

Teachers' Beliefs about English Learners at Universities in Japan: A Review of Previous Research and Findings from a Pilot Study

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The purposes of this paper are twofold: a) to discuss how previous researchers have explored teachers' beliefs in the field of second language education and b) to report the findings of a pilot survey conducted among Japanese university English teachers about their beliefs regarding Japanese learners of English at universities. First, I will review the definitions of teachers' beliefs and their roles in teaching practices. Teachers' beliefs can be a critical factor that makes a difference in the outcome of curriculum goals because of the potentially strong influences on individual teachers' instructional practices. Second, I will examine teachers' beliefs collected through a pilot questionnaire survey. Data were collected from six native English-speaking teachers (ETs) and eleven native Japanese-speaking teachers (JTs). The main purpose of the pilot study was to examine the questionnaire items for use in a larger-scale survey, and therefore a small group of teachers was selected. Despite its small scale, the survey revealed potential differences and similarities between ETs' and JT's beliefs about Japanese learners of English at universities in Japan: The findings indicated the possibility that the teachers share similar impressions of their students, but that their judgments and interpretations of the students' skills and attitudes toward learning English (i.e., motivations and preferences for class formats and activities) could be very different.

Keywords: teacher cognition, teachers' beliefs, English language teaching, English native speaker teachers, Japanese native speaker teachers, Japanese learners of English at universities

1. Introduction

Teachers' cognition—"what teachers think, know, and believe (Borg, 2006, p. 1)"—has been an important part of language teaching research for the past three or four decades. Teachers' cognition influences what teachers do—their teaching practice—and therefore it also influences what can be achieved in their classrooms. JREC-IN, an

online position-offer information database for researchers run by Japan Technology and Science Agency (<https://jrecin.jst.go.jp>) shows that job applicants for teaching positions at Japanese universities are often required to submit their teaching philosophy, goals, and/or plans as part of their applications. These documents reflect individual teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, which

in turn are likely to affect their decision-making processes regarding their teaching. Thus, teachers' beliefs can function as a critical factor for the outcome of curriculum goals due to their potentially strong influences on the teachers' instructional practices.

In spite of this potential importance of teachers' beliefs and of the extensive studies on this topic in the past, much still remains uninvestigated. One reason is that the potential topics of such studies—anything teachers can hold beliefs about—are unlimited; in the field of language teaching, for example, areas in which teachers may hold beliefs that are particularly likely to affect their teaching practice include but are not limited to teaching methods, ways languages are or should be learned, or the position or role of the target language in relation to other foreign languages. Another reason is because these investigations are context specific. Teachers' beliefs influence their teaching practices, but so do other factors, such as institutional guidelines and regulations, availability of teaching and learning materials, and learners' proficiency and motivation levels.

One area that has not yet been explored in the field of language learning and teaching is university English (as a foreign language) teachers' beliefs about their students. This paper will report and discuss the results of a pilot survey conducted among English teachers at Japanese universities. I will start with a review of previous research to show how teachers' beliefs have so far been explored.

2. Definitions and functions of teachers' beliefs

Several researchers have attempted to explain what beliefs are and how they are different from knowledge (Nespor,

1987; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996; Woods & Cakir, 2011). Abelson (1979) refers to seven potentially important characteristics of belief systems:

1. The elements (concepts, propositions, rules, etc.) of a belief system are not consensual.
2. Belief systems are in part concerned with the existence or nonexistence of certain conceptual entities.
3. Belief systems often include representations of "alternative worlds," typically the world as it is and the world as it should be.
4. Belief systems rely heavily on evaluative and affective components.
5. Belief systems are likely to include a substantial amount of episodic material.
6. The content set to be included in a belief system is usually highly "open."
7. Beliefs can be held with varying degrees of certitude. (pp. 356-360)

Nespor (1987) explained that four features of these seven characteristics, of which *existential presumption*, *alternativity*, *affective and evaluative loading*, and *episodic structure* (No. 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the Abelson list, respectively) could help to distinguish beliefs from knowledge while *non-consensuality* (No. 1) and *unboundedness* (No. 6) can be useful in illustrating how beliefs are organized as "systems" (p. 318).

