

**The JET Programme as a Manifestation
of *Kokusaika* (Internationalization) in
Japan**

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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The thesis, not including bibliography and appendices is 98,306 words.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, under which thousands of foreign graduates have been invited to work as language teaching assistants in Japanese schools, in the name of ‘grassroots internationalization’. Although JET was launched in 1987 amid a wider government-sponsored campaign of internationalization (*kokusaika*), opinions have differed as regards the objectives and priorities of its creators, while the concept of *kokusaika* itself has also been subject to a wide variety of interpretations.

The thesis begins by offering five perspectives on *kokusaika*, as both a concept and a policy orientation. Two of these reflect common themes in ‘Western’ discourse on societal internationalization, namely ethnic/cultural diversity and globalization; while the remaining three pertain to more traditional Japanese policy concerns, i.e. the national economic interest, the ‘national identity’, and international prestige. Against this conceptual background, the Main Study assesses the characteristics of the JET Programme as an ‘internationalization policy’, both in terms of intended and *de facto* outcomes. Four aspects of the programme—‘goals’, ‘operational policy’, ‘implementation’ and ‘perceived effects’—are examined, each in a separate chapter. To reflect both ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ positions, analysis is based on a combination of data from government sources (policy statements and documents) and first-hand accounts from ‘ordinary’ JET participants, i.e. ‘grassroots discourses’.

The study detects a number of contradictions between the declared goals of the programme and the operational policy established for achieving them, and reveals a wide diversity of outcomes. Most fundamentally, the study finds that the ‘internationalization’ promoted by the JET Programme is geared less towards supporting systemic change within Japanese society than in furthering perceived overseas interests.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS & NOTES ON STYLE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Japanese Terms

<i>Chūkyōshin</i>	Central Council on Education
<i>Eiken</i>	Test in Practical English Proficiency
<i>Gaiatsu</i>	Foreign pressure (e.g. for reform within Japan)
<i>Gaijin/ Gaikokujin</i>	Foreigner (lit. ‘outside person’)
<i>Gaimushō</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<i>Hinomaru</i>	The Japanese national flag
<i>Jichishō</i>	Ministry of Home Affairs
<i>Jichitai Kokusaika Kyōkai</i>	CLAIR
<i>Kikokushijo</i>	Japanese ‘returnee children’
<i>Kimigayo</i>	The Japanese national anthem
<i>Kokusai Kōryū</i>	International Exchange
<i>Kokusai Rikai Kyōiku</i>	Education for International Understanding
<i>Kokusajin</i>	Internationalist (lit. ‘international person’)
<i>Kokusaika</i>	Internationalization
<i>Mombukagakushō</i>	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology
<i>Mombushō/ Monbushō</i>	Japanese Ministry of Education
<i>Nihonjinron</i>	The ‘Theory of Japaneseness’
<i>Nikkeijin</i>	Foreigners of Japanese descent
<i>Rinkyōshin</i>	National Council on Educational Reform (NCER)
<i>Sakoku</i>	Japan’s period of isolation (lit. ‘closed country’) (1639-1854)
<i>Sarariman</i> (‘Salaryman’)	Salaried workers; particularly those working for corporations
<i>Sōgō Gakushū Jikan</i>	Integrated Study Period
<i>Sōmushō</i>	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
<i>Soto</i>	That which is ‘outside’

<i>Uchi</i>	That which is ‘inside’
<i>Yakudoku</i>	Traditional grammar-translation teaching methodology

Other Terms

National Level JET Organization	MOFA, MEXT, MIC & CLAIR
The ‘Three Ministries’	MOFA, MEXT & MIC

Acronyms

AET	Assistant English Teacher
AJET	Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching
ALT	Assistant Language Teacher
BET	British English Teaching Programme
BoE	Board of Education
CCE	Central Council on Education
CIR	Coordinator for International Relations
CLAIR	Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
CO	Contracting Organization
ESID	‘Every Situation is Different’
GIH	General Information Handbook
JTE	Japanese Teacher of English
JTL	Japanese Teacher of Language
JETAA	The JET Programme Alumni Association
JET	(i) The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (ii) Foreign JET participant, i.e. ALT, CIR or SEA
LGOTP	Local Government Officials Training Program
MEF	Mombushō English Fellows Programme
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MIC	Ministry of Communications and Internal Affairs
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NCER	National Council on Educational Reform
NCROS	New Revised Course of Study
PA	Prefectural Advisor
SEA	Sports Exchange Advisor
SELHi	Super English Language High School
SPA	Specialist Prefectural Advisor
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (an International Proficiency Test)

NOTES ON STYLE

- Although Japanese people's names are commonly written with the surname first, they appear here in the English order, i.e. with surname second.
- In texts generated electronically, e.g. e-mail interviews, online forums and weblogs, errors have been left uncorrected.
- Where a quotation includes a Japanese word or expression, an explanation is included within square brackets.
- All JTLs are referred to by their surnames and title (Ms. or Mr.)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Context

In the mid-1980s, as Japanese economic power was reaching a peak and Western (particularly American) complaints about unfair trade practices were becoming ever more frequent, Japan's politicians began articulating the case for making their country more internationally-oriented. A new buzzword, '*kokusaika*', entered the local vernacular. Although the term '*kokusaika*' is a literal translation of the English word 'internationalization' (and is often used as such), it is perhaps more commonly associated with the 'internationalization campaign' launched by the Japanese government around this time. Taken at face value, *kokusaika* would alter fundamentally Japan's role in the world and transform Japanese society itself. However, two decades later, critics still castigate Japan for its insularity. Alex Kerr describes the Japanese paradox thus: 'no country is as obsessed as Japan with the word internationalization . . . yet few modern nations have erected such high barriers against foreign people and ideas' (Kerr 2002:335).

It may seem strange that the government of Japan—the world's second-largest economy, and a country dependent on external trade for its livelihood—should have deemed it necessary, in the late twentieth century, to launch a national campaign of internationalization. The fact that it was launched suggests that policy-makers

recognised that something was amiss in their nation's relationship with the outside world. The Japanologist and former US ambassador to Tokyo, Edwin O. Reischauer, describes the problem this way: 'lingering feelings of separateness and uniqueness are still serious problems for the Japanese . . . To put it in dramatic terms, they find it hard to join the human race' (Reischauer 1988: 409). Similarly, the social theorist, Jean Baudrillard (1988: 76) describes Japan as 'a satellite of the planet earth', having managed 'to transform the power of territoriality and feudalism into that of deterritoriality and weightlessness'.

In certain respects, Japan does seem to regard itself (and, by the same token, is sometimes regarded) as a nation apart—*in* the world, but not quite *of* it. Indeed, Japan is a country which, in its not-too-distant history, closed itself from the rest of the world for more than two hundred years (Nakane 1990; Tashiro 1982). It is a country that spawned, as recently as the middle of the twentieth century, what many, including Japanese academics like Yuki Tanaka (1996; 2002), regard as an especially brutal war-machine. At the same time, Japan is sometimes perceived as obsessed with its own victimhood (see Orr 2001; Benfell 2002; Buruma 1994). In the postwar era, successive governments have refused to apologise for wartime deeds perpetrated in the name of the Japanese people, when an unequivocal expression of contrition would remove one of the chief obstacles to better relations with distrustful neighbours. For some Japanese, their country's 'island-mentality' or '*shimaguni konjō*' (see Hendry 1994) has created a sense of separateness from the rest of the world, though are also those who consider

themselves as members of a separate, indeed unique ‘race’, denying obvious commonalities with their Asian neighbours (see Wetherall & de Vos 1976). Harumi Befu (2001b) identifies within Japan a ‘hegemony of homogeneity’, while Takeyuki Tsuda (1998) speaks of a ‘stigma of ethnic difference’.

In terms of human relations, the Japanese have earned a reputation for eschewing contact with foreigners (see Herbert 1996; Kimura 2005; Komai 2001). In recent years, there have been reports of Japanese estate agents refusing let properties to foreigners (Herbert 1996:222), while Daniela de Carvalho (2003:85) claims the Immigration Control Board in Tokyo receives 20,000 letters and phone calls per year from ordinary Japanese ‘denouncing foreigners’. While it is perhaps understandable that individuals in more ethnically homogeneous societies might feel some uncertainty or unease about interacting with outsiders, some commentators claim that nationalist elements within the Japanese ‘establishment’ have deliberately sought to instil fear and distrust of foreigners, particularly through their control over education (Hall 2002) and sections of the media (Gamble and Watanabe 2004).

Viewed differently, however, Japan is a far more outward-looking country than suggested by the above. It is a country with a history of embracing foreign learning and technology. This was the case even during Japan’s long period of self-imposed isolation, when Dutch visitors to the foreigner enclave of Dejima provided access to Western books and information about the outside world (Jansen 1984:541). Since

emerging from their isolation in the mid 19th Century, the Japanese have earned a reputation for assimilating elements of foreign culture into their own. Consider, for instance, the fact that hundreds of foreign loanwords (*gairaigo*) have been incorporated into the Japanese language (Loveday 1996). Today, Japan is located at the technological cutting-edge, with many of its companies regarded as global trendsetters. In association with its economic successes, Japan has also assumed a higher political profile, particularly through its U.N. activities. In recent decades, the country has enjoyed success in exporting its own popular culture to a highly receptive foreign public. Meanwhile, ‘ordinary Japanese’ have become avid overseas travellers: besides the several million who travel overseas as tourists each year (JTB 2007), hundreds of thousands of others spend extended periods abroad, as students and, increasingly, as the spouses of foreigners (Schreiber 2006:57). Many younger Japanese worship foreign ‘idols’ (*aidoru*) like David Beckham, while also evincing pride over the achievements of their own fellow-countrymen in the international sporting arena (e.g. US-based baseball stars like Hideki Matsui and Ichiro Suzuki). Clearly, many Japanese *do* care about the outside world, and they care also how their country is perceived in the wider world—which does not concur with the image of an inward-looking, isolationist country.

Despite this greater overseas engagement, many have noted enduring peculiarities as regards how Japanese perceive foreigners and the outside world. To consider here one interesting example: the creation, over the past two decades, of numerous ‘foreign’

replica villages (Hendry 2000)—such as ‘Parque España’, with its imitation Andalusian haciendas; the English country village known as ‘British Hills’; and ‘Huis Ten Bosch’, a reconstruction of the archetypal Dutch town. These foreign villages (*gaikoku mura*) are noteworthy in that they appear to have been designed with the aim of affording the Japanese a flavour of the outside world within the haven of their own national borders. Thus, their creation is consistent with a historical Japanese preference for ‘mediated’ interaction with the outside world. In this connection, it has been noted by some (e.g. Choate 1990; McConnell 1995; Van Wolferen 1993) that the task of interacting with foreigners has traditionally been entrusted to go-betweens or ‘buffers’, invariably speakers of English or other foreign languages.

According to Robert Ozaki (1978), the Japanese approach to the outside world has often been ambivalent and inconsistent. He explains:

The Japanese have historically been vulnerable and susceptible to things foreign. While the country maintained a closed-door policy vis-à-vis the rest of the world before the mid-19th century, Europeans were ‘southern barbarians’..... but once the door was opened in 1868, the barbarians became conveyors of modern enlightenment. Before 1945 the western powers were ‘beastly creatures’; yet after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the beasts quickly turned into messengers of peace, democracy and advanced civilization. The Japanese seem capable of swiftly switching back and forth between fanatical ethnocentrism and blind worship of foreign ideas. (Ozaki 1978:23)

Whatever the ambiguities of the past, the Japanese government’s more recent commitment to the goal of societal internationalization would appear solid. Indeed, the

number of statements stressing the value of internationalization must, by now, have reached uncountable proportions. Of course, statements of intent are themselves no guarantee of reform; organizational ability and genuine political will are also required. In an attempt to gauge to what extent the Japanese government possesses these attributes, I have chosen, as the focus of my research project, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which in 2007, reached its twentieth year of operation. The JET Programme is arguably the quintessential *kokusaika*-era initiative: high-profile, well-financed, and endorsed by the highest echelons of the Japanese political establishment. Crucially perhaps, JET compelled ‘ordinary Japanese people’ to interact with foreigners, imported especially for this purpose, in the name of ‘grass roots internationalization’. On that basis, JET represents an appropriate prism through which to gauge the dynamics of internationalization within a Japanese context.

The overarching question I would like to address in this study is: ‘what kind of internationalization does the JET Programme promote?’ Naturally, I do not mean to suggest there may be alternative ‘kinds’ of internationalization; rather, my intention is to reveal some of the salient characteristics of the programme as an ‘internationalization policy’. In this regard, a range of questions will be considered. For instance, is ‘internationalization’ in the JET context related to more widespread reform of Japanese systems? Is JET aimed at ‘affective’ internationalization (i.e. changing the way Japanese people relate to foreigners and the outside world) or ‘cognitive’ (simply increasing their knowledge of life in other countries)? Who are the intended agents and

targets of internationalization? In the JET context, are all the world's countries and peoples regarded in the same light? For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Section 5.2.

Before proceeding further, it is worth considering two different interpretations of the word 'promote', namely: 'to urge the adoption of' versus 'to contribute to the progress or growth of' (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2000). In the former, a particular course of action is merely advocated; whereas in the latter some tangible effect has occurred, whether advocated or not. Thus, when considering JET's role in the promotion of internationalization, this study aims to assess not only the intentions of government policy-makers but also the programme's 'internationalizing effects'—to the extent that either can accurately be discerned. To illustrate how I propose to address these issues, I shall now outline the basic design of this research project.

1.2 Research Design

Joseph Maxwell (1996:3) has compared research design to a 'philosophy of life', in the sense that 'no one is without one, but some people are more aware of theirs, and thus able to make more informed and consistent decisions'. As such, Maxwell advocates making the design implicit, so that the implications of the research may be better understood. Following this advice, this study will proceed along the following lines:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The remainder of this introductory chapter is dedicated to a statement of purpose, in which I discuss both personal motivations and perceptions as to the value of this research project.

Chapters 2-3: Five Perspectives on *Kokusaika*

Chapter 2 begins with an attempt to understand how the term ‘*kokusaika*’ has been defined and rationalized in Japan itself. The chapter assesses *kokusaika* through the prism of two common themes in ‘Western’ discourse, namely ‘societal pluralism’ and ‘globalization’. In this regard, I consider to what extent Japan’s *kokusaika* might be compared to the process of ethnic and cultural diversification that has occurred in many postwar ‘Western’ societies; and then explore the relationship, to the extent that such exists, between *kokusaika* and the more widely-discussed concept of ‘globalization’.

Chapter 3, by contrast, approaches *kokusaika* from three perspectives that pertain specifically to the Japanese situation, i.e. ‘*kokusaika* as a means of safeguarding Japanese economic interests’; ‘*kokusaika* as an internal dialogue on the Japanese identity’; and ‘*kokusaika* as a means of enhancing Japanese prestige in the world’.

In all, then, five different perspectives on the *kokusaika* concept are considered. With

the exception of ‘*kokusaika* as globalization’, each perspective provides a different conceptual basis on which to examine the Japanese government’s decision to launch an official internationalization campaign. As I see it, this approach offers three principal advantages. Firstly, it enables me to discuss, albeit briefly, a range of concepts and issues germane to the research topic, e.g. nationalism, multiculturalism, globalization and Japanese immigration policy. Secondly, the two chapters constitute, in themselves, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Thirdly, the chapters provide a useful reference point for the Main Study, in that empirical findings can be rationalized through the prism of phenomena discussed therein. While not all issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3 pertain directly to the JET Programme, the five ‘*kokusaika* perspectives’ nevertheless constitute a useful conceptual platform from which to rationalize its creation, organization and day-to-day implementation.

Chapter 4: What is the JET Programme?

Chapter 4 begins with an attempt to rationalize JET as a policy initiative, which also necessitates some theoretical discussion of policy itself. The chapter then moves on to describe the programme’s diffuse organizational structure.

Chapter 5: Research

Chapter 5 features a complete account of my research strategy, i.e. the principles

governing my overall approach, data-collection and data-analysis.

Chapters 6-9: The ‘Main Study’

The four chapters of the ‘Main Study’ constitute an attempt to examine systematically the promotion of internationalization through the JET Programme.

Chapter 6: Goals

As a first step in this examination, I attempt to identify JET’s main ‘official goals’ by examining statements from the various national-level government institutions responsible for the programme’s creation and oversight. Against the background of the abovementioned *kokusaika* discussion, I discuss the implications of each goal identified in terms of what outcomes the Japanese government might be seeking to achieve.

Chapter 7: Operational Policy

The term ‘operational policy’ here refers to the various rules, protocols and guidelines underpinning JET’s operation. In examining these, I am attempting to penetrate the official discourse with the ultimate objective of ascertaining, to the extent possible, the Japanese government’s priorities and intentions. For reasons of space, the analysis is limited to just four policy areas—recruitment, training, allocation and utilization—and

mainly from the standpoint of the ALT.

Chapter 8: Implementation

Of course, even if a government establishes a certain policy infrastructure, one cannot automatically assume it possesses the organizational ability and/or political will to ensure that its policy is implemented in accordance with its wishes. In Chapter 8, therefore, the investigation moves from the level of intent to that of practice. As in the previous chapter, the discussion is limited to the areas of recruitment, training, allocation and utilization, though here with primary emphasis on first-hand accounts from JET participants.

Chapter 9: Perceived Effects

Given its sheer scale and longevity, not to mention the lack of a comprehensive research base, it would obviously be impossible to gauge the effects of the JET Programme in a precise, systematic way. Thus, the content of this chapter is largely based upon subjective data generated by (an albeit limited) number of individuals with first-hand experience working on JET at the so-called 'grassroots level'. In this regard, it is not my intention to gauge whether or to what extent JET has 'fulfilled' the official goals identified in Chapter 6. Rather, to the extent that any tangible effects can be perceived, my ultimate concern is to consider their implications for internationalization

in a Japanese context.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The Conclusion addresses the overarching research question—‘what kind of internationalization does the JET Programme promote?’—in light of the results and conclusions presented in previous chapters. It also considers the future prospects for the programme.

1.3 Research Purposes

1.3.1 Personal Motivations and Research Position

Whatever its focus, it seems logical to assume that a personal stake will enhance an individual’s engagement in any given project. As a long-term resident of Japan with a Japanese spouse and two bi-racial children, I feel that I have such a personal stake. Given this personal proximity to the research subject, it is almost inevitable that I will concur with sentiments expressed by some of the research participants. To be sure, there have been unpleasant occasions during my long residence in Japan where my foreign presence has met with a negative reaction. There is evidence to suggest, however, that many other foreigners, perhaps particularly non-Caucasians, routinely experience much worse discrimination than I have ever encountered. Indeed, a special

UN rapporteur has highlighted the discrimination suffered by ethnic Chinese and Koreans (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2006). It is worth acknowledging also that racial discrimination plagues all societies to some degree, even those with a reputation for ‘tolerance’ like Sweden (Integrationsverket 2006) and the Netherlands (Wertheim 2005). At the same time, there have been numerous positive developments in Japan vis-à-vis foreigners’ rights, e.g. the introduction of the permanent residence visa; the change of law enabling foreigners to purchase property; and moves in some municipalities to allow foreign residents to vote in local elections.

As someone who served as an AET (Assistant English Teacher) at a state High School in Tokyo from 1987 to 1989, I undoubtedly share experiences with some in the ALT community. Given these shared experiences, I felt motivated to learn how today’s JET participants perceived their work and their wider role in Japan’s ‘grassroots internationalization’ process. More generally, I sought to understand, to the extent possible, the day-to-day dynamics of ‘*kokusaika* in action’ two decades after the programme’s launch. Given the above, it would be impossible to approach this research project in a completely objective, dispassionate light. That said, I do not seek to evaluate JET or the wider *kokusaika* campaign according to my own idiosyncratic criteria. Rather, I seek to incorporate into the discussion a wide range of opinion, both foreign and Japanese, both ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’.

Although the reader will discern a vein of criticism in this study, perhaps aimed

principally at conservative elements within the Japanese political and educational establishment, such criticism is far from uncommon even in Japanese circles. Opposition to perceived ‘nationalist’ tendencies in education has come from a wide array of Japanese sources. These include ‘leftist’ intellectuals like Toshio Morita (1988) and Teruhisa Horio (1988); textbook reform campaigners like Saburō Ienaga (2001), and the All-Japan Teachers and Staff Union (*Zen-Nihon Kyōshokuin Kumiai* or *Zenkyō*). Significantly, numerous Japanese scholars, e.g. Kayoko Hashimoto (2000), Mayumi Itoh (2000), Ryuko Kubota (2002) and Yoshio Sugimoto (1999), have highlighted the influence of cultural nationalism in Japanese education. In this regard, I would align myself with such scholars.

1.3.2 Value of this Research Project

To be sure, *kokusaika* has provided the theme for countless publications over the past two decades. However, while most works have tended to focus on the general characteristics of internationalization policy, particularly in fields such as education (e.g. Ehara 1992; Lincicome 1993; Okubo 2003; Sato 2004), business (e.g. Yamazawa 1992; Ström & Mattsson 2006), foreign relations (e.g. Yasutomo 1986; Itoh 2000) and immigration (e.g. Kondō 2001; Sellek & Weiner 1992; Douglass & Roberts 2000), mine combines a discussion of policy with an area largely neglected in the literature, namely ‘grassroots internationalization’. In other words, there has been considerable emphasis upon the ‘macro’ (policy) level, but relatively little on the ‘micro’

(individual) level. Specifically, there has been comparatively little research into attitudes and experiences among those charged with the task of promoting internationalization on a day-to-day basis at the ‘human level’.

Although JET has been featured in numerous publications over the past two decades, there is still a relative shortage of scholarly books dedicated to the programme. Perhaps the most well-known and comprehensive work written to date is David L. McConnell’s 2000 book, entitled ‘Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program’. McConnell’s book is particularly insightful with regard to the behind-the-scenes political negotiations leading up to the programme’s establishment—an achievement aided significantly by his privileged access to key players within the Japanese bureaucracy. The bulk of the research for McConnell’s book was, however, carried out in the late 1980s, and even though he made subsequent research visits to Japan, much of his data is rooted in JET’s early years. Thus, many noteworthy subsequent developments are not addressed. Although I quote extensively from McConnell’s work and would accept many of his basic premises, I do not endorse all of his conclusions. Another commercially-available book-length account of the JET Programme is ‘Getting Both Feet Wet’, edited by two former participants, David Chandler and David Kootnikoff (2002). The book is a collection of short essays by various individuals, both Japanese and foreign, who have been involved in JET’s implementation. As such, it provides a varied if brief insight into the everyday concerns and considerations of ‘ordinary JET participants’.

Besides the above, there are numerous shorter works, especially in publications by JALT (the Japan Association for Language Teaching) and Japanese university journals, which address specific aspects of the JET Programme. Amongst this literature, there has been a particular interest in ‘team-teaching’ (e.g. Inoue 1992; Iwami 1992; Sturman 1992; Scholefield 1996; Sick 1996), while a few papers (e.g. Aldwinckle 1999; McConnell 2002; Porcaro 2006a) have sought to evaluate JET from a more holistic perspective. Some of the most up-to-date work is to be found online in various ‘e-journals’, newsletters and online articles. However, given the considerable variation in quality, my use of online sources has been selective. In this study, the vast majority of online documentary data has been derived from government websites and publications, as well as reports and newsletters from JET-related organizations. A number of e-journal articles have been referenced, as well as the electronic versions of newspaper and magazine articles that also exist in print form. While some have questioned the credibility of online publications (see Collins & Berge 1994), scholars are increasingly drawing upon such sources in the course of their research.

For all the literature that exists, there is nevertheless a gap in terms of presenting ‘grassroots’ perspectives on the internationalizing effects of JET Programme policy. This research project is intended to help fill this gap. Moreover, since this research project is geared toward recording ‘grassroots experiences’, it offers a forum for individuals whose voices might not otherwise be heard. In this connection, it is hoped

that this research might also help highlight any shortcomings whose eradication would enable the programme to become a more effective force for educational achievement and the promotion of societal internationalization in Japan. Finally, since it cannot be assumed that JET will remain in existence indefinitely, this study has a wider value as a chronicle of one potentially far-reaching government policy initiative launched at a pivotal stage in Japanese social and political history.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT—EXPLORING *KOKUSAIIKA* (1)

2.1 Chapter Outline

Over the next two chapters, I shall discuss the concept known as '*kokusaika*' from five different perspectives. Although the choice of perspectives is essentially subjective, it has nevertheless been influenced by the discourse surrounding the subject—specifically, the work of Japanologists and other scholars, media debate, and, of course, official discourse. I shall begin by sketching the historical/political background to the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign, with a view to highlighting some of the problems these policy-makers may have been hoping to rectify. Next, for a sense of what *kokusaika* might mean to the Japanese people themselves, I shall list some definitions of the term, as offered by Japanese dictionaries and scholars. I shall then attempt to identify government perspectives, insofar as such can be discerned, by focusing on official statements and concrete initiatives launched in the name of *kokusaika*.

For most of this chapter, however, I shall be examining *kokusaika* through the eyes of a Westerner. If this implies an unduly partisan approach, it should be remembered that Japan is often identified, despite its geographical location, as an outpost of Western liberal democracy, and emulation of 'the West' has shaped many Japanese policy initiatives. The fact that much of the subjective data in this study was provided by 'Westerners' perhaps further justifies the incorporation of such a perspective into this

analysis. Following a raft of publications during the 1980s extolling the virtues of ‘the Japanese model’ (e.g. Vogel 1980), recent work by Westerners has often been skeptical. Specifically, there has been a tendency to criticise Japanese policy-makers for their reluctant approach to structural reform.

The first of these two ‘Western perspectives’ considers whether the *kokusaika* campaign might have been devised as a means of fostering ethnic and cultural diversity within Japanese society. In this regard, it is probable, given the extent of immigration in their own countries, that many Westerners would regard the promotion of societal pluralism as a *sine qua non* of any organized national ‘internationalization campaign’. The second perspective considers to what extent ‘*kokusaika*’ might be regarded as synonymous with globalization. While, by definition, globalization is clearly not limited to ‘the West’, it is arguably a topic that, for many Westerners, would belong in any discussion of this nature, not least in view of the ‘Great Globalization Debate’ (Held et al 1999) that has been raging in Western countries for several years.

2.2 Why the Need for an Official *Kokusaika* Campaign?

Much has been written about Japan’s uneasy relationship with the outside world and the ambivalence of its citizens towards the presence of foreigners in their society. Several commentators (e.g. Khan 1998; Nakane 1970; Reischauer 1981, 1988) have drawn attention to Japan’s ‘island-country mentality’ [*shimaguni konjō*], a product, it is

sometimes claimed, of its geographical isolation. Some have even suggested that Japan's ethnic homogeneity stymies its citizens' ability to interact with foreigners. Those who look to history for explanations often point to the more than two-century-long period of national seclusion (approx. 1641-1853), known as *sakoku* [lit. 'locked country']. During the *sakoku* period, which was instituted by the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867), Japan virtually closed itself off to the outside world: foreigners were all but barred from entering the country; Christianity was outlawed; and Japanese people were prohibited on pain of death from travelling abroad. According to Chie Nakane (1990: 213), many characteristics of current Japanese society originated during the Tokugawa period. Thus, Mayumi Itoh speaks of a '*sakoku* mentality', which, she claims, still 'gravely affects the Japanese mind' (Itoh 2000:44).

Even though the '*sakoku*' policy ended in 1853 with the arrival of the American navy under the command of Commodore Matthew Perry, Japan's subsequent engagement with the outside world has often seemed somewhat reluctant. On several occasions, Japanese governments have been forced by foreign pressure (*gaiatsu*) into implementing radical shifts of policy. Itoh (2000) refers to the forced discontinuation of *sakoku* as Japan's 'first *kaikoku*' (literally, 'opening of the country'), and notes two other occasions where American pressure has been applied to similar effect. For Itoh, Japan's 'second *kaikoku*' was its demilitarization and democratization following defeat in World War II. Japan's 'third *kaikoku*', which began in the late 1980s, might be described as 'economic *kokusaika*', i.e. the liberalization and internationalization of the

Japanese market (Itoh 2000: 25-26), though T.J. Pempel (1999) has referred to this phenomenon as 'structural *gaiatsu*'. Viewed thus, the *kokusaika* campaign may be less a visionary, homegrown initiative than a capitulation to American pressure.

In the context of Japan's recent history, then, America has been the central foreign player. However, Japan's relationship with its neighbours, China and Korea, is also of great significance. Despite many cultural similarities with these countries, and despite convincing evidence that the origins of the Japanese Imperial family can be traced to the Korean peninsula (Hong 1994; Yamada 2002), some Japanese still apparently adhere to an illusion of ethnic and cultural uniqueness (Smith 1995; Dale 1986). Japan's political relationship with China and 'the two Koreas' has been acrimonious due, in large part, to the deeds of its military forces in those countries in the first half of the 20th Century. Political difficulties have been exacerbated by the subsequent refusal of Japanese governments to express adequate contrition or to provide compensation to war victims (see Tanaka (2002) on the so-called 'comfort women') and the insensitive comments and actions of some Japanese politicians (Kawano & Matsuno 2002). In recent years, both China and South Korea have also become embroiled in territorial disputes with Japan (Suganuma 2001).

To a considerable extent, Japan's prosperity has been built on its ability to manufacture consumer goods for export, yet other countries (notably China) are rapidly acquiring the technical capacity to threaten its traditional markets. Given its lack of natural

resources, Japan's dependence on foreign cooperation is considerable. In the absence of genuine regional friends, Japan has come to regard its relationship with America as paramount. In an East Asian economic and political order dominated increasingly by China, Japanese politicians have become concerned about the prospect of 'Japan passing' (McCormack 1998a), i.e. concerned that a comparatively less prosperous Japan may become less relevant to American interests and hence be 'passed over'. In this regard, the administration of Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi (2001-2006) was especially keen to demonstrate Japan's loyalty to America, dispatching support personnel to Iraq.

In the early 21st Century, Japan faces one serious domestic challenge with a potential international solution, namely its declining indigenous human resource pool. To illustrate: the United Nations projected in 2000 that Japan's population would decline from 127 million to around 105 million by 2050, meaning that Japan would need to accept 600,000 immigrants per year in order to maintain its present workforce (United Nations Secretariat, Population Division 2000). There is already a discernible labour shortage in key sectors like health care, agriculture and manufacturing. Immigration has increased slightly in recent years, suggesting some official appreciation of the need for foreign workers. However, the slow rate of increase may also suggest a belief that Japanese society is not yet prepared to countenance a policy of mass-immigration. Although the benefits of immigration are often questioned in many countries, including even those founded upon immigration (like the United States and Australia), Saul

Bernard Cohen (2003:300) maintains that, historically, Japan is ‘more hostile to immigration than any other industrialized nation’.

2.3 Defining *Kokusai*

Since *kokusaika* is a central theme in this study, not to mention an unfamiliar term for most non-Japanese, its definition must be clarified. However, as David Aldwinckle (1999) observes, relying on Japanese dictionaries to explain the meaning of *kokusaika* can be problematic, since many either do not list the term or provide only vague definitions. Of those that do include an entry, two dictionaries—*Shinsen Kokugo Jiten* (2000) and *Sanseidō Daijirin* (1998)—give identical definitions, namely: ‘*kokusaiteki na kibō ni hirogaru koto*’ (‘broadening to an international scale’); and both list the same example: ‘*keizai ga kokusaika suru*’ (‘to internationalize the economy’). Kōdansha’s *Nihongo Daijiten* (1995) lists *kokusaika* only as one example under the general heading of ‘*kokusai*’ (‘international’). The rather vague definition given here is: ‘*sekai kakoku ni kansuru koto*’ (‘things concerning the countries of the world’). In *Shōgakukan’s Daijisen* (1998), *kokusaika* is defined both as ‘*kokusaiteki na kibō ni hirogaru koto*’ (‘broadening to an international scale’) and ‘*kokusaiteki shiya wo mochi sono kanten ni tatte kōdō suru koto*’ (‘having an international outlook and behaving accordingly’). Both the 1995 and 2000 editions of *Nihongo Kokugo Daijiten* list two definitions for *kokusaika*, namely: ‘*kokusaiteki na mono ni naru koto*’ (‘to become international’) and ‘*sekai ni tsūyō suru yō ni naru koto*’ (‘becoming accepted by the rest of the world’).

Japanese academics have offered their own varying definitions of *kokusaika*. Tōru Yano addresses the question of definition directly in his book, ‘*Kokusaika no Imi*’ (‘The Meaning of *Kokusaika*’). Yano (1986:160) defines *kokusaika* as: ‘making an effort to place a nation with its own identity in a framework of international compatibility with the least friction’ (*kokusaika wa kōyu no aidentiti o motta ikkokumin naishi ichiminzoku wo motto mo masatsu no sukunai katachi de kokusaiteki ni teii saseru tame no doryoku*). For Kazuo Kurimoto (1985:8), *kokusaika* is about establishing contact between ‘the Japanese system’ (‘*nihon no shistemu*’) and ‘other systems’ (‘*ta no shistemu*’); understanding the differences between those systems; and ensuring that the benefits of mutual contact are enjoyed by both sides. Exactly what those ‘systems’ are, however, Kurimoto fails to explain. According to Harumi Befu (1983: 232), the process Japanese call internationalization (*kokusaika*) is in fact ‘not one but numerous and varied’. Thus, in his 1987 book, ‘*Ideorogii toshite no Nippon Bunkaron*’ (‘Theories on Japanese Culture as an Ideology’), Befu lists fifteen ways in which the concept of *kokusaika* might be perceived. These are:

- 1) Assimilating Western culture (*seiyō bunka no sesshu*)
- 2) Accepting foreigners (*gaikokujin no ukeire*)
- 3) Introducing foreign capital (*gaishi no dōnyū*)
- 4) Liberalising trade policy (*bōeki seisaku no jiyūka*)
- 5) Increasing Japanese overseas foreign investment (*Nippon no kaigai tōshi no zōka*)
- 6) Improving ability in foreign languages (*gaikokugo nōryoku no kōjō*)
- 7) Interacting with foreigners (*gaikokujin to no kōsai*)
- 8) Promoting understanding of foreign cultures (*ibunka rikai no sokushin*)
- 9) Permitting foreigners to become naturalized Japanese citizens (*kika*)

- 10) Spreading Japanese language education for foreigners (*nihongo kyōiku no fukyū*)
- 11) Promoting understanding of Japanese culture (*Nihon bunka rikai no sokushin*)
- 12) Contributing to world peace (*sekai chitsujo e no kōken*)
- 13) Clarifying differences [between Japanese and others] (*higa no sai no senmeika*)
- 14) Asserting cultural independence (*bunkateki jiritsusei no shuchō*)
- 15) Pursuing the national interest (*kokueki no tsuikyū*)

To judge from the above, *kokusaika* lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations. Precisely how ‘ordinary Japanese’ might interpret *kokusaika* is thus impossible to ascertain. A few Japan-based teachers (e.g. Dougill 1992; Yoneoka 2000; Hadley 2002) have conducted surveys to gauge student attitudes to the concept, though these have been small-scale and limited to students of English. I should acknowledge before proceeding any further that use of the term ‘*kokusaika*’ has become far less common than in its 1980s/1990s heyday; in fact, it might even be regarded as ‘*passé*’. Ryuko Kubota (2002), for instance, sees *kokusaika* as having been replaced by ‘globalization’ in the 1990s, while Mayumi Itoh (2000) has used it as a synonym for globalization. Against this, Brian McVeigh (2004:142) maintains that ‘*kokusaika* is probably the most popular word in modern Japanese’.

Despite the more recent emphasis on globalization, an appraisal of *kokusaika* arguably remains as relevant today as in the mid-1980s. Indeed, the concept is still being appraised in scholarly works, like that by Roger Goodman (2007). Moreover, as will be argued throughout this study, Japan has yet to dismantle some of its institutional and psychological barriers against foreigners and the outside world. Within Japan,

policy-makers and advisors (e.g. Prime Minister's Commission 2000) continue to advocate greater openness and the cultivation of a more international mentality, while ant-foreigner discrimination continues to attract international criticism (see United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2006). In terms of changing societal attitudes towards foreigners at least, the process of *kokusaika* might be considered 'unfinished business'.

By now, the reader will already have detected a diversity of opinions as regards the meaning of '*kokusaika*' and, thus, the implications for Japanese society of the government-sponsored '*kokusaika* campaign'. Against this background, it is understandable that Mark Lincicome (1993:123) should have described *kokusaika* as a highly contested 'discursive space', where the players (whether intellectuals, politicians, educators, administrators or students) debate issues of meaning and goals often from deeply entrenched ideological positions.

2.4 *Kokusai*—Some Official Words and Deeds

2.4.1 The Language of *Kokusai*

The genesis of *kokusaika* as an official policy can probably be traced back to February 1984, when the then Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, declared his intention to transform Japan into an 'international nation' (*kokusai kokka*). Nakasone's rationale

was twofold: firstly, that Japan's peace and prosperity is indivisible from that of the whole world; secondly, a country of Japan's rising status must shoulder international responsibilities (Itoh 2000:6).

Declarations like Nakasone's have been heard many times down the years. Back in the Heian period (794-1192) the population was exhorted, through the slogan *wakon kansai*, to embrace Chinese know-how, though without surrendering their quintessential Japanese spirit. In the Meiji period (1868-1912), leaders coined a series of modernization slogans, like *wakon yōsai* ('Japanese spirit, Western knowledge')—a contemporary variant of the above-mentioned *wakon kansai*; *datsua nyuō* ('out of Asia, into the West'); *fukoku kyōhei* ('wealthy nation, strong military'); and *bunmei kaika* ('civilization and enlightenment'). The postwar period has spawned a string of new '—ization' buzzwords, all of which suggest a desire to make Japan more like the West, e.g. *minshuka* (democratization) in the 1950s, *kindaika* (modernization) in the 1960s, and, of course, *kokusaika*.

Japanese politics is often renowned for its factionalism (*habatsu-shugi*) (Browne & Kim 2003; Hayes 2004). Thus, it is probably unrealistic to expect all government agencies to speak with one voice on any issue; much less one as multifarious as *kokusaika*. Nevertheless, some insight into 'official' attitudes and positions can be gained from policy documents, press releases and government-run websites. Various government bodies have referred to 'internationalization' (and, more recently,

‘globalization’) in policy statements. As Robert Aspinall (2000a:5) has pointed out, such statements are almost invariably prefaced by a description of the ‘challenging’ international environment in which Japan finds itself. A typical example is the following, contained in the Ministry of Justice’s ‘Basic Plan for Immigration Control’:

The Japanese society is now witnessing a rapid progress in internationalization and globalization brought about by the progress of telecommunications, transportation, and the liberalization of economic systems. Japan should seek prosperity and stability of people's livelihood in a society more open to the international community. It is therefore necessary for Japan not only to create an environment for smooth exchanges of personnel but also to conduct smooth and proper immigration control to meet the need for flexible use of manpower in response, in particular, to changes in industrial structure and corporate behavior. (Ministry of Justice 2000)

The above is one of many ministerial statements portraying internationalization as a ‘challenge’. Interestingly, as Lincicome (1993:124) points out, one of the major initiatives of the *kokusaika* era, the National Council on Educational Reform (*Rinkyōshin*), was established in part to consider how Japan should ‘cope with’ internationalization (*kokusaika e no taiō*). Viewed thus, the government’s decision to launch the *kokusaika* campaign would appear more reactive than proactive.

2.4.2 Edifices of *Kokusaika*

Many might regard ‘internationalization’ as an essentially psychological construct, involving the capacity of individual citizens to empathise with (or at least ‘tolerate’)

individuals of a different ethnic/cultural background. Despite this, Japanese politicians appear to have devoted much of their effort and resources to building ‘edifices of internationalization’, i.e. high-profile projects and initiatives which advertise Japan’s commitment to internationalization. In this regard, Itoh (2000) has described Japan’s internationalization process as ‘nationalistic and superficial’, labeling it ‘outward *kokusaika*’. She contrasts this with ‘inward *kokusaika*’, which, she argues, would entail ‘the assimilation of the Japanese mind to foreign values’ (Itoh 2000:5). For clarification, the term ‘inward *kokusaika*’ (as a translation of Japanese expression ‘*uchinaru kokusaika*’) has been used by Chris Burgess (2004) to refer specifically to local support programmes designed to create a ‘liveable’ (*sumiyasui*) environment for non-Japanese residents.

During the tenure of Prime Minister Nakasone (November 1982-November 1987), several high-profile ‘*kokusaika* initiatives’ were launched. These included the Ministry of Education’s 1983 ‘Plan to Accept 100,000 Foreign Students’ (Wan 2006) and the main focus of this study, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which began in 1987. Even in the early 21st Century, government ministries continue to devise ‘strategies’ for the attainment of internationalization. As examples, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) unveiled in 2002 both an ‘Internationalization Strategy of Science and Technology Activities’ and a ‘Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities’ (see Section 6.4.5).

Japan's local authorities have long been regarded as key players in Japan's internationalization process. In 1988, the government established the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) with the aim of promoting of 'local level internationalization' (*chiiki reberu no kokusaika*). CLAIR administers various international exchange programmes (the largest being JET), 'international cooperation projects' and maintains several offices overseas (see Section 4.4.1). Local government authorities have displayed their commitment to internationalization in various ways. Many have chosen to establish 'sister-city affiliations' with communities overseas (CLAIR 2003a): according to Toshihiro Menju (2003), 930 local authorities had established more than 1400 overseas affiliations, as of April 2001. International conferences and exhibitions have also proved popular, though one local authority even decided to launch its own annual international snowball-throwing contest in 1989 (Moffett 2004:1). Perhaps the most reliable way of assessing the true priorities of local governments, however, is to consider how they have allocated funds for internationalization-related activities. According to official statistics from fiscal year 2000, local governments spent, collectively, ¥104.4 billion in the following manner:

- ¥42 billion was devoted to advancing international understanding on the part of local residents by means of the JET Programme, cultural events and seminars for local residents, and grants given to grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- ¥33.7 billion was allocated for international exchange programmes including overseas trips arranged by local authorities for their citizens, and arrangements for visitors from abroad.
- ¥10.5 billion was devoted to such activities as foreign residents' programmes, scholarships for foreign students, and the promotion of international tourism.
- ¥7.4 billion was spent on international cooperation-related activities, such as hosting overseas trainees and sending professionals to developing countries.

- ¥10.8 billion was set aside for the maintenance of offices overseas and overseas study tours for Japanese local government officials.

(Source: Menju 2003: 6-7)

What is notable here is the comparative lack of funding earmarked for the needs of foreign residents. Indeed, on the basis of the above, local authorities appear more concerned about fostering ties with overseas counterparts than catering for the foreigners already living in their midst. Against the above, it should be pointed out that certain local authorities have adopted more inclusive policies vis-à-vis their foreign residents. For instance, the cities of Kawasaki and Hamamatsu have conducted needs analysis surveys aimed at providing better social services for resident foreigners (Tegtmeyer Pak 1995). The city of Maihara has allowed foreigners holding a permanent residence permit to vote in a local referendum (Japan Times 2002). That said, Takeyuki Tsuda (2006:275) claims that many migrant workers still reside in cities that offer 'virtually no rights and services specifically for foreign residents'.

2.5 Perspective 1: *Kokusaika* as the Fostering of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

2.5.1 Rationale for this Perspective

In attempting to equate *kokusaika* with the promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity, I am undoubtedly bringing on board some personal baggage. As a resident foreigner with a Japanese spouse and bi-racial children, I have a vested interest in the development of

a more ‘inclusive’, pluralistic Japan. My aim in this section, then, is to ascertain to what extent the ‘*kokusaika* campaign’ might be interpreted as an attempt to transform Japan into such a society.

Some commentators have viewed contemporary Japan as a country in crisis, at least in an economic sense. Since the bursting of its economic bubble, Japan’s economy has been undermined by scandal (see Williams 1994), mismanagement (Lincoln 2001) and a consequent lack of investor confidence (for a comprehensive discussion of Japanese macroeconomic problems, see Blomström, Gagnes and La Croix 2001). To this list, one could add the seemingly inexorable rise of China as an economic rival (Abe & Lee 2001). Arguably, however, Japan’s most serious long-term economic challenge is its so-called ‘demographic time-bomb’—the combination of a rapidly ageing society and a record-low birthrate (see Farquee & Mühlisen 2003). For at least two decades, Japanese policy-makers have been aware of this challenge, yet the idea of inviting foreign workers was, until relatively recently, conspicuously absent from the political agenda. Rather, according to Atsushi Kondō (2001), the policy had long been to *discourage* rather than *encourage* immigration.

While the number of immigrants is not the only conceivable yardstick for measuring a country’s ‘level of internationalization’, most Western societies—whether by design or as a corollary of history—have experienced large influxes of foreigners, especially since the 1970s. In France, Germany, the UK and several smaller European countries,

immigrants and their children now comprise 5%-10% of the population. Even in countries formerly considered sources of emigrants (like Italy and Spain), immigration has altered significantly the ethnic composition of society, particularly in larger cities.

Although Japan's non-indigenous population has grown steadily over the past two decades (Ministry of Justice 2006a), it remains smaller in percentage terms than in most other industrialized countries (see OECD 2004). In the event that Japanese authorities did decide to sanction large-scale immigration, they would be presented with similar dilemmas to those faced by European governments in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance: should these immigrants be allowed to reside in Japan permanently and be granted citizenship? From which countries should they be drawn? Should they enjoy the same legal rights as the indigenous population? Should they be granted special educational support (e.g. gratis Japanese language- and/or mother-tongue education)? What measures should be introduced to promote tolerance? While these questions may one day be addressed, they remain for the moment purely rhetorical, since immigrants constitute but a fraction of the population and mass-immigration remains off the national agenda. In assessing Japan's longer-term policy options, however, it is worth considering how some Western countries have tackled the question of societal diversity.

2.5.2 Approaches of National Governments to Societal Diversity

National governments have adopted varying stances on the question of societal diversity. Some have regarded ethnic pluralism as a desirable objective, while others have viewed it in more problematic terms. While I lack the space to do justice to this complex and often polemical issue, I shall briefly discuss two concepts generally considered to be at opposite ends of the policy spectrum, namely 'multiculturalism' and 'assimilationism'.

Multiculturalism

It would be difficult to discuss the topic of societal diversity without mentioning multiculturalism, which emerged as one of the most widely discussed concepts in late-20th century Western social discourse. However, as Steven Vertovec explains, the term 'multiculturalism' can be problematic due to its myriad of definitions and interpretations:

Multiculturalism may refer to a demographic description, a broad political ideology, a set of specific public policies, a goal of institutional restructuring, a mode of resourcing cultural expression, a general moral challenge, a set of new political struggles, and as a kind of feature of postmodernism. (Vertovec 2001:3)

Opinions clearly differ as regards the meaning and implications of multiculturalism. For C.W. Watson (2000:1-2), multiculturalism exists where 'people of different

cultures cohabit any bounded geographical location, however small', while John Derbyshire (2001) differentiates between 'multiculturalism' and 'multiracialism'; the fundamental distinction being that of culture (including religion and customs) versus ethnicity. The relative merits and demerits of multiculturalism have been debated vigorously, both at the popular and official level, perhaps especially in once largely homogeneous developed countries that have experienced large-scale immigration. The debate often centres on the issue of social equality for ethnic minorities within the host country (see Kymlicka 1995, 1998; Castles 2000). For Ellie Vasta (2007:734), multiculturalism is based on two key principles. Firstly, 'social equality and participation'; in other words, the necessity for immigrant participation in 'all societal institutions'. Secondly, 'cultural recognition', i.e. the right of immigrants 'to pursue their own religion and languages and to establish communities'.

Some countries, like Canada and Sweden, have enshrined their commitment to multiculturalism in official policy. Others, like the UK, have experienced what Stuart Hall (2000) has referred to as 'multicultural drift', i.e. an unplanned, gradual process of societal pluralism. In light of such differing approaches, Ralph Grillo (2001) makes a distinction between 'weak' and 'strong' multiculturalism. In the former, cultural diversity is recognized in the private sphere, while a high degree of assimilation is still expected in the public sphere, e.g. in work and educational environments. By contrast, 'strong multiculturalism' is characterised by an institutional recognition of cultural difference also in the public sphere, and includes the right of political representation.



Further along this abstract continuum would be what John Rex (1996:2) refers to as ‘egalitarian multiculturalism’, i.e. cultural diversity coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of tolerance and official protection from discrimination and racism. A possible example here is Sweden, whose government guarantees all immigrants the right to receive both free Swedish lessons and home language tuition for their children, and grants even non-citizens the right to vote in local elections.

Assimilationism

A contrary approach is what is sometimes referred to as ‘assimilationism’. In essence, an assimilationist policy requires that immigrants orient themselves primarily towards the host country by, as Paxton and Mughan (2006: 550) put it, adopting ‘the cultural norms and lifestyle of their new homeland’. As with multiculturalism, the concept of assimilationism is a highly contested one, perhaps particularly in terms of its implications for change in the host society. According to Peter Kivisto (2005:21), some theorists (perhaps particularly non-Americans) ‘tend to either avoid the word assimilation or are critical of it’. Even Richard Alba and Victor Nee (1997:864), who have developed their own theory of ‘new assimilationism’, have declared themselves ‘agnostic about whether the changes wrought by assimilationism are one-sided or more mutual’.

In extreme cases, the phenomenon under discussion here can refer to a process of

complete absorption through policies and programmes of forced assimilation (Vasta 2007:734) and be based upon an assumption of ethnic homogeneity. However, even though the United States is arguably the ethnically heterogeneous society *par excellence*, its governments have pursued an ‘assimilationist’ course to immigrant settlement (see Alba & Nee 2003; Paxton & Mughan 2006; Segal 2002). To become a naturalized American, one must pass a citizenship test, which includes an English ability component. Moreover, some states with large non-English speaking populations (like California and Arizona) have passed ‘English only’ resolutions, prohibiting mother-tongue-medium education in most schools (Crawford 2000). While, on this basis, Derbyshire (2001) would regard America as a *monocultural* society, Grillo (2001) might conclude that, at least in a *de facto* sense, it is ‘weakly *multicultural*’, since immigrants still enjoy freedom of lifestyle in the private sphere. According to John Fonte (2001), however, many immigrants and their children now identify more strongly with their ‘ethnic identity’ than their ‘American identity’, while a sizeable minority feels alienated from, and therefore resentful of, ‘mainstream society’. Some, like Miller (1998), claim that ‘multiculturalism’ has so undermined American values that it threatens social cohesion. Similar claims have become common in the public discourse in diverse societies like Australia (Hage 2003) and Western Europe, leading to the introduction of more assimilationist policies in countries once renowned for their multiculturalist ideals, e.g. the Netherlands (Penninx 2007; Vasta 2007) and Denmark (McCarthy 2005).

2.5.3 The Japanese Approach to Societal Diversity

Although, in recent times, there has been little evidence of a consistent long-term strategy vis-à-vis the settlement of immigrants, Japan's traditional approach to societal diversity has been much more assimilationist than multiculturalist. It is worth remembering that Japan is home to two indigenous ethnic minorities—the *Ainu* (the indigenous inhabitants of Hokkaidō and northern Honshū) and the inhabitants of the Ryūkyū Islands—although both have been assimilated into mainstream Yamato Japanese society (De Vos & Wetherall 1974; Mashiko 1998; Rabson 1999). There is also a long-standing 'foreign' resident community, many of whom were born in Japan (often referred to as '*zainichi gaikokujin*'). Within the *zainichi* community, the largest group is of Korean origin, a vestige of Japan's occupation of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945. In 1952, when America ended its military occupation of Japan, the Japanese government enacted a new 'Immigration Control Law', which stripped these Koreans (and the relatively few Taiwanese and mainland Chinese who had decided to remain) of their Japanese citizenship. As 'foreign residents', these people were denied voting rights; and required to register with the local authorities, carry ID cards and submit fingerprints. To regain their former status, many chose to become naturalized Japanese citizens, changed their names and subsumed their original ethnic identity beneath a Japanese one. The remainder, however, continued to live in Japan as 'resident aliens', having children who, even today, are classified as 'foreigners' (see Ryang 2000).

While the concept of ‘foreigner as stakeholder’ has been slow to emerge in Japanese society, there is now a degree of official acceptance that some foreigners do aspire to long-term residency. Recent governments have made it easier for such individuals to obtain permanent residence visas, though it would still be inaccurate to claim that immigration is encouraged.

2.5.4 Immigration in Postwar Japan

Throughout the postwar economic boom of the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s, western European governments responded to an increasing labour demand by recruiting workers from overseas. In some cases, these migrant workers were allowed to settle permanently in their host countries and granted citizenship. Japan enjoyed a similar economic expansion over the same period, yet its government did nothing to encourage immigration. Rather, according to Kondō (2001), its policies were geared more towards controlling and monitoring foreigners than enabling them to adapt to life in Japanese society. As Chikako Kashiwazaki (2002) somewhat euphemistically puts it: ‘the concept of foreign residents as members of society was quite weak’.

The Japanese economic boom of the 1980s generated a sizeable number of ‘illegal aliens’, who typically had exceeded their permitted period of stay. These were mainly Asians (often Bangladeshis and Iranians, who did not require tourist visas), prepared to

do work shunned by Japanese, i.e. the so-called ‘3K jobs’: *kiken* (dangerous), *kitsui* (tough) and *kitanai* (dirty) jobs (Howell 2004:112). In recognition of the labour shortage, the Ministry of Justice (*Hōmushō*) began issuing employment visas to some foreign workers. Priority was given here to second- and third-generation *Nikkeijin*, i.e. members of the Japanese diaspora, mainly from Brazil and Peru. In 1990, the Immigration Control Law was revised, enabling such people to reside in Japan without restriction on employment. According to Takeyuki Tsuda, Japanese Brazilians are the ‘most ethnically preferred of all foreign workers because Japanese employers assume, in accordance with the Japanese ethnic that correlates culture with race, that *nikkeijin* are culturally similar to the Japanese because of their shared descent, unlike all other foreign workers’ (Tsuda 2004:106). The subsequent influx of *Nikkeijin* quickly changed the complexion of many local communities, especially in the *Chūbu* region of central Honshū. To offer an example: in Ōgaki, my current domicile, the Brazilian population rose from 3 in 1989 to 4,531 in 2006 (Source: Ōgaki Kokusai Kōryū Kyōkai). By the end of 2004, the number of Brazilian and Peruvian residents nationwide had risen to 286,557 and 55,750, respectively (Ministry of Justice 2005a).

In 2000, the Immigration Bureau announced a new ‘Basic Plan for Immigration Control’, which implied some acceptance of the need for foreign manpower. Although the plan stopped short of sanctioning the wholesale acceptance of foreign labourers, it did call for the expansion of internship programmes and also acknowledged labour shortages in the welfare sector. Meanwhile, some restrictions on resident foreigners

have been relaxed. Most notably, in 2000, the government abolished the regulation requiring foreign residents to submit fingerprints when registering with the local authorities, although fingerprinting of foreigners, including even most permanent residents, was introduced at passport control points in late 2007, as part of a US-style ‘homeland security’ drive (Rafferty 2007).

If *kokusaika* is equated with ethnic diversity, Japan does not compare favourably with most other industrialized countries. In 1999, foreigners comprised just 1.2% of the population (OECD 2001), rising slightly to 1.3% by late 2000 (Ministry of Justice 2001a), and to around 1.5% by 2004 (OECD 2004). Despite this, a blue-ribbon commission established in 2000 by then Prime Minister, Keizō Ōbuchi, was sanguine about Japan’s future ability to assimilate foreigners. The Commission recommended the gradual implementation of an immigration policy that would encourage foreigners to want to live and work in Japan. To this end, it advocated the establishment of an ‘explicit immigration and permanent-residence system’, with preferential treatment for foreign students and individuals capable of making a ‘positive contribution’ to Japanese society (Prime Minister’s Commission 2000, Chapter 1:13). Although Mr. Ōbuchi’s death in May 2000 led to the shelving of many of the committee’s recommendations, the potential contribution of foreign labour was again acknowledged in a 2006 immigration policy proposal (Ministry of Justice 2006b). Notably, the proposal advocated a shift of emphasis from the importation of mainly lowly-skilled *Nikkeijin* labourers to more highly-qualified professionals, and even acknowledged a need to

‘provide the basis for the livelihood of foreigners’ (*gaikokujin no seikatsu kibon no seibi*). On the other hand, even this comparatively innovative policy proposal recommended that foreigners should never be allowed to constitute more than 3% of Japan’s population.

Japan’s asylum policy has been the object of especially strong criticism. In the 20-year period from 1982 and 2001, Japan accepted a mere 265 refugees. For a sense of perspective, Sweden granted 44,875 residence permits to refugees in 1994 alone (Migrationsverket 2006). In some years (1991, 1994, 1996 and 1997), Japan granted asylum to a total of one (1) refugee per year (Ministry of Justice 2005b). Evidently, however, the Ministry of Justice discerned no contradiction between statistics like the above and its issuance of the following statement in 2001:

As a member of international society, it is not appropriate for Japan to be simply concerned with its own prosperity but should strive for global cooperation and harmony. Therefore, Japan is a member of The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol (Refugee Convention). (Ministry of Justice 2001b)

2.5.5 Popular Attitudes toward Societal Diversity in Japan

Despite concerns about Japan’s looming demographic crisis, there are suggestions that ‘ordinary Japanese’ remain unconvinced of the benefits of immigration. In one poll referenced by Howard French (2000), about 80 percent of respondents opposed admitting more foreigners; while in another, conducted by a government agency, only

just over half (54%) of the 3000 Japanese citizens polled felt that foreigners should enjoy ‘the same human rights’ as Japanese (Karthaus 2003). Against this, 63% of those surveyed in a nationwide telephone poll by the Mainichi newspaper were in favour of allowing unskilled foreign labourers into Japan (Mainichi Shimbun 2007). Of course, one should acknowledge that opinion polls do not always conform to the standards expected in social science research. Objections are frequently raised as regards the way questions are framed. Moreover, as Pierre Bourdieu (1979) has argued, even individuals without clearly defined positions on a given issue will offer an opinion in response to a poll question. Viewed thus, opinion polls may be more about constructing public opinion than measuring it.

Although overt racially-motivated attacks on foreigners are still rare (certainly by comparison with countries like Russia, Germany and the UK), much has been written about the antipathy within Japanese society towards foreigners. According to Fukuoka & Tsujiyama (1992), even Japanese-born, fluent Japanese-speaking Koreans routinely face discrimination in terms of housing, education, employment and marriage (see also Hayes 2004). While general attitudes are impossible to gauge accurately among a population of some 127 million, Mayumi Itoh (2000:44) claims that the Japanese public favours neither the integration of foreigners into their society nor a more active international role for their country. Others are convinced that most Japanese lack any appreciation for the contribution foreigners are making to their society, e.g. as tax-payers or providers of necessary services. Bruce Lambert (2002:5) puts it this way:

‘In Japan today too many people believe immigrants will take more than they give’.

Roger Pulvers (2000) believes the Japanese media ‘generally ignore the good stories of migration, emphasizing hardship and social disarray’, while Yoshimi Nagamine (2002) notes a tendency for sensationalist reporting on immigrants. In their study of attitudes towards Russians in Japan, Tsuneo Akaha & Anna Vassilieva (2005) found that the Japanese mass media had contributed to the formation and reinforcement of negative perceptions. Of course, sensationalist news stories about the purported delinquency of immigrants are hardly peculiar to Japan; any regular reader of certain British tabloid newspapers would be well familiar with the discourse.

While media influence may have played a part, some have suggested more deep-rooted reasons why many ordinary Japanese remain averse to the prospect of increased societal diversity. For instance, Mayumi Itoh (2000) blames the long-standing insular Japanese mindset, which she refers to as ‘the *sakoku* mentality’. In this connection, other academics (e.g. Lebra 1976; Hendry 1986) have described the distinction Japanese people make between ‘*uchi*’ (that which is inside) and ‘*soto*’ (that which is outside). ‘*Uchi*’ can be translated into English in one of two ways: ‘home’ or ‘inside’. The British anthropologist, Joy Hendry (1986), explains how, for the Japanese, ‘*uchi*’ represents security, cleanliness and safety, while ‘*soto*’ is associated with the unknown, the dangerous, and the unclean (see also Douglas (1966) on ‘external boundaries’). This *uchi-soto* dichotomy extends also to social relations, where one encounters the dichotomy of *uchi mono* (literally, ‘inside people’—family, community and company)

and ‘*soto* (or *yoso*) *mono*’ (‘outside people’—anyone else). Thus, as Harry Wray (1996) explains, anyone who is not a member of one’s own group (whether class, club, or homeroom; faculty department; corporation or nation) is automatically excluded. According to Wray (1996:7), exclusivity ‘prevails more in Japan than in most nations’; as such, it represents an obvious impediment to diversity. Kosaku Yoshino (1992) has described a particularly extreme manifestation of this exclusivity in the doctrine of *junketsu-shugi* (literally, pure-blood-ism), which is espoused by some radical nationalists. According to Yoshino (1992:27), the concept of ‘Japanese blood’ ‘generates, and is generated by, an image that ‘we’ are members of the extended family that has perpetuated its lineage’. Indeed, Japan itself has been referred to as a ‘family state’ (*kazoku kokka*) (Itō 1982).

2.5.6 Does *Kokusaika* Mean the Fostering of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity?

Despite a gradual rise in the non-Japanese population and some improvement in foreigners’ rights over the past two decades, there is still a tendency to regard foreigners as a temporary presence, like the ‘*Gastarbeiter*’ associated with the postwar German economic miracle (see Brubaker 1992), rather than stakeholders in Japanese society. As Debito Arudou (2001) explains, most ‘foreigner jobs’ are not conducive to a long stay in Japan. Rather, most employers, whether in the public or the private sector, offer foreigners only contract employment with no prospect of promotion or welfare cover.

That some degree of discrimination occurs in any society where members of an indigenous majority come into contact with people of a different ethnic background is axiomatic. In the Japanese case, however, some would maintain that discrimination is enshrined in government policy. Some critics have pointed to the absence from the Japanese statute books of a national anti-racial discrimination law (Yamanaka 2003:249) and the fact that discrimination on grounds of race/ethnicity is not specified as an offence punishable by law. Moreover, even though Japan signed the 1969 ‘International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination’ (ICERD) in 1996, there has been, as Tang, Lam & Lam (2003:294) explain, ‘no domestic incorporation’ of this Convention. On the other hand, Georgina Stevens (2004:378) claims that most Japanese constitutional scholars accept that international, self-executing treaties and covenants have force of domestic law without any need for specific domestic legislation. In fact, in one much-publicised case, ICERD was invoked to award \$15,000 damages to a Brazilian woman who had been ejected from a jewellery store purely because of her nationality (Yamanaka 2004:84). Whatever the legal/constitutional ambiguities, foreigners, including long-term residents, do remain subject to restrictions not pertaining to Japanese nationals, e.g. only they are required to carry identification (the so-called ‘alien registration cards’, *gaikokujin tōroku shōmeisho*) at all times and only they are fingerprinted and photographed at ports and airports as a condition of entry/re-entry to Japan.

While the true extent of institutional discrimination and anti-foreigner sentiment within Japanese society are probably unquantifiable, there does not appear to be much justification, on the basis of the above, for regarding *kokusaika* as a scheme to foster ethnic and cultural diversity.

2.6 Perspective 2: *Kokusaika* as Globalization

2.6.1 Rationale for this Perspective

In considering this perspective, I am deviating from one of my overall goals, namely that of exploring possible rationales for the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign. Instead, my aim here is to ascertain whether *kokusaika* may be considered synonymous with the more widely-discussed concept of ‘globalization’ (*‘gurōbaruka’* or *‘gurōbarizēshon’*).

It should be acknowledged that not everyone does discern a difference between *kokusaika* and globalization. Koichi Iwabuchi (1994), for instance, simply regards *kokusaika* as ‘a Japanese version of the discourse of globalization’, while Mayumi Itoh (2000) applies the term ‘*kokusaika*’ throughout her book as a general synonym for ‘globalization’. For Ryuhei Hatsuse (2005), ‘globalization’ is a more accurate translation of the *kokusaika* phenomenon than is ‘internationalization’. The temptation to conflate the two is understandable, given the ubiquity of both as ‘buzzwords’ with implications for the internationalization of Japanese society and Japan’s relations with

the outside world. Moreover, the fact that some Japanese scholars conflate the two terms does suggest some semantic overlap.

