

## REFLEXIVE THEMES IN CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY IN JAPAN

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### Introduction

Our personal experience and observations of being English instructors at Japanese universities and interest in teacher learning and professional development prompted us to collect information on reflective practices of English teachers at the institution of one of the authors' employment. Our efforts and consultations with Japanese academics researching the teaching of English as a foreign language and education in general have illustrated that there is a dearth of easily accessible, peer reviewed research on the topic of reflection among university educators in Japan, either in English or Japanese. This paper is therefore an attempt to redress this omission by investigating the effects that the organisational culture of a Japanese tertiary institution has on the reflective practices of non-Japanese teachers.

### Literature review

#### ***A definition of "reflection"***

Reflective practice may be thought of as the use of reflection as a tool in "swampy" (Schön 1983: 42) professional context, such as teaching, nursing, civil engineering or counselling. Reflection as a psychological phenomenon, however, is resistant to definition. Moon (2013) argues that there is no one overarching definition, but instead there exists a variety of practices of thought that fall under the scope of "reflection" and might be fundamentally the same cognitive process.

Despite the many contexts in which critical explorations of practices take place, Moon's (2013) discussion of reflection does provide a set of core features common to all the definitions of reflection in the literature. Based on those features, we hold that reflection is a conscious process with stages; it is goal-oriented; it is deployed in highly complex situations not amenable to reductive approaches, and is focused on adapting to the vagaries and demands of such situations.

The concept of reflection in the sense that western teachers use it, for example, and as it is used in this paper, appears to be rooted in western cultural practices; to the best of our knowledge, there is no single cognate in the Japanese language. In our discussions with Japanese teacher-educators and academics, we have found the English term "reflection" not to be immediately recognised and

often to require protracted negotiation of meaning before the extent and connotation of the term is agreed upon. This may partially explain the problem we mentioned above regarding the difficulty of finding suitable literature on this topic in Japanese; it appears that the practice under discussion in this paper is not one that is widely recognised in the professional discourse, although reflection surely happens.

#### ***A definition of "cultural context"***

Schein (2004: 17) asserts that a culture consists in a group with a shared history. From this perspective, culture becomes a problematic construct, as the shared history of an immigrant teacher and a foreign institution is necessarily limited. This paper will explore the issue through the dual lenses of organisational and professional cultures. Bloor and Dawson (1994: 276) define organisational culture as the culture of the workplace, with its implicit and explicit rules, regulations, beliefs, and practices. Professional culture is understood as the culture of the profession itself. That is to say that professional culture is grounded in the common experiences of teachers through their training and experience. In this paper, therefore, we treat organisational culture as the culture of the institution. We understand professional culture to be a manifestation of the shared professional ethics and practices of a group of teaching practitioners.

We assume that the organisational culture reflects the cultural values of the founders and participants, the majority of whom are Japanese. Consequently, we contend that the educational practices embedded in its organisational culture are largely reflective of the general teaching culture of Japan, and that this may conflict with the beliefs and practices of those involved in frontline teaching. Based on these considerations, we expect that the professional cultures of teachers will vary from country to country and are inherited, to a degree, by an individual through the formal education and prior professional practice within the territory of those professional cultures.

#### ***The status and role of participants in formal learning***

There are many ways to characterise and categorise cultures. One such category – into

which Japan has been placed and which we assume to be implicit in the organisational culture of Japanese institutions – is the “reactive culture” (Lewis 2005). This is characterised by such features as conflict avoidance, face preservation, patience, politeness, avoidance of interruption and expression of feelings, and dominance of diplomacy over truth. In Japanese society, status thus strongly influences roles in decision-making, negotiation and identification of what is right or wrong. Stapleton (1995: 14-15) calls this “knowing one’s place,” which stems from Confucian thought and pervades education in Japan. In the classroom, the teacher not only exercises full control over the lesson flow, but decides when and if students will be allowed to talk (Barke & Nakamura 2012: 11).

