

The Cosmetics of Teaching English as an International Language in Japan: A Critical Reflection

Glenn Toh

Abstract In Japan, discourses around the English language have often been found enmeshed in a pattern of a continual internal monologue. This pattern can be characterised by various assertions about how English has become an important language in a fast-globalising world, followed by disagreements citing fears of cultural erosion, to be then followed by counter-arguments that Japan can use English to communicate its own culture and values in an international arena (Oda M, *Int Multiling Res J* 1(2):119–126, 2007). However, in terms of policies, outworkings and practices, Japan appears to be struggling with ideological inconsistencies relating to the teaching English as an international language (EIL), not least because of the prevailing focus on native Englishes in ELT portals, particularly American English, and insofar as rhetoric surrounding English (purportedly) for internationalisation may rather be found for being superficial and cosmetic – in practical terms, an English for cosmetic purposes. Drawing on the author’s experiences, the chapter discusses important issues that bear on teachers and English teaching in Japan. These include prevailing cultural and rhetorical formations, resultant policy-related indecisions and contradictions as well as conceptualisations of knowledge and professionalism that remain circumscribed and monolithic. These prove to be strong challenges against more incisive paradigms and practices relating to EIL.

Keywords Internationalisation • Language policy • Ideology • Power relations • Nationalism • Hegemony

G. Toh (✉)

Department of Comparative Cultures, Tamagawa University, Tokyo, Japan
e-mail: glenn@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp

1 Introduction

This chapter is part of the present compilation of narratives of EIL journeys by fellow EIL practitioners aiming to critically reflect on the challenges and dilemmas encountered along the way. I have been teaching EFL, EAP and EIL in the Tokyo region for the last 6 years and prior to this, I was language teacher and teacher-trainer in Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and my native Singapore where I grew up speaking Cantonese at home. In this chapter, I reflect on my experiences as course administrator and classroom teacher.

I begin with an important observation distilled from the ups and downs of my experience as language teaching professional in Japan, one which until recently, I have found difficult to put in words that facilitate reflexive practice. This observation relates to how Japan as a nation has come through what one might call a fairly chequered relationship with the English language and how the consequences of this manage to filter down to the work of teachers like myself. In Japan, discourses around English – whether relating to cultural beliefs, policy pronouncements or public opinion – have often been found enmeshed in a pattern of a continual internal monologue (Oda 2007). By this I mean how this pattern can be characterised by repeated assertions (1) about how English is an important language in a fast-globalising world, which are followed by (2) disagreements citing fears of cultural erosion, then followed by (3) counter-arguments that Japan can use English to communicate its own culture and values in an international arena (Oda 2007). Expectedly, there are variants of these viewpoints accompanied by their own supporting arguments, beyond the scope of this present discussion. Fair and suffice to say that these viewpoints, their variants and the tensions thereof do bear on the work situation of teachers – whether relating to curriculum planning, lesson delivery or even employment or career prospects.

The chapter will centre around three main areas of contention, namely (1) the various ways English collocates with internationalisation and how the language is increasingly treated discursively as being important in contemporary Japan on this account (2) that English and internationalisation are viewed as a juxtaposing threat to Japanese culture and values (3) how counter-arguments seek to assuage these concerns and offer the possibility that English may be used to communicate Japanese values and specificities internationally. Relevant literature will be cited to put the issues within a socio-historical framework alongside critical reflections on how they affect the work of teachers.

2 English and Internationalisation

The words English and internationalisation are often closely collocated. However, in order not to take this often-occurring collocation for granted, it is important to understand how it takes on particularised meanings in the Japanese context.

Internationalisation in Japan has been spoken of as being both selective and reactive. By selectiveness, it has been observed that internationalisation often assumes a strongly Western bias in terms of focus and outworkings. In ELT in particular, American English is held as target model with British English as second choice (see chapter “[Teaching and Learning of EIL in Korean Culture and Context](#)” by Park and Kim). Anglophile ideologies in ELT in Japan strongly indoctrinate Japanese teachers and students ‘with the concept that English is an American or a British language’ (Honma 2008: 143). Englishes from the ex-colonies are accorded low status (Honma 2008; Kubota 2002).

