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Shortcomings in the JET Programme as a Vehicle for English Pronunciation Teaching by Native Speakers

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Abstract

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is a longstanding and influential government initiative employing thousands of immigrant teachers throughout Japan. The JET instructional delivery model is characterized by periodic classroom visits from largely untrained English native-speaking teachers who serve as classroom assistants with the licensed teacher – typically a Japanese individual – being in charge. This model was adopted to promote international contact and authentic language exposure with the JET teacher being especially responsible for teaching oral communication. This study focused on empirically examining their pronunciation teaching since there has been little assessment of how the JET instructional delivery model addresses this important dimension of oral communication. To do so, 4879 teaching activities created by JET participants were analyzed in terms of how they addressed critical aspects of pronunciation teaching. Results indicated important shortcomings, including little integration of pronunciation into the curriculum, weak links between listening to notice phonological features and subsequent learner production, poor coverage of the various dimensions of phonology, a lack of attention to assessing learners' pronunciation needs, and inaccurate presentation of phonology especially through English transcribed into the Japanese katakana writing system. The findings suggest shortcomings inherent in the JET-style instructional delivery model, especially attributable to its recruitment of untrained NS teachers, their sporadic appearance in particular classrooms, and their responsibilities in creating and teaching oral communication lessons. This project is thus important not only within Japan, but also in other contexts where the JET-style model has been embraced as a vehicle for seeking to match native-speaker language skills to student needs.

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INTRODUCTION

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme hinges upon a faith in the value of untrained native-speaking (NS) individuals as language teachers. While scholars in applied linguistics have consistently called such assumptions into question over recent decades, most of these critiques have failed to assess what the NS teachers actually does. For example, Phillpson's (e.g., Phillipson, 2008) influential work about the "native speaker fallacy" attacks NS reliance mainly on the basis of a social justice appeal with its view of NS supremacy in English language teaching as an outgrowth of the colonial legacy of English. There have been surprisingly few efforts to empirically consider how such NS teachers

perform their teaching duties. This study does so by weighing the classroom practice of the JET NS teacher against established best practices in pronunciation teaching. This project thus assesses the effectiveness of two aspects of the JET instructional delivery model. The first is the very notion of recruiting the untrained NS teacher, and the second is how they are supported and deployed by the program *after* they assume their positions. Since English education is now important around the world, since the use of NS English teachers is widespread, and since a number of countries have adopted initiatives similar to JET, the results of this study have broad implications beyond Japan.

The JET Programme is a mature initiative with long-established procedures. Begun in 1987 to improve the English ability of Japanese students through a focus on intercultural exposure and authentic language for communication (Borg, 2020). The instructional delivery model upon which JET is based is characterized by several important attributes. Foremost, it involves the recruitment of NS teachers from outside of Japan. These individuals take on the role of "assistant language teachers" (ALTs) who are to work alongside the full-time Japanese classroom teacher in what the program refers to as a "team-teaching" approach (Nakao, et al., 2019). One impetus for the team-teaching model is that the ALT lacks Japanese government teaching credentials and is, therefore, not qualified to take sole responsibility for a class (Haye-Matsui, 2018). Also, Japanese language proficiency is not required. Only about 1% of JET ALTs hold any qualifications to teach EFL (Chindemi, 2021). This is accepted by JET officials who perceive the ALT's NS status alone to be adequate to the task of language teaching (Galloway, 2009). The ALT is routinely called upon to assume duties including actual classroom teaching as well as lesson plan and teaching materials creation to support this classroom work (Carley, 2013). One important goal of the JET/ALT model is for the participant to work in addressing shortcomings in the curriculum and in required course texts, especially by making classes more personalized to learner needs and more communicative. The official ALT Handbook published jointly by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and the British Council (2013) states that

MEXT have recently stressed that teachers should also seek to introduce supplementary materials into lessons in order to respond to, or stimulate, student interest. Traditionally, teachers may have considered it their job to get students to memorise the contents of the textbook. Now it is being recognised that lessons need to become more student-centred and communicative (p. 15). Another dimension of the JET model is that, unlike their Japanese counterparts who are assigned to a particular classroom, the ALT is positioned as a classroom visitor. Although the exact frequency varies, ALT visits to any particular class – usually around one hour long – typically occur only twice a month or so (Lawrence, 2016).

