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On Goals of Language Education and Teacher Diversity: Beliefs and Experiences of Japanese-Language Educators in North America

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1. Introduction

The current article reports the results of an online survey on Japanese-language educators' beliefs and experiences concerning their profession. This survey was developed as part of the preparation for a roundtable discussion on diversity, inclusion, and professionalism in Japanese language education, proposed by the authors of this article, sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), and held at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in March 2019. The aim of the roundtable was to foster candid and constructive discussion on the topic involving four invited panelists with diverse academic and ethnic backgrounds (Mahua Bhattacharya, Kimberly Jones, Ryuko Kubota, and Suwako Watanabe), as well as the audience participants. In order to facilitate this discussion, we considered it essential to present some concrete information relevant to the topic as a point of departure. Thus, the purpose of the survey was to solicit Japanese-language educators' perspectives on the Japanese language and culture and its teaching, as well as issues concerning diversity and inclusion seen in our professional community. We also thought that the survey could provide space for interested members and potential members, who might not be able to attend the roundtable session, to share their views and concerns.

As mentioned in the introduction to this special section, several recent developments point to the significance of the topic and the timeliness of conducting this sort of survey. Diversity and inclusion have become a major concern in academic and professional institutions in recent years. It is believed that creative solutions to challenging problems are better engendered by groups of people with diverse backgrounds and views



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(Page 2007), and as educators, we are responsible for creating environments where a diverse population of students can communicate beyond differences and learn from each other. In addition, world language educators are uniquely positioned to make important contributions for the enhancement of students' competence "to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding" (ACTFL 2015) and ability to grasp and mediate "differences in meaning, mentality, and worldview as expressed in American English and in the target language" (MLA 2007: 238). While these educational missions appear to be widely recognized, in our opinion, we, as a professional community of Japanese-language educators, have not sufficiently examined how we are modeling these goals set for our students, or whether a culture of diversity and inclusion has been fostered and practiced within our professional community. In the meantime, the results of the 2015 Japan Foundation survey on Japanese language education abroad (Japan Foundation 2017a) indicated a disproportionately high percentage of "native-speaking" Japanese-language teachers as well as a recent decline and shortage of Japanese-language teachers in North America. These results also add a sense of urgency for critical self-assessment.

While language proficiency has long been considered an essential component of subject knowledge required of world language teachers, globalization and information technology have drastically changed how languages are used in contemporary society, and accordingly conventional approaches to classroom instruction have been reevaluated in recent years (Douglas Fir Group 2016, Kramsch 2014). Kramsch (2014), for instance, states, "In the last decades, [that] world has changed to such an extent that language teachers are no longer sure of what they are supposed to teach nor what real world situations they are supposed to prepare their students for" (296). The knowledge, skills, and qualifications expected of language educators must also be reconsidered under the circumstance. While this search of elements that define the profession continues, a growing number of applied linguistic studies have also examined how language teacher identities interact with macro-level ideologies, such as native-speakerism or heteronormativity, as well as how teacher identities constitute a crucial component in shaping sociocultural and sociopolitical dynamics in the language classroom (e. g., Braine 2010; De Costa and Norton 2017; Kubota and Lin 2009; Nelson 1993, 2009; Varghese et al. 2005; Varghese et al. 2016).

Although the number is still small, some studies have examined how non-native speaking Japanese-language teachers have worked through their identities as second language learners, users, and teachers of Japanese in Australia (Armour 2004), or in Hong Kong (Nomura and Mochizuki 2018). The increasing diversity of student populations observed in the Japanese language classroom has also been a topic of several recent studies (e. g., Moore 2019; Mori and Takeuchi 2016). As far as we know, however, there has not been any extensive investigation comparable to the current one that looks directly into Japanese-language educators' beliefs and experiences regarding diversity, inclusion, and professionalism. As detailed below, we received more than 350 responses from the target population in North America. The number of responses, we believe, also indicates the level of interest in this topic.

In the following, we will first discuss the survey design, the methods of distribution and recruitment, and the demographics of survey respondents (Section 2). Subsequently, the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses will be introduced (Section 3). We conducted the analyses with the following questions in mind:

1. Do the survey participants share common views on the Japanese language and culture and its teaching? Are there any significant differences among subgroups defined by their demographic profile?
2. Do the survey participants consider that the Japanese language educator community in North America is a diverse one? If not, in what respects do they think it is lacking in diversity?
3. What do the survey participants consider to be contributing factors for the limited diversity of the Japanese language educator community?
4. How does the lack of diversity manifest itself in the field of Japanese language education? What kinds of discrimination or bias have the survey participants experienced or observed?

Finally, Section 4 offers our concluding remarks, including the limitations of the current survey and future activities that we hope will be prompted by this article.

2. The Survey

2.1. Survey Design

In order to investigate the perspectives of Japanese-language educators in North America, we developed an online survey comprising the following four parts:

- I. Demographic information
- II. Beliefs about Japanese language and culture
- III. Beliefs about teacher qualifications
- IV. Perspectives/experiences about teacher diversity

Part I asked respondents' personal attributes, such as gender and first language (L1), as well as their educational and professional backgrounds, including the highest degree earned, type of affiliated institution, and years of teaching experience. We included these items as independent variables for subsequent statistical analysis.

Part II delved into teachers' attitudes toward language and culture, which presumably underlie their day-to-day teaching practice. With these items, we hoped to identify the goals and values that teachers hold for Japanese language education. When designing this section, we referred to the trial version of *The Global Englishes Orientation Questionnaire (GEO-Q)*, developed by Rose, Funada, and Briggs (2018), which contained fifty-seven statements on English language learners' attitudes toward global Englishes. As shown below, the themes covered in the GEO-Q are pertinent to the discussion of diversity and inclusion. GEO-Q's emphasis on these issues is the primary reason for our decision to base our questionnaire on it. We changed the wording of the original questionnaire to suit our context (i. e., Japanese-language teachers) and serve the current purpose (i. e., diversity, inclusion, and professionalism). We also decided to cut down the number of items in order to make the survey manageable for respondents. To this end, we first identified seven broad themes covered in the GEO-Q. Then, we selected (or created) two statements to fall into each category, which led us to have a total of fourteen statements. The themes and the statements are listed below.

a. Attitudes toward Japanese varieties

- #1. A good Japanese teacher provides opportunities for learners to learn about different varieties of Japanese (dialects, etc.).
- #2. Awareness of different varieties of Japanese (dialects, etc.) will enable students to learn about a greater range of Japanese speakers.

b. Attitudes toward standard Japanese

- #3. Standard Japanese is more correct than other varieties of Japanese, including regional dialects.
- #4. Good Japanese language instruction focuses on preparing students to use standard Japanese.

c. Attitudes toward native speakers of Japanese

- #5. The true owners of Japanese are anyone who uses Japanese.
- #6. When I think of a Japanese speaker, I imagine a speaker from Japan.

d. Attitudes toward accuracy (grammar, intonation, etc.)

- #7. Only grammatically correct Japanese should be taught in Japanese language classes.
- #8. One of the goals of learning the Japanese language is to speak with a native-like accent.

e. Attitudes toward Japanese culture

- #9. Good Japanese teachers help students appreciate unique aspects of Japanese culture in their teaching.
- #10. In order to be accepted by Japanese society, students have to understand the language and culture.

f. Attitudes toward goals of Japanese learning

- #11. I would like my students to use Japanese in a multilingual community.
- #12. Learning Japanese will help my students develop flexibility and sensitivity towards cultures / societies with which they are not familiar.

g. Attitudes toward Japanese-language teachers

- #13. Being a native speaker is not an important characteristic of a good Japanese teacher.
- #14. The role of the teacher is to help students develop native-like proficiency.