I concur with the claim by Pajares (1992) that "distinguishing knowledge and beliefs is a daunting undertaking" (p. 309). For example, let us consider *non-consensuality* of beliefs: Some or even many people may not agree with what some individuals believe; but when something that a limited number of individuals believe to be true does turn out to be true and gets accepted as a fact by

the public, then it becomes common knowledge. Conversely, something that was once accepted as common knowledge in a society can turn out to be a mere belief which scientific evidences cannot prove to be true or which can even prove false. For example, in the Middle Ages in Europe, bloodletting was a common medical practice (Schipperges, 1985/1988) and regarded as knowledge. In those days, people held the ancient medical belief that diseases could be treated by keeping the balance of four humors in the body. In modern medicine, however, such practices are considered to have been based on false beliefs, and bloodletting is no longer practiced in most of the cases where it would have been used in the past (Hirai, Oshimi, & Sakata, 2004).

Evaluative loading also contributes to the intricate nature of beliefs. Research has indicated that “beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction” (Pajares, 1992, p. 316). Views about women’s rights, for example, vary greatly depending on the values that the society creates. Girls should be treated as equally as boys, and both should be able to attend school—such a view may be accepted as natural or common knowledge in one society but is held by only a limited number of people and therefore remains as a belief in another.

Woods (1996) used the term “BAK (Beliefs, Assumptions, and Knowledge)” to explain teachers’ beliefs and knowledge. He claimed that beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge work as important elements in teachers’ decision-making around classroom practices and that the three terms “do not refer to distinct concepts, but rather to points on a spectrum of meaning” (p. 195). He said that these terms had been used as if they were

separate entities in the previous literature, which he saw as an incorrect and problematic representation. Woods and Cakir later used the term *knowledge* “in the broadest possible sense” and also the term *understandings* in order “to emphasize this dynamic nature of teacher knowledge” (Woods & Cakir, 2011, p. 383). When *knowledge* is used in this broadest sense, teachers’ *beliefs* fall into the category of knowledge called teachers’ *personal knowledge*. In other words, part of what is defined as *knowledge* in this broad sense overlaps with what constitutes individuals’ belief systems.

Distinguishing beliefs from knowledge is a laborious task, and in fact, one that does not need to be a critical issue. Rather than trying to see beliefs and knowledge as separate entities, it is important to acknowledge that they are intertwined and constitute a single continuum of thoughts and feelings in teachers’ minds (Woods, 1996). Yet studying teachers’ beliefs—simply put, what teachers believe—should be considered integral to the field of educational research and practice. Next, I will discuss the roles and functions of teachers’ beliefs in those teachers’ decision-making processes.

It is commonly accepted that teachers’ beliefs influence their choices in their teaching practices (e.g., Borg, 2006; Burns, 1996; Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Fang, 1996; Woods & Cakir, 2011). However, the connections between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices are not simple or linear, instead constituting a complicated web of relations, as has been supported by a number of studies (e.g., Burns, 1996; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Eisenhart et al, 1998; Mak, 2011; Sakui & Gaies, 2006).

The complexity of these connections can

be partially explained with reference to the process of reflection and integration of beliefs into teachers' actual actions. Individual teachers make decisions related to class activity planning and assignment design within limits determined by the classroom situation, learners' individual differences (e.g., motivations and abilities), availability of learning and teaching materials, and institutional requirements and guidelines (inter alia). The expectations of other colleagues might be another factor contributing to these conditions, which can in turn lead to great differences in how teachers' beliefs are reflected in their actions. Therefore, researchers cannot simply claim that teachers who take the same actions have the same beliefs; it is possible that teachers' actions may change even when their beliefs remain the same or vice versa (Borg, 2006). Regardless, however, it is certain that teachers' beliefs underlie their decision-making processes and influence their choices regarding those processes in ways that vary idiosyncratically but with reference to their specific teaching contexts.

Nespor (1987) claimed that teachers' beliefs can have another interesting function: helping teachers adjust to "ill-defined" situations:

... the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled, and that beliefs are peculiarly suited for making sense of such contexts. (p. 324)

That is, teachers might interpret their institutional goals in the way they find convenient and comfortable so that they can implement practices or materials they believe will be effective in their classes. Teachers can also use their beliefs to make

sense of certain aspects of the specific reality of their classroom that they cannot explain with reference to theoretical knowledge alone. For instance, teachers might try to explain why they cannot use certain teaching methods by referring to their beliefs about their students. Some teachers might say that communicative teaching method is not effective because they believe that students are not ready. Thus, investigation of teachers' beliefs will help researchers and teachers deepen our understandings of what teaching is about.