2.6.2 When Did Globalization Begin?

In seeking to ascertain whether a chronological distinction can be made between *kokusaika* and globalization, it is useful to consider the question ‘When did globalization begin?’ Some would argue that a globalization of sorts began with the first human migrations. According to Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills (1993:3), ‘the existence of the same world system in which we live stretches back more than 5000 years’. Others have attached epoch-making significance to the first circumnavigation of the globe (Mazlish 1993); the intercontinental forays of European explorers in the late 15th Century (see Tracy 1990); and the expansion of European capitalism in the 16th Century (Wallerstein 1974). Kevin O’Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson (2002:1), applying global commerce as their sole criterion, regard globalization as a phenomenon of the early 19th Century, arguing that the world economy was ‘fragmented and completely de-globalized’ before this time.

Those who perceive globalization as a contemporary phenomenon still tend to view commerce as a key characteristic, if not always the sole definitive one. Almost invariably, emphasis is placed upon the information/telecommunications revolution. Thus, Manuel Castells (1996:92) defines a ‘global economy’ as one ‘with the capacity

to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale'. For academics like Roland Robertson (1992) and David Harvey (1989), globalization amounts to a compression of time and space, while for David Held et al (1999:2), it represents 'a widening, deepening and speeding up of interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual'.

Naturally, any individual's assessment as to when globalization began will depend on what criterion/criteria they use to define the paradigm shift. From a personal perspective, I would concur with Thomas Friedman (2000), who sees the defining characteristics of globalization as America's victory in the Cold War, the subsequent breakdown of the bipolar geopolitical structure, and the almost universal espousal of free-market principles. On this basis, globalization begins in the 1990s. To the above, one could naturally add the above-mentioned Internet-driven telecommunications revolution, which also is essentially a product of the 1990s. The tendency to view 'globalization' as a '90s' phenomenon is somewhat common. As Malcolm Waters (1995:1) puts it: 'just as postmodernism was *the* concept of the 1980s, globalization may be *the* concept of the 1990s'. Although Moisés Naím (2004) perceives globalization as a gradual, historical process, he notes the emergence of a 'new type of globalization' in the early 1990s, which 'greatly expanded the options available to individuals while narrowing the room for maneuvering available to governments' (Naím 2004: 84).

By contrast, the Japanese concept of *kokusaika* was unquestionably a creation of the 1980s, arguably beginning with Nakasone's 1984 '*kokusai kokka Nihon*' speech, and a corollary of Japanese economic success. Thus, those who equate '*kokusaika*' with '*gurōbaruka*' or '*gurōbarizēshon*' appear to be a minority, with most commentators detecting a shift from the former to the latter, both in terms of the discourse and the practical realities. Harumi Befu (2001a:3) and Ryuko Kubota (2002:16) both draw a chronological distinction between internationalization (*kokusaika*) and globalization, with the latter replacing or 'displacing' the former. There is, however, a minor disagreement as to when this displacement actually occurred: according to Befu, 'globalization has been a buzzword in the Japanese media since the late 1980s', while for Kubota the change occurred 'in the 1990s'.

Undoubtedly, the term '*kokusaika*' is used much less frequently than in the mid-1980s to early-1990s heydays. I would maintain, however, that the concept of *kokusaika* remains relevant even in 2008, since many sectors in Japanese society evidently remain engaged in an ongoing process of internationalization. Besides, many of the structures and programmes established by the Japanese government in association with its *kokusaika* campaign (e.g. the JET Programme) have remained in existence. In this sense, one could perhaps argue that the concrete edifices of *kokusaika* co-exist with the dynamics of globalization in today's Japan.

2.6.3 The Question of Governmental Control

Since the *kokusaika* campaign was launched at the height of Japanese economic power, it was almost certainly designed for a more favourable set of economic and political circumstances than those that have come to pass since the early 1990s. Perhaps the key difference between *kokusaika* and (at least my own understanding of) globalization, therefore, concerns the position and role of government. In simple terms, *kokusaika* began as a highly orchestrated, 'top-down' campaign of internationalization—Involving, among other things, the establishment of various internationally-oriented programmes, institutions and overseas relationships, as well as a degree of policy liberalization in areas like education, trade, immigration and macroeconomic management. Regardless of whether this campaign was intended to maintain or alter the status quo, the Japanese government had sufficient power to dictate its course by legislative and financial means. Globalization, by contrast, is an unpredictable, multilateral force affecting the entire world. The Japanese government can seek to influence the effects of globalization on its own society but, ultimately, it cannot control them. Somewhat pessimistically, Takashi Machimura (2003b) contrasts the discourse of 'globalization' with that of '*kokusaika*' in the following way:

The term 'globalization' has become a buzzword, often seen in government documents, newspapers and even popular magazines. Once, 'internationalization' (*kokusaika*) meant a bright future for the still-developing Japan, whereas now globalization seems to symbolize an unavoidable and possibly cruel fate for both the state and its people. (Machimura 2003b: 197)

This is not to suggest that, even in today's increasingly globalized world, the Japanese government does not still retain the ability to control many aspects of the domestic internationalization process. Most crucially perhaps, the government can still easily regulate the flow of foreigners entering Japan. The Japanese government's control over the national economy has, however, become much more precarious, given the decline in its performance during the 1990s (Iwamoto 2006). To illustrate the extent of this decline, the *Nikkei* equity price index stood at nearly 40,000 yen; in June 2008, it stood at around 13,000. In geopolitical terms, too, Japan's power has arguably waned in the post-Cold war era, in parallel with the relative diminution of its strategic importance vis-à-vis America and the rise of China. Japan also has experienced an exponential increase in trade competition, notably from China. In 2003, the Japanese unemployment rate rose to postwar highs. Although both Japanese exports and employment figures have recovered somewhat since 2004, the medium- to long-term prospects for domestically-based manufacturers remain uncertain, as Chinese-owned firms encroach upon their traditional markets. Meanwhile, in parallel with rapid pan-global developments in information technology, capital markets and corporate structures, the Japanese government's ability to set the economic and political agenda has diminished significantly. In short, the once omnipotent 'developmental state' (see Johnson 1982; 1995) that engineered the so-called 'Japanese economic miracle' has lost much of its ability to control. Moreover, as Andy Green (2007:34) explains, 'the major corporations and banks have become so globalised now that the Ministry of Finance, MITI and the Bank of Japan can no longer exercise 'administrative guidance'

in the way they used to'.

Even though 'control' may be beyond the capabilities of any single government or nation in the age of globalization, there are nevertheless those, like Friedman (2000), who regard the United States as the pre-eminent player. Indeed, Friedman considers globalization 'an American creation'. Contrast this with the situation in the 1980s, when America was struggling to cajole a seemingly unassailable Japan into making trade concessions. At that time, Japanese leaders may well have viewed the *kokusaika* campaign as change on their own terms. In the early 21st Century world, the power of the Japanese government to set its own economic and political agenda is much more limited.

Some of globalization's opponents regard it as an irresistible dynamic that enables the United States and other Western countries to foist their own products and values on poorer nations, destroying vulnerable local economies and cultures in the process. Globalization has sometimes been equated with 'Westernization' or 'Americanization' and castigated as 'an imperialism of McDonald's, Hollywood and CNN' (Scholte 2000b:4). In Japan's case, the Westernization/Americanization process began long before 'globalization' became a household term, though opinion within the country has long been divided as to its desirability. Some have noted a generational difference, with older Japanese more inclined than the young to perceive foreign economic and cultural influences as a threat to their national identity (see Sasaki 2004). However, for Takashi

Inoguchi (2000), there are two key reasons why Japanese should not regard globalization as a threat:

First, Japanese national identity has been very strong for years because of the success in writing an identity from the seventh century onwards, especially from 1868. Secondly, globalization works for codevelopment rather than fragmentation in Japan. (Inoguchi 2000:231)

Gerard Delanty (2003) does not believe either that ‘Americanization’, particularly its characteristic ‘conspicuous consumerism’, is threatening to or incompatible with Japanese culture. Rather, he argues, it has actually helped support Japanese culture, in that it has ‘affirmed group identities rather than undermined them’ and ‘allowed the individual to gain a self-identity in the group without political consciousness’ (Delanty 2003:117). Thus, in Delanty’s view, Americanization is ‘perfectly compatible with the cultural horizons of post-war Japan: individualism through materialist values, a high level of group commitment, a belief in equality, and the separation of work and leisure’ (ibid. 118).

2.6.4 Does *Kokusaika* Mean Globalization?

As I have argued above, one key difference between *kokusaika* and globalization is the position of the Japanese government. *Kokusaika* is often perceived in terms of Japan opening up its people and systems to the outside world (particularly ‘the West’) and accepting what it has to offer. By contrast, globalization—however irresistible its

effects on any given society—is always at least potentially a two-way process, in that it enables different countries to display their wares both in the global commercial marketplace and in what Gordon Mathews (2000) refers to as the global ‘cultural supermarket’. In this regard, John Clammer (2000:164) discerns a ‘new globalization’, which is ‘primarily a cultural phenomenon, whatever its economic basis’. Harumi Befu (2001a) sees Japan as ‘one undeniable center’ of this globalization.

According to Mathews (2000), younger Japanese are more culturally assertive than their predecessors, even trend-setting. Thus, it could be argued that globalization, far from being an inexorable, unidirectional process of ‘Westernization’, has actually enabled Japan to redress some of the cultural imbalances of the early postwar era. Clammer (2000: 161) believes the avoidance of cultural domination has been ‘a major plank in Japan’s dealing with the threat of globalization to itself’, while ‘simultaneously exploiting that same global system for the purposes of trade and the exporting of its own culture’. Of course, there has long been foreign interest in certain aspects of traditional Japanese culture—e.g. martial arts like *judo* and *Zen* meditation. Over the past decade or so, products of Japanese popular culture—like so-called ‘J-pop’ music, *manga* (comics), *anime* (cartoons), computer games and *karaoke*—have also made a worldwide impact. Ironically, Douglas McGraw believes that Japan’s global kudos—what he terms its ‘Gross National Cool’—has increased *because of* its economic travails rather than in spite of them, as he explains: ‘Perversely, recession may have boosted Japan’s national cool, discrediting Japan’s rigid social hierarchy and

empowering young entrepreneurs' (McGray 2002:51). In other words, in a globalizing world, Japan's international impact, image and status may be best enhanced when its government is not involved.

On the basis of the above, there is clearly much about *kokusaika* that defies explanation if appraised according to purely 'Western' criteria. In the following chapter, therefore, I shall examine *kokusaika* from three perspectives pertaining specifically to the Japanese situation.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT—EXPLORING KOKUSAika (2)

3.1 Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I shall attempt to rationalize *kokusaika* from three essentially ‘Japanese’ perspectives. First, to acknowledge the government’s preoccupation with economic matters, I shall seek to ascertain to what extent the *kokusaika* campaign might have been motivated by a desire to safeguard national economic interests. I shall then move on to consider two arguably more controversial perspectives, namely: ‘*kokusaika* as an internal dialogue on the Japanese national identity’ and ‘*kokusaika* as a means of enhancing Japanese prestige in the world’. Although this choice of foci is essentially subjective, it is nonetheless informed by a wide array of opinions, including those of many prominent Japanologists.

3.2 Perspective 3: *Kokusaika* as a Means of Safeguarding Japanese Economic Interests

3.2.1 Rationale for this Perspective

As mentioned earlier, the *kokusaika* campaign was launched at a time when both Japanese economic power and accusations of Japanese protectionism were at their peak. In one sense, then, Japan was on the offensive; in another, it was on the defensive.

Undeniably, the country was suffering from something of an image problem, particularly in the United States, where anti-Japanese sentiment had become palpable, especially among vehicle manufacturers, labour unions and lawmakers. Japanese politicians and sections of the mass media countered the jibes with their own accusations of ‘Japan bashing’ (Stronach 1995:51). Against this background, Itoh (2000) sees *kokusaika* as a defensive gambit; a reluctant response to outside pressure for reform of Japan’s ‘closed, exclusive and discriminatory’ systems (Itoh 2000: 36). Similar views are held by other Japanologists. Ivan Hall (1998:173), for instance, regards Japan’s conversion to internationalism more as ‘a device for continued anxious self-protection’ than ‘a fresh outward engagement with the rest of the world’. For Harumi Befu (1983:232), the goal of *kokusaika* is ‘to enhance and protect Japan’s national interest’, which is ‘most prominently expressed in economic terms’, while Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto (1983:269) perceive it as ‘the smooth promotion of Japan’s national interests’, specifically ‘the achievement of Japan’s economic goals overseas without rocking the boat in international waters’. Viewed from this perspective, the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign has little to do with ‘internationalizing’ the mindset of the Japanese people and everything to do with maintaining Japan’s newly-acquired status as an economic superpower.

3.2.2 How did Japan Become an Economic Superpower?

In Japan's emergence as an economic superpower in the 1980s, considerable credit surely must go to the export companies whose products enjoyed (and still enjoy) strong global appeal, thereby generating revenue for the national treasury and, consequently, prosperity for Japan as a whole. However, one would also have to acknowledge the pivotal role played by government, especially the umbilical relationship between ministry bureaucrats and corporate managers, which once earned the country the nickname of 'Japan, Inc.' (Lobb 1971). According to Robert Compton (2001:5), this relationship was formed during the *Meiji* period, when the state introduced a contracting system for newly-privatised industries—the forerunners of today's *keiretsu* (enterprise groups) like Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo. Chalmers Johnson (1982:18-19) views the Japan of the 1980s as a prime example of the 'developmental state' on account of its government's fundamentally 'developmental orientation', which even extended as far as specifying 'what industries ought to exist and what industries are no longer needed'. The intimacy of this government-business partnership was epitomized in the activities of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), which worked effectively on behalf of Japanese companies both at home and abroad—providing loans, lobbying for tax concessions, and arranging for technology transfers from overseas (see Johnson 1982; Sumiya 2000; van Wolferen 1993).

Many believe that Japan's manufacturers benefited unfairly from government measures

introduced to restrict foreign competition. While acknowledging that 'foreign jealousy' did colour attitudes towards Japan, Stephen Cohen (1998:82) believes that 'an overwhelming case' can nonetheless be made for demonstrating that Japan's 'pattern of internal business and trade policies methodically discriminated against foreign companies and contributed to their economic miracle'. During the 1980s, Japanese companies became interested in acquiring overseas companies and high-profile 'trophy properties' in the United States (Bergsten et al 2001:123), yet the Japanese business community largely remained opposed to foreign encroachments on its own turf. Notable examples here were the failed attempts by Texan entrepreneur, T. Boone Pickens, to gain a seat on the board of *Koito*, and an Anglo-American consortium to control *Minebea* (Kester 1991). One foreign participant involved in the latter bid claimed he 'could not find a single Japanese bank or securities house to help in any capacity' (Froot 1993:94). Although the main beneficiaries of Japanese trade policy were the aforementioned *keiretsu*, smaller manufacturers and the Japanese agricultural sector also profited from the government's success in restricting foreign imports. Perhaps the strongest criticism of Japanese trade practices came from American lawmakers, who threatened severe sanctions unless Japan's markets were liberalized.

3.2.3 Liberalization of the Japanese Economic System

In 1989, America launched its so-called Structural Impediments Initiative (SII) negotiations, aimed at securing greater access to the Japanese market for its firms. In

subsequent years, Japan did reduce its trade barriers, though, according to Stephen Cohen (1998:82), this was ‘mainly to preempt retaliation from the United States not because it believed in an international division of labor dictated by comparative advantage’. For Itoh (2000:28-30), the liberalization of Japanese markets and systems—which many, like Sawada & Kadowaki (1990) and Befu (1987), regard as a *sine qua non* of *kokusaika*—has been a tortuous (and, as yet, incomplete) process. The Japanese refer to this process as ‘*kisei kanwa*’—the ‘relaxation’ or ‘loosening’ of regulations rather than their abolition (*haishi*) (Carlile & Tilton 1998:3).

In the ‘global era’, national economic fortunes tend to be dictated much more by international markets than governments. Indeed, Scholte (2000a) has defined globalization itself as ‘a process of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an ‘open’, ‘borderless’ world economy’ (Scholte 2000a:16). With the important role now played by the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an arbiter in trade disputes and the consequent decline of the Japanese ‘developmental state’, a considerable degree of economic liberalization has undoubtedly occurred. At the same time, in John Kunkel’s (2003:187) view, the WTO has also worked to ‘blunt American aggressive bilateralism’.

Of course, there is more to economic liberalization than simply increasing foreign access to domestic markets. Japanese corporate culture has also been forced to adapt to changing circumstances (see Vogel 2006). By comparison with the mid-1980s,

foreigners enjoy much greater influence in the Japanese business world, e.g. Western brokerage houses now hold seats on the Tokyo stock exchange, foreign executives have established a presence in Japanese boardrooms, and foreign ownership of Japanese firms is no longer uncommon. Meanwhile, numerous Japanese corporations have merged with foreign counterparts and forged transnational alliances. In parallel with these developments, manufacturers have relocated their plants overseas to capitalise on lower labour costs.

3.2.4 *Kokusaika* and the Japanese Labour Force

Japan's elevation to economic superpower status in the 1980s occurred without priority being given to the development of an 'internationally competent' human resource base—by which I mean a labour force with a generally high level of foreign language ability and 'intercultural experience'. Rather, as has traditionally been the case, the government seemed content to rely on an urbane, English-speaking élite to stake Japan's claims in the world; essentially, an élite composed of diplomats, corporate managers and bureaucrats like the 'cosmopolitan nationalists' of MITI (Johnson 1982:281).

Although Japan had developed an appropriate skill base for a thriving manufacturing/export-based and domestic service economy, it was clearly not equipped to function as an international, knowledge-based service hub (like, say, Singapore).

From the outset of the *kokusaika* campaign, Japan's limitations in this regard were recognized at the highest level. In August 1984, a potentially far-reaching educational reform agenda was launched under the auspices of the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform, *Rinkyōshin* (later the National Council on Educational Reform, NCER). For Nobuo Shimahara (2004:272), the NCER's proposals were 'in significant measure a political response to Japanese industry's call for developing the human resources it expects to be crucial to its future'. In this regard, Lincicome notes how the NCER acknowledged the importance of education in fostering future generations of 'cosmopolitan Japanese' (*sekai no naka no Nihonjin*; literally, 'Japanese in the world'); in essence, individuals who could help Japan assume a global role commensurate with its status as one of the foremost nations. In NCER reports, the 'cosmopolitan Japanese' was depicted as someone 'with the ability to communicate in one or more foreign languages, a thorough knowledge of foreign countries and cultures, a capacity to appreciate cultural differences and an international consciousness (*kokusaiteki ninshiki*)' (Lincicome 1993:127).

In the assessment of a Prime Ministerial Commission established in 2000 to consider Japan's future strategic needs, insufficient progress had been achieved in this area over the fifteen or so years following the launch of the NCER initiative. The Commission thus advocated the urgent development of 'global literacy' (*gurōbaru riterashii*), which it defined as:

The mastery of information-technology tools, such as computers and the Internet, and the

mastery of English as the international lingua franca. In addition to these basics, communication skills—encompassing the ability to express oneself in two-way exchanges, particularly debates and dialogues involving multiple participants on each side, along with clarity in the exposition of ideas, richness of content, and persuasiveness—will also be important elements. (Prime Minister's Commission 2000, Chapter 1:4)

Although many of the Commission's recommendations have yet to be acted upon, there is nonetheless evidence of a greater awareness among educational policy-makers of the strategic value of 'global literacy', perhaps particularly in light of the economic threat posed by China. With specific regard to English, a detailed 'strategic plan', aimed at fostering 'Japanese with English Abilities', was unveiled by Japan's education ministry (MEXT) in 2002. In this plan, the acquisition of English communication skills was described as 'an extremely important issue both in terms of the future of our children and the further development of Japan as a nation' (MEXT 2002b). Thus, English-language abilities were to be demanded of *all* Japanese nationals, with the introduction of specific attainment targets for schools.

While there is evidence that English is regarded as an important potential resource for national economic development, appreciation for the value of the immigrant worker has remained somewhat more ambiguous (see Kajita 1994; 1998). In fact, even in the abovementioned Prime Minister's Commission report, there was a degree of equivocation on the immigration issue, as illustrated in the following two contiguous passages:

To respond positively to globalization and maintain Japan's vitality in the twenty-first century, we cannot avoid the task of creating an environment that will allow foreigners to live normally and comfortably in this country. In short, this means coming up with an immigration policy that will make foreigners want to live and work in Japan. Achieving greater ethnic diversity within Japan has the potential of broadening the scope of the country's intellectual creativity and enhancing its social vitality and international competitiveness.

It would not be desirable, however, simply to throw open the gates and let foreigners move in freely. First of all we should set up a more explicit immigration and permanent residence system so as to encourage foreigners who can be expected to contribute to the development of Japanese society to move in and possibly take up permanent residence here. (Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century 2000, Chapter 1: 13)

On the one hand, the report acknowledges the potential contribution of foreigners to the Japanese economy, describing 'greater ethnic diversity' in Japanese society as a potential benefit. On the other hand, its choice of expressions like 'cannot avoid' and 'task' hardly suggests unconditional support for immigration. What is also revealing about the above statement, as Julian Chapple (2004) points out, is the Commission's apparent recognition that the environment in Japan in the year 2000 was still not conducive to foreigners living 'normal' and 'comfortable' lives.

To date, the only large-scale issuance of work visas has involved *Nikkeijin* (foreigners of Japanese descent). However, a much larger influx of workers will almost certainly be required to address future manpower shortages in the service and manufacturing sectors. Moreover, while the possibility of importing skilled, highly-qualified professional workers has recently been mooted (Ministry of Justice 2006b), there is no indication, as yet, that the government might be prepared to institute a more expansive

employment-based immigration scheme akin, say, to the ‘points systems’ operated by Australia and New Zealand (see Miller 1999).

3.2.5 Has *Kokusaika* Safeguarded Japanese Economic Interests?

If ‘economic *kokusaika*’ is simply to be equated with market liberalization, then it has been something of a success, having averted a serious trade conflict with America. According to Stephen S. Roach (2007), China has replaced Japan as America’s *bête noire* in terms of trade relations. Open markets have also benefited Japanese consumers by enabling them to purchase a wider range of often cheaper imported products. On the other hand, the government has continued to pursue a cautious approach vis-à-vis ‘internationalizing’ the domestic workforce, particularly in terms of importing foreign labour. In the longer term, such caution could prove detrimental to the potentially vulnerable Japanese economy.

3.3 Perspective 4: *Kokusaika* as an Internal Dialogue on the Japanese National Identity

3.3.1 Rationale for this Perspective

In this section, I shall explore the perhaps unlikely-sounding premise that *kokusaika* is primarily about encouraging Japanese people to dwell on their own ‘unique’ national

identity. To follow this argument to a logical, if extreme, conclusion: *kokusaika* is about making Japanese people not less but *more* conscious of how they differ from foreigners, thereby reinforcing their sense of ‘Japaneseness’. Viewed thus, the mantra of *kokusaika* also acts as a convenient smoke screen to mask the true intentions of an intensely nationalistic Japanese establishment. McVeigh outlines this scenario as follows:

If explicit nationalism and dividing peoples into essentialist groups is not fashionable (especially on the world stage where one should talk about ‘world peace’ and ‘cross-cultural understanding’), then ‘internationalism’ is. Thus, the best method to downplay nationalism is to incessantly speak of and simulate its opposite—internationalism’. (McVeigh 2002: 149)

To assess the merits of the above argument, one needs to ascertain, firstly, whether nationalists wield an especially strong political influence and, secondly, whether Japanese society itself might be especially susceptible to the type of propaganda such nationalists would seek to inculcate. In this connection, I shall begin by briefly discussing the theory of Japanese uniqueness, *Nihonjinron*, which gained particular credence during the 1980s and which, apparently, retains some popular appeal.

3.3.2 *Nihonjinron*

The term *Nihonjinron* has been translated, among other ways, as ‘discourse on the Japanese national character’ (Itoh 2000); ‘discourse on Japaneseness’ (Mathews 2000); ‘theories of Japaneseness’ (Iwabuchi 1994); ‘theories of the Japanese’ (Sugimoto

1999); and ‘defining Japaneseness’ (Buruma 1989). However, *Nihonjinron* is also the collective name given to a body of culturally nationalistic discourse that has gained popularity in the postwar period. Peter Dale (1986) identifies three characteristics common to *Nihonjinron* writings:

Firstly, they assume that the Japanese constitute a culturally and socially homogeneous racial entity, whose essence is virtually unchanged from prehistoric times down to the present day. Secondly, they presuppose that the Japanese differ radically from all other known peoples. Thirdly, they are consciously nationalistic, displaying a conceptual and procedural hostility to any mode of analysis which might be seen to derive from external, non-Japanese sources. (Dale 1986:i)

Despite what many regard as their questionable assertions, some *Nihonjinron* authors have striven to appear objective by applying scientific/rational analysis to their subject. A case in point is Tadanobu Tsunoda, whose 1978 book ‘*Nihonjin no Nō*’ (‘The Japanese Brain’) sparked some controversy. Tsunoda argues that the Japanese are uniquely sensitive to the sounds of temple bells, waterfalls, cicadas and other natural vibrations (Buruma 1989:239). Takeo Doi explains the ‘unique psychology’ of the Japanese in his book, ‘*Amae no Kōzō*’ (English title: ‘The Anatomy of Dependence’). According to Doi (1973:28), the concept of *amae* (indulgent dependence on others) explains not only the psychology of individual Japanese but also the country’s social structure. Some authors subscribe to a notion of inscrutability, the presumption being that the Japanese are ‘unknowable’ except to other Japanese. It has even been claimed that because of their homogeneity Japanese people are capable of communicating with one another without recourse to words: the so-called phenomenon of *haragei* or ‘the

unspoken way' (Matsumoto 1988). In this context, as Tetsuo Najita (1989:14) explains, it is assumed that role of the Japanese social scientist is to mediate and define their self-knowledge in terms accessible to the world of others.

Although many *Nihonjinron* works purport to be the fruit of empirical research, they are often self-referential. As such, they have been dismissed by some scholars, both Western and Japanese, as pseudo-academic charlatanism. Within Japan, however, *Nihonjinron*-based ideas have trickled down into everyday genres like television, magazines and popular books. As Yoshio Sugimoto (1999:81) explains, some major bookshops have a special '*Nihonjinron* corner' where 'dozens of titles are assembled specifically for avid readers in search of Japan's quintessence and cultural core'. According to one survey, more than 700 *Nihonjinron* titles were published between 1945 and 1978 (Nomura Sōgō Kenkyūjō 1978). Many more appeared during the 1980s. Following a relative decline in interest in *Nihonjinron* during the 1990s, Burgess (2004) has observed a revival in the new millennium. In this regard, Harumi Befu sounds a note of concern, adding that 'the contemporary positive evaluation of Japan, emanating from the grass roots, may be a stronger, more firmly rooted affair than wartime *Nihonjinron*' (Befu 2001b: 140).

Despite its apparent popularity, it is difficult to assess the true appeal of *Nihonjinron* among 'ordinary Japanese'. One survey, by Manabe and Befu, discovered that *Nihonjinron* tenets tended to coincide with the world view of older, more affluent

Japanese males, especially those in positions of power; in other words, the Japanese ‘establishment’. The authors suggested that the appeal of *Nihonjinron* may wane as younger Japanese travel abroad more and make foreign friends; the caveat being that these same individuals might become more conservative as they get older (Manabe 2001).

3.3.3 Nationalism in Japan

The genesis of Japanese nationalism is often traced back to the Meiji period (1868-1912), a time when Japan was just emerging from more than two centuries of self-imposed seclusion. The great paradox of the Meiji period was that while it ushered in a wave of modernization and ‘Westernization’, it also marked the beginning of a particularly extreme brand of nationalism, harking back a thousand years to a ‘divine’ imperial ancestry. In their seminal work on Nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) explain the role played by myths and ‘invented traditions’ in the establishment of the nation-state. In broad terms, the ‘invention of tradition’ refers to the processes by which a nation ‘constructs’ its origins and history by establishing continuity with the past, whether real or invented. This was precisely what occurred in Meiji Japan, where the rediscovery of the *Shintō* tradition and the invention of myths surrounding the Emperor (*tennōsei*) played an important role in uniting the Japanese people behind a young Emperor of whom they knew next to nothing (see Gluck 1985).

In another seminal work, Benedict Anderson describes ‘the Nation’ as an ‘imagined community’. It is ‘imagined’ because ‘the members of the nation do not know, meet, or even hear of each other’; and ‘a community’ because ‘regardless of the actual exploitation and inequality that may prevail in each, the nation is always perceived as deep horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 1983:15-16). When the Meiji ‘restorationists’ assumed power in Japan, ordinary people had no sense of nationhood since their country had been divided into 270 feudal domains. Thus, according to Kosaku Yoshino (1992:90), the Meiji government sought to achieve national unity through the ‘affective manipulation of the people’. It inculcated the aforementioned concept of the family-state (*kazoku kokka*), or what Yoshino refers to as ‘familism’ (*ibid.* 91). This attempt at fostering a community spirit appears to have succeeded: even today many Japanese refer to themselves as ‘*wareware nihonjin*’ (‘We Japanese’). The importance of familism was also stressed in the 1890 ‘Imperial Rescript on Education’ (*Kyōiku Chōkugo*), which declared the Emperor not only ‘head of the Japanese family’, but also a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, *Amaterasu*. Around this time, Japanese nationalism began to assume a more radical, militaristic character, as friendliness toward the West was replaced by a vehement anti-Westernism. Endymion Wilkinson (1991:65) attributes this attitudinal shift to Japan’s failure to secure Western respect for its efforts to ‘civilize itself’, especially when its negotiations to revoke unequal treaties broke down in 1887. In the mid-1890s, Japan embarked upon an ultimately unsuccessful 50-year campaign of military expansionism in Asia, during which it occupied Taiwan, Korea and parts of China.

After a period of relative liberalism under the so-called ‘Taishō Democracy’ (1912-1926) (Minichiello 1998:1), power was seized by sections of the military, purveying an anti-libertarian, anti-foreigner ideology. During the 1930s, education became a target for the inculcation of ultra-nationalistic ideas. In 1937, a ‘Nationalism Instruction Bureau’ (*Kyōgakukyōku*) was established, and schools were ordered to adhere to the ‘Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan’ (*Kokutai no Hongi*), which represented a rejection of Western-style individualism. The following excerpt illustrates the prevailing ideology:

The unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our eternal and immutable national entity. Thus, founded on this great principle, all the people, united as one great family nation in heart and obeying the Imperial Will, enhance indeed the beautiful virtues of loyalty and filial piety. This is the glory of our national entity. (Cited in Hall, ed. 1949)

Japanese military actions in Asian countries in the 1930s and 40s have often been described as brutal (see, for instance, Li, Sabella & Liu 2002 on the so-called ‘Nanking Massacre’ of 1937), though postwar politicians have often downplayed this aspect of their history, emphasizing instead their country’s commitment to democracy. At the same time, the notion of the Japanese as a nation *sui generis* continued to hold appeal among a section of ‘the establishment’, including, evidently, policy-makers in Japan’s education ministry, *Mombushō*. In this connection, Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1998:124-126) points to a policy document from the 1960s, entitled ‘*kitai sareru*

ningen-zō’ (‘image of the human beings to be hoped for’), which reflected the ministry’s erstwhile vision for the education of the coming generation of Japanese. The document was compiled by a committee chaired by Masaaki Kōsaka, a philosopher from the nationalistic ‘Kyoto School’. For Morris-Suzuki, the document evokes images of the abovementioned *Kokutai no Hongi*, with its assertions that self-development can only occur through social institutions, family, society and the state. Families are regarded as ‘communities of love’, which foster the development of ‘healthy individuals’ devoted to the nation and the emperor. While in the postwar political context, the document’s authors were careful to stress also Japan’s commitment to democracy, individual responsibility and international openness, their ideological leanings are nevertheless clear.

The ‘*kokusaika* as internal dialogue on Japanese identity’ argument presupposes the existence of nationalistic power-élites in Japan. While it would surely be difficult to substantiate any claim that the *entire* political establishment is composed of extreme nationalists, some have noted a preponderance of strong conservatives in its upper echelons. Ivan Hall (2002: 69) has traced the postwar political progress of the so-called ‘hard right’. Beginning with Nobusuke Kishi (a rehabilitated Class A war criminal), the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has, Hall argues, spawned a string of far-right prime ministers like Yasuhiro Nakasone (paradoxically, the father of *kokusaika*), Ryūtarō Hashimoto and Yoshirō Mori, whom he labels the ‘New Old Right’. According to Hall (2002:73), the inherent xenophobia of the ‘New Old Right’ became apparent with

Japan's rise as a world economic power, and has been most evident in the field of education (see Section 4.4.1). Some have raised concerns that schoolchildren receive a revisionist view of Japan's history (McCormack 1998b; Mishima 1999; Nozaki 2002) and that undue attention is still placed on the notion of an ethnically homogeneous Japanese identity (Parmenter 2004; Willis 2002, 2006).

At the same time, concerns have also been raised that ultra-nationalist sentiment has begun to infiltrate Japanese popular genres. In this regard, Yoshinori Kobayashi's 1998 cartoon book, '*Sensōron*', which justifies World War II as a struggle to liberate Asia from 'white racists', became a best-seller (Morris-Suzuki 2001; Pons 2001; Clifford 2004). In the feature film, 'Pride: The Fateful Moment', Japan's wartime generalissimo, Hideki Tōjō, was portrayed as a man of principle and a doting grandfather. Meanwhile, with the rapid emergence of China as a rival to Japan, some nationalist invective has been directed specifically at that country. According to David McNeill (2007), one Japanese academic-cum-comic-book author, Ko Bunyu, has claimed that 'the Chinese are incapable of democracy, practice cannibalism, and have the world's leading sex economy...which has 'exported 600,000 AIDS-infested prostitutes'. While sensationalist examples are hardly representative of Japanese media discourse as a whole, there are nevertheless problems with the representation of foreigners in the media (see Akaha & Vassilieva 2003; Gamble & Takesato 2004). That said, the same arguably applies to media discourse in several Western countries (see Alia & Bull 2005).

3.3.4 'Othering' the Foreigner in the Age of *Kokusaika*

In his acclaimed work, '*Orientalism*', Edward Said (1978) explains how 'the Orient' (meaning, in his case, the Middle East) has been portrayed in Western discourse as everything that Western societies are not, i.e. their 'Other'. In these circumstances, one's perception of 'self' becomes governed less by what one is than by what is not. As McVeigh (2002:150) sees it, a similar process is at work in Japan. Foreigners, whose characteristics are manifestly 'un-Japanese', are being used to reinforce the Japanese national identity. Michael Weiner (1997:xiii) agrees that the Japanese social construction of 'Self' has presumed its opposite, the excluded' Other', 'against whom notions of Japanese homogeneity and purity could be measured'.

Modern Japan is hardly a totalitarian state. Indeed, the country is currently home to more than two million registered foreigners (Ministry of Justice 2007), whose day-to-day interaction with the local population goes unregulated. This is not to say, however, that any nationalist elements in the 'establishment' would not have powerful means at their disposal, if not to control at least to influence the public discourse. While little-publicised official figures (National Police Agency 2002) prove that non-Japanese actually commit proportionately less crime within Japan than do the Japanese themselves, foreigners are sometimes portrayed in the media as a dangerous, criminal 'Other' and contrasted with the vulnerable, scrupulously law-abiding Japanese (see

Paterson 2002; Burrows 2007). Police information booklets (see Shizuoka Prefectural Police Headquarters 2000) and poster campaigns (Arudou 2002) have depicted dark-skinned, large-nosed caricatures as villains. In one police poster campaign in Tokyo, Japanese were warned to beware of ‘bad foreigners’ (*furyō gaikokujin*). In February 2004, the Ministry of Justice set up a special website to enable the public to report any foreigner they suspected of being an ‘illegal visa overstayer’; a website described by Amnesty International as ‘racist’, ‘xenophobic’ and ‘discriminatory’ (Arudou 2004a). More ominously, the governor of multi-ethnic Tokyo prefecture, Shintarō Ishihara, once urged Japanese Self-Defence forces to be ready to restrain foreigners, who ‘are bound to riot’ in the event of an earthquake disaster (Furuya 2003; Hall 2002).

Media stereotyping of foreigners has been widely discussed. Certain newspapers have fuelled public concern about foreigner crime (see Sankei Shimbun 2000; Gamble & Takesato 2004), while state-operated NHK TV periodically broadcasts statistics on Japanese victims of crime overseas. According to Ryoko Tsuneyoshi (2004:63), ‘images of violent crime committed by Asian foreigners’ are frequently shown in the Japanese media; images which serve to remind ‘Japanese’ that their society is ‘internationalizing within’. Some have also noted how foreigners are sometimes caricatured in TV programmes as volatile and loud. One notable example here is ‘*Koko ga hen da yo, Nihonjin*’ [‘Hey, Japanese people, this is strange’], described by John Maher (2002:170) as ‘a comically ethnocentric half-serious show’, where viewers

would witness excited foreigners ranting over issues like discrimination in Japanese society (see also Iwabuchi 2005). Another media stereotype (arguably becoming much less common) is that of the foreigner as a non-Japanese-speaker, incapable of fathoming anything but the rudiments of Japan's language and customs. In one controversial instance, Hiroshi Kume, a popular news anchor once suggested, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that it would be better if foreigners only spoke halting Japanese (upon hearing an interview with a Indian speaking flawless Japanese). Michael Lev (1996) has reported that some foreigners believe they are perceived as a threat and treated with suspicion once they become fluent in Japanese; the inference perhaps being that foreigners have no permanent place in Japanese society. A similar phenomenon was described some three decades ago by William Wetherall and George de Vos:

Not a few foreigners who have seriously attempted to assimilate into Japanese society—including some who have naturalized and taken a Japanese name—describe a great reluctance on the part of Japanese majorities generally to recognize the ‘visible’ foreigner as a genuine member of the national much less local community. (Wetherall & De Vos 1976:364)

While Japanese society has been widely criticised for the extent to which it ‘others’ foreigners, it is clearly also the case that foreigners are frequently depicted negatively in many other societies. Consider, for instance, the discourse on ‘asylum seekers’ in the UK (Kaye 1998). That said, in representing foreigners in Japanese public discourse, there appears to be an enduring tendency to emphasize differences rather than similarities. Moreover, despite the sizeable foreign population, there has been little public discussion as to whether foreigners might ever be integrated into society as equal

members or full citizens.

3.3.5 Has *Kokusaika* Helped Reinforce the Japanese National Identity?

While it would require a leap of logic to suggest that the *kokusaika* campaign was devised for the express purpose of strengthening Japan's national identity, it is not illogical to suppose that xenophobic elements might seek to exploit any increased presence of foreigners for their own ends. However, Japanese society may have crossed a rubicon in terms of its relationship with foreigners. Today, millions of 'ordinary Japanese' interact with foreigners in the course of their daily lives, and 'international marriages' (*kokusai kekkon*) have increased considerably (Schreiber 2006). Meanwhile, Japan's postwar economic development has enabled thousands of its citizens to travel and study abroad for extended periods, thereby exposing them to alternative lifestyles and societal norms.

The debate on Japanese identity will surely continue as long as nationalists wield any influence over the political and cultural agenda. However, it is questionable whether such nationalists can wield a strong influence over today's more hedonistic, politically disinterested younger generation, who have been labelled '*shinjinrui*' or 'new breed of humanity' (Herbig & Borstorff 1995). Nonetheless, Rika Kayama (2002) has detected a rise in national pride among younger Japanese, a phenomenon she refers to as '*Puchi Nashonarizumu*' (Petty Nationalism). Here, Kayama points to, among other things, an

increased interest in books about the Japanese identity, public enthusiasm over the birth of the Emperor's granddaughter, and a wave of patriotic sentiment during the 2002 football World Cup (when fans sang the national anthem). Kayama warns that such petty nationalism could lead to a more pernicious form thereof. Whatever ideas Japanese nationalists may try to inculcate, there is, as yet, little to indicate that young Japanese derive much pride from their country's Imperial heritage or subscribe to *Nihonjinron*. Rather, any feelings of national pride are more likely to derive from Japan's achievements in the sporting arena, where baseball stars (like Ichirō Suzuki) and footballers (like Shunsuke Nakamura) have made a major international impact. Undeniably, some flag-waving patriotism was evident during Japan's 2002 World Cup games, though that would strike any football fan as entirely normal. Having attended some of the matches myself, a more interesting (though less comprehensible) spectacle was the presence of thousands of Japanese sporting England replica shirts and St. George's Cross face-paint (contrast this with the violently xenophobic scenes frequently associated with England matches). If the behaviour of young Japanese suggests anything, it is that the national identity may already be beyond the control of Japan's conservative 'establishment'.

3.4 Perspective 5: *Kokusaika* as a Means of Enhancing Japanese Prestige in the World

3.4.1 Rationale for this Perspective

In this section, I shall consider to what extent Japan's international image might have been a factor in the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign. If such a suggestion appears strange, it is worth considering the high premium Japanese leaders have traditionally attached to their country's standing in the world, especially vis-à-vis 'the West'—which itself arguably reflects a hierarchical vision of the global political order.

3.4.2 Japanese Attitudes to Hierarchy

The importance of hierarchy in Japanese society is difficult to overestimate. As Ruth Benedict (1989:55-56) explains: 'every Japanese learns the habit of hierarchy first in the bosom of his family and what he learns there he applies in wider fields of economic life and in government'. Chie Nakane (1970) thus refers to Japan as a '*tate shakai*' (vertical society). Many believe that the Japanese devotion to hierarchy began with the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867), which Jared Taylor (1983:42) describes as 'one of the most inflexible, inegalitarian social systems the world has ever seen'. Drawing on neo-Confucianist doctrine, as propagated by the twelfth-century Chinese ideologist, *Zhu Xi*, Tokugawa-era society was stratified along rigidly feudalistic lines. According

to Nakane (1990:213), a caste system was rigorously enforced, with samurais, peasants, artisans and merchants all designated specific positions in society. At the bottom of the social pile were the *burakumin*, a pariah caste, the discriminatory treatment of whom could perhaps be compared to that suffered by so-called ‘Untouchables’ in India (see Michael 1999). Although most Japanese today might identify themselves as members of an egalitarian, middle-class society, they are still routinely ‘ranked’ in order of seniority, ability, status, etc. The principle of hierarchy governs most social relationships, whether in the workplace, educational institutions, or between the sexes. In Japan, it is not only schools and universities that are ranked (as in UK-style ‘league tables’), but also banks and large corporations.

From our perspective, it is important to consider whether Japanese might apply the same hierarchical principles to their perceptions of foreigners and foreign countries. Several Japan specialists (e.g. Itoh 2000; Taylor 1983) believe that hierarchy *does* extend to other nations and races. Itoh (2000:14), for instance, detects a Japanese inferiority complex toward Westerners, which is counterbalanced by feelings of superiority toward other Asians. While attitudes among the population at large are difficult to gauge, some Japanese politicians have certainly shown disdain for their country’s neighbours. The governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara, commonly refers to China as ‘*Shina*’, a pejorative if seldom-used throwback to Japanese occupation (Crowell & Murakami 2000). Shigeto Nagano, a former Minister of Justice, once dismissed the 1937 ‘Nanking Massacre’ as a ‘fabrication’ (Kawano & Matsuo

2002:213-215). Top politicians—including even a recent prime minister, Junichirō Koizumi—have continued to provoke Chinese and Korean anger by visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, where 14 convicted Class A war criminals are venerated. Japanese political leaders have tended to be less disparaging toward ‘the West’, though Yasuhiro Nakasone, ‘the father of *kokusaika*’, did cause a stir in America in the mid-1980s when he suggested that blacks and Hispanics lowered that country’s overall intelligence level (Russell 1991)—which, again, perhaps reflects a hierarchical mentality.

3.4.3 The Origins of International Prestige as a Policy Objective

Ever since the Meiji Restoration, when Japanese leaders began modernizing their country along Western lines, international prestige appears to have been an important policy objective. According to Reischauer (1981:139), Meiji-period leaders sought ‘full recognition from the West as part of the civilized world’. They also sought to emulate the West by establishing Western-style institutions and dispatching missions to study Western culture and technology. Arinori Mori (1847-1889), Japan’s first minister of education and the architect of its school system, even suggested abandoning the Japanese language in favour of English or French (Miller 1977:41). In pursuit of prestige, a high value was also placed on the building of a powerful military. According to Benedict (1989:173), the Japanese ‘need terribly to be respected in the world’, and noting how military might had ‘earned respect’ for other nations, they embarked on a

course to equal them.

In 1902, Japan signed the Anglo-Japanese Friendship Treaty: its first alliance with a major European nation. According to Richard Storry (1990:137-138), this alliance ‘gave back to the Japanese the inner pride that they had lost half a century earlier, when Perry and his successors thrust themselves upon the country’. Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 marked another milestone, making it the first Asian country ever to defeat a European power. In World War I, Japan fought on the side of the victorious Allies, earning its representation at the 1919 Versailles Conference, where the League of Nations Charter was debated. This marked a considerable achievement for a country that had been isolated from the outside world little more than half a century before. As John Dower (1999:21) puts it, ‘no other nonwhite, non-Christian people at the time could have imagined playing the great game of global power and influence at this level’. Japan gained a permanent seat on the League of Nations Council and a share of the spoils of war, assuming possession of German territories in China and Micronesia. However, Japan demanded ‘full equality’ with Western powers, proposing the inclusion of an anti-discrimination clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Japan’s failure to secure the inclusion of such a clause damaged relations with its erstwhile allies, and this eventually led to armed conflict with them in World War II. Dower (1999) claims Japan’s defeat in World War II and the consequent American occupation dealt a major blow to ‘the Japanese psyche’ and ushered in a period of low national self-esteem. However, as Hendry (2003:19) explains, Japan’s postwar

economic success became ‘a source of pride for Japanese people’.

3.4.4 The Pursuit of International Prestige in the Age of *Kokusaika*

According to Harumi Befu (1983), prestige vis-à-vis the West has been a central tenet of the *kokusaika* campaign. He explains:

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(Befu 1983:

233)

Significantly, this campaign was launched at a time when, due to Japan’s economic strength, government confidence was high. Despite Japan’s trade dispute with America, the virtues of ‘the Japanese model’ were being widely extolled around the world in books like ‘Japan as Number One’ by Ezra Vogel (1980). Japanese corporations had also become more internationally assertive, making high-profile overseas acquisitions like Columbia Pictures and New York’s Rockefeller Center. However, Japan’s economic strength was not matched by political influence. Roger Bowen, writing in the early 1990s, put it this way:

Japan serves as an excellent case of the anomaly of the economic giant-political pygmy whose ability to influence international events is severely limited despite a manifest desire to play a larger role. (Bowen 1992:57)

As the premier pan-global political organization, the United Nations is arguably the embodiment of global prestige. It is understandable, therefore, that Japan should have sought to exert influence in that organization. The Japanese government certainly enjoyed success in helping its diplomats into prominent UN positions—perhaps most notably Sadako Ogata, who served as its High Commissioner for Refugees between 1991 and 2001. However, its ultimate goal was a permanent seat on the 15-member UN Security Council (see Drifte 1998). Despite several years as the largest single contributor to several UN bodies and the second-largest contributor overall, Japan has failed to achieve its cherished goal, prompting suggestions that it may reconsider its financial support for the organization (Brooke 2003; Deen 2004). As Hatsuhisa Takashima, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, put it: ‘no taxation without representation is the basic idea’ (quoted in Brooke 2003:A1). Japan’s government has often been accused of resorting to ‘cheque-book diplomacy’ to further its foreign policy aims—one such occasion was the so-called ‘first Gulf war’ of 1990-91 (see Katakura & Katakura 1991:106). It has also faced criticism over its reluctance to commit forces to difficult overseas peacekeeping operations. In this regard, Prime Minister Koizumi’s decision to dispatch a small contingent of non-combat troops to Iraq in 2004 (although these were withdrawn in 2006) is perhaps best understood as a demonstration of solidarity with Washington at a time when many traditional American allies had decided to withhold their support.

On the domestic front, the Japanese government has earned a reputation as a willing

sponsor of prestigious international events. Notable examples here are the World Expositions of 1985, 1990 and 2005, and the 2002 football World Cup. This same preoccupation with international prestige has been reflected in the policies of some government ministries. In 2001, MEXT, concerned at the relatively low number of Japanese Nobel laureates, set a target of 30 Japanese winners within the subsequent 50 years (a goal criticised by the 2001 Nobel Chemistry laureate, Ryōji Noyori, who urged his government to concentrate instead on improving graduate education and research). Research by Menju (2003) has suggested that prestige international events and projects are also a high priority at the local level.

3.4.5 Has *Kokusaika* Enhanced Japanese Prestige in the World?

Japan's historical pursuit of parity with the West and the premium placed by its officials upon high-profile international institutions and events suggest that international prestige may have played a part in the government's decision to launch its *kokusaika* campaign. However, a good deal of Japan's prestige in the 1980s was undoubtedly derived from the success of its economy. With the bursting of the 'economic bubble' in the early 1990s and its subsequent economic problems, Japanese politicians have witnessed a relative decline in their country's international standing. In 'Is Japan Still Number One?', a sequel to his earlier work, Ezra Vogel (2000) dismisses the predictions of doom-mongers who regard the Japanese economic decline as inexorable. However, even Vogel, once a fervent advocate of 'the Japanese model',

also recognises Japan's slowness to adapt to changing times and changing circumstances. Thus, he calls for bold political leadership in building a consensus for reform, coupled with an overhaul of the education system, in order to create 'an environment that allows more individualism, initiative, creativity and multicultured contacts and higher levels of skill in English' (Vogel 2000: 91). In foreign affairs, Vogel advocates greater honesty and openness from Japanese policy-makers in their dealings with China and other Asian countries, especially with regard to 'what happened in World War II' (ibid. 108).

As it stands, many of the changes advocated by Vogel and others have yet to be embraced by Japanese policy-makers. As Vogel has acknowledged, genuine respect may continue to elude Japan, especially in the East Asian region, as long as it fails to atone adequately for past actions. Certainly, its quest for a permanent Security Council seat could prove impossible to achieve on account of China's veto power. Whether international prestige represents, in itself, a productive policy objective is debatable. However, the wider problem for Japan is perhaps less that its leaders have sought prestige for their country than their apparent belief that it can be attained largely through financial means.

3.5 Discussion: What is *Kokusaika*?

Given the various definitions and interpretations of *kokusaika* as a concept, one would

not expect to find a consensus as regards the success of Japan's *kokusaika* campaign. For those who believe that *kokusaika* should entail immigration; social, political and economic reform; and greater openness in Japan's dealings with the outside world, there has been disappointment, even cynicism. Some have dismissed the entire idea of *kokusaika* as a disingenuous government ploy to avoid reform or, more sinisterly, part of an ultra-nationalist conspiracy. At the other extreme, there are those like Usaburō Satsuma (1995) who believe that *kokusaika* has already gone too far, causing irreparable damage not only to Japan's economy and society but also to the Japanese 'identity'. In the middle, there are perhaps those who detect some signs of progress towards the creation of a more tolerant, pluralistic Japan, but believe the Japanese government could and should pursue reform with greater urgency.

Many Westerners—who perhaps understandably evaluate *kokusaika* according to the standards of their own countries—have been skeptical of government intentions. John Clammer (2000:149-150) dismisses *kokusaika* as 'little more than a fad for learning a little English, sprinkling advertisements with foreign words, consuming a small amount of foreign foods or other goods and enjoying travel abroad'. For Harry Wray (1996), the government's use of the term *kokusaika* itself is pernicious, since it confuses the Japanese layman into regarding internationalism as a process of modernization, rather than a state of mind. A serious misconception here, according to Wray (1996:2), is the government's belief that internationalism can be imposed from above by fiat. Karel Van Wolferen (1993) sees the entire *kokusaika* debate as a 'pseudo-debate'. He

explains:

Verbal commitment to a certain cause, or the assertion of a need for it, is in Japan often mistaken for concrete steps, and this is assumed to have changed the situation substantially. But while the constant repetition of the term *kokusaika* creates a sense that Japan's administrators are taking action to correct the supposed absence of an international disposition among ordinary Japanese people, the last thing they want to encourage is an awareness that genuine internationalisation presupposes a willingness to consider the arguments and wishes of foreigners. (Van Wolferen 1993: 542)

Some Japanese observers are equally scathing: Mayumi Itoh (2000) is pessimistic about the prospects for 'real *kokusaika*', since that would entail 'not only tangible liberalization of Japanese systems, but also the intangible liberalization of the Japanese mentality' (Itoh 2000:15). Koichi Iwabuchi (1994) detects a nationalistic rationale; as does Ryuko Kubota (2002:17), for whom *kokusaika* reflects 'Japan's struggle to claim its power in the international community through Westernization (Anglicization in particular) and to affirm Japanese distinct identity rather than local ethnic and linguistic diversity'. Yumiko Kiguchi (1999) dismisses the whole thing as '*tatemae*' (pretence).

Whatever the official motives for the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign were, it is doubtful whether they included the fostering of an ethnically diverse Japan. In the age of globalization, however, Japan's reluctance to embrace systemic reform has begun to yield negative economic consequences. While the prospect of mass-immigration might still seem unpalatable to many Japanese, the alternative could be sustained economic hardship, at least in the medium- to long-term. Given the centrality of economic

concerns in postwar government policy, Japanese leaders may eventually decide that a more flexible immigration policy is required. There are already some signs of change. The modest if steady growth in the foreign resident population has engendered a degree of ethnic diversity. To consider some statistics: 4.5% of all registered marriages in 2000 involved a foreign spouse (a high percentage, given that foreigners made up just over 1% of the total population); since 1970, the annual rate of international marriages (*kokusai kekkon*) has increased by 650%. In 2001, around 7% of all marriages in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area were international marriages (Makino 2002).

In the longer term, Japan's youth may be the harbingers of societal change from within, since they seem to represent everything that the older, more conservative generation does not. Today, many younger Japanese disregard the traditional rules and protocols of social interaction (e.g. deference towards elders and use of honorific language, *keigo*) and display indifference towards the more traditional elements of Japanese culture. While, obviously, it is far from certain that today's non-conformist Japanese youngsters will develop into internationally-minded adults, any flux in social relations does at least hold out the possibility of a more open, tolerant society. It is entirely possible, of course, that many young Japanese will never even have heard of '*kokusaika*', given how seldom that expression is used these days in public discourse. However, even if the '*kokusaika* era' has been superseded by the 'global era' as some would argue, the fundamental issue, in my view, remains the same: the dismantling of barriers, whether structural or psychological, that restrict the role of non-Japanese in

Japanese society. These barriers were acknowledged by the architects of *kokusaika* in the mid-1980s; by a Prime Ministerial commission at the start of the new millennium; by a UN Human Rights commissioner in 2006; and they still represent a common theme in academic and journalistic writing on Japan.

It would, obviously, be impossible to gauge the precise extent to which the psychological barriers have been dismantled since the launch of the *kokusaika* campaign. Nevertheless, for insights into a policy initiative that would appear to address this problem squarely, there is arguably no better object of study than the JET Programme, which, despite being devised at the height of the '*kokusaika* boom', remains in existence, still dedicated (theoretically, at least) to the goal of 'grassroots internationalization'. The following chapter will provide a general outline of this programme's complex organizational structure and consider, from a policy perspective, what changes JET may have been designed to engender.

CHAPTER 4: THE JET PROGRAMME—AN OUTLINE

4.1 Background

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme was launched in 1987, when 848 graduates from four countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand—were invited to Japan to work in schools and local government offices. Today, JET is the largest programme of its type in the world, both in terms of personnel and operating budget. By 2006, it had employed more than 48,000 foreign nationals from 56 countries (Source: MOFA 2006d). Its impact has also been felt overseas: according to Nicolas Maclean (2002:18), the programme ranked second only to the Civil Service as the single largest employer of British graduates in 2002. JET has been a costly project—according to Purnendra Jain (2005:83), its annual budget by the late 1990s had reached around \$400 million. Until 2002, JET participants were treated to first- or business-class flights to and from their home countries. Given that JET employs mainly non-Japanese nationals, one might wonder what could warrant such a financial outlay, particularly in times of economic uncertainty.

Against this background, a large part of this chapter is dedicated to a theoretical discussion of policy, with a view to understanding how the JET Programme might be ‘positioned’ as a policy initiative. Thereafter, in the process of describing JET’s complex organizational structure, the chapter highlights some of the political

considerations behind the programme's creation. In this regard, the reader will note a heavy reliance on the work of one academic, David McConnell; a reliance that, in the absence of alternative sources, has been unavoidable. As explained in the Introduction, McConnell's 2000 book 'Importing Diversity: Inside Japan's JET Program' is the only 'insider account' of the 'behind-the-scenes' political process leading up to JET's launch. McConnell's work is especially authoritative on account of his privileged access to key ministerial bureaucrats.

4.2 What's in a Name?

The letters E and T in 'JET Programme' stand for 'exchange' and 'teaching' respectively, suggesting the existence of two different if not entirely separate elements. Some might regard this title as something of a misnomer, since foreign and Japanese personnel do not change places with each other. Rather, 'exchange' here simply means that they have the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, albeit within 'Japanese' environments, principally the school.

By contrast, the programme's official Japanese title is '*Gogaku Shidō nado wo Okonau Gaikoku Seinen Shōtai Jigyō*'—which broadly translates as 'programme to invite overseas youth for language instruction, etc.'—with '*JET Purogramu*' appearing only in brackets afterwards (CLAIR 2006d). The word '*nado*' ('etc.') was added following the incorporation of 'Sports Exchange Advisors' in 1995. It is perhaps notable that the

Japanese title makes no reference to ‘exchange’ (*kōryū*) or ‘international exchange’ (*kokusai kōryū*). Thus, the casual Japanese observer might be excused for perceiving JET as an ordinary language teaching programme.

4.3 The JET Programme as Policy

As this study is geared, to a considerable degree, towards assessing the intentions and motivations of Japanese policy-makers in creating JET and maintaining its existence for two decades, some appraisal of the programme from a policy perspective seems warranted. Although one could approach this question from many angles, the focus is limited here to considering how JET might be ‘positioned’ as a policy initiative. The task of positioning JET would not appear entirely straightforward, given that executive-level policy-making is a collaborative effort involving three quite different government ministries—those responsible for education, foreign relations and, in essence, home affairs. Moreover, day-to-day decisions on policy implementation are entrusted to thousands of individuals, both Japanese and foreign, based in a diverse array of national and local government bodies and schools across Japan, and also overseas-based entities (e.g. Japanese diplomatic missions). McConnell (2000:63) has described JET a ‘megapolicy’, since it ‘transcends sectoral boundaries’ and ‘creates new institutional structures and patterns of interaction’.

For all its diversity, JET does have a few defining features. Overwhelmingly, it is a

school-oriented programme: over 90% of its foreign participants operate in school classrooms. According to its English name, JET's two main foci are (international) 'exchange' and 'teaching', while its Japanese name labels it a programme of both 'invitation' (*shōtai jigyō*) and 'language instruction' (*gogaku shidō*). Purely on the basis of its name(s), there would appear to be three policy areas with immediate relevance in any investigation of the JET Programme; and all three also have implications for the wider question of internationalization. These are what I shall term 'policy on intercultural education', 'foreign language-in-education policy', and 'foreign cultural policy' (which is inextricably linked to the concept of 'cultural diplomacy'). Before attempting to discuss these, however, I shall begin with a few general comments on the concept of 'policy' itself.

4.3.1 What is Policy?

The concept of 'policy' has been defined in a myriad of ways. To relate just two examples, Wadi Haddad (1994:4) has defined policy as 'an explicit or implicit decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, or initiate, sustain or retard action, or guide the implementation of previous decisions'; while for William Jenkins (1978:15) policy refers to 'a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve'.

Contemporary analysts, like Giandomenico Majone (1989) and Paul Trowler (2003), have advised against interpreting policy simply as a set of ‘top-down’ decisions or directives. Rather, they argue, it should be viewed a complex, dynamic ‘process’ that usually involves negotiation, persuasion, argument, even conflict. Trowler (2003:96) explains this line of reasoning:

- There is usually conflict among those who make policy as well as those who put it into practice, about what the important issues or problems for policy are and about the desired goals.
- Interpreting policy is an active process: policy statements are almost always subject to multiple interpretations depending on the standpoints of the people doing the interpretative ‘work’.
- The practice of policy on the ground is extremely complex, both that being ‘described’ by policy and that intended to put policy into effect. Simple policy descriptions of practice do not capture its multiplicity and complexity, and the implementation of policy in practice almost always means outcomes differ from policy-makers’ intentions (which were, anyway, always multiple and often contradictory).

Stephen Ball suggests that policy be regarded as ‘both text and action, words and deeds’. As he explains, policies are ‘what is enacted as well as what is intended’ and are ‘always incomplete insofar as they relate to or map on to the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice’ (Ball 1994:10). Put differently, policies can yield undesired outcomes. Those responsible for policy formulation do not always possess the means to ensure that ‘their’ policies are implemented in accordance with their wishes. It is logical to suppose that consistent standards of implementation might be especially difficult to attain in a highly de-centralised organizational structure like the JET Programme (see Section 4.4).

4.3.2 Policy on Intercultural Education

The advent of mass-immigration in the latter decades of the 20th Century, particularly in Western industrialized countries, presented education policy-makers with the challenge of preparing schoolchildren for life in multi-ethnic societies. Although policy approaches have varied from country to country, a host of commonly applicable educational concepts has been devised—with names like ‘intercultural education’, ‘cross-cultural education’, ‘multiethnic education’, and ‘multicultural education’ (see Le Roux 2001). Moreover, with the intensification of global interconnectedness, an increasing emphasis has been placed upon enhancing students’ awareness of their responsibilities as ‘global citizens’; hence the expression ‘global education’ (Osler & Vincent 2002).

Although the role of education in fostering tolerance of diversity has been widely acknowledged (e.g. Allwood et al. 2006; Gundara 2000; Hagendoorn & Nekuee 1999; Noorderhaven & Halman 2003), an educated populace may not necessarily be a tolerant one. Indeed, Green et al. (2006:72) have concluded, on the basis of cross-national research evidence from several European countries, that societal tolerance is ‘highly situational and may change markedly over relatively short historical periods’. There are questions anyway as to whether ‘tolerance’ is the best indicator of the level of harmony within any ethnically diverse society. Les Burwood and Ros

Wyeth (1998:465) have defined tolerance merely as ‘an intentional choice not to interfere with conduct which one disapproves’; while for W. Paul Vogt (1997:200), tolerance is about ‘putting up with something you fear, do not like, or otherwise have a negative attitude toward; it involves support for the rights and liberties of others and not discriminating against those toward whom you have negative attitudes’. Thus, as Robinson et al. (2001) point out, ‘tolerance’ and ‘prejudice’ are neither mutually exclusive nor opposite phenomena. In other words, a ‘tolerant’ individual might simply be someone who avoids articulating prejudices for fear of negative consequences to themselves—or, as Burwood and Wyeth (1998:469) put it, ‘a narrow-minded bigot who shows restraint’. As an alternative perspective, Rivka Witenberg and Rachel Cinamon (2006:194) suggest that tolerance must be ‘reflective’, i.e. characterized by ‘a conscious rejection of prejudices, attitudes, beliefs and responses and a recognition that others have rights’. Of course, even this level of tolerance does not necessarily imply a desire for interaction with others or to pursue ‘a common purpose’ (Green et al. 2006:73).