As a project aiming to bring the issues of diversity and inclusion into focus, we fully acknowledge the controversial nature of expressions used in the survey, such as “native speakers,” “native-like proficiency,” and “the true owners of Japanese.” We nonetheless decided to include them because these terms and statements are something that can be observed in mundane discourse in our profession and we hoped to evoke the survey participants’ reactions to such ideas. Respondents were instructed to indicate their beliefs with each statement with a 6-point sliding scale.¹ With the statistical analysis, we aimed to elucidate the overall patterns of beliefs held by Japanese-language educators in North America.

Part III gathered information about the survey participants’ perspectives on teacher qualifications, which relate to professionalism as espoused in our community. We asked respondents to select the five most important criteria that they would consider when hiring a new teacher in their programs. We initially planned to run statistical tests and examine

patterns of teacher beliefs according to their demographic backgrounds. However, after consulting the statisticians, we learned that there was no valid analysis available because of the relatively small number of response counts that fall into each rank, and therefore, we did not include the results of this section in this report.²

Part IV, on the other hand, is devoted to open-ended comments, through which we hoped to get at teachers' perceptions on diversity and inclusion, as well as specific episodes that bring to light particularities of individual situations and experiences. The following were posed:

1. Do you believe the Japanese language educator community in North America is a diverse one? If not, in what respects is it lacking in diversity?
2. What factors do you think contribute to limit the diversity of the Japanese language teaching community?
3. What are the consequences of a lack of diversity? Please describe any episode(s) you have observed or experienced below, including any attitudes, utterances, or actions that may point to bias.

The survey participants were instructed to write their answers either in Japanese or English for this part of the survey.

By gathering both quantitative and qualitative information, we hoped to understand general tendencies concerning the survey participants' views on the Japanese language, culture, and its teaching and possible gaps among subgroups, as well as more nuanced narratives and specific instances experienced by the participants. As shown below, the statistical information generated by Part II was used to address the first question posited in the introduction, whereas narrative responses to Part IV were qualitatively analyzed to respond to the remaining three questions. Finally, it should be kept in mind that this questionnaire was intended to gather real and unheard voices of our community in order to facilitate a constructive discussion. We did not conduct any pilot study to refine the instruments used in this survey, a typical protocol for conducting a survey-based research study. Thus, the results below should be read as a summary report of the membership survey rather than the findings of a research study.

2.2. Distribution and Recruitment

The survey was administered in the fall of 2018, using the Qualtrics survey software. We sent invitations to participate in the survey to the email

listservs of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), the Canadian Association for Japanese Language Education (CAJLE), and SenseiOnline (an online community for those interested in Japanese language/culture education). Although AATJ and CAJLE are the major professional organizations that serve Japanese-language educators in North America, and SenseiOnline is an extensive online community with many subscribers, we realize that the members that can be reached through these channels might not necessarily exhaust individuals who are engaged in Japanese language education in various ways.

2.3. Demographics of Survey Respondents

A total of 392 respondents were recorded in the Qualtrics survey database. Out of these responses, we excluded from our count those who did not go beyond Part I (demographic information) and those living outside of North America. As a result, 355 remained as valid respondents. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the respondents by gender. As shown here, nearly 80% of the respondents were female whereas only 17% were male respondents. One may see this imbalance as a skewed representation of population, but this disproportionate gender balance indeed corresponds with the survey participants' perceptions concerning the gender imbalance in the field, which will be discussed in Section 3.2.

Table 1. Respondents by Gender

Gender	<i>n</i> = 355	100%
Female	281	79.2%
Male	59	16.6%
Prefer not to say	15	4.2%

Table 2 shows the breakdown of the respondents by their first languages (L1). Out of the 355 respondents, 261 (73.5%) indicated their L1 as Japanese. The number roughly corresponds to the one reported by the Japan Foundation (2017a) and also parallels the survey participants' perception concerning the predominance of L1 Japanese teachers in the community, to be discussed in Section 3.2. Approximately 24% of the respondents were L1 speakers of English. Other languages mentioned include German, Polish, Spanish, and Korean, while some people wrote that they speak multiple L1s.

Table 2. Respondents by L1

L1 language	<i>n</i> = 355	100%
Japanese	261	73.5%
English	84	23.7%
Other	10	2.8%

Table 3 shows the respondents' highest degrees earned. Master's degree holders make up the majority (63.4%), followed by doctorate degree (25.1%) and bachelor's degree (9.8%). Others—although only 10 people—wrote associate degree, post-bachelor (including certificate), or post-master.

Table 3. Respondents by Highest Degree Earned

Highest degree earned	<i>n</i> = 355	100%
Master's	225	63.4%
Doctorate	89	25.1%
Bachelor's	35	9.8%
Other	6	1.7%

Table 4 below presents the breakdown of the respondents by types of institution at which they were teaching. We divided the institution type as 4-year higher education institutions (e. g., university, liberal arts college), 2-year higher education institutions (e. g., community college, vocational college), K–12 institutions (e. g., kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school), and others. 54.1% of the respondents were teaching at 4-year higher education institutions, constituting the majority, followed by K–12 institutions (34.1%) and 2-year higher education institutions (5.6%). Others included weekend school, adult education, and so forth.

Table 4. Respondents by Institution Type

Institution type	<i>n</i> = 355	100%
Four year	192	54.1%
K–12	121	34.1%
Two year	20	5.6%
Other	22	6.2%

Table 5 shows the respondents' teaching experience, divided into 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years, and more than 20 years. The group with the longest experience (i. e., more than 20 years) was found to be the majority, making up almost one third of our respondents. The mid-range career groups (i. e., 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years) each comprise similar proportions (i. e., 16.6–20.0%). Teachers with 1–5 years of experience constitute the smallest group. As will be discussed in Section 3.2, this distribution also corresponds with some of the survey participants' perception that the field is dominated by the older generation of teachers.

Table 5. Respondents by Teaching Experience

Experience	<i>n</i> = 355	100%
More than 20	113	31.8%
10–15 years	71	20.0%
6–10 years	64	18.0%
16–20 years	59	16.6%
1–5 years	42	11.8%
No answer	6	1.7%

These demographic profiles were set as independent variables for the statistical analysis to be discussed in Section 3.1. Not all of the 355 survey participants, however, answered the open-ended questions in Part IV, as will be discussed in the later sections.

3. The Analysis and Results

3.1. Teacher Beliefs on Goals of Japanese Language Education

This section addresses the first questions presented in the introduction by summarizing the results of Part II of the questionnaire in which we asked

about teachers' attitudes toward Japanese language and culture as they relate to day-to-day teaching practice. In addition to the examination of overall response patterns, we ran a series of statistical tests to identify if there are any differences in perception according to respondents' demographic profiles. As explained above, the following five variables were included as independent variables.

- a. Gender (2 levels: male, female)
- b. L1³ (2 levels: L1 Japanese, L2 Japanese)
- c. Institution type (2 levels: K–12, college)
- d. Degree (3 levels: bachelor's, master's, doctorate)
- e. Teaching experience (3 levels: 1–10 years, 11–20 years, more than 20 years)

For the two-level variables (i. e., gender, L1, institution type), we used the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which allows for comparing two related samples with non-parametric data. For the three-level variables (i. e., degree, teaching experience), we ran the Kruskal-Wallis test, which can deal with more than two groups. The p value was set at 0.01 for all the statistical tests.

In order to give an overview of response patterns, agreement rates for each of the fourteen statements—calculated as the sum of the percentage of respondents who chose “strongly agree,” “agree,” or “somewhat agree”—are presented in Table 6. The number denoted by # corresponds with the statement number introduced in Section 2.1, but the statements are reorganized in descending order from the highest agreement rate to the lowest. The asterisks on the leftmost column indicate the items that yielded statistical significance with certain variables.

