL in the sense that Sapir (1949) called it "international auxiliary language" and Kakimoto (2001) defined it as "substitute language for international communication." The fact that English is spoken by a considerably greater number of NNSs than NSs (Jenkins, 2002:83) has been gaining more and more recognition with the
number of English users around the world surging towards almost two billion (Crystal, 1985). Recently it has been pointed out that the labeling of NS and NNS itself connotes "power driven, attitudinal problems" and Rampton (1990:97) has suggested the term "language inheritance" and "language affiliation" instead of native language and mother tongue. There is also a growing awareness that "the stereotype of NNS professionals who were born in foreign countries and who learned English in EFL contexts and thus lack native proficiency in English needs to be challenged" (Liu, 1999:85).

Two assumptions were examined in this study. The first assumption is that since people in the twenty-first century are exposed to a variety of Englishes in the international communication, English teachers should be able to provide students with at least several typical varieties of English besides the so-called "standard" variety. NNS teachers could serve as confidently as NSs in the sense of being able to provide a sample variety of English themselves.

The second assumption is that since Japanese teachers are endowed with the potential to be as good as NS teachers, or even better as models of non-native English speakers, they should therefore use English more actively in classroom instruction. It is considered that there is a criticism against Japanese teachers concerning their English language proficiency, especially the negative effects on learners' acquisition of phonology. Nevertheless, Japanese teachers should speak as much English as possible. Since they have been also EFL learners themselves and will be so until they reach full competence, it is only the Japanese teachers who can show how EFL learning could bear fruit after a considerable amount of effort. Medgyes (1992:346-347) stated six advantages non-NESTs (native English speaking teachers) have as follows: a) Only non-NESTs can serve as imitable models of the successful learner of English, b) Non-NESTs can teach learning strategies more effectively, c) Non-NESTs can provide learners with more information about the English language, d) Non-NESTs are more able to anticipate language difficulties, e) Non-NESTs can be more empathetic to the needs and problems of their learners, and f) Only non-NESTs can benefit from sharing the learners' mother tongue. To distinguish Japanese teachers from other NNSs in this paper, they shall be identified as "NNS+J", since only Japanese teachers have an advantage stated under (f) above, sharing the mother tongue with Japanese learners.

The objectives of this study then are, in summary: 1) explore the possible difference in students' attitudes toward NSs and NNSs mainly in terms of tension or anxiety, and 2) analyze students' evaluative reactions to the classes taught in English by a NNS+J and then specify the appropriate roles that NNS+Js are expected to play by their students.

2.2 The Subjects and Procedure
2.2.1 Questionnaire 1
The subjects of Questionnaire 1 were two English speaking students and five Japanese students. One English speaker was a Japanese-Canadian, whose first language was English, and the other was a Peruvian who was a NNS with better speaking proficiency than the five Japanese students. Both had stayed in Japan for three months at the time of the study as exchange students. Five Japanese students were all university students majoring in International Studies of Culture at a university in Fukuoka, Japan. In a survey of their background, three of them had experienced a six-month studying in England and the rest had spent about four weeks in the United States. They were at an intermediate level in overall English proficiency and three of them with six-month overseas experience were rather fluent in speaking.

Each Japanese student had one-to-one interviews in English with the Canadian student and the Peruvian student for approximately ten minutes each in a university classroom. This procedure involved the two exchange students talking continually for about 50 minutes in total with short intervals in-between. The talking segments were both recorded and videotaped for later analysis. Due to technical difficulties, the interview with one Japanese was incomplete and has consequently not been included in the analysis of the amount of time spent by the student. After the talking segments, all Japanese students were requested to answer ten questions on a questionnaire form.

2.2.2 Questionnaire 2

The respondents to Questionnaire 2 were 36 Japanese students. 17 were 1st year university students, taking "Interactive English," and 19 were a combination of 3rd year and 4th year university students taking "English Communication." They had taken those two courses for 13 weeks, during which the classes met once a week. Most of the instructions in those courses were done in English by a NNS+J.

At the end of the 13 weeks, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire form by marking numbers on a 6-point approval rating scale where 1 corresponded to 0%, 2 to 20%, and finally 6 to 100% level of approval of fifteen different statements that expressed the students' evaluative responses to the classes taught in English.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Questionnaire 1

The amount of talk by Japanese students was measured using recorded interviews and a stopwatch. The results in Table 1 show the percentages of how long Japanese students talked in each interview. They spoke almost half the amount of time at every interview except in the case of a Japanese student (B) with a NNS. What the student wrote in a retrospective report was quite noteworthy. She said that she felt "pressure to talk" when

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talking with a NS so that she continually tried to ask questions, while she was more relaxed with a NNS, leading to her talking for 38% of the total amount of time.