Hammond (2007) and Kato (2010) reveal that alongside the qualities Lewis (2005) calls the reactive communication style, Japanese students display a strong desire to save face. One commonly observed behavioural pattern, should questions about the content of the presented material arise, is to confirm understanding not with the teacher but with peers. Hammond (2007: 44) observes that for the student to actually ask a question equates to an embarrassing acknowledgement of one’s inability to comprehend. Therefore, when seeking clarification, the goal of the texts produced by the learners is the same - clarification of understanding - but the structure is radically different, to the extent that in a classroom in Japan, the teacher may not even be involved in clarification at all - prompts for questions, for example, are usually offered by the teacher as a polite closure to the lesson.

The importance of hierarchy persists throughout relations at various levels, including those among teachers, and is affected by age, gender, period of employment at the institution, and role. The hierarchical orientation of relations in Japanese culture is accompanied by an emphasis on public face (Goodman 1994: 138-144; Brislin 1994: 94). An instance of this pattern is briefly described by Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) in the unilateral nature of feedback: experienced teachers provided novice teachers with feedback on observations, often critical, while novice teachers avoided potentially face-threatening topics in discussions of experienced teachers’ lessons. Additionally, Howe (2006: 130) writes that “a pervasive top-down hierarchy in Japanese schooling makes it difficult for new teaching strategies to be disseminated from universities through new teachers to veterans.” In other

words, feedback is perceived to be, and practised as, a top-down transmission of knowledge from a more experienced (and therefore higher-status) practitioner to a less experienced one, and reproduction of the “standard” of the higher status member is the expected outcome of the encounter.

The hierarchical orientation of Japanese education is further illustrated in national policy regarding teaching and learning materials, how curricula are developed and implemented, and institutional attitudes to assessment. In compulsory education in Japan, curricula are set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (known as MEXT), and textbooks used must be drawn from a range approved by the Ministry. A similar pattern emerges in MEXT’s policies regarding university curricula, where teaching and learning materials and curricula, while not defined by Ministry policies, must still be approved by it. This strongly central control exercised over many aspects of education in Japan seems to have given rise to a “public servant” mentality of Japanese school teachers (Shimahara 1998: 460) – a way of thinking in which teachers see themselves as passive instruments of government policies in education. One effect of top-down curricula and the need to keep pace with the prescribed materials is described in Sato & Kleinsasser (2004: 807), where the teachers stated that the need to comply with test requirements and teach towards university entrance exams (Japan’s system of examinations for university entrance is notoriously gruelling), as well as the timetable of the curriculum, worked against their motivation to attempt change in their practices.

### Research question

In light of the issues raised in the literature review, we arrived at the following research question: in what ways are the reflective practices of non-Japanese teachers working in a Japanese tertiary institution affected by the interactions between the institutional culture and their professional identities and cultures?

### Method

Our goal was to explore the consequences for reflection of the tension between two different cultures, something which would be difficult to assess quantitatively (Richards 2003: 8). The choice of interview as a data-gathering tool came from its potential to provide the range of responses necessary for constructive analysis and discussion – the main indicator that the “right”

amount of data has been collected or the "right" number of interviews has been conducted (Baker & Edwards 2012: 4). Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to enable us to deepen our understanding of the phenomena we chose to focus on (Richards 2003: 65), where following a fully structured pattern would have made it impossible to pursue unforeseen lines of inquiry in the interview.

To find the candidates for the interviews, we contacted full-time English teachers from a university English department through a group email inviting them to participate in an online survey, and indicating that we would potentially contact them for interviews at a later date. We collected data on their qualifications to ensure participants held a minimum of a master's degree in TESOL or a related field at the time they responded to the survey. The survey also asked several questions relating to the reflective practices of the participants to help guide the semi-structured interviews.

We used the survey data to select candidates for interview. In order to ensure variety in responses, we used specific criteria, specified below, to identify candidates.