A cursory examination of the items ranked high in the table brings up an interesting observation. For example, the most-agreed statement (#12) and the item ranked third (#11) were both statements included in the category of *Goals of Japanese Learning*. Presumably, these statements are aligned with the recent debate on the goals of language education, such as global competence (ACTFL 2015) and translingual/transcultural competence (MLA 2007). Judging from the close-to-unanimous agreement rates (with 99.7% and 94.9%, respectively) and the absence of statistical difference for these statements, we can confidently assume that these goals are widely shared and accepted among Japanese-language educators.

Table 6. Agreement Rate for Part II

Signifi- cance	Statement Item	Agreement Rate
	#12. Learning Japanese will help my students develop flexibility and sensitivity towards cultures/societies with which they are not familiar.	99.7%
*	#2. Awareness of different varieties of Japanese (dialects, etc.) will enable students to learn about a greater range of Japanese speakers.	96.2%
	#11. I would like my students to use Japanese in a multilingual community.	94.9%
*	#9. Good Japanese teachers help students appreciate unique aspects of Japanese culture in their teaching.	94.3%
*	#13. Being a native speaker is not an important characteristic of a good Japanese teacher.	90.7%
	#10. In order to be accepted by Japanese society, students have to understand the language and culture.	89.2%
	#1. A good Japanese teacher provides opportunities for learners to learn about different varieties of Japanese (dialects, etc.).	88.8%
	#5. The true owners of Japanese are anyone who uses Japanese.	81.0%
*	#4. Good Japanese language instruction focuses on preparing students to use standard Japanese.	75.7%
	#6. When I think of a Japanese speaker, I imagine a speaker from Japan.	72.6%
	#14. The role of the teacher is to help students develop native-like proficiency.	62.7%
*	#8. One of the goals of learning the Japanese language is to speak with a native-like accent.	59.1%
	#7. Only grammatically correct Japanese should be taught in Japanese language classes.	50.8%
*	#3. Standard Japanese is more correct than other varieties of Japanese, including regional dialects.	29.3%

In contrast, other items that are ranked high in the table (i. e., over 90% agreement rate) yielded statistically significant differences among subgroups of respondents. For example, #2 (96.2%), which was concerned with *Japanese Varieties*, #9 (94.3%) with *Japanese Culture.*, #13 (90.7%) with *Japanese-Language Teacher*, were all found to be statistically significant. This means that there was a systematic interaction between certain demographic variables of the respondents and the ways they responded to these items. Given that these statements achieved high agreement rates (more than 90%), it is particularly significant to see how certain subgroups of teachers responded differently. This issue will be further explained with the results of the statistical analysis.

Correspondingly, the items ranked low in the table also show an intriguing pattern. The four least-agreed items (#14, #8, #7, #3) all concern the correctness of language to be taught in class. More precisely, these statements point to the profound value attached to standard Japanese, correct grammar, and native-like proficiency as the legitimate goal of Japanese language instruction. Considering that the respondents agreed less (which also means they disagreed) with these items overall, we can infer some awareness of the controversial nature of monolingual, native-speakerism ideology embedded in these statements (Lowe and Pinner 2016). However, given that these statements were not unanimously declined, either, there might be some discrepancies among the teachers on this issue.

In order to examine where such discrepancies exist, we present below the results of the statistical tests we ran for these items. Of the fourteen statements asked in Part II, six generated statistically significant difference with one or more of the independent variables measured. Table 7 summarizes the distribution of statistical significance ($p \leq 0.01$) found across different independent variables (i. e., demographic backgrounds) and the theme categories.

As evident, only certain theme categories and demographic backgrounds were responsible for the statistically significant differences. With regard to the independent variables, for example, L1, institution type, and highest degree affected the response patterns, but the other variables, namely, gender and teaching experience, did not. Likewise, only certain themes—namely, *Japanese Varieties*, *Standard Japanese*, *Accuracy*, *Japanese Culture*, and *Japanese-Language Teachers*—were affected by these independent variables. In what follows below, we discuss the instances that are particularly noteworthy in relation to our current

discussion on Japanese-language educators' beliefs on the goals of Japanese language education.

Table 7. Distribution of Statistical Significance for Part II

Themes	Gender	L1	Institution type	Highest degree	Experience
Japanese Varieties			#2		
Standard Japanese		#4	#3, #4	#3, #4	
Native Speakers of Japanese					
Accuracy		#8	#8	#8	
Japanese Culture		#9	#9	#9	
Goals of Japanese Learning					
Japanese-Language Teachers		#13			

Attitudes toward Standard Japanese

The two statements included in this category are both concerned with the legitimacy of setting standard Japanese as the primary target of Japanese language instruction and yielded significant difference with similar variables, including L1, institution type, and highest degree. Tables 8–10 show the distribution of responses for #4 (Good Japanese language instruction focuses on preparing students to use standard Japanese) with these variables. In order to highlight the differences between the groups, the cells with top three highest percentages in each group are shaded.

Table 8. Distribution of Responses for Statement #4 by L1

Response	L2 Japanese	L1 Japanese
Strongly agree	13 (15.5%)	14 (6.2%)
Agree	36 (42.9%)	50 (22.2%)
Somewhat agree	28 (33.3%)	93 (41.3%)
Somewhat disagree	4 (4.8%)	33 (14.7%)
Disagree	2 (2.4%)	24 (10.7%)
Strongly disagree	1 (1.2%)	11 (4.9%)

Table 9. Distribution of Responses for Statement #4 by Institution Type

Response	K-12	College
Strongly agree	18 (16.7%)	6 (3.3%)
Agree	31 (28.7%)	48 (26.2%)
Somewhat agree	39 (36.1%)	79 (43.2%)
Somewhat disagree	10 (9.3%)	24 (13.1%)
Disagree	8 (7.4%)	17 (9.3%)
Strongly disagree	2 (1.9%)	9 (4.9%)

Table 10. Distribution of Responses for Statement #4 by Highest Degree Earned

Response	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
Strongly agree	9 (29.0%)	15 (7.5%)	3 (4.1%)
Agree	10 (32.3%)	55 (27.5%)	20 (27.0%)
Somewhat agree	8 (25.8%)	84 (42.0%)	28 (37.8%)
Somewhat disagree	2 (6.5%)	25 (12.5%)	8 (10.8%)
Disagree	1 (3.2%)	13 (6.5%)	12 (16.2%)
Strongly disagree	1 (3.2%)	8 (4.0%)	3 (4.1%)

The overall trend observable here is that L2 Japanese teachers, K-12 teachers, and teachers with a bachelor's degree are more inclined to agree with the idea of emphasizing standard Japanese in class. Noticeably fewer teachers in these groups indicated disagreement, as compared with the teachers in the other groups (i. e., Japanese, college, master's, doctorate). As for the highest degree variable, the higher the degree, the more inclination for disagreement is observed. In fact, a similar pattern is observed with the other statement in this category (#3).⁴ K-12 teachers and teachers with a bachelor's degree have a stronger tendency to agree with the idea that standard Japanese is more correct while their counterparts are prone to show disagreement with this item. The discrepancy is generated particularly by those who hold a doctoral degree as they tend to disagree with this statement more than the other groups. Over 90% of them disagreed with the statement. Given that this item (#3) received a low agreement rate (29.3%), as compared with #4 (75.7%), the

teachers are generally aware of the controversial nature of this statement. As discussed above, an emphasis on standard Japanese is suggestive of the ideology on the legitimacy and illegitimacy of particular language variations to be considered as the goal of language education (Kramersch 2012). Such an ideology is also observed in the attitudes toward accuracy, which we explain below.