In addition, investigation of teachers' beliefs can work as a tool for reflective teaching, in which teachers reflect on their own teaching practices and share their reflections with each other for the purpose of improving their teaching techniques (Farrell, 2011; Kojima, 2008; Mikami, 2011; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). While examining the causes and backgrounds of certain teaching practices, then, these teachers are actually looking into their own beliefs. Reflections on teaching practice and examination of teachers' beliefs regarding them can thus refer to the same mental processes, and both should be considered essential parts of teacher education and training.

3. Previous studies in the field of language teaching

Elain K. Horwitz, who is renowned as a pioneer in the exploration of language learning beliefs, created the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory; Horwitz, 1987), probably the most frequently used questionnaire in the study of the role of beliefs in second language learning and teaching. A number of researchers in Japan have utilized this instrument (e.g., Itoi, 2002;

Kameda, 2005; Keim, Furuya, Doye, & Carlson, 1996; Nakayama, 2010; Riley, 2011; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Utsunomiya, 2010). Horwitz (1987) and many of these subsequent studies investigated the characteristics of "good language learners" in order to develop more effective approaches to learning a second language (Wenden, 1999). Quite a few studies have targeted teachers' beliefs, as well. Some have explored the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching methods (e.g., Graden, 1996; Kameda, 2005) while others have investigated differences between students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning (e.g., Peacock, 1999; Riley, 2011).

Previous studies about teachers' beliefs have covered various research questions, and used various research methods (see Table 1). Questionnaire surveys were used in most of the studies, very often alongside other research methods. Questionnaires allow researchers to collect data on teachers' beliefs, but only at a certain point in their lives; in other words, the information is one-dimensional and static, not dynamic. That is why researchers began to use additional research methods to address gaps that questionnaire surveys cannot fill (Sakui & Gaies, 2006).

Findings from different studies (Table 1) sometimes reveal apparently contradictory results. However, such contradictions are often caused by the use of different research methods and contexts (Borg, 2006). For example, Peacock (1999) reported that differences between teachers' and learners' beliefs negatively influenced students' language learning by contributing to dissatisfaction and frustration among the students. Kern (1995) revealed teachers and students showed overall similarities about

language learning, in addition to the finding that students' beliefs did not change very much from the beginning to the end of the semester. In Wan, Low, and Li (2011), mismatches were reported between teachers' and students' beliefs about the teachers' roles. These authors suggested that metaphor analysis, in which metaphor prompts were used to identify students' and teachers' beliefs about teachers' roles (e.g., teachers being likened as a dictionary), served as an effective tool to help teachers modify their teaching practices in a way informed by students' beliefs.

It is also noteworthy that studies exploring relationships between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices have reported that the teachers had a hard time putting their beliefs into actual practice (e.g., Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Burns, 1996; Graden, 1996; Kameda, 2005; Pan & Block, 2011). At the same time, teachers' beliefs can be modified and developed by interventions into actual teaching situations and by participating in reflective workshops and dialogues with colleagues (e.g., Mak, 2011; Sakui & Gaies, 2006; Woods & Cakir, 2011).

A number of studies (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Peacock, 1999; Riley, 2011; Sakui and Gaies, 2006; Wan et al., 2011) have investigated university-level language teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching methods. However, few studies have explored teachers' beliefs about their students. Facing the problem of declining student population as the population as a whole declines and ages, universities in Japan are making constant efforts to improve their curriculum to appeal to high school students and their parents, and to high school teachers. Many university English programs offer a curriculum in which

Table 1. Selected studies of teachers' beliefs: Objectives, methods, and participants