Michael Walzer (1997) has identified five stages of ‘toleration’ (understood as ‘an attitude or state of mind’), ranging from ‘a resigned acceptance of difference for the sake of peace’ to ‘the enthusiastic endorsement of difference’. He argues, however, that any individual capable of endorsing difference to such an extent must have transcended the realms of mere toleration:

How can I be said to tolerate what I in fact endorse? If I want the others to be *here*, in this

society, among us, then I do not tolerate difference, I support it. (Walzer 1997:166)

Yet, as Walzer explains, even an enthusiastic endorsement of ‘difference’ might still be a selective one, in that an individual might not approve of the particular ‘version of otherness’ prevailing in his or her society:

I might well prefer another other, culturally or religiously closer to my own practices and beliefs (or, perhaps, more distant, exotic, posing no competitive threat). So it seems right to say that though I support the idea of difference, I tolerate instantiated differences. (ibid. 166-167)

Although Walzer concedes that some individuals in any democratic society may never be entirely receptive to the prospect of societal diversity, ‘however well-entrenched the commitment to pluralism is’, some academics (e.g. Byram 1997, 2000a; Risager 2000; Alred et al. 2006) have suggested that reflective, culturally-aware teachers can play a role in fostering ‘intercultural competence’ (IC) among students. In basic terms, intercultural competence refers to an individual’s ability to understand, interact with, and communicate with people from other ethnic/cultural backgrounds without prejudice. For Michael Byram (2000a: 8-10), IC is predicated on a global awareness, which, amongst other things, includes ‘a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own’. Thus, a person who has achieved intercultural competence is:

able to see relationships between different cultures and to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, and who does not believe that their understanding and perspective is natural. (Byram 2000a: 8)

In the pursuit of such ideals, several countries have introduced policies of ‘intercultural education’. In Ireland, for instance, ‘intercultural guidelines’ have been issued by the Department of Education and Science, the National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The NCCA describes the characteristics of intercultural education as follows:

- It is education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us.
- It is education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built. (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2005: 3)

While such programmes often seem designed primarily with the indigenous majority population in mind, ‘inclusive education’, which addresses also the needs of students from ethnic minority backgrounds is regarded by many as an important means of reducing their alienation from mainstream society and improving their educational outcomes. In this regard, Jagdish Gundara (2000:67) believes one of the main challenges for schools lies in developing ‘cross-cultural peer-group solidarities’, and replacing negative aspects with a more constructive value system. Gundara rejects the idea of separate schools and curricula for minority students in that they ‘reinforce misunderstandings, and by negating the children’s knowledge and educational potential, they negate the whole concept of intercultural learning’. Rather, what is important within complex societies, he maintains, is ‘to develop cross-cultural negotiation and

learning, and develop common and shared core values' (ibid. 72). In some countries, policy-makers have devised civic education programmes that do not presuppose a homogeneous model of citizenship, whether in terms of ethnic, religious or cultural identity. Such programmes are sometimes referred to under the broad heading of 'multicultural citizenship education' (Banks 1999, 2001; Dilworth 2004; Schugurensky 2002). For instance, in the Netherlands, where the subject of Intercultural Education (*Intercultureel Onderwijs*) has been compulsory since the mid-1980s, successive governments have sought to promote a multicultural model of citizenship education. Multiculturalist principles have also been incorporated into teacher training in the Netherlands, and in other countries like Sweden and Canada (see Craft 1996). According to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, intercultural education is aimed primarily at:

preparing pupils from the majority population and ethnic minority pupils for participating in a multicultural society. Young people should gain knowledge about one another's background, circumstances and culture so as to further mutual understanding and to combat the prejudice, discrimination and racism associated with ethnic-cultural differences. (Cited in Leeman & Ledoux 2003:387)

Although Japan remains far more ethnically homogeneous than the Netherlands, the diversity of its population increases with every passing year. Thus, 'internationalization' has become a tangible reality for education policy-makers, school administrators and teachers. In the context of a national *kokusaika* campaign, the act of deploying foreigners in thousands of Japanese school classrooms has obvious implications for teaching about foreign countries and cultures. However, might the JET

Programme also have a role in helping Japanese schoolchildren, teachers and administrators to adapt to a more pluralistic reality within their own country? This is one of the questions to be considered.

4.3.3. Foreign Language-in-Education Policy

Although the term ‘language policy’ has been defined in various ways (e.g. Ozolins 1993; Phillipson 2003; Spolsky 2004; Spolsky & Shohamy 2000), it frequently refers to the (overt and covert) decisions made by governments regarding languages and their use in society. As James Crawford puts it, language policy is:

What government does officially—through legislation, court decisions, executive action, or other means—to

- (a) determine how languages are used in public contexts,
- (b) cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities, or
- (c) establish the rights of individuals or groups to learn, use, and maintain languages.

(Source: James Crawford’s ‘Language Policy Web Site and Emporium’; retrieved 2/12/2006)

Closely associated with language policy is ‘language planning’, a concept dating back to a study of language standardization in Norway by Einar Haugen (1959). Robert Kaplan and Richard Baldauf (1997:xi) differentiate language *planning*—‘an activity’ intended to promote ‘systematic language change in some community of speakers’—from language *policy*, which is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices (promulgated by government or other authoritative body or person) intended

to achieve the planned language change. However, others (e.g. Ager 2003; Ricento 2000; Slaughter 2007) often conflate the two into the single concept of 'LPP' (language policy and planning), which is both a practical activity and a field of academic study and research. Ricento (2000:197-207) has conceptualized the development of LPP in terms of three historical phases. In the first phase, beginning in the early 1960s, language was perceived as a pragmatic resource that could be 'planned' in order to solve 'language problems' and thus a tool for decolonization and 'state formation'. By contrast, the second phase, the 1970s and 1980s, was characterized by a greater critical awareness of the negative effects, inherent limitations and ideological implications of LPP theory. In the third (and current) phase, LPP essentially centres on challenges arising from 'globalization', e.g. population migrations and the re-emergence of national ethnic identities and languages. Thus, as James Tollefson (2002a:422) explains, LPP has become 'important for all states, not only developing ones'.

Academics have categorized language policy and planning in various ways. Richard Lambert (2000) identifies 'two principal divisions' within language policy. These are 'corpus policy', i.e. that which 'deals with the prescription of the proper form of a country's language(s)', and 'status policy', i.e. that which is 'concerned with the relative standing of the languages of ethnic minorities' (Lambert 2000:171). Others refer to corpus and status *planning*, following the original typology devised by Heinz Kloss (1969). A third type of language planning is suggested by Robert Leon Cooper (1989:157), namely 'acquisition planning', which refers to 'organized efforts to

promote the learning of a language'. Yvette Slaughter (1007:303), on the other hand, identifies *four* major types of language policy and planning—corpus, status, language-in-education, and 'prestige planning' (which concerns the promotion of a language's image). Among the above, the types of language policy/planning most relevant here would be 'acquisition planning' (Cooper (1989) includes acquisition of foreign languages within that domain) and 'language-in-education' policy/planning.

While some scholars (e.g. Bongaerts & De Bot 1997; Lambert 2000; Medgyes 2005; Zuanelli 1991) have used the expression 'foreign language policy', the terminology suggested by Baldauf (1994:88), i.e. 'foreign language-in-education policy', seems especially appropriate in the context of this discussion. Following Gibson Ferguson (2006), foreign language-in-education policy/planning would involve such decisions as:

- The choice of second/foreign languages as curricular subjects of instruction, along with associated decisions on:
 - when these languages will be introduced into the curriculum
 - whether foreign language study will be made compulsory, for whom and for how long
 - what proportions of the school population will be exposed to second/foreign language instruction
 - In the case of English and a few other pluricentric languages, what variety will serve as a model (or norm) for teaching purposes. (Ferguson 2006:34-35)

Policy decisions might also extend, for instance, to which language skills should be prioritized (with obvious consequences for classroom methodology, materials and

testing); perhaps even personnel issues (e.g. what priority should be attached to the employment of native-speaker teachers).

Several language policy/planning questions seem germane to the case of the JET Programme. Most fundamentally perhaps, there is the question of JET's position within the overall language-in-education policy framework in Japan; in particular, its designated role in the enhancement of language education standards in Japan. Some of the overarching foreign language-in-education policy questions pertain also, in microcosm, to the JET Programme. Which languages/language varieties are to be prioritized? How much time within the curriculum is to be devoted to JET? What level/age of student is to be targeted? A possible additional consideration, given the dual concerns of language teaching and international exchange, is to what extent language teaching might be geared simultaneously towards the principles of intercultural education. In this regard, do JET policy-makers envisage a role for 'intercultural didactics' (see Byram 2000b: 303), which is aimed specifically at teaching 'communicative competence for intercultural situations'?

4.3.4. Foreign Cultural Policy/Cultural Diplomacy

The term 'foreign cultural policy' is closely related to the more widely-discussed concept of 'cultural diplomacy', which has been defined by Milton C. Cummings, Jr. (2003:1) as 'the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among

nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding'. In this respect, cultural diplomacy is perhaps best regarded as the practical application of a country's foreign cultural policy. For Jacquie L'Etang (2006), cultural diplomacy differs from 'formal' diplomacy, in that it is 'directed at the populations of other countries rather than solely their political elites' and it uses 'cultural aims and means' to achieve 'medium-term foreign policy ends'. She explains:

The aims and means of cultural diplomacy are manifold but they all revolve around the central idea of using a principal country's cultural capital by offering wider access to it to target countries with the aim of rendering opinion formers in those countries better disposed towards the principal country. The aim is to win supporters and cultivate the rising generations and, through cultural access (via language, education, science, technology, and the arts), to inculcate sympathy towards the principal country's values and ideology'. (L'Etang 2006:374)

Viewed thus, 'cultural diplomacy' is a form of 'public diplomacy', which has been defined by the U.S. Department of State (1987:85) as 'government sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries'. In this connection, a State Department-commissioned report identified cultural diplomacy as 'the linchpin of public diplomacy', since 'it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented' (U.S. Department of State 2005:1). In practical terms, the rubric of cultural diplomacy encompasses a diverse range of activities and ventures, including bi-lateral and multilateral cultural agreements and conventions; artistic and historical exhibitions; tours of performing artists; cultural 'fairs' and festivals; as well as educational, youth, and professional exchange programmes.

According to Werner Meissner (2002), the value of foreign cultural policy/cultural diplomacy in promoting the interests of nation-states has been recognised for many decades. A pioneer in this respect was France, which had already developed an organizational structure for cultural diplomacy by the end of the 19th century. Indeed, the principal organization responsible for the worldwide promotion of French language and culture, *Alliance Française*, was founded back in 1883. Thus, as Meissner (2002:183) puts it, 'the projection of French culture became identified with the interests of foreign policy'. In Germany also, foreign cultural policy has a fairly long history. According to Meissner, the expression '*Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*' (lit. 'external cultural policy') first appeared around 1912. More than five decades later, the then foreign minister, Willy Brandt, described foreign cultural policy as the 'third pillar of foreign policy' (alongside diplomacy and economic relations) (ibid. 184). In America, goals for cultural diplomacy were laid out in the 1961 Fulbright-Hayes Act as follows:

to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries ... to promote international co-operation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries in the world. (Cited in Coombs 1964:51)

In this, the first decade of the 21st Century, interest in foreign cultural policy/cultural diplomacy is arguably more intense than it has ever been. In the United States, policy-makers have been motivated by a perceived rise in 'anti-Americanism' to re-evaluate aspects of their foreign policy approach. In this connection, a report by an Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy in 2005 urged the State Department to

invest much greater manpower and resources to the pursuit of cultural diplomacy, in a long-term effort to win 'the hearts and minds of reasonable people everywhere' (United States Department of State 2005:2). One well-known advocate of cultural diplomacy is Joseph Nye, a Harvard professor and former U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of State. Nye believes that America, many of whose cultural attributes are widely admired around the globe, needs a more sophisticated approach to cultural diplomacy. In so doing, he argues, America would be capable of achieving foreign policy goals unattainable purely through military and/or financial means. Nye has thus coined the expression 'soft power', which he defines as:

the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. (Nye 2004:x)

Nye contrasts this with 'hard power', i.e. the ability to coerce, which 'grows out of a country's military and economic might'. (Nye 2003:66). In America's case, particularly in its Middle East policy, Nye has argued the case for 'smart power'. In a newspaper article from December 2007, Nye and his co-author Richard Armitage explain 'smart power' in the following terms:

Smart power is not about getting the world to like us. It is about developing a strategy that balances our hard (coercive) power with our soft (attractive) power. (Armitage & Nye 2007:B03)

Unlike America, Japan possesses limited ability to pursue foreign policy goals through military action, especially given its US-imposed pacifist postwar constitution (*heiwa*

kenpō), which formally replaced the army with a ‘self-defence force’ (with expressly *defensive* capabilities) and renounced war (see Cooney 2006:5-6). It does, however, possess considerable financial clout, and has, following Nye, demonstrated a readiness to use ‘payments’ to ‘get what it wants’, though this has prompted accusations of ‘checkbook diplomacy’ (see Haar 2001, Kingston 2001, Wan 2001). A notable recent example here has been Japan’s pursuit of allies on the International Whaling Commission (IWC) (Gillespie 2005). Another resource that Japan seems to possess in abundance, however, is what several academics—e.g. Featherstone (1991), L’Etang (2006) and Maier (2006), following Bourdieu (1986)—have referred to, in this context, as ‘cultural capital’. For Featherstone (1991:96), cultural capital represents ‘alternative sources of wealth other than economic (financial and industrial) capital whose value may nevertheless be redeemable and re-convertible back into economic value, through a whole series of direct and indirect routes’. Given their historical pursuit of international prestige and influence (see Section 3.4), Japanese policy-makers, particularly those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, surely regard Japan’s cultural capital as a major asset. As argued in Section 2.6.4, many of Japan’s cultural attributes hold a strong global appeal. McGraw (2002) perceives the Japan of the early twenty-first century as a ‘cultural superpower’ with a ‘vast reserve of potential soft power’. For many young graduates, the prospect of spending an extended period in such an interesting, dynamic society would hold obvious attractions. Thus, as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, JET surely has great potential.

4.3.5. Discussion Summary

The above brief discussion was designed with the aim of offering some basic guidance in terms of how to position the JET Programme as a policy initiative. For a more considered appreciation of official intentions, one would need first to identify the programme's 'official goals', as specified by the programme's policy-makers (a task undertaken in Chapter 6). Any assessment of 'official goals' must be related to the context in which they were formulated, which, in turn, requires some understanding of Japanese convention/precedent in the relevant policy areas. Perhaps more importantly, however, one needs to examine the details of the policy governing the programme's day-to-day operation. This task will be addressed in Chapter 7.

4.4 Who Runs the JET Programme?

The operation of the JET Programme occurs on three levels—the national level; the local government level; and the school level. Given these very different operational spheres, one would expect to encounter at least some differences of opinion regarding priorities.

4.4.1 The National-level JET Organization

The policy-making and executive administration of the JET Programme falls under the

jurisdiction of three different government ministries (often referred to simply as ‘the Three Ministries’). These are: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (*Sōmushō*); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimushō*); and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*Mombukagakushō*), also known as MEXT. The one other national-level organization involved in the programme’s management is the so-called Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (*Jichitai Kokusaika Kyōkai*), more commonly known by its acronym, CLAIR.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC)

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) is JET’s financial engine. MIC provides the bulk of JET-related funding to participating local authorities and meets the cost of the foreign participants’ salaries and travel expenses. It also plays a role in deciding how many participants are allocated to each local authority and in determining the acceptance guidelines for each participating country.

While MIC itself came into being relatively recently, it is, in essence, the latest incarnation of Japan’s Home Ministry, *Jichishō*, which McConnell (2000) has identified as the primary mover behind JET’s creation. As he explains, Home Affairs decided to establish JET in the mid-1980s, both as a means of re-asserting control over local authorities that had begun establishing their own bi-lateral ties with overseas counterparts, and of strengthening its hand relative to other ministries, particularly

Foreign Affairs, on which it had had to rely for advice on international matters.

Significantly, Home Ministry officials also apparently saw the establishment of an employment programme for young American graduates as a useful means of repairing relations with that country at a time of acrimonious trade friction (see McConnell 2000:31-35).

McConnell (2000:31) considers it ironic that Home Affairs should have been the pre-eminent force behind JET's creation, since, in his view, it was 'by almost any definition the least international ministry in Japan'. On the other hand, Home Affairs was clearly a powerful force in the Japanese political hierarchy, with close ties to the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the capacity to control the programme's finances through a local tax (*kōfuzei*). Despite its lack of international experience, the Ministry succeeded in exerting overall operational control of JET by establishing a specialist unit, CLAIR, which still acts as the programme's chief coordinating and public relations agency.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

As the ministry preoccupied with Japan's international relations, it is logical that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) should play an important role. MOFA is considered to have been especially enthusiastic about the programme, since its creation was consistent with the ministry's wider aim of improving Japan's international image.

MOFA's long-standing interest in garnering influence overseas is outlined in its 'Diplomatic Blue Book', which is published annually. In this book, MOFA declares plainly that 'Japan actively seeks to increase the number of persons who are both knowledgeable about and sympathetic to Japan through its activities in the field of education' (MOFA 2006a:204). Here, a MOFA official candidly explains his ministry's vision for the programme:

From the viewpoint of our ministry, it is a significant part of Japan's national security policy that these youths go back to their respective countries in the future and become sympathizers for Japan. (Cited in McConnell 2000: 30)

In purely practical terms, the role of MOFA is to administer the application and selection processes for candidates through Japanese diplomatic missions in applicants' home countries; it also organizes pre-departure orientations for new recruits.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

It is logical also, given the emphasis on Japanese schools, that the ministry in charge of education should occupy a central position in the JET administration. At the time of JET's launch, that ministry was *Mombushō* (*Monbushō*), the Ministry of Education, Science & Culture; today, its successor, *Mombukagakushō*, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has jurisdiction over all educational aspects of the programme. According to JET's official website, MEXT 'takes a proactive approach to helping ALTs by providing useful seminars and workshops at all

of the JET Programme conferences'. MEXT also provides 'school education training', and 'guidance to ALTs' (CLAIR 2006v).

As McConnell (2000:41-46) has explained, however, *Mombushō* was initially unenthusiastic about JET's creation for two principal reasons. Firstly, it was reluctant to abandon two smaller programmes of its own—the *Mombushō* English Fellows (MEF) Programme for American participants and the BET (British English Teaching) Programme. Secondly, *Mombushō* feared resistance from Japanese English teachers, anxious that their authority would be undermined by a mass-influx of foreign teachers. Of course, there may have been deeper, more ideological reasons for ambivalence among some within *Mombushō* ranks. In this regard, Eric Cazdyn (2003:38) has noted particular opposition to JET from the Ministry's conservative faction (*riron-ha*).

Numerous academics over the years, both Japanese (Inokuchi & Nozaki 1998; Nakamura 1998; Nemoto 1999; Satō 1996; Yoneyama 1999) and non-Japanese (Hall 1998; Masden 1997; McCormack 1998b; McVeigh 2002) have accused Japan's education ministry (whether *Mombushō* or its successor *Mombukagakushō*/MEXT) of harbouring a nationalistic agenda. Bob Johnstone (1994) sees the ministry as 'dominated by conservatives who guard their prerogatives with particular zeal', while Stuart Picken (1986:60) has described *Mombushō*'s stance on the teaching of English as indicative of 'xenophobic attitudes' and 'fear of loss of cultural identity'. According to Kirk Masden (1997:57), the ministry 'simultaneously pursues policies that maintain

and intensify the ‘Japaneseness’ of the country’s educational institutions on the one hand and insulate them from ‘foreign’ influence on the other’. Cynthia Worthington (1999) asserts that, despite its many pronouncements on internationalization, the ministry’s actions reveal a ‘deep hostility’ to its realization.

While it may be difficult to determine the precise influence of radical conservatives, the education ministry’s stance on the teaching of Japanese history has long been highly contentious. All school texts must be authorized by MEXT, as a means of ensuring that ‘only appropriate textbooks’ are used (MEXT 2002a:6), yet a number of ‘approved’ history textbooks have attracted criticism, both within Japan and overseas, on the grounds that they present a revisionist view of Japanese military aggression in Asia. This so-called ‘history textbook controversy’ has raged for several decades (Cogan & Enloe 1987; Dore 1970; Schoolland 1990; Nishio 2001; Yamazaki 1987; Yoshida 2006), re-igniting with each controversial publication. As recently as April 2005, MEXT approved the use of a book compiled by members of the nationalist ‘Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform’ (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukuru-Kai*), which, according to its critics, glossed over Japanese atrocities in Asia. As a further example of *Mombushō*’s ‘nationalistic agenda’, Shōko Yoneyama (1999:82) highlights the flag and anthem issue. In 1989, *Mombushō* made it compulsory to raise the ‘*Hinomaru*’ flag and sing ‘*Kimigayo*’ in school ceremonies, a decision contested bitterly by some teachers and human rights advocates.

Of course, even if all the criticisms were entirely valid, Japan's education ministry would be far from unique in the world in having sought to inculcate a nationalist agenda among its schoolchildren. In fact, Gail Benjamin (1997:138), an American anthropologist, has described the curriculum of Japanese schools as politically 'neutral' on the issue of nationalism and 'less indoctrinating' than the U.S. curriculum. That said, there are still obvious grounds for questioning the depth and sincerity of MEXT's commitment to any programme involving the deployment of thousands of foreigners in Japanese classrooms.

The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)

Since, as mentioned above, CLAIR was essentially a creation of the Home Affairs Ministry (see McConnell 2000:48-50), it can hardly be considered an independent entity with its own distinct ideology. According to its official website, CLAIR was set up 'to promote and provide support for local internationalization', in response to 'rising concerns about local level internationalization in Japan' (CLAIR 2003d). Its main work, therefore, involves co-ordinating the international exchange activities of Japanese local governments, notably 'sister-city' affiliations and cooperation projects. With specific regard to JET, CLAIR functions as an overall logistical facilitator for the programme's foreign participants, providing a range of services that include counselling, Japanese language training and travel arrangements. It also produces regular newsletters, handbooks and web-based resources for JET participants. In the 2007 General

Information Handbook, CLAIR explains its JET objectives thus: ‘to ensure that the JET Programme runs as smoothly and successfully as possible for the local authorities (Contracting Organisations) and individuals involved’ (CLAIR 2007g:17).

4.4.2 JET Organization at the Local Governmental Level

At the local level, JET is administered by around 1,100 so-called ‘Contracting Organisations’ (*keiyaku dantai*), which are the *de facto* employers of JET’s foreign participants (CLAIR 2007g; MOFA 2006d). Although a small number of these Contracting Organizations (‘COs’) are private schools, the overwhelming majority are local governments, i.e. Japan’s 47 prefectural authorities, 15 ‘designated city’ (*shitei toshi*) authorities, and various other city, municipal and village authorities.

Amid this diversity, it is worth noting considerable local differences in attitude towards internationalization. Kashiwazaki (2003), for instance, has identified major differences in policy towards resident foreigners. Some progressive local authorities began developing foreign resident-friendly policies as early as the 1980s, in spite of national-level legal and administrative restrictions. In Kawasaki, local authorities enlisted the collaboration of Korean resident organisations in formulating an anti-discrimination policy package, which contained provisions aimed at more equal receipt of social and public services. The city also established a community centre for ethnic culture (Machimura 2003a:192). Katherine Tegtmeyer Pak (2003:270) believes

such policies have contributed to ‘the ongoing debate about the Japanese national identity’, extending even to ‘discussions of a multicultural Japan’. At the same time, many Japanese local authorities have been less accommodating towards their foreign residents (see Komai 2001; Machimura 2003a), while some have pursued a conservative agenda, with particularly strong manifestations in school education. In 2002, 69 elementary schools in Fukuoka City were ordered to introduce items into sixth-grade report cards to allow for evaluation of children’s ‘love of the nation’ and ‘awareness as Japanese’ (Kogure 2004), and Boards of Education in four other prefectures decided to follow suit in 2006 (Parmenter 2006b). The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education has been notably rigorous in enforcing a requirement for teachers to sing the national anthem and to show their respect toward the flag (see Aspinall 2000b; Hongo 2007). In March 2004, the Board announced its intention to punish any teachers who refused to stand up and sing the anthem at graduation ceremonies. Court cases have since been brought by teachers punished for not complying with these regulations. By contrast, however, Nemoto (1999:161) claims that non-compliance with the same regulations among public schools in Hiroshima Prefecture occurred ‘with the connivance of the local board’. Given such policy variations, it would be surprising if all Contracting Organizations embraced an internationalization programme like JET with equal enthusiasm.

4.4.3 JET Organization at the School Level

It is difficult to overstate the diversity that exists across the Japanese public school system. In terms of size, schools can range from 'large suburban schools with over 1000 pupils' to 'rural single-class schools' (Okano & Tsuchiya 1999:55). Schools vary also according to the nature of the student body (e.g. academic ability and gender) and the specialization. To illustrate: within the jurisdiction of just one prefectoral authority, Saitama, all of the following categories of school are represented: Comprehensive (*Sōgo*), All Girls (*Joshi*), International (*Kokusai*), Technical (*Kōgyō*), Business (*Keizai*), Vocational (*Jitsugyō*) and Agricultural (*Nōgyō*) (Saitama Prefectural Board of Education 2003). Schools also vary in terms of the emphasis they place upon English. At the upper end of the scale are the so-called 'Super English Language High Schools' (SELHi), designated by MEXT as centres of excellence (Arita 2002; Aspinall 2006; Mizui 2006; Porcaro 2006b). Naturally, individual schools vary considerably also in terms of staff ability, attitude and experience.

4.5 Non-Governmental Organisations

There are also two non-governmental organisations worthy of special mention, i.e. the Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) and the JET Alumni Association (JETAA). These are the only two non-official bodies mentioned on CLAIR's official JET homepage <<http://www.jetprogramme.org/>>.

4.5.1 Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET)

Although not an official arm of the official JET administration, the Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) occupies an important position in the programme's infrastructure, as a special interest group for foreign participants. AJET describes itself as 'an independent volunteer organization that promotes and supports exchange and teaching in Japan in cooperation with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme' (National AJET 2005). In concrete terms, AJET conducts periodic discussions with CLAIR and MEXT, during which it raises the concerns of participants and suggests ways of enhancing the programme's effectiveness (see AJET National Council 2005b). It also works in tandem with these two bodies in planning two national JET conferences. Although AJET claims to be 'run by JETs, for JETs', McConnell (2000:248) argues that, after an initial period of confrontation with the official JET administration, it had, by the 10th anniversary of the programme's creation, become 'assimilated' as a 'branch of CLAIR'. This assessment seems slightly harsh, given AJET's successes in publicizing participant grievances and its forthright criticisms of official policy. From the standpoint of this study, the periodic 'AJET reports' have provided a valuable insight into issues of concern among the wider foreign JET community.

4.5.2 The JET Programme Alumni Association (JETAA)

The other noteworthy non-governmental organization is the JET Alumni Association (JETAA), which MOFA's 'JET Programme Official Website' has described as 'a self-supporting alumni association created to strengthen the bonds of friendship developed by former participants'. In a *de facto* sense, JETAA functions as a voluntary PR-organization for the JET administration. As such, it disseminates positive information on both the programme and Japan, and holds pre-departure orientations for new recruits. Some JETAA chapters even offer career advice for returnees.

Although JETAA claims to be self-supporting, it enjoys a very close association with both CLAIR and MOFA. In fact, chapters can apply for 'Grant-in-Aid' subsidies from CLAIR to cover the cost of their activities (JETAA USA 2007). Thus, it would probably more accurate to consider JETAA a 'quasi-official' organ of the JET Programme. Given the scale of its activities and membership, with nearly 21,000 members in 50 local chapters across 15 countries (Source: JET Alumni Association International Website; retrieved 2/4/2008), JETAA plays an important role in publicising the programme around the world. It provides JET organisers with a major public relations advantage, in that they can point to several thousand 'satisfied customers' as testimony to the programme's enduring value. On that basis, one can easily understand why Tsuneo Nishida, the Japanese Consul-General in Los Angeles should have described the Alumni Associations as 'the most visible and important

outcomes' of the JET Programme and 'a great asset for both Japan and other countries' (JETAASC 2000).

4.6 Who Works on the JET Programme?

Throughout its existence, JET has always remained geared toward native-speakers from the world's main English-speaking countries. That said, participants from a diverse range of other countries have been gradually incorporated into the programme. To illustrate: in the 2006-2007 Programme Year, recruits were drawn from countries as diverse as Peru, Russia, Ghana, and Jamaica (CLAIR 2006k).

4.6.1 Categories of JET Participant

More than 90% of JET's foreign recruits are earmarked for the language classroom. These individuals are referred to as 'Assistant Language Teachers' (ALTs). However, JET offers two other types of position, namely those of 'Coordinator for International Relations' (CIR) and 'Sports Exchange Advisor' (SEA). The positions of 'Specialist Prefectural Advisor' (SPA) and 'Elementary School ALT' (EALT) were introduced in 2004 yet abolished two years later, with the latter being subsumed under the general ALT category. On the Japanese side, the sole 'participants' are the 'Japanese Teachers of Language' (JTLs), virtually all of whom teach English (and are thus usually referred to simply as JTEs, 'Japanese Teachers of English'). Since this research project mainly

concerns the work of the ALT and the JTL, only these two positions will be considered here.

4.6.2 The Assistant Language Teacher (ALT)

It is interesting to note, first of all, that classroom-based JET participants are not actually considered as ‘teachers’ in their own right, but as ‘assistants’—hence the title of ‘Assistant Language Teacher’ (*Gaikokugo Shidō Joshi*). In theory, then, it is the ALT’s duty to ‘assist’ his/her Japanese counterpart, the JTL, in delivering the English lesson: a practice known as ‘team-teaching’ (see Section 7.5.3). The original title of ‘Assistant English Teacher’ (AET) was modified when teachers of languages other than English were incorporated into the programme (to date, JET has employed French, German, Chinese and Korean teachers). According to McConnell (2000:45), the education ministry, *Mombushō*, was concerned about undermining the authority of Japanese schoolteachers, and therefore made the foreigner’s ‘assistant status’ a precondition for its participation in the programme. It should be pointed out that foreign JET participants are also sometimes referred to, including in official publications, simply as ‘JETs’. Hence, an ALT is officially defined as a ‘JET engaged in assistance with foreign language instruction’ (CLAIR 2006l:1).

As will become apparent, employment conditions for ALTs can vary quite considerably. One common distinction is that between ‘base-school’ and ‘one-shot’ ALTs. As their

name implies, base-school ALTs are assigned to one particular school, which becomes their ‘base’. The ALT teaches within that school, but may also make regular visits to other schools. Theoretically at least, these ALTs are ideally placed to establish close relationships with students and fellow teachers. By contrast, ‘one-shot ALTs’ are based at a Board of Education, from which they visit a wide variety of schools, sometimes of different levels (e.g. Junior-High and High Schools). Due to the infrequency of their school visits (sometimes, literally, just once in the course of the year), ‘one-shot’ ALTs can never become integrated into the workings of any one school. Although, as McConnell (2000:130-134) has described, Contracting Organizations struggled initially to find willing ‘base schools’, this situation has become less common. The remaining one-shot ALTs tend to be based in more sparsely-populated rural areas, like Hokkaidō. ALTs are also classified according to the type of Contracting Organization that employs them. They can be employed by a prefecture (*kenhaichi*); a designated city (*shitei toshi haichi*); or an ordinary municipality (*shichōson haichi*). Due to the different administrative structures of these institutions, employment conditions can vary considerably.

4.6.3 The Japanese Teacher of Language (JTL)

On the Japanese side, the main school-level participants are the so-called ‘JTLs’, the overwhelming majority of whom teach English. While, as mentioned above, JTLs collaborate in team-teaching with ALTs, their role and status in the programme is

actually much more important than that. Effectively, it is JTLs who determine the day-to-day role of the ALTs within their schools. As career English teachers, JTLs represent a wide diversity of ages, attitudes, levels of teaching experience and English abilities. The JTL-ALT classroom dynamic is critically important, since it can determine the ALT's affective impact on the students. A natural, friendly relationship is obviously more likely to leave a more positive impression than a palpably contrived one.

Among the JTLs in any school, the central figure is the so-called 'ALT Supervisor', i.e. the JTL assigned to 'take care of' the ALT. While some JTLs are undoubtedly eager to assume this role, there is evidence that others consider it a burden and thus are reluctant to put themselves forward. In one questionnaire survey of JTLs conducted at a supervisors' meeting in May 2004, nearly all of the respondents claimed they had become the ALT Supervisor because they were ordered to do so and not because they had volunteered. According to those surveyed, the additional responsibility resulted in an increased workload and additional stress (CLAIR 2005a). One of the research participants in this study, Ms. Abe, tells a similar tale:

Abe: We have a supervisor system. 'Supervisor' means I have to take care of the ALTs or PFTs [part-time foreign teachers], so I have to go to the meeting with them.

PB: Have you mainly volunteered to do it?

Abe: Kind of volunteer... can you understand? Kind of peer pressure...not peer pressure... Also in my mind I feel it's a kind of duty...if I didn't do it, who would?

(Interview with Ms. Abe 3/10/2003)

While no attempt has been made here to assess the level of reluctance among JTLs to assume the role of ALT Supervisor, stories like Ms. Abe's are a reminder that JET was, and still is, a 'top-down' initiative.

Finally, it should be pointed out that JTLs operate only at the Junior-High and High-School levels. In elementary schools, it is the 'homeroom teachers' (HRTs) who, at least theoretically, 'team-teach' with their ALT (MEXT 2001a). However, many HRTs possess no more than a rudimentary grasp of English and few have any specialization in English teaching.

4.7 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested three possible perspectives from which to rationalize JET as a policy initiative. Insofar as these actually reflect the most important policy considerations for JET's organizers, it would be difficult, purely on the basis of the above, to ascertain which consideration, if any, will take precedence. Although government publications describe JET as a collaborative effort by 'The Three Ministries' and CLAIR, consensus building would seem an obvious challenge, given the widely differing histories, philosophies and jurisdictions of these organizations, not to mention the often intense rivalry that prevails among Japanese ministries. As Pempel & Muramatsu (1995:72) put it: 'competition among ministries over 'turf' is standard'. Certainly, MOFA's preoccupation with Japan's international image would not seem

entirely compatible with MEXT's long-standing espousal of conservative causes. The fact that JET has remained operational for twenty years does suggest that ministries have succeeded in finding common ground and/or a willingness to compromise. What is equally noteworthy about JET's organizational structure, however, is the level of heterogeneity at the local governmental and school levels. Given all of this diversity, any researcher of the JET Programme can surely expect to encounter a diverse range of experiences and outcomes.

In later chapters, JET's objectives and operational policy will be subject to more systematic scrutiny, and individual participants will provide their own personal insights on its day-to-day implementation and its effects, as they perceive them. The following chapter, however, is dedicated to a discussion of the methodological aspects of this research project.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, I will address both the theoretical and the practical aspects of this research project. I shall begin by outlining the specific issues to be addressed before proceeding to discuss the various methodological aspects of the research. As a testimony to my personal ‘journey’ as a researcher, I shall document several of the specific challenges I faced and to describe how I sought to overcome them. In so doing, I believe I will be best able to highlight the thought processes underpinning my research activities.

5.2 Research Focus

To reiterate: the overarching question to be addressed in this research project is:

What kind of internationalization does the JET Programme promote?

To the extent possible, the aim here is to identify some of the salient characteristics of the JET Programme as an ‘internationalization policy’, in terms of both desired outcomes and actual (or at least perceived) effects. While this generates a host of potential questions, there are perhaps three broad questions worthy of attention:

- 1) Who are the objects of internationalizing change?
- 2) What aspects of the *status quo ante* has JET sought to change?
- 3) Who are the agents of change?

Firstly, in seeking to identify both the intended and *de facto* objects of internationalization, there are numerous questions worthy of consideration. For instance, at whom is JET principally aimed—is it purely targeting Japanese schoolchildren in a school context, or is a role perceived for JET in a wider internationalization process in Japanese society? In this connection, are all areas of Japan covered by the programme, or is it perhaps confined to those areas less frequented by foreigners? Are JET's foreign participants viewed as players in a mutual process of grassroots internationalization? To the extent that such can be ascertained, what have been some of JET's internationalizing effects on a human level? Secondly, there is the basic question of what JET was created to change. Was JET established in support of some wider systemic reform effort in Japan, rather than merely cosmetic, superficial change (as has sometimes been alleged)? In terms of policy, has the large-scale importation of foreigners been regarded as an opportunity for fundamental reform of foreign language education and/or to support pluralistically-oriented educational initiatives (bearing in the looming demographic crisis mentioned in Section 2.5.1)? Or have JET's objectives been much more modest, limited, say, to augmenting schoolchildren's knowledge of foreign people and their countries, and perhaps helping them with their English pronunciation? Thirdly, this study seeks to ascertain to what extent JET has prioritised

certain countries, peoples and languages over others; and also whether any adjustments of focus have occurred in this regard over the twenty years of the programme's existence.

To address these and other questions, I have chosen to focus, in separate chapters, on four aspects of the JET Programme, i.e. goals, operational policy, implementation and perceived effects. Thus, I have organised my research activities as a series of four discrete yet interconnected stages, as described below:

Goals

It would be difficult to reach a satisfactory appraisal of the JET Programme without making some effort to understand the intentions of its creators. Thus, the first stage in the Main Study (Chapter 6) is dedicated to identifying, and then attempting to rationalize from a policy perspective, the 'official goals' of the programme. In this pursuit, the principal data sources are statements and pronouncements made by or on behalf of the four government institutions responsible for JET's administration at the national level (see Section 4.4.1). For reasons of space and consistency, however, the focus is mainly limited to the official English and Japanese websites of these four institutions and their affiliates (notably diplomatic missions, which fall under MOFA's jurisdiction).

Operational Policy

While an examination of official discourse, like the above, can be expected to reveal what JET's national organisers *claim* they want to achieve, only by examining the programme's operational policy can one reach more objective assessments of possible intentions and desired outcomes. Therefore, in the second stage of my enquiry, I shall analyse the finer details of JET operational policy, i.e. the rules and guidelines underpinning the programme's day-to-day operation in four key areas—recruitment, training, allocation and utilization. A range of official information resources and policy documents will be examined, with a view to addressing the following subsidiary questions:

- Who is eligible to become an ALT and what kind of individuals are most sought after as recruits?
- In theory at least, what training is provided to ALTs and JTLs to help them achieve the programme's declared objectives?
- By what system, if any, are ALTs allocated among Contracting Organizations and schools?
- What duties are ALTs formally required to perform, and under what terms and conditions are they employed?

Implementation

Since policy documents and pronouncements again provide only theoretical perspectives, I have sought first-hand insights on the practical, day-to-day

implementation from individuals with experience working on the programme; in other words, the ‘implementers’ themselves. For consistency, I shall concentrate on the four aspects of operational policy outlined above, viz. recruitment, training, allocation and utilization. In this regard, questions like the following must be addressed:

- How does the JET organization try to ensure that suitable individuals are recruited?
- What preparatory and in-service training do ALTs and JTLs actually receive in association with their JET Programme duties?
- In practical terms, by what procedure are ALTs allocated among Contracting Organizations and schools?
- How are ALTs actually being utilized on a day-to-day basis, and what are some of their most common experiences and concerns?

Perceived Effects

It would be impossible to assess JET’s effects accurately and systematically, given the diverse range of environments foreign participants have operated in over the past 20 or so years. Given this reality, the focus here is limited to identifying and discussing a number of ‘grassroots discourses’ on the programme’s effects. In basic terms, ‘grassroots discourses’ are viewpoints expressed by ‘ordinary JET participants’ (i.e. ALTs and JTLs), which represent their actual or purported perceptions of reality. In the interests of balance, I shall consider not only ‘unofficial grassroots discourses’ (e.g. the views of interviewees or contributors to Internet discussion forums), but also ‘official grassroots discourses’ (i.e. comments/opinions broadcast via the official JET Programme information/public relations apparatus).

5.3 Overall Approach

There is a widespread tendency to categorize research into one of two opposing paradigms: ‘the quantitative’ versus ‘the qualitative’; alternatively, ‘positivism’ versus ‘naturalism’ or ‘interpretivism’ (Reichardt & Cook 1979; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Oakley 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). The quantitative paradigm reflects the principle of establishing the theoretical and conceptual parameters of the research project *before* beginning data-collection. Thus, the researcher tests ‘deduced’ theories against quantitatively measurable phenomena (hence the terms ‘deductivism’ and ‘deductive reasoning’). Qualitative research, by contrast, is aligned with ‘inductive reasoning’, whereby the researcher resists defining the parameters of his/her project before finding out what the data is starting to reveal.

The validity of a ‘quantitative versus qualitative’ distinction is not, however, universally acknowledged. Hope Olson (1995), for instance, criticizes the arbitrary, occasionally incoherent definitions attached to the terms ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ themselves, pointing out how some academics merely characterize one approach in terms of its opposition to the other, i.e. by ‘what it is not’. Meanwhile, others have extolled the virtues of one paradigm by applying a biased assessment of the other. For Fred Kerlinger, ‘there’s no such thing as qualitative data’, while D. T. Campbell avers that ‘all research ultimately has a qualitative grounding’ (Cited in Miles and Huberman

1994:40). To apply some of the criteria specified by Ann Oakley (2000:26-27) to highlight the fundamental differences between these ‘warring paradigms’, my approach bears the hallmarks of qualitative research. For instance: the ‘purpose’ of my study is ‘discovery’ rather than ‘verification’ (in the sense that I have not sought to offer any hypotheses); my ‘stance’ (as a long-term expatriate Japan-resident and former AET) is that of ‘insider’ rather than ‘outsider’; and (having collected much of my empirical data through face-to-face interviews and e-mail dialogues) my relationship to my ‘subject’ has been ‘close and interactive’ rather than ‘distant and independent’. Indeed, any study like this, which relies heavily upon subjective data (particularly in-depth personal accounts) would be regarded as characteristic of ‘qualitative research’.

In pursuing this research, I cannot claim to be free of preconceptions. Indeed, as I have declared elsewhere, *kokusaika* and the JET Programme are topics on which I had formed opinions even prior to embarking on this project. However, even though some (see Hammersley 2000:16) regard partisanship in research as wholly acceptable, it has never been my intention to serve the interests of any particular group. Rather, this research seeks to reflect both ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreign’, as well as ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ viewpoints. That said, balance never equates to complete objectivity.

Data collection methods are obviously determined by the type of data sought. Since, as explained above, I was seeking to explore the JET Programme from a range of different perspectives, it was necessary to adopt a multi-method, multi-modal approach to data

collection. The term ‘multi-modal’ refers here to the combination of more than one semiotic system (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; Jaworski and Coupland 1999). For instance, verbal data was gathered through (both English and Japanese) face-to-face interviews, while textual data was collected through e-mail interviews, documentary and Internet sources.

5.4 The Role of the Internet

Before proceeding any further, I must acknowledge my debt to the Internet. For a variety of reasons, the Internet proved a highly appropriate data-gathering medium. Firstly, it provided access to a host of official websites, reports, policy documents and information/public relations materials. Secondly, the various ‘online discussion forums’ (Section 5.10) facilitated regular monitoring of discussions among ALTs, thus raising my awareness of issues of wider concern within the JET community. The messages (‘postings’) in these forums themselves provided a rich data source. Thirdly, these forums and other websites (notably ‘weblogs’; see Section 5.11) helped to identify potential research participants. Fourthly, the medium of e-mail enabled me to conduct interviews with participants in various locations in Japan and overseas (see Section 5.9). In short, the Internet offered comfortable ‘one-stop shopping’ for a considerable portion of the data applied in this study. Undeniably, however, Internet-based research also presents a range of formidable challenges (see Sections 5.9.2 and 5.12.2).

5.5 Documentary Data

Graham Hitchcock and David Hughes argue that ‘once a written source has been created, for whatever reason, it becomes a ‘potential’ historical fact and therefore documentary data’ (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989:124). While I broadly accept this definition, I would distinguish complete publications (whether in print or electronic form) from *ad hoc* Internet-based content. Thus, in this study, data gathered from online discussion forums and ‘weblogs’ has been classified as ‘empirical data’.

5.5.1. Secondary Documentary Data

In composing the conceptual portion of this study (i.e. Chapters 2-4), a host of scholarly and journalistic publications was referenced. Among all the secondary data sources, one is perhaps worthy of particular mention, namely David McConnell’s 2000 book ‘Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program’, which remains the only full-scale account (whether in English or Japanese) of the political considerations underpinning JET’s creation (see Section 1.3.2).

5.5.2 Primary Documentary Data

Japanese Government Internet-based Resources and Publications

Perhaps the simplest way of gauging official positions on any given aspect of the JET Programme is to consult information disseminated by the official JET organization and its affiliates. Thus, this study drew documentary data from the following sources:

- Government Websites

Much of the data relating to JET's official goals and operational policy (Chapters 6 and 7, respectively) was gathered from websites operated by the Japanese government, specifically the four institutions of the national-level JET organization (see Section 4.4.1), overseas diplomatic missions and local authorities. These websites also provided a useful source of ALT testimonials. One undeniable demerit of government-run websites as a data source, however, is the frequency of content change. As frequently happens with homepages maintained by large institutions, content is updated regularly (see Schneider & Foot 2004). For instance, during the course of this research, CLAIR's 'Official JET Homepage' underwent numerous transitions, including a complete overhaul in 2006 that resulted in both the removal of outdated content and the addition of several new sections.

- The JET Journal (CLAIR 2007b)

The 'JET Journal', which is published annually, is a showcase for essays, photographs and poems contributed by JET participants, described by CLAIR (2007b:2) as 'a unique and lively perspective on the everyday aspects of Japanese life'. In the context of this study, the Journal provided a rich repository of 'official grassroots discourses'

(see Section 9.1).

- General Information Handbook (CLAIR 2006b)

The General Information Handbook (GIH), which is distributed to every foreign JET participant prior to arrival in Japan, is described by CLAIR on its official JET homepage as ‘the first line of reference for all matters concerning the JET Programme’. As a research resource, it offers insights into how the ALT’s duties and obligations are perceived by the national JET organization. References to this publication are included in Chapter 7.

- Handbook for Team-Teaching (MEXT 2002a)

MEXT’s Handbook for Team-Teaching was designed as a pedagogical guide for ALTs and JTLs. Perhaps the most insightful aspects of this book are its revealing perspectives on the role of the ALT (see Section 7.5.3).

‘Non-Official’ Publications and Internet-based Resources

- AJET Reports

The most valuable ‘non-official’ documentary data sources were, without question, the periodic reports issued by AJET (see Section 4.5.1). These reports provided a systematic point of reference for the data gained from interviews and online sources, in that they enabled me to connect the opinions of individual ALTs to more general

discourses within the JET community. Since all AJET members are themselves JET participants, these reports clearly reflect genuine concerns within the foreign JET community. In all, data was extracted from twenty AJET reports issued between 2001 and 2007, covering a wide range of topics, e.g. training, ‘accent discrimination’ and workplace harassment.

- JETAA Websites and Publications

For a ‘quasi-official’ grassroots perspective, additional data was gathered from websites and newsletters operated by the JET alumni association, JETAA (see Section 4.5.2). Here, the most useful publications were the ‘JET Streams’ magazines (CLAIR 2004a, 2005b, 2006p), which featured the findings of JETAA’s annual survey (see Section 9.5.1).

- Minutes of Opinion Exchange Meetings

A small amount of additional data was gathered from the minutes of so-called ‘Opinion Exchange Meetings’, i.e. meetings where officials from the national JET organization meet selected foreign participants. These minutes provide a rare insight into how officials have responded to ALTs’ questions and complaints directly and ‘on the record’.

5.6 Empirical Data: A Brief Overview

Since this study is aimed, in part, at exploring people's opinions and emotions, I sought to gather what John Richardson (1996:175) has referred to as 'rich, descriptive, contextually situated data'. In this pursuit, in-depth interviews with selected participants were considered more appropriate than a mass-response, questionnaire-based survey. Although I had originally intended to interview all research participants 'face-to-face', the difficulty of recruiting sufficient suitable individuals within reasonable geographical proximity (see Section 5.9.2) compelled me to consider alternatives. In this regard, the medium of e-mail (see Section 5.7.2) offered a rewarding and convenient means of augmenting the data gathered through FTF interviews. Since another aim of this research project was to connect the views of individual interviewees to wider 'discourses' among the JET community, the interview data was complemented by two additional Internet-based data sources capable of yielding similar descriptive, personal accounts, viz. 'online discussion forums' and 'weblogs' (see Sections 5.10 and 5.11, respectively).

In any data-gathering activity where human beings are the subject, ethical concerns come into play. In this regard, it is incumbent upon researchers to avoid harm to the research subject. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) put it:

at all times, the welfare of the subjects should be kept in mind, even if it involves compromising the impact of the research. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:58)

Rather than engaging at this point in a discussion of all the various ethical issues associated with researching human subjects, I shall address these issues as they pertain to each specific data-collection method, in the relevant sections below. Particular attention will be given to the ethics of online research, which is a relatively new and especially contentious issue (see Section 5.12.2).

5.7 Research Interviews: A Brief Overview

The research interview is a long-standing method of data collection in the social sciences. Interviews are considered especially suitable for exploratory research since they allow the researcher to modify their questions (unlike, for instance, questionnaires, where questions are determined *a priori*). The more traditional, instrumentalist discourse on interviewing regards the research interview as a simple process of information transfer from interviewee to interviewer. To relate the oft-quoted metaphor from Steinar Kvale (1996:3), the researcher processes the interview data by ‘mining’ for nuggets of buried information. Manual-like research books—such as those written by Patton (1990); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000); Flick (2002) and Robson (2000)—provide comprehensive guides to the ‘rights and wrongs’ of interviewing, though even these that cannot adequately account for the vicissitudes of human interaction. A contrary, perhaps more appealing, interpretation of the interview regards reality more as a ‘socially constructed’ phenomenon. In other words, meaning is derived through social interaction, and is, therefore, contextual. Consequently, as Rubin

& Rubin (1995:15) explain: 'it often doesn't make sense to look for abstract rules of behaviour that are not grounded in the context in which they occur'.

5.8. Face-to-Face (FTF) Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are often categorized according to their level of structure and interviewer control. Colin Robson (2000) distinguishes three basic types of interview:

- The 'fully-structured interview', in which the wording (and often also the order) of questions is predetermined by the researcher.
- The 'semi-structured interview', where the question content is largely predetermined, but some modification is possible according to the person being interviewed.
- The 'unstructured interview', where the interviewer identifies a general area of interest, but lets the conversation assume a momentum of its own. (Robson 2000:270)

To some extent, my choice of interview format was governed by my personal relationship with the interlocutor. When interviewing non-acquaintances, a semi-structured format seemed more appropriate than a casual, unstructured one. Conversely, in the two instances where the interviewee was already an acquaintance, an unstructured format was preferred. Here, the interviews were conducted without the meticulous adherence to protocol suggested in some research books, e.g. formal dress, low-key manner (Rubin & Rubin 1995).

5.8.1 Merits of Face-to-Face Interviews as a Data-Collection Tool

As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000:269) have pointed out, the merits of the face-to-face interview are often assessed relative to those of the questionnaire on account of the similarities between the two data-gathering methods. In comparing the two, Abraham Oppenheim (1992:81-82) has suggested that response rates tend to be higher for interviews than questionnaires, since respondents become more involved and thus more motivated to participate in the research. The physical presence of the researcher also facilitates explanation of their research purposes to the participant, and helps clarify any misunderstandings that may arise. For Robson (2000:272), the flexibility offered by research interviews is a major merit. In the context of this study, the overarching advantage of research interviews was their capacity to yield 'rich, descriptive, contextually situated data' (see Section 5.6).

5.8.2. Challenges and Potential Drawbacks of Face-to-Face Interviews as a Data-Collection Tool

The challenges and potential drawbacks of research interviewing have been widely discussed in the academic world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000; Field & Morse 1989; McLeod 2003; Walsh & Wigens 2003). In-depth interviews are generally considered time-consuming, especially given the audio transcriptions frequently required. Moreover, while the close, personal engagement with informants can be

highly rewarding, the physical presence of the researcher also brings with it challenges of a psychological/interpersonal nature, with potential implications for data quality. In John McLeod's (2003:74) view, the quality of information obtained depends on 'the level of rapport and trust between interviewer and interviewee'. In this connection, researchers are advised to be aware of the so-called 'Halo effect', which is explained by Dennis Coon (2005:438) as the 'tendency to generalize a favorable or unfavorable first impression to an entire personality'. Research theorists have also warned of the 'Hawthorne Effect', where 'the presence of the researcher alters the situation as participants may wish to avoid, impress, direct, deny, influence the researcher' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:156).

Among the ethical concerns associated with interviewing, it is perhaps worth highlighting two principles that researchers are advised to adhere to, namely those of 'informed consent' (David, Edwards & Aldred 2001; Diener & Crandall 1978; Miller & Bell 2002) and 'confidentiality' (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992; Grinyer 2002).

Informed Consent

The principle of informed consent has been defined by Edward Diener and Rick Crandall (1978:57) as 'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to

affect their decisions'. In other words, it is incumbent upon the researcher to provide participants with all information pertaining to the purpose and nature of the research; to ensure that they understand the implications of participation; and to guarantee their right to withdraw their participation at any time. In adherence to these principles, all participants in this study were fully informed as to the objectives of the research project, and consent was obtained prior to conducting the interviews.

Confidentiality

The principle of confidentiality, which exists to protect the privacy of the participant, is explained by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) as follows:

Although the researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:62)

In this study, all participants were guaranteed complete confidentiality as regards the ascription of their remarks. The technique of deleting identifiers, as suggested by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992), has been applied. Pseudonyms have been used in all cases, and care has been taken to avoid including any information (addresses, precise work locations, birthplaces, etc.) that might reveal the identities of participants.

5.9. E-mail Interviews

The development of computer/communications technology has enabled researchers to conduct interviews with individuals in remote locations. Elizabeth Lawley (1992) has thus referred to the phenomenon of 'computer-mediated communication' or 'CMC'. Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart (2000) distinguish between 'asynchronous CMC' (e-mail) and 'synchronous CMC', i.e. real-time 'chat'. Only the former has been used in this research.

Since I was seeking personal insights on a wide range of JET-related issues, I attempted, wherever possible, to establish 'e-mail dialogues' that would continue over a period of days, even weeks, rather than minutes. The procedure was as follows: I began by drafting a single slate of questions, which would be e-mailed to the interviewee in batches of three or four until the requisite data had been gathered. In most dialogues, however, the interviewee's responses generated additional questions. Since it was necessary to process each batch of responses in order to continue the dialogue, this approach ensured a dynamic data-collection and data-analysis process. Like any data-gathering medium, however, e-mail has its 'pros and cons', which are discussed below.

5.9.1 Merits of E-mail Interviews as a Data-Collection Tool

Academics have discussed the merits of e-mail as a data-gathering medium, especially relative to the traditional face-to-face interview, with which it is frequently compared (Giese 1998). As Neil Selwyn and Kate Robson (1998) point out, e-mail is cheap to administer, provides easy access to worldwide samples, and generates a wealth of ready-transcribed data (which is a complete, redundancy-free and unbiased record of the interaction between researcher and participant). Ross Coomber (1997) lauds e-mail as a means of reaching individuals reluctant and/or unable to meet face-to-face (e.g. drug users), while Mann and Stewart (2000:24-25) emphasize its user-friendliness, ease of data handling, and conduciveness to easy dialogue.

In this study, e-mail proved a rewarding medium for interviewing. It was certainly cost-effective, as it facilitated interaction with participants across a wide range of geographical locations without necessitating travel. E-mail also provided great flexibility: not only did it enable me to establish a dialogue with participants, but also proved a convenient means of eliciting shorter additional comments, even after the main body of data had been collected. Another advantage of e-mail was the quality of the data it was able to yield. This advantage existed because participants were able to deliberate over their responses before offering them. For instance, one participant wrote back specifically to request time to 'put some thought' into the questions I had posed. In a single face-to-face interview, the participant may make spontaneous remarks,

which, given the opportunity for reflection, they might prefer to rephrase or retract. Moreover, given the likely time constraints—Robson (2000:273) suggests that interviews last no longer than an hour—the interviewer may fail to appreciate the implications of a response that might have required additional clarification or generated an interesting new avenue of enquiry. Naturally, not all e-mail interviews develop into fully-fledged ‘dialogues’; then again, not every face-to-face interview yields the data quality sought by the researcher.

5.9.2. Challenges and Potential Drawbacks of E-mail Interviews as a Data-Collection Tool

Despite the merits of e-mail, scholars have identified a host of challenges and potential drawbacks associated with its use. Below I shall discuss how these issues have, if at all, affected this study.

- Impersonality

Some scholars (e.g. Giese 1998; Hewson, Laurent and Vogel 1996) regard the computer as too impersonal for gathering qualitative data. Mark Giese (1998), for instance, has described CMC as an ‘impoverished’ communication environment, in which ‘there is no way for participants to pre-judge the quality of an individual’s statements based on physical social cues’ (Giese 1998:unpaginated). Some see

limitations in the inability of the researcher to gauge the paralinguistic signals of human communication, i.e. what Robson (2000:273) refers to as ‘non-verbal cues’, which ‘may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing, or even in extreme cases, reversing its meaning’. Viewed differently, ‘non-verbal cues’ are only the interviewer’s subjective (and, therefore, possibly erroneous) interpretation of their interlocutor’s body language; as such, their representation as data seems problematic. It is conceivable also that the non-verbal dimension, e.g. facial expression and gesture, might distract the interviewer from the content of the interviewee’s utterances (Gillham 2000:30-33).

Some have questioned the researcher’s ability to establish rapport with people they have never met and may never get to meet. Mann & Stewart (2002) explain the researcher’s predicament as follows:

On-line, interviewers may not be able to offer enough ‘dazzle’ to compensate for the charm or charisma that can be so effective face-to-face’. (Mann & Stewart 2002:615)

Against this, one could argue that e-mail communication eliminates some risks posed to data collection by a lack of personal rapport between the interviewer and interviewee (McLeod 2003). While e-mail correspondence does preclude much of the spontaneity of face-to-face interviews, my own experiences would seem to disprove claims that rapport cannot be established on-line. In some cases, e-mail dialogues continued for several weeks, and two interviewees took the initiative to re-establish contact several months after data-collection activities had been concluded. That said, such enthusiastic

participants were not easy to recruit. Indeed, in a few cases, the informant did not continue the dialogue beyond our first or second exchange, thus necessitating the recruitment of additional participants.

- Ethical Concerns

The two ethical concerns discussed earlier with regard to face-to-face (FTF) interviewing, i.e. ‘informed consent’ and ‘confidentiality’, pertain equally to e-mail interviewing; thus they warrant no further discussion here. However, relative to the FTF interview, e-mail dialogues perhaps pose an additional ethical question, namely the high work burden on participants, who are obliged to type out their responses before submitting them. In this regard, e-mail interviewing would not seem appropriate for individuals unaccustomed to writing lengthy e-mails or weblog entries.

- Slow Pace of Data Collection

In contrast to a face-to-face interview, where all data may be gathered at one relatively brief meeting, an e-mail-based approach requires both time and patience on the part of the researcher. In this research, there were several occasions where a participant failed to respond promptly to my e-mail, resulting in hiatuses (sometimes long ones) in the correspondence. While, clearly, e-mail dialogues would not suit any researcher in a hurry, a slower data-gathering process does at least reduce the risk that all the

participant's responses will be skewed by their mood on any given day.

5.10 Sampling

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:92) point out, a researcher's sampling strategy can be as important as their methodology in determining the success or failure of a research project. Hence, the researcher faces key decisions as regards the appropriate sample size and sampling approach.

5.10.1 Sample Size

To a large extent, sample size is determined by the nature and purpose of the research, specifically the type of data sought. In any qualitative research project, the quality of information is regarded as more important than the quantity (Sandelowski 1996). In this project, in-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate means of obtaining detailed, first-hand accounts on various aspects of the JET Programme. I decided upon a figure of around 15-20 participants, which I considered large enough to accommodate a diversity of personal narratives, yet small enough to remain manageable from a data presentation and analysis perspective. A large sample of interviewees was not deemed appropriate, since the volume of data generated could not have been adequately represented in the study, particularly since I intended to use interview data in conjunction with a much larger corpus of alternative subjective data (gained from

‘online sources’).

5.10.2 Sampling Approach

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000:99) have described two basic approaches to research sampling: ‘probabilistic’ and ‘non-probabilistic’, yielding ‘probability and non-probability samples’. Probability samples, which are selected randomly, are generally used where the researcher seeks to make generalizations or predictions pertaining to the wider population. If, as in this study, the researcher is targeting specific kinds of individual, a non-probabilistic sampling approach is considered more appropriate. While non-probabilistic sampling can be achieved by various methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:102-104), the sampling approach applied here would be described as ‘purposive’, since specific individuals were targeted for a specific purpose. In this case, the purpose was to gain first-hand insights on a host of JET-related topics—from recruitment and training to day-to-day work situations and perceived effects. However, given the difficulties encountered in recruiting (particularly Japanese) participants, there was also an element of ‘convenience sampling’ involved, in that I resorted to recruiting two individuals who were already acquaintances. There was also a ‘snowball effect’ of sorts (see Berg 1988), in that one JTL participant helped to recruit several others.

5.11 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

Once sampling decisions have been made, the researcher faces the challenge of identifying and, perhaps more dauntingly, recruiting participants.

5.11.1 Selection Criteria

Michael Patton (1990:169) has emphasised the value of ‘information-rich participants’, i.e. ‘those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research’. Given the focus here on grassroots perspectives, the most logical recruitment targets were individuals with first-hand experience working on the programme, i.e. ALTs and JTLs.

Since I aimed to accommodate a range of personal narratives, I sought to recruit a diverse mix of individuals—ALTs and JTLs; current and former JET participants; individuals with experience operating at each of the three school levels; individuals of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. Although most ALTs are unable to appreciate JET’s long-term effects to the same extent as JTLs, their day-to-day involvement is arguably more intense, since their work is geared exclusively to the programme. ALTs have the added advantage of being able to provide insights on non-classroom-related matters like recruitment, training and ‘international exchange’ within the community; hence, I chose to recruit a comparatively larger number of them.

I decided against targetting schoolchildren, since their insights would have largely been limited to the classroom environment. Moreover, for ‘outsiders’, the difficulty of obtaining permission to conduct research in Japanese school classrooms is well documented (see Seki 2004). There are also additional ethical complications associated with researching children (see David, Edwards & Aldred 2001).

5.11.2 Recruitment Activities

While, as Geoffrey Walford (1998:1) points out, the ‘cook-book’ research textbooks tend to present research as ‘a largely unproblematic process’, recruitment of suitable participants proved something of a challenge.

Recruitment of Non-Japanese Participants

Although, at the outset of this project, I was not acquainted with any serving ALTs or alumni, I had maintained an interest in the programme from my time as an AET. Several months before initiating data-collection activities, I began monitoring discussions on two JET-related online discussion forums. On witnessing the intensity of debate (and especially the length and frequency of some contributors’ postings), I felt these forums would offer an ideal place to find research participants. However, out of the 49 serving and former ALTs I had identified as particularly active forum contributors, most did not reply to my e-mail requesting their participation. A few who

did reply, expressing a willingness to participate in the study, ultimately did not do so; two individuals submitted one batch of data but then curtailed their correspondence; while one person wrote back specifically to decline participation. Of the 49 ALTs, only four became 'fully-fledged' participants, in that they continued the e-mail dialogue to its conclusion. In comparative terms, I enjoyed much greater success in recruiting 'bloggers', i.e. individuals with their own personal websites, five of whom became active correspondents. The remaining two non-Japanese participants were both introduced to me by acquaintances. Meanwhile, I had also tried to recruit a number of ALTs living in my area, but seven e-mails failed to yield even a single response. In short, recruitment of foreign participants proved highly unpredictable. I discovered that even the most avid, prolific forum contributor does not necessarily make a willing research participant.