One defining characteristic of the JET/ALT system is the goal of promoting oral communication and pronunciation (Marchesseau, 2015). This goal is a response to recognition of the weakness of Japanese ELT in fostering oral communicative ability given the traditional focus on memorization of grammar patterns and vocabulary over communication (Bailey, 2018). The reliance upon this traditional approach is especially attributed to the washback effect of high-stakes university entrance exams with their focus upon writing and demonstrations of explicit grammatical knowledge of English (Mitchell, 2017). In response, the Japanese government has put forth the overall goal of "Japanese who can use English" with the objective of preparing Japanese people to be able to employ English for daily interactions (Hashimoto, 2009). The official Japanese government materials for JET demonstrate the intended strong connection between the NS teacher and communication, indicating that "the students, the [Japanese teachers of English], and the native speaker (ALT) work together to engage in communicative activities. Team teaching provides opportunities for active interaction in a foreign language in the classroom" (CLAIR, 2022, p. 82). The focus on oral communication has

gained additional impetus in recent years with the expansion of English study from its traditional onset during middle school into the elementary schools coupled with an emphasis upon listening and speaking for this initial phase of English learning (Carley, 2013).

Outside of Japan, governments across East Asia have adopted initiatives like the JET Programme aimed at recruiting NS language teachers for work in the schools. These include the EPIK (English Programme in Korea) in South Korea, EPS (English Program Sichuan) in China, the NET (Native English-speaking Teacher) scheme in Hong Kong, and the FET (Foreign English Teachers) program in Taiwan (Turnbill, 2018). As with JET, such initiatives tap into the strong preference for the NS as teacher of oral communication (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019). Research confirms that students themselves often do prefer the NS for teaching speaking (Agudo & Robinson, 2014; Al-Omrani, 2008). The preference for the NS to handle the pronunciation aspect of oral communication is strong throughout the world. In one study, for example, teachers from Iran and Turkey viewed the teaching of "correct" pronunciation as a strength of the NS teacher (Tajeddin & Adeh, 2016). In research conducted in Taiwan, English learners consistently indicated the perception that the accent associated with Taiwan English was incorrect and that it demanded remediation by work with NS teachers (Brown, 2014). In Thailand, although English learners do acknowledge some value to local non-native speaker varieties of English, the idealized NS standard still represents the goal of pronunciation learning (Jindapitak, 2015). Thus, the NS is often seen as a mainstay of oral communication and the pronunciation teaching that accompanies this modality.

Pronunciation teaching certainly *is* critical to fostering successful oral communication. Pronunciation is important not only for enhancing intelligibility, or how well the learner's speech can be understood, but also comprehensibility, or how well the learner can understand the speech of others (Derwing et al., 2012). Learners with a good command of pronunciation are generally intelligible to others even when they make grammatical errors whereas those with an excellent command of grammar but having poor pronunciation may not be understood (Gilakjani, 2012a). Yet there are some potential roadblocks standing in the way of good pronunciation teaching. One fundamental challenge in pronunciation teaching is simply providing enough of it. In many cases, teachers fail to sufficiently take on the teaching of pronunciation, often because they feel less capable doing so (Gilakjani, 2016). When pronunciation is taught, it is important to provide practice in all aspects of phonology, to establish a link between listening for noticing of these phonological features and their production for communication, and to creatively integrate pronunciation work into the broader curriculum. It is questionable, though, whether NS intuition is sufficient to adequately promote these goals (Kaiser, 2014). Thus, there is reason to carefully examine how NS teachers present pronunciation in the ALT/JET instructional delivery model given their lack of training coupled with their dominance.

