

Contemporary roles of foreign English teachers in Japanese public secondary schools: An exploratory study

by

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Abstract

This study discusses the roles of Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) in contemporary Japanese society through existing literature, and the results from questionnaires. Ever since the largest wave of NESTs started to work in Japanese public secondary schools in 1987 their roles have never been satisfactorily specified. NESTs are officially employed to offer students opportunity to improve their communicative ability. However, their roles are shaped by complex professional and societal factors. Professionally, they are part of a long chain of authorities starting at the government level through MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), and down to the Japanese Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNEST) they teach with. Socially, forces stemming from Japan's social history and rapidly evolving contemporary society mould their roles. This dissertation discusses the responses of 171 NESTs and 28 NNESTs under the paradigm of a changing society that aims to maintain traditional practices out of touch in the modern world. To assist Japan in achieving its 'internationalisation' goals it is suggested that the continued separation of NEST's assistant status should be modified to that of an English teacher of equal status.

Dedication

For my very special daughter Emily, who unknowingly taught me the Japanese phrase
‘親馬鹿’.

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ACRONYMS

- ALT – Assistant Language Teacher
- BoE – Board of Education
- CLAIR – The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
- CoS – Course(s) of Study
- CLT – Communicative Language Teaching
- ELT – English Language Teaching
- ETJ – English Teachers in Japan
- FL – Foreign Language
- HS – High School
- JALT – Japan Association for Language Teaching
- JET – Japan Exchange and Teaching
- JHS – Junior High School
- JTU – Japanese Teachers Union
- IGO – Intergovernmental Organisations
- MEXT – Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
- NEST – Native English Speaking Teacher
- NNEST – Non-Native English Speaking Teacher
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- PGCE – Post Graduate Certificate of Education
- RTT – Reverse Team-teaching: a classroom situation where the foreign teacher takes the leading role in teaching the class
- SLA – Second Language Acquisition
- TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other languages
- TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Framing the discussion

The roles of NESTs in Japanese public secondary schools have remained ambiguous for at least 30 years. From the late 1980's their roles were more social rather than pedagogical, as reviewed throughout this dissertation. However in view of demographic, social and economic changes a renewed interpretation of NEST roles is considered to be overdue. This dissertation explores the contemporary roles of NESTs through survey data and, in view of shifting social patterns, discusses reasons for their roles. Respectively, the two themes examined here centre around the two contrasting ideologies of roles, for pedagogical, or for social purposes: to teach or not to teach.

NESTs first came to Japan in large numbers through the governmental Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme in 1987. By 1994 prefectural Boards of Education (BoE) and private companies had also started to dispatch NESTs to secondary schools. These start up years of JET are well detailed in an ethnographic analysis by McConnell (2000). In his study one NEST interviewee spoke candidly about their teaching role, and made a comment that was representative at the time: 'We do not know what we are here for, I have not got a clue. Clearly we are not here to teach' (p.198). And nearly 30 years later, one respondent in the present study similarly stated 'I feel like my job is akin to an "English mascot" and there is little value in what I do'. This finding propelled the research presented here in scrutinising what the roles of NESTs are from their perspectives, why they see their roles as they do, and how able they are to fulfil them.

In the early years of NESTs teaching in public schools The Ministry of Education (MEXT), were very open that the role of teachers was not for pedagogical purposes, but to promote ‘internationalisation’ in Japan. JET has been described as a policy instrument used to show that Japan was changing how it relates to the world, and ‘to get local governments to open their gates to foreigners’ (McConnell, 2000:30). By 1999 the handbook from the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) continued to show the dominant stance of ‘internationalisation’ over pedagogy. It stated that ‘JET does not have the aim of improving the foreign language standard of young people’ (Mombusho webpage, 1999 cited in Lai, 2000:218). Around the same period, CLAIR’s 2001 evaluation report did not include any ‘determination or discussion of teachers’ roles’ (Mahoney, 2004:225).

Two recently published ALT handbooks, the MEXT handbook in conjunction with The British Council (‘MEXT handbook’ hereinafter. MEXT, 2013), and the JET handbook (JET, 2013a). identify three distinct NEST roles: team-teaching, classroom assistant and motivator. MEXT, 2013 emphasises that assisting the NNEST is the primary role and that NESTS are not expected to teach the class by themselves, a situation referred to as Reverse Team-Teaching (RTT). The JET handbook indicates the main role as team-teaching and is as unclear about what ‘assisting’ entails, stating that: ‘it is your role to assist the NNEST in the classroom. Exactly how much you assist them often depends on who you are teaching with’ (p.61). RTT is transmitted negatively and described as ‘culture clash’ with 9 pages dedicated to directing NESTs not to adopt this role (p.64-73). JET claims that learners cannot learn in this environment due to socioculturally incompatible teaching styles.

My Assistant (English) Language Teacher (ALT) position began in April 2014, for the Niigata City Board of Education. At present I have experienced working in 6 separate Junior High Schools (JHS), with twenty-four different NNESTs. All NNESTs have appeared to show me respect and acted professionally outside of the classroom, though inside the classroom each teacher has treated me considerably differently: I have experienced being the well documented ‘human tape recorder’ where I stand mostly at the back of the class and read the odd passage for students’ to repeat, and the opposite, me teaching the entire class with the NNEST standing at the back of the class, (RTT), and a myriad of teaching experiences in-between. These personal experiences further initiated the study of other NESTs experiences and to look for patterns and reasons for their treatment and roles.

The primary aim of this dissertation then is to provide a baseline mixed methods survey of the roles of NESTs and, as a result, provide a tentative typology of NEST roles in contemporary society. In order to provide such insight into NEST roles it was necessary to go beyond triangulating scholarly publications of English teaching in Japan with questionnaire responses from NNESTs and NESTs, but place NESTs roles into the wider social frameworks of policy and ideology. Moreover, as Japan is increasingly being shaped by international influences, it was also necessary to put this educational research in a global context. The stance adopted here then is one of an educational anthropologist, seeking root causes for foreign teacher’s roles.

Accordingly, the first deceptively simple research question is:

1. What are the roles of NESTs in Japanese public secondary schools?

This question was developed to address the gap in the literature detailing their roles using educational and social frameworks. The discourses that BoEs, JET and MEXT put forward lack clarity and differ from actual teacher experiences. Further questions evolved from this investigation and literature reviewed in this paper.

2. How clear are these roles?
3. How able are NESTs to carry out their roles?
4. Are NESTs a wasted resource?
5. What variation exists between NESTs and NNESTs?

The chapters are overviewed as follows. Chapter 2 frames the discussion through a critique of the two wider forces affecting foreign teacher perspectives on their roles: social and educational. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and samples used in the study. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the results of the questionnaires, and finally chapter 5 provides concluding remarks and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Direct and Indirect Influences: The times, are they a changin'?

A study of the changing role of NESTs will identify both indirect and direct influences. Indirect ones are more subtle and permeate the key infrastructures of the nation. The direct ones are more readily apparent and are seen in practical requirements. For reasons of clarity and succinctness I have selected two indirect influences, socio-cultural and educational, and one direct, key components of the Japanese teaching system

A detailed examination of four significant socio-cultural influences - socio-historical, society, demography & economy - will comprise Section 2.1. Section 2.2 then looks at the education system in Japan and how these socio-cultural influences affect the classrooms, learners, teachers and teaching practices. Section 2.3 then looks at more direct influences on the day-to-day roles of NESTs – the entrance exam system, grammar translation, teacher roles, NEST introduction, educational policies, NNESTs, NNEST training, NESTs, NEST training, and team teaching.

2.1 Socio-historical factors: Sakoku and Kokusaika - competing ideologies?

Sakoku (closed country) was a period of almost complete isolation from the rest of the world in Japan's history from 1640-1853. Overseas travel for Japanese citizens was banned and an artificial island, Dejima, was the only the only licensed place for contact with non-Japanese merchants. Commentators say that a *sakoku* mentality still influences

the way Japan relates to the world (Sargeant, 2009; Morita, 2013). *Sakoku* has morphed into a discourse known as *Nihonjinron*: a general idea that being Japanese is unique. This ideology, although thoroughly discredited by academic writing (Burgess, 2014), perpetuates cultural identity. The ideologies of *sakoku* and *nihonjinron* are underlying themes throughout this dissertation that may be experienced by NESTs in how they are treated in the school environment by teachers and students.

The underlying apprehension is that national unity and Japanese national identity are being undermined by a focus on English, and that English takes time away from Japanese study and citizenship education (Sargeant, 2014). The widely used grammar translation teaching method (discussed in section 2.3.1) is seen as epitomizing the view of insularity (Dougill, 1995). One view is that this one-way importing of knowledge is a ‘deeply ingrained form of cultural conditioning’ (Sargeant, 2009:55), and a contributing barrier to more communicative approaches that NESTs are trained to deliver.

Along with *sakoku* and *nihonjinron* is *kokusaika*, ‘internationalisation’. *Kokusaika* became socially conspicuous in Japan in the 1980s, and is considered a response by the government to open up markets as a result of foreign pressure (Goodman, 2007). This ideology initiated the policy to introduce NESTs to Japan, which became the JET programme (Lai, 2010). However, it is a buzzword that has carried multiple and contradictory meanings that support dichotomous ideologies of internationalization and *nihonjinron*. In Featherstone’s (1996) account and in accordance with national policies, the aim of internationalization is to increase other countries’ knowledge of Japan and

not to integrate. The notion of internationalisation then seems to be more modernist *nihonjinron* discourse than a resolute attempt at international integration as the term suggests.

These notions of ‘closed county’ *sakuko*, ‘Japanese uniqueness’ *nihonjinron*, and ‘internationalisation’ *kokusaika* resonating from Japan’s past are still evident in contemporary society. Summarized by McConnell (2000:272) that ‘keeping foreigners at a polite distance rather than socializing them to become a part of daily routines is a process at which a majority of Japanese still excel’. An appreciation of these ideologies will provide a deeper understanding to NESTs treatment in Japan, and smaller cultures of schools and classrooms. An argument in this paper is that NESTs are given limited chance to become fully integrated as teachers. This notion is supported by NESTs not legally permitted to have a teaching certificate (Tsuneyoshi, 2011). As a result, it is posited that the longer NESTs live in Japan the greater their awareness of these socio-historical and cultural features become. As awareness of these ideologies heightens, NEST perceptions towards their roles will become affected on an individual basis.

2.1.1 Demography

The outline in section 2.1 of an internalized socio-cultural thinking provides a cursory understanding as to why awareness of the multicultural society within Japan’s borders is little known about. This section considers how another factor – demography – affects the roles of NESTs.

Whereas most industrial nations have policies of immigrant integration, Japan's successive governments have maintained a policy of immigrant assimilation (Gottlieb: 2012). Ethnicity is not acknowledged by the Japanese government, as compilers of statistics compute ethnic minorities by nationality only (Tsuneyoshi, 2011), one is either Japanese or foreign. These top-down forces project false ideals of homogeneity and instil an emphasis on the collective identity. NESTs as a result have regularly described a 'panda mentality' in school cultures, as they are perceived to be uncommon and looked at accordingly (McConnell, 2000).

In opposition to these policies and ideals, the social reality is somewhat different. In 2008 the range of national diversity among Japanese immigrants was similar to that of the UK in 1990 (Blake-Willis & Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008). In the same year The House of Councillors recognized Japan as becoming an immigrant country, a statement that is supported by the 40,000 foreigners who are granted permanent residency per annum (Gottlieb, 2012). This exponential demographic shift is directly relevant to NESTs as the number of young learners in compulsory education in need of language help is continually increasing. Referring to demographic changes Seargent (2014) writes that teaching practices in Japan and pedagogical decisions must recognize this diversity.