Recruitment of Japanese Participants

Again, without local, school-based contacts, there was no obvious starting point for my recruitment activities. I had also lost contact with the high-school JTLs I had collaborated with as an AET in Tokyo fifteen years earlier, and Internet searches had failed to reveal their whereabouts. Against this background, I decided to e-mail 28 JTLs whose names I had noted on various forums and weblogs, but was unable to recruit even a single participant (although one individual did return my message, she did not participate in my research). While obviously disappointing, this lack of success did not

come as a complete surprise, given the norms of social interaction in what Chie Nakane (1970) refers to as Japan's 'vertical society' (*tate shakai*). One generally requires, even as a Japanese, a formal introduction before requesting favours of any non-acquaintance (perhaps reflecting the *uchi-soto* distinction in Japanese society; see Section 2.5.5). In this regard, a '*shōkaisha*' (introducer)—an individual with established ties to the person one seeks access to—is considered indispensable (see McConnell 2003; Roberts 2003). Eventually, I was able to enlist the help of an acquaintance in a different part of Japan, who as my *shōkaisha*, kindly recruited four additional participants among teachers at her high-school. The one remaining Japanese participant in the sample was already a personal acquaintance.

5.11.3 'Voices of *Kokusai*': Introducing the Research Participants

At this point, I shall introduce briefly the participants who so kindly contributed to this research. However, in order to guarantee confidentiality regarding the ascription of their comments, pseudonyms have been used.

Non-Japanese Participants

1. 'Sean', who is originally from Northern Ireland, was in the second year of his contract as a high-school ALT in the Kansai area of Japan. He had decided to leave the programme upon completion of his second year, but intended to remain in Japan in a

non-teaching capacity.

2. '*Judy*' is originally from the Mid-West of the United States. At the time of our correspondence, she was teaching at three high schools in the Kanto area, one of which was her 'base school'.

3. '*Larry*' is an American of Japanese descent who worked for three years as an ALT in western Japan. As an ALT, he worked at a 'base high school', making once-weekly visits to several other schools.

4. '*May*' is originally from the American Mid-West. Before arriving Japan in 1996 to work as an ALT in several junior-high schools, she had majored in Japanese Language and Linguistics. While working on JET, May met her husband, a Japanese national. She has remained in Japan since the completion of her JET contract, and is currently contracted to her local Board of Education as a teacher/trainer.

5. '*Andrew*', who is originally from the eastern United States, spent three years as a High School ALT, plus one additional year as an Elementary School ALT in a different prefecture of Japan. He returned to the United States to begin a non-teaching-related career.

6. '*Billy*' is originally from the American South. At the time of our correspondence,

Billy was in his second year as an ALT, working at three elementary schools in a semi-rural area. Prior to arriving in Japan, he had worked for a major American corporation in his home state.

7. ‘*Sam*’ is from the western United States. He worked as a Junior-High School ALT in western Japan for two years before returning home to pursue a career in the performing arts.

8. ‘*Suresh*’ is a Briton of Indian descent. He spent two years working as a base-school High-School ALT in the west of Japan.

9. ‘*Warren*’ is a former U.S. serviceman who spent three years as a base-school High School ALT in western Japan. Since then, he has lectured at several Japanese universities.

10. ‘*Fred*’, who is from the American South, spent two years working in high schools in western Japan. In addition to his base school, at which he taught four days a week, he was required to visit two other schools for one day per fortnight.

11. ‘*Christine*’, an American, was head of international policy at a Japanese diplomatic mission in the United States for several years. In this capacity, she interviewed applicants for the JET and MEF (Mombusho English Fellowship) Programmes.

Japanese Participants

12. ‘*Ms. Kobayashi*’ has been working as a teacher since 1980. Her involvement with the programme has been intense and uninterrupted, and has even entailed finding apartments for foreign JET participants in her role as ‘ALT Supervisor’.

13. ‘*Mr. Yamaguchi*’ has been working as a teacher for 23 years. He has team-teaching experience with both ALTs and PFTs, though his involvement has been intermittent.

14. ‘*Ms. Nakata*’ has been a teacher for more than 20 years. She has worked on JET every year since its launch in 1987, prior to which she collaborated in the MEF Programme.

15. ‘*Ms. Abe*’ has worked as a High School teacher for nearly 20 years. She has team-taught on the JET Programme every year since its launch in 1987.

16. ‘*Mr. Hasegawa*’ has been a High School teacher since 1973. His involvement with the JET Programme has been intermittent. He has also team-taught with several non-JET foreign teachers (PFTs).

17. ‘*Ms. Suzuki*’ recently retired as a High-School teacher after more than 25 years in

the profession. She had been involved in the programme either in a team-teaching capacity or as ‘ALT Supervisor’ for more than 15 years.

18. ‘*Mr. Watanabe*’ is currently an associate professor at a private university in central Japan. In the 1980s, he spent more than four years teaching at a prefectural high school specialising in foreign languages, particularly English, during which time he collaborated with several team-teaching partners.

5.12 Online Discussion Forums

Online discussion forums (also referred to as ‘discussion groups’ or ‘message boards’) are a means by which Internet users discuss topics of common interest. For the researcher, they represent a potentially valuable source of descriptive, subjective data. These forums are typically organized into a series of discussion topics or ‘threads’, defined by Coombs (2001:112) as ‘a chain of postings on the same subject that emerge from one posting’. These threads are generated either by contributors (‘posters’) themselves or by the forum moderator.

In this research, discussions in four JET-related forums were monitored approximately once a fortnight over a four-year period. In addition, regular visits were made to three general teaching and Japan-related forums featuring occasional discussion of the JET Programme (see ‘Web Resources’ in Bibliography). Despite the wealth of

English-language JET forums, I was unable to locate any Japanese equivalents (perhaps understandable, given that only a minor part of a JTL's work relates to JET). I did, however, encounter a small number of general Japanese teachers' forums where JET issues were occasionally discussed. With a few notable exceptions, these forums required password-protected subscription; on this basis, they were not accessed (see '*Ethical Concerns*' in Section 5.12.2).

5.12.1 Advantages of Online Discussion Forums as a Data Collection Tool

As a data source, online discussion forums offered several advantages. Firstly, they enabled me to identify salient issues of concern among the JET community (which were often identical to those raised by ALT interviewees). Secondly, the discussion 'threads' themselves constituted a rich repository of descriptive data. The large volume of postings revealed broad 'discourses'—essentially, amalgamations of shared opinions and experiences—within the JET community, to which the opinions of individual interviewees could be connected. Thirdly, online discussion forums presented a valuable opportunity to observe natural interaction among ALTs without the intrusive influence of my own research agenda (Nosek, Banaji & Greenwald 2002:174). All discussions generated therein were authentic (in the posters' 'own words') and thus immune from any 'Hawthorne effect' (see Section 5.7). Fourthly, some postings drew my attention to useful additional data resources.

5.12.2 Potential Drawbacks and Challenges of Online Discussion Forums as a Data Collection Tool

Despite their undoubted advantages, online discussion forums also present their own methodological problems and challenges, some of which will now be discussed with reference to this research.

Verification of Identity

One concern about online researching is the difficulty of verifying whether a contributor's 'virtual identity'—which often includes an assumed 'user name'—accords with their actual characteristics (see Jones 1997; Rheingold 1993). As Sherry Turkle (1997) has explained, it is common for Internet users to create 'online personae', and there have been numerous cases of 'identity deception' (e.g. Berman & Bruckman 2001; Donath 1999). While the authenticity of the poster's identity is an obvious concern, ascertaining the veracity of their statements is, arguably, of equal importance. In this respect, the challenge of verifiability pertains to any data-gathering medium (including the face-to-face interview) where content cannot be independently corroborated (see Taylor 1999).

Negativity Bias

While, by definition, forums accommodate a range of opinions, there is nevertheless a danger that the researcher may gain a skewed impression of reality. Throughout four years of monitoring, the tendency towards negativity in JET-related forums was palpable. In this regard, it has been suggested that forums have a cathartic appeal for some disgruntled individuals (see da Cunha & Orlikowski 2008). Despite their apparent negativity, the JET-related forums did draw my attention to important shared concerns among the wider ALT community. In fact, several episodes described by forum contributors were similar if not identical to ones related to me by interviewees.

Ephemerality of Data Source

Concerns have been raised about the ephemerality of online data. As with any website, an online forum can simply be discontinued by its 'Webmaster' at any time and, hence, disappear without trace (Schneider & Foot 2004). Of course, the researcher can archive the data source, by using archiving software, by saving the page in HTML form or, as was done here, by creating a text file and printing out in hard copy. However, anyone seeking to verify the data independently may not be able to locate its source. On the other hand, the same holds true for many other forms of data, notably the spoken word. In other words, not being able to locate the source of utterance does not invalidate that utterance.

Ethical Concerns

The emergence of the Internet as a research medium has generated a host of contentious ethical issues. Some institutions have formulated their own codes of ethics for online research (e.g. Ess & AOIR Ethics Working Committee 2002; NESH 2003), while scholars have offered opinions and/or sought to justify their own ethical stance (e.g. Bakardjieva & Feenberg 2001; Boehlefeld 1996; Clegg Smith 2004; DeLorme, Zinkhan & French 2001; Herring 1996; King 1996; Thomas 1996, 2004; Waskul 1996). Among these, a particularly valuable perspective is provided by Jim Thomas, who has written extensively on ethical issues in online research. Thomas (1996) differentiates between ‘deontological’ and ‘teleological’ positions. Deontological positions are based on ‘rule following’ and proceed from ‘formally specified precepts that guide how we ought to behave’ (like the codes of ethics formulated by institutions). By contrast, the teleological (or ‘consequentialist’) perspective ‘operates from the premise that ethical behavior is determined by the consequences of an act’. Thomas maintains, furthermore, that teleological perspectives ‘hold that the goal or end of an act should be weighed with a calculus that, on balance, will result in the greatest social good or the least social harm’ (Thomas 1996:108-109). Elsewhere, Thomas is critical of those who would impose all-embracing ethical rules on online researchers without consideration of research context or purpose. He explains:

TEXT REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

(Thomas 2004: 187).

Against this background, I shall highlight some of the key issues in the ethics debate and then explain the stance assumed in this study.

- Privacy

One area of contention stems from the uncertainty over what is ‘public’ and what is ‘private’ in an online context (Bakardjieva & Feenberg 2001; Herring 1996; King 1996; Waskul 1996). Although, as David Berry (2004:324) explains, ‘the technologically flexible, dialogical and fluid nature of the Internet’ lends itself to being conceptualized as ‘a vast public sphere’, concerns have been raised that the use of forum data may compromise a poster’s privacy. In this context, some academics (e.g. Bakardjieva & Feenberg 2001; King 1996) have argued the existence of ‘perceived privacy’. Janne Bromseth (2003) explains this line of reasoning:

Most research experiences report that the intended audience of a message is not the big mass of unknown readers, but the persons considered to be belonging to the group. In oral group communication, the boundaries and positions in a group are more easily defined. If there are eavesdroppers outside of the group that are not really part of it, but are potentially listening in, the awareness of this is of another character as we can actually see it and adjust to it. (Bromseth 2003:79)

Against the above, one might reasonably assume that contributors to open discussion groups—as opposed to closed, subscription-only, password-protected ones—are not oblivious to the fact that their discussions can be monitored by any Internet user. Besides, even though contributors might not have envisaged their postings ending up as research data, they do, evidently, consider them worth conveying to anyone interested in reading them. On that basis, they take a conscious decision to broadcast them over the World Wide Web. To the extent that privacy can ever be guaranteed in a system where users can be identified by their computer's 'IP address' (see Cranor 1999), any individual who posts their contributions under an assumed name (as frequently occurs) and/or does not include their personal e-mail address can probably assure their anonymity. Even where a poster has used their real name, the researcher can achieve the same outcome by ascribing authorship of their comments to a pseudonym.

An interesting perspective on this issue has been provided by 'the Project H Research Group', a large international group of researchers who discussed the ethics of computer-mediated communication in the 1990s. After 'a prolonged scholarly discussion', the group decided to adopt an ethics policy that did not seek permission for the recording and analysis of publicly posted messages. Their reasoning was as follows:

We view public discourse on CMC as just that: public. Analysis of such content, where individuals', institutions' and lists' identities are shielded, is not subject to 'Human Subject' restraints. Such study is more akin to the study of tombstone epitaphs, graffiti, or letters to the editor. Personal? – yes. Private? – no. (Cited in Sudweeks & Rafaeli 1996)

- Ownership of Forum Contributions

Another ethical issue concerns the ownership of forum contributions. In this regard, Judith Sixsmith and Craig Murray (2001:429) pose the following rhetorical question: 'Do they belong to the poster (author), electronic group (community), or to any observer (including researchers)?' To judge from the debate within academic circles, the answer to this question is hotly disputed.

While most 'posters' may never have considered the ownership issue, some clearly have. For instance, Howard Rheingold (1993) cites the example of the individual who decided to assert ownership over his postings by removing from a forum archive everything he had written over a 2-year period. Copyright concerns have also been raised by some scholars, e.g. Cavazos (1994), Litman (2001) and Vaidhyanathan (2001). In practical terms, however, 'ownership' of a forum posting—or at least its physical representation—rests in the hands of the individual or organization hosting the forum, i.e. 'the Webmaster', since they have the ability and the authority to discontinue the forum at any time. By contrast with a copyrighted publication (where ownership can more legitimately be asserted), a posting assumes the same air of ephemerality in the public domain as a verbal utterance once a forum no longer exists.

In recent years, there has been a widespread tendency to challenge the notion of Internet copyright (see Spinello 2006). In this connection, David Berry (2004) draws

attention to the model offered by online software development groups like the Free/Libre and Open Source movements (Stallman 1999; Williams 2002). As Berry (2004:329) explains, these movements sanction reproduction and reuse of their products on condition that any future work deriving from them is itself placed within the public domain. In this way, these movements have inspired a host of other organizations to espouse the principle of common ownership.

- Informed Consent

In Section 5.8, ‘informed consent’ was identified as one of the key ethical principles in social research. A notable exception to this principle is ‘observational research’, where, according to Sixsmith and Murray (2001), it has traditionally been accepted that acts performed within the public domain may be observed and researched without consent, to ensure that they occur in their natural context, uncontaminated by the researcher’s agenda.

Opinions are divided as to the ethical basis for covert observation. Garton et al (1997: unpaginated) are clearly in favour, asking whether researchers must identify themselves as such ‘if they are only participating in the electronic equivalent of hanging-out on street corners or doughnut shops’. Susan Barnes (2004) acknowledges the public nature of certain Internet settings, but suggests that ‘when researching any Internet group, it is a good idea to contact the group in advance and ask permission to observe them’

(Barnes 2004: 219). Adamantly opposed to covert observation are Bakardjieva & Feenberg (2001:234), who regard it as little better than spying. One serious potential problem with seeking permission to observe forum contributors is that drawing attention to the presence of a researcher could cause them to adjust their behaviour, thereby altering the dynamics of the forum (King 1996). If this should occur, the researcher's original objective might well be compromised.

● My Stance

In this study, I have striven to observe the overarching ethical guidelines suggested by Thomas (1996:116), i.e. 'never put subjects at risk; never lie to them; and minimize social harm while enhancing social good'. My response to the specific ethical issues outlined above has been as follows. In addressing concerns over privacy, this study has taken care to avoid identifying forum contributors (although this task was facilitated by their widespread use of 'user names'). Reference has been made only to the content and location of postings, and in some cases to the poster's nationality. Moreover, data has been appropriated only from 'general access forums', i.e. those that can be accessed without subscription or password. I would argue that because such postings have been released into an unrestricted public space, they should be available to the researcher without the poster's consent. In this respect, I align myself with the researchers of the 'Project H' group (Sudweeks & Rafaeli 1996) and numerous others who have covertly observed forum discussions and then appropriated postings without requesting

permission from their authors (e.g. Chin & Gray 2001; Kawai 2007). If researchers were compelled in all cases to seek consent (from an individual who may be untraceable or unresponsive) to reproduce the text of a posting, online discussion forums could be rendered largely untappable as a resource for observing natural online interaction.

From the perspective of this study, the observance and reporting of such interaction—acknowledging the fact that JET participants *have evinced* certain opinions—is considered more significant than recording the precise words they have used or indeed than finding out and publicizing the true identities of the posters. To fail to acknowledge these opinions because one has been unable, for whatever reason, to obtain permission to record them is almost to deny that they were ever voiced. While safeguarding the rights of Internet users is an obvious and legitimate concern, it should not preclude the responsible use of covert observation in online research.

5.13 Weblogs

Weblogs (or ‘blogs’) are on-line journals, updated in reverse chronological order by their authors. Janice Reynolds (2004:167) defines a weblog as ‘a dynamic, continually updated website that grows over time with the accumulation of writing and other content’. Weblogs have become a popular means for JET participants to document their experiences on the programme. As such, they offer vivid, often emotional insights into

their day-to-day lives. Although weblogs accounted for a relatively small proportion of the data, they did provide a useful additional source of descriptive data, uninfluenced by any researcher's agenda. Since weblogs pose broadly the same ethical questions as online discussion forums, my stance regarding data appropriation is identical to that outlined above in Section 5.12.

5.14 The Role of Discourses

As explained above, this research project has relied heavily on first-person accounts from JET participants—but are these accounts necessarily accurate and factual? In discussing the dynamics of research interviews, David Block (1995) asks the reader to consider the extent to which informants may be involved in self-positioning as much as, if not more than, providing reliable information. On this basis, he advises researchers to regard all oral accounts as ‘voices’ adopted by informants to respond to their questions. Thus, Block (2000:758-759) suggests that interview data should not necessarily be considered as the participant’s memories of events (i.e. as a cognitive phenomenon), but rather as a reflection of how they relate to the interview context (i.e. as a social phenomenon). Put differently, the participant’s interpretation of their own experiences is determined, at least in part, by their interaction with the researcher. Therefore, the ‘voice’ of the informant may not truly represent what they believe or would choose to say in another context.

Although not the product of interaction with a researcher, the same holds true for online discussion forums, where the dynamics of group interaction help determine the content and tenor of a contributor's utterances. As Jay Lemke (1995: 24-25) explains: 'we speak with the voices of our communities, and to the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion these out of the social voices already available to us, appropriating the words of others to speak a word of our own'. Viewed from this perspective, any forum posting, interview response, weblog entry, or indeed any other statement will conform to what James Paul Gee terms a 'Discourse' (with a capital 'D'), i.e. 'a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network, or to signal that one is playing a socially meaningful role' (Gee 1996:131). For Gee, Discourses also include paralinguistic features like 'gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes' (ibid. 127).

Contemporary interpretations of the term 'discourse' are no longer essentially 'linguistic' like that offered by Michael Stubbs (1983:1), who defined it as 'language above the sentence or above the clause'. To apply the analysis offered by Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, more recent definitions regard D/discourse as '*beyond language in use*'. Thus, it is not only a question of 'language reflecting social order but also *shaping* social order and individuals' interaction with society' (Jaworski & Coupland 1999:3; emphases mine). Norman Fairclough views 'discourses' (as a

countable noun, like Gee, though this time with a lower case ‘d’) as ‘diverse representations of social life’ that are inherently ‘positioned’:

Differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent social life in different ways, different discourses. For instance, the lives of poor and disadvantaged people are represented through different discourses in the social practices of government, politics, medicine, and social science, and through different discourses within each of these practices corresponding to different positions of social actors. Finally, discourse as part of ways of being constitutes styles – for instance the styles of business managers, or political leaders. (Fairclough 2003: 206)

Similarly, Paul du Gay identifies a tendency among ‘theorists’ to regard discourse as:

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. Thus the term refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into play. (du Gay 1996:43)

Following du Gay, ‘discourses’ are regarded in the context of this study as socially-constructed representations of reality. In essence, discourses are ‘speaking positions’ which reflect the identities and experiences of those who adopt them. These differing representations of reality are perhaps best illustrated in Chapter 9, where I contrast ‘official grassroots discourses’ on the effects of the JET programme (for instance, what JET participants say when describing their experiences on official websites) with ‘unofficial’ ones (what they say in ordinary interviews, online discussion forums and weblogs).

5.15 Data Analysis

Naturally, any researcher's approach to data analysis will depend on the type of data they have gathered. The overarching nature of the enquiry here necessitated a broad research focus, geared towards both the intentions of policy-makers (whether actual or ostensible) and the perceptions and experiences of individuals working on the JET Programme at the 'grassroots level'. Hence, a multi-modal, multi-method approach to data collection was preferred.

The first two chapters of the Main Study are dedicated to a discussion of 'official perspectives' on the JET Programme. In essence, I am seeking here to assess the internationalizing intentions of JET's creators, based on analysis of both official discourse on the programme's goals and the operational policy that has been established. Here, data collection was a straightforward if time-consuming exercise, involving a systematic search of official JET information sources, primarily websites. In terms of data presentation, my chief aim was to establish a systematic framework for the presentation and analysis of the qualitative data, by creating a range of initial discussion categories or 'themes'. Essentially, however, this amounted to a personal judgement as regards which specific elements of the JET Programme would provide the most pertinent insights into the overarching question of 'promoting internationalization'.

Against the background of the above, the bulk of empirical data in this study is what would typically be labelled ‘qualitative data’ (Bryman & Burgess 1994; Silverman 1993). This data represents the personal perceptions and experiences of individuals working on the JET Programme on a day-to-day basis; in short, it is the ‘rich, descriptive, contextually situated data’ referred to in Section 5.6. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis often occur concurrently. In this study, on-going analysis of interview data was not only a safeguard against what Steinar Kvale (1996: Chapter 10) refers to as ‘the 1,000 page question’, but also an essential means of re-formulating and adding interview questions to reflect previous participant responses. The analytical process was facilitated by the use of e-mail interviews, which compelled me to scrutinize each new batch of data, purely in order to continue my dialogue with the participant. My familiarity with the interview data was enhanced during the transcription process. Since some interviews were conducted in Japanese, a native-speaker of that language, who was also a competent English speaker (having lived in the UK for more than eight years), was asked to check the transcriptions for accuracy.

Data from online discussion forums and weblogs was archived by saving relevant threads as text files. All postings of relevance were printed out, coded and sorted in the same manner as interview transcripts, and then incorporated into the corpus of interview data. A commonly identified phase in the process of qualitative data analysis is ‘data reduction’, which Matthew Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994:10) define

as ‘the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions’. In this project, data reduction was facilitated by the use of *a priori* thematic categorizations; some of which had been generated through the above-mentioned examination of official discourse and operational policy. The interview data itself was reduced (and additional categorizations generated) through a process of coding and sorting, which was carried out manually rather than with the aid of computer software like *NVivo*. Given the richness of expression—what Clifford Geertz (1973:3) refers to as ‘thick description’—evident in many first-person accounts, the selective ‘winnowing’ of data (Walcott 2001:44) occasionally proved challenging. While I felt it important to include well-written (or eloquently expressed) descriptions and characterizations, my primary concern for selection of extracts was to illustrate concretely the most salient categorizations and concepts to emerge from the investigation.

5.16 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various data-collection methods and analysis techniques employed in the study. It has also described the research challenges faced and the solutions I sought to apply. In this regard, the development of the Internet has presented numerous challenges for the researcher alongside the exciting opportunities. In the context of this study, the ethical challenges of online data-gathering were considered deserving of special attention.

Since this study is concerned both with assessing the intentions of policy-makers and recording the perceptions of policy-implementers at the so-called grassroots level, a multi-method, multi-modal approach to data-collection has been employed. In the remaining chapters, I shall illustrate how this varied data has been interpreted and applied with the aim of answering the research question.

CHAPTER 6: GOALS OF THE JET PROGRAMME

6.1 Introduction

Although this chapter is entitled ‘Goals of the JET Programme’, it is largely dedicated to discussing the policy implications of the goals specified in various ‘official JET sources’. In this connection, it should be remembered that the ‘official line’ vis-à-vis the JET Programme is disseminated by a diverse range of government-affiliated organizations, both within Japan (from ministries to local authorities) and overseas. Given their differing priorities and jurisdictions, one cannot automatically assume that all such organizations will perceive JET’s goals in identical fashion, and that, consequently, they will broadcast a consistent message to the outside world.

Against this background, my first task is to ascertain what the main ‘official goals’ of the JET Programme actually are. In this pursuit, my main data sources are the websites operated by each of the four national-level JET organizations. Consideration is given to both English- and Japanese-language versions of these websites in case any differences of emphasis can be discerned (bearing in mind their different target readerships). Additional data has been derived from the websites of Japanese overseas diplomatic missions (often the primary information source for would-be applicants) and CLAIR’s ubiquitous ‘General Information Handbook’. While, for reasons of space, only a small selection of extracts from these sources can be presented here, I have attempted to

focus on the most prominently featured statements. Regardless of whether these ‘official goals’ appear feasible or are likely to be embraced, or even understood, by those charged with the responsibility for achieving them, they have been articulated by institutions of the Japanese government. As such, the research regards them as accurate representations of official positions vis-à-vis JET’s goals.

Following the theoretical policy discussion in Chapter 4, the bulk of this chapter considers the implications of JET’s ‘official goals’ with specific reference to Japanese precedent/convention and the insights of prominent scholars in relevant fields. Finally, this chapter presents some basic ‘grassroots perceptions’ on JET’s goals, as related to me by ALT and JTL interviewees.

6.2 Official Discourse on the Goals of the JET Programme

6.2.1 ‘The CLAIR Perspective’

As JET’s primary PR-organization, CLAIR is responsible for operating the ‘Official Homepage of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme’, which is, without question, the single most comprehensive collection of information on the programme available anywhere. On this website, JET’s goals are explained as follows:

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme aims to promote grass roots internationalisation at the local level by inviting young overseas graduates to assist in international exchange and foreign language education in local governments, boards of

education and elementary, junior and senior high schools throughout Japan. It seeks to foster ties between Japanese citizens (mainly youth) and JET participants at the person-to-person level. (CLAIR 2006e)

The message on the corresponding page of the website's Japanese-language version (CLAIR 2006d) is virtually a direct translation of the above. In fact, except for variations in phraseology, CLAIR has for several years disseminated the same message, namely that JET is about achieving 'grassroots internationalization' through local-level/grass roots international exchange and foreign language education, and is aimed primarily at the younger generation of Japanese (see CLAIR 2002a; 2002b; 2004a).

6.2.2 'The MEXT Perspective'

Although overwhelmingly school-oriented, there is no section of MEXT's official website specifically devoted to JET. On its English-language pages, JET-related content is especially limited: a search in 2006 yielded a total of just 7 references, none of which featured any detailed explanation of JET's goals. On the other hand, there were 160 references to JET across MEXT's more comprehensive Japanese-language website. In one MEXT statement from 2001, JET's goals were specified thus:

There are two basic aims of the JET Programme—to improve foreign language education (*gaikokugo kyōiku no jūjitsu*) and to promote international exchange in local areas (*chiiki ni okeru kokusai kōryū no sokushin*). (MEXT 2001d; my translation)

In a separate MEXT statement, entitled ‘*JET Puroguramu no Genjō to Hyōka*’ (‘JET Programme Current Situation and Assessment’), the above two goals are again emphasized. What is notable here, however, is the reference to a third goal, i.e. ‘mutual understanding’ between Japan and other countries (*shogaikoku to no sōgō rikai*):

The JET Programme was established in 1987 at a time when our commitment to internationalization was changing in association with the worldwide trend of globalization. The programme is being implemented with the aims of promoting international exchange at a local level (*chiiki reberu de no kokusai kōryū no sokushin*), improving foreign language education in Junior-High Schools and High Schools (*chūgakkō, kōtōgakkō de no gaikokugo kyōiku no jūjitsu*), and fostering mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and other countries (*shogaikoku to no sōgō rikai, kōryū no sokushin*). (MEXT 2001c; my translation)

In a 2003 publication entitled ‘*Kokusai Kōryū Panfuretto*’ (‘International Exchange Pamphlet’), MEXT (2003a) rationalises its own involvement in the programme:

It has become important to improve and enrich the content and method of foreign language education in our country’s Junior High Schools and High Schools, especially in terms of fostering improvement in practical communication ability in ‘listening’ and ‘speaking’ (*toku ni “kiku koto” “hanasu koto” no jissenteki komunikēshon nōryoku no ikusei kōjō*), and also encouraging pupils to gain a correct understanding regarding other countries (*shogaikoku ni kansuru tadashii rikai*) ... By receiving language instruction directly from native speakers, students will obtain ample opportunities to learn a ‘more living language’ (*yori ikita kotoba*). (MEXT 2003a; my translation)

In this last extract, MEXT not only envisages a role for native-speakers in fostering communicative competence among schoolchildren but also in facilitating ‘correct understanding’ of foreign countries. In common with numerous other ministerial policy statements, however, there is no explanation of terminology. In the above instance, the

reader cannot deduce whether the phrase ‘correct understanding regarding other countries’ (*shogaikoku ni kansuru todashii rikai*) implies, say, a desire to understand alternative value and belief systems, or merely an expanded repertoire of facts about foreign countries.

6.2.3 ‘The MIC Perspective’

Numerous searches of MIC’s English-language website made in 2006 and 2007 failed to yield even a single detailed explanation of JET’s goals. However, in a statement on its Japanese-language version (MIC 2005), MIC does describe JET as ‘one of the world’s largest human exchange projects’ (*sekai saidai kibo no kokusai kōryū purojekuto no hitotsu*), whose aims are ‘the fostering of local-level international exchange’ (*chiiki reberu no kokusai kōryū*) and ‘the enrichment of language education’ (*gogaku kyōiku no jūjitsu*). In essence, the same two goals emphasized by CLAIR.

The lack of statements from this ministry, particularly by comparison with other two ministries, is perhaps understandable given that CLAIR generally represents it in international matters. Indeed, CLAIR was itself created by MIC’s predecessor, the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Jichishō*)—which McConnell (2000:31) identifies as the primary driving-force behind JET’s creation.

6.2.4 'The MOFA Perspective'

Given its preoccupation with Japan's external relations, it would be understandable if MOFA offered a somewhat different perspective from other ministries. However, in the main mission statement on its own JET website, MOFA simply echoes the same message as CLAIR and the other two ministries:

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme invites university graduates from various overseas countries to Japan to participate in international exchange and foreign language education throughout Japan. (MOFA 2006d)

A similar explanation is provided in the following widely-distributed MOFA information pamphlet from 2004:

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme seeks to enhance internationalization in Japan by promoting mutual understanding between Japan and other nations. Specifically, the programme aims to enhance foreign language education in Japan, and to promote international exchange at the local level through fostering ties between Japanese and foreign youth. (MOFA 2004:2)

Japanese embassy/consular websites—which also fall under MOFA's jurisdiction—describe the programme's goals in broadly similar terms to the above, as reflected in the following extract (which is identical to that featured on several similar websites):

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme aims to enhance internationalization in Japan by promoting mutual understanding between Japan and other nations. The Programme

enhances foreign language education and promotes international exchange at the local level through fostering ties between Japanese youth and foreign, young professionals. (Source: Consulate-General of Japan in Vancouver, 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 12/06/2006)

However, in the following statement on its Japanese-language website, MOFA provides a different, more revealing insight into its vision for the programme:

In schools and local authorities in every area of Japan, young JET participants are experiencing Japan through their close involvement in activities with the local community. Thus, they represent a new type of (pro-Japanese) Japan-specialist (*hitoaji chigatta atarashii taipu no chinichi-ka, shinnichi-ka*), who differ from the Japan researchers of the past. On returning to their homelands, they have been playing an active part in many different fields; as such, they are becoming valuable intermediaries (*kichō na hashi-watashi*) between Japan and their own home countries. (MOFA 2006b; my translation)

Here, it is apparent that MOFA does not regard JET merely as a means of changing Japanese attitudes towards foreigners and the outside world. Rather, it is also about influencing the way foreigners perceive Japan (and then encouraging them to convey a positive message about Japan to people in their home countries). Thus, when MOFA speaks of 'mutual understanding', it is motivated, in no small measure, by a desire to engender positive impressions of Japan. Of course, this is entirely consistent with its overtly-declared objective of increasing the number of persons 'who are both knowledgeable about and sympathetic to Japan' through 'activities in the field of education' (MOFA 2006a:204).

6.2.5 What are the Main ‘Official Goals’ of the JET Programme?

While individual statements often bear the hallmarks of the ministry that issued them, the above examination of official discourse suggests that, in general terms, three goals predominate over all others, namely:

- 1) To promote ‘local-level international exchange’
- 2) To enhance standards in foreign language education (particularly communicative competence in English)
- 3) To foster ‘understanding of Japan’

That one should be able to identify three goals is perhaps logical, given that JET was founded (and is overseen jointly) by three ministries. One could perhaps argue that these goals broadly concur with the founding ministries’ individual concerns and spheres of influence, i.e. local/regional development (Ministry of Home Affairs); foreign language education (Ministry of Education); and Japan’s international image (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Of course, there are many other possible rationales for JET’s creation and continuing existence that have not been openly declared. Whenever the distribution of financial resources is involved, one can never overlook the ‘*cui bono?*’ factor. Suffice it to say, there are myriad vested interests across Japan that have benefited (and continue to benefit) from JET’s existence. In other words, it is inevitable that different individuals and groups will perceive the goals of the programme according to their own interests.

Before I attempt ascertain to what extent these goals are enshrined in JET Programme

policy and pursued on a day-to-day basis, I shall consider the implications of each goal individually, particularly in terms of what it reveals about official attitudes to the wider question of internationalization (to the extent that such can be discerned). In this regard, the theoretical policy discussion featured in Chapter 4 may offer some useful points of reference.

6.3 Local-Level International Exchange

6.3.1 What are the Implications of This Goal?

In terms of policy, the implications of this goal must obviously depend on how the term 'local-level international exchange' is conceptualized. As explained earlier, JET does not fit the traditional definition of an 'exchange programme': there is no reciprocity in terms of Japanese graduates being dispatched overseas to work in school classrooms. Nonetheless, CLAIR has explained why JET should be considered an exchange programme:

The JET Programme is an exchange programme on many levels. First, each participant brings their culture to a local community in Japan, helping the geographically isolated country to gain personal contact with peoples of other nations. Second, each participant will learn a great deal about Japan and people and customs here, knowledge that we hope participants will share with their friends and family upon returning home. Many JETs come to teach, but ultimately they learn much more about Japan and their home country as well. (CLAIR 2006r)

To judge from this statement, JET is about 'cultural exchange'; a mutual process of

education, whereby foreigners and Japanese share their cultures with each other. In describing Japan as a ‘geographically-isolated country’ (which seems questionable in this age of supersonic travel and global interconnectedness), CLAIR appears to be suggesting that ‘personal contact’ between Japanese people and foreigners is still somehow too limited and in need of official encouragement. Over the past two decades, the government has undoubtedly facilitated such contact by inviting thousands of young JET participants to reside and work in communities around Japan. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of workers, particularly from Brazil and Peru, and thousands of overseas students, especially from China, have arrived in the country. Despite a steady increase in Japan’s foreign-born population, ‘international exchange’ remains a declared policy objective for the JET Programme, but what specifically are JET’s sponsors hoping to achieve?

Official JET publications (e.g. CLAIR 2006e) frequently refer to the somewhat nebulous concept of ‘grassroots internationalization’, which is apparently the end-product of local-level international exchange. For many, however, the use of the term ‘grassroots’ in this context is incongruous, given that term’s association with autonomous volunteer groups that seek change ‘from the bottom-up’. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, McConnell (2000:30) has described the JET approach as ‘top-down grassroots internationalization’. Despite ubiquitous use of the term ‘grassroots internationalization’, there is little discussion as regards its desired effects, if any, on Japanese society. This absence of discussion was certainly evident in my own

examination of official JET websites and publications. Given this reality, one is perhaps compelled to turn to Japanese convention and precedent for some indication of official intentions in this regard. To this end, I shall now consider:

- how the concept of ‘international exchange’ has commonly been interpreted in a Japanese context
- how the issue of ‘intercultural education’ has been addressed within the school education system

6.3.2 ‘International Exchange’ in a Japanese Context

The term ‘international exchange’, so ubiquitous in JET Programme literature, is a simple translation of the Japanese expression ‘*kokusai kōryū*’—‘*kokusai*’ meaning ‘international’ and ‘*kōryū*’ meaning ‘exchange’ (though with the specific connotation of ‘interchange’ or ‘interaction’). Tadao Umesao (1993), for instance, defines ‘*kokusai kōryū*’ simply as ‘associating with foreigners’ (‘*gaikokujin to kōsai suru koto*’).

Although the term ‘*kokusai kōryū*’ has been used in various contexts (e.g. business and international politics), it often refers to a specific type of ‘managed’ interaction between Japanese and foreigners that takes place under the auspices of an organization, whether official, quasi-governmental or non-governmental. At the community level, a key role in *kokusai kōryū* is played by ‘Local International Exchange Associations’ (*chiiki kokusaika kyōkai*) (CLAIR 2003c), which are affiliated to the ‘International Departments’ (*kokusai-ka*) of local authorities; in other words, CLAIR’s ‘domestic branch offices’ (CLAIR 2003b). These associations offer support to foreign residents

throughout Japan, by, for instance, providing logistical services and free Japanese lessons. The associations are also known for organizing *kokusai kōryū* ‘events’ or ‘activities’, which bring Japanese people into social contact with foreigners in their local communities. While literally thousands of such events are held annually across Japan, the following day of activities, hosted by the Aichi International Association, is a typical example of what is on offer:

1. Performance of *shamisen*; a traditional Japanese three-stringed instrument
2. Indian dance
3. Potluck party with your own country's specialties
4. Lion dance and bean-scattering ceremony: celebrating Chinese New Year and scattering roasted beans to drive out evil spirits on *Setsubun* (traditional Japanese festival)
5. *Ikebana* (flower-arranging) demonstration
6. Koto (Japanese horizontal harp) & violin performance

(Aichi International Association 2007: unpaginated)

In *kokusai kōryū* events, the emphasis is placed upon activities that are both entertaining and culturally enlightening. Possible linguistic barriers notwithstanding, the expectation is that Japanese and foreigners will share aspects of their respective cultures in a warm, congenial ambience. Although such events are probably appreciated by many who participate in them, the value of this approach to international exchange is not universally appreciated. Mary-Ellen Yoshioka (1999), for instance, criticises such ‘carnival-like events’ for their superficial approach to intercultural understanding. Another critic, Tomoko Nakamatsu (2002), has described how ‘Asian brides’ (i.e. Korean and Filipino nationals) were routinely deployed as an exotic cultural attraction, e.g. as dance performers and cookery teachers, purely as a means of bolstering the

internationalist credentials of local officials. As Nakamatsu (2002:224) explains, ‘the repeated staging of these stereotyped events made some foreign women feel they were being used to promote the towns’, while these same women were excluded from regular community events. In other words, she concludes, the women were valued as members of ‘exotic’ ethnic groups but not as members of mainstream Japanese society. A similar observation has been made by Chris Burgess (2004), for whom *kokusai kōryū* events serve to ‘include’ foreigners by locking them into a particular category of difference.

To what extent JET can be compared to local *kokusai kōryū* events is debatable. JET participants are specially imported, salaried employees, contracted to perform a range of specified duties; they are not simply foreigners who happen to be living in the vicinity and are willing to give up some of their free time to inform locals about their cultural traditions. Among Japanese, participation in *kokusai kōryū* events tends to be voluntary and motivated by personal interest. By contrast, JET essentially ‘forces’ Japanese schoolchildren and JTLs into contact with foreign ALTs. Despite these obvious differences, characteristics of the ‘*kokusai kōryū* event’ are clearly evident in another government-sponsored programme, the so-called ‘Local Government Officials Training Program’ (LGOTP), under the auspices of which foreign civil servants are invited to Japan for training (of up to 10 months’ duration). In a section of the LGOTP training guide entitled ‘Preparing to be an Ambassador of Your Home Country’, CLAIR suggests how foreign participants might prepare for local-level international

exchange in their area:

One of the objectives of the LGOTP is to have the participants cooperate with activities for internationalization planned by the local governments in Japan. In this regard, you may be asked to introduce your hometown or country and its customs to residents in your host city. Therefore, you may want to consider bringing some of the following items with you to Japan: Slides and photos of home: family, work, places of interest, food, everyday scenes, unique events and celebrations; a fact book about your country with statistics, maps, and photos; everyday items such as stamps, newspapers, coins, music CDs; traditional clothing of your home country. You may also want to consider songs, dances, or other cultural performance that you could do. (CLAIR 2006c: 11)

Again, critics might perceive such ‘activities for internationalization’ as designed to display foreigners as an exotic attraction, thus emphasizing their ‘otherness’ (see Section 3.3.4). One might question whether it is appropriate for CLAIR to suggest that foreign civil servants perform songs and dances in the line of duty. While LGOTP may not be entirely representative of all government-sponsored international programmes, it is worth noting a few clear similarities with the JET Programme. Both programmes invite foreign participants to Japan in the name of ‘internationalization’ and are co-ordinated by CLAIR (in this case, in co-operation with MIC) yet implemented by local authorities. Like JET, LGOTP has its own ‘Tokyo Orientation’ and official publications compare its participants to ‘ambassadors’.

To judge both from my interview data and online accounts, some ALTs see the characteristics of the ‘*kokusai kōryū* event’ at work in the JET Programme. A skeptical ALT explains:

The basic principle of JET: We will provide local communities with friendly young foreigners and pay these foreigners to be nice to people and to participate in the community and whatnot...If the government really wants to internationalize Japan, they'd be a lot better off creating actual jobs for people to actually do in the community. Bringing in foreigners to sing 'The Hokey Pokey' with children is one thing, actually encouraging the integration of foreign workers in Japan is quite another. (Source: 'Dave's ESL Café' Japan Forum; retrieved 3/11/2005)

In the same context, one of the ALT interviewees, May, is critical of JET's dependence on recruits who speak little or no Japanese, which she considers an obvious impediment to their interaction with Japanese people. May is convinced, however, that the local officials who sponsor *kokusai kōryū* events (and here she includes JET) do not regard a lack of language ability as an impediment to the kind of interaction they are seeking to promote:

There's this kind of idealization of the concept of communicating 'in spite of' language barriers, and people seem to speak reverently of being able to connect and communicate without words. Well, yes it's nice, and certainly fun, for a group of Japanese with no English skills and a group of foreigners with no Japanese skills, to be able to accomplish a task together (like making soba noodles or something). But is it meaningful? I would say only in the most limited of ways. There's no exchange of ideas, no clash of values, and thus no hard work required on either side. (May 8/10/2003)

In the absence of detailed official explanations, it is difficult to ascertain precisely what concrete effects JET policy-makers hoped to achieve by establishing the goal of international exchange. Clearly, many ALTs (and, indeed, other resident foreigners)

believe that Japanese local authorities are more interested in using foreigners to generate some form of intangible ‘international feel-good effect’ within their own local communities than in acknowledging that foreigners are capable of making a useful contribution to Japanese society. On the other hand, given the link several national governments have made between education and the promotion of societal tolerance (see Craft 1996), it would seem unreasonable to dismiss unconditionally the possibility that the placement of ALTs in schools was designed, at least in part, to facilitate a smooth psychological transition to a more pluralistic society. To assess to what extent this might be the case, it is worth investigating how ‘intercultural education’ has been approached in a Japanese context.

6.3.3 ‘Intercultural Education’ in a Japanese Context

In Chapter 4, it was explained how certain countries with large immigrant populations (e.g. the Netherlands) had introduced civic education programmes aimed at fostering societal tolerance, including some predicated upon a multicultural model of citizenship. It would be fair to say that Japan has not sought to emulate these countries, which, given its traditional stance on diversity issues (e.g. immigration, and naturalization), is perhaps predictable.

When considering the topic of intercultural education within the state school sector, studies by Japanese scholars often centre on the concept of ‘education for international

understanding' (*kokusai rikai kyōiku*) (Akuzawa 2005; Ishikida 2005; Ishii 2001; Ōtsu 1992; Ozaki 2004; Sato, C. 2004; Satō, G. 2007; Tada 1997). Education for International Understanding (EIU) has its origins in a 1950s UNESCO initiative of the same name, aimed at fostering a harmonious international society in the immediate aftermath of World War II (see UNESCO 1959). According to Mariko Akuzawa (2005), Japan was particularly keen to embrace this ethos in the early postwar period, out of 'regret over nationalistic education carried out during the war' and due to widespread popular sympathy with UNESCO's goals.

In subsequent years, however, the focus of EIU deviated considerably from that envisaged by UNESCO; a deviation which began as early as the mid-1960s. In this regard, Takao Kamibeppu (2002:74) has observed a transformation from the 'global citizen model' proposed by UNESCO to a 'Japanized' form of EIU, more attuned to 'Japan's expanding international activities'. In the context of educational internationalization in Japan, the 1974 report by the Central Council on Education (CCE, *Chūō Kyōiku Shingi-kai* or *Chūkyōshin*) entitled 'On International Exchange in Education, Science and Culture' (*Kyōiku Gakujutsu Bunka ni okeru Kokusai Kōryū*) has been regarded as a landmark policy initiative. With specific regard to EIU, the report identified three core priorities, namely: education for Japanese children living overseas (*kaigaishijo kyōiku*); education for children returning to Japan from overseas (*kikokushijo kyōiku*); and foreign language education (*gaikokugo kyōiku*). According to Tetsuya Kobayashi (2004), one of the main policy objectives specified in the report

was ‘to nurture the Japanese for international society’. Thus, it was recommended that the promotion of education for overseas-based and returnee children be implemented with the aim of ‘raising internationally minded children and improving their international understanding’ (Kobayashi 2004:190). The report also acknowledged how Japan’s foreign language deficiencies had impeded its ability to engage actively with the international community.

While the furtherance of Japan’s national economic interests was an important consideration for educational policy-makers throughout the 1960s and 1970s, some scholars noted also a resurgence of interest in ‘the national identity’. As one example, a 1966 CCE report advocated the fostering of ‘proper patriotism’, ‘respect for symbols’ (specifically, the Japanese emperor) and the ‘development of Japanese character’ (Beauchamp & Vardaman 1994:164-167). Moreover, despite the ostensible importance attached to the development of ‘international-mindedness’ among overseas and returning Japanese schoolchildren in the above-mentioned 1974 Central Council report, Lincicome (1993) points to a Ministry of Education document from the following year, which states that the primary goal of education for such children should not be ‘to cultivate an international consciousness’ but, rather:

to assuage the anxiety Japanese people living abroad feel towards the education of their host countries that takes place in an environment completely different from Japan’s, and their accompanying anxiety that the system for receiving these children upon their return [to Japan] is inadequate. (Lincicome 1993:156)

The economic boom of the 1980s changed Japan's relationship with the outside world. Just as Japanese companies were expanding their operations overseas, foreign workers were also being attracted to Japan. The intensification of Japan's international involvement engendered what Akuzawa (2005:72) describes as a 'popularization of EIU', at both the national and local government level. At the same time, however, the two basic principles underpinning official approaches to EIU, i.e. the Japanese national economic interest and the Japanese national identity, remained the same. Under the stewardship of Prime Minister Nakasone (1982-1987)—the man widely credited with launching the *kokusaika* campaign—internationalization in education became, paradoxically perhaps, associated with the promotion of nationalism. As Kobayashi (1986:65-66) argued at the time, internationalization was viewed merely as 'a tool for contributing to the political, economic and social aspects of the nation', with foreign countries regarded as mere 'objects from which Japan can learn something or make a profit'.

In his earlier-mentioned '*kokusai kokka Nihon*' speech of 1984, Nakasone emphasized the importance of Japan's 'international contribution' (*kokusai kōken*) (Itoh 2000). One important means of achieving this was through Japanese 'overseas development aid' (ODA). With the significant rise in ODA during the 1980s (Yasutomo 1986), a new concept was incorporated into EIU, namely 'development education' (*kaihatsu kyōiku*). According to Yuri Ishii (2001:341), however, the mainstream actors in educational policy-making at the time remained 'uninterested in development

education'. Rather, as Akuzawa (2005:73-75) explains, the main proponents of development education were non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and it was also they, as the principal advocates for migrants' rights, that introduced 'the multicultural perspective' into Japanese school education.

What is apparent thus far is a general lack of interest among educational policy-makers in using EIU to help foster tolerance of diversity within Japanese society itself. On this basis, Yoshiyuki Nagata & Bob Teasdale (2003:641) would appear justified in distinguishing 'education for international understanding' ('the exploration of social, political and cultural differences between nations') from 'education for intercultural or cross-cultural understanding' (which includes 'the study of cultural and social differences within a nation state, with the aim of building national harmony and cohesion'). However, with the introduction of curriculum reforms at the beginning of the 21st Century, there would appear to be a prospect of change.

In 2002, MEXT introduced into the primary and junior-high school curricula a so-called 'Period for Integrated Study' (*Sōgōteki na Gakushū no Jikan*), one element of which was 'education for international understanding' (*kokusai rikai kyōiku*). In the history of the Japanese curriculum, 'integrated study' classes are revolutionary in that they are designed not with the aim of transferring knowledge but of fostering independence and creativity among children (Komatsu 2002). As MEXT (2002d) explains, the Period for Integrated Study is designed to help students:

- (1) Develop natural gifts and faculties to find assignments, learn, and think by themselves, make decisions independently, take actions, and solve problems better; and
- (2) Acquire ways to learn and view things, develop attitudes to address problem solving and research activities independently and creatively, and be able to think of their own goals in life.

The Period for Integrated Study is revolutionary also in that lesson content is decided entirely by individual schools and teachers, and teaching materials do not require MEXT's authorisation. In association with this reform, there are also suggestions of a shift of policy emphasis to reflect Japan's changing demographic realities, as reflected in the following statement from MEXT:

The term 'Education for International Understanding' is not only applicable to English classes but to every subject, especially the subject of social studies, the subject of geography and history, moral education and special activities. Such education aims at instilling a broader perspective and an understanding of different cultures, fostering attitudes of respect for such ideas, and the ability to live with people of different cultures. (MEXT 2003b)

In theory at least, contemporary *Kokusai Rikai Kyōiku* no longer has just an external focus ('learning to understand different cultures') but also an internal one ('fostering the ability to live with people of different cultures'). At the same time, there are signs of both a cognitive and an affective emphasis, perhaps suggesting a move in the direction of civic education programmes pursued in some Western European countries (see Section 4.3.2).

Meanwhile, however, some scholars of Japanese education (e.g. Tsuneyoshi 2005; Parmenter 2004, 2006a; Willis 2006) have perceived no fundamental deviation from a long-standing tendency to predicate education policy upon the assumption of ethnic homogeneity. Despite an increase of interest in Japan in ‘citizenship education’ in recent years, Willis (2006:54) believes few Japanese scholars look at citizenship education with a ‘global’ view in mind, targeting instead only ‘mainstream Japanese society’. Willis’ views are largely shared by Lynne Parmenter, who identifies two essential assumptions underpinning Japanese education policy with regard to citizenship and identity questions, namely ‘homogeneity’ and ‘uniqueness’ (Parmenter 2006b:11). Parmenter notes that although these assumptions are rarely made explicit, they are implicit in policy documents and curriculum guidelines, which often contain references to developing self-awareness ‘as a Japanese person’. As Parmenter (2004:87) explains, ‘the assumption that all children in Japanese state schools are Japanese underlies all education policy and curriculum’. As one example, MEXT guidelines for the 2003 sixth-grade primary school curriculum specify one of the aims of social science as follows:

To deepen interest in and understanding of the achievements of our ancestors who have worked hard for the nation and society and our excellent cultural heritage; to cherish our country’s history and traditions; and to foster a sentiment of love for the country.

(*Kokka, shakai no hatten ni ōki na hataraki wo shita senjin no gyōseki ya sugureta bunka isan ni tsuite kyōmi, kanshin to rikai wo fukameru yō ni suru to tomo ni, wagakuni no rekishi ya dentō wo taisetsu ni shi, kuni wo aisuru shinjō wo sodateru yō ni suru.*) (MEXT 2003c; my translation).

Another conspicuous feature of Japanese education policy noted by Parmenter (2006b) is a neglect of Asia, to the extent that Asia is not mentioned once in either the elementary school or the junior-high school curriculum. As Parmenter (2006b:16) puts it: 'the most noticeable feature of education about Asia in Japanese schools is its non-existence'.

Despite the increasing diversification of its population, Japan's approach to intercultural education has, thus far, shown few signs of emulating the multicultural citizenship models pursued in countries like the Netherlands and Sweden. Ryōko Tsuneyoshi reports some increase in 'sensitivity' among educators and textbook companies regarding issues like equality and human rights, yet she believes also that the Japanese system still has 'a long way to go' in terms of mainstreaming the experiences of minority cultures and striving toward 'a more inclusive curriculum' (Tsuneyoshi 2001:161). Likewise, Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu (2003) detects positive signs of change vis-à-vis the promotion of positive cross-cultural interaction; ultimately, however, he sees intercultural education in Japanese schools as still steeped in cultural essentialism. He explains:

Foreign residents are invited to share their 'traditional cultures' in the classroom, and Japanese children are therefore being exposed more than ever to people from other cultural backgrounds in a positive way. However, the problem of overemphasizing differences and instilling frozen national stereotypes is unfortunately an integral part of the simplistic way in which culture is taught. (Shigematsu-Murphy 2003: unpaginated)

This ‘simplistic’ approach to intercultural education—whereby cognitive aspects of internationalization (e.g. learning facts about different countries and customs) are prioritized over more humanistic, affective aspects (e.g. engendering empathy and an ability to live together with non-Japanese)—has been observed by others. Akuzawa (2005) refers to a ‘traditional 3Fs approach’; an emphasis on foreign countries’ ‘food, fashion and festivals’. In other words, teaching towards a superficial appreciation of ethnic cultures, or what Stanley Fish (1997) labels ‘boutique multiculturalism’. In this regard, Kobayashi (1986:65) claimed, two decades ago, that internationalization in education in Japan was ‘often misunderstood as simply the mastery of foreign language or the acquisition of information of foreign countries’. Yuko Okubo (2003), writing more recently, sees intercultural education as still ‘reduced to dealing with the cultural aspects of foreigners’ rather than acknowledging the needs and rights of Japan’s own foreign resident communities.

Despite long-standing criticism of intercultural education in Japan, MEXT (2003a) has suggested that JET does have a role to play in facilitating ‘correct understanding’ (*tadashii rikai*) of foreign countries. Moreover, it is under the specific auspices of *kokusai rikai kyōiku* (as one element of ‘integrated study’) that ALTs are invited into elementary school classrooms. Since JET exposes literally millions of children in their formative years to the presence of foreign ALTs, the programme’s role in attitude formation is potentially far-reaching. In this regard, ALTs would seem to represent a ready-made resource for the introduction of new initiatives and activities in the area of

intercultural education. In order to understand how policy-makers actually perceive the role of the ALT in the wider context of Japanese school education, it is necessary to examine the finer details of the programme's operational policy. This issue will be addressed in Chapter 7.

6.4 Enhancing Standards in Foreign Language Education (Particularly Communicative Competence in English)

6.4.1 What are the Implications of This Goal?

The implications of this goal can be considered on two levels. Firstly, there is the question of how JET might help ameliorate deficiencies in language education, particularly in terms of communicative competence in English. Secondly, and more important from the perspective of this study, is the broader question of how improved English standards across Japanese society might affect the country's internationalization (*kokusaika*) process.

6.4.2 Japan's 'English Problem'

Given that foreign language education is a virtual *sine qua non* in any national curriculum, the Japanese government's desire for higher standards seems natural. In linking JET to foreign language teaching, it is implied that the importation of foreign

ALTs can help raise these standards. However, to appreciate JET's potential merits in this regard, it is worth trying to identify the problems that might need addressing.

The first point that must be acknowledged about foreign language education in Japan is the high level of criticism levelled at it. Primarily perhaps, criticism has focused on the failure to nurture children with the ability to communicate in English. In the opinion of Tokyo University professor, Takashi Inoguchi (1999a; 1999b), Japan has become an '*eigo shippai kokka*' ('nation that has 'failed' with regard to English'). Evidently, Inoguchi's views are widely shared (see Clark 2000; Mulvey 1999; Tolbert 2000). As an 'objective' indicator of Japan's linguistic shortcomings, some (e.g. Honna 1995; Jo & Hisada 2000; Sawa 1999) have pointed to the perennially poor performance of Japanese students in international TOEFL tests, which feature a listening and speaking component. While some, including academics like Sean Reedy (2000), would refute such criticisms, analysis of Japanese students' TOEFL scores does reveal markedly worse results than among their counterparts in China, South Korea and Taiwan, even factoring in the high number of Japanese test-takers (see Educational Testing Service 2007).

Even if English language education is not the unmitigated disaster some of its critics allege, it still falls well short of standards achieved in subjects like science and mathematics, for which Japan has won many plaudits (see Lynn 1988; Cave 2001). In order to understand how such a situation has arisen, one should perhaps consider not

only the systemic deficiencies in English education, but also the underlying issue of attitudes (whether official or popular) towards the English language and its study.

6.4.3 Japanese Attitudes toward the English Language and its Study

The question of ‘language attitudes’ has been investigated from a wide range of perspectives. In an early study, Gardner & Lambert (1972) focused on the issues of attitude and motivation in second language learning. According to Colin Baker, language attitude studies have covered a wide range of areas like ‘language preference’, ‘reasons for learning a language’, ‘language teaching’, ‘language groups and communities’, ‘uses of language’, ‘classroom processes in language lessons’ and ‘parents’ language attitudes’ (Baker 1992:23). Some researchers have sought to determine how individuals evaluate varieties or dialects of a given language based on a person’s accent, using so-called ‘matched-guise’ techniques (e.g. Giles, Hewstone & Ball 1983). Other studies, stretching back several decades, have considered the relationship between language learning success and learner attitudes towards the society/country where the target language is spoken (e.g. Brown 1994; Gardner 1991; Gardner & Lambert 1972; Lallemand 1987; Lightbown & Spada 2006; Nikolov 2001; Schumann 1986). While there are obvious difficulties in gauging attitudes towards English among any 128 million-strong population, examination of the Japanese case does reveal a few paradoxes.

Except for a few years during World War II (Imura 2003), English has been the central pillar of Japanese ‘foreign language-in-education policy’ since the Meiji period. As Byram (2000b:316) puts it: ‘English was the most important language for the purpose of importing Western civilization’. In prewar times, standard British English was generally perceived as the most appropriate model for school language education (McKenzie 2008; Scarangello 1956), though a shift towards American English began with the U.S. occupation of Japan in the early postwar period, when, as Hoshiyama (1978:105) explains, new English textbooks were compiled ‘under the suggestive directive of the U.S. Occupation Forces’ educational advisors’. Japan’s close alliance with America in subsequent decades has practically guaranteed the prioritization of English as a target language in school education, though this has been to the virtual exclusion of all other foreign languages, including even those of Japan’s East Asian neighbours. Kaplan & Baldauf (2003) question the wisdom of a limited foreign language-in-education policy:

It is unclear why English persists as essentially the only foreign language taught. One would think that Japan’s geographic location in East Asia and its global economic partnerships would suggest that there ought to be significant numbers of Japanese able to speak Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Korean, Mandarin, Thai, and the languages of its other major economic partners. (Kaplan & Baldauf 2003:25)

While there is little evidence of widespread support for the learning of other languages, the value of English education does seem to be appreciated across a broad spectrum of Japanese society, as Robert Aspinall (2006) explains:

Among the vast majority of academics, policy-makers, teachers, parents and business groups, it is hard to find anything other than the whole-hearted approval of efforts to improve international education in general and English language education in particular. (Aspinall 2006:257)

Significantly, advocacy for better English education extends to Japan's teaching unions, including the All-Japan Teachers' and Staff Union (*Zenkyō*), which has frequently opposed government policy in other areas. Some Japanese multinationals, like Matsushita, Toyota and NEC, have for several years linked career prospects to English ability (Voigt 2001). Evidently, there is also considerable public interest in learning English. According to the Yano Research Institute, Japanese parents spent \$768m in 2004 on English conversation lessons for their children. Another survey estimated that 21% of Japanese 5-year-olds were studying English in some form (McCurry 2006); while according to Suzuki & Imanishi (2000:24-25), English accounted for 85% of all classes taught at *Berlitz* language schools in Japan in 2000. To judge from enrolments in such classes, as well as in overseas study programmes and proficiency tests like TOEFL and the domestically-operated *Eiken*, Mee-Ling Lai (1999:216) would seem justified in describing English as a language for 'upward and outward movement' in Japan.

Despite the above, analyses of English language education have often focused on the negative aspects, notably the ambivalent attitudes of Japanese towards English and its study (e.g. Befu 1983; Inoguchi 1999a and 1999b; Law 1995; McVeigh 2002; White

1988). In recent years, some (e.g. Higae 2006) have questioned MEXT's emphasis on English while standards of Japanese are perceived to have deteriorated, particularly in terms of students' ability to write *kanji* (Chinese characters). Some academics (e.g. Nakamura 1989; Ōishi 1990; Tsuda 1990, 1996) are known to oppose the spread of English on ideological grounds, based on a belief that it perpetuates Anglo-Saxon (particularly U.S.) global hegemony. One notable proponent of this line is Yukio Tsuda (1990; 1996) of Nagoya University. Tsuda is an enthusiastic subscriber to the 'Linguistic Imperialism' thesis (Phillipson 1992), as reflected in the title of his 1996 book: '*Shinryaku Suru Eigo, Hangeki Suru Nihongo*' ('Invading English, Counterattacking Japanese'). In part, Tsuda opposes 'English rule' (*eigo shihai*) out of concern for its effects on Japanese culture and traditions. In this connection, McVeigh (2002) has discerned a wider tendency to equate the attainment of native-like competence in English with a diminution of a person's 'Japaneseness'. Similarly, Kaplan & Baldauf (2003:22) note a 'popular assumption' in Japan that 'knowing (learning) any language other than Japanese causes the learner to become less Japanese', which makes it tantamount to 'subtractive bilingualism'. In this connection, a much-discussed phenomenon, particularly in the late 1980s and 1990s, was the so-called '*kikokushijo* problem' (Goodman 1990; Kanno 2000; 2003), whereby children returning from overseas (where, typically, their fathers had been posted) suffered discrimination at school because of their perceived 'foreign' behaviour; most notably, their foreign language ability. In one albeit small-scale survey conducted in 1990, more than two-thirds of respondents reported having been bullied because of

'their English ability, lack of competence in Japanese, different manners, attitudes and ways of thinking' (Yoneyama 1999:169). Although a teacher, Yumiko Kiguchi (1999:10) claims her colleagues treated her 'like a criminal' when she attempted to introduce 'genuine English' in her classes.

Some commentators have observed a tendency among Japanese to make light of, or even celebrate, their lack of foreign language ability. McVeigh, for instance, (2002:156) refers to a TV quiz show featuring a 'Funniest English' segment, and another geared towards 'unusable English'. Moreover, many Japanese wear clothes festooned with 'nonsense English' and/or comical spelling mistakes. In this regard, Barbara Hyde (2002) has described how English performs an 'emblematic' function, which is devoid of any communicative purpose. Hyde considers such 'useless' English particularly insidious, since it reinforces the message that 'all English is just as peripheral to the real business of life' (Hyde 2002:16).

6.4.4 Systemic Deficiencies in Japanese School Language Education

While attitudes towards English clearly vary, 'systemic' deficiencies in foreign language education have been seen as an impediment to the fostering of communicative ability in English. According to Judith Lamie (1998:518), the education ministry identified, as long ago as 1986, the following problems: lack of student exposure to spoken English; lack of confidence in communicating in English; large class sizes;

difficult teaching materials and an adherence to traditional teaching methods. To the above list, one might add others like ‘inadequate teacher training’ (Browne & Wada 1998; Crooks 2001; Lamie 1998, 1999; LoCastro 1996; Yonesaka 1999) and ‘lack of class time devoted to English’ (Hato 2005). Of all the above factors, however, the widespread adherence to a traditional, non-communicative teaching methodology known as *yakudoku* (grammar-translation) is often regarded as the most pernicious because of its effects on teacher training, materials development and testing.

Yakudoku

Yakudoku, which literally means ‘translation’ (*yaku*) and ‘reading’ (*doku*), focuses almost exclusively on the translation of foreign language texts and the analysis of grammar (Hino 1988; Law 1995; Gorsuch 1998). *Yakudoku* methodology was introduced more than a thousand years ago as a means of assimilating Confucian ideas and technology from China without the need for a mastery of spoken Chinese. While *yakudoku* is criticised most commonly for its neglect of communicative ability, Nobuyuki Hino claims its effects are even more pernicious. As he explains: *yakudoku* ‘limits the speed at which the student reads, induces fatigue, and reduces the efficiency with which s/he is able to comprehend’ (Hino 1988: 47). For Kaplan & Baldauf (2003), a major disadvantage of the traditional approach is its neglect of the pragmatic element of language learning. They explain:

The problems in English (and other foreign language education) are only occasionally

grammatical. More often, the problems lie in the failure to understand other languages' pragmatic rules and semantic restrictional rules. The English that some Japanese have learned is often technically correct, but it is frequently less than intelligible because, in teaching the language, pragmatics is entirely ignored in favour of quite traditional grammatical instruction.