**Table 1** Percentage of the amount of talk by Japanese students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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</table>

The questions asked here consisted of the 10 statements listed in Table 2. They were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1, "completely disagree," to 4, "pretty much agree." The numbers in the table indicate the means of the points given to a NS and a NNS and the difference of the means between NS and NNS.

**Table 2** Questionnaire items and means of points given to NS and NNS and difference of means between NS and NNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>NNS</th>
<th>NS-NNS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The pronunciation sounded familiar so that I could talk more easily.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The pronunciation sounded rather unfamiliar.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 In spite of the unfamiliar expressions, I felt like speaking actively.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The talk went smoothly and I found it easy to carry out a conversation.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I laid more stress on accuracy than fluency.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I tried to be fluent more than to be accurate.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The interviewer used many unfamiliar expressions.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The interviewer tried to use simpler English.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 I was relaxed when talking with the interviewer.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 I felt anxious whether I was making sense.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items 1 and 2 were concerned with intelligibility. The results showed that the subjects perceived the NS's pronunciation to be more familiar and easier to understand compared to the NNS's. This result contradicts the result of Smith and Rafiqzad (1979) mentioned in the earlier section. But we also have the data in Questionnaire 2 that English spoken by a Japanese speaker was considered highly intelligible among Japanese students. So we could at least conclude that in terms of intelligibility, the NS variety is not always the best model since intelligibility is an extremely subjective...
matter for each listener in a specific situation and depends on several interrelated factors such as articulation, speed, and familiarity.

Questionnaire items 3, 4, 6 and 9 all dealt with positive attitudes and fluency. In this respect, a NNS scored higher in three items out of four. Especially item 4, "the talk went smoothly and I found it easy to carry out a conversation" holds the second largest gap between NS and NNS (0.7), followed by item 6, "I tried to be fluent more than to be accurate" (the difference 0.5.) A NNS in this experiment can be said to have facilitated fluency in Japanese students' speech in English.

Items 5 and 10 were concerned with anxiety, including consciousness of accuracy. Item 10, "I felt anxious whether I was making sense" with a NS, gained 3.8, where the difference in points was the largest, 0.8. These results indicated that a NS in this experiment generated apparently more tension or anxiety in Japanese speakers. This difference was also observed in the form of, what the student called, "pressure to talk", which was mentioned in the earlier section.

One student in Questionnaire 1 wrote in a retrospective report as follows, "NNS's English was a little difficult because of her accents but I could see both sides making efforts to understand each other so the talk was enjoyable." Another wrote, "during my stay in England, I felt somewhat nervous when talking with British people while I felt more relaxed talking with people from other countries especially from Asia."

Everyone would admit that aural-oral competence, which has long been criticized as defects of Japanese learners, must be developed with special efforts. Therefore any factors which might bring about "debilitating anxiety" should be carefully eliminated from the classroom environment. In that sense, participation of NSs as ALTs should be planned so deliberately as to produce no undesired side effects related with anxiety.

3.2 Questionnaire 2

The questionnaire form included 15 response statements listed in Table 3. They were grouped in positive responses and negative responses as in Table 4, which indicated means and standard deviations of the points given to each questionnaire item. The former responses were mainly based on the merits of NNS teachers proposed by Medgyes (1992). The latter were based on the common criticisms of English classroom environment in Japan including teachers as one of the conditions.

The results of items 1, 2, 9, 14 and 15, which were concerned with English spoken by a teacher, indicated that English instructions done by a Japanese teacher were favorably accepted. Item 1, "pronunciation is easier to understand," gained 4.1 point and item 2, "expressions are easier to understand," 4.3 point while three negative responses, 9, 14, and 15 all received low points, 2.1, 1.9, and 1.5 respectively. Item 14, "English spoken by a Japanese seems to have mistakes," and item 15, "I'm afraid of
negative influence of English spoken by a Japanese teacher," represented very common criticisms of Japanese speakers. English spoken by a Japanese is often considered to be not "real" or "authentic" and to be exposed to it may cause the negative influence.

Table 3 Questionnaire items of Questionnaire 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pronunciation by a Japanese is easier to understand.</td>
<td>4.1 (SD 1.4)</td>
<td>4.3 (SD 1.2)</td>
<td>4.7 (SD 1.5)</td>
<td>4.3 (SD 1.4)</td>
<td>4.9 (SD 1.3)</td>
<td>4.5 (SD 1.4)</td>
<td>4.9 (SD 1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Expressions used by Japanese are easier to understand.</td>
<td>4.7 (SD 1.5)</td>
<td>4.3 (SD 1.3)</td>
<td>4.9 (SD 1.4)</td>
<td>4.3 (SD 1.3)</td>
<td>4.9 (SD 1.4)</td>
<td>4.6 (SD 1.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Means and standard deviations of points given to each questionnaire item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.1 (SD 1.5)</td>
<td>1.4 (SD 0.8)</td>
<td>2.0 (SD 1.2)</td>
<td>1.4 (SD 0.8)</td>
<td>1.8 (SD 1.0)</td>
<td>1.9 (SD 1.2)</td>
<td>1.5 (SD 0.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Rating scale: 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100%
point: 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6
However, the students in this study did not show much of this kind of concern.