Attitudes toward Accuracy

Tables 11–13 show the results for statement #8. The same set of independent variables (i. e., L1, institution type, and highest degree) are found to be affecting the response patterns in similar ways as discussed above. More precisely, L2 Japanese teachers, K–12 teachers, and teachers with a bachelor’s degree tend to agree with the emphasis on a native-like accent as the goal of Japanese language instruction—more so than their counterparts with different characteristics. In the case of highest degree, the higher the degree one holds, the less inclined respondents are to agree.

Table 11. Distribution of Responses for Statement #8 by L1

Response	L2 Japanese	L1 Japanese
Strongly agree	11 (13.1%)	9 (3.9%)
Agree	28 (33.3%)	33 (14.4%)
Somewhat agree	29 (34.5%)	75 (32.8%)
Somewhat disagree	7 (8.3%)	41 (17.9%)
Disagree	6 (7.1%)	45 (19.7%)
Strongly disagree	3 (3.6%)	26 (11.4%)

Table 12. Distribution of Responses for Statement #8 by Institution Type

Response	K–12	College
Strongly agree	8 (7.4%)	9 (4.8%)
Agree	33 (30.6%)	23 (12.3%)
Somewhat agree	30 (27.8%)	69 (36.9%)
Somewhat disagree	16 (14.8%)	29 (15.5%)
Disagree	10 (9.3%)	40 (21.4%)
Strongly disagree	11 (10.2%)	17 (9.1%)

Table 13. Distribution of Responses for Statement #8 by Highest Degree Earned

Response	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
Strongly agree	7 (21.9%)	8 (3.9%)	5 (6.8%)
Agree	9 (28.1%)	45 (22.2%)	6 (8.1%)
Somewhat agree	6 (18.8%)	72 (35.5%)	24 (32.4%)
Somewhat disagree	4 (12.5%)	29 (14.3%)	15 (20.3%)
Disagree	5 (15.6%)	31 (15.3%)	15 (20.3%)
Strongly disagree	1 (3.1%)	18 (8.9%)	9 (12.2%)

59.1% of the respondents agreed with Statement #8 overall, which, by itself, shows a weak consensus among the Japanese-language educators on this item. The other statement in this category (#7) also shows a similar degree of disparity in teacher response (50.8%). Therefore, the teachers have varied perspectives on the importance of accuracy—be it accent or grammar—to be underscored in instruction. It is, then, remarkable to find the statistically significant gaps in the perspectives on native-like accent according to different subgroups of L1, institution type, and highest degree backgrounds. It should be emphasized that both items in the *Accuracy* category are explicitly indexing a reference with the native-speaker yardstick. This kind of belief is closely tied into how “native speaker” is conceptualized and venerated in language education, whether consciously or unconsciously, which we will discuss below.

Attitudes toward Japanese-Language Teachers

Statement #13 in this category generated a statistically significant difference. Again, although the majority agreed with this statement that emphasizes the insignificance of the native-speaker status as a qualification for Japanese-language teachers (90.7%), the extent to which it is agreed or disagreed with by each subgroup yielded a statistically significant difference as shown in Table 14. 61.9% of the L2 Japanese teachers strongly agreed with this statement, whereas only 34.1% of the L1 Japanese group did so. Correspondingly, more L1 Japanese teachers indicated disagreement overall (10.9%) than L2 Japanese teachers (4.8%).

Table 14. Distribution of Responses for Statement #13 by L1

Response	L2 Japanese	L1 Japanese
Strongly agree	52 (61.9%)	78 (34.1%)
Agree	20 (23.8%)	80 (34.9%)
Somewhat agree	8 (9.5%)	46 (20.1%)
Somewhat disagree	2 (2.4%)	17 (7.4%)
Disagree	0 (0%)	6 (2.6%)
Strongly disagree	2 (2.4%)	2 (0.9%)

The fact that L2 Japanese teachers are inclined to agree with this statement more strongly than L1 Japanese teachers, and that the difference was statistically significant, is worthy of note. As we have examined above, the majority of L2 Japanese teachers support standard Japanese and native-like accent as an instructional target. However, when it comes to teacher qualifications, they clearly depreciate native-speakerism. In contrast, L1 Japanese teachers showed a less clear stance on these issues. That is, they neither strongly support nor reject the statements that point to native-speakerism, as compared with L2 Japanese teachers. It seems of great importance to understand how the gaps between these groups come to be and what they mean in terms of diversity and inclusion.

Attitudes toward Japanese Culture

Statement #9, which asked whether unique aspects of Japanese culture should be emphasized in instruction, generated an interesting result. Clearly, most teachers agreed with the idea depicted by this statement (94.3% agreement rate). The overall importance of culture learning in current pedagogy is apparently discernible from the strong leaning toward agreement here. However, the degrees to which agreement was expressed differ significantly across subgroups. While a majority of L2 Japanese teachers chose “strongly agree” (72.4%), less than a half of L1 Japanese teachers did so (46.5%). On the other hand, some L1 teachers indicated disagreement (7.5%), but few L2 teachers disagreed with this statement (1.1%). Similar discrepancies were also observed for the subgroups of institution type and highest degree with a higher percentage of college teachers and doctorate holders showing disagreement with this statement than their counterparts. This statement may evoke a static and monolithic

view of Japanese culture, which counters the widely acknowledged goals of language education discussed earlier, including the global orientation and the sensitivity and flexibility towards other cultures. Thus, as it appears, the overstated uniqueness of Japanese culture probably resulted in some discord among the teachers.

Summary of 3.1

Overall, the general goals of Japanese language teaching, which lead to the education of world-ready multilingual individuals with flexibility and sensitivity towards diverse cultures/societies, are shared by the majority of the survey participants. Considering that we did not find the same level of consensus with the other items (either agreement or disagreement), the high agreement rate on these goals is particularly remarkable. Moreover, a clear pattern emerged out of the discrepancies among different subgroups. L2 Japanese teachers, K–12 teachers, and teachers with a bachelor's degree tend to support standard Japanese and native-like accuracy as legitimate targets of language instruction more actively than their counterparts. At the same time, L2 Japanese teachers tended to depreciate the native-speaker attribute as a characteristic important for good Japanese-language educators more than L1 Japanese teachers. The contrasting results on native-speakerism as instructional targets as opposed to teacher qualifications adds further complexity to the situation. As stated earlier, these findings should be read as general tendencies according to different demographic backgrounds and be complemented by narrative responses that provide specific details. In the sections that follow, we present the narrative responses.

3.2. Perceived Diversity in the Japanese Language Educator Community

This section reviews the results of 248 responses submitted to the first set of the open-ended questions: “Do you believe the Japanese language educator community in North America is a diverse one?” “If not, in what respects is it lacking in diversity?” Nearly 60% of the survey respondents (144 out of 248) indicated that they believe the Japanese language educator community in North America is not diverse, whereas approximately 20% (49 out of 248) believe it is. The remaining respondents indicated “neither” or provided no direct response. A higher percentage of K–12 teachers (approximately 30%, or 31 out of 105) provided an affirmative response to this question than college teachers (a little over 12%, 18 out of 143).

Open-ended responses to the second question covered a wide range of topics and themes. In order to identify salient and repeated ideas and present them in a logical and consistent manner, we employed a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006; Maguire and Delahunt 2017). In the coding process, key ideas (nouns) that capture the topics discussed in each response were extracted and grouped into categories to form distinct themes, which were then used to find patterns, including frequency and interrelationship (Saldaña 2014). Coding was done by all four authors, divided into two teams, with one team responsible for initial coding and the other checking and verifying it. The most frequently discussed themes were ethnic/cultural background, gender/sexuality, and age/generation. We will explicate each of these themes below.