A critical question in adequately addressing the entire gamut of phonology in teaching has been the importance of attending to both segmental and suprasegmental features of the language (Zielinski, 2015). The term "segmental" is used by linguists to refer to the individual sounds of the language, or the phonemes; the term "suprasegmental" refers to features above the individual sound, especially intonation, pauses, and stress. Untrained and inexperienced teachers especially tend to focus too heavily on segmentals (Nguyen & Newton, 2020; Tergujeff, 2012). Yet, linguists recognize that suprasegmental language features carry a heavy meaning load (Adams-Goerte, 2013). Indeed, some linguists contend that suprasegmentals are *more* important than segmentals in communicating meaning in English (Buss, 2016). Thus, enhancing learner competency in both segmental and suprasegmental features of spoken language from the very start of a learner's language study is now broadly recognized as necessary for adequate

communicative success in the target language (e.g., Darcy et al., 2012). This acknowledgment of the importance of segmental and suprasegmental features implies that there are many specific areas of pronunciation demanding focus by the English language teacher since both subsume numerous phenomena.

Another important issue in pronunciation teaching, therefore, is the use of methods tailored to providing practice in the various dimensions of English pronunciation. In terms of segmental aspects of language, this includes elements of phonics in which learners learn English spelling conventions and the connection to the sounds of the language as well as length of vowels, tense and lax vowels, consonants, and final consonant clusters (Darcy et al., 2012). In some cases teachers have taught the international phonetic alphabet (IPA) to learners since English orthography is not wholly phonetic (Tergujeff, 2012). Areas of greatest importance for suprasegmentals include syllable divisions within words and stressed syllables within words (Gilakjani, 2012b). Intonation, thought groups, contrastive stress, and focus/emphasis are also important suprasegmental features for learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Attention to linking, assimilation, and reduction also yield important benefits to learners, further indicating the importance of suprasegmental work (Adams-Goerte, 2013). Saito and Saito (2016) investigated the use of instructional methods tailored to addressing suprasegmental features especially problematic for learners whose L1 was Japanese. They noted gains in comprehensibility when instruction focused upon word stress, rhythm, and intonation.

Finally, for pronunciation teaching to be most effective, pronunciation activities must be cogently integrated into the instructional mainstream as one aspect of general communicative listening and speaking activities. This can be problematic in practice with some practitioners viewing pronunciation as a surface layer of "polish" superimposed upon a grammatical language core (Wahid & Sulong, 2013). Established best practices, however, indicate that an articulated and carefully controlled sequence of pronunciation practice activities is important with the different aspects of pronunciation being linked to communication (Darcy, et al., 2012). Promoting connections between noticing of phonological features in listening and their production is critical. Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010) suggest a progression from description and analysis of particular features through activities designed to promote noticing and culminating in controlled and communicative practice. Most critical in meeting the pronunciation needs of learners is the importance of careful needs assessment, especially through recording of their speech production for reference, including listening assessment, and determining how learners themselves perceive various features of the target language (McGregor & Reed, 2018).

Language educators have responded by developing a rich repertoire of methods for teaching the many aspects of pronunciation and, in particular, for promoting the critical connections between *noticing* these aspects and *producing* them. These techniques include "conducting" which involves movement along with rhythm, stress, and intonation of words or phrases, tapping out rhythm, using nonsense syllables to illustrate intonation, slowing down/speeding up utterances, back chaining, teaching about content words vs. function words for suprasegmentals, and using nonsense sentences (Hussain & Sajid, 2015). Pronunciation teachers have used rubber bands with the learners stretching the bands in time with stress patterns in words and phrases as kinesthetic reinforcement (Nair et al., 2017). The "stress stretch" method has learners stand each time they pronounce the stressed syllables in polysyllabic words (Chan, 2018). Kazoos have been pressed into service to teach intonation (Tergujeff et al., 2020). Puppets are especially valuable with young learners in allowing them to use language with dramatic pronunciation while avoiding embarrassment (Yolanda & Hadi, 2019). Even lighted candles can be used to demonstrate aspirated stops, the result of the correct articulation being observed by the sway or extinguishment of the flame (Spezini, 2021). Such methods are not new but have been part of the pronunciation teaching repertoire for decades. For

example, a book from 1987 entirely dedicated to teaching English rhythm and intonation discusses having students stretch rubber bands to teach English rhythm (Wong, 1987). In light of the foregoing, it would be expected that any major, long-established program such as JET purporting to promote oral communication would carefully employ a variety of methods to address the various aspects of English pronunciation.

