

PERCEPTIONS, MOTIVATION AND TROUBLES:

INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES OF JAPANESE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN JAPAN

Intercultural speakers need to

- 1) be cognizant of their own and others' attitudes,
- 2) have knowledge of the self and of others on both an individual and societal interactional level,
- 3) be able to interpret and relate,
- 4) be able to discover and interact,
- 5) and have critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

The stated educational goal of MEXT is to develop Japanese learners' communicative skills by including culture as a component of curricula in order to develop students' cultural identity thus focusing learners on being able to explain Japanese culture, traditions and history to foreigners in English (MEXT, 2011).

- “The undoing of native-speakerism requires a type of thinking that promotes new relationships. This is already evident in discussions concerning the ownership of English” (Holliday, 2006 p. 386).
- Moving from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelativist frame of reference allows learners to be more willing to engage in social network formation with native speakers (Isabelli-García 2006).
- The more interaction learners have with native speakers of a language the more that interaction can have a strong influence on a learner’s second language development (Isabelli-García, 2006; Lapkin, et al., 1995; Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995; Siegal, 1995).

What do Japanese learners gain from their interactions with non-Japanese English speakers?

What problems do Japanese learners encounter in their interactions with non-Japanese English speakers?

How do Japanese learners really perceive Non-Japanese English speakers?

- 
- The Myth of the Native Speaker perpetuates non-native speakers (including Japanese EFL learners) and their cultures as:

“‘collectivist’, ‘reticent’, ‘indirect’, ‘passive’, ‘docile’,
‘lacking in self-esteem’ ‘reluctant to challenge
authority’, ‘easily dominated’, ‘undemocratic’, or
‘traditional’ and, ‘uncritical and unthinking’”
(Holliday, 2005, p. 385)

Initial Data Collection and Analysis

1. Interaction interviews (Monash University, Melbourne)

Used by Neustupný (2003), Muraoka (2001), and Asaoka (1987)

2. Language Management Theory (Jernudd and Neustupný, (1987)

Second Stage Data Collection

1. Online questionnaire created using data from initial data collection

Third Stage Data Collection

1. Interaction interview combined with specific situation questionnaire

10 JAPANESE PARTICIPANTS

6 FEMALES, 4 MALES; AGES 19-40

1-1.5 HOUR INTERACTION INTERVIEWS:
FOCUSING ON IDENTIFYING “DEVIATIONS”
AND ADJUSTMENTS MADE

102 JAPANESE PARTICIPANTS

AGES 19-40

ON-LINE ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE
COLLECTED FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
AND THEIR CONTACTS/FRIENDS

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

HOW DO JAPANESE LEARNERS PERCEIVE THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH NON-JAPANESE ENGLISH SPEAKERS?
HOW DO THEY REACT TO PROBLEMS IN THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH NON-JAPANESE ENGLISH SPEAKERS?
DO THEY ESTABLISH MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS?

Stages of LMT

1. Norms – expectations (socially-shared or individual) of appropriate and expected behavior,
2. Deviation –behaviour of an interlocutor or self which deviates from a norm,
3. Noting – whether or not the deviation is noticed,
4. Evaluation – the noted deviations are evaluated as positive, negative or neutral,
5. Adjustment design– the plan made by the participant to attempt to remove the problem,
6. Implementation – the act of implementing the adjustment plan to attempt to remove the deviation
(Neustupný , 2005, pp. 310-311).

LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT THEORY

DURING INTERACTION INTERVIEWS, PARTICIPANTS SOMETIMES NOTE AND RE-EVALUATE THEIR OWN BEHAVIOURS AND THE BEHAVIOURS OF THEIR INTERLOCUTORS.

THEY REDEFINE WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED AND RAISE THEIR OWN AWARENESS OF WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE INTERACTION.