Ethnic/Cultural Background

Most respondents who believe that the Japanese language educator community in North America is lacking in diversity discussed the imbalance of ethnic/cultural background. This theme subsumes a number of ideas expressed by the respondents. For example, many referred to the skewed representation of L1 and L2 Japanese speaking teachers (e. g., “They are mostly native speakers”). These comments appear to reflect the reality mentioned at the beginning of this essay that North America has the highest percentage (77.3%) of L1 Japanese teachers of all the world regions (Japan Foundation 2017a). The terms “native” and “non-native,” however, were not always used to refer to teachers’ L1 in the respondents’ open-ended responses. They were also used to express the ideas of ethnicity or cultural upbringing.

Besides the “native” versus “non-native” divide, some respondents explicitly referred to a particular nationality, ethnicity, race, or color, either as dominating, or being underrepresented in the field. For instance, the scarcity of African American, Black, Brown, Caucasian, Latino, *Zainichi* Koreans, or mixed heritage was mentioned. Yet others described teachers’ limited experience or exposure to other cultures without using any particular label (e. g., “Those I know are often people who grew up in Japan”). A few even noted the limited range of cultural backgrounds represented among Japanese-language teachers in North America (i. e., Japanese, American, Korean, Chinese) in comparison to the current diversity of our student population.

Gender/Sexuality

Approximately 70 percent of the respondents noted that the community is lacking in diversity in gender/sexuality. Many of them discussed that this

field is dominated by female teachers. Indeed, this is also implied by the gender imbalance of the current survey participants (see Table 1). Some people also commented on the underrepresentation of various sexual orientations and gender identities (e. g., gay, transgender, LGBTQ, etc.). With regard to this, some comments discussed that the community is primarily dominated by heterosexual teachers.

Age/Generation

Compared with the first two themes, age and generation were discussed less frequently. Still, many of those who mentioned age/generation (approximately 14 percent of the respondents) agreed that the field—dominated by older generations—is short of younger teachers. Although “old” and “young” are relative and equivocal concepts, this issue is particularly crucial because it concerns the sustainability of the field. In fact, 31.8% of the current survey participants have more than 20 years of teaching experience and 16.6% of respondents have 16-20 years of teaching experience (Table 5). Combined with the fact that the teacher shortage in North America was noted by the Japan Foundation (2017a) survey, cultivating new generations of teachers is a matter of urgent concern.

Other Themes

Besides the three main themes above, there were other concerns in regard to diversity and inclusion expressed by the respondents. For example, with regard to diversity among Japanese, some people pointed out the skewed representation of different regional accents and dialects. Similarly, some discussed that many teachers seem to be from the *Kanto* region or urban areas of Japan, or from the middle to upper-middle class. These comments appear to correspond to the critical reflection on the traditional emphasis on the idealized native speaker of standard Japanese as a model, discussed in Section 3.1. Other comments touched on the lack of diversity in academic/professional training, as well as the lack of communication among subgroups of teachers formed based on the sense of comradeship (仲間意識) or common teaching philosophy or methodology. Even the term “faction (派閥)” was used to describe the phenomenon.

Summary of 3.2

As we discussed in this section, the majority of the respondents believe that the field is lacking in diversity. Ethnic/cultural backgrounds, gender/sexuality, and age/generation were the three most notable areas in

which the lack of diversity was recognized by the respondents. These observations, by and large, appear to reflect the reality of the situation. That is, L1 Japanese, female, and teachers with long-term experience make up the preponderance of community members while other groups are presumably underrepresented. In the next section, we will delve into the causes of such an imbalance as perceived by the survey participants.

3.3. Contributing Factors for the Limited Diversity

This section addresses the third question explained in the introduction, which was concerned with the perceived causes of the limited diversity. We analyzed the responses using the same procedure described above and extracted the most recurrently discussed factors: unappealing working conditions, lack of teacher training programs and a decline in the number of Japanese language learners, native-speakerism, and heteronormativity. Interestingly, some of these factors are relevant across different themes concerning the lack of diversity identified above.

Unappealing Working Conditions

One of the most recurrent factors mentioned by the respondents concerned the precarious working conditions of this profession as perceived by current and future Japanese-language educators: these may include excessive teaching loads, instability of employment (often part-time), and inadequate compensation. The issues of job stability and security were brought up constantly in relation to all the three areas where diversity was considered lacking. For example, quite a few respondents talked about the gender imbalance in the field resulting from non-competitive salaries that are unattractive to men, who are often considered to be the primary earners of the household. The lack of competitive compensation is also perceived as resulting in a significant strain in recruiting and retaining younger generations, as well as competent L2 Japanese speaking professionals. Additionally, the hurdle of obtaining a teaching license for K–12 teachers, which requires a tremendous amount of time and financial resources, keeps people from considering teaching as their career.

In addition to the financial instability and job insecurity, the perceived low status of language teaching positions, especially at the college level, is also believed to keep prospective teachers with a minority background (male, L2 Japanese speaking, young) away from the field. In research-oriented institutions, language courses are primarily taught by non-tenure track (and often part-time) instructors, whereas so-called “content courses” are covered by tenure-track/tenured faculty members. The “bifurcation”

inherent in area studies/language-literature programs across U.S. institutions has been recognized and critically discussed (e. g., MLA 2007). This structural issue, pointed out more than a decade ago, has not seen much improvement. In fact, the financial pressures felt by universities and colleges in recent years appear to have worsened the situation in some contexts (Chronicle of Higher Education 2019).

While the financial insecurity and the low-status perception often associated with language teaching positions are largely the results of societal and institutional functions, it is also teachers themselves who may contribute to the creation of the “unappealing” image of the occupation through their working style, especially for their students who may otherwise be aspired to be future teachers. One respondent particularly discussed how current learners of Japanese may not find Japanese teaching jobs appealing as their future career because they see their teachers working tirelessly under seemingly difficult work conditions, having meetings on weekends and working long hours, etc. This comment, while derived primarily from personal contacts, points to an ironic circle in which teachers’ “hard” work ethic, translated to their students, ends up discouraging future teachers. This circumstance, along with the low salary, may lead competent language learners to turn to other occupations.

Overall, the disadvantages of the Japanese teaching profession are perceived as limiting the pool of potential teachers to individuals with certain profiles (e. g., female L1 Japanese speakers). Although these comments appear to make intuitive sense, we need to interpret them with caution. The situations surrounding diversity differ considerably across different languages despite presumably similar “working conditions” to those depicted above. The predominance of L1 speaking teachers in the Japanese language educator community is particularly remarkable, as it is not seen in other commonly-taught languages, such as Spanish, French, and German. Therefore, as much as these factors are surely contributing to the dynamics of diversity, they are not solely responsible for the particular situation of Japanese language education.

Lack of Teacher Training Programs and Decline in Enrollments

The lack of teacher training programs is perhaps one factor that may vary depending on the particular situation of different languages. Some respondents pointed out the scarcity of graduate programs or teacher licensure programs in Japanese as the cause for diminishing younger generations of teachers. According to the Japan Foundation (2017b), as of

2015, only sixty-five institutions in the United States offered some kind of teacher training programs. The same survey also reports that the number of teachers and institutions in North America have decreased from 2012 to 2015 and attributes the decline to the diminishing federal support for foreign language education and the shortage of candidates for Japanese language teacher positions, especially in K–12 institutions. The financial pressure tends to motivate institutions to discontinue existing positions upon the retirement or departure of current teachers, or to downgrade them from tenure-track to non-tenure track, or from full-time to part-time. This situation continues to pose a challenge for younger generations to enter this field.