Study	Primary objective(s)	Methods and participants
Kern (1995)	To compare teachers' and students' beliefs about language learning and to explore the potential influence of the former on the latter.	288 French learners and 12 French teachers at a university in the U.S; Students took a full version of BALLI (34 items) twice in a semester (beginning and end of semester) and teachers took a 24-item version of BALLI once.
Burns (1996)	To explore how the underlying thinking and beliefs the teacher brings to the classroom shape the processes and interactions that occur.	Six experienced teachers in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program; classroom observation and ethnographic interviews.
Graden (1996)	To explore how teachers' beliefs about reading instruction were affected by their beliefs about students.	Six secondary foreign language (French and Spanish) teachers from three public school settings in the US; interviews, audiotaped classroom observations, and observational field notes.
Peacock (1999)	To identify differences between student and teacher beliefs about language learning.	202 EFL students and 45 EFL teachers at a university in Hong Kong; BALLI, comprehensive proficiency test, interview, self-rated proficiency sheet.
Kameda (2005)	To investigate how high school teachers' beliefs were reflected in their teaching practices.	Questionnaire survey (based on BALLI) among teachers at "low-ranking" senior high schools in Tokyo, observation and follow-up interviews with teachers who answered that they were implementing their beliefs in their classes.
Sakui and Gaies (2006)	To investigate the types of beliefs held by one researcher/teacher and the relationship between these beliefs and professional identities.	Narrative inquiries and self-study of a Japanese teacher of English (first author); the teacher's journal entries with the second author's responses, questionnaire survey and interviews with students, the second author's interviews with the teacher, and students' written work.

Mak (2011)	To explore the development of a pre-service EFL teacher's conflicting beliefs about the Communicative Language Teaching model in an Asian teaching context.	One pre-service EFL teacher in over a one-year program: questionnaires, follow-up interviews, field notes, video-recording of teaching practices, lesson plans, conferences with the participant and her course instructor, the teaching advisor's written feedback, and interviews with course instructors.
Pan and Block (2011)	To explore learners' and teachers' beliefs about English, students' motivation to learn English, and current focus of English teaching and learning in classrooms.	Questionnaire survey among 53 university teachers and 637 students at six universities in Beijing with a 73% and 100% return rate respectively, and interviews with one teacher and one student.
Riley (2011)	To investigate shared beliefs about language learning among university English teachers.	34 native English-speaking teachers at a university in Japan; questionnaire survey from Sakui and Gaies (1999).
Wan, Low, and Li (2011)	To examine the effects of metaphor analysis of students' and teachers' beliefs; the effects on behavioral changes, particularly in teachers' practice.	35 first-year students, 35 third-year students, and 33 EFL teachers at a university in China; metaphor analysis including a theory-based support workshop, completion of a metaphor elicitation task, and follow-up interviews.
Woods and Cakir (2011)	To investigate how teachers' knowledge and beliefs of communicativeness in language teaching develops.	Six newly-graduated language teachers in Turkey; the first phase included a background survey and an examination and task related to participants' understandings of communicative language teaching and interviews, while the second phase included participant observation of videotaped clips of English-as-a-second-language lessons in a Canadian university context, a questionnaire survey, and follow-up interviews.
Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012)	To explore teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy including its importance in language learning and the challenges they face in promoting it.	A questionnaire conducted among 200 teachers at the language center of a university in Oman with a 30.5% return rate, and follow-up interviews with 20 teachers.

native English-speaking teachers (ETs) and native Japanese-speaking teachers (JTs) are assigned different roles (e.g., focusing on instructing students in different skills). Exploring the differences in the beliefs of ETs and JTs and the reasons for these differences should inform the effective implementation of curriculum and achievement of strong learning outcomes.

Shimizu (1999) investigated students' perceptions of ETs and JTs, reporting that the students regarded ETs as friendly and their classes as fun, and JTs' classes as boring but JTs as knowledgeable. However, no study has compared ETs' and JTs' beliefs about their students. In the next section, I will describe a pilot study in which this comparison was made.

4. Development of a pilot questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the pilot study was developed and implemented during the winter of the 2013 academic year, and was intended to cover the following five areas: a) what kinds of abilities teachers believe their students have, b) what kinds of abilities teachers believe their students want to improve, c) what kinds of activities teachers believe their students want to do, d) what views teachers believe their students have about learning a language, and e) how teachers believe their students are actually learning the foreign language. As discussed earlier, questionnaires have limitations as a data collection method, providing only synchronic data. Thus, the use of questionnaire surveys alone contradicts the concept of BAK (Woods, 1996), as questionnaire data represents teachers' beliefs as stable and separate entities (Woods, 2006). However, the main purpose of this study is to describe teachers' beliefs about typical learners at Japanese

universities, and there do not seem to be any issues with the use of a questionnaire survey as a first step in pursuit of this purpose. The questionnaire will be revised to be used in the final survey, on the basis of the findings from this pilot; I also plan to conduct follow-up interviews with a selected number of respondents after the final survey.