1. Participants should be from different cultural backgrounds.
2. Participants should have a range of cultural experience, both in Japan and in other countries.
3. Participants should have experience teaching both in Japan and other countries.
4. Participants should have a range of experience at different levels of responsibility within an organisation.

The survey asked questions about the educational background of the participants, and explored aspects of their reflective and developmental practices to generate interview questions. The survey questions and data are not provided in this paper due to the number of questions and responses whose inclusion would add little value to the subsequent analysis of the interviews.

Each participant was interviewed once employing a semi-structured format, with the interviews lasting around one hour and consisting of several open-ended questions determined by responses to the survey, the content of the literature review and the interviewer's decisions to follow themes that emerged as the interviews progressed. The questions (edited for readability)

can be found in Appendix A. They were followed by a small number of more specific questions for clarification of the participant's answers.

The data the interviews produced was deemed sufficient to provide for the in-depth analysis and discussion of the issues discussed in the literature review.

### Participants

From the survey responses, we identified and contacted three suitable participants, and of the three, two were able to participate in interviews. The two interview participants chose the names Olaf and Harry. Pronoun usage will follow the gender implied by the pseudonym.

Olaf comes from East Asia, and has experience teaching in several countries. He undertook both a CELTA and an extensive practicum in an English-speaking country as part of his master's degree programme, and has also previously worked in other Asian nations besides Japan. Olaf is relatively inexperienced in teaching, with less than five years of service in total.

Harry is from the United Kingdom and has more than fifteen years teaching experience within and outside of Japan, in both the private and tertiary sectors. His master's course was conducted by distance and did not include a practicum, although he held a CELTA and had multiple years of teaching experience before undertaking the degree. He has previously held supervisory positions within educational organisations.

Our third potential participant was Japanese, and had spent some twenty years in the United States working in university administration. Unfortunately, he was unable to participate in the interview due to it being impossible to arrange a mutually suitable time and location within the time-scale of this project.

### Analysis

The approach taken in this research was informed by both academic and experiential knowledge. Our own experiences, and reflections thereon, naturally influenced our work, from the initial selection of the topic to the recognition of themes in the data: as Borg (2003: 88) indicates, previous experiences establish cognitions which influence how one thinks. Additionally, the process of conducting this research was "swampy" (Schön 1983). As our ongoing review of the literature brought new perspectives to the research question, we refined our analysis of the data. The need to balance multiple, even conflicting, perspectives has often given us pause for reflection, and has led to us reframing the discussion of the literature several

times. In short, collecting and interpreting the data influenced our construction of the academic background to this research, and the construction of the academic background of the research influenced how we organise and even *perceive* the data. Indeed, we feel that this paper has come about in a similar way to the process of reflection itself, and that this particular instance of the text should be viewed as a product of reflective writing practices. It is by no means a canonical version; such a thing cannot be properly said to exist.

The discussion of the interview data is split into themes for the sake of clarity. We discuss them in light of how the literature review interacts with the themes emerging from both interviews, and those that emerged from discussion with the individual participants. We also suggest links back to the literature, and point to what we feel are important avenues for future research.

### ***Institutional culture***

Olaf demonstrated a great degree of concern for his students' learning, attributing it to the kind of care he received from his own teachers in the past - "I wanted to become an English teacher, or language teacher when I was very little, cos I had really good teachers" - and stating:

"[B]efore I know much about a student, I will have to assume what is helpful, right, judging by maybe knowing a little bit their background, where they come from, and what their level is now, you will design certain activities, or something that you think is helpful, but, by getting their feedback, well those comments like "oh, I'm too lazy, I don't want to do it" of course will not be taken into account, but I want to know whether this activity is actually helpful for this particular group. So, I guess every group is different, so, basically, their feedback will be about the activities that we do in class, so ... so I will either change or ... stop or continue doing certain things in class based on their feedback."