In addition to the increasingly mixed levels of learners in classes, Japanese public schools offer neither bilingual education nor native language support (Viapae, 2001), a concern further compounded by the Japanese classroom culture of putting all students into the same class regardless of proficiency. Teachers on the 'front line' have to deal

with such issues, since there is no provision in the training structure for NNESTs and NESTs to prepare them for this dilemma (discussed in sections 2.3.7 and 2.3.9).

2.1.2 Society

This section builds on the discussion of historical and demographic considerations relating to NESTs by reviewing significant social factors. The factors considered in this sub-section are seen as affecting NESTs roles indirectly and to varying individual degrees depending on their awareness of them (as seen in the responses of the more experienced NESTs in chapter 4).

A key social misconception that stems from ideologies of homogeneity is the belief that Japanese society and the education system are egalitarian. However, Kariya (2010) writes that empirical research has shown that Japan has never been an equal society nor has its education system. A related view is that the image of equal opportunity that Japan has projected is ‘on the edge of vanishing at the gates of a neoliberal-led capitalist learning society’ (Kariya, 2010:59).

Young learners are most influenced by changing times as they mature and develop identities. Presently they are in a confusing position of receiving traditional educational practices while socially experiencing a different ‘world’. Socialisation starts at pre-school, where Hayashi and Tobin (2015:33) write that despite the 30 years of economic and social changes, preschool curriculum and pedagogy have largely stayed the same. However, as the current generation mature, their ideologies and

ethnopsychologies (the anthropological study of social groups) are evolving in increasingly complex and diverse ways.

The society of 30 years ago when NESTs first came to Japan differs from contemporary society in a number of ways. There was more uniformity, on a certain level, which made the significance of sharing various perceptions more difficult. Western ideas have been adopted such as consumerism and increased leisure time, which are assisting a shift from traditional Confucian values (Yoshizaki, 1997). However, it is frequently reported that western ideas are adapted to meet Japanese needs, a national level balancing act of importing outside influences and maintaining cultural identity (Sugimoto, 2014). What this means is that the strength of maintaining identity is stronger than acknowledging the realities of Japan's contemporary ideologies, and 'internationalised' multicultural society (which were the initial goals of JET). Because of these forces the professional teaching roles of NESTs in the present era continue to lack more pedagogical approaches. A view supported by the roles never having been standardised or amended (sections 2.2 and 2.3), and the unpedagogical training that NESTs receive before starting their positions, presented in Table 3.

2.1.3 Economy

Following a period of post-war economic prosperity, Japan experienced a prolonged period of economic stagnation. By 2012 Japan had run up a government debt equivalent to 235% of its GDP, which is in contrast to the 'crisis' of Greece's significantly lower 164% in the same year (OECD, 2015). As the country struggles to end 20 years of

deflation, people living in Japan are becoming poorer, and the effects of this on the compulsory education and teachers are considerable. This section briefly discusses factors that relate to learners, NNESTs and the classroom, which have strong implications for how NESTs perceive their roles.

In 2012 a survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on relative poverty found 16.3% of children aged 17 or under to be in poverty, a figure that was acknowledged by the Japanese government in 2015 (Japan Today, 2015). The relative poverty rate for working single parents by 2013 became the highest in the OECD at around 60%, resulting in a high incidence of child poverty and raising the risk of poverty being perpetuated across generations (OECD, 2015). Educationally, such factors place increasing pressure on families to pay school tuition fees (that differ between prefectures).

Following compulsory education, graduates of elite universities receive permanent employment with job security, good wages, social services and pensions. The non-elite graduates become part of the ‘working poor’ that receive none of these benefits. The non-egalitarian society is seen clearly here as the rich receive good education and get richer, the poor are getting poorer. This virtual caste system has been referred to as ‘educational bifurcation’ (Befu, 2010).

Additionally there is a discrepancy between NNESTs and NESTs in terms of remuneration. NNESTs receive yearly salary increases and at least two yearly bonuses. NESTSs receive salary increases for the first few years of employment only and no

bonuses. As NESTs learn this freely available information, their motivation and feelings towards their roles become affected, as the results from the present study found (see sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.5 in particular).

2.2 Education in Japan

Besides social factors, certain underlying educational issues influence NEST roles. Commentators have criticized the Japanese education system as dwindling in standards, and blame the multiple stakeholders involved in designing school curricula as lacking ‘vision’ as well as being unable to reach consensus over its direction (Ishida & Slater, eds, 2010; Sato, 2011). This section therefore discusses how different aspects of the Japanese educational system affect NEST roles by examining the influences of education bodies, the teachers’ working environment and the learners themselves.

2.2.1 Educational bodies

The authoritative body on all educational measures at the governmental level is MEXT. At the prefectural and municipal levels BoEs oversee matters related to education, and maintain the right to make their own decisions (Aichi, 2012). Further down the chain are the principles and teachers working with the realities of learners, using textbooks authorized by MEXT: the only developed country in the world that has a governmental ministry to screen school textbooks.

At the top level, national policy makers work in close cooperation with business

interests. Respectively the strongest calls for reform have come through the big business representative Keidanren (Gainey & Andressen, 2002). The overarching guide for these multiple stakeholders is to blend imported reforms, which are based on American and British models, with traditional schooling (Gordon, et al., 2010). In essence, businesses and Courses of Study (CoSs) call for more communicative language teaching methods, but the societal ideologies of education and the exam system dictate traditional methodologies (outlined in section 2.3.2). NESTs can only become aware of this conflict of goals that runs deep into the Japanese culture through experience. Arguably, the longer NESTs work in public schools and become aware of these struggles the more they feel powerless in fulfilling their roles to affect language skills, or internationalisation.

2.2.2 Classrooms

The classroom context in Japan presents a number of potential cultural features that can limit the ability for NESTs to carry out their main role of teaching. Principal limitations to delivering Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies in secondary education are the widely practiced didactic and non-interactive teaching approaches used. Class sizes of 40 (significantly higher than other OECD countries (MEXT, 2008)) are teacher led, learners sit in rows alternating boy/girl facing forward, and are expected to be passive listeners quietly taking notes from the teacher. In reality however, this classroom culture fosters disruptive students that are resistant to teacher authority (Shimahara, 2002). These factors contribute to the underachieving and anti-social behaviour that has plagued Japanese education since, at least, the 1980s (Goodman &

Phillips, 2003).

NEST roles extend to outside of lesson time too, for example, learners clean their own schools on Japan. Under the heading of ‘motivator role’ the MEXT handbook (2013:12) describes this, as well as getting involved in club activities, as something school staff ‘may ask you to do’. JET does not state this as part of a role but advises NESTs to clean as teachers ‘will appreciate your help’ and learners will enjoy the opportunity to speak in a less formal atmosphere (p.26). In support of this more social role, a previous study by Meerman (2003) found that impacts on student learning increased during such non-lesson time activities. In view of this, adopting such actions may improve teacher relations, which in turn may lead to more professional respect and increased cooperation during lesson time.

2.2.3 Young learners

The Japanese Youth Research Institute found the ambition of young learners to be significantly low as only 9% of Japanese upper secondary school learners strongly hope for success in their careers, compared to 30% in the US and 37% in China (Shimahara, 2002:49). An awareness that was noted by one respondent in the current study who wrote that ‘post-bubble students seem to lack hopes and dreams’. An additional finding was that 79% of Japanese high school students believed that they were free to rebel against teachers, in contrast to 6.8% in America and 18.8% in China.

Learners are spending less time studying outside of class too according to findings from

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), an authority on assessing international trends in education. Its data revealed that second grade students in Japanese JHSs spent 1.7 hours per week learning outside of school in 1999, second from bottom of the 38 countries surveyed (Blake-Willis & Rappleye, 2011:232). One commentator perceives the youth of today as ‘the lost generation’ that faces an uncertain future; this is an issue reflecting a deeper transition in Japanese society (Brinton, 2011:9/10).

A key role of a NEST is to keep students motivated (JET, 2013a), a factor that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research repeatedly finds as being a determining component of successful language acquisition (Singleton, 2001). More specifically to Japan, Meerman’s (2003) study found that learning is motivated by the visiting NESTs. According to the NESTs in his study, the level of impact that they make on learners is determined by the NESTs sense that learners are academically benefitting from team taught lessons. Indeed, learner motivation was found to be the most common problem recognised by NESTs (see table 11). However, the ability of NESTs to play a more supportive or counsellor type role is hindered by their assistant position, the education system and potential language barriers.

Behavioural issues have surfaced and risen over the past three decades too. ‘Educational pathologies’ such as: school and domestic violence, suicides, crime, drug abuse, dropout, ‘school phobia’, ‘school refusal’, and bullying have been sensationalized by the media, and subsequently elevated into policy issues (Takayama, 2011). Some reasons given for their yearly increase concern laziness and lack of motivation as well as socially induced

emotional causes of ‘school refusal’ (Shimahara, 2002:43; DeCoker & Bjork, 2013).

The Japanese Teachers’ Union pointed the blame elsewhere stating that the teachers feel as if they were no longer able to understand children and do not know how to deal with them (Ota, 2000). This is particularly interesting as a key reason NNESTs give for not giving NESTs more power in their professional role is that they do not understand the students and culture (Árva & Medgyes, 2000). This evidence rejects that argument.

2.3 English education in Japan

It has been argued above how the wider socio-cultural and educational settings in which NESTs work indirectly contribute to shaping their roles. Further more direct influence may be found when examining the day-to-day roles of NESTs in a particular context. The context selected is a familiar one to me – English education in Japan – and will be examined using ten different foci.

2.3.1 Entrance exam system

The most cited issue of English education in Japan is the meritocratic university entrance exam system (Gainey & Andressen, 2002). Learners’ English classes, particularly in upper secondary school, focus on passing these tests using dated methodologies that restrict the communicative approaches as written in the CoSs. Traditional rote learning used in Foreign Language (FL) classrooms has been referred to as ‘quasi-learning’, and conflicts with the more authentic knowledge based learning that NESTs are trained to deliver (Sato, 2011).

There is a widely held belief in Japan that entrance to a good high school leads to a good university, which in turn leads to finding a stable job. The resulting stress and pressure on learners, which begins in JHS as learners choose their High School (HS), is something NESTs frequently encounter and have to adapt to. Preparing for exams is so deep-rooted in language education in Japan that classroom practices fail to acknowledge changing times by their continued use of class time for exam preparation. One example of change in the present day is that around half of higher education institutions have no entrance exams, and employ open admissions instead (Gordon et al 2010). Additionally, the current government administration has been touting the introduction of TOEFL tests to replace the focus on translation and grammar in the curriculum and raise (speaking) proficiency (O'Donoghue, 2014). More innovative BoEs, such as Osaka, have progressed from talking about this well-known issue, and begun assertive action by starting to use TOEFL in high schools, as of 2015.

A consequence of this rigid culturally entrenched structure is that NESTs face a sense of powerlessness to affect language ability in their learners'. The highly centralized education system is built on these tests and, amongst other things, works to reinforce a difference of opinion in how to teach English between NNESTs and NESTs. Nearly all NESTs in the study presented here reported preparing for entrance exams as a key limitation to their teaching. It was widely reported too that lessons are cancelled and schedules changed so that the NNEST can catch up on their grammar instruction, a methodology overviewed in the next sub-section.

2.3.2 Grammar translation

Yakudoku, the mainstream way of learning English in Japanese compulsory education schools, requires learners' to translate sentences word for word into Japanese and then rearrange the words to suit Japanese word order. *Yakudoku* is deeply rooted in Japan's sociolinguistic tradition dating back over one thousand years (Nobuyuki, 1988), and practiced in mainstream schooling for over 100 years (Sergeant, 2009). The MEXT handbook, however, uses the third person by asking for schools (not teachers) to focus on more communicative, rather than traditional (*yakudoku*) approaches. Further mismatch between the CoS and teacher training in both manuals is found in their referencing to communicative approaches: MEXT makes three references to communicative learning, and the JET handbook makes one, which is in relation to its use in elementary schools.