The questions in the pilot survey were prepared based on items in Horwitz (1987, 1988) and Sakui and Gaies (1999). The questionnaires used in these studies were originally aimed to explore learners' beliefs; questions that I found irrelevant to teachers' beliefs were excluded from my survey—that is, questions that would have elicited teachers' beliefs about language learning, and not about their students (the goal of the study), or where their students' views would have been difficult to ascertain. Examples of questions not adopted include the following, from Horwitz (1987, 1988):

- If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?: 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.
- It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one: 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) disagree, and 5) strongly disagree.
- The language I am trying to learn is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficulty language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language.

Moreover, certain questions were modified to suit the objective of this survey. For instance, one question ("It is easier to speak than [to] understand a foreign language")

compared certain language skills. This sentence was replaced by new sentences in which the different skills were treated on their own terms: “[In a typical class the teacher teaches, the teacher’s own] Students are good at listening to English,” “Students are good at speaking in English,” “Students are good at reading in English,” “Students are good at writing in English,” “Students’ English pronunciation is good,” and “Students have good grammatical knowledge of English.” The survey was prepared in English and in Japanese. The questions on earlier drafts were checked by two experts holding doctoral degrees in the fields of Language Education or Applied Linguistics, the first a native English speaker and the second a native Japanese speaker; each of them had over a decade of experience in teaching English at Japanese universities. The question items were finalized by the researcher (the author) based on the two experts’ suggestions.

The survey was implemented on-line using SurveyMonkey (<https://jp.surveymonkey.com/>); the responses were collected over about a month, from mid-December 2013 to mid-January 2014. Since this was a pilot study, the survey was distributed only among a small number of teachers. All the teachers approached—11 ETs and 18 JTs of English as a foreign language—were teaching in one English program at one private university in Japan. Six ETs and 11 JTs responded to the survey, a return rate of 58.6%; all the teachers responded to the version in their native language. The English version is presented at the end of this paper as Appendix.

For the survey, the respondents were asked to choose one typical university English class they had taught or were

teaching as a reference case for answers regarding their beliefs about typical Japanese students. Most of the teachers approached had taught or were teaching at other universities as well. In the ET group, two chose a class in the English program mentioned above, and the rest chose a class at a different university. In the JTs’ group, four chose a class in this English program, two a class at a different university, and the rest did not specify.

5. Results and implications of the pilot survey

The data was collected from a relatively small group of teachers, and therefore it is not possible to generalize the results to a larger teacher population. The findings, however, have provided meaningful suggestions for a larger-scale study, which will take place as a next step.

First, the pilot study revealed five potential differences between the beliefs of ETs and those of JTs:

- 1) The tendency was stronger among ETs than JTs to believe that students do not “find a reason in learning English,” meaning that students do not feel that there is a good reason to learn English.
- 2) The tendency was stronger among *JTs to believe that students feel embarrassed to speak in English in class.
- 3) ETs were much more generous in their judgment of their students’ pronunciation and grammar knowledge.
- 4) Most JTs agreed that students prefer a class format in which they have frequent chances to initiate activities, while most of the ETs disagreed.
- 5) Most ETs agreed that students prefer a class format in which the teacher

* Erratum: “JTs” should be “ETs.”

mostly explains the material, while JTs disagreed.

On the first point, only three out of 11 JTs somewhat disagreed; the rest agreed or somewhat agreed that students have reasons to learn English, while four (two somewhat) out of six ETs disagreed with it (See Appendix, Part II, Q6; the numbers of question items hereafter refer to the numbers in Part II unless specified. Also, see Table 2). The ETs' disagreement may be due to the wording used in the English version: "Students find a reason in learning English." The equivalent in the Japanese version was "gakusei ha eigo gakushu ni imi wo miidashite iru [学生は英語学習に意味を見出している]," and a clearer English translation would have been "Students have good reasons to learn English," or "Students find it meaningful to learn English."

On the other hand, the question of reasons is also taken up in Q41 (Table 3): "Why do you think students learn English?" to which multiple responses were possible. Differences were notable in the participants' response: most JTs—nine out of 11—chose "Because they think it will be useful if they can use English," while only one ET did so. JTs generally might share the belief that a vague yearning prevails among Japanese students to be able to use English, and this belief may be reflected in four JTs' choice of "Because they want to be able to use English"; only one ET chose this response. Perhaps, JTs have a stronger tendency to believe in this ephemeral wish (Suzuki, 1999) on the part of students, whereas, ETs tend to focus on students' concrete objectives for their English learning, and as a result cannot perceive such nuances in their students' attitudes.