Further, some people also discussed low and declining numbers of Japanese language learners as a possible cause for the situation, especially the generational imbalance. As a matter of fact, the survey results by the Modern Language Association (2019) and the Japan Foundation (2017a) both report a slight increase in Japanese language enrollments in North America. However, these reports only show the aggregated data without separate numbers by institution types or regions. Therefore, it is noteworthy that some respondents, who presumably have experienced a decline in enrollments, brought up this issue as a possible factor for the generation imbalance. In reality, the lack of teacher training programs, available positions, and available teacher candidates (e. g., learners of Japanese) are likely be intertwined, and most of the issues are financially determined both at the federal/national and state/local levels.

Native-Speakerism

While the two factors discussed above are more or less pragmatic matters, there are also ideological aspects that are less delineable but surely prevalent and ubiquitous. Native-speakerism has been defined—originally in the context of English language teaching—as a “belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday 2006: 385). It is a stereotype that favors or values the native speaker. In the survey, for example, some respondents commented on the perceived language superiority of native speakers as a contributing factor that characterizes the current state of community membership imbalance. Examples of bias and prejudice discussed by the respondents include:

- Japanese language is too difficult for L2 speakers to reach an advanced level.
- L1 Japanese speakers are better language teachers.
- Correct or native-like Japanese should be taught in class.

These comments give context to how native-speakerism is prevailing as a form of validation for teacher qualifications, which can also be translated into the preference of L1 Japanese teachers in hiring. It should be reminded that, as we discussed in Section 3.1, there were statistically significant gaps between L1 and L2 teachers in their views on instructional targets and teacher qualifications. That is, whereas L2 teachers underscore the importance of native-like accent yet depreciate the native-speaker attributes in teaching, L1 teachers maintain a less clear stance in both respects. Therefore, biases toward native speakers are held differently by L1 and L2 speaking teachers.

Heteronormativity

Another ideological element brought up in the survey was related to the limited representation of diverse sexual orientations in the teacher community. As described by some respondents, due to the pervasive idea that heterosexuality is the norm in society, LGBTQ teachers may feel vulnerable or alienated, which hinders them from being open about their sexuality. There are some people who even feel insecure about their employment opportunities. In fact, one respondent particularly described the difficulty of revealing their sexual orientation because they heard of incidents in which employment might be rejected due to sexuality. While these are presumably extreme and possibly illegal cases, these comments clearly reflect the heteronormativity prevalent in the community.

It should be noted that heteronormativity is not limited to Japanese language education or academic communities, but it exposes the problem omnipresent in society at large. For example, some respondents pointed out that the heteronormative ideology is widely retained without critical apprehension in Japanese society, where the Japanese government has only recently begun discussing the possibility of proposing a bill that allows same-sex marriage. While the number of respondents who discussed this theme was smaller than the other three themes discussed above, their voices remind us of an important aspect of diversity beyond native versus non-native, gender, and age/generation, especially given the number of LGBTQ students studying Japanese. We will further discuss some comments on this topic in the next section.

Summary of 3.3

This section discussed the factors that led to the limited diversity of the Japanese language educator community, as perceived and experienced by the respondents. These factors are personally, institutionally, and societally constructed and intricately related. Hence, it is hardly possible to explicate them as discrete elements. In essence, we can summarize these causes as pragmatic constraints, on the one hand, and ideological issues, on the other. In our eyes, neither are easily resolvable. Nonetheless, the recognition of these issues at least leads to a step forward. In the next section, we will present concrete episodes in which the lack of diversity is manifested in mundane experience.

3.4. Biases and Discrimination Experienced or Observed by the Survey Participants

This section introduces specific episodes that exemplify varied issues concerning diversity (or rather lack thereof), inclusion, and professionalism experienced or observed by the survey participants. In this section, we decided to share some actual excerpts of the survey respondents' open-ended responses rather than presenting the results of a thematic analysis as we did in Sections 3.2 and 3.3. This is because we believe that by introducing the respondents' actual voices, we can share some of the nuances that may be otherwise lost and also offer readers an opportunity to develop their own interpretation. To reiterate, the purpose of this survey was to gather beliefs and experiences of Japanese language educators from diverse backgrounds and to use the information as a starting point of our dialogs.

Among various topics discussed in the 195 responses to the third open-ended question, we selected examples that seem to best illustrate recurrent themes found in episodes shared by the respondents. We also tried to include perspectives of respondents from diverse backgrounds, especially of those who are deemed the minority in this particular community vis-à-vis the results of this survey. By no means was the selection an easy process, but we ultimately decided to highlight the following issues: native/non-native divide, professional qualifications and candidates' lingua-cultural backgrounds, an idealized monolithic image of the Japanese, and heteronormativity observed in the profession. All the responses are original, but apparent grammatical mistakes or typos are corrected in brackets. Comments written in Japanese were translated by the authors. The respondents' backgrounds are noted in parentheses.

Native/Non-Native Divide

In the previous section, we discussed how pervasively native-speakerism can be observed in mundane discourse, in some cases taking the form of bias against L2 teachers. In this ideology, Japanese people are portrayed as “legitimate users” of the language. The following excerpt illustrates how such biases are manifested in everyday interaction.

Excerpt 1

I have worked with Japanese teaching professionals who have expressed disbelief that non-native speakers can ever really gain a high level of proficiency in Japanese, and who doubt competency of Japanese teaching colleagues who are not native speakers. (College, Female, L2, Doctorate, 11–15 years)

From this statement, it is not clear to whom the Japanese teaching professionals mentioned in this excerpt addressed this disbelief, but it is apparent that this respondent, who is herself an L2 Japanese speaker, was present at the scene when such an explicit comment that discriminates against L2 speaking teachers was made. In Section 3.1, we discussed how L1 Japanese teachers maintain more or less an equivocal stance toward native-speakerism, as compared with their L2 teacher counterparts. However, this does not preclude the fact that certain individuals overtly present discriminatory remarks and attitudes. The next excerpt offers another example that depicts the bias against non-native speakers.

Excerpt 2

Another thing that I have heard teachers discuss is whether non-native speaking teachers should teach pronunciation or not, and an often-expressed idea is that it would be bad for students to imitate the accent of a non-native speaker. When I hear these kinds of comments, it seems to me that people have an overly narrow idea of what “counts” as acceptable Japanese pronunciation. (College, Female, L2, Doctorate, 6–10 years)

The comment described in this excerpt reflects the assumption that only L1 speakers can present the model pronunciation. It should be reminded that the statistical analysis in Section 3.1 presented the mixed responses on Statement #8 concerning whether a native-like accent should be set as a pedagogical goal (59.1% agreement rate). This incident precisely points to the presence of individuals who believe in the native-speaker supremacist ideology (Kadoya 2012; Kubota 2008), which gives L1 teachers the authority and excludes L2 teachers as legitimate language

owners. In fact, this respondent later expressed, “the comments imply that my Japanese ability is subject to, or vulnerable to, the judgments of others” and “the comments single me out as different, and this feels othering.”

Unlike the instances introduced above, some people highlighted some positive aspects of having L2 teachers.