It is thus not surprising that Olaf rated learner feedback as an important tool for professional growth, indicating in the interview that, when implemented properly, he believes it to be an invaluable resource for self-development, noting that: "a lot of times you make decisions - teachers make decisions - based on assumptions, or your past experiences, but every group is a new combination, so getting their feedback will definitely help you to tailor your materials and design a more customised course." By student feedback, however, he meant not institutionally-collected feedback mandated by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport (MEXT) (Suzuki 2013). Instead, for Olaf, individual feedback from students on their

progress and preferences is important, including their roles and participation in learning, as well as how effectively he, as a teacher, responds to their needs. Harry takes a more holistic approach regarding the role of feedback, suggesting that "you have to be flexible about curriculum... it's not fixed. [It should use] the feedback from the students". This serves to highlight the tensions between the hierarchical tendencies and construction of feedback from higher to lower status members of staff and what is thought to happen in the classroom at an institutional level, and what teachers identify as needing to happen in the classroom in their day-to-day practices.

It seems that MEXT's actions are an attempt to effect change in organisational culture, while Olaf's and Harry's approaches invoke practices sanctioned by their professional cultures.

The values Olaf promotes seem to be different from those of the institution. Olaf talks about consultations in which he, either directly or indirectly, has his students think more about their learning and become engaged in it more actively, noting that "talking with them will help them to reflect. Why am I in this class? What can I actually do? I have sixteen weeks."

This student-centricity, with the teacher cast as a guide rather than a leader, operates in contrast to the pronounced hierarchical qualities discussed above. Despite this dedication to student-centred practices, Olaf admits that his reflective practices had changed because they had to, highlighting the tensions inherent in teaching in a context different from that where one was trained, noting:

"I would say because the curriculum, the design of the curriculum, the student learning outcomes are kind of vague, and they're not clearly laid out, like, you know, each level, and where they're overlapping each other, but also sometimes they don't connect at all. So that's what I found difficult, and why I had to change the way I used to do things. But also because of the students. Uh. ... All Japanese now, almost all. I have like one Korean or one Chinese in class. But before, back [where I trained], I had classes with students from everywhere, so it's a more international environment. So because of that, I also had to adapt."

### ***Role of institution in teacher learning***

Olaf showed a conflicting attitude to observations as a PD activity within the institution. In the interview, he specifically noted the benefits of the CELTA and the feedback he received from his tutors. "When I was doing my CELTA, [observation] was really helpful." He also demonstrated a preference for practical application of knowledge as a learning tool, stating that "I could just take this study and experiment

with my students the next day, and in a way, I guess, it was like an experiment ... process - you read a lot of things, and then you start using these in classrooms". This sentiment is echoed by Harry, who also speaks positively of the CELTA and practical qualifications in general:

"Well, you know, it [the Master's degree] didn't seem to affect my teaching very much at the time. Certainly not in the way the CELTA did when I first started teaching [...] It's a bit frustrating that [a master's degree] is seen ahead even of a CELTA, because that is a much lower-ranked qualification, but it lends itself far better to the environment we work in. It's more practical, a teaching qualification."

However, Olaf also noted that he felt peer observation to be of questionable value, attributing this attitude to the observer's lack of appropriate skills or training necessary to provide feedback and the irrelevance of post-observational feedback to teachers' development needs:

"And those people [CELTA trainers] are trained to do observation. Well you can have teachers who have no idea what they're doing either, coming to your class and ... don't know how to observe, and don't know how to give you comments. But I think, at least so far ... except that CELTA course, I haven't really had any formal observation that's helpful, or ... it wasn't that much."

Again, this attitude is echoed by Harry, who questions the value of peer observations with "well, I could have told you what they were going to do because it's on the program today", before moving on to argue that:

"[A fixed curriculum] restricts teachers, and so forth, because our curriculum's fixed, you can't change anything in the course, and because you have these fixed points where you have to achieve certain things, it definitely, I'd say it affects people's methodology as teachers and so forth. And I'm sure people are still ... very different in the classroom, but probably less different than they would be if they were writing their own curriculum."