However, the majority of both ETs and

JTs (five out of six, and six out of eleven) chose "Because they think English is necessary for job hunting" (Table 3). This motivation can be regarded as a concrete objective, but ETs might not have been convinced enough that it is actually present as a motivation for it to alter their answers regarding whether students have a reason to learn English (or it may simply be due to the problem in the translation as was mentioned above) (Q6, Table 2). The proportion of JTs choosing this seemingly concrete objective is not as high as that of ETs, suggesting the possibility that JTs tend to believe that students are motivated to study English by insubstantial yearnings rather than clear objectives.

The second point is supported by the results for the questions regarding the use of English in class (Table 2): Q9. "Students feel embarrassed about speaking English in front of other students"; Q10. "Students feel embarrassed about doing activities using English with other classmates"; and Q11. "Students feel embarrassed about speaking English with their teacher (i.e., the survey respondent)." Four, five, and five JTs respectively disagreed or somewhat disagreed with these respective statements while no ETs disagreed with Q9 and only one somewhat disagreed with Q10 and Q11 respectively.

Q13 to Q18 (Table 2) relate to students' skills and abilities in different areas of their English language competence (e.g., Q13. "Students are good at listening in English," Q14. "Students are good at speaking in English"). All 11 JTs disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement "Students' English pronunciation is good" (Q17), while only two out of six ETs did so. Six JTs (two somewhat) disagreed that "Students have

good grammatical knowledge of English" (Q18), while only two ETs disagreed or somewhat disagreed with it. These differences may be related to the kinds of skills these

teachers focus on in their respective classes and perhaps also to students' attitudes toward their performance in the respective classes.

Table 2. Question responses indicating differences between ETs' and JTs' beliefs

Questions	No. of responses				
	ETs (n=6)				
	JTs (n=11)				
	A	B	C	D	NA
Q6. Students <u>find a reason in learning</u> [have good reasons to learn] English.	2 0	2 3	2 5	0 3	0 0
Q9. Students feel embarrassed about speaking English in front of other students.	0 1	0 3	4 3	2 4	0 0
Q10. Students feel embarrassed about doing activities using English with other classmates.	0 1	1 4	4 3	1 3	0 0
Q11. Students feel embarrassed about speaking English with their teacher (you).	0 3	1 2	4 3	1 3	0 0
Q13. Students are good at listening in English.	1 2	2 6	3 1	0 1	0 1
Q14. Students are good at speaking in English.	3 5	2 3	1 3	0 0	0 0
Q15. Students are good at reading in English.	0 2	1 3	3 6	2 0	0 0
Q16. Students are good at writing in English.	2 6	2 4	2 1	0 0	0 0
Q17. Students' English pronunciation is good.	1 2	1 9	3 0	1 0	0 0
Q18. Students have good grammatical knowledge of English.	1 4	1 2	3 4	1 1	0 0
Q21. Students like <u>the</u> [a] class format in which they can initiate activities.	2 1	2 1	1 7	0 1	1 1
Q22. Students like <u>the</u> [a] class format in which the teacher gives explanations.	0 0	1 4	1 4	4 1	0 2

Notes. 1) A=I disagree; B=I somewhat disagree; C=I somewhat agree; D=I agree; NA=I don't know or no response. 2) The original wording on the questionnaire is used in this table, but clarifications are provided in the brackets for the parts of the statements underlined with dotted lines.