Excerpt 3

I remember a student I taught in 102 at the university. He had taken 101 from a native speaker. He was spell bound by the fact that I could speak Japanese and his comment was, “I now know I can learn Japanese.” My response was, “Why?” “Because you aren’t Japanese and I have only every [ever] seen Japanese speak Japanese and my previous teacher told me I would never be able to learn it.” (College, Female, L2, Bachelor’s, more than 20 years)

Not only does this example suggest that L2 teachers can serve as role models for students, but also it alerts that having exclusively L1 teachers may negatively impact their motivation. While a few respondents, including the author of the excerpt above, mentioned some positive influences of L2 teachers, the overwhelming number of responses discussed negative treatment experienced by L2 teachers that points to the prevailing native-speakerism ideology. In addition, such an ideology is adhered to not only by teachers but also students. In fact, the same respondent added another episode, in which she recounted her somewhat negative experience with students’ reaction to her: “When I walked into another class on [one] evening the students started to leave. I wrote my name on the board and turned around and started speaking Japanese. The students couldn’t believe a white person was the teacher or so they told me later.” The episode above supports the notion that native-speakerism ideology is widely held by students as well.

The perceived linguistic hierarchy between L1 and L2 teachers can also be manifested in their professional encounters more covertly, or perhaps even innocently, as shown in the following example.

Excerpt 4

I left a working group which had met for multiple months in which I was the only non-native instructor, and for which the meetings were conducted entirely in Japanese.... The other members of this working group repeatedly expressed astonishment at the fact that I can communicate in Japanese, and every time that there was a linguistic or other specialized term used in Japanese in the meetings which I admitted to not understanding, it was

another leap backwards to explaining words like (literally! with gestures!) *unten suru* ('to drive') to me. My master's degree in education is from XX [name of a well-known university in the United States]. I know a fair bit about educational theory and second language acquisition terminology in English. (K-12, Female, L2, Master's, 11-15 years)

The respondent's frustration is derived from the ways in which her L1 Japanese colleagues treated her by constantly questioning her Japanese competence (at least so it seemed from her point of view) and not giving credit to her other academic competence. It seems that the L1 Japanese colleagues may not realize how their way of accommodating the L2 colleague can be received by the addressee.

Excerpt 5, written by an L1 college teacher, also presents an episode of innocent action that resulted in the exclusion of a minority member. She recalls an instance in which an L2 speaking teacher left a group because Japanese was used as an exclusive medium of communication.

Excerpt 5, translated by the authors

It is efficient and convenient to communicate via emails and so forth in Japanese when the majority of a group are Japanese people. However, having one person who is not accustomed to written Japanese impedes the flow of communication. At one time, a group of about ten people were exchanging emails on a conference for Japanese language education. One person there was American. The formal Japanese writing style was difficult for her, and she never replied to any of the emails. In the end, she didn't participate in the online conference. I assume she may have considered us exclusivist. It would be possible for Americans to teach at high schools, but I think it would be fairly difficult for them to communicate in writing with Japanese about education or conferences. I understand how she feels since I myself am still struggling to communicate in English. (College, Female, L1, Master's, 11-15 years)

This American teacher left the group because of the language barrier, as assumed by the respondent. She acknowledges that using the L1 of the majority in the group, Japanese in this case, would be efficient and convenient. Although she expresses some empathy for the L2 teacher who left the group by acknowledging her own limited proficiency in English, what is not explicitly recognized and reflected upon in this comment is the consequence of selecting Japanese as the only medium innocently and uncritically without considering the risk of alienating L2 speakers. Some may interpret this episode as a covert form of bias against L2 speakers,

while others may wonder if the L2 teacher should have acted differently to remain engaged to be part of the community. As discussed in Section 3.1, the majority of the current survey participants appear to share the goals of language education that emphasize the development of world-ready multilingual individuals with flexibility and sensitivity, but these episodes do not paint a favorable picture of who we are as models for our students.

A dilemma between efficiency/convenience and inclusion, as implied in this episode, may be a common concern experienced by many members of the Japanese language educator community. Presently, the fields of education and applied linguistics have begun to embrace the idea of *translanguaging*—“the development of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy, Garcia, and Reid 2015: 281)—to support the learning of multilingual youth, or *translingual practices* (Canagarajah 2013) to acknowledge multilingual professionals’ resourceful use of multilingual and multimodal resources. Given these developments, the practice of uncritically selecting one particular language as a default language of communication should be reevaluated, especially if it deepens a division between “native” and “non-native” speakers in the community.

Professional Qualifications and Candidates’ Lingua-Cultural Backgrounds

As mentioned in Section 3.2, the terms “native/non-native” are concerned not only with linguistic competence but also with sociocultural knowledge. Some respondents shared their experiences in which their professional qualifications were questioned because of their lingua-cultural backgrounds. Excerpt 6 is one such example from the context of higher education.

Excerpt 6

One specific example was a job interview where I was asked how I would handle correspondence with a Japan-based grant funding agency. The question was clearly aimed at the perception that I would not have the cultural and linguistic skills necessary to successfully navigate professional relationships with funding agencies. I do not know if native-speaker candidates were also asked this question, but I very much doubt that they were. (College, Female, L2, Doctorate, 11–15 years)

This respondent explains that the question from the hiring committee implies their doubt in L2 Japanese candidates' cultural and linguistic competence to adequately perform expected duties. Needless to say, not every L1 Japanese speaker would have the ability to succeed in negotiation with Japan-based grant funding agencies. If such an understanding existed among the hiring committee members, they might have asked all candidates—regardless of their native/non-native status—the same question, contrary to this respondent's assumption. The kind of doubt felt by this respondent, which likely stems from the predominance of L1 Japanese teachers in the field, is interconnected with the prevailing tendency to make an immediate association between one's native language/culture and ability to perform everything well in the language/culture.

While the excerpt above, as well as other results reported in the previous sections, suggests that positions in higher education tend to emphasize high proficiency in Japanese (indeed expressions such as “near-native” or “superior-level” were often included in position announcements), K–12 settings present different kinds of dynamics and demands. In Excerpt 7, for instance, an L1 teacher shared her observations as to how the lack of English competence and shared educational background can present a challenge for L1 Japanese teachers who moved to the United States after receiving a bachelor's degree from a Japanese university.

Excerpt 7, translated by the authors

Japanese native speakers teaching in America seem to lack the ability to persuade and advocate on their own behalf. Especially in K–12 programs, they will face difficulties when they appeal to taxpayers, local politicians, and boards of education because 1) they cannot vote, 2) they do not have enough English linguistic competence to promote proposals, and 3) they will be considered ethnocentric. Comparing teachers from Japan who were educated in Japan up to secondary education and in the United States for post-secondary (along with American teachers) with teachers from Japan who went to school in Japan up to college, it appears that the former group of people are accepted by their colleagues and administration and are assigned jobs that require responsibility. (K–12, Female, L1, Master's, 16–20 years)

This excerpt demonstrates how much K–12 teachers are expected to function as part of the local community. The lack of adequate English competence or of sufficient knowledge of the U.S. education system similarly affects college Japanese-language teachers' work performance.

However, the work of college instructors, especially in larger programs, tends to be more specialized or compartmentalized, and, moreover, international faculty can be valued as contributors to the internationalization of campuses in higher education institutions that are facing global competition. On the other hand, many programs at K–12 institutions are run by one teacher, which adds additional responsibilities in their daily administrative work and outreach activities that involve surrounding communities.⁵ Thus, the qualifications expected of Japanese-language teachers at these levels and the issues concerning diversity and inclusion experienced by L1 and L2 teachers in the respective contexts are likely quite different from each other.

Idealized Monolithic Image of the Japanese

While the issues discussed above concern how the “native” versus “non-native” statuses affect communication and hiring practices, the idealized monolithic image of the Japanese, which has often served as a model to emulate, poses a divide among native speakers as well. As discussed in Section 3.1, many respondents indicated their understanding of standard Japanese as legitimate and accurate Japanese. In the following excerpts, respondents shared similar instances of speakers of regional dialects being devalued in the community.