The JET handbook, however, states that MEXT encourages classes to be more student-centred, and to only use the textbook as a guide. This causes further confusion for the NESTs professional role as they are assistants to NNESTs who have a primary goal of passing entrance tests that use the textbooks approved by MEXT. Further contributing to the methodological debate is evidence that NNESTs lack the sufficient sociocultural and strategic competencies to introduce communicative activities in their classes, and to assess students' communicative competence (Sakui, 2004; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2009). An issue that many NESTs in the current study commented on too, highlighting the issue that 'older NNESTs are unwilling to try modern teaching practices, and younger NNESTs are inexperienced'.

2.3.3 Teacher roles

Research into analysing NEST roles has led numerous previous researchers to highlight the role ambiguity mentioned earlier. Tajino and Tajino (2000) note confusion among NESTs about how to carry out their roles. Crooks (2001) discusses the need for increased training of teachers together in order to solidify roles. Mahoney (2004) details unclear roles as being a major problem, and notes the lack of experience in collaborative teaching techniques. These findings seem to be mirrored in the surface level textual analysis of the recent NEST handbooks that follow. Additionally, by considering the official roles as prescribed by governmental bodies it is possible to assess NEST ability to carry these out from the findings in chapter 4.

The professional NEST roles, as detailed in the MEXT and JET handbooks, are outlined in Table 1 below. Both handbooks state that roles will depend on the NNESTs and ‘your relationship with them’. From here each handbook is more suggestive of roles, rather than clearly stating what they actually entail, each handbook is littered with open-ended phrases such as ‘it is advised...’ and ‘your role depends on ...’. Both handbooks are very clear that RTT is not a not a role, and repeatedly state that it should not be done regardless of any teaching qualifications that NESTs may possess. Interestingly, NNEST roles lack any direction from MEXT on how to team-teach. Mahoney (2004:236) suggests that standardisation of roles would be extremely difficult, and from his study of 473 JHS NNESTs argues that roles vary in accordance to the ‘unique relationship’ they have with their assigned NEST.

Reasons for maintaining assistant roles centre on the NNEST knowing the learners, their levels and teaching culture, and are in line with previous studies (Árva & Medgyes, 2000 Mahoney, 2004) These ideologies that in part stem from historical insularity, reflect a resistance to equality by presuming that NESTs are not able to ‘know’ their learners, or understand their language and intellectual competencies. Finally and relating to the power relationships between teachers is the wording in both handbooks where NNESTs are referred to using the possessive ‘your’ JTE. This being read by the assistant in the relationship sends contradictory signals from the wording of roles in the rest of each handbook that state ‘you are to assist the JTE’.

Table 1: NEST roles from MEXT and JET handbooks

JET Handbook	MEXT Handbook
Main role: Team-teaching.	Main roles: Team-teaching, classroom assistant and motivator.
Plan lessons collaboratively.	Plan lessons collaboratively.
	Collaboratively assess lessons after class.
Motivate students.	Motivate students.
Prepare learners for eiken tests.	Prepare for tests, including eiken.
Advised to discuss, strategize and rethink roles with NNESTs, possibly outside of working hours.	
Special classes for returnee students, generally outside of work hours.	
Create or assist with exams.	

2.3.4 Why introduce NESTs?

It is argued that although the society in which the national policies behind the introduction of the JET programme has evolved, the unpedagogical goals for the programme remain mostly unchanged. It is posited that there is a demand for officially recognised changes to NEST roles in view of social changes, their experience, knowledge and abilities.

Reasons for the start up of JET offers insight into the slow pace of change and improvement to English education. JET was a foreign relations strategy, a policy instrument to create Japanese sympathizers with no educational rational (McConnell, 2000). After 27 years JET participants are still expected to share what they learned about Japan with their family and friends ‘upon returning home’ (JET, 2010). The message here further questions JET motivations as NESTs are not expected to stay or live in Japan, but promote ‘internationalism’ and return ‘home’ immediately after contract completion (on flights paid for by JET). The uncertain goals surrounding JET intentions, and by extension the roles of NESTs, are shown by the fact that since 1987 there has never been an evaluation of the pedagogical outcomes of NESTs being in Japanese schools (Mahoney, 2004). Whether a NESTs actual principal role is to be an educator, a cultural ambassador, or both, and to what degree further problematize NESTs understanding of their roles.

2.3.5 Educational policies

As noted above, NESTs were introduced to fulfil the policy to teach the English from the government's screened textbooks in an assistant role with NNESTs. The extent of their assistance depends on many factors including the experience of NNESTs and NESTs, personalities of NNESTs and NESTs, and methodologies accepted by their teaching contexts. The policies released by MEXT are considered the official principles for English education in Japan's public schools (Tahira, 2012).

Educational policies have intensified because of pressure from the business sector since the 1980's (Saito, 2004) and as a result of social changes since the 1990's (Sargeant, 2014), the first mention of communicative targets was in 1989 (Nishino, 2008). The 21st century has witnessed unseen levels of dramatic reforms as current educational policy becomes increasingly globalised and major Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO) are exerting considerable influence on Japanese education reform debates (Takayama, 2011). However, the goals to increase communicative abilities in compulsory education set out in the CoSs do not seem realistic for a host of reasons, one being class time. A revision to the 2006 CoS included one extra English class per week for JHS level learners (MEXT, 2006). In total JHS learners have an average of 270 hours over 3 years to achieve policy goals, whereas HS learners have between 470 and 650 hours, depending on their course. The Japanese language is very different from English in terms of morphology, syntax and sociolinguistic features. Contrastingly, the French and English languages have similar linguistic features but in Canada JHS learners have 1200 hours, and HS learners have 2100 hours (Aspinall, 2011).

The recent reorganization was intended to serve as a radical reform to promote communicative approaches extensively across public schools. But, how much these communicative goals affect or influence NEST roles is complicated, primarily because of the widespread use of grammar translation, and because, it is believed, of the subservient assistant roles of NESTs in the classroom. Moreover the handbooks make only passing references to the communicative approaches that MEXT desire. These strategically short references denote the policy-practice conflict that for Brown and Wada (1998) has been a major issue for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Japan.

An argument is developing that it is these more professional NESTs that are arguably in a strong position to deliver more communicative methodologies and meet CoS targets. However, and as found in the data in chapter 4, NESTs are unable to meet such goals due to social and institutional restrictions. As a result, the array of sociocultural and educational factors presented so far in this chapter, are likely to instil a sense of frustration among these more professionally minded and experienced NESTs.

2.3.6 NNESTs

Teaching culture in Japan differs in a number of ways from western models. A key difference that has been receiving a lot of attention in recent years is that of the number of NNEST responsibilities. Although NNESTs are remunerated above the OECD average, one estimate of working hours per week is 52 as a result of club activities and phone calls to parents in the evening, among other duties (Sato, 2011). One of these overworked NNESTs in each school has the added responsibility of supervising the

visiting NEST, writing their schedule, answering their questions, and talking to other NNESTs in the school about the NEST and their classes. This duty changes hands each year with no training offered on this supervisory role.

An additional factor to the heavy workload of NNESTs is the quality of NESTs sent to schools. One NNEST from a recent study expressed that the chances of getting paired with a professional NEST are like winning the national lottery (Underwood, 2014 cited in Clavel, 2014a). This is perhaps unsurprising when one takes into account the hiring specifications and training for NESTs (detailed below in section 2.3.7). As a result, inexperienced NESTs are likely to unknowingly become professional burdens for their NNESTs. The longer and more experienced NESTs become the more possibility there is for their roles to incorporate this knowledge, though how an understanding of this is acted out will differ between each NEST.

2.3.7 NNEST Teacher training

The inadequacy of training NNESTs has repeatedly come under fire. Over time the teaching profession has been transformed from a profession, to a class of public servants that is progressively becoming de-skilled (Sato, 2011). MEXT has little influence in NNEST training as this happens in universities that they do not regulate. The only way MEXT is involved in teacher training is by receiving the training syllabus that universities by law have to submit; there is no inspection like Ofsted in the UK (Ota, 2000). More than 70% of higher education institutions offered teacher training as of the first of May 2008 (Numano, 2010), and the varying quality of training begins here.

Typically trainees receive a total of seven weeks training over three years and have a minimum of two weeks teaching practice in a school where they teach as few as three times. After finding a teaching position they are in front of the class after the first week. The teaching certificate is awarded after sitting a general paper test that covers all school subjects. Consequently teachers earn their certificates to teach English without learning about English teaching instruction (Clavel, 2014b). In-service teacher training exists for NNESTs, though the relationship between it and initial teacher training has been very weak, for reasons of politics and history rather than pedagogy (Ota, 2000). Whilst the inadequate teacher preparation for NNESTs presented here highlights miscommunications between policies and classroom practice, it also serves to demonstrate the lack of official training with NEST co-workers to carry out the key role of team-teaching.

In addition to formal training, Japanese teachers, like any teachers, are products of their own education (Lamie, 1998). NNESTs, exposed to grammar translation methodologies from school, use these themselves when they teach language. This indoctrinated practice combined with NESTs largely theoretical training, and pressure to prepare students' for entrance exams, leaves little room for the NESTs to have a significant impact in their primary teaching role.

2.3.8 NESTs

As noted earlier, NESTs are employed by three groups: BoEs, JET and private companies. In December 2012, there were 8,505 NESTs at elementary and JHSs. The

majority of these (3,647) came directly from BoEs, 2,560 were dispatched by JET and 2,298 came from private companies (Aoki, 2014). The employment criteria for each is generally the same, as learned through communications with BoEs, CLAIR officials, work classifieds and company websites. JET hiring criteria embodies NEST requirements and is outlined Table 2 below.

Table 2: JET (2013b) employment criteria

Employment criteria for JET NESTs	
1.	Must not hold Japanese citizenship.
2.	Must have a Bachelors degree (in any subject).
3.	Must come from one of the 40 participating countries (that vary from year to year).
4.	Can be any age, but those over 39 must contact JET to ‘discuss issues that might arise’.
5.	Teaching qualifications are not required, though ‘an interest in education and young people is an advantage’.
6.	Previous JET teachers may reapply.
7.	Cannot apply if the applicant has lived in Japan for more than six out of the last 10 years.
8.	Japanese language ability or qualifications are not required, although an interest in learning Japanese is an advantage.
9.	Applicants with tattoos and piercings should ‘think very carefully before applying’.

For the purposes of understanding NEST ability to perform their professional roles, 2, 5 and 8 are of particular interest. The NEST job description is for a position to teach as an assistant in Japanese public schools. Even the unspecialized observer would assume such a position to require a relevant degree, teaching qualification(s) and some level of

Japanese ability, but evidently these are not required for candidates. Correspondingly, NESTs lack of TEFL training and lack of qualifications have been criticised by previous studies (Crooks 2001; McConnell, 2000).

The variety in ability for NESTs to carry out their roles extends from personal abilities to the employment laws they abide to in the contracts they sign. JETs and ALTs are essentially the same thing but ALTs can be fired for not doing their job, whereas dismissing government employed JETs requires adherence to a significant bureaucratic process and the resulting paperwork. This situation is described by a leading scholar on NESTs in Japan as ‘a cold system’ (Brown, 2014 cited in Clavel, 2014a). Other legalities complicate the working relationships of NESTs too. Japanese labour law restricts the NESTs working for private companies to teach in a classroom with NNESTs (Clavel, 2014c); this is evidenced by the private companies being the only people in a position to direct their NESTs on what they can do. As a result, NNESTs have to direct any communications with the companies, which makes both teachers effectively powerless to even plan a lesson together. The added role confusion here comes from the information NESTs are to follow. The MEXT handbook, as noted above, repeatedly states that NESTs should not teach by themselves but, as shown here, legally private company NESTs have to.