The fourth and fifth points are related to the class format. The responses to Q21, “Students like the class format in which they can initiate activities” and Q22, “Students like the class format in which the teacher gives explanations” provided

intriguing results (Table 2), although the word choices in the English translation may have caused confusion among ETs; “the class format” in these sentences should have been “a class format.” For Q21, only two out of eleven JTs, but four out of six ETs

Table 3. Responses to Q41 “Why do you think students learn English?” (N=17)

Response choices	No. of responses	
	ETs (n=6)	JTs (n=11)
Because they like English.	1	0
Because they are interested in [the] cultures <u>in</u> [of] English-speaking countries.	1	0
Because they need credits for [the] class to graduate from university.	3	10
Because they want to be able to use English.	1	4
Because they think English is useful to communicate with overseas countries.	1	1
Because they think English is useful to interact with English-speaking people.	2	1
Because they think English is necessary for job hunting.	5	6
Because they think it will be useful if they can use English.	1	9
Other: Because they already have experience in learning English.*	0	1
Other: [Because it is] mandatory [.]	1	0

Notes. 1) The original wording on the questionnaire is used in this table, but clarifications and corrections are provided in the brackets. 2) The sentence with an asterisk (*) was originally written in Japanese and was translated into English by the author.

Table 4. Responses to Q42 “What kinds of learning activities in particular do you think students should do?” (up to two choices)

	L	S	R	W	P	G	V	Other
ETs (n=6)	2	5	2	0	1	0	1	0
JTs (n=11)	3	5	3	2	2	3	2	0

Note. L=listening, S=speaking, R=reading, W=writing, P=pronunciation, G=grammar, V=vocabulary.

disagreed or somewhat disagreed. For Q22, four JTs somewhat disagreed and five (one somewhat) agreed. These figures may imply that students are relatively passive in classes run by ETs.

ETs and JTs also shared some similar beliefs, both positive and negative, about Japanese university students of English. The open responses to Q10 in Part I (impressions of students' personalities and attitudes toward learning English) ranged from "good," "cheerful," "hard-working," and "intelligent," to "shy," "not confident," "not interested in learning" "disillusioned," "lazy," "lethargic," and "apathetic." Moreover, teachers in both groups identified particular skills or areas of language competence that they felt students most needed to focus on (Question # 42). "Speaking" was chosen by the majority of ETs (five out of six), and by a plurality of JTs (five out of 11) (Table 4).

6. Conclusion

Despite its small scale, this pilot study has provided interesting implications, indicating a few possible differences between ETs' and JTs' beliefs about learners of English at Japanese universities. A new questionnaire for a larger-scale study will be developed based on these preliminary findings, with the intention of exploring these differences further. The pilot study findings indicated that the English translation of the Japanese questionnaire items needed more accuracy. This problem will need to be addressed prior to future implementation of the new questionnaire. In addition, elements of individual teachers' backgrounds, such as their research interests and their years of teaching experience have to be taken into account in analyzing the data.

A review of previous studies suggests

that while teachers' beliefs influence what they do in class, what they (can) do also influences the formation of teachers' beliefs. Physical constraints (e.g., class size, availability of materials), and cognitive restrictions (e.g., interpretations of the institutional guidelines, expectations from and about students and colleagues), help determine what teachers do in their classes and also help teachers modify their old beliefs and develop new beliefs; in other words, relationships between teachers' beliefs and contexts are intertwined. It is possible that ETs and JTs are assigned different roles in English learning programs, and such different roles contribute to the differences in beliefs held by these two groups of teachers. In revising the pilot questions for a larger-scale questionnaire, I intend to include questions about what kinds of courses or skills ETs and JTs are respectively asked to teach at universities in Japan.

ETs and JTs shared similar impressions of what typical Japanese students are like, but their interpretations of students' attitudes (i.e., motivations and preferences with regard to class format or activities) were very different in the pilot study. If such differences between ETs and JTs really exist, the factors that cause them should be explored. This will be one of the main issues I will take up in future research.

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Appendix: Survey on Japanese University English Teacher Beliefs (English version)
The cover message and general instructions have been omitted from this appendix.

Part I

1. Are you currently teaching English to 1st and/or 2nd year students of non-English majors at university in Japan (English majors include English literature, English linguistics, and English communication majors.). Or have you done so in the past two years?

* If your answer to Question Item No.1 is "Yes," please answer the following questions.

2. What is your first language (mother tongue)?

English/Japanese/Other (language name)

3. Which country are you from?

Australia/Canada/Ireland/Japan/United Kingdom/United States of America/New Zealand/Other (country name)

4. What is your expertise?

Linguistics/Applied Linguistics/English Education or TESOL/English Literature /Other (study area name)

5. How long is your English teaching experience at university (universities) in Japan?

Less than 1 year/1 year or longer but shorter than 3 years/3 years or longer but shorter than 6 years /6 to 10 years/11 to 15 years/16 to 20 years/21 to 25 years /26 to 30 years/31 years or longer

6. If you have other teaching experience, please specify the level, content, length, and place. (e.g., Taught ESL to immigrant and international students at a high school in the US for two years., Taught English at a junior high school in Japan for five years., etc.)