Given the importance of teaching pronunciation and the complexity in doing so, there is ample reason for concern regarding the fitness of any teacher to undertake this task. Despite this concern and despite the expansive and longstanding nature of the JET Programme, as well as the adoption of similar programs across Asia, no research has methodically considered how JET ALTs across Japan teach English pronunciation. This project aimed to rectify this gap in scholarship through a systematic assessment of pronunciation teaching against the backdrop of best practices in this domain of language pedagogy. As a result of the foregoing, this project focused on the following research questions.

Overall: How effectively does the JET/ALT delivery model address English pronunciation?

1. How effectively do JET/ALT participants integrate pronunciation work into the broader curriculum?
2. How effectively do JET/ALT participants create activities to link reception/noticing of phonology and production?
3. How effectively do JET/ALT participants address the various segmental and suprasegmental aspects of English phonology?

METHOD

The articulation between policy and classroom practice is complex and often tenuous. While an enormous number of factors underlie this relationship, an important one is rigorous teacher preparation to inculcate best practices (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2013). In the case of the JET Programme, the lack of teacher preparation thus indicates the value of empirical investigations into actual classroom teaching – rather than examining policy or official textbooks - if one is to better understand students' experience. Looking at classroom practice is also important since one goal of the JET/ALT model is for the participant to supplement curriculum and official texts. Fortuitously, in the case of JET the need to share teaching materials among this cadre of short-term teachers has resulted in the creation of government-sponsored websites at the prefectural level for disseminating materials among participants. These sites provide bountiful lesson plans as well as associated materials such as handouts, PowerPoint presentations, and audio or video files or Internet links. Since the materials have been used by teachers prior to posting, they provide robust insights into classroom teaching. Futhermore, the fact that these activities are intended as resources for others to follow provides a glimpse into valorized practice. For the data collection portion of this project, 4879 of these materials for use in elementary, middle, high school, and adult classes from 22 such sites across Japan were collected and analyzed (Although Japan has 47 prefectures, not all have their own JET/ALT activity sharing sites). No sampling scheme was used; rather, all available materials were harvested. Collecting such a large corpus provides several benefits: Trends are more evident and more certain, a large geographic area can be reliably covered, important exceptions may be manifest, and the chance of these practices impacting learners is greater. Evaluating an entire programmatic model demands such an expansive approach.

For data analysis, each of the research questions was addressed differently. While this corpus contained many activities in which learners engaged in target language listening or speaking, only those with pronunciation practice were analyzed. Special care was taken to make note of those activities in which listening and speaking were *linked* with perception of aspects of English phonology. In ascertaining the teaching of segmental

and suprasegmental features of English phonology, plans promoting listening and/or production of single vowels (such as the "i" in "sit") and two-sound diphthongs (such as the "a" in "cake"), consonants, especially the distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants, flapping, and released vs. unreleased consonants (such as the way that "t" is typically pronounced when word final such as in "cat.") were included. Suprasegmentals/adjustments in connected speech included syllables and syllable stress within words, linking, reductions, sentence stress (stress-timing)/thought groups/rhythm, focus and emphasis, and intonation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis indicated that JET program participants did create abundant opportunities for learners to engage in listening and speaking with 2586 of the 4879 activities involving these skills in some form. These activities included learners uttering single words, asking questions of others, giving speeches, and performing dramas. Despite this, no attention to pronunciation accompanied most of these activities. Only 215 of these activities either claimed to include attention to pronunciation or actually did so. Of this number 60 provided no useful guidance to others hoping to employ the materials for pronunciation. Such lessons simply included ambiguous statements such as instructing teachers to "check the students' pronunciation" or the be "strict about pronunciation." One lesson plan instructed teachers to "help students get used to the sounds" in using new vocabulary. Another stated that the teacher should "go over the pronunciation of the new words." The analysis thus revealed that the remaining 155 out of the 4879 activities (or about 3.2%) did provide useful guidance about working with learners on pronunciation. By comparison, about 18.1% of the lessons were primarily concerned with grammar, about 11.7% with reading, and about 6.2% with vocabulary. This finding alone calls into question whether JET attains its ostensible goal of eschewing traditional test-prep teaching in favor of oral communication.