JAPANESE LEARNERS' FRIENDS

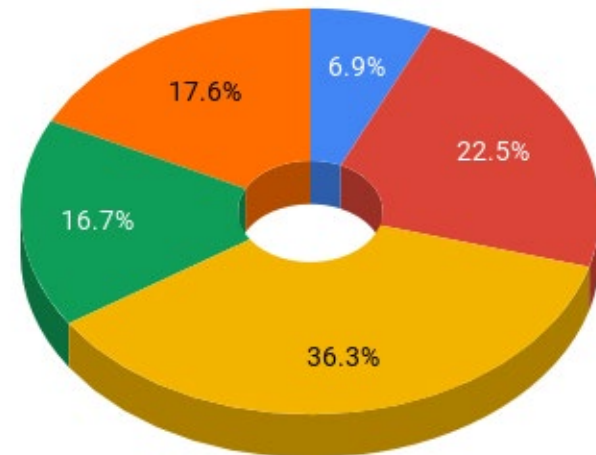
■ Self-reported number and nationality of non-Japanese English speaking friends

JM1: "University is a bit hard to meet new friends. People are busy. International people don't join club activities so much. I met my friends in meet-up. It' online activity place."

JF2: "My co-worker. We studied together in our Master's degree. Now, we work [at] the same place. We can't meet often in our free-time, so we meet at lunch time."

- Most online participants confirmed that the average number of NJES friends typically ranged between 3-10.
- 23 online participants indicated that they have 1-2 NJES friends.
- Participants reported four main sources of NJES friends; part-jobs/work, university classes, and online meet-ups, and language exchanges.
- Primary Nationalities were: American (32%), Canadian (19%), British, (13%) Australia (9%), New Zealand (1%) English speakers from various countries such as; China, Columbia, Japan, Mexico Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Russia (Total: 26%)

How Many Non Japanese English Speaking Friends Do You Have?



NATIVE SPEAKERS AS A LANGUAGE RESOURCE

■ Linguistic Deviations – Grammar correction by non-Japanese English speakers (NJES)

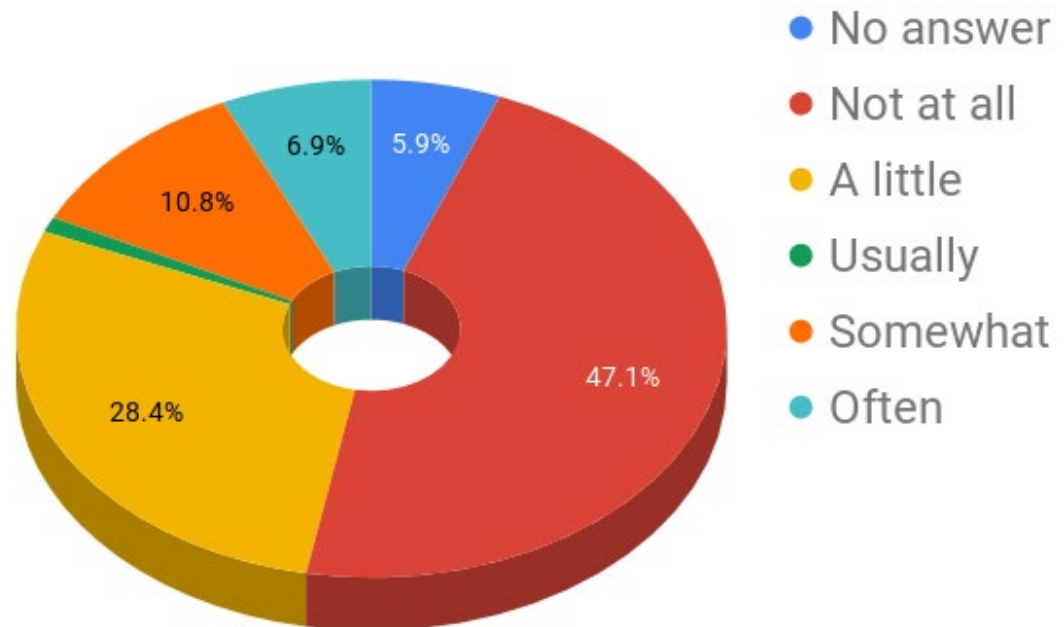
JF3: “I think my English is okay. If I have any question, or if I can’t say what I want to say, I just ask him, so. That’s okay.”

JM7: “Sometimes I don’t know 文法 (bumpo: grammar), but my friend help me. She knows Japanese well, so she just tell me in Japanese.”