2.3.9 NEST Teacher training

Official training programs for NESTs have received criticism by academics for lacking rigour (Tajino & Walker, 1998; Clavel, 2014b). The implication here is that as their

teacher training is insufficient, their ability to fulfil their main teaching role is uncertain. Training procedures between three main employers of NESTs was obtained from correspondences with BoE staff, CLAIR officials and a trainers working for a private company. Training programmes between these employers are independent of each other and reviewed in Table 3.

Table 3: NEST training

BoE
As each prefecture and municipality operates independently, and the lack of public information available makes it not possible to produce a concise training outline for each location. What follows is more generic than applicable to all BoEs around Japan. No pre-placement training is offered. However, the job interview requires prospective teachers to write a report on an aspect of teaching in Japanese public school, and to give a demonstration lesson: requirements that test a certain level of teaching experience. Different prefectures and municipalities operate their own in service training that generally consists of monthly meetings, 2 yearly peer observation classes, and attendance to the JET Skills Development Conference (SDC), looked at below.
JET
JET, through CLAIR, provide ‘post arrival orientation’ that lasts two days, and mainly focuses on Japanese etiquette and building relations with NNESTs (personal correspondence with CLAIR trainer). There is a Skills Development Conference (SDC) lasts for two days and is held every year, attendance is mandatory. The 2015 conference, which I attended, focused on workshops on how to build relations with NNESTs, and dealing with learner behaviour (including the keynote speech).
Interac
Interac is the largest dispatch company, their training is surmised here and is considered representative of private company NESTs. Five days of training from 9am to 7pm are offered for teachers either post-arrival or teachers already living in Japan. As with JET, there is a lot of focus on teaching Japanese social etiquette and adapting to life in Japan. Lesson activities are presented and practiced that focus on

communicative approaches and are supported, like the JET handbook, with lesson plans, flashcards and worksheets on their website. Meetings are held ‘from time to time’, and ‘periodic class observations provide NESTs with tips from experienced NESTs (Interac, 2015 and semi-structured interviews with 4 Interac teachers).

The ability of NESTs to carry out the main professional role of assisting in teaching comes into question here as any training offered is of little pedagogical value. This evidence along with the hiring criteria outlined above suggests a teaching role designed for failure. If positions were reversed and a Japanese citizen wanted to work in a UK public secondary school, they would first need to show teaching qualifications recognized by a competent authority in Japan. Following acceptance, they would be able to work for four years, in a non assistant role, during which time they would have to undertake an accredited teacher training programme assessed against the English qualified teacher status (QTS) (Gov.UK, 2013). It is arguable that if the Japanese government accepted international teaching qualifications and increased training for teachers then the need to co-teach could be abolished. The widely practiced and long-standing role of ‘solo’ teaching (without an assistant) in Japanese private schools is evidence to such a system working in Japan.

2.3.10 Team-teaching

This final sub-section looks at the main role of team-teaching. Team-teaching emerged as a teaching practice without any form of effective pedagogic research validating it as an effective educational innovation (Wada, 1994). As a result, team-teaching has been the subject of much debate, as reflected by numerous teacher training seminars (rarely

with both teachers) and countless books over the last 30 years (McDonnell, 2000). As a result it was not surprising to discover from the Institute for Research in Language Teaching that it is not widely practiced. They found that 30% of the time the NEST was in charge, 25% of the time the NNEST in charge, and 36% of the time was spent team-teaching (McDonnell, 2000:211). Perhaps unsurprisingly key team-teaching issues have remained unresolved in three decades, as summarized in Table 4 below

Table 4: Issues related to NEST's team-teaching role

Issue	Description
Feedback	There has never had a sufficient system to inform NESTs how they are doing in their professional roles (Mahoney, 2004).
Human tape recorder	This situation may arise as a result of not knowing how to team-teach, and/or stress on behalf of the NNEST. It can cause motivational issues for the NEST such as a sense of worthlessness.
NESTs Supervisor	The burden of supervising NESTs causes additional stress for NNESTs that NESTs become increasingly aware of (McConnell, 2000:188).
Interpreter	The well-documented interpreter role (Tajino & Walker, 1998) highlights the lack of clarity concerning the level of two people working as a team.
One-shot system	Perhaps the largest on-going issue is that NESTs make irregular visits to schools and classes. Respectively both teachers have little time to develop a purposeful working relationship, and there is a severe lack of continuity with the NEST and learners. (McConnell, 2000).
Policy practice gap	The top down CoS goals of communicative proficiency are not being met in the classroom. For NESTs this causes confusion in their professional roles as they receive mixed messages from MEXT, their employers, co-teachers and other NESTs.
Power relations	Only a negligible number of NNESTs see NESTs as equals (Mahoney, 2004).
Student behaviour	There is mixed information on who should be the disciplinarian, and cultural differences in carrying it out. With the continuing rise in

	anti-social behaviour NEST roles become increasingly confusing.
Untrained teachers	Training is inadequate for NESTs. This can be the cause of stress for NNESTs and cause friction in their working relationship.

Further limitations on the professional role of NESTs are that NNESTs understand the Japanese education system in more detail, and that they are certified teachers, making them professionally accountable (Árva & Medgyes, 2000). Other issues associated to the obstruction of the team-teaching role relate to power relations, lack of time and communication problems (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2003).

Team teaching is widely practiced throughout many Asian countries, the Japanese context however is said to be unique because of the two teachers unequal status, a view of Tajino & Walker (1998). In their study, the tradition in Japan of (NNEST) teacher-led classes was acknowledged, but it was proposed that teaching objectives would be better reached through team learning: a situation where teachers as well as learners learn from each other. They acknowledge many of the issues of teacher relationships and offer this reconfiguration of roles, for both teachers, for the improved quality of education and interests of the learners.

Many reasons for the ambiguity surrounding the NEST role of teaching (pedagogical) or not teaching (social) were explored throughout this chapter. The main role as presented by BoEs, JET, MEXT and the job title is that of teaching. However, as JET was implemented without pedagogical goals, and the pedagogical effects of NESTs have never been evaluated, the question of their true pedagogical purpose beyond rhetoric is raised. The perpetual lack of clarity in NEST roles, active failure to recognize

their abilities, and the discrepancies with hiring criteria point to them not only being a wasted resource but highlight underlying sociocultural and educational constraints. These wider global trends are filtered through top down Japanese educational reforms by, for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD. Takayama, 2011) and the Japanese Federation of Economic Organisations (Keidanren) (Sargeant, 2014:104/5).

Using a global focus and comparative educational studies a more realistic picture of Japanese education is coming to the fore. Japan no longer has the false ideologies of being a homogenous, egalitarian country leading in educational practices. Mounting publications, the media and social commentators now report a more accurate picture of Japan's dwindling educational standards, economic stagnation, rising inequality and social problems. Through examining how English education in Japanese secondary schools is at a crossroads the roles of NESTs may be more critically assessed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Aims

The aims of this chapter are to describe the subjects, data collection instrument, the data collection methods and variables in obtaining data on NEST roles in contemporary Japanese secondary school education.

3.1 Subjects

The subjects were selected using maximum variation convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) as I was looking for patterns across a range of teachers with diverse experiences, but had little control on who would answer. In total, the responses of 28 NNESTs and 171 NESTs that met the criteria were included in the study (they are working, or have worked in Japanese public secondary schools, and completed the questionnaire in full).

3.2 Instrument

Questions were developed from published research on NESTs teaching in public schools in Japan (Sakamoto, 2012; Sakui, 2004), and my teaching experiences. The questionnaires (appendices I and II) asked some general questions about teacher's location, education and experience. The focus however was on qualitative data and covered areas of pedagogical interest in teaching, the CoSs, methodologies, relationships between teachers and the ALT system. Two questionnaires, one for

NNESTs the other for NESTs, were first piloted by six teachers (three NNESTs and three NESTs) and minor revisions were made. These trials revealed that the questionnaire took between 20-40 minutes to complete depending on detail included. The final versions consisted of 22 questions in each questionnaire.

3.3 Data collection and Method

The questionnaires were written online using SurveyMonkey Inc (2014). Using a web-based survey made sending larger numbers of questionnaires both time and cost effective, with monthly plans of ¥5000 (£27.50). The link to the NNEST questionnaire was first emailed to the eight teachers that I had worked with. Seeking a higher response rate the MEXT website was consulted (MEXT, n.d.) which provides web links to all prefectural BoEs in Japan. On using this hub site, approximately a third of the links were found to be dead. Working links to sites were navigated to find BoE email addresses, and from December 2014 I started the time consuming task of emailing all BoEs in Japan.

After three weeks, 28 of the 47 prefectural BoEs had been contacted but I had received only one response. The responding BoE stated that it would consider distributing the questionnaire if it received a Word document to read first. Following this its abridged response was: ‘it is not customary to ask your types of questions to people you do not know....teachers will feel uneasy responding to open question as the goal is not clear... most of your questions too are answerable by consulting prefectoral handbooks. The Japanese teachers will not answer their true feelings and will say what their handbook

tells them to say.' A week after this, another BoE replied more obligingly saying it was able to assist the research but could not directly email the questionnaires to the schools. This prefectural BoE provided the email addresses of all the schools in its prefecture, stating that a questionnaire could be sent to each school directly. Due to the time required to do this and wait for responses the deadline was extended from one month to two months.

The NEST questionnaire was distributed using social media and included two language-teaching groups in Japan, English Teachers in Japan (ETJ), and the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). Around 111 of the responding NESTs were JET NESTs, this is a significant factor in terms of NEST representativeness and is explored throughout chapter 4. I felt that NEST responses reached saturation as no new information for each question was seen after around 80 responses. However whether this was achieved for the NNEST sample group is questionable considering the low return rate. With this in mind NNEST responses should be treated with caution when incorporated in the results and discussion, as the sample size may not be representative.

3.4 Variables

Although the NNEST teachers who helped to pilot the questionnaire stated that an English only version was fitting, it is possible that prefectural BoEs and teachers reading it may have felt intimidated by it. Owing to only two BoEs out of the 28 contacted replying to the request, it may be speculated whether these sentiments were shared by the other BoEs that did not offer to distribute it. This experience provides

hints to the diversity of the institutional settings of BoEs, some maintaining more traditional top down views and others having a more modernist equitable stance.

At least two further factors may have hindered the responses from NNESTs. The questionnaire was initially sent out in December, just before a seasonal holiday. NNESTs may have been busy away from work, and not remembered to complete it. Additionally, the busy work schedules of NNESTs as mentioned in Chapter 2, which became clear to me after the questionnaire was sent out, may have made the 20-40 minutes to complete it off-putting. Future research should take these experiences into consideration when sending questionnaires for NNESTs in Japan to complete. And finally, a limitation of the study was the failure to ask teachers for permission to send follow-up questions. As the questionnaires were sent by email, an additional question to ask teachers if they would agree to be contacted for follow-up questions would have been very straight forward.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

The literature and surface level textual analysis of the handbooks in chapter 2 suggests that NEST roles in general are not detailed clearly. It was found that roles vary according to teachers and are shaped by a combination of: socio-historical and educational factors, the English education system, and all teachers' background training and ability. These findings are further explored in this chapter through the feedback of questionnaires sent to both NNESTs and NESTs regarding NEST roles.