I. The integration of listening and speaking with a pronunciation focus

The 155 activities in this corpus providing explicit guidelines for teaching pronunciation were biased toward listening activities with no speaking. There was also comparatively little linking of the listening and speaking activities included. The following breakdown illustrates the relevant data:

- Activities involving listening only: 43
- Activities involving speaking only: 26
- Activities involving both listening and speaking: 18
- Activities involving reading or writing for pronunciation learning but with no listening or speaking (including learners simply being provided with katakana renderings of English for pronunciation guidance): 68

In the 18 cases where listening and speaking were linked, nine of these simply involved choral repetition of the ALT rather than listening to develop sensitivity to particular nuances of phonology and scaffolding learners toward their deployment as mechanisms for communication. Results indicated that choices such as the embrace of choral repetition were related to large class sizes, time limits, and the "standalone" nature of ALT visits, features of which lesson creators made note in a number of instances. For example, one lesson posited the value of group work - rather than activities in which learners spoke one by one - in allowing all learners to speak in light of large class sizes. Another notable finding was the inclusion of reading and writing tasks for pronunciation practice, but without accompanying listening or speaking components. Most of these lessons involved the writing of poetry. Such written work also would be easier to implement in larger classes. Of particular note is the finding that the entire corpus of materials included no forms of diagnostic assessment of pronunciation whatsoever.

II. Coverage of segmental vs. suprasegmental features of English

The breakdown in terms of areas of pronunciation focus in the materials is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Areas of pronunciation focus in the corpus of 4879 English activities

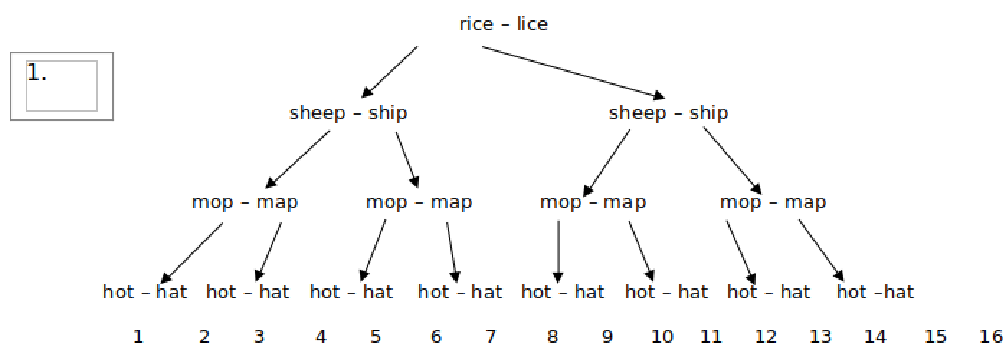
Area of focus	Number
Attention to individual phonemes	55
Attention to individual phonemes via katakana	50
Attention to syllable counts in words	11
Attention to stressed syllables in words	0
Attention to linking	13
Attention to reductions	1
Attention to stress of content words vs. function words, stress-timing/rhythm, thought groups	4
Attention to focus and emphasis/contrastive stress	2
Attention to intonation	1

(Note: Some materials appear in multiple areas.)

These results indicate a strong bias toward the pronunciation of individual sounds. Indeed, if katakana renderings (see below) are included, then 95 of the 155 examples of pronunciation teaching related to individual sounds. The most common of these activities were phonics decoding tasks, minimal pair games, and minimal pair trees tailored to sounds presumed difficult for Japanese speakers to distinguish such as /l/ vs. /r/ and /b/ vs. /v/ as well as tense vs. lax vowels. Figure 1 illustrates one of the minimal pair trees; learners listen to the ALT speak four words such as *rice, sheep, map, hat* so as to be able to determine the resulting number (in this case, 4). The meta-language used in these materials further reflects this bias toward segmentals. The terms *minimal pairs*, *phonics*, and *phonemes* were used throughout with the notion of minimal pairs being explicitly taught to learners in some cases. Terms relating to suprasegmentals such as *stress-timed, syllable-timed*, and *thought groups*, as well as the term *suprasegmental(s)* itself did not occur.