“Participants (JF1, JF2 JF4, JF6) sometimes noted and evaluated negatively their ability with English in their interactions, but indicated that their NJES friends gave them assistance when necessary,” (Devitte, 2016).

- Participants are not always aware of corrections made by their interlocutors during the interactions.
- Communication of ideas was emphasized

Do your NJES usually help with or correct your grammar?



NATIVE SPEAKERS AS A LANGUAGE RESOURCE

■ Linguistic Deviations – Vocabulary correction by non-Japanese English speakers

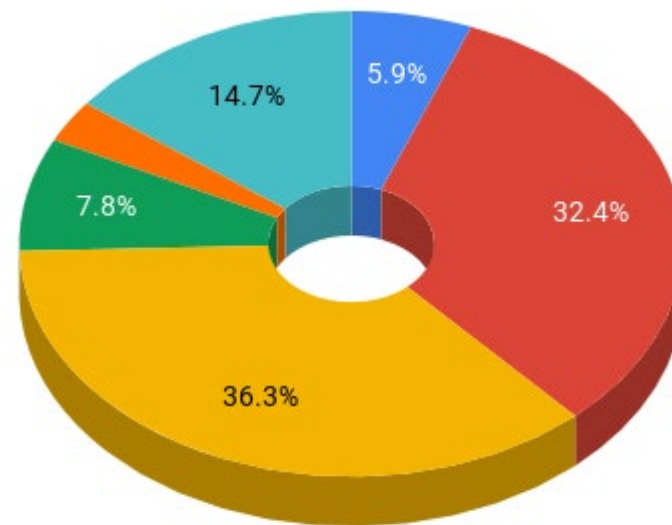
JM9: “If I don’t know something. I just google it. Or look up the word in a dictionary.”

JM6: “I don’t always know the word, but my friends know and if I say in Japanese or I talk (around) they help me find what I want to say.”

“The act of code-switching prevalent in the data implies that in friendships there is less of an emphasis on differences in power and distance and that it is not considered to be an imposition to code-switch between languages by the participants as their internal agenda during interactions is to communicate (Devitte, 2016).

- Codeswitching and using the internet are common ways to circumvent linguistic problems when they are noted
- Actual vocabulary correction was felt to be minimal to none

Do your NJES usually help with or correct your vocabulary?



- No answer
- Not at all
- A little
- Often
- Usually
- Somewhat

FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

■ Socio-linguistic Deviations – who does the helping?

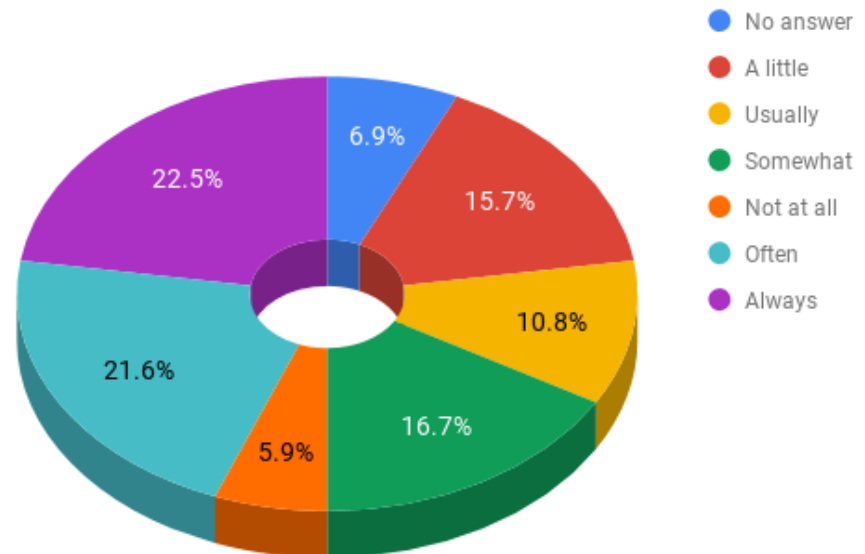
How often does your NJES help facilitate communication?