Moreover, internationalisation has also been spoken of as being a reactive outcome of external changes in politics and economics. For example, internationalisation has been seen as a reaction to problems arising from trade disputes over trade imbalances between Japan and America, causing the government to moot the importance of looking outwards in readiness for similar challenges, notably through seeking equal partnership with Western nations (Kubota 1999). A recent variation of this is how Japanese companies have had to relocate operations overseas for various reasons to do with currency fluctuations or cost-cutting.

Similarly, the co-optation of English into the country’s internationalisation initiatives has been seen as being selective and reactive. Kubota and McKay (2009) tell of the growing presence of non-English speaking communities in Japan. Yet, English is selectively deemed the language of internationalisation despite the growth of Portuguese, Tagalog and Mandarin speaking communities. Kubota (2011) tells of the increasing need for Japanese people to use Mandarin in international contact. In other words, conceptualisations of internationalisation remain particularised – excluding Japan’s growing hinterland of diverse ethnicities and the thriving East Asian economies while reifying the outworkings of an internationalisation that focuses on Western nations, particularly America (Kubota 2002). The attempt at projecting a greater ‘openness’ to the world outside ironically harbours a degree of convergence and constriction of vision and outcome – with an internationalisation that largely ignores an increasingly rich diversity of cultures and languages in the country’s own neighbourhood and backyard.

In terms of ‘reactiveness’, one may look at the policies and assumptions governing an important initiative like the Global 30 project. The Global 30 project is the common name for the Internationalisation Hub Consolidation Project, part of an initiative to attract 300,000 foreign students into Japanese universities by 2020. The adoption of English as the official language of instruction is an example of the way current attention on the English language is symptomatic of a knee-jerk reaction.

Rivers (2010: 441) describes that among ‘a plethora of threats’ facing Japanese higher education are the problems of falling enrolments due to low birth rate and international competition. To achieve the targeted 300,000 students, 13 universities have thus far been named as centres for running content courses in English. This effort, however, does come with accompanying ironies.

Global 30 Project classes are run primarily if not solely for foreign students with only limited opportunities for the involvement of Japanese students (Rivers 2010; Birmingham 2012; Matsutani 2013). With this comes the diminishing of what would actually have been an ideal opportunity for closer cultural exchange between Japanese students and their overseas counterparts, well in keeping with internationalisation. Discussing one Global 30 university in Tokyo ‘known as a pioneer in international education’, Matsutani (2013: B6) notes that this university has just begun to consider the merits of having more interaction between the foreign students and local students doing their courses in Japanese. The fact that an overwhelming majority of Japanese students will blissfully continue to do their degrees in Japanese on the very campuses where a diversity of international students will be doing the same in English, leads to questions.

Rivers (2010) argues that this segregation is about minimising contact between foreign and Japanese students for fear of erosion of Japanese culture (discussed in the next section). If this is the case, then Global 30 seems to be more about the quest (or haste) to reach the targeted 300,000, rather than about promoting the space for meaningful interaction between Japanese and foreign students, the danger of educational ‘apartheid’ notwithstanding. In their haste to ‘internationalise’, the conveners of Global 30 seem to have missed the irony of a campus ‘internationalisation’ where Japanese and foreign students, in real terms, exist and study apart from each other. The consequence is that the presence of foreign students learning in English becomes merely a personified or commodified enactment of a reductively tokenised form of ‘internationalisation’. For EIL stalwarts, this is both parody and travesty packaged-in-one.

Moreover, while overseas student recruitment offices have been set up in different countries like Russia, Tunisia, Vietnam and India (Rivers 2010), only one of these countries has had any history of having English as a medium of education – India. This is besides the possibility that overseas students from these countries may well be wanting to study in Japanese, seeing that Japanese is a feature of uniqueness that Japanese universities can offer – whereas instruction in English is available in many countries across the continents, be they Hong Kong, Canada or Australia. With practically no history, tradition or track record in educating people in the English medium, the adoption of English as medium of instruction on the Global 30 Project seems to be a knee-jerk reaction, one which can be found for a lack of depth-of-consideration, in the haste to quickly ‘internationalise’ Japanese campuses, while boosting institutional enrolments and hence, finances.

The above discussion raises the point that the kind of internationalisation the country has chosen to follow and the resultant co-optation of English into its rhetorical and discursive fabric are not free of an ideologised selectivity or an ‘ulteriority’ that excludes other wider, fairer or more inclusive possibilities, given deeper thought or greater proactivity on the part of planners and policy makers.