Figure 1 Minimal Pair Tree

1 Pronunciation Tree



The overall paucity of focus on pronunciation in this corpus of JET teacher support materials is also reflected in the narrowness of the *methods* used in addressing the various dimensions of English pronunciation. The most common methods employed are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Most common methods employed to teach pronunciation in the corpus

Target Skill	Method(s) Used	Number
Segmentals/Phonemes	Learners read katakana for English pronunciation	50
Segmentals/Phonemes	Learners listen to ALT say minimal pairs and indicate which is being said (mostly via pronunciation trees)	21
Linking	Learners listen to songs and mark links on lyrics sheet	9
Word-level pronunciation	Learners say individual words with pronunciation focus	8
Attention to Number of Syllables in Words	Learners write haiku in English	8
Segmentals/Phonemes/Phonics	Learners listen to ALT and pick the alphabet letter representing the sound they are saying	7
Word-level pronunciation	Learners listen to individual words spoken by ALT and repeat	6
Attention to syllables in words	Learners listen to words and engage in kinesthetic activity such as tapping along on their desk to the syllables or moving to signs around the room with numbers representing syllables in a word	5
Segmentals/Phonemes/Phonics	Learners repeat phonics after ALT ('buh, buh, bear')	3
Segmentals/Phonemes	Learners write poems with rhymes	3

The most prevalent form of instruction given to students regarding pronunciation was the use of katakana writing to phoneticize English words. The most common form of attention to adjustments in connected speech were exercises to listen to songs and to mark the linking on a lyrics sheet. Besides this, more common methods in this collection for teaching English pronunciation were minimal pair listening exercises such as the tree above, phonics activities in which the sounds represented by letters were taught, and repeating after the teacher, typically single words. Poetry writing appeared as a method to teach two aspects of pronunciation. The first was the number of syllables in words through writing English haiku; the second was teaching word sounds by writing rhyming poetry.

III. Use of "katakana English" and incorrect pronunciation teaching advice

One unanticipated result of this study was documentation of pronunciation advice to learners that was patently incorrect, especially through the use of the Japanese katakana writing system to render English words. Katakana is a phonetic writing system based upon the sounds of Japanese. Because the Japanese sound inventory differs from that of English, using katakana to render English words only approximates mainstream English pronunciation and can result in English pronunciation that is incomprehensible to non-Japanese speakers. For example, one material provided learners with phrases for in-class conversation work. A katakana pronunciation as well as a translation into Japanese accompanied each phrase. The phrase "Take care, see you" would, if the given katakana pronunciation were followed, sound something along the lines of "tayku keah shee yoo." In one such example (Figure 2), learners practiced asking about the time. On this sheet, the katakana provided to the learner for "3:00," for example, would sound something like "sree oh krohkoo." In this material, the creator stated that the English alphabet would have been used but the learners did not know it since they were beginners. In some materials, *only* katakana was provided. This purposeful teaching of incorrect pronunciation is problematic since it will have to be "untaught" later. Yet, it is notable that there were no instances in which teaching English using katakana was integrated as a

steppingstone toward later improved pronunciation via careful instructional scaffolding in a set of articulated lessons. Subtracting the 50 activities using katakana for English from the 155 lessons with pronunciation teaching guidance leaves only 105 activities including useful pronunciation teaching methods for others to follow out of the 4879 activities in this corpus (about 2.2%).

Figure 2 Example of English pronunciations provided in katakana

What time is it? ウォット タイム イズ イット?

It's ~. イツ ~.