This attitude is also touched upon in Sato and Kleinsasser (2004: 812), who cite the irrelevance, or perceived irrelevance, of PD activities set up by institutions as a factor in the absence of significant change in the teachers' practices.

Finally, while discussing his answers to the survey, Olaf reported that although he had sufficient time for reflection, there didn't seem to be a particularly strong reason to do so: "There's no ... impact." In other words, Olaf feels that the insights, improvements and innovations associated with successful reflection do not spread and the current situation seems to promote solitary reflection, at least in one teacher, thus limiting its value. For Harry, the top-down curriculum and set

textbook hampers reflection in that "probably, because it's almost like it's ... it's not my fault. But that's a teacher problem, not a curriculum problem in that sense."

#### **Reflection on culture-specific learner attributes**

In his reflection on students' behaviour, Olaf has come to believe that his learners exhibit different behaviour in his class than they do in a class with a Japanese teacher:

"[S]o then they feel like "oh, I'm taking English [and] American people, in general, are very relaxed and casual, and I can come to class late, no problem in the way I talk to teacher." Also, because in English we don't have *keigo*, you know, polite honorifics, whatever, so, maybe they don't ... they feel like it's a way of, like, stress relief, I don't know. But they definitely behave differently, I think."

Later, with the interview itself as a medium for reflection, his views on the students' behaviour and lack of motivation develop into realisation that learner behaviour was perhaps influenced by a disconnection between the curriculum goals and the students' needs, remarking that "there are things I want them to do, in class, but there's a long list of things that they actually want to learn ... I want to at least give them class time, or half of the semester, whatever, to do what's actually helpful". In contrast, Harry, even though his other stated practices may be characterised as student-centred, seems to reject student-stated needs as a central component of his teaching, explaining that their answers to many of the questions in a needs analysis are likely to be obvious or circular, such as "[I need English for] this course, the one you're asking me about". This raises worthwhile questions about needs analysis in curriculum development for students in Japanese tertiary institutions.

#### **Reflection on curriculum and attendant issues**

The focus on the student evident in Harry's and Olaf's answers naturally raises the issue of the capacity of curriculum to meet students' needs. Indeed, it was the central topic of Harry's interview and an important part of Olaf's discussion. Harry believes that a curriculum should not only be tailored to students' needs, but also be a dynamic, flexible document that is not completed until the course finishes, again attesting to a disjunct between professional identity and organisational reality.

Olaf is also concerned with the capacity of curriculum to respond to students' needs, stating "the student learning outcomes are kind of vague, and they're not clearly laid out, like, you know,

each level, and where they're overlapping each other, but also sometimes they don't connect at all". When questioned on this, Olaf responds that "I try to choose what actually makes sense, and is the right thing I think to do in your class". This strategic response to policy, and teaching "what makes sense" for the student, suggests that freedom is an important aspect of education for him. While university teachers may appear to have that kind of freedom, there is a great deal of personal responsibility involved, and, as Harry mentions, it is easy to blame external factors, such as a fixed curriculum, for personal mistakes in the course of one's practice - "it's not my fault". Additionally, Harry states that the MEXT policy of requiring a textbook affects both teaching and assessment practices, stating "methodology has been replaced by the coursebook [...] especially if you're teaching a coursebook where all the tests are taken directly from [it]".

Harry arguably refers to the same phenomenon as the "public servant mentality" (Shimahara 1998) when he claims that he would likely be able to predict the approach a teacher would take to a lesson due to the curricular constraints in place, and thus would perhaps not benefit as greatly from an observation as he otherwise could.

Prescribed materials and assessments drawn from the same source arguably interact with the desire to take personal responsibility for teaching – with all the reflection that implies – and redirect it, with the result that approaches to teaching and learning are homogenised.