Most questions in the questionnaires were open-ended in order to provide respondents with a platform to express their views in as much detail with reference to their roles. As the focus of this exploratory study is on NEST roles, their responses were given priority in this chapter's data analysis, NNEST responses were used only to add detail to views where necessary. As the total number of responding NESTs was 171, the sheer wealth of data cannot be put here in detail. General patterns towards NEST roles, along with any responses that stood out or embodied any general consensus, are discussed here. Considering that there are over 8,000 NESTs in Japanese public secondary schools the return rate of 171 represents around 2% of these.

General findings corresponded to the personal experiences put forward in chapter 1: roles vary from school to school, from NNEST to NEST, and that roles are undefined and unclear. Regarding team-teaching, nearly all respondents described three key roles:

being a human tape recorder, doing nothing, and teaching the entire class (RTT), though there was a wide range of descriptions and misunderstandings of what these roles entailed. In addition to these main roles, a further fourteen roles were identified (see Table 9), though with unclear definitions and role nuances this number is tentative. Sociocultural factors were acknowledged as being integral to how NESTs were treated by NNESTs. The two key variables that were found to have the strongest influence on NEST roles were their NNEST co-workers and factors concerning the education system.

4.1 Samples

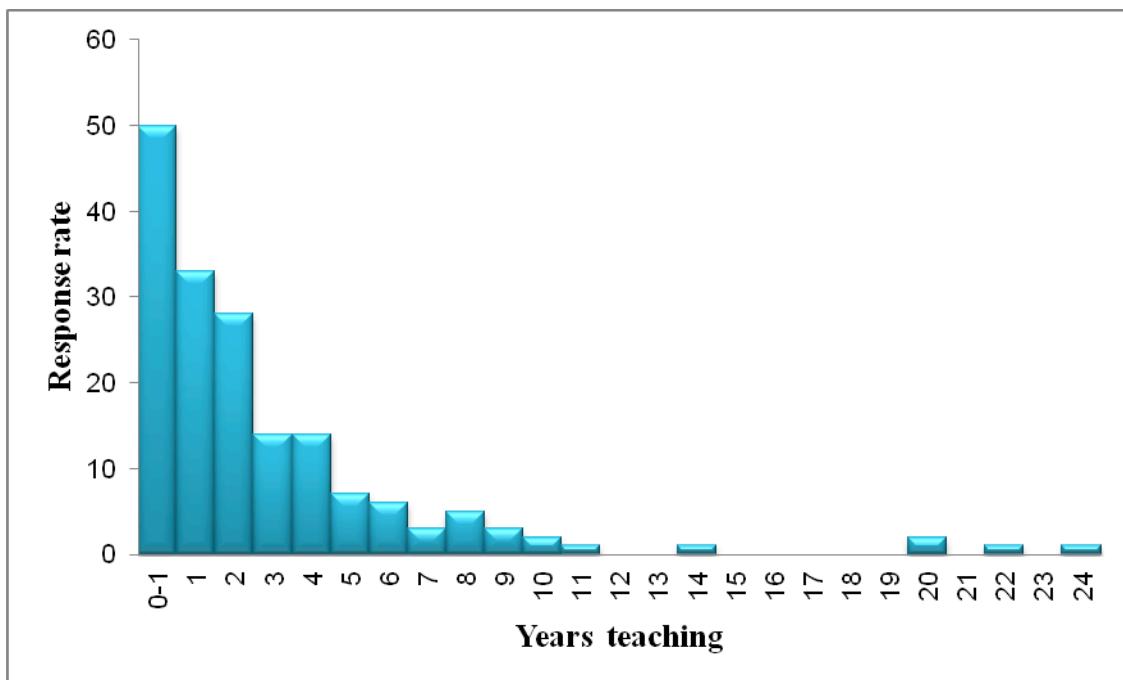
Questions 1-4 asked for respondent's personal details. The NEST's responses came from 45 prefectures (out of 47), so are accepted as being representative of teaching experiences around Japan. More female teachers than males responded, 113 and 57 respectively, one NEST was transgender. No differences in roles were found between genders, the only difference of treatment was sexism experienced by female NESTs from male NNESTs (a perennial issue since the early years of JET (McConnell, 2000)). Question four supported previous findings that NNESTs are typically older than NESTs, as shown in Table 5. This primary finding suggests that larger numbers of NESTs have less time to gain experience in their role, and less time to appreciate how sociocultural factors affect their roles. This issue is explored throughout this chapter.

Table 5: Age ranges of teachers

Age ranges	NNESTs	NESTs
20 – 29	3 (10.7%)	102 (59.7%)
30 – 39	5 (17.9%)	42 (24.6%)
40 – 49	12 (42.9%)	24 (14%)
50 – 60+	8 (28.6%)	3 (1.8%)

As seen in chapter 2, the roles of NESTs described in teacher handbooks and previous research are unclear. As teacher roles are very much learnt ‘on the job’, NESTs were asked how long they have been teaching. These quantifiable responses, figure 4.1, are seen as an indicator of how well NESTs are able to carry out and understand their roles.

Figure 4.1: NESTs Number of years teaching



The large numbers of teachers working between 1 and 4 years may partially be explained by the high number of JET responses as they have a contract cap of 5 years. More than half of these JET NESTs (69) added that they plan to be in Japan for between two to five years. This finding reveals a number of weaknesses of the JET programme NEST system related to difficulty in carry out their roles. Young under trained NESTs are on a steep learning curve, and have little time to learn from experience, a view shared by a NNESTs in the current study by their comment ‘NESTs leave just as they are getting good’. This finding builds on Underwood’s research in chapter 1, that the chances of working with a good NEST are very low. The 25 longer serving NESTs (teaching for more than 5 years) suggest higher professional motivation and an ability to meet expectations. In view of this, the responses of the shorter and longer serving NESTs are compared and contrasted throughout this chapter with reference to the research questions.

Economical factors, as introduced in chapter 2 were realized directly by all teachers in their remuneration and contract length. As mentioned, NNESTs receive a higher salary that increases each year, and bonuses; additionally they receive life contracts that are subject to an evaluation every 10 years. In contrast, all NESTs receive a lower salary and minimal job security from their one-year contracts, a factor not only affecting views towards roles, but also their social positioning. However, a 2018 law, if implemented, will make all foreign workers permanent in their positions, subject to their having already worked between 5 and 10 years (depending on profession. 5 years for NESTs) in Japan (Smith-Freemills, 2013). This is a change that could have major effects for existing teachers’ social standing, teaching roles, and quality of English education.

4.2 Professionalism

The findings from the samples above introduced issues relating to NESTs ability to carry out their roles. This section builds on these findings and answers the research questions through highlighting that there is a pool experienced teachers in Japan being underutilized. This notion is explored by looking at the **professional backgrounds** and **professional development** of NESTs. Using these headings research questions 3 and 4 are considered, how able NESTs are to carry out their roles, and how much of a wasted resource NESTs are.

Responses to ‘why teachers’ became teachers’ varied in line with personal circumstances, and most NESTs provided multiple reasons. Although many included teaching and/or an interest in Japanese culture (reflecting a level of intrinsic motivation to fulfil roles), there was a significant proportion, around a third, categorized as ‘just because’. Such responses included ‘it is an easy job to allow people to work and live in Japan’. This group was seen as reflecting lower intrinsic motivation towards professionalism in their teaching roles.

4.2.1 Professional background

An appreciation of NESTs professional background is necessary to understand their ability to carry out their teaching role, and measured by analysing NEST undergraduate degrees and teaching qualifications. Table 6 shows the undergraduate qualifications of 168 NESTs (three responses were unclear) under four broad categories: language

related, Japan/Asian related, social sciences and non-language related, as explained below. In Table 7, these findings are contrasted with qualifications that NESTs have or are in the process of getting to gain an appreciation of their teaching knowledge, ability and commitment to their role. For reasons of clarity I have explained below some working definitions of terms used:

- **Language related** includes studies in English and Japanese, as well as education and linguistics.
- **Asia/Japan related** covers two course types: Japan studies and East Asian studies.
- **Social sciences** category includes a broad range of undergraduate courses in this field of study.
- **Non-language related** incorporates a wide range of degrees that are neither related to language or social sciences.

Table 6: NEST Undergraduate qualifications

Field of degree	Responses
Language related	49 (29.16%)
Asia/Japan related	25 (14.88%)
Social science	55 (32.73%)
Non-language related	39 (23.21%)
TOTAL	168

Table 7: NEST Professional teaching qualifications

Teaching qualifications	Responses
TEFL, TESOL, CELTA	48
MA	26
PGCE	7
None	98
TOTAL	179

The data suggests a general trend of opposing professional backgrounds ranging from NESTs with a higher language qualification, (including 8 NESTs that had both an MA and a teaching qualification), and those with no professional qualifications. Just under half of the undergraduate degrees (44.04%) were language and Japan/Asia related, reflecting their motivation to live and work in Japan. There was not, however a positive correlation between undergraduate degrees and professional qualifications. One reason for the high proportion of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) qualified NESTs is that JET offers a subsidy of ¥15,000 (£84) for JET NESTs to do an online TEFL course. Although this practice, which began in 2010, shows some level of change in focus for JET goals from its ‘internationalisation’ focused, unpedagogical beginnings to showing some support for professional development, how much this particular course prepares teachers is open to debate. A Head of an English Language Teaching department in a British university was sent a detailed outline of an online TEFL course. He responded that the training is not comprehensive enough to prepare a teacher to teach EFL (personal communication).

The NESTs MA qualifications were in TEFL, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of

Other Languages), linguistics, and Post Graduate Certificates of Education (PGCE) (or equivalent in their respective countries). NESTs with these higher level teaching qualifications showed a higher level of ability and commitment to carry out their main role of teaching, as seen in the frustration apparent in their responses at not being able to use pedagogical knowledge and experience in their roles. Additional roles were also identified that NESTs expressed they are qualified to do, but are restricted from doing by the education system and/or NNESTs, namely attend meetings, plan lessons, utilize classroom management practices, discuss yearly syllabi, use mixed methodologies and write tests.

NNESTs showed less variety in their professional background as 13 (46.42%) studied literature, 7 English language, 2 another language (other than English), 2 non-language related, and 2 were unclear. Also, 16 (57.14%) NESTs were found to have no additional teaching qualification(s). The high number of literature graduates indicates concern in their teaching ability as previous research has found teachers with this degree to be unprepared for their teaching role in public secondary schools (Brown & Wada, 1998). The high proportion of literature graduates, together with the lack of teaching qualifications and insufficient training (outlined in chapter 2) implies that NNESTs are on as steep a professional learning curve as NESTs. This notion was explored by asking NNESTs to rate how much they felt their training prepared them to teach. The results, in Table 8, showed that fewer NNESTs felt prepared by their training. However, although a continuing trend of prospective teachers taking unsuitable degrees was found 17 years after Brown and Wada's (1998) research, the representativeness of this finding should be treated with caution due to the small sample size.

Table 8: How much teacher training prepared NNESTs. 1 = Completely, 5 = Not enough

Answer choices	Responses
1 – Completely	4 (14.29%)
2	4 (14.29%)
3	7 (25%)
4	6 (21.43%)
5 – Not enough	7 (25%)

4.2.2 Professional development

Professional development was measured by analysing educational affiliations and educationally related conference/workshop attendance. All of the JET NESTs said they were by default member of AJET, though few expressed any active role. Likewise, all JETs went to in-service training (the SDC) where attendance is compulsory, and little else. The non-JETS showed more affiliations, primarily with JALT and ETJ, and a higher rate of active attendance.