(Kaplan & Baldauf 2003:26)

The entrenchment of *yakudoku* in Japanese educational culture has been identified as a major obstacle to the introduction of alternative methodologies (Henrichsen 1989). Thus, despite initiatives to introduce more communicatively-oriented teaching, *yakudoku* has remained the preferred method of instruction for many JTLs (Gorsuch 1998). A survey by Anthony Rausch (2000) found that even JTLs who claimed to espouse 'learner-centered beliefs' employed *yakudoku*-based teaching practices in their classrooms.

The 'advantage' of *yakudoku* from a teacher's perspective is that knowledge of the target language can be evinced without the need for practical communicative ability, which, according to Aspinall (2006), many Japanese English teachers lack. Lynn Earl Henrichsen (1989) attributes the prevalence of *yakudoku* immediately after World War II to a shortage of trained, fluent English-speaking teachers. Evidently, the education system has been slow to overcome this problem. In a survey of High School JTLs in the late 1990s (Lamie 1998:521), 77% of respondents claimed to have received no training in communicative language teaching methodology. The introduction of new communicatively-oriented training courses for JTLs, in association with more recent MEXT language-in-education reforms, may eventually engender some improvements.

As it stands, however, such courses are often too brief and inconsistent to make a significant overall difference (see Section 8.5.1).

University Entrance Examinations

One reason for the continuing prevalence of *yakudoku* is the university examination system. English is a major component in the most university entrance examinations, including the ‘National Center Test for Universities’ (*Daigaku Nyūshi Sentā Shiken*), which often determines entry to Japan’s national universities. In fact, according to Yuko Goto Butler and Masakazu Iino (2005:30), English is often given the most weight in these examinations. It is difficult to overstate the importance of examinations in the life of a Japanese citizen. As Green (2000:422) puts it: ‘the fundamental problem in Japanese education is the problem of excessive examination competition’. Not for nothing is Japan described as a ‘*gakureki shakai*’—a society based on educational qualifications (Takeuchi 1995). Individuals are defined by their academic achievements, which usually means the university they attended (though, of course, Japan is far from unique in this respect). Given the stakes, it is understandable that the vast majority of High School teaching should be geared toward the entrance examinations (Crooks 2001; Rohlen 1983; Stephens 1991; Yoneyama 1999). In this respect, JTLs face the same pressure as all other teachers to impart the information that examination candidates need to remember, though this often leaves little space for communicative-type activities (Browne & Wada 1998; Goto Butler & Iino 2005; Sakui

2004).

Despite the importance of such examinations, questions are entirely of the multiple-choice variety, whereby candidates simply shade in rows of small circles on a ‘marksheets’ (Frost 1991). Thus, preparatory teaching is not aimed at honing the students’ communication skills. Rather, as Graham Law explains, the English examination usually entails the rote memorization of a re-coded (Japanese) version of an English text, with the original ‘alien code’ largely ‘displaced from view’ (Law 1995:216). In a widely-publicized reform, a listening component was incorporated into the Center Test in 2005, following a recommendation from MEXT (2003b). However, according to Elizabeth Lokon (2005), preparatory teaching for this examination has remained non-communicative and based largely on rote learning, thus providing little additional incentive for students to learn how to communicate in English.

The Japanese School Learning Environment

An alternative explanation for Japan’s ‘English problem’ is offered by Robert Aspinall (2006:262), who rejects the premise that school language learning deficiencies can be explained simply by referring to a ‘large, monolithic, unchanging Japanese culture’. Rather, he argues, common characteristics of the Japanese learning environment heavily influence the ‘small cultures’ that form within every Japanese school classroom (following Holliday (1999), these ‘small cultures’ are uniquely composed groups of

individual students, each with its own internal dynamics).

In Aspinall's view, certain 'common characteristics' of the Japanese school learning environment 'influence the interactions of groups of learners and teachers in ways that inhibit effective communicative foreign language teaching practice' (Aspinall 2006:255). Drawing on both ethnographic studies by Rohlen & Le Tendre (1996:369-376) and the experiences of 'many language teachers in Japan', Aspinall (ibid. 263-264) identifies four broad characteristics that militate against successful communicative English teaching in Japanese school classrooms. Firstly, Japanese learners are often passive and deferential to the 'superior knowledge' of teachers. Secondly, the Japanese emphasis on humility causes more advanced students to conceal their true ability; here, Aspinall notes cases of fluent English-speaking 'returnee students' (*kikokushijo*) pretending to be poor at English, purely in order to blend into their peer group. Thirdly, there is a tendency for students to believe that questions have only one 'correct' answer, which is known by the teacher. Fourthly, the egalitarian nature of Japanese education results in English being taught to (often large) mixed-ability groups.

6.4.5 The Pursuit of Communicative English and Internationalization

Whatever its root causes, Japan's 'English problem' is one that contemporary education policy-makers both acknowledge and appear intent on solving. In 1989, *Mombushō*

announced an ambitious curriculum entitled *New Revised Course of Study: Emphasis on Oral Communication* (NCROS) (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 1989), which, for the first time, identified 'communicative competence' as the principal goal of English language education. A new English course entitled 'Oral Communication', with emphasis on oral/aural skills, was introduced at the senior high-school level. This shift of emphasis was reinforced with the introduction in 1994 of the 'Course of Study Guidelines' (see Goold, Madeley & Carter 1993a, 1993b, 1994). According to Lamie (1998:515), however, the problem with the new approach was that it 'demanded a language emphasis, a resource utilisation and a classroom teaching style which were all in diametric opposition to those used before it'.

A tendency to equate communicative competence in English with the attainment of internationalization is evident in numerous official policy/consultative documents (e.g. MEXT 2002b; 2003a; 2003b), as well as on-the-record statements, like the following from one *Mombushō* official:

If Japanese students and teachers improve their communicative competence in English, then they have become more international. This is the goal of the JET Program from the point of view of our ministry. (Cited in McConnell 2000:30)

As will be illustrated below, the 'internationalizing value' of communicative English is recognized not only at the official level, where it is regarded as a potential strategic developmental resource, but also apparently at the popular level. While some Japanese

undoubtedly view spoken English ability as a means of enhancing their employment prospects, others might regard it as a tool in their personal quest to become '*kokusaijin*' (literally, 'international people'). In this regard, some (like Horibe 1998; Kubota 2002; Yoshino 2002) have identified a discourse in Japanese society that identifies English ability as a *sine qua non* of intercultural competence.

6.4.6 English as a Resource for National Development

To judge from their language-in-education policies, many governments appear to appreciate the value of fostering foreign language ability in their citizens. In some countries, high standards of foreign language education have yielded substantial national development benefits, for instance, in terms of attracting inward investment or training human resources for the international service sector (see Chua 2004; Pakir 1997 on the Singaporean situation). However, according to numerous Japan-scholars (e.g. Carroll 2001; Coulmas 2002; Heinrich 2007; Kawai 2007; Law 1995; McVeigh 2004; Miller 1982; Osa 1998; Tai 1999; Unger 1996), Japanese language policy has traditionally been predicated upon an ideology of 'linguistic nationalism', which itself is predicated on an assumption of ethno-linguistic homogeneity. Despite an apparent realisation among policy-makers that the concept of a monolingual Japan is difficult to sustain, scholars have noted a resistance to systemic reform. James Tollefson (2002b) describes the Japanese predicament as follows:

internationalization and cross-cultural understanding, the purported need to defend Japanese and secure its place in the world continues to be an undercurrent of discussions about language policy in Japan (Tollefson 2002b:11).

In this connection, Nanette Gottlieb (2007:35) considers Japan to have reached Ricento's (2000) 'third stage' of language policy development, where the focus is on 'global flows and identity interactions', while its language policies remain 'largely derived from the first stage', i.e. when language was perceived a tool for nation-building. Similarly, Tessa Carroll (2001:7) notes a long-standing tension in Japanese language policy between the development of Japan's contacts with the outside world on the one hand and 'maintaining its uniqueness' on the other. However, Peter Backhaus (2007:146) considers not only the ideological underpinning of the Japanese language 'as the essence of being Japanese', but also the uncontested role of Japanese as the national language itself to be under increasing pressure, both from above and below.

English Language Policy for the New Millennium

As Japan reassesses its language education priorities, some policy-makers have clearly decided that a wholehearted embrace of English is in their country's vital interests. For instance, the aforementioned Prime Minister's Commission (2000) advocated, as a 'strategic imperative', that all citizens acquire a working knowledge of English by the time they become adults. To this end, it issued a number of specific recommendations,

including the streaming of English classes by ability (a move away from Japan's long-standing egalitarian ethos in education); improved training and objective assessment of school English teachers; more foreign teachers of English; the 'outsourcing' of English lessons and materials development to private language schools; and increased use of English within government institutions. Perhaps most controversially, the Commission called for a national debate on making English Japan's 'official second language' (*daini kōyōgo*) (Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century 2000).

Significantly if unsurprisingly (given the abovementioned history of linguistic nationalism), the Commission presented an instrumentalist rationale for its advocacy of English, depicting it as a national developmental resource in Japan's pursuit of vital 'global literacy' (*gurobaru riterashii*); the implication being that ability in the national language alone would not be sufficient to guarantee Japan's competitiveness in the new globalized economic environment. The Commission stressed that English should be regarded not simply as 'a foreign language' but as the 'international lingua franca', and, as such, no threat to the Japanese national identity. As Kawai (2007:49) puts it, 'English is treated as if it were a de-culturalised, neutral instrument of communication, which is considered not to affect Japanese-ness'. Although the proposal sparked vigorous discussion, not to mention a degree of ridicule, at the time of its publication (Heinrich 2007; Kawai 2007; Mikawa 2001), the sudden death of Prime Minister Ōbuchi in May 2000 effectively ended the debate on the 'officialization' of English

(Kaplan & Baldauf 2003).

In this, the first decade of the 21st Century, various new language education initiatives have been introduced by MEXT. As in the *New Revised Course of Study* of 1989, the 2002 national curricula for foreign language studies (MEXT 2002a: 98-116), place the emphasis firmly upon communicative skills. For both Junior High ('Lower Secondary') and High ('Upper Secondary') School English lessons, the overall objectives are specified as:

- a) To develop students' basic practical communication abilities
- b) To deepen the understanding of language and culture
- c) To foster a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

The 'Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities'

In 2003, a potentially far-reaching initiative was announced under the title of the 'Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities' (*Eigo ga Tsukaeru Nihonjin no Ikusei no tame no Senryaku Kōsō*). This initiative warrants particular attention, since it not only outlines the longer-term strategic vision for English in Japan's national development, but also provides some indication of the priority attached to JET in the wider context of Japanese foreign language-in-education policy.

The so-called 'Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities' (which preceded the formal announcement of the 'Strategic Plan') outlines English language

education priorities as follows:

In order to be able to ‘make use of English’, it is necessary not only to have a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use English for the purpose of actual communication. Thus, in English classes, instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher-centered classes are not recommended. Through the repetition of activities making use of English as a means of communication, the learning of vocabulary and grammar should be enhanced, and communication abilities in ‘listening’, ‘speaking’, ‘reading’, and ‘writing’ should be fostered. (MEXT 2003b)

Ostensibly at least, *yakudoku* methodology no longer has a place in the school classroom. Rather, the Strategic Plan emphasises the social value of communicating in English, advocating increased use of ‘experiential learning activities’ like study-abroad programmes and summer camps. The Plan even proposes an elementary school model programme aimed at fostering ‘children responsive to internationalization’ (although there is no explanation as to what this means).

At a strategic level, the importance of the English is rationalised as follows:

Due to the lack of sufficient ability, many Japanese are restricted in their exchanges with foreigners and their ideas or opinions are not evaluated appropriately...English abilities are important in terms of linking our country with the rest of the world, obtaining the world’s understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation. (MEXT 2003b)

English is thus acknowledged as both a developmental resource and the medium

through which the Japanese must articulate their opinions if the world is to learn to understand Japan and its interests. As McConnell (1999:55) puts it, English is important to Japanese ‘so they can avoid unanticipated counterreactions and thereby raise their own status in the world’. Viewed thus, the fostering of communicative ability is less a question of enabling individual Japanese to communicate with individual foreigners in the interests of intercultural friendship or of creating a harmonious, multicultural Japan and more about equipping Japan to survive in an increasingly competitive global economic and political environment.

Despite its longevity and the billions of dollars of invested in it, JET barely rates a mention in the first key foreign language-in-education policy initiative of the 21st Century. Although one section of the ‘Strategic Plan’ does call for the recruitment of ‘ALTs with excellent experience’ and ‘ALTs with advanced abilities’ to work as full-time teachers, it also recommends the introduction of a ‘special part-time instructor system’, i.e. separate from the JET Programme. Crucially, there is no indication anywhere in the Plan (or, for that matter, in any other MEXT policy document) that ALTs may ever be employed as permanent, fully-accredited teachers. In short, the attention devoted to JET in the Strategic Plan is minor, which suggests that MEXT still regards the programme as a peripheral feature in the overall context of Japanese foreign language-in-education policy.

6.4.7 English and Internationalization at the Individual Level

To judge from enrolments in private language schools and English tests (see Section 6.4.3), many Japanese appear to regard the mastery of English as a valuable personal asset. While the vocational value of English ability is easy to appreciate, its value in fostering an ‘international outlook’ is far less tangible. Although some researchers (e.g. Gardner 1991; Schumann 1986) have suggested that attitude towards the people of the country where a particular language is spoken is a key motivational factor in language learning, it would require a leap of logic to equate an individual’s ability to speak a given language with an automatic empathy for the native-speakers of that language.

Although one would hardly expect to find a consensus in any society as regards what constitutes an ‘international person’, several authors (e.g. Gudykunst & Nishida 1994; Horibe 1998; Kubota 1998, 2002; Yoneoka 2000; Yoshino 1997, 1998, 2002) have identified a discourse within Japanese society in which foreign language (particularly English) ability is regarded as a necessary criterion for being/becoming a ‘*kokusaijin*’ (‘international person’). According to Ryuko Kubota (2002:22), there is ‘a widespread conception that because English is the international language that bridges multiple cultures, learning English enables understanding of the world and cultural diversity’. Perhaps based on such reasoning, one chain of English conversation schools (*ei-kaiwa kyōshitsu*) exhorts the public to learn English and become ‘*kokusaijin*’. In one study, Judy Yoneoka (2000) discovered that her Japanese student respondents tended to

regard ‘foreign language ability’ and ‘knowledge of foreign countries’ as the defining attributes of ‘being international’. By contrast, in other countries from which she collected data (i.e. India, Germany and the United States), respondents were more likely to define an international person as someone who displayed attributes like ‘broad-mindedness’, ‘sociability’ and ‘lack of prejudice and fear’ (vis-à-vis foreigners) (Yoneoka 2000:6).

The unsteady relationship between English ability and internationalization is amply highlighted in the works of Japanese anthropologist, Kosaku Yoshino (1997; 1998; 2002). Although Yoshino (1997:139) believes both ‘the ability to use practical English’ and ‘knowledge of cultural differences’ are regarded ‘by many well-educated Japanese’ as two necessary conditions for becoming a *kokusaijin* (international person), the attainment of *kokusaijin* status may not, in his view, imply any desire to embrace foreigners or their values. Rather, in the contemporary Japanese context, it may be yet another manifestation of cultural nationalism and cultural essentialism. In this regard, Yoshino draws our attention, in a 2002 work, to the prevalence in Japan of several important occupational groups of ‘cultural intermediaries’, whom he compares to the ‘new intellectuals’ that mediate between ‘classic’ intellectuals and the masses, as described by Bourdieu (1984). For Yoshino (2002:142), the importance of these groups—which include businessmen, interpreters, cross-cultural counsellors, overseas volunteer workers and tourism industry workers—lies in the fact that they are not ‘mere consumers of discourses of cultural difference’ (in essence, *Nihonjinron*) but play an

active role as ‘reproducers, transmitters and popularisers of these discourses’ in contemporary society.

With the advent of globalization, Yoshino has noted a rise in interest in ‘intercultural communication’, leading to the establishment of what he terms of an ‘intercultural communication industry’ within Japan. Within this ‘industry’, teachers of English have become compelled to augment their linguistic and pedagogical skills with a cross-cultural perspective, enabling them to incorporate into their lessons discussions of comparative culture (*hikaku bunka*). The problem, however, as Yoshino sees it, is that ‘*Nihonjinron* classics continue to be consumed uncritically in the sphere of English teaching’, which, in turn, results in English teachers performing the role of ‘new intellectuals’, who reproduce *Nihonjinron* in the course of their daily work. A further characteristic of the Japanese ‘intercultural communication industry’ is the publication of essentialist ‘intercultural communication’ manuals, offering advice on ‘how to speak and behave, and even think in international settings’ (Yoshino 2002:142-143). As Yoshino perceives it, the cultural intermediaries who produce such manuals seek to nurture ‘large numbers of internationally-minded Japanese with both the ability to use English as a means of practical communication and a good knowledge of Japanese culture and society’; the idea being that these individuals will then participate in international society on behalf of the Japanese nation, as equals and not merely passive recipients of Western values. From this perspective, a *kokusaijin* might also be regarded as someone with ‘the ability to explain things Japanese in English’ (Yoshino:

2002:144).

On Yoshino's reasoning, it would appear unwise to assume an automatic link between foreign language ability and an outward-looking world view or empathy with foreigners. One could nevertheless argue that, for many Japanese, an interest in foreign languages might be an important early step on the road to a deeper engagement with foreigners and the outside world. Thousands of Japanese travel abroad annually to attend foreign-language and other educational programmes, while a significant number of Japanese have married English-speaking foreigners. It is not illogical to assume that many of these same individuals might have harboured a broadly positive rather than a negative attitude towards the study of English during their school years. In other words, in a Japanese context, it is at least conceivable that positive experiences of studying English at school might sow the seeds of a more 'international' outlook or a more 'internationally-oriented' lifestyle (perhaps including residence overseas) in later life. The mass-recruitment of foreign ALTs may suggest that policy-makers regard a native-speaker presence in the classroom as conducive to the formation of such experiences among Japanese schoolchildren. Over the following three chapters, I shall attempt to assess to what extent this is actually the case.

6.5 Fostering Understanding of Japan

As I argued earlier, the goal of 'fostering understanding of Japan' (*nihonrikai*) is

ultimately concerned with garnering support/sympathy for Japan. This goal differs from the previous two in that it is not a response to a perceived systemic Japanese problem. Rather, it is aimed at an external constituency—i.e. foreign individuals and, arguably, foreign governments. Viewed from this perspective, JET is less an issue of education policy than one of cultural diplomacy.

6.5.1 ‘Fostering Understanding’ at the Individual Level

The goal of fostering understanding of Japan centres on the idea of inviting to Japan young, impressionable foreign graduates, who, it is hoped, may later rise to positions of influence in their home countries. This goal is of course predicated on a supposition that ALTs will be treated well, enjoy their stay, and return home with positive impressions of Japan. For a variety of reasons, however, the Japanese government cannot possibly guarantee that this will occur. There is no level playing-field for ALTs, whereby all enjoy equally favourable living and working conditions. Besides, ALTs themselves are not a monolithic group of individuals; rather, they will have had their own reasons for joining the programme and, hence, different role perceptions and different criteria for assessing job satisfaction and success.

6.5.2 'Fostering Understanding' at the Government Level

In crude terms, JET could be regarded as a scheme to gain influence with foreign governments; the basic idea being that by providing gainful employment for thousands of foreign nationals, Japan garners sympathy among the governments of participating countries. To appreciate fully the implications of this goal, one needs to remember the political context at the time of JET's creation in 1987. As explained in Chapter 1, Japan's relations with the United States and other trading partners had become strained amid accusations of Japanese trade protectionism. Viewed thus, JET presented a convenient means for Japan to reduce its trade deficit with such countries while simultaneously yielding an important public relations benefit. According to Kuniyuki Nose, the Ministry of Home Affairs official credited with drafting the original JET proposal, Japan's image was the paramount concern. He explains:

Frankly speaking, during the year of the trade conflict between Japan and the US... what I was thinking of was how to deal with the demands of the US that we buy more things such as computers and cars. I realized the trade friction was not going to be solved by manipulating material things, and, besides, I wanted to demonstrate the fact that not all Japanese are economic animals who gobble up real estate. (Cited in McConnell 2000:35)

In its original form, JET does seem entirely consistent with a desire to placate the United States. McConnell (2000:1) has described JET as a 'gift' to the American delegation from Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, presented at his so-called 'Ron-Yasu' summit with President Ronald Reagan in 1986. Early JET recruitment

policy is also consistent with Japan's historical desire to enhance its standing vis-à-vis 'the West'. Initial participation was limited to a select group of 'Western' English-speaking countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand (though Americans accounted for the lion's share of recruits). Of course, given the programme's heavy emphasis on English teaching, it is entirely logical that the participants should be drawn from such countries, especially as two largely Anglophone nations, Canada and Ireland, were added to the list in the programme's second year of operation. It is more doubtful, however, whether the subsequent decision to invite French and German participation was motivated by educational concerns; not least because there was no structure in place to assimilate their educational contribution (very few Japanese schools offered French or German at that time). The decision was almost certainly a diplomatic initiative to accommodate two major Western nations initially excluded from the programme. The fact that it was announced by Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita during an official visit to Europe in 1988 lends further weight to this argument. Over time, a diverse range of other nations has been incorporated incrementally into the programme, including major powers (like China and India), developing countries like Laos, and tiny island-states like St. Lucia. In the age of globalization, it would appear that the Japanese government still recognises the potential 'soft power' value of the JET Programme.

6.6 Some Grassroots Perspectives on JET Goals

While the above three ‘official goals’ are given the most attention in the remainder of this study, it is worth considering also how the programme’s goals have been perceived by those with *de facto* responsibility for realizing them, i.e. ALTs and JTLs. It is entirely possible that some of these individuals are unaware of the objectives specified by the national JET organization; rather, their perceptions of the programme and their own role in it (and, consequently, any insights they provide for the benefit of this study) may be largely dictated by their personal experiences.

What was quite noticeable, even among the small sample of participants in this study, was the broad divide between ALTs and JTLs regarding both the objectives of the JET Programme and the meaning of ‘internationalization’. To summarize very briefly the views expressed: all but one of the JTLs immediately identified ‘communicative English’ (or ‘language’) as the primary rationale for JET’s creation. However, a variety of subsidiary rationales were also mentioned, including: ‘to enable schoolchildren to get used to foreigners’, ‘to teach foreign culture’, ‘to invite people from overseas and to give them a chance to see what Japan is like’ and ‘to force students to interact with a foreign teacher’. Most ALT interviewees, by contrast, regarded the ‘internationalization’ angle as paramount. As criteria for measuring progress towards internationalization, the JTLs emphasized factors like ‘knowledge of foreign countries and cultures’, ‘not being afraid of foreigners’, and ‘recognizing differences among

foreigners'. ALTs, on the other hand, identified such factors as 'pluralism', 'cultural relativism', 'creating an environment where a variety of points of view, based on the nations and cultures that those points of view come from, are mutually exchanged and appreciated'; 'exposing oneself to various cultures in order to examine one's own culture/values'; 'recognizing that the norms, standards, values etc. that I have are not the only correct or appropriate ones in the world'.

6.7 Conclusion

While an examination of JET information sources may enable us to identify the programme's main 'official goals', it is of limited value in helping us to understand the implications of these goals, not least given the lack of detailed official discussion of desired outcomes. One can look to precedent and/or enlist the insights of scholars, as was done here, for some general clues on how to interpret government pronouncements. However, for a more reliable assessment of official intentions vis-à-vis the JET Programme, one needs to examine the finer details of the policy under which the programme is operated; a task that will be addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7: OPERATIONAL POLICY

7.1 Overview

This chapter, like the previous one, seeks to understand the motives of the Japanese government in creating the JET Programme and maintaining its existence for some two decades. Whereas Chapter 6 centred on official discourse on the programme's objectives, Chapter 7 examines the practical details of JET operational policy, i.e. the rules and guidelines underpinning the programme's operation. In my judgement, an examination of operational policy offers a more reliable indication of policy-makers' actual intentions than their official statements of intent. That said, it would still be difficult to claim categorically that any 'intentions' identified here represented accurately those of all policy-makers, especially given the differing ministerial agendas (see Section 4.4.1). In gathering data for this chapter, a heavy emphasis has again been placed upon the websites of the national-level JET organization and Japanese diplomatic missions (the latter being an important conduit of information to prospective JET applicants). Numerous government publications have also been referenced, while selected comments from research participants have been included in order to provide a 'grassroots' perspective.

Throughout this chapter, connections are made to the theoretical discussion of policy conducted in Chapter 4. In other words, the details of JET operational policy are

assessed through the wider prism of policy on intercultural education, foreign cultural policy/cultural diplomacy and foreign language-in-education policy. For reasons of space, however, the focus of this examination is limited to just four areas of JET-related policy—recruitment, allocation, training and utilization (i.e. work duties).

7.2 Policy on Recruitment

When considering JET recruitment policy, it is perhaps logical to begin by examining the formal eligibility criteria, since these provide the clearest indication of the Japanese government's vision of the type of individual suitable to fulfil the goals outlined in Chapter 6.

7.2.1 Eligibility Criteria

Nationality

Put simply, some countries have been invited to contribute participants while others have not. MOFA (2006e) has suggested that this is not an indication of official JET policy, but because 'the decision as to how many participants to be recruited in which country depends mainly upon the request of the local governments in Japan'. While participation was initially limited to just four English-speaking countries, fifty-six countries had been involved with the programme by 2006 (MOFA 2006d). Of course,

this still represents a narrow selection of countries.

Although there is nothing in any JET information material to suggest that one country should take precedence over another as a source of ALT recruits, the probability of a strong Western (i.e. American and Western European) orientation is high, given the long-standing Japanese tradition of employing educators from such countries, stretching back to the Meiji period (Jansen 1995; Lie 2001). Furthermore, some scholars (e.g. Befu 1983; Itoh 2000) have viewed the entire *kokusaika* campaign as a means of affirming Japan's self-identification with the United States and other 'Western' liberal democracies (rather than with their Asian neighbours). Of course, in the context of a foreign language-in-education policy weighted heavily towards English, there would also be a logical tendency to prioritise candidates from the world's main English-speaking countries, all of which would be classified as 'Western', irrespective of their geographical location.

'Diversity Issues'

An individual's right of application is, and always has been, based on their nationality, not their ethnic background. Hence, given that the four main English-speaking countries—the US, UK, Canada and Australia—all have multi-ethnic populations, one might expect the diversity of their societies to be reflected in the participants they contribute to the programme. As explained in Section 3.4.2, however, some scholars

(Itoh 2001; Taylor 1983) have noted a tendency in Japan to ‘rank’ foreigners according to their race. Specifically, it is claimed that ‘non-white foreigners’ (even if they are ‘Westerners’) are often portrayed negatively in Japanese society, and thus receive less favourable treatment than their ‘white’ counterparts (see Creighton 1997; Lie 2000, 2001; Minami 1971; Russell 1991; Stronach 1995; Suzuki 1973; Suzuki & Sakamoto 1976). Anti-Korean discrimination is a particularly long-standing and widely discussed phenomenon (Fukuoka & Tsujiyama 1992; Ryang 2000), though John Russell (1991) has claimed that people of African origin are also the object of virulent discrimination. Russell asserts that, in some ways, ‘the black other occupies the same symbolic space and function as *burakumin* [an indigenous Japanese minority group that has suffered discrimination since feudal times] and Koreans’ (Russell 1991:13). Russell’s assessment would concur with the findings of Hiroshi Wagatsuma (1967), who reported, in a 1960s analysis of social perceptions of skin colour in Japan, that Japanese have long associated the colour ‘white’ with purity and positive traits, while ‘black’ symbolizes that which is ugly and impure. Some scholars (e.g. De Carvalho 2003; Okubo 2003; Suzuki & Sakamoto 1976; Yamanaka 2000, 2003) have even reported discrimination against *Nikkeijin*, i.e. foreigners of Japanese origin.

Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that JET should have been accused of operating a ‘white bias’, i.e. an overwhelming preference for white Caucasian candidates (Amin & Kubota 2004; Kubota 2002; McConnell 2000). McConnell (2000) claims that race was a factor, at least in the programme’s early days, in the allocation of

ALTs, in that CLAIR took great care ('*hairyō*') not to send 'nonwhites' to certain (particularly rural) parts of Japan. He explains:

What *hairyō* meant in practice was that nonwhites were rarely placed in rural municipalities that had been assigned only one JET participant, as everyone from the mayor down to the parents and students was probably counting on a white face. (McConnell 2000:82)

Judging from her own experiences, Christine, a former official at a Japanese diplomatic mission, refutes all accusations of bias at the recruitment stage. She claims that, at least in the American case, ethnic minority candidates were never subject to systematic discrimination. Rather, she offers a different explanation for the dearth of African-American candidates in JET's early years:

I do remember having a discussion, again in the early years, with one of the interviewers who was an African-American professor at one of the local universities about not having more African-Americans applying for the JET and Monbusho program. He replied that few would take the risk of taking a year off to go to some foreign country; rather most would want to get right into the job market to get their careers going. After a few years, this changed for the JET program as more and more African-Americans realized they could develop international experience and get paid a good salary (Christine 24/2/2004).

Whether or not racial discrimination does influence or has ever influenced the implementation of recruitment policy, the PR-apparatus has become keen to emphasise the programme's acceptance of diversity. Items like the following have become common in the 'Frequently Asked Questions' sections of recruitment websites:

Q: Will my race and religion play a role in selection?

A: No, absolutely not.

(Embassy of Japan in South Africa, 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 22/06/2006)

Q: Will my race, gender or religion affect my candidacy?

A: No... all applicants are judged on their individual merits and equally considered.

(Consulate-General of Japan in Toronto, 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 22/06/2006)

The UK JET website stresses that JET welcomes applicants from 'all ethnic minority groups', since a key aim of the programme is 'to show Britain as a multi-cultural country'—which would almost suggest a bias *in favour of* ethnic minority candidates rather than against them. If this position were representative of JET recruitment policy more generally, it could have important implications for policy on intercultural education within Japan itself by demonstrating to Japanese schoolchildren the sheer normality of ethnic diversity in Western societies. This would be particularly significant in light of the recent influx of foreign workers into Japan, thousands of whom place their children in mainstream schools. Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1998) believes this influx has prompted a greater awareness of the multiculturalism issue:

Even in Japan, where ideologies of ethnic homogeneity have maintained a powerful grasp on the popular imagination for much of the postwar period, ideas of multiculturalism are now attracting growing attention. It seems almost as though the arrival of a new wave of migrants has "reminded" many Japanese commentators of a cultural diversity which had always been present, but had temporarily sunk from the surface of public consciousness. (Morris-Suzuki 1998:192)

One natural corollary of the diversity in the English-speaking world is a diversity of

native-speaker accents (Crystal 1997; McArthur 2002; Wells 1982). In this regard, accents not only differ among countries but also within them, perhaps particularly in countries like the UK with its distinctions according to region (Storry 2002) and class (Barber 1993). In the spirit of inclusiveness noted above, the UK JET website affirms the programme's tolerance of all accents:

Q: I have a strong accent, can I still be accepted?

A: Of course. What is important is that you have clear pronunciation, good grammar and vocabulary and your voice can reach the back of a classroom. The JET Programme is very keen to have participants representing as many areas of the UK as possible.

(Source: 'UK JET Programme' website; retrieved 05/09/2004)

Despite this apparently equitable approach, several academics (Kachru 2005; Kubota 1998, 2002; Ōishi 1990; Tsuda 1990, 1996) have identified a long-running discourse in Japan that regards some English accents as better than others. Indeed, according to Honna, Tajima and Minamoto (2004), Japanese learners harbour negative attitudes toward 'non-native speaker' (NNS) varieties of English. In Kubota's (2002:21) view, a 'native speaker myth' prevails in Japan, in which 'Inner Circle' varieties of English, 'particularly North American and British' are perceived as superior to all others. (Following Kachru (1992:356), 'Inner Circle' refers here to the USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada). In this connection, some prominent Japanese critics of 'English linguistic imperialism' (e.g. Tsuda 1990, 1996; Ōishi 1990) have questioned whether native-speaker models of English are necessarily the most appropriate ones for Japanese learners to emulate.

JET eligibility criteria (CLAIR 2006g) stipulate only that ALT candidates should have ‘excellent pronunciation, rhythm, intonation and voice projection skills in the designated language’ as well as ‘other standard language skills’, ‘good writing skills’ and good ‘grammar usage’. Although perceptions will inevitably differ as to what constitutes ‘excellent pronunciation’, there is nothing in official policy to suggest that one native-speaker English accent should be considered preferable to any other. To what extent, if at all, discrimination is a factor in the day-to-day implementation of the JET Programme is a matter for consideration in Chapter 8.

Age

From the outset, JET has been regarded as a youth-oriented programme. Thus, Japanese-language publications and websites have always described it as a ‘programme to invite overseas youth’ (*gaikoku seinen shōchi jigyō*). JET eligibility criteria stipulate that all applicants be ‘in principle’ under 40 years of age (CLAIR 2006g). Several Japanese embassy websites (e.g. in the USA and South Africa) have suggested that this age limit exists because ‘one of the main purposes of the Programme is to foster youth-to-youth exchange between Japanese youth and young professionals from the countries participating on the JET Programme’. The description of JET participants as ‘young professionals’ is perhaps questionable, given that so many of them lack prior vocational experience. Perhaps even more questionable—considering the age limit was

only increased from 35 in 2002—is the assertion made on the website of the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney that ‘in Japan, generally, youth is considered 40 years and younger’. The website of the Consulate-General of Japan in Los Angeles claims that the age limit of 40 is ‘in principle’ because ‘the JET Program is a youth program and also age has cultural considerations in Japan’, yet it provides no clues as to what these considerations might be.

It is worth pointing out that ‘ageism’ has been identified as a widespread problem in the English teaching (specifically the TEFL/TESOL) profession, with recruiters in many countries besides Japan favouring younger candidates over older ones (see Cooper 1999; Templer 2002). Bill Templer (2002) sees the spread of English as intricately fused with a ‘youth culture’ permeating many of the societies where English teachers work, which drives a pattern of preference for ‘younger’ EFL teachers. Although the JET administration offers no justification for its own youth-oriented recruitment policy, it is nonetheless consistent with trends in the wider Japanese employment market. In most occupational sectors, both remuneration and promotion are dictated by seniority, i.e. age and length of service, rather than performance, in a system known as *nenkō joretsu* (see Gill and Wong 1998; Hasegawa 1986; Koehn 2001). Consequently, younger recruits are often preferred to older ones on purely financial grounds. In the context of the Japanese school, another possible reason for JET’s pro-youth policy is a perception that younger candidates represent ‘less of a threat’ to the authority of the JTL than do older ones. This reasoning is evident in the following statement from an

education ministry official:

If the JET participants are too old, Japanese teachers feel threatened. Also, people just out of college are more flexible and can adapt easier to Japanese schools. (Cited in McConnell 2000:76)

In the interests of ‘international exchange’, it is conceivable that the mandatory age ceiling was predicated on a belief that younger foreigners would bond more easily than older ones with Japanese schoolchildren due to their relative proximity in age. In one case study by American researchers in Germany (U.S. Department of Education 1999), age was identified as a factor determining the teacher-student relationship. It was suggested that young teachers might achieve a better rapport with students, since they have ‘more understanding of and tolerance for students’ interests’ (U.S. Department of Education 1999:256). Certainly, younger ALTs would seem better qualified than older ones to discuss youth-related matters, insofar as such would interest Japanese schoolchildren. It should be remembered, however, that the *de facto* mediator of most classroom interaction, i.e. the JTL, is often considerably older than the ALT. In terms of language education, it does not seem entirely logical to expect a younger, inexperienced individual to make a more effective pedagogue than an older, more experienced one. Although scholarly literature testifies to the difficulties in determining the optimum qualities for a teacher (Darling-Hammond 2000; Good & Brophy 1997), several research studies have shown a correlation between teacher inexperience and unsatisfactory student outcomes. As one example, a 1996 study in California by Jepsen

& Rivkin (2002) found that student performance declined with the influx of inexperienced teachers.

In the context of Japanese cultural diplomacy, the mandatory age-limit does appear to make sense. Cultural diplomacy is often aimed, as Jacquie L'Etang (2006:374) puts it, at cultivating 'the rising generations'; indeed, one U.S. government-sponsored report claims that cultural diplomacy is 'uniquely able to reach out to young people' (United States Department of State 2005:16). Down the years, many national governments have sought to influence youth attitudes in other countries through cultural means. For instance, during the 'Cold War' period, the American government broadcast popular music over its Voice of America radio station in the hope of influencing young people behind the so-called 'Iron Curtain' (Gorman & McLean 2003:121). More recently, in association with the Bush administration's so-called 'War on Terror', American popular culture has been seen as a potentially valuable means of winning friends in Islamic countries (see NAJP 2003; Waller 2007). An important mechanism in the foreign cultural policies of many countries is the educational exchange programme; notable examples of which are the Oxford-based Rhodes scholarship (Kenny 2001) and the American Fulbright Program (Pells 1997). Such programmes have been widely lauded for their success in cultivating individuals sympathetic to the principal country. For the Japanese government, JET represents a potentially valuable resource in their quest to cultivate foreigners sympathetic to Japan (*shinnichi-ka*). In this respect, younger recruits are preferable to older ones, in that they have yet to embark on a

career path and, at least theoretically, have the possibility of rising to influential positions in their home countries.

- Opposition to the Age Limit

Although JET's architects appear to have considered the hiring of experienced foreign teachers too much of a threat to the morale of local teaching staff, some JTLs regard JET's pro-youth policy as unhelpful, precisely because it means having to collaborate with an inexperienced teaching partner. This was certainly evident in my own interviews with JTLs, and there is evidence also that some Contracting Organizations would prefer to receive older, more experienced ALT recruits. In a 2001 MEXT report entitled '*Todōfuken Seireishiteitoshi Kyōikuiinkai kara no Iken*' (literally 'Opinions from Prefectural and Designated City Boards of Education'), 31 out of 54 Boards of Education representatives expressed disapproval of the age limit (which, at the time, was set at 35). Here, one representative complains about the immaturity of some recruits:

Many of the foreign youths are childish individuals who have only just graduated from university and lack any social experience. Rather than imposing an age limit, maybe applicants should be required to have a certain number of years of experience as a '*shakai-jin*' [lit. 'society person'; essentially, a fully-fledged and gainfully-employed adult].

(*Daigaku wo sotsugyō shita dake de shakai keiken ga sukunaku gaikoku seinen ga medatsu. Nenrei yori mo shakai-jin toshite no keiken nensū wo shikaku seigen ni mōkeru beki de wa nai ka.*) (MEXT 2001b; my translation)

Despite the apparent dissatisfaction of BoE officials in 2001, there has been only a slight relaxation in the age-limit (from 35 to 40) in the intervening years. Meanwhile, the JET administration has offered no indication that the limit may be raised further or abolished altogether. Recruitment materials still invariably emphasise the importance of youth exchange. On this basis, it would appear that the desire to cultivate individuals sympathetic to Japan remains a higher priority than enlisting the help of experienced foreign educators who might achieve a more positive impact on school foreign-language and intercultural education.

Qualifications

Given their educational role, it is perhaps logical that all ALTs should be university graduates. What is far from logical, however, is the lack of priority given to applicants with degrees in subjects relevant to the ALT's work duties, such as English, linguistics, modern languages or perhaps even Japanese. Instead, a degree 'in any subject' is considered sufficient. ALTs do not require a teaching qualification, either. The official eligibility criteria stipulate that candidates should *either* be 'qualified as a language teacher' or 'strongly motivated to take part in the teaching of foreign languages' (CLAIR 2006g; emphasis mine), while one recruitment pamphlet describes the acquisition of a TEFL diploma merely as 'helpful, but not required' (MOFA 2004:4). This message is reiterated on various recruitment websites, like the following:

Q: I don't have a teaching qualification (e.g. a TESL/TEFL certificate) or teaching experience

in an actual school. Can I still apply?

A: Yes. Formal qualifications or teaching experience are not an official requirement. However, applications that feature teaching qualifications and/or teaching experience may be favourably looked upon. An interest in education and young people is certainly an advantage when applying for the programme.

(Source: Embassy of Japan in Ireland 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 07/03/2005)

According to the official 'JET Program USA' website, a few Contracting Organizations have begun specifically requesting ALTs with TEFL/TESL certification—although the website is careful to stress also that certification is 'not a MUST to apply for the program'.

This apparent lack of concern for appropriately qualified recruits is at odds with much recent educational research (e.g. National Research Council 2002; Darling-Hammond 1999; Glatthorn et al 2006; NCTAF 1996), which affirms the importance of relevant teacher qualifications in fostering educational success. A study by the US-based Center for the Study of Teaching (Darling-Hammond 1999) found that the two most consistent and powerful predictors of student achievement were having teachers who were both fully certified and had a major in the subject being taught. Linda Darling-Hammond and Beverly Falk (1997:193) identify 'teacher expertise' as 'the single most important measurable cause of increased student learning'. Here, the American National Research Council (2002) explains why teachers should possess qualifications in their respective disciplines:

Teachers with content expertise, like experts in all fields, understand the structure of their

disciplines; thus they have the cognitive ‘roadmaps’ to guide the assignments they give students, the assessment they use to gauge student progress, and the questions they ask in the give and take of the classroom (National Research Council 2002:11)

The lack of emphasis placed on recruits with expertise in English language and pedagogy has obvious implications for the classroom role of the ALT recruits. On the basis of the above, most ALT recruits would seem ill-equipped to assume the role of ‘main teacher’ if called upon to do so.

The Question of Experience

What priority do JET recruiters attach to a candidate’s experience? In addressing this question, there are perhaps two aspects to consider: firstly, teaching experience, i.e. whether the candidate has ever taught English before; secondly, what one might describe as ‘intercultural experience’, e.g. experience living and working abroad and/or alongside people from different cultures. In relation to the latter, I shall specifically consider what premium, if any, is attached to candidates with previous ‘Japan experience’.

● Teaching Experience

For many, it is almost axiomatic that experienced teachers, in any school context, generate better learning outcomes than do inexperienced ones. Willie, Edwards &

Alves (2002) put it this way:

The classroom is the fundamental building block of any school system. And classrooms are successful only insofar as teachers are competent. (Willie, Edwards & Alves 2002:85)

The correlation between ‘teacher quality’ and student achievement is also supported by a host of empirical research (e.g. Ferguson 1991; Murnane & Phillips 1981; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2000; Rockoff 2004; Wenglinsky 2000). For Steven Rivkin et al (2000), ‘teacher quality’ has a greater impact on academic performance than any other school input. Despite this, JET recruitment policy appears to regard teaching experience in a similar light to teaching qualifications—as a possible advantage for applicants but by no means essential. This is reflected in the following statements, both featured on Japanese embassy/consular websites:

Teaching experience or teaching qualifications (e.g. TEFL) are NOT required but may aid your application. (Source: Embassy of Japan in Ireland ‘JET Programme’ Page; retrieved 08/11/2005)

Although no prior teaching experience and no prior Japanese-language skills are necessary (for the ALT position), successful JET Program applicants must have a strong sense of responsibility, a genuine interest in learning about Japan, and must be able to adapt to a different culture and new situations. (Source: Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco ‘JET Program’ Page; retrieved 08/11/2005)

Put simply, JET recruiters do not consider it a major problem if ALT recruits have never been in charge of a class before. Christine, the former interviewer and consular

official, claims that this is because ALTs are not regarded as pedagogues, but as 'cheerleaders for the English language'. In this context, it is the responsibility of the JTL, as the 'master Japanese English teacher', to focus on 'the actual content' (Christine 23/5/2004). In this connection, the following ALT suggests that too much teaching experience might actually harm a candidate's chances of being hired:

A true ESL teacher would struggle here. I have a CELTA and have taught ESL at a university in NZ. JET is an absolute joke compared to that. I can see why they take less qualified people because 'real teachers' can have really high expectations. (Source: 'I think I'm lost' Website; retrieved 03/01/2005)

On the other hand, there are some JTLs, like Mr. Yamaguchi, who regard the ALT's lack of experience as a practical problem:

The biggest problem, in my opinion, is that (the ALT) may only just have graduated from, say, an American university. That person will not have undergone any specialist study in terms of teaching English. For instance, they might have graduated from the economics department, but come to Japan because they thought it sounded interesting. They come for all sorts of reasons, don't they? So, in the case that the situation in Japanese schools doesn't correspond with their image, some of them lose enthusiasm. So I think there's a question whether the current way of doing things is OK. (Mr. Yamaguchi 5/11/2004; for Japanese original, see Appendix 1)

Despite such concerns, there is still no suggestion in any official document or statement that experienced foreign teachers might ever be given prominence in the programme. This certainly suggests a degree of conflict between the purported aims of current Japanese foreign language-in-education policy and the realities of JET recruitment

policy. MEXT policy documents, statements and curriculum guidelines all clearly advocate a shift toward learner-centred, communicative language teaching—yet little discernible emphasis is placed on recruiting the calibre of educator best qualified to attain this objective.

- Japan Experience

To what extent, then, is previous Japan experience an advantage for prospective candidates? After all, the formal eligibility criteria stipulate that applicants should ‘have an interest in Japan’, ‘be interested in the Japanese educational system’ and ‘[be interested] particularly in the Japanese way of teaching foreign languages’ (CLAIR 2006g). Given this apparent emphasis on candidates with an interest in Japan, it is paradoxical that many who have acted upon their interest, by moving to Japan and living there for an extended period, are ineligible to participate in the programme. Candidates must not have lived in Japan for three or more years in the eight years prior to their application. It is particularly curious that prior (specifically, recent) Japan experience should be regarded as a demerit rather than an asset, especially as this runs contrary to policies pursued in many other countries where native-speaker English teachers are recruited (e.g. the Middle East). Moreover, research has shown that newcomers to any society tend to experience difficulties purely due to their lack of familiarity with the cultural norms of the host country (Miller & Steinberg 1975; Gudykunst & Kim 2003) and its modes of interaction (Reinsch 2001).

Despite this, the policy of importing of ‘fresh’ foreigners shows no sign of changing. In the following statement, a MOFA representative explains why his own ministry feels locally-based foreign teachers should never be allowed to supplant recruits with ‘Japan novices’:

If the sole aim of the Programme were English education then selecting JETs from among people already living in Japan would be a good idea. However...another facet of the Programme is cultural exchange. We want to open the door wide to allow those who know nothing of Japan to come and develop an appreciation for it. (CLAIR 2005a)

If the above statement appears to portray JET as an exercise in altruism, it is again worth remembering MOFA’s earlier-mentioned policy goal of using the programme to nurture individuals sympathetic to Japan (see Section 4.4.1). From the perspective of cultural diplomacy, an individual who has already lived in Japan obviously represents a less attractive prospect than a young, impressionable *tabula rasa*. However, MOFA’s desire for a high turnover of fresh foreigners is not universally welcomed. In a survey by MEXT (2001b), 46 out of 52 Board of Education representatives expressed a preference for teachers with prior Japan experience. One representative noted that ALTs with ‘a prior knowledge and a deep understanding of Japan display a tendency to adapt smoothly to their school environment’ (*Nihon ni taisuru yobi chishiki ya rikai ga fukai hodo gakkō ni taisuru tekiō mo sumūzu ni susumu keikō ga aru*). Another suggested that an individual’s ‘interest in and affection for Japan’ (*Nihon e no kyōmi, aichaku*) and, consequently, their enthusiasm for teaching (*shidō e no netsui*) increases

in parallel with the length of their stay. AJET also vehemently opposes JET's long-standing 'revolving-door' employment policy because it results in the recruitment of many immature, 'low-quality' ALTs (AJET National Council 2006).

Although JET's emphasis on the importation of fresh foreigners does undoubtedly concur with the wider principles of Japanese cultural diplomacy, it may simultaneously militate against achieving the goals of enhancing foreign language education and local-level international exchange.

Japanese Language Ability

Although JET specifically recruits a number of Japanese-speaking foreigners each year, these are employed not as ALTs but as 'CIRs' (Coordinators for International Relations) and are relatively few in number (just 437 in 2007). For ALTs, Japanese ability is not a formal requirement, a fact illustrated in the following statements on embassy websites:

Please note that prior Japanese language ability is NOT required for ALT applicants!

(Japanese Consulate-General in New York 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 02/02/2005)

Q: I don't speak any Japanese, can I still apply?

A: Yes, for the ALT position many successful applicants apply with little or no Japanese knowledge. Although an interest in learning Japanese is an advantage when applying for the programme, formal qualifications are not required.

(UK JET Programme Website; retrieved 02/02/2005)

What apparently is important is that candidates make an effort to study Japanese *after* being accepted to work on the programme. This is clarified in Eligibility Criterion Number 16, which stipulates that ‘successful applicants are expected to make an effort to study or continue studying the Japanese language prior to and after arriving in Japan’ (CLAIR 2006g). Again, the paradox is that JET recruiters seem much more keen on hiring ‘fresh’, non-Japanese-speaking candidates who may (or may not) later commit themselves to studying Japanese than individuals who have already accumulated some knowledge of Japanese by virtue of already having lived and worked in Japan.

Language education researchers might question the wisdom of placing such a low priority on recruits with Japanese ability. Indeed, many would regard knowledge of the local language as a valuable attribute for any overseas-based language teacher (Barratt & Kontra 2000; Bolitho & Medgyes 2000; Medgyes 1992, 1994). As Barratt & Kontra (2000:22) argue, ‘the more the NS [native speaker] teachers learn about the host language, the better they will be able to teach (i.e. to predict students’ difficulties)’. Other researchers have identified a link between an individual’s knowledge of the language of the host country and their ability to engage in that country’s social processes (Kim 2001; McAllister 1986; Noels, Pon & Clément 1996). Young Yun Kim (2001:100) regards ‘knowledge of the host language’ as ‘one of the most salient factors of cognition in cross-cultural adaptation’. Kim refers to the notion of ‘functional fitness’, which, as she explains, is ‘consistent with what is commonly understood when

we say that a person is ‘well adapted’—that is, this person is capable of carrying out everyday-life activities smoothly and feeling comfortable in a particular environment’ (Kim 2001:185-186). For ‘cultural strangers’, functional fitness is ‘linked directly with host communication competence and participation in host social communication processes’ (ibid. 186). Conversely, an inability to communicate in the local language can lead both to practical difficulties (Nah 1993) and alienation from mainstream society (De Vos 1990; Sowa et al 2000). Many ALTs will undoubtedly accumulate a knowledge of Japanese during their stay in Japan, though ‘functional fitness’ will not be achieved quickly by most, not least given the relative difficulty of the Japanese language. In fact, the US State Department’s Foreign Service Institute rates Japanese as one of the most difficult languages in which to achieve professional competency (Sandness 1997:vii).

Surprisingly perhaps, there are those who believe Japanese language ability may actually be a demerit for applicants. May, for instance, suspects that some officials prefer non-Japanese-speakers not only because they represent less of a ‘threat’ to the established order within schools, but also because they help reinforce the image of foreigners as an irreconcilably contrary ‘Other’:

I sometimes think that officialdom prefers JETs who can’t speak Japanese (although everyone is aware that these kinds of JETs are more of a handful and require more ‘looking after’). After all, a JET who can’t speak Japanese can’t really change anyone’s opinions or perspectives, they can just make everyone feel happy that they are ‘internationalizing.’ And, what better way to reinforce one’s Japanese-ness than the JET with no Japanese? A JET who

doesn't understand Japanese and doesn't know all the culture rules and norms here makes lots of social blunders, and those blunders help Japanese people to notice that they themselves seem to avoid those blunders 'naturally,' and everyone feels 'international' when they forgive those blunders made by the foreigner. (May 2/11/2003)

Although generalisations are often unhelpful, May's observations here would concur with those of Japanologists like McVeigh (2002), Weiner (1997) and Yoshino (1992), who have described a common and long-standing tendency in Japan for perceptions of 'Self' to be based upon an essentialist notion of identity, which distinguishes the Japanese from all other peoples (see Section 3.3.2 for a discussion of *Nihonjinron*). McConnell (2000:54), too, suggests that too much fluency could actually work against a candidate's chances of being accepted, raising the example of an individual whose exceptional Japanese language skills led to the rejection of his application. However, McConnell provides a different rationale for the rejection than that suggested by May; namely that fluent Japanese-speaking applicants are 'seen as working against two major purposes of the program: the teaching of English and the introduction of Japanese language and culture to a new generation of foreign youth' (*ibid.* p. 55).

Whatever the official policy rationale, the low priority attached to candidates with Japanese ability, pedagogical experience and familiarity with Japan seems guaranteed to place many ALTs in a position of dependence vis-à-vis their JTL, at least in the initial stages of their stint in Japan. In a school context, this policy hardly seems conducive to systemic change, whether in language teaching practice or in approaches to intercultural education.

Personal Attributes

Although the eligibility criteria do not address directly the question of a candidate's character traits, there are three criteria that pertain purely to their motivation for living and working in Japan. It is stipulated that applicants must:

- Be interested in Japan, and be willing to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of that interest after arrival.
- Be interested in the Japanese educational system and particularly in the Japanese way of teaching foreign languages.
- Be interested in actively working with students.

(CLAIR 2006g)

To the extent that these can legitimately be considered 'eligibility criteria', they pertain to factors that defy objective assessment. Thus, in the context of the application process, it becomes a question of a candidate's ability to convince recruiters that their 'interest' is genuine. Eligibility Criterion 3, which demands that applicants 'have the ability to adapt to living and office conditions in Japan' (CLAIR 2006g), is again a paradoxical one, given that individuals with recent Japan experience are automatically excluded from the programme. In recent years, several recruitment websites have stressed the desirability of candidates capable of embracing life and work in a Japanese environment, as in the following example:

Q: What are you looking for in ALT candidates?

A: Applicants should be motivated to teach English, work with kids, and participate in international exchange activities. They should also be flexible and adaptable to new cultures, as well as having a good understanding of their own country and culture and be willing to share this knowledge with people of other cultures. Finally, applicants should be open-minded and interested in learning about Japanese language and culture.

(Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney 'JET Programme' Page; retrieved 22/09/2005)

The importance of these same attributes was also affirmed by the following MOFA spokesperson at the 2006-2007 ALT Opinion-Exchange Meeting:

In looking at candidates, some of the areas we are paying the most scrutiny to are their adaptability to different cultures and society, interest in Japanese society and culture, and the level of their commitment to fulfil their work duties. (CLAIR 2007a: 4)

To judge from the above, JET recruiters are seeking mature, adaptable individuals who will not try to impose their own values on their Japanese hosts. Naturally, however, they have no reliable means of identifying such individuals among the thousands who submit applications each year. It would obviously be impossible to gauge a candidate's 'interest in Japan' or their 'motivation to teach English and work with kids', particularly in the absence of a verifiable track record. Again, a more reliable indicator of a candidate's ability to adapt to conditions in Japan would be prior experience of living there.

7.2.2 The Term-Limit Policy

The first thing to realize about the JET employment contract is that it entitles foreign recruits to only a single year's employment; a point which CLAIR stresses in no uncertain terms:

Participants entering into the Programme should be fully aware that the JET Programme is a one-year commitment. Acceptance into the Programme is by no means a guarantee of two, or three or even five years of participation. However, if both the participant and Contracting Organisation agree, it may be possible to re-contract for up to four times, allowing the participant to stay five years. (CLAIR 2006r)

In fact, only 'in exceptional cases' will an ALT receive the maximum four contract extensions, as the following statement makes clear:

As a rule, JET Programme contracts are for a one-year period. In normal cases, if both JET participant and Contracting Organisation agree, the contract may be renewed for another year, with two renewals permissible (allowing for a total of three years on the Programme). However, effective immediately in the upcoming 2007-2008 JET Programme Year, a Contracting Organisation will have the option to re-contract any ALT, CIR, or SEA an additional two times if it (the C.O.) deems that the JET participant's work performance, level of experience and ability are of an exceptionally high standard. Thus in exceptional cases, a Contracting Organisation could conceivably employ the same JET for five years in total (i.e. the JET re-contracts 4 times). (CLAIR 2006j)

The path to the five-year term-limit for ALTs has been an arduous one. Indeed, a three-year limit had remained in place for 15 years before 'outstanding participants'

were invited to apply for a fourth year (CLAIR-AJET 2003). Despite this change, the JET administration made only 100 posts available nationwide and subjected candidates to a rigorous application process. Would-be applicants were assessed according to their ‘improvement standard’, and restrictions were placed on where an application could be lodged: if no vacant position was available in their local prefecture, ALTs were ineligible to apply elsewhere unless another Contracting Organization had failed to attract sufficient locally-based applicants (CLAIR-AJET 2003:17-20). In 2005, two new positions—‘Specialist Prefectural Assistant (SPA)’ and ‘Elementary School ALT’ (EALT)—were created as a means of granting an additional year’s employment for ‘outstanding’ participants (see Section 4.6.1). With the extension of the term-limit to five years, the JET administration abolished the former position and subsumed the latter under the general ALT category.

Although the five-year term-limit may appear to be merely the latest in a string of *ad hoc* incremental policy amendments, this reform was actually recommended in MEXT’s 2002 ‘Strategic Plan:

Through making flexible the terms of employment of the JET program (extending the maximum period of employment from three years to five years) and utilizing ALTs as special part-time instructors who can teach alone in class, the effective use of ALTs will be promoted.
(MEXT 2002b)

Whether a five-year cap may reasonably be described, as MEXT appears to suggest, as ‘flexible terms of employment’ is, of course, questionable. Indeed, no ALT has ever

been allowed to remain on the programme longer than five years. In fact, evidence suggests that most participants tend not to bother even applying for an extension beyond their third year. To illustrate: out of a total of 5052 ALTs working on the programme in 2006, a mere 135 had extended their period of employment beyond the third year, and only 46 of those had reached their fifth (and mandatory final) year (CLAIR 2006k).

The term-limit is clearly a bone of contention, since it prohibits talented, dedicated ALTs from establishing careers within the Japanese school system. In terms of learning outcomes, a policy of discarding talented individuals would seem detrimental, given the wealth of research evidence linking teacher quality with student achievement (Ferguson 1991; Murnane & Phillips 1981; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2000; Rockoff 2004; Wenglinsky 2000). Moreover, JET's 'revolving door' approach to staffing is not only expensive but also possibly damaging to the organizational performance of a given school, perhaps particularly where the same 'base-school' ALT has remained in place for some years. As Richard Ingersoll (2004) explains:

The good school, like the good family, is characterized by a sense of belongingness, continuity, and community, and is especially vulnerable to teacher losses. (Ingersoll 2004:144)

While some opposition to the term-limit among ALTs is perhaps to be expected, a level of disapproval is also evident among Japanese staff connected with the JET Programme. In a MEXT (2001b) survey conducted among Boards of Education, 41 of 54 BoE

representatives declared themselves in principle in favour of abolishing the term-limit.

Among the JTL interviewees in my sample, there was also a consensus that term-limits were counter-productive. Ms. Yamaguchi's view is representative of those expressed:

Ultimately, [the ALTs] leave after about 2 or 3 years. Also, they're not specialists [in English teaching]. And after 2-3 years, when they have become accustomed to teaching, they leave. To improve matters, it would be far more effective if there were a system where [ALTs] were allowed to stay not 2, 3 years, but 20 or 30 years...or Japanese staff could spend a year studying in America or Britain. The current JET Programme has little effect but costs a lot of money. (Mr Yamaguchi 5/11/2004; my translation. For Japanese original, see Appendix 2)

It is worth remembering that term-limits on the employment of foreigners are also common in the tertiary education sector (Hall 1998), as well as other occupational sectors. A specific term has been coined to refer to this phenomenon—the 'rice-paper ceiling' (Kopp 2000). May, a former ALT, provides a personal account of the human consequences of reaching this ceiling.

'The Rice-Paper Ceiling': One ALT's Tale

For ALTs planning on returning home after a year or two, the term-limit is obviously inconsequential; however, for those, like May, who have begun to establish roots in Japan, it can represent a major source of frustration. While working on the JET Programme, May met her husband, a Japanese national. As a fluent Japanese speaker (with a degree in Japanese) and a teacher of considerable experience, May felt ideally

qualified to remain in a position she enjoyed, but was prohibited from doing so because of JET's term-limit policy. May's occupational situation was complicated by being based in a small provincial town, where stable, reasonably paid private-sector jobs are less plentiful than in major urban centres. She describes her situation as a part-time private employee of her local Board of Education:

I have a part-time position with no paid holidays, no sick-leave, no maternity leave, no chance for raises etc...As you can imagine, my position is actually quite precarious. Should I get pregnant or become unable to work for medical reasons or something, I have no unemployment insurance etc. In many ways, I am in a similar situation as Japanese 'free-ters' [freeters are individuals who, upon leaving school, float 'freely' from one temporary and/or part-time job to another]. (May 17/10/2003)

Without the employment security guaranteed to Japanese schoolteachers (Bossy 2000; Ishikida 2005), May makes a bleak assessment of her future employment prospects:

What do I envision for my future under the rice-paper ceiling? Working as a teacher in the classroom, in this part-time capacity until I am too old to do it any more! What would be different without a rice-paper ceiling here? Well, I could perhaps have the chance to move into different positions, be given responsibilities such as the training and supervising of new JETs, training of Japanese teachers etc. (May 17/10/2003)

May blames the long-standing and widely acknowledged stereotype of 'foreigner as temporary guest' (see De Mente 2003:147; Fitzgerald 2000:190) for her predicament. Evidently, this is a stereotype to which even some highly-placed Japanese officials appear willing to subscribe. Consider the following statement from Japan's

Consul-General in Houston at a send-off reception for departing JET recruits:

Like Texans, we are very hospitable people. You will be temporary guest workers. We don't expect you to stay forever, but, during your official stay, you will be treated as our honored guests. Like Texans, you will find the Japanese easy to trust and win friendship.
(Consulate-General of Japan in Houston 2006; retrieved 22/04/2007)

In May's view, JET—ironically, a programme ostensibly aimed at promoting 'grassroots internationalization'—sets the worst possible precedent for employers of foreigners in other sectors:

I am quite certain that the view of foreigners as people who ultimately leave has had and will continue to have a big effect on my working life... I think that people do not see anything amiss in this situation (foreigners are temporary, shouldn't have the same benefits, career opportunities as Japanese etc) and I think the JET program definitely helps contribute to this perception, because before I started working at the BOE, the only foreign employees were JETs, all of whom left after one or two years... it is very significant that the JET program has had a three-year cap, because this program surely sets an example for other institutions hiring foreigners.. I feel really suspicious of the fourth and fifth year for ALTs, no raises, no bonuses etc., I don't see it as very beneficial for ALTs. (May 17/10/2003)

The benefit to the local BoE in May's case is easy to appreciate: it has retained the services of an experienced, Japanese-speaking teacher without any long-term commitment. Evidently, May's JET experience has been put to good use:

At the BOE, I have basically created the eikaiwa [English conversation] program in this town as part of integrated education, [Period of Integrated Study], and design all the lesson plans and play a large role in deciding the year-long curriculum for almost all of the elementary

schools in this town. The lessons are theoretically team-taught, but I lead the classes since there aren't any teachers who can speak English. (May 17/10/2003)

May is perhaps fortunate to have secured gainful employment with her local BoE, although even this was possible only because she qualified for a residence visa by virtue of her marriage to a Japanese citizen. For many other ALTs, the only prospect of remaining in Japan is through the sponsorship of a private language school (*ei-kaiwa kyōshitsu*), some of which are renowned for their unfavourable conditions of employment (Iwatane Kane & Hayashi 2007).