JF3: “I think [my friend] does help. Maybe ask questions, or suggest points.”

JM7: “When we talk in English. She talks a lot. It help me.”

Interviewees indicated that their NJES often took a “higher” position when communicating. They took primary responsibility for facilitating the conversation and keeping it going.

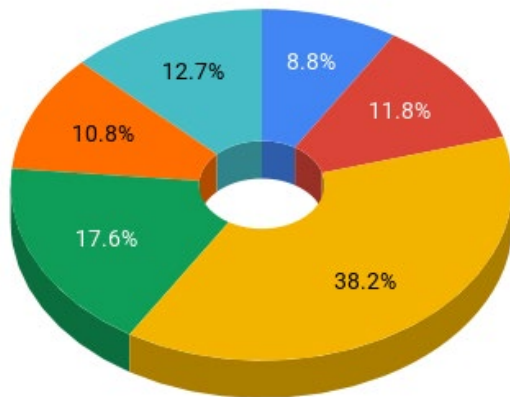
- This was a vague sense that the NJES talked more than the Japanese learner.
- While the Japanese learner seemed “hesitant”, they were actually focused on communicating their ideas and listening.



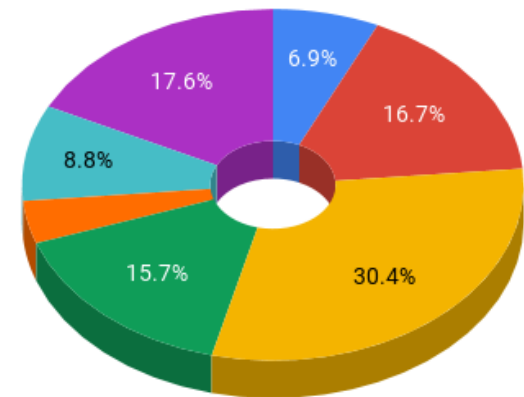
PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH

- Socio-Linguistic Deviations- noting non-understanding and “good” communication

Do you feel your friends understand your English?



Do you feel you communicate well in English?



● No answer ● Somewhat ● Usually ● Often ● A little ● Always

● No answer ● Often ● Usually ● Somewhat ● Not at all ● A little ● Always

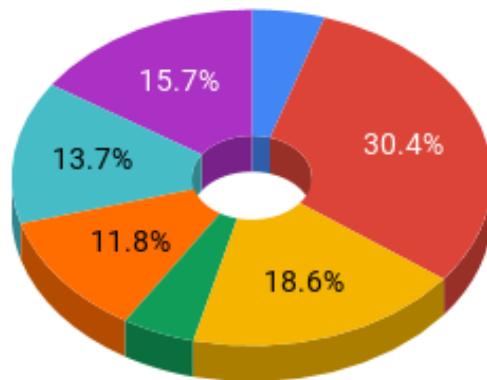
Interaction interview reported **adjustment designs**:

- Take a “passive role” in a conversation (such as just listening to their NJES friend),
- Take more active roles by asking questions or offering their own commentary,
- View linguistic **deviations** as a “learning opportunity”.

PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH

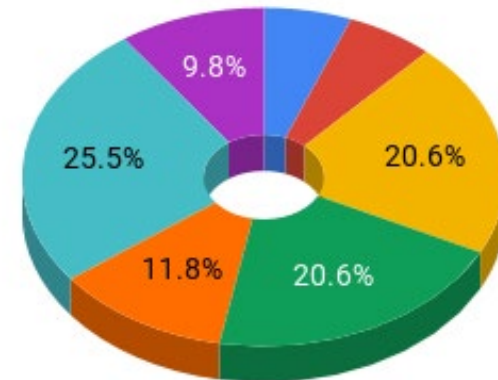
■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Starting Conversations

Do you feel you start conversations?



● No answer ● Often ● Somewhat ● Not at all
● A little ● Always ● Usually

Do you feel your NJES start conversations?