How these incongruities affect the work of EIL teachers remains to be discussed. However, there is more to the matter at hand.

3 Viewing English and Internationalisation as Cultural Threat

Japan has always taken care to manage and manicure its cultural frontiers.

Miller (1995) notes that popular attitudes around the use of Japanese as the national language are linked to Japanese identity, ethnicity and culture. For the Japanese, language is particularly tied in (down) to a monolithic connection with ethnicity. For this reason, there is this understanding that the Japanese in general will feel uncomfortable when non-Japanese show a mastery of the Japanese language as this is viewed as a form of 'invasion' of Japanese cultural-linguistic turf (Miller 1995). Befu (1984) describes the set of beliefs like this:

Speakers of Japanese as a mother tongue have all descended from "genetically" Japanese people who have lived on the Japanese islands and practiced Japanese culture. At the same time, those who have practiced Japanese culture are native speakers of Japanese and descendants of Japanese living on the Japanese islands. Thus in the minds of Japanese the following equation holds: Japanese archipelago = genetic Japanese = Japanese culture = Japanese language (Befu 1984: 68)

Hence, it has been suggested that the reputation of Japanese to be poor in English can be traced to the maintenance of ethnolinguistic distinctiveness (Miller 1995). Aspinnall (2003) notes that 'Japanese nationalist scholars . . . believe that Japanese people with poor English skills should not be ashamed of the fact, but, rather, should be proud of it' (Aspinnall 2003: 104)

Put simply, such discourses and the accompanying rhetoric are borne of tensions between ideologies relating to nationalism, border management on the one hand and the wish (or lately, the need) to be part of a larger international network for the advantages to be gleaned, on the other.

Given such reservations about English, having it as the language of the Global 30 Project is paradoxical. While Japan seeks to shield itself from the perceived 'ill effects' of English or even linguistic imperialism as noted in Hashimoto (2007), there seem to be no qualms or compunctions about having it used in lessons for students from Russia, Tunisia or Vietnam. Interestingly, Global 30 will only offer limited interaction between Japanese and foreign students, as noted above. It therefore seems contradictory that while the country has sought to contest English linguistic imperialism (Hashimoto 2007), it nevertheless shows readiness to mobilise the language where it is thought to be of advantage, in this case to bring in overseas students, a vast majority of whom are, ironically, from non-English speaking countries. Paradoxically too, these overseas students will study in English on Japanese soil and within the portals of Japanese academia, various quarters of which remain uncomfortable with English, cross-cultural interactions and even with overseas students (Rivers 2010). It appears that the need to have English bring in the finances is matched by the readiness to use it for students ushering in these finances, linguistic imperialism notwithstanding.

Evidently, English continues to bound between two extremities. On the one hand, its spread and presence is viewed as a challenge to Japanese culture and identity:

English takes time away from Japanese language study and citizenship education . . . national unity and Japanese national identity are being undermined by a focus on English. (Yamagami and Tollefson 2011: 31)

On the other hand, English is reified as the counterpart of Japan's internationalisation effort. Unfortunately, both extremes might be traced to apprehension: fear of cultural erosion versus the fear of losing out on opportunities made available through a greater openness to English (Yamagami and Tollefson 2011). The question of whether these polarities can be reconciled is examined next.

4 Can English Be a Vehicle of Japanese Socio-cultural Specificities?

An important corollary to having English as an international language would be the acknowledgement that English as a cultural resource must encompass (and engender) an expansiveness, diversity and plurality of cultural synergies, representations and meanings. Whereas a belief in English being a threat to national identity would tend to promote its alienation and estrangement, an attempt to 'plug' Japan into EIL discourses would mean the opposite – involving bona fide moves to re-conceptualise English as a resource that can (1) represent or at least communicate Japanese culture and matters Japanese (2) promote a greater appreciation of diversity as well as cross-cultural and transcultural synergies that Japan as a nation can contribute to (3) help engender a rich reciprocity of people-to-people exchange alongside an appreciation for the plurality of languages and cultures in Japan's immediate neighbourhood and beyond. Hence, shifting from discussing the matter of threat (to Japanese identity), this section will examine whether there is any sense of this sort of expansiveness, acceptance and diversity in Japanese conceptualisations of English as a cultural resource.