Items 7, 8, 12, and 13 were concerned with seeing classroom as a setting for English use. Item 7, "simple instructions should be in English so that students can get used to spoken English," gained the highest point in this study, 4.9. Together with the results of 8, (4.6 point), and from the negative point of view, 12 (1.4 point) and 13 (1.8 point), there is a high expectation for English to be used by teachers and students in the classroom. In order to fulfill this students' expectations, the use of English should be encouraged more in every classroom.

Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 dealt with attitudes of students. Item 5, which was given the other highest point, 4.9, showed students' high anticipation of teacher's understanding: "a NNS+J understands better what difficulties Japanese learners would have." Here it appeared as one of students' positive attitudes toward their teachers. The other items concerning teachers were items 4 and 6, the mean points of which were 4.3 and 4.5 respectively. It can be said here that students regard a NNS+J as an "imitable model of the successful learner" (Medgyes, 1992:346).

Medgyes (1992) has proposed why NNSs can offset the advantage NSs have over NNSs, thanks to their native command of English. NNS teachers, based on their own learning experiences, can be more aware than their native counterparts of "learning strategies" as well as English itself as a language, therefore they can also "anticipate language difficulties" and "be more empathetic to the needs and problems of their learners." That should be true especially when they share with their students a mother tongue and a common culture. Also Baxter (1980:55) claims that, in Japan, "the most appropriate teaching model is one based on the proficient Japanese speaker of English." Given all these, it is proposed here that NNS+Js are more appropriate as models of English speakers since they should be capable of treating the situations related to psychological problems or culture-related trouble in language learning more easily than NS teachers can. NNS+Js ought to be more aware of their own endowments and should exercise them to the fullest extent.

The results of the items 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13 all show that students are ready to use English as a means of communication in classroom. So now it is the teachers that are challenged to use English as an instruction language in classroom as much as possible, using Japanese when necessary since it helps students understand better.

4. Conclusions and Implications

There are some limitations in this study. First, since data in Questionnaire 1 were collected from the one-to-one interview style, it took a long time to collect the data from a relatively small number of subjects. Any extension of this study will need to use other
research design where a larger number of subjects can have meaningful and prolonged interactions with each native and non-native speaker. Next, all the participants in the present study were assumed to have an intermediate level of English proficiency, there is a possibility of different results from different proficiency levels. So possible correlation with different proficiency levels should be considered in any future studies. With these limitations in mind, conclusions which can be drawn from the present study can be summarized as follows. Firstly, a NNS teacher would have a higher possibility to facilitate a learner's fluency in speaking and to generate less anxiety concerning accuracy. Secondly, Japanese teachers of English should be more aware of their own capabilities in being the NNSs of English as well as the bonus of sharing a mother tongue with learners. Several negative aspects of Japanese teachers using English in the classroom have been proved to be regarded as less problematic among Japanese learners compared to the positive effects brought from the interactions in spoken English. Finally, the role of NSs should be reconsidered. From elementary to senior-high school level, more and more NSs have been introduced in the classroom as ALTs. The main objectives in having ALTs in classrooms have been stated as providing: 1) a model especially for "correct" pronunciation, 2) real interactive situations for communication, 3) adding authenticity in the classroom, and 4) an opportunity to experience a different culture. But, are these objectives achieved only by NSs? This is not so if the perspective of EIL is taken into consideration. It is already established that native speakers of English are being outnumbered by non-native speakers spread all over the world. In view of the above, the four objectives of having ALTs in the classroom are all attainable by either NSs or any NNSs as long as they have a sound knowledge of English. NSs are not only one choice any more but one of various other choices to be ideal teachers of English. Jenkins (2002:85) even claims "the right for speakers to express their (L1) [mother tongue] regional group identity in English by means of their accent" and argues that "phonology must be intelligible and acceptable to the target international, and therefore predominantly NNS, English-speaking community." Therefore, in order to be an efficient user of English in this new century, Japanese people need more experience and training with EIL. For this purpose, it is desirable to have competent NNSs of English as well as NSs as ALTs in the classroom. Japanese teachers should perform a role as NNSs themselves and provide students with a chance to learn the way to speak EIL which does not conflict with the speaker's self-identity.

References