These findings in section 4.2 show a larger number of NESTs to be young, lacking in relevant qualifications and showing limited interest in professional development. There is a sense that many JET NESTs are unable to fulfil their teaching roles, and that it is a waste of government and taxpayer's money to attempt to maintain the JET programme, a specific comment made by 29 NESTs in the current study. However, a pool of experienced, qualified and professional NESTs was found. After nearly 30 years of the largest influx of NESTs it is unsurprising that such a group exists in Japan. However, it

was found that these NESTs feel inhibited to realise their potential, and evidence that suggests that their abilities are being wasted. Detailed by one NEST in the current study who works as a regional advisor for the Association for JET (AJET). Familiar with the circumstance 80 JET NESTS, he put that ‘the majority of teachers routinely reported being under-utilised, ostracized, bullied, bored and inadequately prepared for the job’.

4.3 Classroom practices

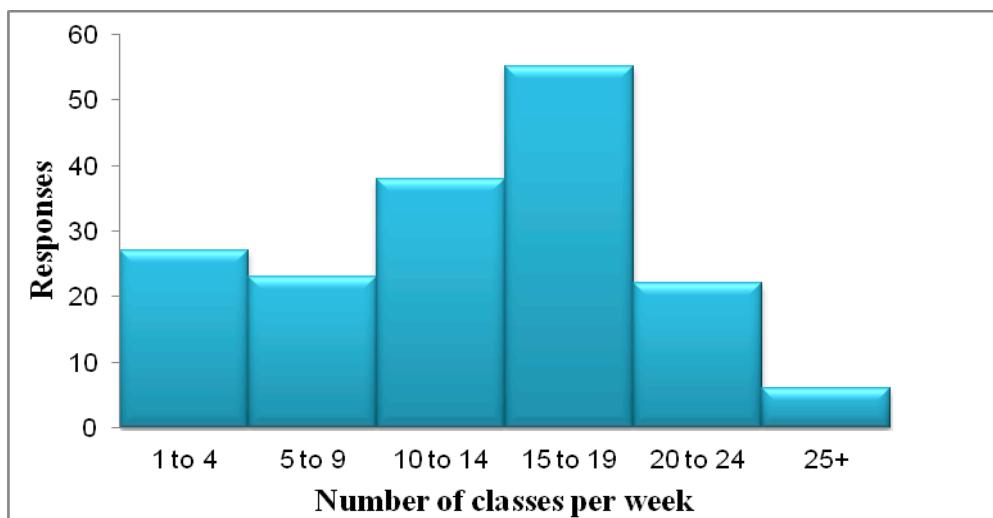
Questions 11-15 were designed to elicit classroom practices, in particular to discover the extent to which teaching goals were aligned between teachers, and the impact of the CoS on classroom practices. This section explores various aspects of NEST roles in the classroom, and has significant links with question research question four – are NESTs a wasted resource? The questions examine the perception that the full potential of NESTs is being underutilised.

4.3.1 Team-teaching

The main teaching role of team-teaching is first assessed by analysing the quantifiable responses of how often NESTs team-teach (Figure 4.2). Despite the varied responses, the numbers of classes that NESTs teach are equal to that of a part time worker. Reasons for so few classes are a result of several factors including contracts, relationship with the NNESTs, the NNESTs schedule and the ‘one shot’ system (a situation whereby NESTs go to schools and classes irregularly). This evidence points to an underutilization of NESTs, and less opportunity for them to carry out their main

teaching role. In this situation the professional growth of NESTs and their ability to deliver quality education is hindered by forces beyond their control.

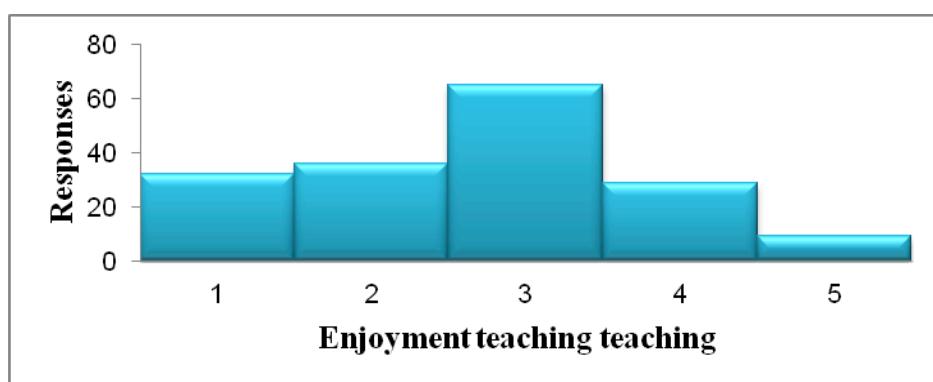
Figure 4.2: NESTs average team taught classes per week



Enjoyment levels of team-teaching were ascertained and the results show a certain level of job satisfaction, a vital component of motivation and desire to fulfil the teaching role to a higher standard. These quantifiable results from Likert scale responses are shown in Figure 4.3. In general, satisfaction with team teaching was higher than anticipated in light of the major issues with the Japanese education system. Possible explanation for this finding is that NESTs work with such large numbers of NNESTs (some in the present study working in seven schools with between 4-6 NNESTs in each one). Since the treatment by each NNEST is different the NESTs may have responded to their overall treatment as seen by a comment that surmised other comments: 'Every lesson is technically to be team-taught. An ALT is not legally allowed to be teaching alone in a classroom with students. The reality is quite different. Still I am almost always

accompanied by a teacher. Some try to work together with me, but others make no effort. So it is difficult to answer the question. Define team teaching.' A comment exemplified by the finding that 46 NESTS opted to add that they were not clear as to what team-teaching is. Although the general impression of team-teaching experiences does seem encouragingly positive, it was clear that this question was not written clearly enough and NNESTs were not sure how to respond.

Figure 4.3: Enjoyment team-teaching; 1 = High. 5 = Low



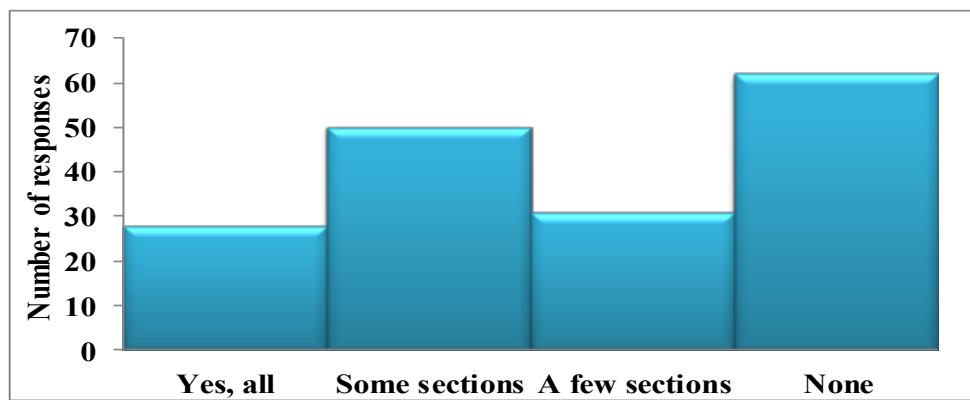
A possible explanation for the high neutral response (38%) is that nearly all NESTs commented that pleasure in team teaching is entirely dependent on the NNEST. As one NEST put: 'I do (enjoy team-teaching) when the teachers are actually involved in team teaching; there are others who walk out, some who stand in the corner, and one who pays no attention whatsoever as I give lessons even though they are physically present.' An additional variable to the responses was in the wording of the question, as NESTs visit numerous schools each week of the academic year (the one-shot system), and work with many NESTs on a weekly basis, the general view stimulated by the question was not specific enough for NESTs to answer.

Additional details that 93 of the NESTs opted to provide mostly centred around NNESTs having ‘no idea how to do it’, and the need for training. The three principal responses identified by NESTs were that some rarely do it (they stand at the back of the class), some do RTT on a regular basis, and others that ‘love’ team-teaching because of their relationship with their NNESTs. These responses further highlight the variety of treatment NESTs receive from their co-workers, and the urgency to improve the co-teaching system. Interestingly, there is evidence here that conflicts with the teaching handbooks explicit and repeated caution that RTT should not be done. It was found to be a practice that not only is prevalent among NESTs, but it appears to be the norm for experienced NESTs (further discussed in section 4.4.1).

4.3.2 Policy awareness

As all teachers are expected to follow the language and methodologies as written in the CoS, they were asked the extent to which they have been read. NEST results are shown in Figure 4.4. This study found more than half of NESTs teachers had read some of it, though most of the 62 (36.3%) responses to ‘none’ declared that they did not know what it was. Other responses explained that ‘relevant sections’ were read, by NESTs and NNESTs, of which a few experienced teachers emphasized the cultural influences impeding its communicative methodologies. One NNEST expressed that ‘if everything that is written in it is truly done in English classes in Japan, I would really like to join a class as a student’. The following sections discuss the degree to which the CoS is followed, thereby evaluating NESTs ability to carry out their roles (research question 3).

Figure 4.4: NEST readership of CoS



4.3.3 Teaching methods and goals

The main variation of teacher views was found in their team-teaching goals and methodologies. NESTs provided multiple goals of theirs when teaching, nearly all mentioning communicative targets in line with CoSs. However, although some of the NNESTs mentioned communicative goals, all except two added ‘to pass tests’ too. This may be seen as a professional compromise as the evidence suggests that to varying degrees NNESTs would like to encourage communicative skills, but at the same time not stray from the grammar translation they are obliged to follow.

These results are mirrored in the methodologies that both teachers use. NESTs mainly incorporate a mixed methods approach, in line with current ELT practices. The more experienced NESTs expressed awareness of limitations imposed on them by society, education system and NNESTs. As one NEST succinctly put ‘it is frustrating knowing and being trained in methodological practices but not being able to implement any of them in my classrooms’. Although NNESTs made some reference to communicative

methodologies all emphasized the use of grammar translation to pass tests. Both NNESTs and NESTs commented on the lack of team-teaching training.

NEST roles in this subsection are seen as evolving from experience on the job. Newer NESTs have less knowledge to fulfil their professional roles, and the more experienced NESTs feel powerless to make any significant change. In view of these findings, it seems that the experienced NESTs are being underutilized, and considered to be a resource whose potential is waiting to be tapped.

4.4 On NEST roles

The final 7 questions (16 – 22) were all qualitative and designed to elicit both details on the roles of NESTs, and some of the perceived reasons behind them. NESTs were asked about their understanding of their roles, as well as their opinions on the NEST system. The discussion of these questions serves to provide insightful responses to all research questions. Each question will be discussed in turn.

4.4.1 What do you do in the classroom?

Two broad categories of roles were extracted from the data: ‘professional roles’ (Table 9), and cultural ‘ambassador roles’ (Table 10). The professional roles in bold correspond to the roles put forward by the two handbooks. An initial analysis sees that there are a higher number of roles carried out that are not included in the handbooks. Multiple roles were described by nearly all NESTs, and are either learnt or self-assigned

through experience on the job. Interestingly, there were almost no references to the ‘collaborative’ emphasis used in the wording of the handbooks. The most common responses were ‘RTT’ (‘I usually am the main teacher’) and ‘tape recorder’, though the lesser-experienced NESTs stood out with responses such as ‘teach?’. The RTT finding is both encouraging, and a cause for concern. The RTT role, as seen throughout this dissertation, is one that experienced NESTs who have been living in Japan for a number of years are arguably better at doing, especially in delivering the communicative goals that MEXT and the CoS call for. However, the newer less experienced and unqualified NESTs are not as able to teach effectively, thus providing a poorer quality of education. All teachers were, to varying degrees, assigned a ‘tape recorder’ role. This finding, and in response to research question 2 on how able they are to carry out such roles is easily answered. Furthermore, and in response to research question 4 on how much of a wasted resource NESTs are, the responses appeared to be divided: not at all (RTT), and completely (tape recorder).