Despite incremental extensions to the contract length, even the most highly acclaimed ALT will be prevented from remaining on the programme any longer than five years—to be replaced, in most cases, by an untrained novice. Aside from one somewhat ambiguous reference in MEXT's 'Strategic Plan' advocating the recruitment of 'ALTs with advanced abilities' to work as 'full-time teachers' (MEXT 2002b), nothing in any policy directive suggests that foreigners may ever be granted long-term career opportunities within the Japanese school system. Term-limits, by definition, limit the ability of ALTs to generate change within Japanese schools. In the view of May (above) and others, this desire to avoid reform is one reason why term-limits have been imposed. Some scholars (e.g. Masden 1997; Worthington 1999) believe MEXT policy-makers are, as a principle, committed to ensuring that school-level internationalization remains strictly superficial.

From a wider, anthropological perspective, Patrick Fitzgerald (2000) argues that foreigners, perhaps particularly when afforded nominal membership of any Japanese group or institution (as happens in the JET Programme), represent a cause of '*meiwaku*' [trouble] for their Japanese hosts. He explains:

We cannot truly belong to any group in Japan, being of permanent guest status regardless of our actual years of living in Japan and thus permanently a burdensome nuisance for the members of the group to which we are nominally attached. (Fitzgerald 2000:190)

In terms of the three policy areas discussed in Chapter 4, the term-limit arguably has the greatest implications for the furtherance of Japanese cultural diplomacy. A steady turnover of young, potentially 'upwardly-mobile' individuals with Japan connections and experience would seem wholly consistent with the government's goal of garnering sympathy for their country among elites in foreign countries.

7.3 Policy on Allocation of ALTs

The rationale for including this section is simply to ascertain whether JET authorities have established a consistent policy for the allocation of ALTs among Japanese communities. For instance, what criteria, if any, determine the number and nationality of ALTs placed in a given community?

Although successful candidates may request placement in a specific area of Japan, JET

authorities stress that they are unable to satisfy any such request (MOFA 2006d), not least because some locations are more sought after than others. According to Mr. Harada of CLAIR (private correspondence), it is the prerogative of each Contracting Organization (CO) to request the number and the nationality of the ALTs they require. However, in the case of ALTs from the main English-speaking countries (*eigo-ken no kuni*)—specified by Mr Harada as the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Jamaica, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados—the national JET organization cannot guarantee that requests will be met exactly; instead, ALTs are allocated among COs in proportion to the total number of applicants from each country. By contrast, where a CO requests ALTs from a non-English-speaking country (*hieigo-ken no kuni*) or a ‘minor country of the English-speaking world’ (*eigo-ken no shōsū shōtai koku*), these ALTs are usually allocated exactly as requested. However, COs are under no obligation to request or accept a specific number of ALTs; in fact, any CO may withdraw from the programme altogether if it so desires.

It is difficult to gauge the overall implications of an allocation system that places decision-making power in the hands of individual Contracting Organizations. Arguably, a de-centralised decision-making system lends itself to diversity in recruitment more than a system where all hiring decisions are made centrally. Given the likelihood that some COs will embrace the programme more enthusiastically than others (see Section 4.4.2), one foreseeable consequence is an uneven distribution of ALTs across Japan. In essence, however, one can only begin to understand the implications of JET allocation

policy when one has learnt how ALTs have actually been distributed among the regions of Japan. The issue will be addressed in Section 8.4.

7.4 Policy on Training

This section seeks to ascertain what system of training has been instituted to compensate for the apparent deficit in participant experience and qualifications. It is worth pointing out here that training has been a major focus of criticism and a cause for complaint among both ALTs and JTLs (though this matter will be discussed in more depth in Section 8.5).

Numerous scholars (e.g. Carless 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves 1992; MacDonald 1991) regard trained educators as indispensable for the effective implementation of any educational initiative. In this connection, Peter James (2001) differentiates between 'teacher training', where learning needs are typically defined by 'a recognisable deficit in the participant teachers' knowledge or skills' and 'teacher development', which often focuses on 'the extension or development of teachers' existing knowledge or skills' (James 2001:151-152). In the JET context, then, there is an apparent need for both 'teacher training' for novice ALTs and 'teacher development' for existing JTLs. For the furtherance of foreign language-in-education goals, a logical emphasis would be training for communicatively-oriented English teaching—both for ALTs, many of whom lack any teaching experience, and for JTLs accustomed to the *yakudoku*

(grammar-translation) approach to language teaching. In terms of intercultural education, one would envisage a need for basic training/orientation aimed at helping ALTs to adapt smoothly to their new environment, possibly also including a Japanese language component. At the same time, one might expect both JTLs and ALTs to benefit from some form of intercultural training aimed at facilitating their collaboration with a partner grounded in a different cultural and educational tradition.

7.4.1 Training for Communicatively-oriented Language Teaching

Since the fostering of communicative competence in English is both a key JET aim and the central pillar of recent foreign language-in-education policy, one might expect MEXT to place a high priority on professionally-delivered, communicatively-oriented training. After all, few ALTs could be described as qualified language pedagogues. Moreover, even though all JTLs are certified teachers, concerns have also been raised about the quality of their training, particularly in terms of communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology (Browne & Wada 1998; Crooks 2001; Lamie 1998, 1999; Lamie & Lambert 2004; LoCastro 1996; Yonesaka 1999).

Communicative Language Teaching is based on the premise that many aspects of language learning occur only through natural processes (Krashen 1985; Krashen & Terrell 1983; Littlewood 1981). In this connection, Stephen Krashen (1985) has formulated an 'input hypothesis', which regards language acquisition as a largely

subconscious (or ‘unconscious’) process. Learners acquire language ability ‘unconsciously’ through exposure to understandable speech (‘comprehensible input’), which increases in complexity as they progress. In this scenario, the task of the communicative language teacher is to create an environment conducive to natural communication. As Stephen Andrews (2007) explains, the teacher’s role becomes that of ‘facilitator’, which implies the need for familiarity with ‘CLT techniques and the skills of managing pair- and group work, rather than knowledge of subject matter’ (Andrews 2007:19). For Peter Medgyes (1986), CLT places greater demands on teachers compared with more traditional teacher-centred approaches, since it necessitates a wider range of classroom management skills. Given Japan’s teacher-centred *yakudoku* tradition (see Section 6.4.4), any shift to a more learner-centred instructional approach would clearly require considerable adjustments in teaching style for many JTLs, which would suggest a need for preparatory training.

Communicatively-oriented teacher training has been a salient feature in the EFL industry for several decades. In the UK, training and certification has been provided by organizations like the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and later the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) (Andrews 2007:19). In Japan, there is no such history of institutionalised training in communicative methodology. It should be pointed out, however, that not everyone appreciates the value of CLT-related training. According to Paul Knight (2001:155), many CLT practitioners espouse the methodology on intuitive rather than theoretical grounds. Thus, CLT training courses

often ‘teach the classroom practices without explaining the underlying principles, leading to a mistrust of theory among many teachers’. Other researchers (e.g. Anderson 1993; Bax 2003; Ellis 1996) have questioned the cultural appropriateness of CLT training in countries with a different tradition of language teaching pedagogy (like Japan). Jan Anderson (1993) explains this line of reasoning in an American context:

While the communicative approach may be the best way of training those from other language backgrounds here in the United States and the most efficient kind of training for those who need to be part of our culture, it may not meet the needs of others in distant lands, who are learning English for a different purpose and who have no hope of ever visiting our country and no desire to adopt our culture. (Anderson 1993:471).

Researchers (e.g. Miller & Aldred 2000; Sato & Kleinsasser 1999; Thompson 1996) have discovered that if a teacher has failed to understand the principles of CLT or appreciate its value, it may be difficult for them to develop communicative practices appropriate to their own teaching contexts. This, in turn, may cause them to revert to their traditional teacher-centred approach. In other words, even if a JTL were to undergo communicatively-oriented training, they would not necessarily pursue a communicative approach within their own classroom.

7.4.2. Intercultural Training

Another form of training with potential relevance in the JET context is what is sometimes referred to as ‘intercultural training’ (Byram 2000b; Kohls & Brussow

1995; Landis, Bennett & Bennett 2004); alternatively as ‘cross-cultural training’ (Kohls & Knight 1994), ‘intercultural communication training’ (Brislin & Yoshida 1994) or simply ‘culture training’ (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). Ward et al. identify two broad areas where such training has been applied, both of which could be regarded as germane to the JET situation:

The first and major effort has been to provide pre-departure orientation to individuals about to undertake an extended sojourn abroad. A second, less-developed field has concentrated on teaching members of multicultural societies to become more aware of and sensitive to each other's values and practices and to impart specific job-related skills to majority members who work with minority clients or customers. (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001:265)

In short, then, the question of intercultural training is relevant both for Japan-bound or newly arrived ALT recruits, and also Japanese staff assigned to work alongside such recruits. It is certainly true that JTLs are grounded in different educational traditions from most ALTs, and are familiar with different social norms and value systems. One element of intercultural theory, often applied in intercultural training programmes and relevant to the Japanese context, is what Harry Triandis (2004) refers to as the ‘individualism-collectivism model’ (see Gudykunst 1998; Hall & Gudykunst 1989; Hofstede 1980; Latham et al 1998; Triandis & Singelis 1998; Triandis et al 1988; Trompenaars 1993). As Triandis (2004:x) explains, this model suggests that individuals from ‘individualist cultures’ (‘North Americans of European backgrounds, North and West Europeans, Australians, New Zealanders’; i.e. most of the ALT cohort) tend to view the world differently from people from ‘collectivist cultures’ (which would

include the Japanese). Latham et al (1998) explains how these differences can manifest themselves on an individual level:

People who value primarily individualism place emphasis on their own personal progress. They value autonomy, privacy, individual initiative and achievement. Their identity is based primarily on themselves as individuals. In contrast, people who espouse a collectivist philosophy value group work, derive their identity from the group, and emphasize the importance of group-based decisions. (Latham, Millman & Miedema 1998:200)

Since intercultural training varies according to purpose and scenario, a diverse range of activities and programmes can be encompassed under this rubric. Gudykunst, Guzley & Bhagat (1996) have suggested that intercultural training be classified according to two principal distinctions: firstly, ‘didactic’ vs. ‘experiential’ learning techniques and, secondly, a ‘culture-general’ vs. a ‘culture-specific’ content focus. In the former, the distinction is that between training based on, for instance, lectures and videos, and that which entails active trainee participation in tasks that simulate unfamiliar cultural contexts. In the latter, the distinction refers to a focus on concepts and principles applicable across a range of cultural contexts, as opposed to that which pertains to just one particular culture.

There are divided opinions on the usefulness of intercultural training. Richard Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida (1994:165-171) claim, on the basis of various empirical studies, that intercultural training programmes yield important benefits for trainees, particularly in terms of ‘thinking and knowledge development’, ‘affective reactions’ and ‘behavior’.

A similar if more equivocal conclusion is reached by Cargile & Giles (1996:398). However, Ward et al. (2001:262) are more reluctant to accept empirical confirmation of the effectiveness of intercultural training, claiming that most training programmes are unsystematic and reliant on cognitive methods of delivery rather than procedures with a behavioural and affective emphasis. According to Suzanne Weber (2002:197), however, criticism has been directed also at behaviourally-oriented, 'experiential' training programmes. Given the emphasis on using JET to promote 'grassroots internationalization' and 'mutual understanding' between Japan and other countries, one might expect at least some intercultural element to be incorporated into the JET training system.

7.4.3 Training for ALTs

In order to ascertain what training is provided to ALTs, I examined a range of official websites, as well as two widely distributed resource manuals—the Team-Teaching Handbook (MEXT 2002a) and the General Information Handbook (CLAIR 2006b). According to the above information sources, all ALTs are supposed to receive both 'pre-service' and 'in-service' training. In addition, a form of 'post-service' Japanese language training is available for selected JET alumni.

Pre-service Training for ALTs

- Pre-departure Orientations

Before departing for Japan, recruits attend a so-called ‘Pre-Departure Orientation’, hosted by the Japanese diplomatic mission in their respective home countries (MOFA 2006d). These orientations are intended as a basic introduction to living and working conditions in Japan, yet their content and duration are not fixed.

- ‘The Tokyo Orientation’

Irrespective of their eventual placement, all recruits arrive in Tokyo for a conference commonly known as ‘the Tokyo Orientation’. According to CLAIR (2006h), the purpose of this conference is ‘to provide a basic introduction to life on the JET Programme’. On this basis, it generally includes the following components:

- An introduction to the significance of the JET Programme, presented by Japanese government officials.
- An introduction to the JET positions and related conditions in Japan, presented by officials of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), and CLAIR.
- Workshops introducing the job skills needed by JETs to fulfil their positions, conducted by re-contracting CIRs, ALTs and SEAs, CLAIR, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (CLAIR 2006h)

Although, in content terms, the above might seem appropriate preparation for recruits, the entire Tokyo Orientation is scheduled to last for a mere three days.

- Local (Prefectural or Municipal) Pre-service Orientations

Upon arrival in their placement area, ALTs participate in a local orientation. According to MEXT (2002a:12), the purpose of these orientations is ‘to better acquaint them (ALTs) with conditions related to education, etc., in their respective areas’. Significantly, however, the national JET administration sets no standards—whether in terms of content, quality or duration—for such orientations, leaving individual COs free to interpret their training responsibilities as they wish.

In-service Training for ALTs

During the school year, ALTs attend an additional training seminar, organised by their local prefecture or Designated City. According to MEXT (2002a:12), the aim of these ‘Mid-year Seminars’ (or ‘Mid-Year Block Conferences’) is ‘to discuss issues on education and work’. In theory, an equal number of ALTs and JTLs attend these seminars, yet participation is obligatory only for the former. Additional local training seminars may be held, yet as MEXT (2002a:13) acknowledges: ‘the frequency and scheduling of training varies according to the prefecture and the local area’. A national-level training conference, known as the ‘Renewers’ Conference’ (or

‘Conference for Re-contracting JETs’), is held for any participants intending to renew their contracts for a further year. This conference has, at least in theory, a strong pedagogical focus. Indeed, as MEXT (2002a:12) explains, it aims at ‘ALTs’ professional development through skill-focused workshops and presentations’. The training itself is provided by a combination of ‘speakers from the Education and other professions’ and ‘2nd or 3rd year JETs who can share useful information and skills to set 1st year JETs on the path to having an even better and more productive 2nd year’ (CLAIR 2006i); in other words, a key role in training is entrusted to individuals with no background in teacher training/development. Given the deficit already identified in the experience and expertise of most recruits, the lack of a structured, professionally-delivered training programme for ALTs hardly seems conducive to effective classroom performance.

Japanese Language Training

CLAIR offers foreign JET participants a range of courses designed ‘to improve their Japanese language abilities’ and ‘to assist in the promotion of the understanding of Japan upon returning home’. The range of training options includes multi-level correspondence courses on Japanese language, as well as courses and seminars in ‘Translation & Interpretation’ and ‘Linguistics & Pedagogy’. For participants who have already attained a certain level of Japanese ability, there is also a two-week summer language course hosted by the Japan Foundation. In addition, MOFA offers its own

‘post-service’ training programmes for JET alumni already involved in the teaching of Japanese in their home countries; as well as Japan-based training courses for JETAA members who have already become or plan to become teachers of Japanese, or who use Japanese in their daily work.

While it may seem ironic that Japanese language training is the only area of JET-related training that is both structured and delivered by professionals, it makes perfect sense in the context of Japanese foreign cultural policy, which places a high priority on cultivating relationships among professionals in the United States and other Western countries. Viewed thus, Japanese language training may be aimed less at facilitating the ALT’s work duties than at steering them in the direction of a Japan-related career upon their return home.

7.4.4 Training for JTLs

Unlike most ALTs, JTLs are certified professional teachers. Nonetheless, numerous researchers (e.g. Crooks 2001; Lamie 1998, 1999; Lamie & Lambert 2004; LoCastro 1996; Yonesaka 1999) have identified serious deficiencies in their training, especially in light of the well-publicized policy shift towards communicative, learner-centred teaching. Fundamentally, as Lamie & Lambert (2004:92) argue, the education ministry has not ‘provided guidelines through which the new goals can be realistically applied in the current EFL classroom’. According to Gorsuch (2001), Japanese pre-service teacher

training programmes fail to provide adequate teaching practical experiences for trainee teachers. For instance, many English teachers receive their teaching credentials from universities with no education faculty. Moreover, they may only need to take a minimal number of English-related courses, including subjects like English literature or linguistics, to gain their teaching qualification.

In terms of in-service training, there exists, in theory, an impressive array of communicatively-oriented programmes for JTLs. In practice, the restrictions on participation are formidable. The most widely publicized national-level training programme is that organized by the MEXT-sponsored ‘Institute for Educational Leadership in the Teaching of English’ (MEXT 2002a; 2002b). However, this 4-week programme, which is aimed specifically at achieving MEXT’s core aims of ‘improving communicative competence and teaching skills’, is not open to all JTLs. Rather, participation is limited to ‘teachers’ consultants’ working at Boards of Education and ‘Junior High School and Senior High School teachers *demonstrating good leadership qualities*’ (2002a:11; emphasis mine). In the aforementioned ‘Strategic Plan’, MEXT (2002b) set an annual target of 2,000 teachers to participate in communicative training programmes, though this still represents only about 1 in every 30 JTLs. MEXT also sponsors English training programmes (of 2, 6 and 12-months duration) and overseas learning programmes, though again these cater for a very small number of JTLs.

In theory, any serving JTL has the opportunity to take an overseas sabbatical to pursue

studies in any subject of their interest. In practice, however, uptake is limited, since teachers must receive permission from their school and bear the expenses themselves. This might explain why MEXT set the modest annual target of just 118 teachers for 'short-term' overseas study and a mere 28 for 'long-term' study. Another section of the 'Strategic Plan' advocated support for English teachers 'hoping to undertake training overseas for more than 1 year utilizing the sabbatical system for graduate study'. Again, however, the numbers envisaged were small. MEXT (2002b) proposed that support be extended to an annual total of 100 teachers; 2 per prefecture).

At the local level, MEXT's Strategic Plan envisaged the following training provisions:

Intensive training for all 60 thousand English teachers in junior high and senior high schools is to be carried out under a five-year plan to be implemented from the fiscal year 2003 (subsidies to be provided to prefectural governments) (MEXT 2002b).

Although every JTL is required to undergo one year of induction training, MEXT leaves in-service training decisions to local authorities (Kobayashi 1993). Thus, as Gorsuch (2001) explains, such training varies widely in frequency and content from prefecture to prefecture. According to MEXT (2002a) some English teachers' organizations occasionally organize their own training conferences, where 'enthusiastic teachers conduct research or discuss issues and problems they are confronted with in their daily English classes' (MEXT 2002a:11). What is noticeably absent in all the above is any form of mandatory team-teaching-related or intercultural training.

7.4.5 Discussion Summary

To judge from official information sources, there is nothing to suggest that the national JET administration perceives a need for a comprehensive preparatory training course devoted specifically to the JET Programme—whether for its overwhelmingly inexperienced ALT recruits or for any JTLs who might be unaccustomed to and/or apprehensive about collaborating with an even more inexperienced, non-Japanese-speaking foreigner. Rather, the policy is a *laissez-faire* one, which allows individual COs and schools to pursue whatever approach to training they consider appropriate, to whatever standard. There are obvious questions as to whether, in its pursuit of higher standards of foreign language (particularly communicative English) education and intercultural education, the JET training system constitutes adequate preparation for ALTs and JTLs.

7.5 Policy on Utilization

7.5.1 The ALT's Formal Work Duties

The Japanese government devotes considerable energy and resources to the recruitment of ALTs, but how does it propose to utilise them? The most direct way of answering this question would be to examine the ALT employment contract. However, as CLAIR

(2007d:4) has clarified, each Contracting Organization compiles its own Terms and Conditions in accordance with local requirements. Since it would be impossible to examine here all the various contracts offered by COs throughout Japan, the focus is limited to 'The JET Programme Terms and Conditions (proposed)' drawn up by CLAIR. In essence, this is the 'model contract' that provides the general blueprint for all employment contracts. It may be amended by Contracting Organizations 'to incorporate specific local conditions' (CLAIR 2006g:65).

In Article 4 of this model contract, the ALT's are specified as follows:

The ALT shall perform duties as specified by the Supervisor and/or principal of the board of education and/or school, as set out in the following items:

1. Assist in foreign language instruction at junior and/or senior high schools.
2. Assist with foreign language education at primary/elementary schools.
3. Assist in the preparation of teaching materials, and assist with foreign language ability contests.
4. Assist with seminars for current foreign language teachers.
5. Assist with special and extra-curricular activities.
6. Assist with local international exchange activities.
7. Other duties accepted as necessary by the Supervisor or the school principal.

(CLAIR 2006l)

7.5.2 The ALT as 'Assistant'

Formally, then, ALTs are not employed as teachers in their own right, but as 'assistants' charged with responsibility for providing support for language education

and various other unspecified tasks. There is no designated role for ALTs in ‘intercultural education’, except as assistants in ‘international exchange activities’ (*kokusai kōryū katsudō*). In the school context, the JTLs perform the role of ‘master’ teachers, since they are certified by their local Board of Education. This inequality of status is reflected in Article 20 of the model contract, which states that ‘the JET shall faithfully observe his/her superior’s orders on matters pertaining to the performance of duties’. The subordinate status of ‘the JET’ is highlighted further in Article 7(2), which states that any prefecture may simply dismiss them if it is unable to pay their salary due to a non-approval or reduction of a budget in the prefectural assembly; in such cases, they merely receive one month’s salary as compensation. Further, in terms of their status vis-à-vis the JTL, the General Information Handbook (GIH) leaves the ALT in no doubt as to whose priorities must take precedence:

Please bear in mind that the ALT is an assistant to the Japanese teacher in the classroom. The ALT should not, therefore, be expected to conduct classes alone, not be the ‘main’ teacher. As an assistant, the ALT must respect the syllabus requirements and wishes of the Japanese teacher during lesson planning sessions...It is useful to remember that all ALTs (except Chinese and Korean ALTs) begin their duties at the beginning of the second term, so the curriculum may already have been planned. However, ALTs are a valuable resource for Japanese teachers, suggesting activities or creative and effective ways to use the authorised Japanese textbook. (CLAIR: 2006b: 125)

From the standpoint of the national JET administration, then, the ALT-JTL relationship is anything but a partnership of equals. This is perhaps most graphically illustrated in CLAIR’s description of the ALT as a ‘resource’ for Japanese teachers.

7.5.3 The Role of the ALT in Language Education

Team-Teaching

One of JET's defining characteristics is the joint-deployment of ALTs and JTLs in a collaborative pedagogical approach known as 'team-teaching' (see, for instance, Árva & Medgyes 2000; Brumby & Wada 1990; Buckley 2000; Johnson 1999; Maroney 1995; Medgyes 2001; Polio & Wilson-Duffy 1998; Robinson & Schaible 1995; Tajino 2002). Indeed, Sachiko Hiramatsu (2005:114) describes team-teaching as 'the core of the JET system'.

The term 'team teaching' itself has been defined in various ways. For Richards et al. (1992:375), it is 'a term used for a situation in which two teachers share a class and divide instruction between them'. Carless and Walker (2006:464) define team teaching as 'simply two teachers together in the classroom, actively involved in instruction'; while Davis (1995:8) extends the definition to cover 'all arrangements that include two or more faculty in some level of collaboration in the planning and delivery of a course'. Robinson and Schaible (1995:57) refer to the concept of 'collaborative teaching', which concerns 'any academic experience in which two teachers work together in designing and teaching a course that itself uses group learning techniques'. In this study, the term 'team-teaching' refers to a specific model of language instruction

whereby a non-native (Japanese) English teacher collaborates with a native-speaker of English in teaching the same class of students. In the wider context of Japanese school education, team-teaching represents a radical departure from long-standing pedagogical practice.

While interpersonal interaction is always likely to produce unpredictable outcomes, numerous opinions have been offered as to what factors determine the formation of productive team-teaching relationships. To consider just three perspectives: Peter Sturman (1992:145) identifies ‘mutual, personal and professional respect, adaptability and good humour’ as ‘the essential components of team-teaching’; Kathleen Bailey (2006:299) stresses the importance of teachers being able to choose ‘their own partners’ rather than being ‘forced into any particular partnership’; while Bailey, Dale & Squire (1992:174) advocate, among other things, that team-teaching partners ‘focus on goals not on personalities, recognize one another’s contribution, and set aside time for planning on a regular basis’.

The merits of team-teaching have been widely discussed, both in terms of student learning outcomes (Anderson & Speck 1998) and teacher development (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan 2001; Robinson & Schaible 1995). For Rebecca Anderson and Bruce Speck (1998), team-taught classes offer students certain advantages over classes taught by a single teacher, such as better access to assistance from teachers, a wider variety of teaching methods and materials, and greater opportunity to participate in class.

Moreover, for teachers, collaborative teaching relationships are a potentially valuable opportunity for on-the-job personal development, in accordance with the ‘social constructivist’ view of learning as a social process (Barnes & Todd 1995). In the context of the language classroom, the advantages of a native-speaker/non-native speaker teaching team have also been acknowledged (Carless 2006; Luk 2001; Tajino & Tajino 2000; Tajino & Walker 1998), particularly in terms of creating opportunities and enhancing motivation for student communication in the target language.

At the same time, some see potential for tension in collaborative teaching relationships, particularly where such relationships are imposed from above. As Dan Lortie (1975) explains, teachers are generally used to working in isolation from others because of the ‘cellular’ nature of the school, which compartmentalizes them into ‘egg crate’ classrooms. Although, in Lortie’s view, this isolation fosters teacher independence, it is detrimental to any notion of collaboration. According to Susan Wheelan (2005), the concept of professional autonomy is a long-standing one within the teaching profession, as teachers value their freedom to choose their own teaching methods and make decisions concerning their own classroom. On this basis, it is perhaps unsurprising that Bruce Johnson (2003) should have discovered, in a study on the introduction of collaborative teaching arrangements at four Australian schools, that some teachers disliked their new arrangements, complaining of ‘an increase in their workloads, a loss of professional autonomy, and the emergence of damaging competition between teams for resources, recognition and power’ (Johnson 2003:337).

Andy Hargreaves (1994) warns of the detrimental effects of ‘contrived collegiality’, which is ‘usually administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-orientated, fixed in time and space and predictable’ (Hargreaves 1994:195-196), by contrast with ‘collaborative collegiality’, which is ‘spontaneous, voluntary, development-orientated, pervasive across time and space and unpredictable’ (*ibid.* 192-193). Hargreaves’ reasoning is supported by other studies, e.g. Avalos (1998), Carless (2006) and Sawyer (2002). Francis Buckley (2000:12) identifies ‘incompatible teammates’ as ‘perhaps the biggest problem’ associated with team-teaching. In short, then, one cannot assume that a team-teaching relationship will automatically be harmonious and fruitful, particularly if, as in the JET context, it is a ‘top-down’ arrangement.

- MEXT’s ‘Six Merits of Team-Teaching’

The official JET Programme rationale for team-teaching is set out by MEXT (2002a) in its 116-page ‘Handbook for Team-Teaching’. As the only comprehensive government publication dedicated to team-teaching, it can be considered an indication of the Ministry’s stance. The fact that the Handbook’s Preface was authored by the Director-General of MEXT’s Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau would indicate a high level of official endorsement. The Handbook identifies six potential merits of team-teaching, which reflect MEXT’s vision of the ALT-JTL relationship and the desired outcomes, in terms of both foreign language education and the promotion of intercultural understanding. These ‘merits’ are now examined critically by referring to

extracts from the Handbook.

1) Motivation for Communication in the Target Language

In the following two extracts, it is anticipated that the ALT's arrival will heighten students' appreciation of the social value of communicating in English:

The presence of an ALT in a classroom gives the students a practical and immediate motive to use the language as a means of communication. They do not need any explanation regarding the need to speak the language. And even when there is no ALT present, they know they need to learn the language because they can use whatever word, expression or grammatical rule that they have learned when an ALT visits them. (MEXT 2002a:15)

The mere presence of the ALT in class can be motivating to students because he/she is a native speaker of the language. Students look very happy when they talk to the ALT and find themselves understood. It is in this way that they are motivated to study the language. (ibid: 20)

Here, MEXT appears to regard the presence of an ALT as a powerful motivating force for the study of English, which, in light of some team-teaching research (e.g. Carless 2006; Luk 2001), is not, in itself, an unreasonable proposition. However, the MEXT statement is predicated on a number of questionable assumptions about the teaching team. Firstly, it assumes that inexperienced, untrained ALTs will possess the motivational ability and resourcefulness to inspire students sometimes characterised as unenthusiastic learners of English (McVeigh 2002). Secondly, it assumes that ALTs will receive unconditional and effective support from their JTL partners. Thirdly, and

perhaps most optimistically, it assumes that the presence of a native-speaker will produce a more general positive 'knock-on effect' in all-round enthusiasm for studying English. In considering the ALT's latitude for influencing students, one has always to be mindful of the importance of English examinations that attach no importance whatsoever to communicative ability (see Section 6.4.4).

2) Cross-Cultural Understanding

Among official publications, the Handbook is unusual in that it makes specific recommendations as regards how cross-cultural understanding might be achieved, albeit within the context of the Japanese school. The following statement provides some revealing insights into the mode of classroom interaction envisaged by MEXT:

Team-teaching provides good learning opportunities for a better understanding of cultural differences for both students and teachers. The students will learn much about differences and similarities between Japanese culture and the culture from which the ALT comes. Just observing how the ALT behaves in the classroom can be enlightening to the students. The ALT can also relate his/her way of life to parts of the school textbook referring to some aspects of different cultures. (MEXT 2002a:15)

In essence, 'cross-cultural understanding' is regarded here as an exercise in comparative culturally-determined behaviour, based on an apparent expectation that the ALT will somehow 'behave differently' from any given Japanese person. Whether intended or not, the student's role is described in vicarious rather than participatory

terms, i.e. observing the ALT's 'foreign' behaviour rather than engaging with them in an environment free of preconceptions.

In terms of interpersonal dynamics, it is expected that ALT-JTL interaction will increase mutual awareness of (apparently unanticipated) cultural differences; the presupposition being that differences between ALTs and JTLs are attributable to their 'culture' rather than, say, their personality. Once again, interaction is reduced to an exercise in the appreciation of cultural differences:

Discussions between the JTL and the ALT in the course of lesson preparation should serve as another chance for cultural exchange. Through the process of getting each other's point of view across, both JTLs and ALTs will find covert as well as overt differences in their cultural background. Besides becoming aware of differences between cultures, both JTLs and ALTs will be able to rid themselves of stereotypical images of a culture that they might have initially held. (MEXT 2002a:16)

For MEXT, the corollary of this increased awareness of cultural differences is a mutual jettisoning of stereotypes. Such a conclusion is again predicated on many presuppositions, e.g. the development of a positive interpersonal JTL-ALT relationship; the absence of linguistic barriers; and a shared sense of purpose. It is assumed that a stereotype-free JTL-ALT relationship will develop osmotically ('through the process of getting each other's point of view across') rather than with the aid of team-teaching training or 'intercultural training' (see Section 7.4.2).

In the following extract, the vicarious position of the student is again stressed. Indeed, the ALT is almost regarded as incapable of influencing student attitudes (and, by the same token, the students as incapable of being influenced) without mediation from the JTL:

Students may not directly benefit from this kind of cultural learning. However, they can be influenced indirectly by a JLT-ALT pair that is freer from stereotypical images of culture, and which demonstrates a smooth, co-operative working relationship. The attitudes of teachers are conveyed more strongly through the way they behave than through what they say. (MEXT 2002a:16)

While it is unclear to what extent JTLs and ALTs attach credence to statements like the above, their inclusion here does seem to support the views of those who consider Japanese approaches to cross-cultural teaching to be predicated on simplistic assumptions of national ethnic homogeneity and uniqueness (e.g. Murphy-Shigematsu 2003; Parmenter 2006a).

3) Presentation of Situations

As MEXT sees it, team-teaching is a valuable aid in the presentation of language situations:

Presenting a variety of situations is an important part of foreign language teaching. Dialogs of many kinds in many situations are usually provided in school textbooks and the teacher has to show how they are actually carried out...with the help of an ALT, he/she can present those

situations much more easily. (MEXT 2002a: 16)

From a purely logistical standpoint, the above proposition is hardly a contentious one: a second teacher seems likely to facilitate the presentation of dialogues. Certainly, team-teaching with a native-speaker offers students greater possibility of observing and participating in 'real-life' language situations than would be the case in classes taught by a lone JTL. Again, however, successful outcomes are likely to require close co-ordination and planning, which could prove difficult given the time constraints and administrative burden under which most Japanese schoolteachers operate (Okano & Tsuchiya 1999; Rohlen & LeTendre 1996; Sato 2004).

4) Student Participation

In common with 3) above, the logistical advantage of deploying two teachers, particularly in the large classes characteristic of Japanese schools, is not difficult to appreciate. Indeed, some researchers (e.g. Anderson & Speck 1998) have acknowledged the positive effects of a second teacher presence on student participation. In the following extract, MEXT envisages a dynamic, imaginative approach to classroom management:

Interactive activities will be carried out more effectively when two teachers are present. The class can be divided into two and students can engage themselves in different activities at the same time. A JTL and ALT team can move about the classroom, attend to a different group of students at a given time and interact with them. This helps make the lessons more

learner-centered. They can take turns teaching a group, changing the focus of instruction. The JTL, for instance, could concentrate on an explanation of contrastive differences of an expression in the target language with the Japanese equivalent. And the ALT could actually show how to use it. (MEXT 2002a: 16)

For many JTLs, the ‘learner-centered’ approach envisaged here would mark a radical departure from usual classroom practice. In this regard, Lamie & Lambert (2004) identify an inherent conflict between the aims of Grammar-Translation (*yakudoku*), as ‘a vehicle through which students come to a deeper understanding of the morphology and syntax of the foreign language’ and those of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where ‘the transfer of meaning is of paramount importance’ (Lamie & Lambert 2004:92). In spite of this apparent conflict, some researchers (e.g. Yukawa 1994; Smith 1994) believe some JTLs are well capable of adapting their teaching routines to different circumstances. Nonetheless, if MEXT is serious in its desire to use JET to help foster learner-centredness, one would envisage a need for both a communicatively-oriented joint training programme for ALTs and JTLs (which, as explained in Section 7.4, is lacking) and an examination system that better reflects the Ministry’s declared commitment to communicative language teaching.

5) Teaching/Learning Materials Development

On this issue, the Team-Teaching Handbook offers the following perspective:

Team-teaching makes the development of teaching/learning materials easier. Writing English

texts, making audio tapes or making videos for classroom use is not an easy task...The JTL and the ALT should discuss their ideas about materials they plan to develop. One of the teachers should outline an idea, and the pairs should then decide how to put the idea into complete form. When face-to-face communication is difficult, they can talk to each other on the phone or use a facsimile machine to exchange their ideas or drafts. (MEXT 2002a: 17)

Again, the above envisages a wholehearted collaborative JTL-ALT relationship, predicated upon a high level of organization and professionalism in both parties. How far such can be achieved is open to question, given, for instance, the deficit in ALT experience, the deficiencies in training for both ALTs and JTLs, and the general danger of 'contrived collaboration' (Hargreaves 1994) associated with any team-teaching relationship imposed from above. Most seriously perhaps, many JTLs would probably struggle to find time in their hectic schedules for the kind of close and sustained engagement described above.

6) On-the-Job Training

Finally, MEXT regards the presence of the ALT as an opportunity for JTLs to enhance their own ability to communicate in English:

Team-teaching provides JTLs with increased opportunity to train themselves. Through working with ALTs, they can improve their proficiency in the target language. Team-teaching with native-speakers of the language, including preparation for classroom instruction, motivate, in a natural way, JTLs to use the language for real communicative purposes. Thus they can get a feel of using the language as a means of communication. (MEXT 2002a: 17)

The value of teacher collaboration in promoting professional development has been widely acknowledged by researchers (Buckley 2000; Lieberman 1996; McLaughlin 1997; Smylie 1995). As Ann Lieberman (1996) explains, professional development is enhanced when teachers share knowledge with and learn from one another. In the extract above, ALTs are regarded as a training resource for JTLs, based on the not unreasonable assumption that non-native career English teachers will always feel motivated to converse in English with their native-speaker colleagues. One would certainly expect this obvious merit to be capitalized upon; a possible caveat again being the lack of free time most Japanese teachers enjoy during the course of their working day. Of course, if collegiality is ‘contrived’, motivation for extra-curricular conversation may be less than wholehearted.

While MEXT’s ‘Six Merits of Team-Teaching’ *per se* may seem reasonable and logical, they are predicated upon some tenuous assumptions. Notably, they assume that a cordial, professional relationship will quickly develop between the ALT and the JTL; that both parties will be willing and able to collaborate in lesson planning; and, perhaps most implausibly, that they will share a common vision in terms of both their own and their partner’s role. Given the inexperience of most ALT recruits, the deficiencies in training, and the various systemic problems associated with foreign language education in Japan, it is hard to imagine how most real-life team-teaching situations could resemble those envisaged by MEXT. It might be tempting to applaud the Handbook as a well-intentioned if overly optimistic guide for inexperienced educators. On the other

hand, some of the scenarios it envisages seem predicated on the kind of naïve, essentialist view of cross-cultural relations described by, among others, Mabuchi (2004), McVeigh (2002) and Yoshino (2002). In these scenarios, the ALT is cast in the role of pedagogical and cultural resource. What is clear, on the basis of the discussion thus far, is that team-teaching in the JET context is not based upon the principle of ‘partnership’. Indeed, ALTs have no decision-making power whatsoever as regards when or how they are utilized.

7.5.4 The ALT’s Other Duties

Formally at least, the ALT’s work extends beyond the field of language education. According to the aforementioned ‘model contract’ (CLAIR 2006l), ALTs may be called upon to assist in ‘foreign language ability contests’, ‘special and extra-curricular activities’ and ‘local international exchange activities’. The contract also includes an ‘other duties’ clause—i.e. ‘other duties accepted as necessary by the Supervisor or the school principal’—which has caused concern among ALTs (see AJET National Council 2006); a concern evidently recognised by some ministerial officials, like the following MEXT spokesperson:

As for the JET contract, there is a tendency to use the ‘other duties specified by the supervisor’ clause as a catch-all clause, however we feel that there is a need to write out in more detail these other kinds of duties. (CLAIR 2005a)

For any ALTs apprehensive about the lack of specificity in their job description, the General Information Handbook lists some duties they *might* be called upon to perform. These include: acting as a Prefectural Advisor (PA) or sub-PA (essentially, a counsellor for newer ALTs); proofreading; public speaking; officiating at speech contests; presenting workshops and seminars at JET conferences; and teaching a foreign language to adults (CLAIR: 2006b: 131-132). The Handbook offers the following 'reassurance':

The wide range of miscellaneous duties may seem daunting, and anything that has to do with another culture will probably end up on your desk eventually. However, there is no need to worry! Feel free to ask other JET participants for help; they have probably had similar experiences. (CLAIR 2006b: 131-132)

In light of this reality, it seems inevitable that the day-to-day workplace realities of some ALTs will bear no resemblance to those of others, revealing a great likelihood of inconsistency in the implementation of JET policy.

7.6 Conclusion

Despite the ambitious discourse of reform surrounding the programme (and, indeed, Japanese education more generally), the JET operational plan, as outlined above, does not seem conducive to systemic change, whether in terms of foreign language education or intercultural education. Rather, it manifests certain inherent constraints that militate against the introduction of fresh approaches and that also reveal a

fundamental lack of clarity as regards how change is to be realized in the classroom.

In the context of foreign language education, constraints are evident in the fact that applicants for the position of ALT require no pedagogical experience, qualifications or training, and then are offered little in the way of formal training prior to or upon arrival in Japan. Moreover, even though communicative competence is specified as *the* key objective for foreign language education in both the junior-high and high school curricula (MEXT 2002a: 98-116), all-important high-school and university examinations necessitate no communicative ability. Given the premium still attached to rote memorization, it is hard to envisage much of a role for ALTs in helping students prepare for examinations. This reality encapsulates the ‘conflict between approaches’ (*yakudoku* vs. CLT) described by Lamie & Lambert (2004:92). It means, in practical terms, that the ALT (and, by extension, the entire JET Programme) is peripheral to the fundamental business of foreign language education in Japanese schools.

In terms of intercultural education, numerous factors militate against fundamental change. In terms of recruitment policy, for instance, JET has clearly never been regarded as an opportunity to employ foreign intercultural/cross-cultural specialists. In fact, a comparatively higher priority has been placed upon the employment of novices, in order, as the abovementioned MOFA spokesperson put it, ‘to open the door wide to allow those who know nothing of Japan to come and develop an appreciation for it’ (CLAIR 2005a). In this context, no special priority has ever been given to speakers of

the Japanese language. In fact, Japan experience is regarded almost as a disadvantage, with current or recent Japan-residents disqualified even from applying. The upper age limit of 39 years automatically precludes the participation of any highly experienced teachers—including almost anyone who has ever occupied a school leadership position in their home country. As in the case of foreign language education, there is a lack of specificity as regards what the presence of the ALT is supposed to achieve in terms of ‘grassroots internationalization’ within the school. To judge purely from the above, the intercultural role envisaged for the ALT is that of ‘cultural informant’ (Browne and Evans 1994; Fukazawa 1996). While this is generally taken to mean a teaching assistant who provides interesting information about their home country, its customs and lifestyle, it might also be someone whose ‘foreign’ behaviour demonstrates how foreigners differ culturally from Japanese people. In essence, ALTs are perceived much more as a ‘cultural resource’ for JTLs than as intercultural educators in their own right. Certainly, there is nothing in the JET operational programme to suggest an active role for ALTs in preparing schoolchildren for an era of greater societal diversity.

Naturally, the constraints inherent in the JET operational plan do not mean that ALTs and JTLs cannot form partnerships that yield impressive results, whether in terms of motivating students to communicate in English or in enhancing student interest in and understanding of foreign people, countries and cultures. However, the conditions established by JET policy-makers do appear ‘contrived’ in that they place an inordinate burden on (already overburdened) individual JTLs to collaborate with often

inexperienced ALTs in creating and delivering lessons that students will regard as worthwhile. Moreover, given the imperative to help their students pass all-important examinations, JTLs might be forgiven for perceiving JET as tangential both to their responsibilities and the wider priorities of school English language education. In this regard, team-teaching success seems likely to depend as much as anything on the intangible of interpersonal chemistry.

As potential agents of reform, ALTs are constrained not only by their peripheral role in school language education but also by their temporary status, which is enshrined in a five-year term-limit policy. Given the impossibility of establishing careers for themselves within the Japanese school system, it is logical to suppose that most ALTs will choose to leave Japan well before their mandatory maximum five-year term has expired—though, of course, many probably never intend to remain in Japan for more than, say, two or three years. From the perspective of Japanese cultural diplomacy, however, the term-limit is a help rather than a hindrance, in that it guarantees a steady flow of young graduates, capable of being molded into lifelong (and potentially influential) friends of Japan.

While the two goals of ‘promoting local-level international exchange’ and ‘enhancing standards in foreign language education’ are unquestionably the most prominent, there are grounds for ambiguity in terms of which of these goals, if any, should take precedence. To illustrate: the employment contract envisages a basic role for the ALT

that falls within the domain of the professional language educator (i.e. assisting in foreign language instruction, the preparation of teaching materials, and with seminars for current foreign language teachers), yet, again, lack of experience and training are obvious impediments. At the same time, ALTs are contractually bound to participate in ‘local international activities’—in other words, ‘*kokusai kōryū* events’ (see Section 6.3.2)—in what is, after all, commonly described as a ‘grassroots internationalization’ programme. Given these contradictions, it would be unreasonable to expect all ALTs to perceive the programme, and particularly their own personal role in it, in identical fashion. It would be equally unreasonable to expect consensus among JTLs or other Japanese staff. Rather, a degree of uncertainty, even confusion, would appear almost inevitable.

In the following chapter, the programme’s day-to-day implementation will be discussed, largely through the prism of personal opinions voiced by ALTs and JTLs. On the basis of the above, one would expect to encounter some major differences in opinion as regards the rationale for the programme and the appropriate roles of the various actors.

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter, which is based on a combination of statistical data and first-hand personal accounts, aims to provide some insights into the day-to-day implementation of JET policy. It is worth acknowledging from the outset, however, the difficulties in making generalisations, not least given the limited sample of primary data presented here, particularly the first-hand accounts. For consistency, the discussion covers the same areas as in the previous chapter, i.e. recruitment, allocation, training, and utilization.

In addressing first the recruitment question, the main objective is to ascertain, to the extent possible, what kind of individuals are being recruited to serve as ALTs. Specifically, I consider what emphasis, if any, is placed on a candidate's nationality and ethnic background, and attempt to identify what personal attributes recruiters regard as particularly important in an ALT. Next, I consider, albeit very briefly, the allocation question, with a view to determining on what basis ALTs are distributed among Japan's prefectures and 'designated cities'. I then move on to consider the question of training, an aspect of the programme widely regarded as deficient (see Section 7.4). Here, I report how the JET approach to training has been assessed by some participants, and outline their main criticisms. Against the background of the JET 'model contract', the final section of this chapter considers the question of utilization,

i.e. how ALTs actually have been/are being deployed on a day-to-day basis. In light of the programme's diversity, however, the focus is limited to just a few of the most salient discourses to emerge from the data. Before beginning the discussion proper, I shall introduce the concept that encapsulates the diversity of conditions that prevail within the programme—‘ESID’ (‘Every Situation is Different’).

8.2 The ESID (‘Every Situation is Different’) Principle

Any researcher of the JET Programme is almost certain to encounter the ubiquitous slogan ‘Every Situation is Different’ (‘ESID’). An Internet search will yield hundreds of references to ESID—in online discussion forums, weblogs, and both unofficial and official JET-related websites. It has been mentioned in books (e.g. Mann 2002), and one website has even appropriated ‘ESID’ as its own title. Some have even referred to ‘the ESID mantra’.

Inevitably, opinions differ as to how ‘the ESID principle’ should be interpreted, as illustrated in the following exchange between two ALTs:

A: I think the entire concept of ‘esid’ should be done away with. It would be more logical to tell the dopes that come to this job expecting everyone to have the same experience that they’re obviously too young and/or stupid to realize that no matter where you go or what job you’re doing no two people have the same experience even if they’re working for the same company or field of work...I certainly didn’t get told at orientations for my previous jobs that ‘every situation is different’...nor did they hint that every situation could be the same. It’s an obvious fact. I think I heard my co-workers in my previous real jobs tell me stuff like ‘I dunno, figure

something out'.

B: Fair point...But most people's issue with the ESID thing is the extent to which contracts differ. Free cars and housing vs. no car and expensive or crap housing, and the amount of annual leave. I might be wrong, but I believe that some contracts can only give 12 days leave, others 20, and some even don't have to go in during school holidays either, which is obviously a huge benefit. Regardless of contract, some get good schools/JTEs, and others get crap ones. It is just luck, just like our placements. (Source: 'Shimane JETs' website; retrieved 08/08/2005)

From a more extreme perspective, one apparently disgruntled former ALT rationalizes the ESID principle in the following terms:

When CLAIR say 'every situation is different' they infer that 'situation' refers to things like work hours, geographical location and academic level of school. In reality 'different' can mean the difference between being beaten up by your students or having students that form their own English club. It can mean the difference between receiving large subsidies for your excellent apartment or being charged 2,000 US dollars key money to live in an apartment with no electricity, running water and high rent. It can mean the difference between going to a school where many friendly teachers speak English and going to a school where ten words are spoken to you all year and your kochō sensei [head teacher] molests you. It can mean the difference between teaching over 20 classes a week on your own and only acting like a human tape recorder in your two classes a week. (Source: 'JET Program Survey' website; retrieved 03/04/2003)

While this last statement may seem like gratuitous hyperbole, some ALTs do, unquestionably, encounter quite extreme situations. This is evident in AJET's issuance of reports on workplace violence (AJET National Council 2005d), stalking/harassment (AJET National Council 2004c), and bullying/classroom management (AJET National Council 2007a). Even where problems are less acute, the ESID principle still invites

situations neither intended nor envisaged by JET's creators, as will be illustrated below.

Several ALT participants, like the following two, claimed to have been warned about ESID in the course of the recruitment and orientation process:

PB: When you were being recruited and oriented to work in Japan, were you told explicitly what your task would be?

Larry: Yes and no. I was told what to expect. However, people would always come back with the same answer: 'It really all depends on your own placement. Everyone's experiences will be different'. (E-mail interview with Larry; 3/11/2003)

PB: When you were being recruited and oriented to work in Japan, were you told explicitly what your task would be?

Judy: No! I was told ESID (Every Situation Is Different), which it is - my job is very different from my friend in Nagano and the municipal JETs in Kanagawa (I'm a prefectural JET). I was told that generally, I could expect to be the lesson planner and idea maker for close to 100% of the team-teaching time (which turned out to be true). (E-mail interview with Judy; 4/5/2004)

Viewed sympathetically, official acknowledgements of ESID are merely an appreciation of the practical impossibility of standardizing a programme of JET's scale, and a prudent reminder to recruits of the need for flexibility. Of course, even if the national JET administrators were striving for consistency, they could never standardise all aspects of the programme. They could not, for instance, legislate away differences in aptitude and attitude among those involved with the programme (whether students, teachers or administrators); nor could long-standing local disparities in power and resources be eradicated purely in order to create a level-playing field for ALTs. Viewed more critically, however, ESID is a blanket disclaimer for the day-to-day problems

encountered by foreign participants. Given the complaints, it is perhaps surprising that the national JET administration has not done more to guarantee greater consistency in employment conditions for ALTs, e.g. in terms of working hours, work duties and holiday leave. From the perspective of this research, the prevalence of ESID means that generalisations are almost impossible to make, which has obvious implications for my ability to draw overarching conclusions about the programme. I have at least attempted to ensure, by triangulating data sources, that the phenomena discussed below are based on more than the idiosyncratic views of a few individuals.

8.3 Recruitment

In the previous chapter, the recruitment issue was addressed from the perspective of operational policy, with specific attention given to the eligibility criteria for ALT candidates. The aims here are to ascertain what kind of candidates are actually being recruited, and then to explore the likely implications, both in terms of officially-declared programme goals and the more general goal of promoting internationalization in Japan.

8.3.1 Nationality Issues

Each year, the JET organization invites applications among nationals of specific countries, listed on its official homepage (CLAIR 2006f). Some countries have been

invited to contribute participants on an annual basis, while others (particularly smaller, non-English-speaking countries) have not. Although the pool of participating countries has widened considerably, from just four in 1987 to forty-four in 2007, large areas of the world have remained excluded. For instance, South Africa was listed as the sole eligible African country for 2007-2008, while the only Middle Eastern representatives were Israel and Turkey (MOFA 2006c). Although the list of participants (see Figure 1 below) has remained dominated by what might broadly be described as 'Western countries', there has been an overwhelming, highly disproportionate and increasing emphasis on one country, namely the United States.

Figure 1: Number of Participants from Principal Countries 1987-2007 (Sources: MOFA, CLAIR & MIC)

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America as 'Number One'

Ever since the programme's launch, American participants have always been the most numerous. In its first year, JET employed 582 Americans, compared with 150 UK nationals, 83 Australians and 23 New Zealanders (MOFA 2005). American dominance has endured despite the incremental addition of around forty other countries, including some very populous and politically prominent ones like China and India. In 2007, America contributed more participants than all 43 other countries combined. Moreover, the percentage of Americans has increased every year since 1987, even as the overall number of JET participants has declined. In 2007, JET employed 5,119 foreign nationals, down from 6,190 in 2002. Over this same period, however, the number of American participants rose from 2,477 to 2,808, while those from Britain fell sharply from 1,233 to 577 (CLAIR 2007e).

There are perhaps logical reasons why Americans should account for the lion's share of JET participants. Above all, as documented by McConnell (2000), the programme itself seems to have been devised primarily as a means of placating America at a time of severe trade friction. Moreover, the United States is the pre-eminent global power and the world's most populous English-speaking nation; it has also, without question, been Japan's most important ally in the postwar era. Of course, if, as MOFA (2006e) has claimed, the decision as to how many participants to be recruited from a given country is made at the local level, then this preponderance of Americans may not reflect the

priorities of national-level policy-makers. That said, the policy of allocating ALTs from the main English-speaking countries in proportion to its number of applicants does appear to favour Americans, since they account for the highest number of applicants.

While the heavy dependence on American ALTs will obviously mean that Japanese schoolchildren are more likely to be exposed to American norms of English pronunciation, spelling, idiom, etc., than any other, some have claimed that JET is institutionally biased in favour of ‘American English’, although, of course, American English itself encompasses a wide diversity of regional, social and ethnic varieties (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998). Even within the United States itself, there are institutional biases in favour and against certain varieties of English; a reality illustrated in the so-called ‘Ebonics debate’ of the 1990s (Baron 2000; Baugh 2000; Green 2002). In a postwar Japanese context, there would appear to be some institutional preference for American English—perhaps more specifically what Kövecses (2000:80-81) has referred to as ‘Standard American English’ (SAE)—since school English textbooks tend, as an educational legacy of American occupation, to reflect American norms (Hoshiyama 1978). Several researchers (e.g. Bresnahan et al 2002; Chiba, Matsuura & Yamamoto 1995; Kubota 2004) have also noted a general preference for American English and/or American accents. However, in a study of the Japanese ‘*ei-kaiwa*’ (English conversation) market in the 1970s, Douglas Lummis (1973; 1976) identified a very specific bias in favour of American English as spoken by ‘middle-class whites’. Lummis noted a prevailing ‘ideology of English conversation’, which identified the

‘white middle class American’ as ‘the ideal speaking partner’ for a Japanese learner (Lummis 1976:10). Interestingly, in the JET context, McConnell (2000:80) reported the case of an African American ALT who was frequently asked by his Japanese teaching colleagues whether he could speak ‘standard English’. A similar story was related by Peter Herzog (1993:98).

As a corollary of this apparent preference for ‘standard American English’, numerous scholars (e.g. Kubota 2002) have reported discrimination against certain other English varieties and accents. Amin & Kubota (2004:120), for instance, claim that teachers from Australia, New Zealand and Ireland ‘often face biases with regard to their accent’. Writing in the first decade of JET’s existence, Robert Juppé (1995), a former ALT advisor, has recalled how some Australian ALTs had been asked to modify their accents by listening to tapes. More recently, the following Irish ALT recounted a similar story:

Two of the JTEs in my school, one of whom is a part-time, recently graduated, unlicensed teacher and the other who transferred to my Jr. High School with the change of the new academic year, on a very simplistic level, have requested the following of me:

Firstly, and most importantly, that I CEASE TO SPEAK WITH AN IRISH ACCENT as my accent will impede the students progress in English as the Japanese English curriculum favors the American accent. I was therefore advised to practice my American accent with the New Horizons CD every night. (Ishikawa JETs ‘J-Talk’ Forum; retrieved 12/11/2003)

The above case was debated vigorously on at least two online discussion forums, and became something of a *cause célèbre* for AJET. Complaints of this nature were

evidently numerous and/or serious enough to galvanise AJET into issuing a report on 'accent issues' (AJET National Council 2003). The report detailed numerous incidents of ALTs being asked, typically by a JTL or CO official, to modify their way of speaking in order to conform with a 'preferred accent' (invariably, a North American one). Although not personally the victim of discrimination, the following American ALT confirms the prevalence of accent bias:

I have heard several Japanese people talk condescendingly about meeting other English speakers from other countries and how they couldn't understand them because they spoke strange English. I have had JTLs tell me that they are glad I'm American and speak *proper* English. (Source: AJET National Council 2003:3)

The following ALT speculates that a preference for 'American accents' might even account for the earlier-mentioned decline in the number of UK participants:

BoEs want on the whole American ALTs since most of the books and accents are American. British accents are hard to follow for most English speakers (unless its RP English), and when you get into regional accents it just gets muggier...I've heard enough Brits talking about a time when they were told that someone or other had a hard time following them because of their accent (their accent being almost non existent). (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 03/09/2006)

Insofar as claims like the above can be substantiated, they suggest that some Japanese 'end-users' have failed to appreciate the diversity inherent in the English-speaking world—though this, in itself, is hardly proof of an institutional bias in favour of American English and against all other varieties. In fact, some Boards of Education still

hire proportionately more British ALTs than Americans (CLAIR 2007f). The fact that in 2007 Americans accounted for more than 61% of all ALTs (CLAIR 2007e) does mean that, in *de facto* terms at least, JET is skewed in favour of ‘American English’, though the impact of these individuals will obviously depend on how they are utilized within the school (see Section 8.6).

Given the ESID principle, the internationalizing implications of the American presence will obviously be difficult to gauge. Logically, the preponderance of American ALTs would suggest that Japanese schoolchildren as a whole are likely to learn more about the United States than any other country, if only in terms of factual information. Although JET is described as a grassroots internationalization programme, there is little to suggest, on the basis of the discussion thus far, that the Japanese educational establishment would regard the presence of American ALTs as an opportunity to promulgate the virtues of the multi-ethnic ‘melting pot’ society. Rather, scholars like Parmenter (2004) and Willis (2006) have emphasized how school education remains predicated on an assumption of ethnic and cultural homogeneity, despite the steady increase in the number of non-Japanese children in Japanese classrooms. The evident preference for American ALTs as ‘agents of internationalization’ within Japanese schools—rather than, say, Koreans, Chinese or Brazilians (the nationalities that constitute the bulk of Japan’s foreign population)—is perhaps one further reminder that the officially-declared desire for school-based, grassroots internationalization does not necessarily imply a desire to foster a more pluralistic Japan. Rather, as Mitsuhiro

Yoshimoto (1994:198) explains, what *kokusaika* does not include is ‘precisely one of the most fundamental ways of internationalizing Japan: the genuine acceptance of foreigners’. Thus, Yoshimoto views Japanese enthusiasm for America as an essentially superficial phenomenon, linked much more with that country’s consumer-driven, capitalist system than with any genuine desire to recreate its ethnically diverse society.

He explains:

In postmodern Japan, everything is commodified, including the sense of nationhood. America is, therefore, just another brandname, like Chanel, Armani, and so on. We can, of course, read a sign of colonial mentality in the Japanese craving for ‘America’ as a brand name; however, we can also cynically say that it is only part of the system of differences which needs to be reproduced perpetually for the survival of the Japanese capitalist economy. (Yoshimoto 1994:195)

Japan’s attraction to America has been viewed similarly by others. Gerard Delanty (2003:118) considers ‘Americanization’, particularly the materialistic, mass-consumer culture referred to by George Ritzer (1993) as ‘McDonaldization’, to be ‘perfectly compatible with the cultural horizons of post-war Japan’. He argues, moreover, that because the Americanization of Japan was driven by the Japanese middle-class rather than colonialism (in essence, ‘an Americanization without America’), it has never threatened or undermined the indigenous Japanese culture. From this perspective, the importation of young American graduates seems much more a symbolic demonstration of Japan’s alignment with the United States as a political ally and a global cultural force than an attempt to inculcate American or pluralistic values in Japanese

schoolchildren.

JET's Relative Neglect of Asian Countries

While Japan's postwar political history has been characterized by its close identification with America and the 'West', the deepening of economic ties with Asian countries, especially from the late 1980s, has sparked a debate on the question of Japan's 're-Asianization' (*sai-Ajia-ka*) (Kobayashi, Y. 1991; Mochizuki 1995; Ogura 1993; Sakamoto 1994). In essence, this has been a debate on the appropriate political relationship with countries whose history vis-à-vis Japan has often been complicated, even troubled. In his book, 'Japan: Domestic Change and Foreign Policy', Mike Mochizuki (1995:54-56) discusses three versions of the 're-Asianization' discourse that emerged during this period, each with different policy implications for Japan. Firstly, an 'integrationist' version, which sought to integrate Japan's Asia policy with its America policy, with the ultimate aim of revitalizing the American presence in Asia. Secondly, a 'restorationist' version, which cast Japan, the first East Asian liberal democracy, as a key player in an 'Asian restoration' and the logical cultural and political bridge to America. Thirdly, an 'exclusivist' approach, which envisaged a Japan less dependent upon America and more grounded in East Asia, although, as Mochizuki points out, the most vocal proponents of this approach were also 'the most reluctant to acknowledge the suffering Japan imposed on its Asian neighbours during the imperialist period' (Mochizuki 1995:55). For China and South Korea, Tokyo's

readiness to make such an acknowledgement would certainly be regarded as a precondition for any genuine rapprochement (Austin & Harris 2001). However, in the years since the publication of Mochizuki's work, political relations with these two countries have often been strained in the wake of visits by Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni 'war shrine' in Tokyo (Wan 2006) and the publication of controversial history textbooks (Nishio 2001; Yoshida 2006), as well as territorial disputes (Suganuma 2000). Meanwhile, Japan's economic and political power, especially relative to China, has undoubtedly diminished.

For McConnell (2000:233-236), the admission of participants from China (in 1992) and South Korea (in 1993) was the manifestation of re-Asianization within a JET context. However, despite an initial rise in the number of Chinese and Koreans, Asian involvement has remained marginal. In 2007, JET employed just 77 Chinese and 59 Koreans (as well as 41 Singaporeans and 21 Indians, mostly as English-teaching ALTs), compared with 2808 Americans (CLAIR 2007e). Despite the prominent role played by English in the Philippines (Hidalgo 1998), JET employed not a single Filipino ALT in the 2006-2007 Programme year. In terms of foreign language-in-education policy, Asian languages still barely register. Even major languages like Mandarin Chinese and Korean are offered in only a small percentage of Japanese schools (Hatori 2005), and no mechanisms have been introduced through which the work of Asian ALTs might be incorporated into the national curriculum. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of JET participants from Asian countries are employed as CIRs. Of course, a

preponderance of native English-speakers is understandable in the context of MEXT's broader strategic drive for improved standards of communicative competence in English, the world's most widely studied language. Nonetheless, the almost total neglect of Asian languages, perhaps particularly Chinese, hardly seems conducive to the fulfilment of Japan's longer-term economic and diplomatic interests (Kaplan & Baldauf 2003). The dearth of Asian ALTs could be seen as an indication of the low priority attached to Asian perspectives on education, as noted by Parmenter (2006b), and a further affirmation of Japan's alignment with the so-called 'Western world'.

8.3.2 Ethnicity Issues

In the previous chapter, I explained how JET recruiters had been accused in the programme's early days of favouring 'white' candidates over others. To judge from more than 4 years of Internet-based research, suspicions of 'white bias' (McConnell 2000:80) have not been entirely eradicated. The following exchange between a prospective applicant (A) and a serving ALT (B) is typical of many discussions still taking place in online discussion forums:

A: As a Chinese Canadian, I have heard many stories about being discriminated in the application process because of my 'yellow' skin color. I was wondering if there are any JETs out there who have an Oriental background or who know friends of an Oriental background that got accepted into JET?