## Discussion

In their answers, the respondents made it clear that they place a great deal of emphasis on the learner and the learner's experience. This focus on the learner is, however, in contrast to what the interviewees perceive to be a rigid application of curriculum, which in turn leads to homogenisation of teaching practices and restricts motivation, time, or opportunities for the teacher to practise in the way they believe leads to learning.

In line with the reviewed literature, Harry's and Olaf's professional cultures seem out of step with the organisational culture, which possesses two common features present in Japanese education: the prescribed curriculum, and the idea that learners are receptacles for knowledge rather than active co-constructors.

The participants' answers also suggest that even aspects of PD that are almost universally considered to be "good practice", such as peer observations, are not *ipso facto* good practice; just

as it is necessary for students to be "ready" to notice a particular form or usage in language, it is arguably necessary for a teacher to be "ready" to benefit from the experience of a peer observation and feedback, or to provide the kind of feedback which would encourage, rather than discourage, experimentation and innovation. In practical terms, this means that even something as rich in possibilities as observation needs to be managed as deftly as we teachers hope to manage our learners' opportunities to notice. This echoes Day's (1993) observations about the necessary and sufficient conditions that lead to teacher development.

This is reminiscent of an aphorism, spuriously attributed to Abraham Lincoln, about pleasing certain people at certain times. Moreover, teachers are as varied in their preferences as their learners, and as such we acknowledge that institutional PD programs become more difficult to run as the teacher cohort becomes larger. Consequently, maintaining and managing an effective program arguably becomes a role within an organisation rather than a responsibility devolved to the individual teacher. Indeed, planning learning among teachers arguably requires similar practices to planning learning among students, and we suggest that informed and principled analyses of learning needs and desires among tertiary EFL educators in Japanese contexts would make interesting – and hopefully useful – research projects.

## Limitations

As was mentioned in the introduction, we were unable to locate any literature, either in English or Japanese, on the subject of reflection of teachers in tertiary education. Forced to look elsewhere, we identified a limited number of papers on professional development in the secondary education context, which formed the foundation of the interview content and subsequent analysis and discussion. However, although we accept that there are significant differences, we believe the two bear several similarities, including government funding and the institutions having been conceived, organised and established in Japan.

The data represent but two sets of personal opinions among more than 30 English teachers employed at one institution among over 800 in Japan. In addition, the constraints of availability involved in performing the interviews during vacation time meant that we were unable to undertake multiple discussions with the same subjects. This led to the study effectively taking a snapshot configuration in its examination of the

issues. As such, the data cannot be generalised. We do believe, however, that the participants' perspectives on teaching and learning as given in the interviews are likely to resonate with immigrant teachers who teach English at the secondary or tertiary level in Japan.

### Conclusion

This paper started as an attempt to discover common reflective themes in the professional practices of foreign English teachers at a Japanese university. The data from the interviews elucidated and expanded on such themes as the role of the institution in promoting reflective practice and providing opportunities for it, culturally-varying attitudes to learning, the limited influence teachers have beyond their classrooms and its effect on qualitative changes, both personal and institutional. There is also an overarching theme running through the data: how the main components of their reflection seem to concern squaring the student-centricity of their professional philosophy with their concerns for the ability of the curriculum to meet students' needs. It is evident from the data that the participants place more emphasis on their students' needs than seems to be required from them. It is clear that differences in the perception of "good" learning and "good" teaching, in how granular curricula should be, and how rigidly assessment is applied, pose a challenge to professional development of foreign specialists. This paper, in our opinion, presents a clear example of the tensions between professional identities initially constructed outside Japan, and the organisational culture of the institution as it recapitulates aspects of the country's organisational culture. This clash, when unaccounted for, presents a significant obstacle to the efficacy of teacher learning for our two participants.