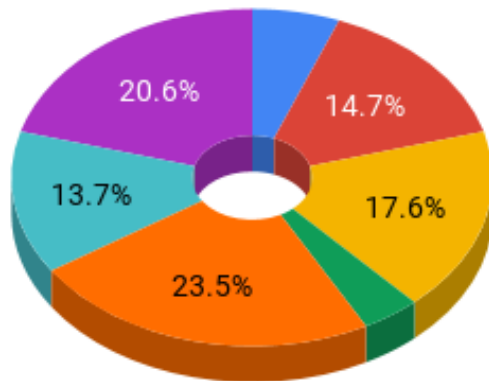
● No answer ● Not at all ● Usually ● Somewhat
● Always ● Often ● A little

- Questionnaire participants indicated that they feel that they start conversations frequently (45.1%; always or usually),
 - However, when the question is reversed, they indicated 37.3% (always or usually) of the time their NJES initiated.
- Interaction interview reported **adjustment designs**:
- This correlated with interview participants who found that they didn't really pay attention to who initiated conversations and gave different answers during their interviews (when asked about specific interactions).

PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH

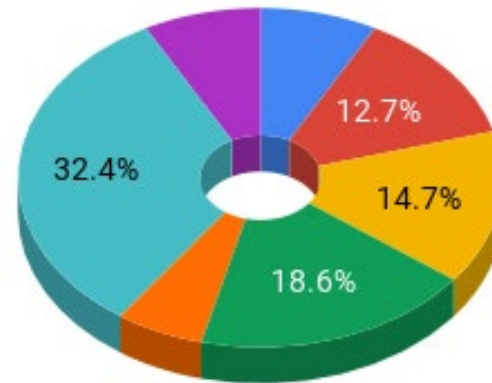
■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Topic Selection

Do you feel you choose the topics you talk about?



● No answer ● A little ● Often ● Not at all
● Usually ● Always ● Somewhat

Do you feel your NJES choose the topics you talk about?



● No answer ● A little ● Usually ● Somewhat
● Not at all ● Often ● Always

- Questionnaire participants indicated that they feel that they start conversations frequently (37.2%; always or usually),
- However, when the question is reversed, they indicated 40.2% of the time their NJES selected.

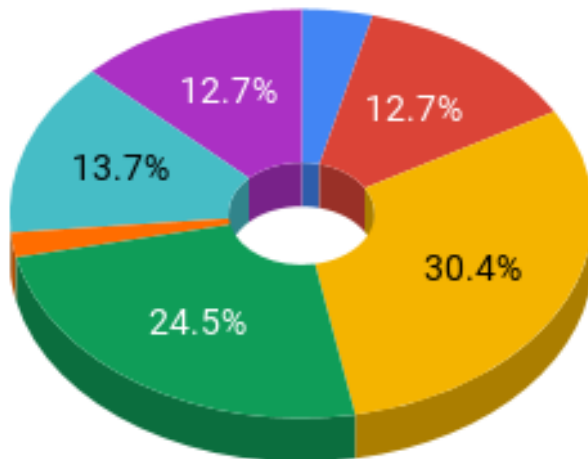
Interaction interview reported **adjustment designs**:

- This correlated with interview participants who found that they didn't really pay attention to who selected the topics of conversations.

PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TOPICS

■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Background knowledge

Do you usually understand what they are talking about?



● No answer ● A little ● Usually ● Often
● Not at all ● Always ● Somewhat

JM9: “Actually, as you know I was still a student, so sometimes it was difficult (to participate). Because they were talking about music, and not about our generations music. Most of my friends are maybe over thirty. It's a good thing for me because I can know about different things.”