Table 9: Professional roles

Broad roles	Specific roles	
Team-teaching	Materials developer	Cultural informant
RTT	Source of activities	Help with writing assignments
Human tape recorder	Mark papers	Disciplinarian
Nothing	Lesson planner	Design listening tests
	Translator	Classroom management
	Feedback on learner presentations	Help NNESTs ‘poor language skills’
	Motivator	Support the JTE

The primary purpose of importing NESTs in the 1980s was for a vague notion of ‘internationalisation’. Since then roles have maintained a lack of clarity and are underpinned by the specific sociocultural ideologies examined earlier, it is unsurprising that NESTs maintain a role of ambassador. Responses to this question made it clear that NEST roles were more entertainer than language teacher, which is a feature of the ‘panda mentality’ that was discussed in chapter 2. These roles highlight the social insularity stemming from history that still resonates in (mostly) suburban ideologies. However, NESTs ‘international’ presence may be seen as helping to open up a more global awareness, one of the only effects of JET that has been viewed positively (McConnell, 2000). Simultaneously, teachers seen as ambassadors and temporary visitors were not seen as serious teachers, so these roles were viewed negatively by nearly all respondents.

Table 10: Ambassador roles

Ambassador roles			
1	To expose learners of other ways of thinking	4	To provide cultural contact
2	To introduce foreign cultures	5	To reaffirm cultural stereotypes
3	To make learners comfortable talking with foreigners	6	To show English is a living language

4.4.2 Why are ALTs in the classroom?

Despite all respondents providing more than one reason to this question, very few responses mentioned the main role of teaching. Nearly all responses made reference to the educational worth of their position, including NESTs in their first year with many ‘I am not sure’ and ‘good question’ responses. This finding reveals that it is immediately apparent that the role of teaching does not match expectations, a view that has existed since JET started. JET teachers in the early years of the programme were routinely baffled upon starting work with expectations of teaching to only be designated to a ‘human tape recorder’ or similar role (McConnell, 2000). In other words, this finding reveals a gap between main roles in the job description and handbooks, and the main roles of the actual job.

More experienced NEST’s responses related to politics and economics, denoting a deeper understanding of their ‘true’ roles. A minority stated that as there is no needs assessment, they are not sure why they are here and that ‘JET, CLAIR and the schools do not know the answer to this question’. Other reasons repeated roles provided in previous questions: ‘to make up for NNESTs lack of English’, ‘it depends on the NNEST’, tape recorder and ambassador roles. These responses provided further evidence that roles are unclearly stated, and that they differ from expectations. The level to which NESTs are able to carry out professional teaching roles vary according to the NEST, their goals and motivations. Since pedagogy was not found to be a goal, all teachers in this sample felt that it was assumed that they should accept the job role of ‘entertainer’.

4.4.3 Are you treated as an equal teacher?

The questions in this and the next sub-section were primarily aimed to provide insight to the fifth research question concerning the variability of NNESTs treatment towards NESTs. The inconsistent treatment towards NEST primarily by NNESTs, as seen throughout chapter 2, is resonated here. Some NESTs strongly stated that they are not treated equally, a couple of NESTs stated that they are treated equally, but the majority made clear that it was case dependent. Of the ‘no’ responses, those that gave reasons were divided with some clearly expecting to receive equal treatment, and others who did not mind because of their assistant status. All experienced NESTs said they were not treated equally, one stating that ‘everyone knows that the answer is ‘no’’. Some experienced NESTs commented that they are treated more equally in time, because of their understanding of learners and ‘teaching experience’.

There are at least two possible explanations for these subjective views, one concerning the NNEST, and one the NEST. NNESTs have been described as *uchi-muki* (outward orientated), or *soto-muki* (inward orientated), labels that carry comprehensive anthropological meanings, see for example Poole (2010). Although simplified somewhat, *uchi-muki* teachers are more global in their views and the *soto-muki* teachers are more inward looking, mostly as a result of the socio-historical factors outlined in chapter 2. In essence, *uchi-muki* NNESTs are more likely to assign ‘tape recorder’ roles, and use grammar translation, whereas *soto-muki* NNESTs are more likely to practice RTT and use more communicative methodologies. On the other hand, NESTs vary widely in their levels of maturity, experience working in Japan, and understanding of

the Japanese culture and psyche, amongst other things. Such factors all contribute to their perceptions of how they are treated.

4.4.4 What problems do you regularly face?

The high number of perceived problems to this question by all NESTs revealed insight into hindrances affecting teacher roles. Some of the issues, which have been widely reported on for three decades, reflect the slow pace of change in Japanese education. Issues such as learner behaviour, however are a reflection of deeper issues in contemporary society. These issues stem from Japan's inward looking social history, and the resulting ideologies seen by a lack of recognition of changes in contemporary society. Stated problems, in Table 11, are placed under broad categories that reflect concerns with the education system, schools, learners and NNESTs. All issues directly impede NESTs ability to carry out their professional roles.

NESTs in their first mostly year stood apart with comments such as 'none really', however one of these NESTs wrote that 'there is no systematic continuity when teaching English in Japan. From school to school and grade to grade kids are taught in drastically different ways'. This finding both exemplifies how quickly issues are acknowledged, and the conscientiousness of some of the NESTs. From the second year issues were found to be highly visible as all NESTs working for two or more years commented at least one of the issues in Table 11. One comment from a NEST midway through their second year incorporated a view shared by most NEST in relation to this question specifically, and an awareness that was seen other qualitative questions in this

section: ‘I feel like I have just been thrown in this situation where whether I sink or swim could drag down an entire generation of children. I desperately do not want to be the reason for any of these kids to come to hate learning English, but with no experience and little idea what I am doing I constantly worry about overwhelming the kids I am supposed to teach’.

Table 11: Professional issues encountered by NESTs

Categories	NEST issues impeding professional roles
Class	Teaching incorrect grammar because it is in the textbook. Mixed levels classes. Regularly preparing for exams and not using communicative language. Treated like a human tape recorder. Class sizes too big. ‘No systematic continuity in the English education in Japan.’
Cultural	Passive aggressive NNESTs. Racism. ‘Invisible rules of behaviour’.
Learners	Motivation (the most common issue with 47 occurrences). Words used to describe learners were; disruptive, disrespectful, rowdy, unruly and sleeping in class. ‘Learners are used to being taught English in Japanese, so a NEST coming to class causes confusion and is demotivating’.
NESTs	Boredom from being a ‘tape recorder’ and having no classes. ‘Frustrated at persistent stereotypes of being young and inexperienced with no relevant education, or Japanese language skills’. Regular and sudden schedule changes.
NNESTs	Unprepared. Lacking classroom management skills. Poor English skills. Too busy. Differing views on NEST roles. Goal of finishing textbook. ‘Excessive translating’. ‘Are scared of learners’. Not informing NESTs about school events. Sexism.
Roles	Unclear roles. ‘It would be helpful if the NESTs roles were clearly defined, as my role varies from school to school’. ‘Lack of training’.

There was a general sense that some of these issues improve with time and experience as one experienced NEST wrote ‘as I am reasonably experienced I do not have any problems’. However, most issues were reoccurring and well established, as seen from the literature outlined in chapter 2. Student behaviour was mentioned in around two thirds of responses, and how to deal with this key issue is somewhat contentious. Discipline is described in both manuals on one page, with JET (2013a:57) offering a more realistic view of the teaching situation that ‘Japan has its fair share of rebellious youth’. Disciplinary practices differ according to culture, in Japan for example learners may not be sent out of the classroom, and there is no after school detention system. Teachers in Japan are mostly powerless to control the diverse learner behaviour, and seen in the responses by the number of comments on poor classroom management skills of NNEST, and them being ‘unable to discipline students about anything’.

4.4.5 What do you think of the ALT system?

All responses to this question centred on the ALT system of sending NESTs to schools, with many expressing the belief that the scheme is both ineffective and expensive. Such views stressed the burden that NESTs place upon the Japanese economy. One response summed up the theme of responses by stating: ‘With low pay and high staff turnover, the number of highly competent NESTs is almost nil. This punishes the kids, and the parents who actually pay for the system. Still at least it is funded though taxes, so all the Japanese teachers still get their bonuses, no matter how poor the quality of education’. NESTs were in the first year acknowledged this too, and although some were happy to make ‘easy money’ the majority (including unskilled teachers) made clear that

motivation towards their job quickly diminishes.

4.4.6 Could you improve the ALT system? How?

The purpose of this question was to elicit how roles may be improved upon. Around half of the newer NESTs honestly said that they are not experienced enough to answer this question, though some of them mentioned the improvements below. Such improvements largely mirrored the problems in section 4.4.4 and throughout this dissertation. One NEST summarily asserted: ‘Direct hire. Training. Pay. All the things that a company that does not want to go out of business would do’.

Payment and short contracts were recurring comments, it is clear that NESTs are aware of these and the resultant negative feeling from such awareness may be a contributing factor affecting roles. Some NESTs stated that all NESTs they know have second jobs. As a result, the working hours of an unclear number of NESTs are similar to NNESTs. The consequential factors, such as tiredness and being busy, are further humanistic factors affecting their ability to carry out all roles. The concern over pay that a number of NESTs stated was the reason they shared in having ‘little incentive to do a good job’, a finding that not only evidenced demotivated teachers but is a major concern for the quality of education. In contrast, some NESTs made clear that they are ‘underworked and overpaid’, a wasted resource in one respect and a key difference between them and NNESTs.

Hiring policies and training for all teachers featured regularly here, and the education

system was repeatedly criticized for not preparing teachers for team-teaching. JET NESTs mostly recognized the need for their training to be more than two days. However this coupled with the limited opportunities to team-teach explained the repeated response to give qualified NESTs more power.

The one-shot system regularly featured, a complaint that has been made for nearly 30 years (McConnell, 2000). Teachers are forcefully handicapped by this system in developing working relationship with teachers and learners, and is a major contributing factor perpetuating the NEST status as a visitor. For roles to be effective, teachers need to build a relationship with learners by visiting schools more regularly. It appears that this widely reported major hindrance to carry out roles is known by teachers and administrators and persists because of reasons related to cultural separation of non-Japanese (see section 4.4.3), economy and the education system. A semi-structured interview with a director of a prefectoral education centre revealed his continued insistence to have NESTs at one school for one year. The key reason given for this system not being in place was lack of funding for education.

4.4.7 How do you feel about being an assistant?

This question, and the final discussion in this chapter, concerns all five research questions, and aims to provide a succinct understanding of views towards NEST roles. The initial results saw that newer NESTs mostly did not mind being assistants as they were not qualified to teach. NESTs who have been working from 2 or 3 years, however, saw themselves as being underutilized, and in some cases claimed that they were more

qualified than the NNESTs. Further support for this is that NNESTs have a maximum 7 years placement at one school before they are moved to another, some NESTs were found to be working at individual schools longer than NNESTs. This finding, combined with problems surrounding NNEST teaching ability explored above and extensive RTT, revealed that experienced NESTs found the title of ‘assistant’ to be misleading.

Although chapter 2 clarified that solo teaching for foreign workers is illegal in Japanese public schools, it was found repeatedly to be widely practiced. Furthermore, during the present study eight currently practicing solo teachers in public JHS and HS made contact, five with teaching qualifications and three without. It was found that certain prefectural BoEs actually issue teaching licenses to foreign teachers. Prefectures include Ibaraki, Osaka, Kurashiki and Kyoto, and maybe more, but due to lack of research papers it is unclear how many in total (information obtained from personal contact with ‘solo’ teachers, and the General Union). These teachers have little extra job security with their 3 year contracts and their roles were as unclear, developed only from experience rather than documentation supplied by any authority. Ability to carry out roles was high as a result of experience, though learner behaviour was somewhat more extreme compared to the findings above. Teachers on the whole found that they had to be very strict as learners paid them little respect if they did not ‘set the tone from the beginning’. Teachers reported learners using phones, walking around during class, and female teachers reported being touched inappropriately.