Finally, it is important to repeat our proviso regarding the literature, which complicated the writing of this paper. We were unable to locate any peer-reviewed papers on the topic of teacher reflection among tertiary educators in the Japanese context in English or Japanese. This made discussing the issues, at least in the academic vernacular, more difficult, and represents an avenue for future research - one that may potentially have a positive influence on the future of university education in the country. We feel that this gap in the literature is an important issue, particularly given the current Japanese government's stated intentions to overhaul English language education in Japan. To conclude,

we issue the perhaps clichéd call for further research in this area.

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## Appendix A - Interview questions

### Olaf

1. Tell me about your teaching background.
2. So you had done more private tutoring and cram school in ----. Tell me more about it.
3. So you said it wasn't real teaching. Why did you choose that word?
4. Has that helped you or has it influenced the things that you do in your job now?
5. Do you see any similarities between what you did back then and teaching English in Japan?
6. So you said two years teaching in ---- whilst doing your master's in ----. Tell me more about it.
7. You found it really useful to be teaching whilst doing the course. You mentioned articles and not having much of an idea of what they were really talking about. What did you find that you made the strongest connection with?
8. You did mention in your survey that you had already done two years in summer school in Japan. Was that your first experience with Japanese students?
9. Do you think that your practices have changed in the ---- years you have been here?
10. So you mentioned the curriculum. What about the students themselves and their behaviors in class? Did that encourage or engender any changes in your practices or ways of thinking about (...) the whole "way of being" in class?
11. You answered (in the survey) that it's your responsibility to reflect on your practice, to consider your practices, and you agreed that it's the institutions responsibility to provide opportunities for that. You disagreed that there were sufficient opportunities for that. Can you expand on that?
12. And for the following questions. You gave a neutral answer to "I am aware of opportunities for learning about and from my practice where I work".
13. Ah, we touched on this already. "I feel I have enough time to think about my practice". Please explain.
14. Now, you mentioned that you use peer observation as a kind of tool to help you reflect and get feedback, and the comments you get from that. But you indicated that formal observation is not a tool that you use. Can you explain?
15. OK, you also mentioned feedback reports from students. You mentioned that it is very important. Can you give any concrete examples of the kind of things that's given you something to think about?
16. Do you find it effective? How do you think it also helps?
17. You do a great deal of consultation with your students. Why do you do it?

### Harry

1. Tell me about your teaching background.
2. Was that East or West (Japan)?
3. What do you mean by real English?
4. And did (your master's degree) affect your teaching at all?
5. How do you feel about a master's degree being a barrier to entry in Japan?
6. Is there anything that stands out for you [from the transition from in-company teaching to university teaching]?
7. So are you saying that you consider a needs analysis to be an entirely student-centred operation?
8. Give your impressions of shifting to the university sector.
9. What do you mean by blocks? Are you talking about the building blocks of the phrase?
10. You're saying that there's a lot of differentiation in the class?
11. Were you involved in the design of the curriculum? To what extent?
12. So, in general, how many hours were you talking of classroom time?
13. How do you feel about curriculum in general, having designed them yourself?
14. What, in general, with regard to Japan, has been your experience of curriculum? Can you elaborate more on what you perceived to be the attitudes, or rather, can you elaborate more on your experiences with curriculum?
15. You've drawn attention to the distinctions between your experiences of curriculum in ---- and Japan. How has that affected your practices?
16. To the question "I feel I have enough time to think about my practice", you answered neither affirmative nor negative. Why?
17. Again then, question two. "I feel there are sufficient opportunities for collaboration with other teachers". You answered "neutral". Can you elaborate on that?
18. I'm pretty sure your answer is going to be quite similar for the next one: "I feel that peer collaboration is conducive for me reflection", which is one of the questions you answered "neutral". Why?
19. Are you saying that you think that the curriculum is actually affecting or defining the teaching practices that we actually use?
20. And then do you feel that the curriculum is set up in a way that affects the general topics that you reflect on, the issues that you actually consider?
21. OK. Let's move on. One of the questions was "learning about and from my practice is encouraged by my employer", and you chose "disagree". Why?