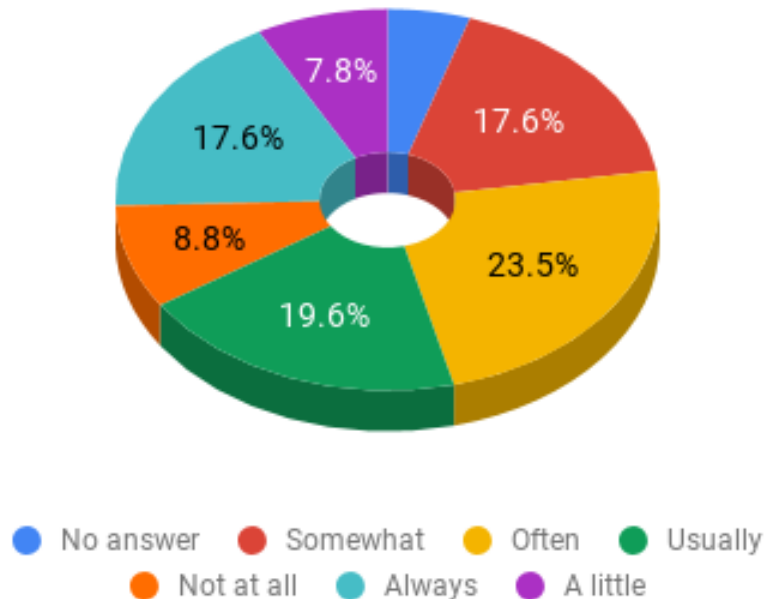
JF2: I like it. As it is exciting that we can communicate, share our feelings for our lives though our cultural values are quite different. It is also interesting to know new cultures and the way of thinking in other countries.

- The “passive role” is used to acquire new background knowledge.
- Again internet is essential in helping learners to “research unknown” information.
- 44.1% (Always or usually) indicated they understand the topics of conversation

PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TOPICS

■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Background knowledge

Do your NJES explain when you don't know the topic?



JM4: "I am Japanese. I don't have Japanese friends that talk about politics. I don't know politics, but [my American] friend tells me about Obama."

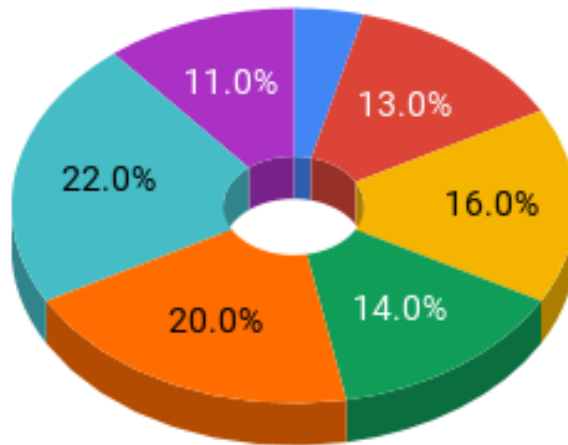
JM1: "I was talking about immigration in Europe with my friend. Japanese people don't give their opinion, but he gives his [a lot]. I wanted to know more, so he told me things I didn't know."

- Participants interview reported that their NJES friends talk about a wider range of topics.
- The NJES seemed happy to explain.
- **37.2% (Always or usually) their friends provided background information**

PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TOPICS

■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Background knowledge

Do your NJES explain when you don't know the topic?



● No answer ● Somewhat ● Often ● Not at all
● A little ● Usually ● Always

JM4: "I am Japanese. I don't have Japanese friends that talk about politics. I don't know politics, but [my American] friend tells me about Obama."

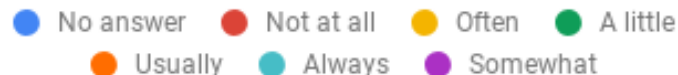
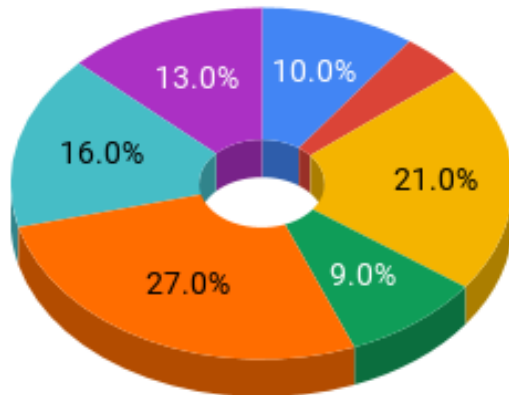
JM1: "I was talking about immigration in Europe with my friend. Japanese people don't give their opinion, but he gives his [a lot]. I wanted to know more, so he told me things I didn't know."

- Participants interview reported that their NJES friends talk about a wider range of topics.
- The NJES seemed happy to explain.
- **33% (Always or usually) their friends provided background information**

PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TOPICS

■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Background knowledge

Do you feel you can give your opinion easily?