From the evidence reported in this sub section and chapter, it seems that the next step for foreign teacher roles is to be on an equal footing with their native Japanese

counterparts, a move that would require more training than is currently offered. Training needs to cover in detail learner differences not only from pedagogical perspectives but also socio-cultural influences. Similar conclusions have periodically surfaced at the government level. In 2003 the then Minister of Education announced that 1300 special teacher licenses (certificates) would be given to foreign teachers to teach in a solo capacity (Guardian, 2003). Although this reform was never implemented it signalled that MEXT knows that to improve foreign language ability it must acknowledge abilities beyond its borders, at the same time acknowledging the restrictions it places upon itself. However, as they were to be ‘special’, they also were not regular teacher licences, which again suggests the clear separation of Japanese and non-Japanese in an official context.

One response came from a former NEST now working in a prefectoral office stated that solo teaching roles for veteran JET NESTs is being planned for JETs in the coming years. The validity of this is unclear despite concerted efforts to confirm this. This situation highlighted the limitation of failing to ask teachers for permission to send follow up questions a noted in chapter 3. Further signs that changes are underway can be seen in a questionnaire that was sent out by JET to its teachers in February 2015, the first time such a measure has been done in JETs history. The questions in the questionnaire related to relationships with NNESTs, issues with the one-shot system, school roles (including exam writing) and teaching qualifications. The official reason provided for its purpose is for results to ‘be used at the 2015 ALT Opinion Exchange Meeting as a reference for improving various aspects of the JET programme’, and will be made available in the CLAIR forum magazine (JET, 2014).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study was to look at the role of NESTs in Japanese public secondary schools. To understand how the role evolved, a study of the social and educational context was undertaken. The NESTs themselves were then sent a questionnaire which investigated their understanding of the wider factors that influence their roles, requested details of their current role, and asked for an honest assessment of their effectiveness. Initial conclusions are that NESTs roles are intertwined deeply into the Japanese culture and in spite of their questionable educational worth, no significant changes have ever been made to change this.

The main factor influencing the data was the high number of JET NESTs. The sampling method used offered little control over who would answer; future research may choose to be more specific about the choice of respondents. On analysing the data it was found that the differences between lesser and more experienced NESTs revealed insights into the understanding of roles and their ability to carry them out. The NESTs responses were not seen as a limitation of the study.

Limitations were mentioned throughout this dissertation, and three prominent ones are further examined. Firstly, although it was unclear why there was such a low return rate from NNESTs, previous research from Brown and Wada (1998) posited that language issues, and time taken to complete the questionnaire may be factors. Secondly was the apparent reluctance of BOE's to circulate the questionnaire. This attitude towards conducting research may be a reflection of cultural practices and *uchimuki* thinking, but

it is unclear to what extent. The final limitation was the noticeable absence of learner opinions towards NESTs being in their classrooms, and their views on what NEST roles are. Investigation of the validity of these views from learner perspectives and the reasons why demand research.

Cultural influences were found to be dominant in all areas affecting NEST roles, mostly in imposing restrictions on the extent and nature of their roles and their unequal treatment compared with NNESTs. This inherently complex finding is confused by the freedom that NESTs receive in their professional roles through RTT (and solo teaching). This ‘main’ teacher role is not equal with NNESTs in terms of their social standing and benefits they receive. A reason why the NEST system has continued on such a large scale for 30 years, instead of employing foreign teachers directly throughout Japan (as in other industrialised nations), is deeply entrenched in Japan’s socio-history and culture. This line of enquiry supports the evidence that Japan continues to cling on to traditions and concepts of purity rather than adopting those of the modern world (Gordon et al, 2010).

The mounting evidence of grassroots changes to NEST roles, as seen in the small cultures of the schools and at prefectural levels, suggests a trend of declining top down pressures from MEXT. MEXT has traditionally exerted pressure on school practices as dictated by the Japanese custom of social hierarchy. MEXT for example, failed to even discuss with schools and principals about the JET programme before it was introduced, and continually fails to consult schools and teachers on CoSs. In contemporary Japan, as evidenced throughout this dissertation, NESTs are increasingly adopting the role of

teacher, and not assistant to the teacher. Furthermore, there are increasing numbers of NESTs with teaching qualifications, knowledge of Japanese language and experience currently directing classes, so the question of who is assisting who is increasingly becoming even more tenable. The realities of NEST roles on the ground are continually ignored at the higher levels of MEXT who seem to be loosing their grip on dictating teaching practices throughout Japan.

The social and professional distancing of NESTs seen throughout this dissertation and the effect this appears to have on various aspects of NESTs roles is significant. A resulting purpose of this introductory study is a call for a higher-level assessment of roles and of following modifications that should be implemented from the findings. Such changes are one of the key contributing factors to helping to break the 30-year loop of poor foreign language skills. In effect, ‘Japan has a stark choice of either engaging more with globalization or continuing on a path of chronic, inward-looking decline’ (Aspinall, 2011).

The next CoS is due in the next 3 or more years and a shake up to the system of foreign English teachers is overdue. As solo teaching has existed in Japan in public and private schools for over 15 years, models are in place with showing how to implement them. Hiring qualified teachers and offering longer contracts has repeatedly been called for and was repeatedly seen in the questionnaire responses from experienced NESTs.

Further support for this view of increased equality comes from appreciating changes as a result of changing demographics. This dissertation used the terms NNESTs and

NESTs to describe teachers, however as a result of larger scale immigration, ‘non-native’ English speaker is becoming increasingly unclear. This change in demographics blurs the lines between the two types of teacher, further demanding the urgency for recognition of equality.

A report of this length could not provide enough detail about the anthropological social positioning of NESTs. Their roles were repeatedly found to be more social than educational: for ‘internationalising’ Japan, rather than teaching its youth communicative English. This continuation of viewing foreign people as outsiders ignores social and demographic trends in contemporary Japan. Maintaining ambassador and ‘internationalising’ roles in view of shifting demographics and globalisation is somewhat naïve. It is long overdue for Japan to present itself as a nation embracing multiculturalism in order to regulate prejudicial views that stem from more narrowly viewed ideologies. This dissertation calls for future research to look into the roles that non-Japanese citizens can play in adopting a more global education. This view is bubbling under the surface as Keidanren is now calling for people in Japan to be multilingual, not to focus on a single Foreign Language, in order to compete in the global market. How their influence will be shown in future CoSs will indicate how serious Japan is to change its image of insular, assimilative thinking and how supportive it is for embracing the global community.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire for JTEs (NNESTs)

Questionnaire Cover Letter

My name is Nathaniel Reed, I am a graduate student at the University of Birmingham, England. I am researching modern English teaching practices in Japanese Elementary, Junior and High Schools. I am inviting you to help me by completing a questionnaire (below). I could not complete my dissertation without your help so I am very grateful for your answers.

The questionnaire should take about 10-15 to complete. All of your answers will be confidential; I will not write your name or any information about you anywhere. If you do not want me to include your answers (after you have submitted them) please email me and I will delete your questionnaire.

Thank you very much for helping me with my academic research. Your data will be very helpful for me to write a dissertation. By returning this questionnaire you are agreeing to be included in my study. If you have any questions about the study, and/or would like a report of the responses please email me and I will very happily send them to you.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Reed

XXXXXXXX@yahoo.com

JTE Questionnaire

- #### 1. Personal information – for researcher’s purposes only

Name: _____ Prefecture: _____

2. What level school(s) do you teach at (ES, JHS or HS)?
 3. What is your gender?

Female		Male	
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4. What is your age bracket

20-29 30-39 40-49 50-60+

5. Why did you become an English teacher?
 6. Have you studied English abroad? If yes, please provide details.
 7. How many years have you been an English teacher?
 8. What did you study at university?
 9. Do you have any (other) teaching qualifications? (E.g. Jshine, TEFL etc).
 10. How much did your teacher training prepare you to teach English?

Completely	1	2	3	4	5	Not enough
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11. Do you study English? (in an Eikaiwa, community centre etc).

No	Yes
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If yes, please provide details:

12. Do you have any affiliations with education groups? E.g. JALT, ETJ etc.
 13. Do you attend teaching seminars/workshops? (E.g. in-service teacher training, JALT) If yes, please provide details.
 14. Have you read the Ministry of Education's 2008 Course of Study guidelines?

Yes, all	Some sections	A few sections	None
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15. What are your main goals when teaching English? (E.g. Communicative competence, to finish the text book, to prepare students' to pass exams, fun etc).
16. What methodology do you mainly use: grammar translation, task based, communicative (CLT) etc.
17. How often do you team teach on average each week?

1-4 Lessons	5-9 Lessons	10-14 Lessons	15-19 lessons	20-24 Lessons	25+ Lessons
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18. Do you enjoy team-teaching?
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Yes, very
much. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No, not at all |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|

19. Why are ALTs in the classroom?
20. What do you think of the ALT system?
21. Could you improve the ALT system? Please provide details.
22. Do you think ALTs should teach solo without a Japanese teacher? Please provide details.

Appendix II: Questionnaire for ALTs (NESTs)

Questionnaire Cover Letter

My name is Nathaniel Reed, I am a graduate student at the University of Birmingham, England. I am researching modern English teaching practices in Japanese Elementary, Junior and High Schools. I am inviting you to help me by completing a questionnaire (below). I could not complete my dissertation without your help so I am very grateful for your answers.

The questionnaire should take about 10-15 to complete. All of your answers will be confidential; I will not write your name or any information about you anywhere. If you do not want me to include your answers (after you have submitted them) please email me and I will delete your questionnaire.

Thank you very much for helping me with my academic research. Your data will be very helpful for me to write a dissertation. By returning this questionnaire you are agreeing to be included in my study. If you have any questions about the study, and/or would like a report of the responses please email me and I will very happily send them to you.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Reed

XXXXXXXX@yahoo.com

ALT (NEST) Questionnaire

1. Personal information; for researcher's purposes only.

Name:

Prefecture you teach in:

2. What level school(s) do you teach at (ES, JHS or HS)?

3. What is your gender?

Female		Male	
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4. What is your age bracket

20-29		30-39		40-49		50-60+	
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5. Why did you become an ALT?

6. How many years have you been an ALT?

7. What was your undergraduate degree?

8. Do you have any teaching qualifications? E.g. BA/MA/TEFL/CELTA/
BULATS/CETYL – if so, which ones?

9. Do you have any affiliations with education groups? E.g. JALT, ETJ, AJET.

10. Do you go to teaching/language meetings, conferences or workshops etc?

11. Have you read Mombosho's (MEXT) 2008 Course of Study guidelines?

Yes, all.	Some sections.	A few sections.	None.
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12. What are your main goals when teaching English? (E.g. Communicative competence, to finish the text book, to prepare students' to pass exams, fun etc).

13. What methodology do you mainly use: grammar translation, task based, communicative (CLT) etc.

14. How often do you team teach on average each week?

1-4 Lessons	5-9 Lessons	10-14 Lessons	15-19 lessons	20-24 Lessons	25+ Lessons
----------------	----------------	------------------	------------------	------------------	----------------

15. Do you enjoy team-teaching?

Yes, very much.	1	2	3	4	5	No, not at all
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16. What do you do in the classroom?

17. Why are ALTs in the classroom?

18. Are you treated as an equal teacher? – In the school – by JTEs

19. What problems do you regularly face?

20. What do you think of the ALT system?

21. Could you improve the ALT system? How?

22. How do you feel about being an assistant (not the main teacher)?