今 何時 ですか。 ～です。

3:00= スイリー オックロック

5:30= ファイブ サーティー

10:52= テン・フィフティー トウー

8:00= ________________________

6:30= ________________________

2:15= ________________________

By contrast, a few activities were designed to *remedy* existing "katakana pronunciation" among learners. This was not because katakana pronunciation represented an artifact of previous English classes, per se, but because katakana is also widely used in mainstream Japanese to render foreign loan words (other than those borrowed from Chinese in classical times). There are thousands of such English loan words in the modern Japanese language. These borrowings and renderings in Japanese pronunciation can cause learners great struggles. A young Japanese learner relying upon their L1 background knowledge to pronounce an English word like *McDonald's* correctly and carefully may instead produce an utterance (*makudonarudo*) incomprehensible to English speakers unfamiliar with Japanese. Three of the activities in this corpus were explicitly designed to teach learners the differences between katakana English and mainstream English pronunciation. In another five of the activities, the learners were simply warned not to use "katakana English" for the task.

Besides the issue of katakana renderings, other examples of inaccurate presentation of English phonology were found. This included an activity touted as teaching intonation, but actually about focus and emphasis. Another activity graded students on speaking "clearly" but with no further instructions. This could be misconstrued as indicating that adjustments in connected speech such as linking, reductions, and unreleased final stops should be avoided. Doing so, though, would break important rules of English phonology. Furthermore, given the different nature of Japanese and English phonology overall as well as cultural differences, speaking "clearly" or "carefully" likely means a very different thing to a beginning Japanese learner of English versus an accomplished English speaker and should be clarified in teaching plans. Along the same lines, one material instructed the teacher to break sentences down and to practice the pronunciation one word at a time. Such an approach deprives learners of the chance to acquire adjustments in connected speech. Another lesson instructed the teacher to place strong emphasis upon the article "a" in sentences so that learners could perceive it. This is the opposite of the actual rules of English phonology in which articles generally receive

little stress in an utterance. In another lesson, learners were (correctly) taught that English speakers often make adjustments in connected speech in which the words "give me" come to sound like "gimme." Unfortunately, the lesson went on to characterize this as "slang" rather than as the normal working of English phonological rules. One material pertaining to the pronunciation of numbers instructed the teacher that in order for learners to differentiate numbers such as fifteen and fifty, they should be taught to make the "teen" number with a long final syllable (*fifteeeeen*) and the others with a short syllable (*fifty*). While there is a slight difference in the length of the two, it is not as exaggerated as such advice indicated. Also, this material implied that this distinction is the only one with no mention of the more important presence or absence of voicing of the letter "t" to differentiate the pairs.

Overall, then, these results foreground important problems with the viability of the JET instructional delivery model as a vehicle for English pronunciation teaching, a critical aspect of language education and one widely used to justify that use of native speakers in a teaching capacity. This study implies avenues for change. One putative rationale of the JET/ALT model is the centrality of oral communication to the ALT role. Results here indicate that the critical pronunciation aspect of this mandate in actual teaching practice was lacking. Without more systematic and cogent attention to pronunciation, learner success with real oral communication will be limited. One change to the JET/ALT-style of teaching important for fostering pronunciation would be to address the sporadic nature of ALT classroom visits. While this could prove difficult, the alternative is to continue a system of disjointed classes in which learners practice isolated bits of pronunciation with little overarching instructional trajectory. The inadequacy of this approach can be further foregrounded by comparing the treatment of pronunciation with grammar in this corpus. Over five times as many materials in this corpus pertained explicitly to practice in grammatical form than to pronunciation. Not only does this indicate a more systematic approach to grammar *within* JET/ALT work, but it suggests that the grammar dimension of JET/ALT efforts are much better integrated into the curriculum overall given the strong focus on explicit grammar instruction in the Japanese EFL classroom. This is especially ironic given that an important dimension of the stated JET/ALT mandate is to dislodge the primacy of grammar teaching in greater favor of oral communication.