JF4: “Japanese don’t give their opinion. My NJES don’t care. If my opinion is different they [still] listen I wish Japanese don’t say the same thing every time to make harmony.”

JM2: “As you know, Japanese are shy about disagreeing. That’s not our culture. Americans, other foreigners are okay to disagree.”

- The “openness” of foreigners allows participants to give their opinion more freely (over 51% of the time they felt that the NJES listened to their opinion).
- The fact that NJES are more direct is seen as “Honne” which the participants said that they valued.
- 43% (Always or usually) felt that they can give their opinion easily.
- 35% said that the NJES knew more about topics.

PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH

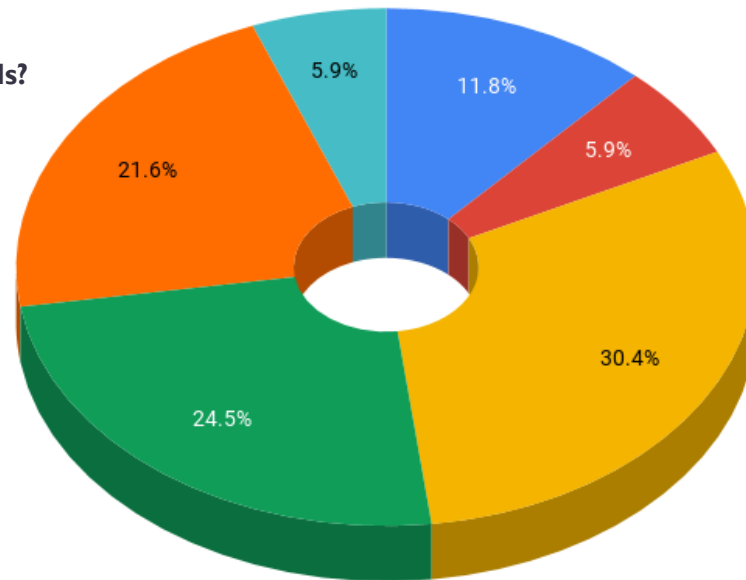
■ Socio-Linguistic Deviations- Closeness

Do you feel you have a close relationship with your NJES friends?

JF2: "I can definitely be open with foreigners more because you know, I can make repair after a conversation. "It's not what I mean, but...my true feeling is this". If I do that to Japanese, they don't believe me."

JM2: "It is fun to talk with foreigners. In many cases, it is inspired by a non-Japanese way of thinking, which will broaden our horizons."

JF4: "I do not distinguish between my Japanese friends and friends from other countries. I just feel they are friends of mine."



● I don't know. ● They are closer to me than even my best Japanese friends. ● They are just like my usual Japanese friends.
● They are just like my very good / best Japanese friends. ● They are not as close to me as my usual Japanese friends.
● They are not very close at all to me.

- All of the interview participants indicated that they as close or closer to their NJES friends
- NJES are seen as more "open" than Japanese
- 54.9% (Closer 8%, Very good, 30%, Usual 28%) similar responses to interview participants

FEELINGS OF CLOSENESS TOWARDS NJES

- Comments from online participants

Great to have a such wonderful connection both inside and outside my home country. feel more comfortable to hang out with non-Japanese speakers.

I always think I can't convey my feeling. So, it's very hard. But fun.

I can learn a lot from them about their culture, English and more.

I do not distinguish between my Japanese friends and friends from other countries. I just feel they are friends of mine.

I don't feel anything special (they are same)

I feel happy to have a English speaking friend.

I feel like that I could know more about the outside of my own country through their opinions and perspectives

I feel much more secure

I feel that I can be my true self more than towards some of my Japanese friends.

I feel the world closer. It's fun :)

I like communicating with them as I can learn a lot from it. Also I feel happy when I can laugh together on jokes.

I like it because I can study English and I also can know different point of view. I think friends are friends. Nationality is not matter

I like it. As it is exciting that we can communicate, share our feelings for our lives though our cultural values are quite different. It is also interesting to know new cultures and the way of thinking in other countries.