Excerpt 8

I have heard Japanese language teachers make negative comments about the accents of teachers who are not from Tokyo, and I have heard teachers say that if someone usually speaks with a non-Tokyo accent (e. g., Kansai, Tohoku etc.), then that person should “hide” their accent and adopt a Tokyo accent when teaching. (College, Female, L2, Doctorate, 6–10 years)

Excerpt 9, translated by the authors

I have heard that one of the teachers, who used non-standard Japanese, was told his/her Japanese is inaccurate. (College, Female, L1, Master’s, more than 20 years)

These examples add another layer of prejudice in addition to the “native/non-native” hierarchy. Further, the following excerpt points out that the emphasis on standard Japanese is not simply a matter of personal preference but it is also the consequence of pedagogical training.

Excerpt 10

When going through teacher training, we were told to use the Tokyo standardized accent, forcing people with dialect to adjust to the Tokyo accent. (K–12, Female, L1, Bachelor’s, 6–10 years)

In this fashion, the superiority of standard Japanese is reinforced in the process of professional development. As discussed in Section 3.1, many of the current survey participants agreed with the appreciation of varieties of Japanese language (#2) and disagreed with the idea that standard Japanese is more correct (#3). However, the comment above makes us wonder whether and how such beliefs actually translate into their language teaching and teacher-training practices.

In addition to the practices that elevate standard Japanese as the target language, some respondents noted how the idealized normative behaviors of Japanese are discursively constructed and reaffirmed.

Excerpt 11, translated by the authors

A good number of Japanese language teachers in the older generation maintain a purist image of Japanese language and culture with a sense of pride and try to teach it. This ideology is exemplified in such utterances as “Japanese people wouldn’t say such things,” “Japanese people don’t behave that way,” and “we don’t say or behave in such a way in Japanese culture.” (College, Male, L1, Master’s, 6–10 years)

The “purist image of Japanese language and culture” (日本語・日本文化に関する純粋主義) in this comment represents the essentialized and ethnocentric view of Japanese or so-called *nihonjinron*. In Section 3.1, we discussed the gaps in emphasizing the uniqueness of Japanese culture according to the profiles of institution type and the highest degree. This comment also alludes to the possibility that such a belief is held differently across different generations.

Heteronormativity Observed in the Profession

In the remaining part of this section, comments concerning LGBTQ teachers will be presented in the hope of adding another dimension to the issue of diversity and inclusion in the field.

Excerpt 12, translated by the authors

Personally, I think the proportion of gay teachers in the field is large. In that sense, we can say there is diversity. Many of them are open about their sexual orientation in their personal space, but not at work. After all, heterosexual perspective and logic are considered the norm, and the homosexual ones are not reflected in educational settings. For instance, I remember seeing a vocabulary quiz like this: “Last week () got married to an American man” and the correct choice was “sister” (because

this person married to a man) (I don't remember the exact detail, but something of this nature.) (College, Male, L1, Master's, 6–10 years)

As discussed in this comment, the presence of LGBTQ teachers is probably recognized by many but has not been openly discussed in the professional context. The heteronormativity is pervasive and often reinforced in daily practice. As pointed out by this respondent and some other respondents, materials used for language teaching often contribute to the reinforcement of heteronormativity as well. Some teachers may be reluctant to address these issues, assuming that the question of sexuality has nothing to do with language learning and LGBTQ issues should be dealt with by LGBTQ teachers themselves (Nelson 1993). Nonetheless, some comments emphasize the significance of diversity as a benefit to students in various respects.

Excerpt 13

The lack of diversity means that students miss out on the diverse perspectives that teachers could bring to the classroom. Also, students may be more motivated when they have teachers who are more like themselves – so an LGBT teacher may be a source of encouragement for an LGBT student; a non-native speaker may be a source of encouragement for a learner; an African-American teacher may be a source of encouragement for a student of color.... (College, Female, L2, Doctor, 6-10 years)

As suggested in this excerpt, having diverse representations of people of different backgrounds is certainly a significant step forward. However, appreciating the difference alone will not likely change the fundamental ideological structure that obstructs the development of a truly inclusive community. What is equally important is to engage with the reality of discourse that creates biases and evaluate the values and ideologies attached to the differences.

Summary of 3.4

This section introduced selected excerpts that illustrate four salient issues and demonstrated how the lack of diversity manifests itself in day-to-day professional lives and what kinds of discrimination and bias the survey respondents have experienced or witnessed. The voices that we shared here reveal how our unconscious biases, or reluctance to take action on an issue that one is aware of, may lead to the perpetuation of reduced inclusivity and diversity in the Japanese language educator community. Of course, the excerpts introduced here describe particular incidents only

from the respondent's perspective. Given the anonymity of the submission, we have no way of knowing exact details of the situations, or how the same incidents were experienced by others involved. However, the fact that the respondents were compelled to share their stories in this particular form, we believe, has some significance in its own right and gives us a chance to reflect on our own conduct.

4. Conclusion

This report presented the quantitative and qualitative results of the fall 2018 survey on Japanese-language educators' beliefs and experiences concerning the goals of language education and teacher diversity. Together, the results illuminate converging and diverging perspectives of the survey participants, contradictions or dilemmas between aspirational ideals and mundane practices, and fundamental societal and institutional conditions for language educators that are considered to be a cause of the current lack of teacher diversity.

As mentioned earlier, we originally developed this survey as a prompt for the AATJ-sponsored AAS roundtable discussion and not as a research study. We are aware of the limitations in our method of data collection and survey design. For instance, although we received a large number of responses, our method of recruitment may not have effectively reached all educators who teach Japanese language along with literature, culture, and history, given the nature of AATJ and CAJLE, and the SenseiOnline listserv. The inclusion of a broader set of voices might have changed the results. In this sense, the term "the community of Japanese-language educators" used in the survey and the current article is worth questioning. Further, this survey only solicited the participants' perceptions on limited topics within this complex subject. The selection of the statements in Part II, for example, might have directed the survey participants to focus on the native versus non-native dichotomy. The wordings of the open-ended questions might have also encouraged the participants to share episodes of their negative experiences more than self-reflection of their own unconscious biases or possible solutions to the current situation.

Despite these limitations, however, we believe that the current survey created an important opportunity to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of Japanese-language educators in North America. We hope that this report will stimulate further discussion among all who contribute to Japanese language education and motivate future quantitative and qualitative research on the issues identified here.

In closing, we would like to underscore that the diversity in attitudes and beliefs observed in the survey results itself should not be viewed negatively. Imposing one's own views upon others without acknowledging different perspectives goes against the spirit of inclusion. In our opinion, what is critical is to embrace the idea that there are, and should be, peers who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints, and continue to engage in dialogue with an open mind to explore common ground. As an educator, it is also important to engage in critical reflection on how our words and actions in the classroom and other professional contexts serve either to challenge or to reinforce the types of ideologies that go against the spirit of diversity and inclusion. In addition to such efforts at an individual level, the expansion of advocacy activities by associations such as AATJ is also necessary to promote our profession to prospective future educators with different backgrounds and to improve the overall conditions of our profession that support diversity and inclusion.

NOTES

¹ The scale consists of “Strongly agree,” “Agree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.”

² We consulted with Statistics Lab at the University of Kentucky for all statistical analysis conducted for this project.

³ In this article, we use “L1 Japanese” and “L2 Japanese” to refer to the teachers who speak Japanese as their L1 and those who speak Japanese as their L2, respectively.

⁴ Due to space limitations, tables with the actual counts and percentages are not reproduced in this article.

⁵ 66% of the K–12 respondents indicated that their program is run by one teacher, whereas only 13% of the college respondents did so.

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