<<< For the question items below, please choose one typical class that you have taught or are currently teaching for

Japanese university first or second year students (non-English majors) and respond with what you think of typical students in that particular class. >>>

7. Which university are you teaching that class? If you are willing to share the information, please write the name of the university. (e.g., Nihon University)
8. What faculty are your students in that class belong to? If you are willing to share the information, please write the name of the faculty. (e.g., Faculty of Science Engineering)
9. Please write the name of the class if you do not mind it, and/or write briefly what the class is about. (e.g., "English A" Promoting integrated skills, a required class for first year students.)
10. What kinds of impressions do you have about the students' personalities and their attitudes toward learning English in that particular class? Please write a few words such as adjectives to describe them. If you think it is difficult to describe only with adjectives, you can explain in a few sentences.

Part II

For the questions in this part, please respond with your impression about typical students in that particular class you chose in Part I.

Note. Response choices to questions 1~40 were: I disagree. / I somewhat disagree. I somewhat agree. / I agree. / I don't know.

1. Students do in-class activities actively.
2. Students do in-class activities diligently.
3. Students take their home assignments seriously.
4. Students are interested in improving their own English learning methods.
5. Students try to make more opportunities

- for learning English outside the class.
6. Students find a reason in learning English.
 7. Students plan their English learning.
 8. Students are interested in improving their English abilities.
 9. Students feel embarrassed about speaking English in front of other students.
 10. Students feel embarrassed about doing activities using English with other classmates.
 11. Students feel embarrassed about speaking English with their teacher (you).
 12. Students are good at learning foreign languages.
 13. Students are good at listening in English.
 14. Students are good at speaking in English.
 15. Students are good at reading in English.
 16. Students are good at writing in English.
 17. Students' English pronunciation is good.
 18. Students have good grammatical knowledge of English.
 19. Students think that English classes should be fun.
 20. Students think that English classes should be serious.
 21. Students like the class format in which they can initiate activities.
 22. Students like the class format in which the teacher gives explanations.
 23. Students want to learn English from English native speaker teachers rather than from Japanese native speaker teachers.
 24. Students want to do listening activities in their English classes at university.
 25. Students want to do speaking activities in their English classes at university.
 26. Students want to do reading activities in their English classes at university.
 27. Students want to do writing activities in their English classes at university.
 28. Students want to do pronunciation improvement activities in their English classes at university.
 29. Students want to do activities to improve their grammatical knowledge in their English classes at university.
 30. Students want Japanese translation to be utilized in their English classes at university.
 31. Students want teachers to use Japanese whenever possible in their English classes at university.
 32. Students want teachers to use English whenever possible in their English classes at university.
 33. Students are interested in the content, method, or format of their English classes at university.
 34. Students should be given a chance to learn a language other than English.
 35. Students should spend more time learning in their study field rather than learning a language.
 36. Students should learn English rather than other foreign languages.
 37. Students should live in a country where English is spoken in order to be able to use English.
 38. Students should learn about English speaking countries and regions in order to be able to use English.
 39. Students should practice translating from English to Japanese in learning English.
 40. Students should practice translating from Japanese to English in learning English.
 41. Why do you think students learn English? Choose one, two, or three reasons.
Because they like English.
Because they are interested in cultures

in English-speaking countries.

Because they need credits for class to graduate from university.

Because they want to be able to use English.

Because they think English is useful to communicate with overseas countries.

Because they think English is useful to interact with English-speaking people.

Because they think English is necessary for job hunting.

Because they think it will be useful if they can use English.

Other (Please specify)

42. Which skill or ability do you think students should improve most? If you are asked to choose only one skill/ability or two to focus on, which one(s) would you choose?

Listening / Speaking / Reading / Writing / Pronunciation / Grammar / Vocabulary / Other (Please specify)

43. Please explain your reasons why you think the skill(s)/ ability(ties) you answered in Question #42 should especially be improved.
44. What kinds of learning activities in particular do you think students should do for their English learning? Why do you think so? Please explain if there is anything you would like to add to your previous responses above.
45. Please feel free to write any comment about this survey.

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