B: That is just crazy! There is no discrimination in the application process! If anything, white people are the minority in the JET program. Far more than 50% of all JETs are of Asian

decent. Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Tai, you name it. When I got here, I was surprised to find out that there are soooo many Asian ALT teachers. You got no problem. Just do your best to be out going and happy at the interview, and things will go your way. (Source: 'JET Forum'; retrieved 07/08/2006)

Not everyone is convinced by such reassurances. On one website, a Japanese-American former ALT (a Japanese History and Culture major, with 2 years' prior Japanese study) explained how her first JET application had been rejected, while that of her white, Caucasian husband (who had been 'unable to list any previous exposure/interest in the Japanese culture') was accepted. On the basis of her experiences, she perceives an enduring 'white bias':

Though many people will scream in defense of the JET Programme's racial diversity, from what I have seen and heard, the Programme does appear to have a disproportionately large amount of Caucasian participants. Though I am well aware that the participant percentages are often reflective of the countries that field the most applicants (north American/Britain), the JET Program still seems to disfavor those of color...I strongly believe the Programme caters to the demands of the general population to be educated by JETs who are white. This is perhaps one of the greatest flaws of the program and only helps to perpetuate the myth that socially acceptable foreigners can only be white. (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 23/04/2003)

Given the amount of debate on this topic, individual instances of bias in the selection process cannot be discounted. That said, there are several indications that discrimination against non-white candidates is not (or, if it ever was, is no longer) systemic. Firstly and most obviously, the list of participant nations includes several with an overwhelmingly 'non-white' population. In 2007, for example, there were 41

participants from Jamaica, 39 from Singapore and 21 from Trinidad & Tobago (CLAIR 2007e). Secondly, diversity within the JET community is reflected in the content of orientation seminars and materials. In recent years, Tokyo Orientations have featured workshops on ‘minority issues’, with titles like ‘Life as a JET of African Descent’ (CLAIR 2006h). Similarly, the General Information Handbook features essays on JETs of African, (East) Asian and South Asian origin (CLAIR 2006b: 283-287). Thirdly, JET’s recruitment apparatus now makes an effort to present the programme as a model of ethnic diversity. It is common, especially on official websites, to read accounts from so-called ‘minority JETs’. To consider two examples from 2006: out of a total of sixteen testimonials featured on the official JET homepage, eight were authored by non-Caucasians (CLAIR 2006u). Similarly, two out of the six testimonials on JET’s UK website were composed by British ALTs of Indian origin (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme UK 2006a; 2006b). Fourthly, ‘minority JETs’ maintain a high-profile presence within the wider JET community. Several ‘minority JETs’ have occupied leadership positions in AJET, including the national ‘Chair’. Also, AJET has issued a report on so-called ‘minority issues’ (AJET National Council 2005c). Minority JETs have established strong self-support networks—e.g. ‘The Japan Asian Foreigner Community JETs of Asian Descent’ and the AJET ‘Special Interest Group for JETs of African Descent’ (AD SIG). Fifthly, and perhaps most tangibly from the perspective of this research project, is the high level of online activity among ‘minority JETs’, particularly those of East Asian origin.

CLAIR publishes no statistics on the ethnic origin of participants, which, although inconvenient for the researcher, is perhaps understandable given concerns about ‘racial profiling’ (see Muffler 2006). Thus, it has not been possible to determine the precise extent to which the programme has embraced, in relative terms, candidates of different ethnic backgrounds. For instance, while Asian ALTs appear to have established a strong presence on JET, there have been suggestions in some online discussion forums that ALTs of African origin are still underrepresented.

8.3.3 What Attributes Make a Successful ALT Candidate?

Besides the attributes highlighted on recruitment websites and in the JET eligibility criteria (see Section 7.2.1), it has been suggested that the programme favours graduates of ‘high-status universities’. McConnell (2000), for instance, has claimed that Oxbridge graduates are ‘especially sought after’, while according to one of his informants in Japan’s Washington embassy, MOFA ‘really wanted the Harvards and Yales’ (McConnell 2000:55). Arguably, graduates from such universities are especially well positioned to attain positions of influence in their home countries; on that basis, they might be regarded as ideal agents of Japanese ‘soft power’ (although most ALTs are not Oxbridge or Ivy League graduates). In AJET’s view, a candidate’s *alma mater* is not a reliable indication of their likely performance as an ALT. Thus, in the interests of recruiting more suitable candidates, AJET has called for greater transparency in the selection process:

The numerical scoring system used at applicant interviews remains confidential, and yet there are biases on where candidates are selected. Good universities, for instance, add to this scoring bias while language skills or work experiences do not necessarily increase a candidate's score resulting in a clearly unequal application process. (AJET National Council 2006: 5)

In an attempt to gauge which personal attributes are most prized by recruiters, I investigated 'grassroots' accounts of the JET selection interview, gathering data both from personal interviews and online sources. Despite the obvious dangers in attempting to second-guess the priorities of any interview panel, there appears to be a widespread perception, at least within the 'online ALT community', that candidates are selected according to broadly similar criteria. Thus, several 'advice websites'—with names like 'The Interviewer's Side of the Table: An Insider's Guide for a Successful JET Interview'—have been created, offering practical 'do's and don'ts' advice to prospective interviewees. The selection interview is also a recurring discussion topic in online forums, where past interviewees (even the occasional interviewer) answer queries from would-be applicants. To judge from numerous online accounts, JET interviewers appear to favour candidates who can evince some knowledge of both Japan and their own country, and who demonstrate a readiness to conform to Japanese social and cultural expectations.

Knowledge of Japan

All ALT participants in my sample reported being tested at interview on their

knowledge of Japan, or, more correctly, their ability to recall facts about Japan. In particular, they reported an emphasis on current events, names and places. Larry, for instance, was asked:

Who is the current Prime Minister of Japan?

What cultural activities do you want to do while you are in Japan?

Can you name the four main islands of Japan?

What is the population of Japan? (Larry 3/11/2003)

To judge from online discussion forums, similar if not identical questions have been posed to other interviewees. By all accounts, it pays for candidates to do their homework on Japan, since the interview panel will, rightly or wrongly, regard an ability to recall basic factual information as an indication of personal interest in the country. Of course, first-hand experience of life in Japan would seem a much more reliable indicator of such—yet, as pointed out earlier, anyone with three years' residence in Japan within the eight years prior to the application deadline is automatically rendered ineligible to work on the programme (CLAIR 2006g).

Knowledge of Own Country and its Culture

JET recruiters appear keen to ensure that ALTs are also knowledgeable about—or, rather, capable of imparting factual information about—their own home countries and cultures. Thus, according to Larry, interviewees might be asked questions like: ‘what would you say are the highlights of your country’s history?’ or ‘what do you plan to

teach the students about your culture when you get to Japan?' (Larry 3/11/2003). Again, online accounts have testified to a tendency among interviewers to pose general knowledge-type questions, especially related to people, places and events. For instance, one candidate reported having to name all the provinces and territories in Canada, with their provincial capital; another was required to sing the Canadian national anthem. An interviewee in Edinburgh was asked to name the leader of the British Conservative party; while one in London was asked where in Britain they would take a group of Japanese students if they had already been to London, Oxford and Stratford upon Avon (Source: 'I think I'm lost' Website; retrieved 04/11/2006).

Since ALTs are assigned to schools, it is understandable that JET recruiters should prioritize knowledgeable individuals over comparatively less well-informed ones. What is less easy to understand is why a candidate's knowledge of facts and figures should apparently be deemed more important than their pedagogical experience. One possible rationalization is that recruiters perceive the ALT's primary role as that of 'cultural informant' (Browne and Evans 1994; Fukazawa 1996), i.e. someone capable of augmenting team-taught English lessons with real-life, culture-specific content. A more critical interpretation would see ALTs reduced to providing entertaining if superficial perspectives on life in their home countries, i.e. what Akuzawa (2005) has labelled 'the 3Fs approach' ('food', 'fashion' and 'festivals').

Adaptability to Japanese social and cultural norms

It is understandable that JET recruiters should prefer individuals capable of appreciating that Japanese social and cultural norms differ from those of their home country, and adjusting their own behaviour accordingly. Thus, while JET is advertised as a programme to ‘internationalize’ Japanese society at the grassroots level, the qualities of ‘flexibility’ and ‘adaptability’ are commonly stressed (especially on recruitment websites). In this connection, David Chandler (2002) recalls receiving the warning ‘Don’t be a missionary in Japan!’ at his Tokyo Orientation in 1995. For Chandler, the implication of this warning was that ‘Japan will only change when the Japanese people are ready to do so, and that the ‘arrogance’ and ‘cultural superiority’ brought by some Westerners was both ineffective and without foundation’ (Chandler 2002:212). Christine, the former JET interviewer, confirms that ‘missionaries’ are, emphatically, not what recruiters are looking for, yet she acknowledges this propensity among some of her compatriots:

Americans rarely assimilate. Those that do have had long, productive, interactive lives in Japan. But most Americans want to create American enclaves, confusing ‘being international’ with being American or Western...I have noticed some tendencies among them. They are young, so they want to set the world on fire. They are American, so they think they have all of the answers. Japanese are not interested in ‘missionaries coming to save them’ so I can certainly see potential fodder for clashes. (Christine 2/3/2004)

Christine explained how interviewers would always test the candidate’s strategies for dealing with potentially uncomfortable intercultural situations, e.g. by asking how they

would feel if a Japanese student wanted to touch their hair, and note the extent to which candidates attempted to apply their own 'Western' cultural solution to a Japanese classroom problem. The use of such techniques has been confirmed by numerous past interviewees, who have posted lists of questions on the Internet, like the following:

- A student or group of students are clearly not paying attention and are disrupting the rest of the class during your lesson (talking loudly, not paying attention, etc.). What do you do?
- You have a lot of great ideas for teaching class but the JTE only wants to use you as a tape recorder. What do you do?
- Your accompanying instructor contradicts you during class but is obviously incorrect - how do you handle this situation?
- You catch a student cheating on homework or an exam. What do you do?

(Source: 'I think I'm Lost' Forum; retrieved 31/10/2005)

Clearly, some ALTs believe recruiters are seeking malleable (rather than merely adaptable) individuals, who will readily concede to the wishes of their Japanese hosts and never 'make waves'. One New Zealand ALT rationalises his own interview success as follows:

I think I was chosen because I emphasised the fact that I would be an assistant teacher. I think that JET is scared of qualified people because they are afraid that the qualified teacher will try and 'take over'. You have to prove to them that you will work well within the Japanese system and not try to make changes etc. ...I would recommend you emphasise the fact you are a team player and that you are willing to play by Japanese rules. (Source: 'I think I'm Lost' Forum; retrieved 03/11/2005)

8.3.4 Implications of the JET Recruitment Process

JET's detractors have criticized the programme for its heavy reliance upon young, largely non-Japanese-speaking amateurs. As James Porcaro (2006a) sees it, the vast majority of ALTs possess 'little or no experience as teachers of anything, let alone English as a foreign language' (Porcaro 2006a:10). Given the apparent lack of priority attached to a candidate's experience or qualifications, the job interview might be expected to assume an inordinate importance in the JET selection process.

JET interview panels are usually composed of three members: typically, a Japanese official from the host diplomatic mission, a former JET participant, and another non-Japanese familiar with Japan (e.g. an academic). Although, according to Barrie Humphreys & Kathy Elvin (2002:42), panel interviews help 'guard against the possibility of bias and discrimination', JET interviewers themselves undergo no special training, as recommended by some specialists in human resource management (e.g. Riley 1996; Millar et al. 1998). Since most interviews last only about 20-30-minutes, the panel's ability to assess a candidate's suitability to operate in an unfamiliar Japanese classroom environment is questionable. To summarise numerous accounts, the successful ALT candidate will be someone who has managed to convince their interview panel that they are interested in Japan and highly motivated to work there; someone who has memorized certain facts about Japan and their home country; and someone who has learnt about Japanese norms of interaction and can articulate a

willingness to conform with them. In other words, someone who fits the image of the 'ideal candidate' presented on various embassy websites (see Section 7.2.1). Inevitably, performance-related factors (e.g. self-confidence and speaking prowess) and intangibles (like dress and physical appearance) will play some role in determining who are selected to become ALTs. Nonetheless, any candidate who accessed one of the 'JET interview advice websites' and were capable of articulating convincingly the advice there from former interviewees would stand every chance of impressing an interview panel, irrespective of their true opinions, beliefs and abilities.

In recent years, JET has been criticized, by both Japanese and non-Japanese, over the 'quality' of its ALT recruits. This criticism has been articulated not only in Internet discussion forums, but also in reports (e.g. AJET National Council 2006; MEXT 2001b), newspaper articles (e.g. Yomiuri Shimbun 2003; Porcaro 2007), even the occasional ALT essay in an official information source (e.g. CLAIR 2006m). The criticism has pertained not only to the ALT's job performance, but also to their general attitude and demeanour. According to AJET, the programme often recruits the 'wrong candidates who are increasingly having an adverse effect on the reputation of the programme' (AJET National Council 2006:5). It has been claimed that too many recruits regard their time in Japan as an extended holiday and thus prioritise hedonistic pursuits over their professional duties. The following ALT's opinion is representative of many others encountered in the course of this research:

With such lax entry requirements, JET has gained a reputation abroad as a great way to see Japan, get paid a civil servant salary/benefits package, and do virtually no teaching work in return... the quality of people and low talent pool I experienced within JET reflected this lax application requirement. JET is viewed by most participants as a gap year, a 1-year drinking binge and an extended college frat party than it does a year of professional development. ('Wayfaring Stranger' Weblog; retrieved 31/11/2006)

The AJET National Council (2006) has voiced concern over the lack of rigour and consistency in the selection process, which, it claims, has caused a tangible decline in ALT quality. As evidence of this decline, AJET pointed to the increasing number of ALTs who 'drop out' without completing their contracts and the reduction in the 'retention rate', i.e. the percentage of ALTs who renew their contracts. AJET has thus raised the fear that the decline in ALT quality may lead to JET's eventual demise, as local authorities opt to replace their ALTs with foreign teachers from the private sector.

8.4 Allocation of ALTs

In the previous chapter, it was explained that Contracting Organizations enjoy considerable decision-making power as regards the number of ALTs they employ. Thus, to judge from official statistics (e.g. CLAIR 2007f), there appear to be wide differences in attitude towards the programme at the local government level. The distribution of ALTs among Japan's prefectures and 'designated cities' is extremely uneven and appears to be becoming increasingly so, as more Contracting Organizations 'outsource' their team-teaching needs to the private sector.

In online discussions, some ALTs have suggested JET was created specifically to ‘internationalize’ Japan’s more remote, rural communities, where relatively few foreigners would ordinarily reside. Were that the case, regional variations in the distribution of ALTs would be wholly understandable and easy to predict. It is certainly true that there were only 9 ALTs working in schools throughout the entire Tokyo Metropolitan area in 2006, while the much less populous and largely rural prefecture of Kumamoto hosted 161 (CLAIR 2007f). However, in two heavily populated prefectures contiguous to Tokyo, the intake figures were markedly different from each other: Saitama prefecture hosted 155 JET participants, compared with just 11 in Kanagawa prefecture (in fact, according to Kanagawa AJET (2006), the Kanagawa Prefectural BoE has announced its intention to withdraw from the programme altogether). The city of Sendai hired 68 participants in 2007, whereas Nagoya, whose population is considerably larger, hosted just 9. In short, official statistics (CLAIR 2007f) contradict any notion of an urban-rural divide; indeed, they indicate that the allocation of ALTs to a given prefecture or designated city is determined neither by the size nor the density of its population.

In recent years, the Japanese local government structure has undergone significant reorganization, including a series of municipal mergers (Kaneko & Suzuki 2006: 536-537). This reorganization has undoubtedly impacted greatly the number of Contracting Organizations hosting ALTs. To illustrate: according to the official

2004-2005 JET Programme brochure (CLAIR 2004b:2), there were 'over 2000' COs hosting JET participants, by 2007 this had fallen to 'approximately 1100' (CLAIR 2007d:2). However, another reason for the decline has been the decision by several COs to replace their ALTs with locally-hired native-speakers unaffiliated to JET. These individuals—who are referred to by most of the Japanese participants in this study as 'PFTs'—perform largely the same team-teaching duties as their JET counterparts. Some COs, like the Tokyo Prefectural Board of Education, have a history of employing PFTs. According to MEXT figures from 2002 (MEXT 2002c), Tokyo Prefecture employed 794 private 'PFTs' compared with just 14 JET Programme ALTs. A similar policy is pursued in some other predominantly urban prefectures, and increasingly in the 'Designated Cities' (JALT 2006).

An 'ESID principle' of sorts prevails also with regard to PFTs. In some schools, the PFT is the only foreign teacher; in others, they supplement the services provided by an 'official' ALT. Some PFTs are former ALTs, others have had no involvement with the JET Programme; some are qualified career English teachers, while others are as inexperienced as the average first-year ALT. Some are contracted directly to a BoE, while an increasing number of others are employed by so-called 'dispatch companies' (see JALT 2006; National Union of General Workers 2003; Yomiuri Shimbun 2007b, 2007c). One significant difference between ALTs and 'outsourced PFTs' is that the latter are usually paid by the hour and are often required to teach at more than one school during the course of their working day. Thus, they are likely to leave the school

premises as soon as their lessons are over, rather than stay behind to socialize with students and JTLs or participate in extra-curricular activities. Moreover, unlike 'official ALTs', they are not contractually bound to 'assist with local international exchange activities' within local communities.

8.5 Training

In the previous chapter, the lack of a comprehensive teacher training/development structure was identified as a potential impediment to JET's ability to enhance foreign language (particularly communicative English) education and intercultural education in Japanese schools. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the overwhelming majority of comments encountered in this research (whether in personal interviews, online discussion forums, surveys or reports) on the subject of training were critical. Some were scathing in their assessment, like the ALT who stated: 'I don't believe my contracting organization has given me any training, in any shape or form' (AJET National Council 2004a:4). In my interview sample, one ALT described the training as 'sorely lacking'; another as 'woefully inadequate'; while three of the JTLs claimed to have received no training whatsoever in relation to their team-teaching duties. While dissatisfaction is difficult to quantify in precise terms, a 2004 AJET survey revealed that only 11% of nearly 300 ALT respondents felt they had received regular training, while 78.2% felt they had not. Of these, 57% claimed they had never taken *any* training courses for the work they were performing (AJET National Council 2004a). As a

means of rationalizing some of this discontent, I shall briefly discuss some of the most commonly voiced criticisms about the JET approach to training.

8.5.1 Training for ALTs

Excessive Generality in Content of National-level Training Courses

Each year, the JET administration hosts two national conferences: the ‘Tokyo Orientation’ and the ‘Renewers’ (Re-contracting) Conference’, both of which are scheduled to last for just three days. While the Tokyo Orientation is widely appreciated as a social event, its content has been criticised for its excessive generality. Below is a typical ALT complaint:

I was very impressed by how well CLAIR provided for us upon first arriving in Japan. However, I was quite surprised and a little dismayed that there were not more job related training seminars and activities at the orientations in Tokyo. (AJET National Council 2001b)

The same criticism is often directed at the Renewers’ Conference, which is attended by participants who have committed themselves to an additional year’s service (see CLAIR 2006i). In the following account, an ALT describes a workshop designed for teaching conditions bearing no resemblance to his own:

First came a presentation by a third year ALT and her JTE, who work in a high achievement senior high school. Of course their methods worked well for their eager, brilliant students, but

their situation was so different from the norm that it was difficult to see the point of such an exhibition. The JTE spoke English very well, and there was an oral communication component that was actually planned. I think there was quite a bit of resentment among the watching JETs, and a lot of eyes rolled. (Source: 'Randomwisdom' Weblog; retrieved 09/11/2006)

Of course, given the diversity of conditions that prevail within the programme, it is perhaps logical that the most training should be provided not at national conferences but locally, by individuals familiar with each ALT's working environment.

Lack of Consistency in Local-level Training for ALTs

Since MEXT delegates most teacher training decisions to local authorities (Crooks 2001; Gorsuch 2001), one would hardly expect uniform standards of ALT training. Even so, the level of inconsistency described in a 2005 AJET survey (AJET National Council 2005e) was particularly extreme. AJET's survey found that some 'post-arrival orientations' focused on Japanese language training, while others emphasized teaching and interaction with students (in one case, recruits were deployed as counsellors at an 'English camp'). Some orientations amounted to little more than a one-night party, while others offered no organized activities. In short, there were no standards whatsoever for these supposedly vital local orientations.

Given the low priority evidently attached to ALT training, it would appear that some COs expect recruits to accumulate the requisite pedagogical and intercultural skills as

they proceed. The unfortunate corollary of this approach, however, is that many ALT recruits arrive at their workplaces unprepared and unsure what is expected of them. To illustrate: in a 2002 survey of ALTs in Gifu Prefecture, nearly 60% of respondents felt their host institution had not adequately prepared them for the team-teaching situations they subsequently faced. The following comment is similar to many one encounters in AJET reports and online discussion forums:

I have no idea what to do or what I am doing, since this is my first time teaching. There has to be more than pronouncing words, reading sentences, and playing games with the students. But I understand that this, like any other job, has OTJT (on the job training), learning as you go... I think some sort of pedagogue course would be really useful especially with regard to the themes of discipline in the class, getting students to not speak Japanese in English class, and classroom motivation. (Source: Gifu Prefectural Education Center; retrieved 07/08/2005)

Deficiencies in training seem bound to undermine the ability of ALTs to fulfil their tasks, at least within the school. As numerous researchers (e.g. Carless 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves 1992; MacDonald 1991) have explained, an untrained individual is unlikely to perform their pedagogical duties as effectively as a trained educator. For ALTs, lack of training arguably heightens the risk of other problems, e.g. role confusion and loss of confidence—which, in turn, increases the risk that they will form unfavourable impressions of the programme.

Over-reliance on Volunteers and Other Non-specialists

Some ALTs have expressed dissatisfaction that their training was carried out by other ALTs rather than professional teacher trainers. It is certainly questionable whether most ALTs are qualified to teach language teaching methodology. To illustrate with some recent data: AJET found that 86.7% of the 496 ALTs it surveyed held no TESOL certification (AJET National Council 2007b:9). Moreover, although ALTs do undoubtedly accrue valuable life experience just from being in Japan, some, like May (below), question their ability to act as intercultural trainers:

CLAIR's workshops, and the annual midyear conference usually includes some workshop which is supposed to address JETs role in internationalization. However, these workshops are usually conducted by second or third year JETs, in other words usually someone with no special training or background. (May 29/10/2003)

For all the criticisms leveled at volunteer-run presentations, some ALTs, like the individual below, have found them valuable:

I expected pie-in-the-sky antics about how our lesson plans should include interaction ...or how we should use modern team-teaching methods with our JTEs (Japanese teachers of English) or some other vague hogwash. On the contrary, the workshops I attended were fantastic. They actually acknowledged and addressed the issues most of us face; issues like JTEs not being able to speak English (more common than you'd think), teaching methods that weren't even close to the 'proposed guidelines' published by the Ministry of Education (yes, they exist, but nobody reads them), JTEs that are too busy or disorganized to plan out lessons in advance, and battling with entrance exams that don't actually test their communicative ability. (Source: 'Randomwisdom' Weblog; retrieved 02/10/2006)

Nonetheless, the fact that ALT training is largely left to non-specialist, volunteer trainers, who were themselves trained by other volunteers, does create an inherently piecemeal system. Reliance on volunteers has become standard practice, as evidenced by the deployment of ALTs as ‘Tokyo Orientation Assistants’, the creation of a ‘JET Mentor Network’ and the use of ordinary participants as ‘Self-support Group Leaders’ (SGLs), i.e. volunteer counsellors. The deployment of volunteers in Japanese education extends well beyond JET, and has even been advocated in MEXT policy documents. Here, a notable example is the ‘*Gakkō Iki-iki Puran*’ [Plan for Lively Schools], which deploys ‘working people from society’ (including proficient English-speakers) as volunteer teachers (see MEXT 2002b; MEXT 2002d). Given the billions of yen spent on importing untrained foreign graduates, the extent to which training is entrusted to volunteers seems somewhat surprising.

8.5.2 Training for JTLs

As explained in Section 7.4.4, JTL training has long been the object of criticism. According to Anthony Crooks (2001:34), the education ministry simply considers the pool of JTLs ‘too large to train’. Thus, despite its declared desire for communicative language teaching, the Ministry seems content to leave most training decisions to local education authorities.

Inadequacies in Local-Level Training

In conformance with government policy (e.g. MEXT 2002b; 2003a; 2003b), BoEs have begun providing intensive communicatively-oriented training courses for JTLs within their areas of jurisdiction. Again, however, the quality, content and duration of such courses vary considerably. To consider a few examples: in Gifu, the Prefectural BoE brought in the British Council in 2004 to conduct a series of 4-week training courses (Cross 2005). In Sendai city, the BoE offers its JTLs a non-compulsory English-medium training seminar (Crooks 2001). According to Amanda Gillis-Furutaka (1994:34), high-school English teachers in Kyoto receive thirty days of 'TEFL training', while Greta Gorsuch (2001) found that training programmes in four other prefectures generally lasted only between one and three days. In other words, some JTLs appear to receive a reasonable amount of communicatively-oriented training while others do not, though some (e.g. Lamie 2000) would maintain that most JTLs still lack the training necessary to implement communicative methodologies in their classes. What is generally absent from such programmes is any form of 'team-teaching training', despite what AJET's National Council (2001b:1) has identified as an 'obvious demand'. According to Rebecca Benoit and Bridget Haugh (2001:unpaginated), most JTL team-teaching training is simply 'done by observation of team teaching lessons with little analysis of the strategies/techniques employed by the team'. The fact that many JTLs and ALTs (including most of those I interviewed) never participate together in training programmes has been identified by some (e.g. Donald

2000) as a particularly serious failing.

Intercultural training has never been mandatory for JTLs (nor, indeed, for ALTs). However, according to the two participants in my sample who had worked as 'ALT Supervisors' (see Section 4.6.3), cross-cultural and internationalization-related issues were often addressed in Supervisors' seminars they attended. However, in the experience of these two interviewees, the approach to such matters was almost invariably superficial. Ms. Abe explains:

PB: What has happened at the seminars you have attended?

Abe: Sometimes some classes are presented. Sometimes the *kyōiku sentaa* [Education Centre] invites a professor to talk about internationalization or something.

PB: Do they explain what internationalization is about?

Abe: No, they don't. They just repeat the slogan. That's totally B.S., I think. In that sense, when I've attended that type of seminar recently, I feel so irritated. How often do I have to listen to the same slogans or totally stupid things?

PB: Can you remember any of the slogans?

Abe: Well... 'internationalization'... or 'you have to make use of the ability of the ALTs'. They don't know how to do that.

(Extract from interview with Ms. Abe 3/11/2004)

In Ms. Kobayashi's experience, ALT Supervisors' seminars were aimed less at fostering intercultural awareness than at stressing the need for JTLs to control their ALTs:

What I've found a bit troubling at the Supervisor's meetings is they tell us to 'utilize the ALTs'. They actually use the English words 'utilize' and 'utilization'. At first, and in fact,

even now, they talk about ‘utilizing people’ or ‘managing them’. They say things like ‘make sure they don’t miss classes’, ‘make sure they are punctual’, ‘look after them’...

(Ms. Kobayashi 25/11/2004; for Japanese original, see Appendix 3)

Some ALTs have complained that JTLs, ALT Supervisors and other Japanese staff are incapable of dealing appropriately with individuals of a different cultural background. In response to problems reported by ALTs, AJET recommended to CLAIR that ALT Supervisors receive ‘cross-cultural training’, ‘culture shock training’ and ‘cultural awareness training’ (AJET National Council 2004d:27). AJET issued a further plea to CLAIR and MEXT to institute cross-cultural training for Japanese in all ‘places where JETs work’, even, somewhat ironically, for those responsible for the cross-cultural training of Japanese staff at the prefectural level (AJET National Council 2002:4). In the context of teacher development for JTLs, however, COs do not appear to regard intercultural training as a priority.

There are perhaps two commonly cited reasons for inadequacies in JTL training: lack of local financial resources and lack of time. It has been acknowledged (see CLAIR 2003e) that many local authorities operate under budgetary constraints. According to Gorsuch (2001), lack of finances has been blamed for the discontinuation of some training programmes. One JTL participant, Ms. Abe, reported that budget cuts had caused her local BoE to reduce the number of annual in-service training seminars and to limit attendance to just one JTL per school. Another factor precluding regular attendance in seminars is the heavy work burden placed upon Japanese teachers

(Hadley 2001; Sugiwaka & Ito 2004; Yoneyama & Murphey 2007). Many JTLs would simply find it difficult to attend training seminars, even where offered.

8.5.3 Discussion Summary

In the school context at least, there are questions as to whether the JET training structure facilitates the attainment of the declared policy goals in the areas of language education and international exchange. In terms of language education, JET's organizers appear to place the onus on inexperienced ALTs to learn how to teach as they proceed; rather than on recruiters to ensure that competent, qualified language teachers are employed; or on COs to ensure that adequate pedagogical training is provided. In-service teacher development for JTLs is also inconsistent, which works contrary to the smooth introduction of communicative methodologies (see Gorsuch 2001; Lamie 2000; Lamie & Lambert 2004). Moreover, the evident complete lack of both joint 'team-teaching training' and 'intercultural training' hardly seems conducive to the establishment of harmonious ALT-JTL relationships.

8.6 Utilization

The term 'Utilization' here relates specifically to how ALTs are deployed on a day-to-day basis within the schools and Contracting Organizations to which they have been assigned. While the aforementioned 'model contract' (CLAIR 2006l) stipulates

the duties ALTs will or might be required to perform, the practice often does not concur with the theory, as illustrated in the following comment from a 2006 AJET report (based on survey responses from more than 10% of all JET's foreign participants):

The survey shows that ALTs as 'assistants' are few and far between, many have responsibilities above and beyond that definition. Equally, there are others however, who do not have any responsibilities at all. (AJET National Council 2006: 4-5)

8.6.1 'Team-Teaching'

In the context of the curriculum, ALTs are assigned to assist specifically with foreign language classes (typically, the subjects 'Aural/Oral Communication', English I and English II). At the elementary school level, where foreign languages are not yet part of the curriculum, ALTs assist with 'foreign language conversation', as part of 'Education for International Understanding' (*kokusai rikai kyōiku*) in the Period for Integrated Study. In theory at least, the ALT's primary duty is to assist the JTL in 'team-teaching'. Although every team-teaching situation is undoubtedly different, some studies (e.g. Leonard 1994; Macedo 2002; Shimaoka & Yashiro 1990) claim to have identified patterns in the ALT-JTL team-teaching dynamic. Todd Jay Leonard (1994:16-17), for instance, perceives three main styles of team-teaching, namely: 'ALT Centered', 'JTE Centered' and 'Cooperative Team-Teaching', while Alan Macedo (2002:16-18) discusses 'the four most common team-teaching patterns'. What needs to be

acknowledged above all, however, is the extent to which an ALT's team-teaching role will vary according to their JTL partner. In other words, although the apportionment of duties may depend on many variables (e.g. class size, student ability, the existence/absence of a language barrier, lesson content, lesson frequency), the ALT's role will ultimately be decided by the JTL. Todd Ferguson (2004b) explains:

The manner in which an ALT is utilized as an English language resource in the classroom is often at the complete discretion of JTEs. JTEs decide which classes ALTs will participate in. JTEs are free to either solicit lesson planning ideas from ALTs or not; they are also free to reject any suggestions made by the ALT. This situation gives the ALT little autonomy over when and how English will be taught in the classroom. (Ferguson 2004b:3)

Although the earlier-mentioned Handbook for Team-Teaching (MEXT 2002a) assumes that JTLs will always welcome the presence of an ALT in their classrooms, the reality is often different. As May explains, JTLs are a diverse group with widely varying attitudes towards team-teaching:

Some JTEs are very happy to have an ALT in class, others predictably feel resentment or perhaps feel threatened. With teachers like these, there is a lot of friction, and we hear about far too many cases of under-utilized ALTs, which I think is partly due to these feelings of fear and resentment. I also think there are still a lot of JTEs who have not resolved for themselves (forget about curriculum rules) the dilemma of *juken* [exam-related] English skills versus real-world English conversation skills. I think there are still teachers who believe that students should be able to get enough English skills just from studying for exams and they haven't internalized the importance of conversational English, so these JTEs tend to see ALTs as a distraction for 'real English study'. (May 12/11/2003)

Numerous researchers would concur with May's observations. For instance, Greenhalgh (1993) and Hiramatsu (2005) have detected unease among some JTLs about team-teaching with a foreign ALT. Sachiko Hiramatsu (2005:122) notes that the ALT may be perceived as a particular threat 'if a JTE feels that he or she is not good at spoken English'. It is understandable, then, that some ALTs, like the individual below, should experience a diversity of teaching conditions even within a single working week:

I taught with 5 different JTEs at 1 JHS and sometimes I was a human tape recorder. I didn't really care. I joked around with the students in English and Japanese during those classes whenever I got a chance. Other classes it was closer to real team teaching, where the JTE and I each had a part to play and worked together to teach a class. There was a lot of in between teaching. I taught solo most of the time when I was sent out to the 3 local elementary schools. When I had help from the teachers it was a lot of fun, when I didn't, it was a scary challenge that made me a better teacher in the end. (Source: 'Gaijin Pot' Forum; retrieved 31/3/2005)

Amid the diversity of team-teaching scenarios, it may be difficult to discern any conclusive trends. Indeed, both successes and problems have been reported.

Team-Teaching Problems

By definition, *team-teaching* is predicated on the establishment of a cooperative ALT-JTL relationship. However, as researchers (e.g. Avalos 1998; Buckley 2000; Carless 2006; Hargreaves 1994; Johnson 2003; Sawyer 2002) have established, successful teacher collaboration cannot be taken for granted. In online accounts, ALTs,

like the following individual, have warned prospective candidates to be prepared for any eventuality:

The JET Program needs to address the lack of 'team' in team teaching. It advertises itself as a model of teamwork and it is far, far from that in most schools. Of JETs I know well, about 8 out of 10 have had the same experience as me. JETs should know in advance that they are going to be doing a lot different work than they bargained for. (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 23/04/2003)

Among the ALTs I interviewed, a non-collaborative classroom scenario was more common than a completely collaborative one. The same was true for some of the JTLs, including Mr. Watanabe, who describes here the difficulties of collaborating with untrained, inexperienced ALTs:

Most of the foreign teachers did not have much pedagogical, methodological ideas because they had never instructed before. Most of them had an idea but they were just assigned to speak English and didn't pay much attention to the minute details. One teacher just spoke for 15 minutes or so, but the students got a bit bored. But it was, I think, partly my responsibility. I think it's very difficult to do team-teaching. (Mr. Watanabe 5/6/2003)

Even allowing for the inherent 'negativity bias' of online discussion forums (see Section 5.12.2), reports of discord in the JTL-ALT relationship are common. Indeed, such reports have been featured in numerous publications (e.g. Ferguson 2004b; Gorsuch 2002; Mahoney 2004; Miyashita 2002a; Sato 1989; Scholefield 1996; Tajino & Tajino 2000; Yamada 1996). Among the problems that have come to light over the years, I shall briefly outline three of most commonly discussed.

- ‘Human Tape Recorder Syndrome’

Perhaps the most widely reported of all dysfunctional team-teaching scenarios is what some have referred to as ‘Human Tape Recorder Syndrome’. This occurs where a JTL limits the ALT’s role to reading out comprehension passages or pronouncing English words on command, as illustrated in the following account:

In one of my old schools, I was allowed no say into the lesson plan. I was a human tape recorder. I’d stand there in class and drool, and daydream, until the teacher asked me to pronounce a word for the students. (Source: ‘Angry Optimism’ Weblog; retrieved 08/11/2006)

While impossible to quantify in precise terms, occurrences of ‘Human Tape Recorder Syndrome’ have evidently been frequent enough to warrant a mention in several publications (e.g. Aspinall 2000a; Cazdyn 2003; Ferguson 2004b; Macedo 2002; Marck 2002; McConnell 2002; Tajino & Tajino 2000; Tajino & Walker 1998; Tope 2003; Yokose 1989). The phenomenon has even been acknowledged in some official JET information sources (e.g. CLAIR 2006o:3).

- ALT as ‘Main Teacher’

At the other extreme, there are tales of ALTs being left to deliver lessons unaided, even though this is specifically proscribed by CLAIR. Indeed, in the General Information

Handbook, it states that 'the ALT should not be expected to conduct classes alone, nor be the 'main' teacher' (CLAIR: 2006b:125). Here, Andrew describes his own situation, almost with an air of resigned inevitability:

When I come to class, teachers tend to cede over control to me completely and then stand by should I come to any problem in communication with the students. There is very clearly a power issue going on here and I think it is a lot of the reason men teachers do not ask me to teach with them. It seems to be an unspoken rule that one person must take control of the class. I really do not like this idea and spent some time fighting against it, but it is a difficult balance. On top of this, sometimes teachers just come in, introduce me, and sit down. I acknowledge that this dilemma is infinitely superior to the 'human tape recorder' problem that seems to come up. (Andrew 12/02/2004)

As with Human Tape-recorder Syndrome, this phenomenon has been widely acknowledged (see AJET National Council 2005f, 2005h; Ferguson 2004b; Macedo 2002; Miyazato 2001; Tajino and Walker 1998).

● Communication Problems

Cruz & Zaragoza (1997) have emphasized the importance in any collaborative relationship of 'effective communication', which helps to 'initiate the expression of respect and trust needed for the development and continued growth of a positive endeavor' (Cruz & Zaragoza 1997:148). It is evident from the number of complaints that effective communication is not always established between ALTs and JTLs. In

certain cases, communication problems may be the result of a simple language barrier, as the following ALT explains:

Why would communication be a problem? You both speak English right? Wrong! JTE's teach English, they don't speak it. Unfortunately I wish I was kidding, but in some circumstances you will find this to be unfortunately very, very true. Sometimes, you will have an amazing JTE who can read and write beautifully and translate things to Japanese with ease, but when you need to discuss or explain something it takes four or five times to get the message through.

(Source: Japan Forum 'Teaching in the JET Programme' Thread; retrieved 04/02/2007)

The above view is shared by Miyashita (2002a), who notes that many JTLs still encounter 'the very basic problem of not being able to aurally comprehend English spoken by an ALT, or orally respond to them' (Miyashita 2002a: 87). In other cases, like the following, miscommunication appears to result from a difference in role perceptions. Sean explains:

There was one teacher I team-taught with, who would translate every word I said for the students. He made what I was doing an exercise in futility. When I spoke to him about it, he just said: 'What's the point? They don't understand what you say. I have to translate!'. I told him I could change and simplify what I was teaching, but he seemed to be against embracing what I was doing. So in the end we agreed he would say nothing. He would only translate especially difficult words. This created a bad atmosphere. The students didn't see any team-teaching. (Sean 8/7/2003)

Others have attributed communication problems to the attitude of the JTL or ALT. Below, an ALT expresses a belief, articulated also by others (including several of my

research participants), that some JTLs are simply not interested in interacting with their ALT partner:

As many other JETs can probably agree, working in a Japanese school can be a very lonely experience unless you fully take the initiative and basically force Japanese to talk to you. There are the rare talkative types, no doubt, but they are low in number. (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 23/04/2003)

Some researchers, like Greenhalgh (1993) and Hiramatsu (2005), have suggested that the insecurity of some JTLs about their spoken English ability may be one factor inhibiting relationships with ALTs. However, given the overwhelming focus on examinations (Gorsuch 2001), some JTLs might be skeptical as regards JET's value and thus dismissive towards their ALT. Conversely, there may also be ALTs who lack enthusiasm for communicating with their JTL. In this regard, some Japanese observers (Akimoto-Sugimori 1996; Kobayashi, J. 1991; Miyoshi 1996) have identified in some native-speaker teachers negative traits like insensitivity, emotional instability and ethnocentricity.

Team-Teaching Successes

Given the ESID principle, it is logical that many team-teaching relationships should also flourish. In Leonard's (2003:50) view, 'the successes far outnumber the failures'. While it is impossible to verify this assessment, largely problem-free collaborations are evidently very common. Positive ALT accounts, like the following, can of course be

found in official information sources:

One of the great aspects of team teaching is the mutual assurance and support that the JTE (Japanese Teacher of English) and the ALT are able to give each other during the lesson. Both individuals have talents that when combined allow for great teaching potential - JTEs are able to gauge their students abilities, while the ALT provides first class interaction with the students. Personally, I find its immensely reassuring to have another teacher with whom to look to if things aren't going as planned. (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme UK 2006b: unpaginated)

To be sure, however, the researcher will also encounter many positive assessments of team-teaching from 'ordinary ALTs'. However, the majority of positive ALT accounts encountered in this research centred on either the agreeable personality or the enthusiastic attitude of the JTL, rather than the establishment of a smooth, professional relationship. Below is a typical example of personal praise from an ALT:

My JTE, 'the teacher who I assist in the classroom', is by the far the coolest in Shimane and, most likely, the coolest in Japan. He's 24 and always ready for a good time. Many of the JETs have commented how lucky I am to have a JTE who is down to earth and funny (many are stuck with ancient teachers who resemble woodblock paintings of Confucius). Better than this, however, is how well we get along in the classroom. We've become comfortable with one another and I'm pretty sure the students notice this and enjoy having us laugh (even if sometimes they don't know what we are laughing at, which is usually a good thing). (Source: 'Translate this' Weblog; retrieved 25/09/2006)

Personal praise in numerous online discussion forums is testimony to the many positive relationships that have been formed. Every year, numerous ALTs nominate a JTL

partner for AJET's annual 'Internationalisation and Teaching Awards' (AJET 2007).

Conversely, JTLs are often eager to laud the contribution of their ALTs. In one AJET survey (AJET National Council 2005h:35), 64% of JTL respondents reported 'only minor' problems in their team-taught classes, while 33% deemed their relationship with the ALT to be 'excellent'. Among my own interviewees, most JTLs praised ALTs for their cooperative spirit and their motivational impact on students.

The intangible of 'personal chemistry' is regarded by many as *the* key determinant of a positive team-teaching outcome. In this regard, both researchers and former participants have emphasized the importance of personal attributes in ALTs, notably flexibility (Cominos 1992; Lisotta 1993; Scholefield 1994; Yamamoto 1993), intercultural tolerance (Nordquist 1992) and friendliness (Arakawa 1993; Kiguchi 1994; Scholefield 1996). According to Wendy Scholefield (1996), ALTs are under considerable pressure 'to be *genki* (lively or outgoing) at all times, no matter what happens, to adapt to and accept any situation, no matter how demeaning'. Moreover, 'a friendly, encouraging ALT' is vital for 'putting JTLs at ease' (Scholefield 1996:20-21).

8.6.2. Lesson Planning

Some researchers (e.g. Stein 1989; Sturman 1992) have emphasized the importance of establishing a clear division of duties in collaborative teaching relationships. However, there is evidence that equitable burden-sharing, like that envisaged in the Handbook for

Team-Teaching (MEXT 2002a:17-18), is absent from many ALT-JTL relationships.

For instance, in a 2007 AJET survey among 496 ALTs, 41.7% of respondents claimed they planned most of their lessons alone, as compared with just 27.6% who collaborated with a JTL (AJET National Council 2007b:4). Below is an ALT account describing one kind of situation that can occur:

The teacher would ask minutes before class if I had any ideas for class that day-completely disregarding his own plan. I often made lesson plans and brought them in. Sometimes they were used, sometimes not. (JET Survey Website; retrieved 23/11/2003)

Difficulties in establishing a collaborative lesson-planning relationship have been attributed to a variety of factors, e.g. linguistic barriers, personality issues, lack of training, and lack of time. A survey by Moote (2003) found that some JTLs simply resented the extra effort. Even when there are no obvious logistical or interpersonal problems, lesson planning often becomes a question of which party is willing to take the initiative. This is acknowledged even in accounts featured on some official websites:

I do almost all of the lesson planning myself. Some of the teachers I work with take an active role in running the class; others tend to take a back seat and leave most of it up to me. (Source: MOFA 'JET Programme Official Website'; Retrieved 23/11/2003)

While impossible to quantify exactly, many team-teaching/lesson planning relationships are clearly not collaborative, much less equitable. Thus, satisfactory

outcomes often depend on imponderables like the flexibility and enthusiasm of individual ALTs and JTLs, and the intangible of ‘personal chemistry’. Of course, even harmonious team-teaching relationships do not, in themselves, guarantee that students will improve their English or develop an enhanced sense of intercultural awareness.

8.6.3 The ALT’s ‘Other Duties’

Besides their role in language education, which may also extend to on-the-job training for JTLs, ALTs are contractually obligated to assist, if required, with unspecified ‘special and extra-curricular activities’, ‘local international exchange activities’ and ‘other duties’. In this regard, some ALT interviewees reported being called upon to perform duties other than lesson delivery and planning, e.g. Judy conducted adult conversation classes and ran an extra-curricular ‘English club’; Sean was involved in ‘meet and greet’ (essentially, *kokusai kōryū*) events involving overseas students. To judge from online reports, it is common for ALTs to be asked to attend local festivals, teach adult conversation classes, organize club activities (*bukatsu*), officiate at the ubiquitous *benron taikai* (speech contests), or to participate in what Hideki Sakai (2002:73) refers to as ‘socializing activities’, such as playing games, eating lunch with pupils and helping to clean classrooms. A report by CLAIR (2007c) claimed that a full 96% of the 4216 JET participants surveyed in late 2006 had participated in some event or activity aimed at the promotion of internationalization.

8.6.4 'The Expectations Gap'

For some ALTs, personal experience does not concur with the image of the programme projected by official information sources. Indeed, a salient feature of the subjective data, gathered over a 4-year period, was the high number of complaints from ALTs over what they perceived as a gap between expectations and realities. Even allowing for the negativity encountered online (see Section 5.12.2), complaints over unfulfilled expectations seemed too numerous to be dismissed as idiosyncrasies. While this discontent is difficult to quantify precisely, a 2005 survey of nearly 800 JET participants revealed that only 11% of Elementary and Junior High School ALTs and just under 15% of High School ALTs felt their expectations had been met (AJET National Council 2005f). In a subsequent survey, involving more than one in ten of all foreign participants, 53.7% claimed their work did not 'inspire, motivate or challenge them the majority of the time', while 69.2% 'did not have a clear understanding of what their job would entail before they came on the programme' (AJET National Council 2006:2). Among ALTs, all of whose work is JET-related, the Expectations Gap can sometimes lead to disillusionment.

While some individuals might complain whatever their circumstances, there are surely many concrete reasons why ALTs feel their expectations have not been met. In some cases, these reasons may be peculiar to the ALT's work environment. Serious order problems, including school violence (*kōnai bōryoku*) by pupils against teachers,

bullying (*ijime*) and ‘classroom collapse’ (*gakkyū hōkai*) have occurred in countless Japanese schools (Goodman 2000; Okano & Tsuchiya 1999; Shimahara 2002; Yoneyama 1999). According to Nobuo Shimahara (2002:7), anti-school behaviour among adolescents has become ‘a national preoccupation since the late 1970s’. It would appear from AJET reports on workplace violence (AJET National Council 2005d), and bullying/classroom management (AJET National Council 2007a) that ALTs have not remained immune to such problems.

While individuals vary in their ability to tolerate stress, some ALT disillusionment may also be attributable to what Rutman (1970:42) has referred to as ‘cultural baggage’—i.e. the tendency for an individual’s cultural background to influence subconsciously their behaviour. Such ‘baggage’ may be particularly problematic in a programme like JET, where ‘individualistic’ Westerners are obliged to collaborate with more group-oriented, ‘collectivistic’ Japanese (see Hall & Gudykunst 1989; Nussbaum 2005; Triandis 2004). A widely-discussed by-product of cultural baggage is what is sometimes referred to as ‘culture shock’ (Fitzgerald 2003; Furnham & Bochner 1986; Oberg 1960; Parhizgar 2002; Ward et al 2001). According to Kalervo Oberg (1960:177), the anthropologist credited with devising the concept, culture shock occurs when an individual enters a new culture and is ‘precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse’ (Oberg 1960:177). While it would be impossible to establish here a link between an ALT’s unfulfilled expectations and their psychological reaction to the unfamiliar Japanese environment, some ALT comments do appear to

manifest certain symptoms of ‘culture shock’ as listed by Oberg—notably ‘confusion’ in ‘role’ and ‘role expectation’ and, in more extreme cases, ‘disgust’, ‘indignation and rejection’ and feelings of ‘being rejected by members of the new culture’ (Oberg 1960 177-182). In the view of Helen Fitzgerald (2003), certain personality types are less susceptible to culture shock than others (e.g. those who are flexible and able to manage anger and frustration), but there are also circumstances that increase or decrease susceptibility. As she explains, ‘people who have had previous exposure to other cultures and other ways of life suffer less’; ‘knowledge of the new language and culture helps’; and ‘those who support from family and peers suffer less’. (Fitzgerald 2003:233). It could be argued that by recruiting a preponderance of young individuals lacking in overseas experience, intercultural training and Japanese language ability, and then placing them in communities where they are largely isolated from friends and family, JET creates fertile conditions for the development of culture shock. While some ALTs will possess the attributes necessary to adapt quickly to their new environment, others will not. Thus, some unfulfilled expectations become almost a natural corollary of operational policy. While, on the face of it, the policy of recruiting fresh, young Japan-novices is highly compatible with the goal of fostering understanding for (i.e. sympathy for) Japan, there is also an inherent risk that some recruits will develop attitudes of antipathy.

Another possible cause of unfulfilled expectations is what might be referred to as ‘role confusion’. In this regard, there is an underlying ambiguity in the message

disseminated by the JET organization as regards the appropriate role of the ALT. To summarise some of the findings thus far: a heavy (arguably the primary) emphasis in JET recruitment information is placed upon the goal of grassroots, youth-to-youth international exchange. Although the ALT's pedagogical role is also specified, recruitment information invariably points out that applicants do not require teaching qualifications or experience; consequently perhaps, most eventual recruits possess neither. Education-related duties do feature prominently in the contract (CLAIR 2006i), yet many recruits receive only rudimentary pedagogical training. To compound matters, when ALTs arrive at their schools, they can be utilized in any number of ways, according to the wishes of the JTL. In this regard, there is evidence that many JTLs are just as confused as ALTs as regards the appropriate role for the latter. Indeed, even within my sample of participants, JTLs did not share the same views as ALTs as regards JET's *raison d'être*, particularly in terms of the relative importance of the programme's two core foci—international exchange and language teaching (see Section 6.6). In a wider survey among JTLs (AJET National Council 2005h), 69% of respondents claimed not to know JET's exact aims, although 84% did acknowledge some 'cultural exchange component'. Only 16% had heard of MEXT's Handbook for Team-Teaching and even fewer (11%) claimed to have read it.

Even among the small number of ALTs interviewed for this study, a degree of role confusion was evident, as Andrew's account illustrates:

PB: Did anyone connected with your JET application and orientation at any stage spell out to

you precisely what your task as an ALT would be?

Andrew: No, no, no. Never, never, never. This has always killed me. At first I faulted those on the JET Programme at large, CLAIR and *Monbusho* [MEXT]. Then I faulted those at my schools, but took that back too...I stopped blaming the people at my school because I realized they are equally at a loss to explain my job. I am here because the prefecture pays my salary; I have no qualms about that, but I think the school sees me as a sort of fluffy benefit. (Andrew 15/02/2004)

To judge from online comments, like the following, many ALTs share Andrew's sense of confusion:

I don't know exactly what is expected of me. I also don't know where to begin. What am I supposed to be teaching? English, I know, but what exactly [?] Vocabulary, grammar, speaking ability, etc. (Source: Gifu Prefectural Education Center; retrieved 07/08/2005)

Another common complaint among ALTs is that of 'underutilization' (AJET National Council 2005a; Ferguson 2004b; McConnell 2002; Rosati 2005). Normally, this refers to situations where ALTs are assigned insufficient duties by their school and/or CO, whether during their working week or periods of recess. However, for some, like Andrew, underutilization can mean being excluded the classroom:

If I am not asked to teach classes for a week (which happens more often than I am comfortable admitting) it is not seen as a loss or, I think, even very odd. It took me a long, long time to reconcile that this culture, and my job within it, existed. I really waited a long time, though, for someone to explain to me what the hell was supposed to be going on. Why would some teachers invite me to class and others hardly ever talk to me? What was I supposed to do once I got into class? What was my role in preparation for classes? ... It was really as bad as a dream where you are naked at school, because I was naked. I had absolutely NO idea what I

was supposed to do and here I was, employed, paid fairly well and completely in the dark...My schedule is blank and when teachers want me to come to class with them they write their names in. It is absurd. Even now I am only barely able to accept it and it makes me uneasy at work to sit at my desk as I watch the school go on around me. (Andrew 16/02/2004)

While it is difficult to determine how common the above case is, the term 'underutilization' has become an established fixture in the JET lexicon. Reports by AJET (e.g. AJET National Council 2001b, 2002, 2005a) and others (e.g. Ferguson 2004b) have documented dissatisfaction over this issue going back several years: lessons cancelled; schedules changed at short notice; ALTs spending their entire summer recess in an office without duties to perform. The following complaint exemplifies the kind of situations that occur:

I think it is ridiculous that when there are no classes, I have to go to work and do nothing. I have no problem going to work. But I feel I have no value if I am told to sit at my desk all day long. (Source: AJET National Council 2001b)

Given their lack of JET-related training/orientation, it is understandable that individual JTLs and school officials should utilise their ALTs according to their own ideas. However, this has led some ALTs to claim that their internationalising role is not adequately recognised (see, for instance, AJET National Council 2001a; 2006). In one case, a Vice Principal denied an ALT time away from the school to help a colleague with a cultural activity. To explain his decision, the Vice Principal opened the ALT's contract and showed her it was not one of her duties to 'help internationalize'. Rather, he explained, her ultimate responsibility was 'to teach' (AJET National Council

2001a:2). Similar sentiments have been expressed by some JTLs, like the following, who demands that ALTs behave more like professional teachers rather than mere cultural informants:

We expect them [ALTs] more to help us TEACH English than just to share their cultures with us in class. We hope that they will play a more active role in teaching the language, trying to understand more about our educational background and students and prepare materials more spontaneously... Ask not what we can do for you. Ask what you can do for us. (Source: 'Yuki's EFL/ESL Bulletin Board'; retrieved 23/04/2005)

Since the JTL's ultimate responsibility is to guide students through grammar-translation-based English examinations, it is possible that they (and also some students) will regard the ALT's presence as an unwelcome distraction. Such differences in perception regarding the role and value of the ALT are clearly a salient cause of the 'expectations gap' among ALTs. By extension, they represent a potential impediment to MOFA's goal of fostering empathy with Japan.

8.7. Conclusion

While recruitment trends (MOFA 2007) suggest an almost singular emphasis upon English, and particularly 'American English', there are reasons to question the impact of the ALTs themselves on school foreign language education. Firstly, the legacy of *yakudoku* does not appear to have been expunged from Japanese classrooms, despite a well-publicized drive to introduce communicative English teaching. Examinations and

teaching materials remain largely oriented towards grammar-translation methodology, and many JTLs have not been trained to appreciate and apply communicative methodology. Secondly, the pedagogical effectiveness of ALT recruits, particularly in the initial stages of their employment, is questionable, given their lack of expertise and training. Thirdly and perhaps most fundamentally, JET itself appears to be regarded as only a peripheral element in school foreign language education. This is demonstrated by the fact that schools and JTLs enjoy complete freedom to ‘utilize’ their ALTs as they see fit, while Contracting Organizations are increasingly exercising their right to withdraw from the programme altogether in favour of teachers from the private sector.

JET’s role in intercultural education would seem limited by the fact that ALTs are specifically assigned, at least at the junior-high and high-school levels, to foreign language (overwhelmingly, English) classes rather than classes geared specifically towards internationalization. The likely implication here, as Lamie & Lambert (2004: 96) point out, is that ‘in order to achieve the internationalisation goal ALTs must be prepared to spend time with the students and staff with whom they work’. However, given the JTL’s generally high work burden and the fact that many ALTs teach in several different schools during their working week, opportunities for sustained interaction are often quite limited. In terms of enhancing ‘correct understanding of other countries’ (MEXT 2003a) among Japanese schoolchildren, JET’s scope is limited by its overwhelming reliance on Western, specifically American, recruits, although the increased diversity of those recruits does at least have the potential to dispel stereotypes

regarding the ethnic/racial identity of 'Westerners' and native English-speakers. Rather than speculate further as to JET's possible effects, I shall instead present, in the following chapter, the perceptions and observations of individuals with first-hand experience working on the programme.

CHAPTER 9: PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF THE JET PROGRAMME

9.1 Introduction

It would obviously be impossible, given its scale, to evaluate JET's effects in precise terms. In recognition of this reality, the focus is limited here to considering how JET's effects have been perceived by certain individuals who have worked on the programme at the 'grassroots level'. Although primary attention is given to the ALTs and JTLs who participated in this study, I shall attempt, wherever possible, to connect the 'voices' of these individuals to more widely-espoused views or 'discourses' within the JET community. When one considers the sheer scale and longevity of the JET Programme, I acknowledge that the sample of discourses presented here is simply too small to provide much more than a limited insight into JET's overall impact.

Throughout this chapter, I differentiate between 'official' and 'unofficial' 'grassroots discourses'. To clarify this terminology, an 'official grassroots discourse' simply means any statement or remark articulated by an ALT or JTL through an official information outlet, e.g. a CLAIR website or brochure. An 'unofficial grassroots discourse', by contrast, is what an ALT or JTL has said and written in other situations, e.g. in an interview or online forum posting. I should point out that 'official grassroots discourses' are almost invariably the utterances of foreign JET participants. To illustrate: the 2007 'JET Journal' (see Section 5.5.2) contained just one JTL

contribution, compared with more than twenty from ALTs. In this study, 'official grassroots discourses' are exclusively the voices of ALTs. In one sense, these ALTs are entirely representative of the wider 'ALT community', since they are subject to the same general terms of employment as their peers. In another sense, however, they are unrepresentative, having assumed a separate identity as contributors to official information sources, where the imperative is to project a positive image of the programme. Indeed, these ALTs might even be regarded as *de facto* spokespeople for the official JET organization. Since scathing criticism of Japan and/or the JET Programme would be unthinkable in any government-controlled information outlet, 'official grassroots discourses' clearly do not reflect all strands of opinion within the ALT community.

It is important to appreciate also, when comparing the views of JTLs and ALTs, that each may be evaluating JET's effects from fundamentally different standpoints. All but one of the JTLs in my sample had been involved with the programme, to some extent, since its inception. Thus, they were able to base their assessments on twenty years of experience. By contrast, all but one of the ALT participants had been in Japan for less than five years. This very difference was reflected in responses to a team-teaching survey conducted by Arthur Meerman (2002). Meerman discovered that ALT evaluations of the programme usually focused on the need for improvement, whereas JTLs tended to look retrospectively and acknowledge the positive changes that had already occurred (Meerman 2002:8).

As a framework for analysis, I return to the three goals outlined in Chapter 6, i.e. ‘local-level international exchange’; ‘enhancing foreign language education’ (particularly, communicative competence in English); and ‘fostering understanding of Japan’. The key question here is less ‘have these goals been achieved?’ than ‘what effects, if any, can be discerned in each area?’ However, in light of my research question, which centres on the promotion of internationalization in Japan, a proportionally greater weight is attached here to discussing the perceived effects of ‘local-level international exchange’.

9.2 The Perceived Effects of Local-Level International Exchange under the Auspices of the JET Programme

9.2.1 ‘Official Grassroots Discourses’ on the Effects of Local-Level International Exchange

From a public relations perspective, it is obviously incumbent upon the JET organization to project a positive image of the so-called ‘JET experience’. In this pursuit, personal testimonials from ALTs represent a valuable resource. While the content of such testimonials varies quite considerably, a common thread is the appreciation expressed by ALTs for the generous treatment they received in Japan. Thus, if one were to identify the typical ‘official grassroots discourse’ on local-level

international exchange, it would be along the lines of the following:

- *'The JET Programme has fostered warm personal relationships between Japanese and foreigners at the grassroots level'*

In official JET (and also 'quasi-official' JETAA) information sources, numerous ALTs have testified to the warm personal relationships they formed with local people during their stay in Japan; thus affirming the achievement of at least one of JET's three core goals. The following two excerpts are probably representative examples of this discourse:

The schools are very different but I love the students and teachers at each school equally. The students are always warm and welcoming towards me and made me feel at home from the first day I arrived. The teachers are all lovely and try very hard to speak English and encourage me to speak Japanese. (CLAIR 2006a: 42-43)

The JET Programme was the greatest experience of my life. When I first arrived in Japan on the JET Programme I knew my life would be forever changed... Most importantly, I made a difference in the lives of young people. The other JETs I became friends with, the people in my small town, the teachers I worked with, and the students I taught, actually taught me more than I could ever teach them and they touched my life profoundly. (CLAIR 2006u, Testimonial 2)

Given that the personal testimonial is a widely-used persuasion technique in the public relations field (see Lamb & Brittain McKee 2005; Smith 2003; Zappala & Carden 2004), it is difficult to determine to what extent statements like the above represent honest, balanced assessments of 'the JET experience' on the part of the individuals who

have evinced them rather than conscious attempts to appear singularly positive.

9.2.2 ‘Unofficial Grassroots Discourses’ on the Effects of Local-Level International Exchange

In this section, I shall present the two most salient discourses to emerge from my interviews with JET participants. In the first case, the views are those of JTLs; in the second case, they belong to ALTs.

- *‘Thanks to the presence of ALTs, Japanese schoolchildren have got used to foreigners’*

In terms of JET’s internationalizing effects, the most commonly voiced opinion among JTL interviewees was that the presence of ALTs had somehow enabled Japanese schoolchildren to ‘get used to’ (*nareru*) foreigners. Strikingly, three JTLs evinced the almost identical view that contact with ALTs had led pupils to begin regarding foreigners as ‘similar human beings’ to themselves rather than something irreconcilably different—which, they suggested, had been the case prior to JET’s introduction. This is illustrated in the following three extracts:

Before meeting ALTs regularly, students thought to meet a native-speaker of English was a different world for them. But even though it’s only once a week, the students feel: ‘*O, gaijin mo Nihonjin to onaji ningen nan da*’ [‘Oh, foreigners are the same human beings as Japanese’; my translation]. When students say... I don’t know if students nowadays understand or not...

that if they say '*gaijin, gaijin*' [foreigner; literally 'outside person'], they think *gaijin* lives in a different world... from our world. But when they became friends... or they became just acquaintances, they call them by their names. They found out that they are also humans... (laughs)... like us. It's very important. (Ms. Nakata 5/11/2004)

They [the students] realize that people that speak English are human beings just like them. The opportunity to meet foreigners has increased, and that has had a good effect, I think. (Ms. Suzuki 3/6/2004)

Although we don't hear it so much nowadays, in those days, the word '*gaijin*' was often heard. When the first JET teachers arrived... and even now... there was a sense that these people were very a different race to oneself. Perhaps this is a rude way of putting it... but I think there was a feeling of surprise, like: 'Oh, there are other human beings besides Japanese'. (Ms. Kobayashi 25/11/2004; for Japanese original, see Appendix 4)

If the above comments represent anything like an accurate assessment of the situation prior to JET's introduction, they would indicate an extreme level of insularity within Japanese society. Of course, insularity and fear of foreigners have been salient and recurring themes throughout Japanese history (see Akaha 1996; Andressen 2002; Gordon 2003), and even in recent decades (see Aspinall 2000a; Lincoln 1993; Shibata 2005). Aspinall (2000a) explains:

For most of its modern history the vast majority of Japanese citizens have had no personal contact with foreigners. Any contact there was tended to be highly controlled or regulated by the government, and it was not until 1964 that Japanese citizens were allowed to leave the country without needing approval for their trip. Therefore foreigners venturing into Japan's hinterlands often received a reception that they might consider more in keeping with that reserved for visitors from another planet. (Aspinall 2000a: 6)

In Aspinall's view, therefore, the Japanese government's decision to sanction a large-scale importation of foreign JET participants represented 'a very significant departure from the past'. Thus, Daniel Kahl (1997) believes that JET's most important achievement has been to expose 'fresh, impressionable young kids to foreigners'. As he explains:

There is absolutely no better way to destroy latent prejudice than for young people to confront their bogeyman (the unknown foreigner) and realize he is just flesh and blood like themselves. (Kahl 1997:18)

As Ms. Kobayashi sees it, the increased contact fostered by JET has, as Kahl suggested, eradicated fear and apprehension among many students:

In terms of the interchange, I think there's been quite a big rise in the number of Japanese kids who've stopped running away from foreigners when they see them, and who'll greet a foreigner with a 'hello' when they see them. (Ms. Kobayashi; 25/11/2004. For Japanese original, see Appendix 5)

Despite an apparent belief among JTLs in this sample that the presence of ALTs in schools had been instrumental in helping schoolchildren to overcome their apprehensions about foreigners, it would seem unreasonable to discount the influence of other factors. Consider, for instance, the fact that millions of Japanese now travel abroad every year (JTB 2007) and the steady rise in Japan's resident foreign population (Ministry of Justice 2007), which includes thousands of school-aged children (Yoshioka 1999). One could perhaps argue also that the gradual loosening of once rigid

codes of social interaction has engendered a greater acceptance of diversity, particularly among younger people. In this regard, Tetsuo Sakurai (2004) has identified a clear ‘generation gap’ in Japanese society, which was a factor even before JET’s introduction. In Sakurai’s view, Japan’s so-called ‘baby boom generation’, i.e. those born between 1947 and 1949, have been highly critical of many aspects of Japanese society, particularly its protocols of human interaction. Although, as Sakurai points out, many members of this generation have themselves gone on to assume ‘standard conservative roles in society’ (for instance, as so-called ‘salarymen’), they raised their children to be more open and self-expressive. In Sakurai’s view, therefore, the children of these ‘baby boomers’ (perhaps those born around the mid- to late-1970s) are less isolationist (and thus less intimidated by foreigners) than their predecessors (see Sakurai 2004:22-25).