I never thought about how I feel about it. It's just normal to make new friends.

I think it is a great way to not only enhance one's communication skills but also learn about the person's country and customs.

STAGE THREE

- **Second online questionnaire (Any Nationalities residing in Japan)**
 - Negative Deviations
 - Ex. Always asking “Where are you from?” as the opening question when meeting someone for the first time.
 - Ex. Being asked questions about Japan, such as “Why are all Japanese so shy?”
 - Ex. Not knowing about a topic that someone is talking about.
 - Positive Deviations
 - Ex. Finding out that someone likes something about Japan/your country that you didn’t think that they would.
 - Ex. Learning something about a topic that you didn’t know much about before (ie. music, Marvel).
 - Ex. Being able to give your opinion without worrying about the other person’s difference of opinion.
- 1. Will focus on specific points of interaction that were “positive” deviations.
- 2. Will attempt to determine the generalizability of the positive deviations.
- 3. Will categorize the negative deviations based on a 7 point scale.
- 4. Will attempt to determine the frequency in which the deviations are encountered.
- 5. Will attempt a comparison between Japanese learners’ and non-Japanese English speakers’ perceptions of the phenomena.

- The more interaction learners have with native speakers of a language the more that interaction can have a strong influence on a learner's second language development (Isabelli-García, 2006; Lapkin, et al., 1995; Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995; Siegal, 1995).
 - While the effects on linguistic development are largely nonconclusive, the interpersonal interactions with NJES enhance Japanese learners experiences with English and potentially improve motivation to interact and use their 2nd language.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- “The undoing of native-speakerism requires a type of thinking that promotes new relationships. This is already evident in discussions concerning the ownership of English” (Holliday, 2006 p. 386).
 - The participants seem to be taking ownership of their English in that they are using English to establish, maintain and negotiate social relations with their NJES friends.
 - Fostering a sense of curiosity about a range of topics that directly relate to the students would be beneficial to the problems they have with background information.
 - Providing students with topical short readings that relate to current events, pop-culture etc. and giving them access to vocabulary necessary for them to articulate their opinions.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Moving from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelativist frame of reference allows learners to be more willing to engage in social network formation with native speakers (Isabelli-García 2006).
 - The participants value their NJES friends as much as their Japanese friends and view them as essential contributors to their lived experiences.
 - Encouraging students to join programs that allow them access to potential NJES friends; these can be online meet-ups, or learning centres in universities.
 - Encouraging students to become interested in non-first language YouTube videos through activities that require them to watch and present information that they learn.
 - Providing students with self-disclosure and talking about personal experiences living abroad.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Asaoka, T. (1987). *Communication problems between Japanese and Australians at a dinner party*. Japanese Studies Centre .
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Devitte, W. (2016). *Friendships in Japan: The Foreign Language Social Network Development Experiences of Japanese Learners of English*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Sophia University.
- Jernudd, B., & Neustupný, J. V. (1987). Language planning: For whom? In L. Laforge (Ed.), *Proceedings of the international colloquium on language planning* (pp. 69-84).
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT journal*, 60(4), 385-387.
- Isabelli-García, C. (2006). Study abroad social networks, motivation and attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition. In DuFon, M. A. & Churchill, E. (Eds.)
- Lapkin, S., Hart D., & Swain, M. (1995). A Canadian interprovincial exchange: Evaluating the linguistic impact of a three-month stay in Quebec. In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 67-94). Amsterdam /Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Marriott, H. (1995). The acquisition of politeness patterns by exchange students in Japan. In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 197-224). Amsterdam /Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Muraoka, H. (2001). Management of intercultural input: A case study of two Korean residents of Japan. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 10 (2), 297-311.
- Neustupný, J. V. (2003). Japanese students in Prague. Problems of communication and interaction. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 162, 125-143.
- Neustupný, J. V. (2005). Foreigners and the Japanese in contact situations: Evaluation of norm deviations. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (175-176), 307-323.
- Regan, V. (1995). The acquisition of sociolinguistic native speech norms. *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context*, 245-267.
- Siegal, M. (1995). Individual differences and study abroad. *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context*, pp. 225-244.