The data collected here also indicates that the challenge of infrequent classroom visits is exacerbated by large class sizes. Many of the lesson plans in the corpus made explicit mention of the need to accommodate large classes as a consideration in their design. Invariably, this means less intensive contact between the teacher and individual learners. A primer on Japanese education including a collection of several dozen lesson plans for new ALTs assembled by the ALT organization AJET (2010) states that "class size will usually be the single most important factor in your lesson planning" (p. 71). They warn that the ALT should be prepared to teach classes of up to 60 students. Pronunciation teaching practices predicated upon intensive coaching of individual learners with methods such as careful and ongoing diagnostic assessments via individual voice recording and analysis were absent in the materials corpus assembled for this study. Implementing them within the current model of large class sizes and sporadic visits would be daunting. For example, one lesson indicated that the ALT was allotted 20 minutes out of the class period for their teaching. Assuming a class size of 40 students, this would mean that the ALT would have 30 seconds of interaction time with each. Such a calculation does not take into account the time needed to start the lesson, move from one learner to another, and the wrap up. If the ALT were to visit the class in the typical bi-weekly pattern, this suggests something on the order of 10 minutes of possible contact with each learner per academic year. The implications for pronunciation teaching success are obvious: Even were the entirety of the ALT's teaching devoted only to pronunciation, such a small amount of contact would render much progress unlikely.

CONCLUSION

Learning English is important around the world as a part of contemporary internationalization. One widespread practice in English education is the recruitment of minimally-trained native speakers (NS) as teachers. While scholars in English language education have roundly critiqued the reliance upon such teachers, little empirical work has examined their actual teaching. This study addressed this gap by empirically assessing the work of NS teachers in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, an initiative placing thousands of untrained NS teachers into classrooms around the country to promote international contact and to improve students' oral communication skills in English. As a means to determine the effectiveness of JET teachers' work, this project focused on their pronunciation teaching with their approaches being measured against established best practices. This aspect of teaching was chosen for examination because pronunciation is widely cited as an especially important rationale for using native speakers as teachers. Results of an analysis of 4879 teaching materials created and used by JET teachers revealed important shortcomings in their approaches, in particular they exhibited a narrow focus upon a small subset of pronunciation aspects with other important pronunciation skills being consistently ignored. In some cases, these teachers presented incorrect information regarding English pronunciation. Such teaching has troubling implications for students' oral communication ability, even suggesting that the use of the native-speaking teacher in JET may actually be counterproductive. Indeed, the English skills of Japanese students consistently rank near the lowest among East Asian countries despite the vast financial expenditures associated with English study in Japan (Fairbrother, 2022).

The results of this study have demonstrated flaws in the instructional delivery model used in JET, an approach not only involving recruiting the untrained NS teacher, but providing them with no post-hire training and typically rotating them among many classrooms in an effort to maximize their exposure to students. The first implication is that trained teachers should be sought or that training should be provided to recruits, even in the area of pronunciation teaching which is widely assumed to represent a forte of the native-speaking teacher. This study amply demonstrates that the language intuition of the native speaker is not sufficient for teaching. The second implication is that the JET teacher should have consistent contact with students so as to teach lessons that connect with each other. Otherwise these teachers will remain only "tokens" of internationalization as a "foreign face" in front of a class rather than professionally-empowered change agents (Brown, 2019). Finally, professional agency should be promoted instead of these teachers being temporary workers. Such lack of agency and of a meaningful role represents a frequent complaint among ALTs. For example, many have voiced frustration about being relegated to the role of "human tape recorder" in serving as a vocabulary and sentence model for pronunciation through parroting textbook content (Borg, 2020; Knodell, 2017). This lack of professional voice among JET ALTs in what and how they teach has been widely documented (e.g., Glasgow, 2016). Changes to the JET/ALT model in response could involve making the ALT position permanent with professional growth opportunities to accompany credential acquisition and performance. Certainly these practices represent givens for most fields.

The JET programme instructional delivery model is expedient, and it conjures an aura of internationalization and effective teaching. Native-speaking teachers are recruited and positioned as classroom visitors, but with few tangible skills and almost no training. The assumption is that native speaker language skill alone will prevail. This study provides evidence, though, that this is not the case. Given that JET has served as a model for other such programs – and that a faith in the value of the native speaker is widespread – the findings of this study have important implications in many other contexts around the world where English is taught.

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