- *‘The effects of ‘international exchange’ are much more noticeable outside the school than within it’*

Among ALT interviewees, there seemed to be a consensus that their presence had yielded a much greater impact outside of the school than within it, particularly in terms of forging friendships with Japanese people. This, despite the fact that JET’s goal of ‘local-level international exchange’ is purportedly centred on the concept of ‘youth-to-youth exchange’ within a school context (CLAIR 2006e).

As discussed in Chapter 8, a considerable number of ALTs have expressed frustration at their lack of impact in the school. However, what perhaps stymies the ability of ALTs to establish relationships with students and colleagues more than anything is the brevity and infrequency of their contact with them. While this limitation is perhaps particularly acute for ‘one-shot ALTs’ (see Section 4.6.2), it is worth remembering that all ALTs are assigned to several classes during the course of their working week. Many, like the following ALT, are required to visit more than one school:

I teach at two schools, with 10 different teachers, in a total of 20 classes, visiting each class only once every 2 weeks. I know none of my students’ names. My teaching style is constantly in flux. (Source: ‘Dana Goes to Japan’ Weblog; retrieved 22/10/2006)

Some ALTs have complained of being marginalized by JTLs who consider their input a distraction from the primary task of exam preparation. Sam (below) claims to have been prevented from introducing even a small intercultural element into his team-taught lessons:

Formally, I don’t have too many success stories of internationalization. The classroom, which I’d considered an ideal place to inject tidbits of culture, turned out to be a pretty unreceptive place for such things. The students would have been more than game and would often ask me questions about how things are in the US, but the educational machine would have none of it. The teachers, while often receptive of my ideas themselves, would point out that there wasn’t enough time in class for such things; there was just too much to get done. (Sam 25/2/2005)

In light of such constraints, some ALTs appear to believe that personal fulfillment must

be sought outside of the classroom, as reflected in the following advice:

We shouldn't let our happiness and job satisfaction depend on our accomplishments in the classroom. We can just as earnestly and effectively work to carry out the aims of the JET Programme outside of the classroom. (Zuhlke et al 2000:9)

While 'outside of the classroom' may be interpreted as meaning 'spending time with staff and students'—which Lamie & Lambert (2004:96) suggest may be the key to achieving JET's 'internationalisation goal'—many ALTs perceive their internationalizing impact to be much greater beyond the school premises. Here, Judy contrasts her everyday impact in the local community with that in the schools where she teaches:

I see the most impact from my presence outside of school, particularly in my adult lessons on Mondays and Saturdays. They're interested in finding out how foreign people think, and I can see their brains working when we come to a controversial issue. I feel like my presence has an impact on everyday people I know—the cashiers at the *combini* [convenience store] and supermarket and the old lady who owns the wine shop down the street, the post office staff, and so on. Well, at least they don't freak out whenever I get into their lines anymore! Most of them know my name, where I'm from, and have asked me questions about various things...I feel that since these people see me when I'm going about my daily business, they know me as a real person. When I'm at school, I'm the English teacher who teaches English and speaks English... it's kind of like when we were in elementary school and couldn't imagine that our teachers had families and hobbies! (Judy 4/5/2004)

To illustrate their internationalizing impact within the local community, several ALT interviewees related personal tales of 'grassroots internationalization'. Here, Sam

describes a recent encounter with a Japanese ‘salaryman’:

Last night I was riding the train home from some errands in town at around 9pm. The train was dead silent with Salarymen, Office Ladies (OL's) and High School students heading home who were all sleeping or wanted to be sleeping. Except for this one salaryman who was maybe 50, standing near the door studying English out of a little worn paperback book...Almost without realizing it, I found myself switching off my headphones and turning around.

"You're studying English? Erai (great/admirable)."

"Oh, but I cannot speak well."

"But you're speaking fine just now," I said with a smile so he wouldn't feel as nervous as he looked.

We continued to talk until we arrived back at Fukuma. I found out that he was planning on visiting the U.S. and the U.K. next year and he was studying English so he and his wife could get around. When we finally parted ways he said, *"Thank you for speaking me. I am very happy for today,"* and we both went our separate ways. (Sam; 25/2/2005)

Arguably, spontaneous encounters like the above better fit the definition of ‘grassroots internationalization’ than do the staged ‘*kokusai kōryū* [international exchange] events’ described in Section 6.3.2. While many everyday encounters (perhaps like Sam’s above) perhaps produce only an ephemeral ‘feel-good effect’, some do develop into deep, long-term relationships. Indeed, two of the American ALTs had both met their eventual Japanese spouses during their time on the programme. What is difficult to measure, however, is the extent to which the interaction generated by the JET Programme has changed overall perceptions and treatment of foreigners in Japanese

society.

9.2.3 What Has Changed as a Result of 20 Years of Local-level International Exchange under the Auspices of the JET Programme?

At the individual level, there have surely been hundreds of cases where an ALT's presence has had a profound if highly localized impact, most obviously where they have married a Japanese person. In a much smaller number of cases, an ALT has gone on to make a verifiable community-wide impact—like Anthony Bianchi, who was elected to Inuyama city council, thus becoming the first ever North American to hold an elected position in Japan (JETAANY 2004). Ultimately, however, the effects of international exchange will be governed by 'the ESID Principle' and depend on a host of variables, such as the ALT's personality, and the nature and frequency of their interaction with local Japanese.

There is some research evidence to suggest that younger Japanese are more accepting of diversity than their predecessors, and to quote Sakurai (2005:25), are 'not intimidated by foreigners'. In a study on xenophobia in Japanese society, Misako Nukaga (2006), for instance, found a correlation between a person's age and their attitude toward the acceptance of foreigners, with older Japanese tending to be 'more opposed to foreigners' than younger ones. In Nukaga's sample, almost 70% of those aged 50 and over displayed an 'oppositional attitude' toward foreigners, compared to

only 38% of those in their twenties (Nukaga 2006:195). Eric Seizelet (2001) discovered a similar attitude gap on the question of local voting rights for resident foreigners. Fiona Graham (2003) observed a generational difference also in the corporate world, with the younger generation 'much more accepting of foreigners' (Graham 2003:170). As Millie Creighton (1995) puts it: 'there are clearly many Japanese who have become aware of foreigners as real people, not just as gaijin, and many Japanese are more aware of some of the problems of representation' (Creighton 1995:157).

Again, what is impossible to ascertain is the role played by JET in this process of attitude change—if, indeed, any tangible change has occurred. Despite positive appraisals like the above, one theme to emerge strongly from interviews with both ALTs and JTLs was the view that JET had not yet managed to dispel ethnocultural stereotypes, though opinions differed as regards the nature and implications of the stereotyping. One JTL, Ms. Kobayashi, seemed particularly concerned by the enduring stereotype of the English-speaking foreigner as a white (archetypally, blond, blue-eyed) Caucasian. She explains:

For the students...and perhaps for Japanese people in general...the image of the 'foreigner' is someone with white skin, blue eyes and blond hair... but we've had a black Canadian ALT, we've also had Japanese Hawaiian female teacher, and a Japanese-American female teacher...but because people have this image, when that happens, they seem to feel something isn't quite right... There are some people who in terms of their appearance clearly fit the Japanese image of a foreigner, and also some that do not. In that respect, I think that's a real pity that students cannot appreciate that not only those with white skin, blond hair and blue eyes speak English. I would really like the students to understand that, but it is very difficult.

(Ms. Kobayashi 25/11/2004; for Japanese original, see Appendix 6)

The tendency to regard ‘whiteness’ as a *sine qua non* of a ‘Westerner’ is apparently a long-standing stereotype in Japan. Hiroshi Minami (1971:106-107), writing at the beginning of the 1970s, noted how the ubiquitous terms ‘*gaikokujin*’ [lit. outside country person] and its colloquial version, ‘*gaijin*’, themselves almost invariably evoked images of a ‘*hakujin*’ [lit. ‘white person’]. For Etsuko Fujimoto (2002), a dominant discourse within *kokusaika* is what she terms ‘whitenization’, which represents for Japanese ‘the process of identifying with white Westerners and privileging white bodies’ (Fujimoto 2002:2). In the context of the JET Programme of the early 1990s, Herzog (1993) noted that a disproportionately large number of ALTs were ‘middle-class Caucasians’ which, in his view, perpetuated ‘the biased picture of foreigners held by the Japanese’ (Herzog 1993:98). Even though white Caucasians probably do still account for the majority of ‘Western’ ALTs, there is, as argued in Section 8.3.2, enough evidence to rebut any lingering accusations of a ‘white bias’ in JET recruitment policy.

That said, one issue that appears to disturb many ALTs is what might be referred to as ‘essentialist stereotyping’, which relates to perceived innate differences between Japanese and foreigners. Andrew outlines his concerns:

It is the problem of exclusivity that really plagues the people here, for example the refusal to believe that I could do well with chopsticks or, god forbid, kanji [Chinese characters]. The surprisingly prevalent idea that Japanese food is difficult to eat bothers me. I am not talking

about those extreme examples, the laughable comments made by people in power about Japanese skis needing Japanese snow or Japanese people being unable to digest foreign rice. While those stories are bothersome (and equally amusing), the real problem I think internationalization needs to address has to do with the teacher who sincerely complimented me on my use of chopsticks but then laughed awkwardly and confusedly when I sincerely replied that I was equally impressed with her use of a fork. (Andrew 15/02/2004)

While Andrew's chopstick anecdote may seem somewhat idiosyncratic, it is actually consistent with a common discourse among foreign residents in Japan. In fact, without prompting, three other ALT interviewees recounted similar stories. This 'chopstick discourse' has featured in books (Condon 1984; McVeigh 2004); one ALT has even created his own website with the URL <www.yesIcanusechopsticks.com>. In this connection, Haruko Minegishi Cook (2005) suggests that many Japanese still readily subscribe to a range of 'folk beliefs', like the following:

Certain food items are so uniquely Japanese that no foreigner can eat them. Japanese culture is so different that no foreigner can understand and appreciate it. The Japanese language is so difficult that no foreigner can master it. (Minegishi Cook 2005:123-124).

For some (e.g. McVeigh 1998), episodes like that described by Andrew (above) attest to the enduring prevalence throughout Japanese society of cultural essentialist thinking, itself consistent with the ideology of *Nihonjinron* (see Section 3.3.2). For May, a fluent Japanese-speaking former ALT with permanent resident status and a Japanese spouse, the premise that foreigners are irreconcilably different from Japanese people and its corollary—that, ultimately, foreigners have no meaningful role in Japanese society—is

particularly difficult to accept. She explains:

Perhaps the single biggest thing that makes me feel like a perpetual guest is the way people talk to me and ask questions. If I am alone and someone decides they want to talk to me, they often assume I am a traveler (as opposed to a resident of this area). People ask if I have visited certain sightseeing spots, and when I say no, I am often told that I better hurry up and go before I return to America. I am always asked how long I will stay here, even when people know I am married to a Japanese man...The message is that, as a foreigner I am unique and perhaps interesting, but also I am separate and temporary. I once said, when asked when I would be returning to the US, that perhaps I never would and we had to buy a cemetery plot soon. But the reaction was 'oh that's a funny joke! When you move back to the US you can get a big cemetery plot because over there you'll be buried not cremated'. (May 29/10/2003)

One could argue that, rather than helping to dispel foreigner stereotypes, JET actually exacerbates them, by maintaining a constant flow of fresh, young, largely inexperienced, non-Japanese-speaking individuals, all of whom are expected (indeed encouraged) to return home upon completion of their contracts. While JET has unquestionably diversified over the twenty years of its existence, the fact that more than 90% of participants are still drawn from the same select group of 'Western', English-speaking countries means the programme still projects a comparatively narrow image of 'the foreigner'. In terms of JET's overall internationalizing impact on Japanese society, the following exchange (between two ALTs) perhaps encapsulates the core issue at stake:

A: I think JET fulfills a purpose just by bringing the younger generations of Japanese in 'forced' contact with foreigners, in steadily increasing numbers. The exposure to black, white, Asian people etc. serves to disrupt the small secluded island mindset. And as these generations

grow up and bump the old fogeys out of the high positions in business and government, they'll bring an expanded world viewpoint, and Japan will grow and change (and maybe get better at English).

B: Does it really disrupt the secluded mindset? Or does it just reinforce it? The fact that Japanese people are only exposed to foreigners imported from 1st-world countries only seems to strengthen various notions of lack of Japanese ability, ignorance of Japanese culture, and the 'uniqueness' of being Japanese, or so it seems to me. True internationalization would involve bringing in all the Chinese workers and the 3-sei [third-generation] Koreans who blend in seamlessly with Japanese society to the schools, to show the students that Japan actually is already a far more international place than they assume, and that Japan is far more dependent on foreigners than it would like to think. The ALT system accomplishes none of this; it has the opposite effect. (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 22/11/2006)

In other words, has JET, by creating opportunities for grassroots international exchange within the very crucible of attitude formation, the Japanese school, helped set in motion an evolutionary, osmotic and inexorable process of societal attitude change in Japan? Or has it merely been a cosmetic and ultimately pernicious façade that reinforces long-standing stereotypes of foreigners as a temporary, almost ornamental presence on the margins of Japanese society? Given the numerous incremental changes introduced during its first twenty years (e.g. the incorporation of non-English-speaking participants; the extension of the term-limit), it is perhaps too early to draw any firm conclusions about JET's internationalizing impact on Japanese society, to the extent that such may ever be possible. The nature and intensity of JET's impact will obviously depend on how the programme evolves—assuming, of course, the Japanese government decides it warrants remaining in existence.

9.3 The Perceived Effects of the JET Programme in Enhancing Standards in Foreign Language Education (particularly Communicative Competence in English)

Again, JET's overall impact on school foreign language education is probably unquantifiable. To judge from JTL and ALT discourses, however, it would be difficult to conclude that any major improvements had occurred in the twenty years of the programme's existence. This was evident in both the 'official' and 'unofficial' discourses discussed below.

9.3.1 'Official Grassroots Discourses' on JET's Effects on Language Education

The JET organization has an obvious vested interest in advertising the programme's achievements. Thus, self-congratulatory statements like the following are common on official websites and in PR-brochures:

The JET Programme has gained high acclaim both domestically and internationally for its role in advancing mutual understanding and for being one of the world's largest exchange programmes. (CLAIR 2006s)

What is perhaps significant here and in numerous similar statements (e.g. MOFA

2006d; CLAIR 2006n) is that the accolades pertain only to JET's achievements in the area of cultural/international exchange, while no mention is made of its contribution to language education. Moreover, despite an extensive search of relevant websites and information sources, I was unable to identify any 'official grassroots discourses' lauding JET's positive effects on foreign language education in Japan. In fact, where ALTs were prepared to comment on the language education question, the tone tended to be critical rather than complimentary. Consider the following extract from an essay on CLAIR's 'JET Programme Homepage':

At present the vehicle for English education in this country is stuck in a rut. In fact, it's never got out of first gear. So, I ask each and every one of you in the JET community: 'Must we continue to take the back seat in these hugely important issues, and therefore help keep spinning the wheels of English language failure? Or shall we ask the difficult questions that need to be asked, lobby for more meaningful input into the system, and lay the foundations for a bold and exciting road ahead—with positive and lasting change for the English language students of tomorrow. (CLAIR 2006t: 9)

While assessments like the above hardly concur with the image JET's organizers would prefer to project, they do suggest some official acknowledgement of what many consider the programme's biggest failing. In fact, some government spokespeople, like Tomohiro Taniguchi of MEXT (below), have also been prepared to admit publicly the programme's lack of achievements vis-à-vis English education:

JET has done a very good job in opening the eyes and minds of an otherwise closed mindset in rural populations, and that's a good infrastructure around which to build any skill, including language skills... You can keep the JET scheme going while trying to improve the obviously

poor skills of some Japanese teachers of English. But I have to admit that while JET has been successful in forging people-to-people ties, that hasn't always translated fully into the quality of English teaching in public education. (Cited by McCurry 2007: unpaginated)

9.3.2 'Unofficial Grassroots Discourses' on JET's Effects on Language Education

Given the ESID principle, it is perhaps unsurprising that opinions should vary even among my own sample of interviewees. Since, for reasons of space, not all of these opinions can be discussed here, I shall concentrate on presenting just two broad discourses—one positive, the other negative—to emerge from the data:

- *'The presence of ALTs has increased student motivation to communicate in English'*

Since Japanese students are often characterized as passive, reticent foreign language learners (see Hadley & Evans 2001; King 2005; Pritchard 1995; Taguchi 2002 & 2005), any improvement in motivation would surely be regarded as a positive development. Among the participants interviewed, all but one of the JTLs (and 3 ALTs) claimed to have detected an increase in the number of pupils willing to communicate in English. Ms. Suzuki perceived a lessening of fear of using English, as a 'knock-on effect' of the more general 'humanization' of foreigners discussed in Section 9.2.2:

I think the fact that foreigners have come into classrooms has helped to reduce the fear of English among students. Things are changing, as I told you, and nowadays, more students

want to come to the ALT and try to speak English. (Ms. Suzuki 3/6/2004)

Similar opinions have been voiced by other JTLs, like the following, on some Japanese-language websites:

It is astonishing to see our pupils interacting naturally with the ALT. Our pupils can listen to ALT speech in English without feeling strange. I think that shows why ALTs cannot be ignored. (*Seito-tachi ga shizentai de ALT to sessuru sugata wa sore dake de odoroki de aru. Karera ga eigo ni yoru supiichi wo nan-no iwakan mo naku kikeru yō ni natta koto ga sono mama ALT no sonzai igi wo shimeshite iru to watashi niwa omowareru node aru*). (Katō 1999)

One ALT interviewee, May, concurs that the presence of non-Japanese-speaking ALTs has provided an incentive for communication, though she also suggests a more pragmatic reason for improvements in student motivation, namely the general increase in awareness among Japanese as to the practical value of communicative English ability. She explains:

I think more and more students, esp. JHS [Junior-High School students] have very practical reasons for wanting to be able to speak English (ex: the boy who likes soccer and wants to be able to either play or somehow work with soccer as a career and thinks being able to speak English will increase his hire-ability). More and more students realize that just being able to pass the tests and get into high school or college is not enough. They want to be able to speak. And I do think that having an ALT at school who doesn't speak Japanese has provided good motivation for this, because it lets students see first hand the difficulties encountered because of language barriers. (May 6/11/2003)

As argued in Section 6.4.3, there is evidence of widespread interest throughout Japanese society in learning English, much of it linked to vocational goals and aspirations. Over the past two decades, certain developments have arguably created an even greater incentive to learn foreign languages among the young. One such development has been the signing by the Japanese government of a series of bilateral agreements entitling young Japanese to take 12-month 'working holidays' in various countries. As of early 2008, these countries were Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Republic of Korea, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark (Source: MOFA website, 'The Working Holiday Programmes in Japan' page; accessed 2/4/2008). Another significant development, as alluded to by May (above), has been the increase, particularly since the 1990s, in the number of Japanese 'role models' enjoying successful careers overseas, notably in the sporting field (see Sakurai 2004).

In the context of the language classroom, there are surely numerous factors that would motivate individual students to communicate in English. One such factor may, as the JTLs (above) suggested, be the ALTs themselves. While Zoltan Dörnyei (2001:79) sees teachers as an 'overlooked factor' in research on language learner motivation, some individuals evidently believe in the motivational power of the teacher. In a study by Ann Clark & John Trafford (1995), both teachers and students identified the teacher-pupil relationship as 'the most significant variable affecting pupils' attitudes towards language' (Clark & Trafford 1995:218). Some would apply this principle to JET. Both JTLs and ALTs have stressed the importance of a friendly, outgoing

personality in achieving positive outcomes among Japanese students (see also Arakawa 1993; Kiguchi 1994; Scholefield 1996).

The JET Programme has engendered little tangible improvement in language education

Despite perceptions of an increase in student motivation, the view that JET had produced little tangible improvement in overall English standards was strong among the interviewees. Only one JTL was prepared to attribute improvements in communicative ability unequivocally to the presence of ALTs. Others, like Mr. Yamaguchi (below) felt major improvements would be unattainable as long as contact between ALTs and students remained so brief. He explains:

The ALTs have only been coming to the schools once a week. In some classes, the teacher only comes once a month, or once every three months. In this case, [the effect] is only partial. I think it's difficult. (Mr. Yamaguchi 25/11/2004; For Japanese original, see Appendix 7)

Some ALT interviewees were dismissive of the entire approach to English education in Japanese schools and, thus, pessimistic about their own and the programme's potential to generate change. Even Sean, whose overall stance on JET was extremely positive (see Section 9.4.2), was critical in this respect:

Practically speaking, the programme hasn't been much of a success. Japan stills lags behind countries like Afghanistan on EFL scores and there is general scent of apathy towards the oral element of English communication. 'This will only change when oral testing is given equal footing to grammar in the stupid uni entrance exams'... I remember a teacher at my school

saying this to me a while ago. If such a thing did happen, I would feel my work was actually going towards something more tangible. (Sean 8/7/2003)

The view of JET as incapable of reforming an inherently flawed system of foreign language education is a common one within the ALT community, as exemplified in the following two statements:

If the students are supposed to benefit from contact with foreigners, then I succeeded. But if they were supposed to become fluent in English, I failed. Like many ALTs, I still struggle with these questions even after having left Japan. (Parker 2002: unpaginated)

I like the money and the freedom and all that, but how many of us can TRULY say we are improving anybody's English ability. Certainly not me, and not from lack of trying. I think the Japanese are slowly realizing what a drain we are, and that their money is better spent sending their own teachers abroad to improve their English. (Source: 'Big Daikon' website; retrieved 03/01/2007)

Among the JET community and beyond, the programme's failure to deliver tangible improvements in language education standards has been attributed to a variety of factors. Some (e.g. Lamie & Lambert 2004) have blamed wider systemic problems within Japanese school education, in particular the enduring adherence to grammar-translation, although this methodology has been applied to much less detrimental effect in other countries, e.g. the former Soviet Union (Bowen 2005) and India (Chaudhary 2002). Others have blamed systemic shortcomings in JET, e.g. training (Ferguson 2004a) and recruitment (Porcaro 2006a). For Yasuhiro Nemoto (1999:92), the number of ALTs in Japan is simply too small to produce any concrete

results. As he explains:

The JET Program has had only limited success in helping students to improve their foreign language conversation skills. This is because of the disproportional native English teacher-student ratio, about 1:1815. It is impossible for one native speaker to take care of 1815 students and improve their communication skills. (Nemoto 1999:92)

9.3.3 What Has Changed as the Result of 20 Years of English Teaching under the Auspices of the JET Programme?

Even if one were able to quantify JET's contribution to improvements in English standards, it would still be impossible to calculate the internationalizing effect this had engendered on a psychological, 'human' level. That said, numerous scholars (e.g. Horibe 1998; Yoneoka 2000; Yoshino 2002) have identified a Japanese tendency to equate foreign language ability with somehow 'being international'. What has become apparent over the twenty years of JET's existence is a gradual change in the official discourse on the role for English in Japanese society. In recent years, there has been a greater readiness to portray English as a vital strategic resource for Japan's economic future. This has been reflected in a host of policy statements (e.g. MEXT 2002b; 2003b) and proposals (Prime Minister's Commission 2000). In a period of economic uncertainty, there is concern, expressed even by one Japanese education minister (Nagoya 2004), that China and South Korea may be outpacing Japan in terms of general English ability. If MEXT had envisaged JET as an earnest language improvement programme, it would surely have sought to ensure that trained,

experienced career English teachers (perhaps even teacher-trainers) were recruited, rather than non-specialists. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to rationalise the apparently peripheral role assigned to the 5,000 or so foreign ALTs already imported at considerable expense to the Japanese taxpayer.

To judge from both interview and online accounts, it would probably be fair to state that positive ‘grassroots assessments’ of JET’s achievements *vis-à-vis* language education are in the minority. Moreover, as Porcaro (2004:83) has pointed out, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that JET has generated any notable improvement in students’ English proficiency levels or in the quality of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Japan, though some researchers (e.g. Browne 1998; Gorsuch 2002) claim it has had some positive effect on the English ability of JTLs. While some spectacular success stories obviously exist, especially in higher-performing schools like ‘Super English High Schools’ (SELHi) (Mizui 2006; Porcaro 2006b), there is little indication that JET has improved, in any fundamental sense, the overall standard of foreign language education in Japan. To the extent that one can draw any meaningful conclusions from TOEFL test scores, Japan has remained near the bottom of the international pile in terms of English ability. In the 2005-2006 tests, Japan tied with Mongolia for last place in Asia, scoring a student average of 497 points. This, compared with 557 for China, 538 for South Korea and 530 for Taiwan (Educational Testing Service 2007:16). Such figures would suggest that Japan’s ‘English problem’ still prevails, to some extent, despite twenty years of the JET Programme.

9.4 The Perceived Effects of the JET Programme in Fostering Understanding of Japan

If one were to interpret ‘fostering understanding of Japan’ simply as acquainting foreigners with the Japanese lifestyle, customs and language, one would naturally conclude that JET had gone some way to achieving its goal, since most recruits are, by design, Japan novices. As a MOFA spokesperson once declared:

We want to open the door wide to allow those who know nothing of Japan to come and develop an appreciation for it. (Cited in CLAIR 2005a).

However, as I have argued throughout, ‘fostering understanding of Japan’ is best regarded as a euphemism for ‘fostering sympathy with Japan’, and here JET’s success is arguably much more difficult to measure, given that approximately 48,000 foreigners had participated on the programme as of 2007. Although it would probably be impossible to determine how many of these individuals have completed their service with positive rather than negative impressions of Japan, it is possible to discern quite distinct discourses of ‘satisfaction’ and ‘dissatisfaction’ among the foreign JET community.

9.4.1 ‘Official Grassroots Discourses’ on JET’s Effects in Fostering Understanding of Japan

‘Discourses of Satisfaction’

The most obvious repositories of positive appraisals of ‘the JET experience’ are the various websites operated under the aegis of the official JET administration. Although, as explained in Section 9.3.1, there is evidence to suggest that official JET information outlets are prepared to countenance some criticism of language teaching practice (e.g. CLAIR 2006t:9; 2006x:3), this research was unable to find any instances where an ALT aired personal grievances about their treatment in Japan. The following example is perhaps representative of many ALT testimonials published by CLAIR:

The JET experience is like receiving a gift of precious seeds for an unknown plant. How each participant appreciates this gift and sows their seeds differs, depending on the ground they land on in Japan and the ground they came from before Japan. My understanding of Japanese culture has blossomed day by day and over the seasons my seeds have grown into a mature tree. My JET experience has gifted me with a rewarding job, understanding, knowledge and appreciation for Japanese culture, lifelong Japanese and international friendships. (CLAIR 2006q: 38-39)

JETAA publications (e.g. CLAIR 2004, 2005, 2006p) provide an equally reliable source of endorsements of ‘the JET experience’. Consider the following comments from JETAA’s 2005 annual survey:

The JET experience is something I will cherish forever.

I loved the JET Programme and I highly recommend it to any young person I meet!!!

JET was a wonderful time in my life. I remember it fondly and think of it often. I always tell stories about Japan.

I had a really great time in Japan and would do it all again in a heartbeat.

(CLAIR 2006p: 10)

Again, given the *raison d'être* for the JET alumni association, it is highly unlikely that ALTs would see JETAA publications as the appropriate forum in which to air their personal grievances.

9.4.2 'Unofficial Grassroots Discourses' on JET's Effects in Fostering Understanding of Japan

'Discourses of Satisfaction'

Clearly, it is not only the official JET organization and JETAA that disseminate positive discourses on 'the JET experience'. Indeed, there is no shortage of 'ordinary ALTs' happy to extol JET's virtues. This was certainly the case with regard to the following ALT, whom I interviewed in June and July 2003 (via e-mail and subsequently face-to-face).

The case of Sean

Sean had come to Japan for what the JET organizers might regard as ‘the right reasons’, i.e. a long-standing interest in Japanese popular culture and an apparently genuine personal desire to experience the country. Indeed, he describes his acceptance on to the JET Programme as ‘like a dream come true’. By contrast with some of his peers, Sean does not appear to have perceived any ‘expectations gap’ (see Section 8.6.4). Rather, his comments (like the following) reflected a general sense of well-being and fascination with life in Japan:

PB: Has Japan lived up to your expectations?

Sean: Very much so. In many ways it’s just like a big movie, the things I’ve experienced—going out in Osaka, seeing the neon lights, working in schools with very friendly students, experiencing the festivals, the culture. It really has been without a shadow of a doubt the best two years of my life. I would say, definitely... I’m fascinated just by travelling, so I’m here really just to experience the people, the difference of everything.

In general, Sean evinced positive comments about his workplace situation and his relationships with Japanese colleagues. He recalled, for instance, how completely supportive his schools had been when he was injured in a bicycle accident. He was also eager to praise his ALT supervisors, one of whom he described as ‘exceptional’, and evaluated favourably his own classroom input. He explains:

I work at two good schools, where I’m given autonomy as to what I can create. I’m not just

regarded as a voice-box... my personal role is one where I'm able to create my own lessons. I try to teach usable, tangible English. And I'm trying to do it in an enjoyable way, a way that makes the students smile... In my schools, I've got a very favourable impression of what they're doing. I feel lucky to be affiliated with such good organizations. I doubt there are many JETs as lucky as me.

At the same time, Sean rationalizes his own treatment in Japan through the prism of (what he perceives as) a general benevolence toward foreigners, particularly 'Westerners':

To be foreign is to be cool! I see beautiful Japanese women walking around with ugly foreign men. Why? The only reason I can think of is: because he is foreign. Sorry, that's an awful example. Look at Louis Vuitton—everyone has them...Think of the sports stars...David Beckham, Oliver Kahn, Ian Thorpe, Ronaldo, etc. Whether they're talented or not, they're popular because they're foreign.

In Sean's perception, it is unquestionably advantageous to be a Westerner in Japan. Thus, although one may be stereotyped, it will be a 'benevolent stereotype' (see Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2003:1010). For many, however, (e.g. Haarman 1986; Lie 2001; Russell 1991; Stronach 1995), any such benevolence would generally be reserved for 'white foreigners'. There are also those, like William Wetherall and George de Vos (1976), who have warned any foreigners against construing their 'special treatment' as an honour. As they see it, when the foreigner is assumed to be incapable of 'getting inside' Japanese culture, special treatment can be 'a form of degradation' (Wetherall & de Vos 1976:363-365).

In part, Sean attributes his positive experiences to a personal willingness to embrace the Japanese culture, language and lifestyle—which, as explained in Section 7.2.1, is apparently what JET recruiters intend to happen. Sean is adamant that ALTs should not regard their participation in JET simply as a mission to ‘internationalize’ the Japanese:

It's not only about them [Japanese people] embracing foreign things. I show I'm interested in Japanese things... I show I take time to watch Japanese TV, to learn the language. Sometimes I talk about K-1, or Antonio Enoki [a Japanese wrestler], Morning Musume [a popular singing group]. It's genuine interest and they react well to that. The process of internationalization is not just something for the students. I am also here to be internationalized. It's a two-way thing.

Of course, it is impossible to judge to what extent Sean's satisfaction is genuine, rather than the product of a conscious desire to project a positive image to the researcher; in essence, a kind of ‘Hawthorne effect’ (Mackey & Gass 2005). That said, many ALTs have expressed views similar to Sean's in weblogs and online discussion forums. The following is one example:

I was real happy on the program. I came on JET at the age of 35. I've never had a job before that gave me as much satisfaction as JET did and I don't think I ever will again. I remember waking up in the morning looking forward to going to work. Having kids smile at you in the morning when you get there is kind of a special thing. I really loved my students and I believe I had a positive impact on them. JET is all about them. I just think everything else about the program is unimportant. (Source: JET-L Forum; retrieved 30/03/2005)

In some cases, ‘discourses of satisfaction’ appear motivated by an ALT's desire to defend the programme and/or Japan against attack from their more disgruntled peers

(‘naysayers’). Below is a typical example of this phenomenon:

I am an ex-JET, and I am happy to say it gave me a fantastic start in Japan, and without it I would not now be working at my Tokyo investment bank, living with my Japanese girlfriend, very happy in my Minami-Aoyama [an upmarket area of Tokyo] house. Still, too many JETs come to Japan, live an insular, confused life here, and leave three years later bitter and resentful and paranoid about Japan and the so-called widespread racism of Japanese people. A pity. (Source: ‘Japan Today’ Forum; retrieved 22/06/2006)

‘Discourses of Dissatisfaction’

Evidently, JET has engendered goodwill among many ALTs. There appear to be others, however, who arrived in Japan with a broadly positive image of the country yet left disillusioned. While the extent of dissatisfaction is obviously difficult to quantify precisely, a sizeable corpus of negative comment has accumulated on the Internet. In light of the attention already devoted to ALT grievances (see Section 8.6), these ‘discourses of dissatisfaction’ will be augmented here only with a single brief case study, that of Billy, whom I interviewed by e-mail over an 8-day period in April 2003.

The Case of Billy

Billy’s case may seem particularly extreme, since almost all of his comments relating to both Japan and JET Programme were, to varying degrees, negative. Although it would be easy to dismiss this narrative as gratuitous negativity, it does show how

spectacularly the goal of ‘fostering understanding of Japan’ can fail, while also illustrating some human effects arising from systemic deficiencies within the programme.

By his own admission, Billy had applied for JET not out of interest in teaching English nor, for that matter, even in Japan *per se*, but to fulfil a long-held desire to study karate under one particular teacher. While in Japan, Billy met and married his Japanese wife. Even so, Billy’s expectations of ‘the JET experience’ do not appear to have been met. To begin with, he claims to have been told he would be teaching in junior-high schools, but was instead assigned to elementary schools, ostensibly the domain of experienced ALTs (typically, those in their fourth or fifth year). Indeed, only in 2006 did JET’s organizers formally sanction the deployment of first-year ALTs in elementary schools (CLAIR 2006j). Moreover, while ALTs frequently complain of ‘underutilization’, Billy experienced the opposite. In his first year, he was required to teach, unaided, 32 classes per week; in the second year, this was reduced to a still formidable 26 classes. Billy was evidently very unhappy with his treatment in the workplace; thus, he describes his relationships with Japanese staff in adversarial terms. Consider the following example:

At the moment, I am taking a paid holiday every Friday in order to avoid working at one of my schools where the woman principal and I have been having screaming matches in the staffroom. When my Japanese wife came to school to try to work out the problems, she screamed at my wife! So, I’m sorry to deprive those kids, but I have to protect myself.

In contrast to Sean (above), Billy does not believe Japanese welcome the presence of

foreigners in their society. Rather, he contends, ‘they’ have formed many misconceptions about foreigners and ‘the world outside Japan’, based on hyperbolized media images, and have thus ‘made life difficult’ for any foreigners (including ‘Westerners’) living in their own country. While some might question Billy’s assessment, numerous scholars (e.g. Itoh 2000; Lambert 2002, Lie 2000) have nevertheless detected considerable popular opposition to the presence of foreigners in Japanese society. There is also evidence that sections of the Japanese media frequently portray foreigners in a negative light (see Akaha & Vassilieva 2003; Gamble & Takesato 2004; Goodman & Miyazawa 2000; Nagamine 2002). Against this background, Billy perceives his role to be that of ‘internationalizer’, yet he believes his mandate to internationalize goes unappreciated by local Japanese staff. He explains:

The town only thinks of me as an English teacher and has no idea that ministers from the government begged me and all the other jets to ‘internationalize’ the ‘narrow minded’ Japanese people. Those were his words, not mine. During one of many meetings at the Tokyo orientation for new jets, there were many officials from the Japanese government, especially the Ministry of Education, Sports and Science. One of those gentlemen actually said the words ‘internationalization’ and ‘narrow minded Japanese people’... ‘grass roots’ means to teach and internationalize by force, whether the town wants it or not. Yes, that’s how it is. I believe the central government is embarrassed of its own population and has taken the only practical steps to fix the problem. Now, the townspeople and the teachers and administrators have become internationalized because I MAKE them do it.

For Billy, ‘grassroots internationalization’ is a ‘mission’ to internationalize the Japanese rather than a mutual process of internationalization. Thus, as he makes clear, he sees no obligation to adjust his own behaviour to the Japanese environment:

When they tried to make me conform to Japanese customs, I deliberately refused (it actually says to do this in the JET handbook. The handbook says 'turning Japanese' is not the goal of the JET program).

I do not take my shoes off when I come inside.

I do not use chopsticks.

I do not go out drinking with my colleagues. (Neither did the other jet, which my boss suggested was the reason he had troubles at his school)

I do not scream 'good morning' or 'goodbye' in English nor Japanese when entering or leaving a room.

They didn't seem to care about the gross violations of my contract, they only seemed to care about me adhering to the little Japanese customs involving shoes and greetings.

In Billy's case, JET's goal of fostering sympathy for Japan would appear to have failed dismally. Again, however, as with any interviewee, it is impossible to ascertain to what extent Billy's comments are the product of actual circumstance or born of a conscious desire to project a certain image to the interviewer. Although 'discourses of dissatisfaction' are common, especially online, it would nevertheless be a gross oversimplification to conclude that all critics of the JET Programme felt antipathy toward Japan. Ironically, despite the above, even Billy refuses to view himself as anti-Japanese:

I know I sound bitter, but there are plenty of things I love about this place. Anyway, half my family is Japanese now, so I will always be a part of it.

9.4.3 Has the JET Programme Fostered Understanding of Japan?

Obviously, in light of the ESID principle, the above question is very difficult to answer conclusively. However favourable they made employment conditions, JET's organizers would still be unable to guarantee that every ALT left Japan harbouring positive impressions of their country. It is often acknowledged, even among the ALT community itself, that, to quote AJET, 'the wrong candidates' occasionally slip through the recruitment net (AJET National Council 2006:5). As argued throughout, however, there are also systemic flaws in the programme that seem conducive to the formation of negative impressions of 'the JET experience'.

For all the complaints voiced by serving ALTs, the best indication of JET's successes in fostering empathy with Japan is its legacy among individuals who have already completed their service. In this regard, it is worth noting that the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) retains, as of 2007, over 20,000 members in 50 regional chapters across 15 countries. This would suggest that, despite the many 'discourses of dissatisfaction', many ALTs do return to their home countries with a broadly sympathetic view of Japan, while many others have remained in Japan of their own volition upon completing their contracts, albeit in a different capacity. In annual JETAA surveys (e.g. CLAIR 2004, 2005, 2006p), alumni consistently evaluate their own participation in JET in positive terms. For instance, in the 2005 JETAA survey 76% of respondents claimed to have remained in contact with Japanese friends and

62% with Japanese former co-workers. In response to the question, ‘Do you feel that you contributed to the aims of the JET Programme?’, 68% answered ‘Yes, I think my presence made a positive impression’ (CLAIR 2006p:10). In the 2006 JET Programme Questionnaire (CLAIR 2007c), 13.8% of more than 4,000 JET participants surveyed claimed to be ‘extremely satisfied’ with their work on the JET Programme while 43.6% were ‘fairly satisfied’; against this, only 1.9% declared themselves ‘dissatisfied’ and 6.5% ‘not really satisfied’. Even in a survey conducted on a well-known ‘gripe website’, 31% out of 258 respondents claimed to have had a ‘fantastic’ time, while a further 24% described their JET experience as ‘good’ (Source: ‘JET Survey’; retrieved 03/11/2003).

Such expressions of satisfaction are conspicuously at odds with the negativity evident in many online discussion forums. One simple explanation is, of course, that these forums simply attract a preponderance of individuals with a penchant for airing grievances. By the same token, CLAIR and JETAA publications attract the very opposite type of people. Moreover, even though ALTs do generally appear more inclined to articulate discontent than satisfaction, it is unclear to what extent such discontent is heartfelt, rather than simply driven by the dynamics of the environment in which their comments are aired (or perhaps a reflection of their state of mind on a particular day). Another explanation is that most ALTs do find their stay in Japan largely enjoyable and rewarding, irrespective of their day-to-day working conditions. Undeniably, JET does offer its participants many potential benefits. For fresh graduates, it is a first step on the occupational ladder; that the work location is a modern,

interesting, exotic country is an obvious plus. As a first job, participants might even consider their remuneration adequate, especially given the amount of free time most of them enjoy. For many ALTs, the absence of career advancement prospects within Japanese schools is a non-issue, since they will not have intended to remain in Japan anyway for more than a year or two. According to some reports (CLAIR 2005b:14), the JET experience has helped alumni to secure employment in their home countries. In short, JET offers many advantages, even to individuals who find their daily duties unfulfilling or worse.

In a general sense, there is evidence that MOFA's emphasis on 'fostering understanding of Japan' is paying dividends. McConnell (2002) has described JET's 'ripple effect' in America, whereby a considerable number of alumni have found employment in Japan-related professions. The same is evidently true also for British alumni, whether in the private sector or the diplomatic service. As one notable example, the current (2008) UK Consul in Nagoya is a JET alumnus. Viewed from this angle, it is perhaps not imperative that all (nor even a majority of) JET participants return home with positive views of Japan. MOFA's policy objective (see MOFA 2006a:204) can be achieved as long as a 'critical mass' of individuals sympathetic to Japan operate in strategically important sectors. While Michael Auslin seems loath to believe the Japanese government capable of such calculatedness, he is nonetheless impressed by the programme's achievements:

There are conspiracy theories ... [about] the Japanese trying to mold world opinion and create a cadre of Manchurian candidates out there...I think you're really talking, in terms of numbers, about one of the most significant cultural exchange programs ever. On top of that, what stuns me is ... if you go around to [Western] people who are involved professionally with Japan, and you do a very unscientific poll, I think I consistently get somewhere between a quarter and a third of the people have been on JET. ... [The programme] has somehow, for whatever reason, inspired a fair number of people to ultimately devote their lives professionally to Japan, and that's no small feat. (Yomiuri Shimbun 2007a: unpaginated)

Clearly, Japan's government has succeeded in generating an interest in their country among thousands of graduates who may not otherwise have harboured any such interest. JET has thus been lauded by numerous commentators (e.g. Heng 2007; Jain 2005; Leonard 2002; McCurry 2007; Magee & Wong 2008) as a successful example of how a government has cultivated positive perceptions of their country through public diplomacy, or, as Nye (2004) would put it, generated 'soft power'. But what of JET's effects at the governmental level?

Although it is difficult to determine what role, if any, JET's creation in 1987 may have played in placating Western governments at a time of serious trade friction, it is nevertheless logical to suppose that these governments would have approved of a programme providing gainful employment for their graduates. Over the years, foreign diplomats, even government ministers, have acknowledged publicly JET's contribution to bi-lateral relations (e.g. Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs 2005; British Embassy Tokyo 2006). Meanwhile, in parallel with geopolitical changes and the diminution of concerns about Japanese economic hegemony, Japan's relationship with

Western governments has become fundamentally different from (and better than) that which prevailed in 1987. In America, the Bush administration, which regards Japan as a key ally in its 'War on Terror', has been particularly grateful for Tokyo's support, especially in association with its involvement in Iraq (Hook et al 2005:111-112). Arguably, it is now China that American politicians view as their country's chief long-term rival, whether in economic, political or military terms (Roach 2007). Even if JET were discontinued immediately, it is difficult to imagine any negative repercussions on Japan's relations with its allies in North America, Europe and Australasia.

While Japan's stock appears to risen vis-à-vis Western governments over the course of JET's lifetime, the same has hardly happened with respect to the country's two most populous neighbours, China and South Korea. Indeed, with particular regard to the former, political relations have almost certainly deteriorated. This, despite a thriving bilateral economic relationship: indeed, China overtook the US in 2004 as Japan's foremost trading partner (Blustein 2005). Anti-Japanese sentiment has remained high in both China and South Korea at a popular level (Funabashi 1998; Rose 2000). Given the probable importance of both nations in Japan's economic and political future, it is difficult to understand why so few of their young graduates have been targeted for recruitment to a programme expressly aimed at 'fostering understanding of Japan'.

9.5 Conclusion

JET's effects have been perceived and described in a multitude of ways. Among these parallel representations of reality, there are probably some that broadly concur with the image JET's organizers would like to project and others that clash starkly. Although the small data sample presented here renders generalizations inapplicable, it is probably safe to assert that the number of foreigners who have worked on JET since its inception (approximately 48,000 as of 2007) is still too small to have had much more than a superficial impact on attitudes and values within Japanese society at large. Moreover, with JET relegated to a tangential role in foreign language-in-education policy, its effects on overall English standards have, for many, remained almost imperceptible.

While many evidently regard JET as a 'failure' in terms of improving English standards and of questionable value in 'internationalizing' school education, they might still concur with Justin McCurry (2007) in awarding it an 'A+' for its achievements in public diplomacy. Whatever its shortcomings, JET has remained in operation for twenty years and continues to attract applicants eager to sample 'the JET experience'. It has also spawned a network of active, well-resourced alumni associations, suggesting that however vehemently some ALTs criticize the programme within their own online discourse community, thousands of their peers (and perhaps also many of the critics themselves) have retained ties with Japan and Japanese people, even long after returning home.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

This chapter addresses directly the overarching research question—‘What kind of internationalization does the JET Programme promote?’—in light of the results and conclusions presented in previous chapters and considers the future of the JET Programme. In bringing together all the findings of this study, I have drawn the following four conclusions regarding the internationalization promoted by the JET Programme.

10.1 What Kind of Internationalization has the JET Programme Promoted? Four Broad Conclusions

1) JET’s internationalizing impact on Japanese school education has been, for the most part, superficial

It might seem unreasonable to expect an exchange programme like JET to function as a catalyst for the systemic reform of a national school education system. After all, other governments have imported large numbers of foreign teachers with more limited aims.

In Japan’s own region, there is South Korea’s EPIK (English Programme in Korea) and Hong Kong’s NET (Native English-speaking Teacher) Scheme. As their names suggest, both of these programmes were designed primarily to improve standards of school

English education. Lai (1999:215), for instance, has described Hong Kong's NET as a 'straightforward language improvement scheme'. Contrast this with JET, where considerable emphasis has been placed on the programme's role in promoting 'youth-to-youth international exchange' and 'grassroots internationalization' within Japanese society. Significantly, JET was also launched in the context of a wider societal internationalization (*kokusaika*) campaign and a liberalizing education reform agenda, in which 'coping with internationalization' (*kokusaika e no taiō*) was identified as one important aim (Lincicome 1993). Christopher Hood (2001), recalling the American 'black ships' that arrived in Japan in the mid-19th Century to open up the country after more than two centuries of self-imposed '*sakoku*', claims the JET Programme was actually considered 'the black ship' of education reforms in the 1980s, 'as it was seen as instrumental in helping reform many areas other than just foreign language teaching' (Hood 2001:60).

Taken at face value, the decision to place thousands of young foreigners in classrooms all across Japan in the name of 'grassroots internationalization' does appear revolutionary, especially in the context of a school system run by a ministry long renowned for its conservatism and, many have argued, strong nationalist tendencies. The Japanese government has subsequently invested billions of dollars in JET, and official discourse surrounding the programme has always suggested a desire for far-reaching (if sometimes unspecified) effects (see Section 6.2). Despite this, this research concludes that JET has not been—nor, ultimately, does it appear to have been

designed as—a means of changing practices and priorities in Japanese school education. Overall, JET's impact has been largely superficial.

There are numerous reasons for reaching this assessment. First of all, despite the discourse of reform surrounding the programme, the designated 'agents of change', the ALTs, have always lacked the mandate to challenge established practices within their schools. Their formal role in the programme has, from the outset, been designated as a supporting one, as 'assistants' to the JTLs. In this regard, ALTs have been described as a 'resource' for JTLs (CLAIR: 2006b:125). Effectively, it is the JTLs that determine the ALT's role within the school. While some ALTs may feel they have been 'utilized' effectively, others evidently do not. Secondly, the fact that most ALTs are untrained, pedagogically inexperienced, non-Japanese-speaking, and unfamiliar with the Japanese school environment practically guarantees their dependence on the JTL, at least in the initial stages of their employment. Thirdly, considering the size of Japan's school population, the ALT cohort is small and diffuse. In 2007, just 4,400 ALTs were employed to cover all the schools in Japan. It is common for ALTs to operate in more than one school during the course of their working week. Fourthly, ALTs ultimately enjoy only temporary status in the Japanese school system, a reality enshrined in JET's strict five-year term-limit policy.

Although Hood (2001:61) lauds JET for having helped to promote 'the idea of team teaching' in Japan, which itself is something of an innovation, the programme does not

appear, thus far, to have made any significant inroads in achieving MEXT's main foreign language-in-education goal, i.e. enhancing students' communicative competence in English. This is perhaps not merely a question of appropriately-skilled human resources, but of systemic practices which militate against the introduction of a more learner-centred, communicative teaching approach. Most fundamentally, crucial high-school and university examinations still attach no importance to a student's communicative ability. The continued prevalence of such examinations is itself a major disincentive to the espousal of communicative teaching practices among JTLs and, by extension, a further tangible reason for the marginalization of ALTs.

In terms of intercultural education also, twenty years of the JET Programme do not appear to have engendered any fundamental changes in approach, aside from the fact that the presence of ALTs has introduced a tangible, 'living' foreign element into Japanese classrooms. Many ALTs have undoubtedly forged friendly relationships with their Japanese students and colleagues, leading to suggestions they have helped reduce general apprehension about interacting with foreigners. However, in a formal sense, ALTs play no role in intercultural education (except perhaps at the elementary school level), being assigned specifically to language classes, where their activities are largely limited to introducing culture-specific realia. Some critics actually see JET as an impediment to intercultural understanding, believing the presence of young, temporary, non-Japanese-speaking ALTs serves to reinforce the stereotypical of the foreigner as a marginal presence in Japanese society.

2) JET's promotion of internationalization has been uneven and inconsistent

Despite its establishment of a costly, complex, wide-ranging organizational structure for the programme, the national JET organization has maintained a *laissez-faire* approach with regard to much of the programme's day-to-day implementation. While such an approach is perhaps understandable, its corollary has been an extreme level of diversity in conditions, standards and outcomes, a reality encapsulated in the slogan 'Every Situation is Different' (ESID).

As the General Information Handbook (CLAIR 2007g) makes clear, ALTs are employed not by the Japanese central government by local Contracting Organizations (COs). As explained in Section 4.4.2, these COs are a diverse group of institutions with differing positions on many programme-related matters. Some COs have chosen to limit their involvement in JET or to eschew participation altogether, while others have maintained a steady interest in the programme throughout its existence. There are also considerable local variations in stance on issues like candidate selection (e.g. in terms of how many recruits are required and which countries they are drawn from) and training. Moreover, COs are free to adapt the 'model contract' (CLAIR 2006l) to suit their own demands. The corollary of this approach is a lack of uniformity in working conditions for ALTs, even with regard to fundamentals like holidays and working hours. At the school level, the utilization of ALTs is often dictated by the interests and

priorities of individual JTLs and/or other local staff. In this respect, the incorporation of an ‘other duties’ clause into all ALTs’ contracts has effectively granted schools the right to demand that their ALTs perform any duties of their choosing.

Given the often widely differing approaches to policy implementation, it is logical to suppose that JET’s internationalizing effect should also vary considerably according to the work location. Some ALTs might encounter only supportive local staff and motivated students; others might be met with indifference. Of course, there are also variations in attitude and ability among ALTs themselves; indeed, some have been criticized by their peers as unsuitable or lacking in quality. Without question, the programme has engendered satisfaction in many quarters. If the individuals interviewed for this study constitute anything like a representative sample, some JTLs have welcomed the fresh ‘outside’ perspective engendered by the presence of ALTs. The JET experience has also been evaluated positively by numerous ALTs, who have forged relationships and friendships with Japanese people in their local communities. In some cases, the experience has been nothing short of life-changing, e.g. for those who have married a member of their local community, those who have remained in Japan upon completing their JET contract, or those who have gone on to pursue a Japan-related career in their home country. At the same time, this study has also detected some lingering ambivalence toward JET’s existence. At the local government level, enthusiasm among Contracting Organizations has certainly not been unanimous, as illustrated by the variations in the number of JET participants employed by Japan’s

prefectural and ‘designated city’ authorities (see Section 8.4). Within schools, there is an apparent lack of consensus among JTLs in terms of how ALTs should be deployed on a day-to-day basis. Thus, while some working arrangements have seemed problem-free, others have generated complaints of ‘underutilization’ and ‘human tape-recorder syndrome’ (see Section 8.6.1). Without question, JET has greatly increased the opportunities for interaction between ‘ordinary Japanese’ and ‘ordinary foreigners’, thereby fulfilling the programme’s ‘international exchange’ function. However, the negative discourses presented in this study suggest the programme has not always been the model of intercultural harmony it is sometimes portrayed as.

3) JET’s internationalization has always had a predominantly Western orientation

One conclusion about the JET Programme that can be proven empirically is that it is and has always been geared overwhelmingly towards the countries of ‘the West’ and America in particular. To illustrate: in 2007, more than 92% of the 5,500 participants were recruited from ‘Western’ countries, i.e. North America, Western Europe and Australasia, with almost 55% (and 61% of the ALTs) from the United States alone.

Clearly, then, JET recruitment trends have not reflected the changes that have occurred in the geopolitical power structure over the twenty years of the programme’s existence, perhaps most notably the growing global influence of China. Recruitment has not reflected either Japan’s strong economic relationship with China, which in 2004

surpassed America as its main trading partner. JET's orientation has remained, to borrow Befu's (1983: 233) phrase, 'an elliptical affair predominantly pointed toward the West'. While the ALT community has undoubtedly become much more ethnically diverse than in the programme's early days (when accusations of 'white bias' were leveled at its organizers), many of the non-Caucasian ALTs are still what might be described as 'Westerners'. They have been recruited as representatives of their home country not the country of their ethnic origin. In other words, a British candidate of Indian ancestry interviewed in the UK for an ALT position would not be tested on their knowledge of India.

From a language teaching perspective, JET's overwhelming emphasis on English (particularly native-speaker models) is entirely consistent with the priorities of MEXT foreign language-in-education policy, not to mention policy priorities in other East Asian countries like China (Lam 2005) and South Korea (Sungwon 2006). One arguable deficiency in Japanese foreign language-in-education policy, which JET has done little to address, is the lack of diversity in target languages for school education. In this regard, JET might be considered a missed opportunity to achieve diversification. Of course, if national language policy priorities are ever re-evaluated and the programme remains in existence, this opportunity may one day be seized.

As mentioned in the Introduction, JET's creation appears to have been motivated, at least in part, by a desire among Japanese policy-makers to assuage the anger of their

American counterparts during a period of trade friction. While Japan's political relationship with America seems to have improved considerably since that time, the programme has not only remained in existence but has gradually increased its reliance on participants from United States, relative to those of other nationalities. Today, Japanese politicians appear less concerned about 'Japan bashing', as was the case in the mid-1980s, than 'Japan passing' (McCormack 1998), i.e. concerned that Japan may be 'passed over' by America in an Asian economic and political order dominated increasingly by China. From this standpoint, the preponderance of American participants in JET might be regarded as one small manifestation of a much wider policy aimed at sustaining America's interest in its strategic partnership with Japan.

4) JET's internationalization has had a strong external focus

MOFA has never made a secret of Japan's desire to nurture 'Japanophiles' (*shinnichi-ka*) through its use of educational programmes (see MOFA 2006a; 2006b). This desire has clearly been reflected in JET recruitment policy. In other words, while most ALT recruits might seem ill-equipped to generate change within the Japanese school system, they do possess undoubted potential as agents of Japan's influence in the world. ALTs are invariably university educated, overwhelmingly young, and in most cases have yet to embark on a long-term career path. In this respect, they represent a patently more attractive recruitment target than older, career pedagogues, whose influence would largely be restricted to the language classroom.

JET's strong external focus is amply demonstrated in the relationship between the Japanese government (under the auspices of CLAIR, MOFA and overseas diplomatic missions) and the JET alumni associations (JETAA), whose activities it backs with both logistical and financial means. The success of these alumni associations in maintaining not only a very sizeable membership (21,000 in 2007) but also an extremely dynamic one is testimony to JET's success in garnering influence overseas. At the same time, individual alumni have also gone on to assume positions in fields where they are able to steer others in JET's direction; for instance as academics, authors and teachers of Japanese. There are also signs that some alumni are influencing their own children: according to the website of JETAA International, the programme is now attracting 'second generation JETs'. Clearly, the JET Programme has enjoyed great success in generating and maintaining overseas interest in Japan. Arguably, JET's greatest achievement has been its ability to project Japanese 'soft power' far beyond its own borders.

10.2. Whither the JET Programme?

Two decades after its launch, there are signs that the JET Programme is being degraded. The overall number of participants has been falling year on year since 2002. In 2007, for the first time ever, even the number of Americans fell comparative to the previous year (although in percentage terms, the Americans still increased their share). The

number of participating local authorities is also in decline, amid a noticeable trend towards the ‘outsourcing’ of team-teaching to private ‘dispatch companies’ (see *Asahi Shimbun* 2004; *JALT* 2006; Ozawa & McLauchlan 2003). Since ‘outsourced PFTs’ (see Section 8.4) are purely concerned with English teaching, this would suggest that some local authorities consider ‘international exchange’ less of a priority than communicatively-oriented language teaching.

As a plan to influence disgruntled US lawmakers at a time of trade friction, *JET*’s launch in 1987 is easy to rationalize. In the geopolitical/geoeconomic order of the early 21st Century, the political rationale for its continued existence is less clear. To judge from discussions in the *ALT* community, some now perceive *JET* to be in a state of existential crisis. Aside from the seemingly inexorable trend towards privatization, *JET* has been criticized for a perceived decline in ‘*ALT* quality’ and, perhaps more seriously, for its failure to deliver any tangible improvements in foreign language education. Some, like Lamie & Lambert (2004), have argued for a reevaluation of the programme’s goals, while others (e.g. Miyashita 2002b; Porcaro 2006a, 2007) have called for its abolition.

As argued in Section 6.4.6, it has long been questionable whether MEXT regards *JET* as a significant element in its foreign language-in-education policy. It is interesting that *JET*’s apparent decline comes at a time when communicatively-oriented training for *JTLs* has increased and plans have been announced to expand English education into

Japanese elementary schools (from 2011, English is to be made compulsory from the fifth grade). With JET's future looking somewhat uncertain, a number of alternatives to the current arrangements have been offered. Porcaro (2004:83), for instance, has suggested discontinuing JET in favour of 'long-term, intensive training' for JTLs in 'workshops, seminars and courses throughout the year for which they would be paid for required attendance'. Others, who would retain JET, have suggested a shift in recruitment policy to favour experienced foreign teachers and teacher-trainers. A common suggestion among JTLs, including some in my own interview sample, is to send JTLs abroad for language training; in essence, the JET Programme in reverse.

There are questions also whether, in light of the steady increase in Japan's foreign population, JET's goal of fostering 'international exchange' remains a valid one. Certainly, one would expect cross-cultural interaction to occur between local Japanese and the two million or so foreign residents in their country without the need for costly official orchestration. Then again, most foreigners in Japan are not 'Westerners'. While, as some participants in this study have suggested, JET may have helped Japanese schoolchildren to overcome their apprehensions about interacting with foreigners, it is unclear to what extent, if at all, the programme has helped prepare Japan for what some believe to be an inevitable transition to a more pluralistic reality. What is apparent, however, is that more than two decades after Nakasone's landmark '*kokusai kokka Nihon*' speech (see Section 2.4.1), there are still some very influential Japanese who consider their country's racial/cultural homogeneity to be one of its paramount virtues.

These individuals evidently include Taro Aso, who, as head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) in October 2005, praised Japan as ‘one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture and one race, the like of which there is no other on this earth’ (cited in Reed 2006).

While JET is widely acknowledged to have been a major success of cultural diplomacy, it is perhaps questionable whether this success alone warrants such a substantial financial outlay, especially at a time of prolonged national economic uncertainty and when Japan’s international reputation and influence is arguably being enhanced through alternative, non-governmental means (see Section 2.6.4). The programme’s long-term survival may hinge on the vested interests of Japanese politicians at both the national and local levels, rather than official satisfaction at its achievements. Should the government decide to discontinue the programme, it is likely that this would occur gradually, since an abrupt closure might be seen as an admission of failure. Alternatively, the programme may be scaled down considerably from its current level. This process may already have begun.

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APPENDICES: EXTRACTS FROM ORIGINAL JAPANESE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Appendix 1: Extract from Interview with 'Mr. Yamaguchi' (5/11/2004)

一番大きな問題は外国のたとえばアメリカの大学を卒業したばかりで来ますよね。その人は英語を教えることについて専門的なことは勉強してないですね、たとえば経済学部を卒業したりして、面白そうだから来る、いろんな目的できますよね。実際、日本の学校に来てみて自分のイメージと違ったりして、中にはやる気をなくしてしまう人とかいますから。だから今のやり方がいいのかどうかっていうのは問題があると思います。

Appendix 2: Extract from Interview with 'Mr. Yamaguchi' (5/11/2004)

結局、2年間3年間で帰っちゃいますよね。帰ってしまうし、慣れた頃には全くの(イングリッシュティーチングの)専門家ではないから、2年3年たって慣れた頃には国に帰りますよね。非常に無駄が多い。もっと、きちっとやるためにには、2、3年じゃなくて、ちゃんと10年とか20年とか居てもらうような制度に変えるとか、あるいは日本人の教員をアメリカなりイギリスに1年間なら1年間留学させるような制度を作るほうがずっと効果的だと思います。今のJETプログラムは効果は薄い。お金ばかり使って効果はあまり無い。

Appendix 3: Extract from Interview with 'Mr. Yamaguchi' (5/11/2004)

担当者の集まりでは私がちょっと気になりましたのは「ALTを活用してください。」といらんですね英語ではユーティライズ、ユーティライゼーションという言葉を使っています。最初から今もそうなんですが、「人間を活用する」ですとか、あるいは彼等は「管理する」という言葉を言います。「さぼらないようにさせてください」、「時間を守らせて下さい」、「生活のめんどうを見て下さい。」というような事もありました。

Appendix 4: Extract from Interview with 'Ms. Kobayashi' (25/11/2004)

今ではあまり聞かれませんが、当時はですね「外人」というような言葉がありまして、JETプログラムで外国人の先生が学校に入って来るようになった時には、今もそうですが、非常に自分達と違う人種、日本人意外にも人間がいるんだな。ちょっと失礼な言い方ですが、そのような驚きがあったと思います。

Appendix 5: Extract from Interview with 'Ms. Kobayashi' (25/11/2004)

「交流」という点でいえば外国人を見ても逃げなくなつた日本人の若者たち、自分から「ハロー」と挨拶していく若者達、その数はやはりかなり増えたと思います。

Appendix 6: Extract from Interview with 'Ms. Kobayashi' (25/11/2004)

生徒たちあるいは多くの日本人にとって「外国人」というのは金髪で青い目で白い肌なんですね、そういうイメージを持っていて、たとえば黒人のカナダ人のALTを担当したこともありますし、ジャパニーズハワイアンの女性、あるいはジャパニーズアメリカンの女性がALTとして来た事もありますし、オーストラリアの方もありますが、そのような時には非常に違和感を感じるんですね。ですから、見た目、外見が明らかに日本人がイメージする外国人という場合とそうでないという場合明らかに違いがあります。その辺について私は非常に残念に思いました、英語を話すのは金髪で青い目の白い肌の人だけではないというような事をなんとか知つてもらいたいなと思いましたがなかなかそれは大変な事でした。

Appendix 7: Extract from Interview with 'Mr. Yamaguchi' (5/11/2004)

週に一回、あるクラスには1ヶ月に一回、3ヶ月に一回しか来ないですよね。そうなるとやっぱりどうしても、部分的というか。難しいと思いますね。