Kachru (1995) describes how English has become a medium of plural canons and identities, now richly invigorated with the diversity of voices that come through Jamaican, Malaysian or Indian English. Honna (2008) speaks of a Japanese English with similar hopes that it will carry and communicate Japanese culture and specificities.

Honna (2008) argues that English spoken among Asian interlocutors takes on the pragmatics as well as cultural realities and realisations of an Asian language. He also observes the following:

The collective energy and time spent by a majority of 120 million Japanese who compulsorily studied English for some six years is truly enormous, and should not be wasted. Japanese people should be encouraged to take advantage of the outcome of their educational experience. One way to achieve this consciousness is to recognize that Japanese ordinarily are expected to speak Japanese English. (Honna 2008: 156)

Blaming teachers for perpetuating old beliefs in an Anglophile English, Honna (2008) argues for the importance of explaining the Japanese way of life in English,

for Japanese people ‘to talk about themselves with people from abroad, explaining Japanese customs on international occasions’ (Honna 2008: 163). Kubota (2002) notes in a similar vein that the upsurge of nationalism including a reassertion of Japanese values that has come as a response to internationalisation has actually helped lubricate the argument that English can be used to represent and communicate matters and values Japanese.

Looking at the curriculum, Yamada (2010) attempts to link the Japanese ELT curriculum to the plural identities of English. She notes that English is now used in Japan when people from non-Western cultures interact and Japanese English textbooks now incorporate Japanese culture into their content while recognising the international status of English. For example, she points out how textbooks feature an exchange of emails in English among Japanese, South Korean, Singaporean and Thai students, Japanese people using English in Singapore, or Japanese students doing volunteer work in Bangladesh and Nepal using English.

However, in terms of actual portrayal, Yamada (2010) admits that there still remains ‘power divides among represented nations’ economic status’ and ‘Japan’s insufficient attention to its own diversity’ (Yamada 2010: 502). By this she means that the portrayal of multicultural interaction is more frequently about encounters or attachments between Japanese and people from economically well-endowed western countries – American husband and Japanese wife, Japanese husband and Australian wife, for example. Yamada (2010) notes that no interaction takes place between Japanese and the Koreans and Ainu who have resided on Japanese soil. Citing the dominant influence of countries in Kachru’s (1995) Inner Circle (historical centres of English like Britain or Canada), the reason she offers is that:

This could be interpreted that the Japanese gain the power or authority of the English language through primarily Inner Circle interactions . . . show[ing] an increasing commonness of intercultural relationships between Japan and the Inner Circle countries but also represent Japan’s maintaining its international position through gaining the power of the English language (Yamada 2010: 501)

Hence, despite some recognition of the relevance of English in a plurality of cross-cultural interactions, there remains evidence that the Anglo-American identity of English continues to hold currency. Seargeant (2009) even argues that in Japan, English is treated as an artifact of foreignness in that ‘the language becomes not so much a tool for international communication, but a living artifact belonging to a foreign culture’ (Seargeant 2009: 56).

So in terms of whether English is seeing acceptance as a vehicle of Japanese socio-cultural specificities or whether the sorts of openness and expansiveness that one would look for in conceptualisations of an international English language currently exist in Japan, it appears that signals are not entirely positive in this connection.

5 Effects on Teachers and the Teaching of EIL

5.1 *How Teachers Are Deployed and Positioned in Their Daily Routines*

Thus far, I have attempted to describe the superintendent discourses, ideologies and their outworkings that relate to internationalisation, EIL and Japan. In the remainder of the discussion, I will attempt to link what has been discussed to the work of English teachers, in particular, ramifications of prevailing discourses filtering their way into classrooms, staffrooms and department corridors. Many of the observations are based on first hand encounters with issues that have forced me into deeper reflection.

Concerning this, one important observation deserves mention. In recent years, with the ubiquity of English conversation schools around shopping areas, with the number of workers enrolling for English classes even as language schools are constantly on the search for teachers, with universities fighting hard to raise English levels, and with a university with entrenched traditions like Tokyo University conducting admission ceremonies in English, one might get the impression that Japan is experiencing a ‘renaissance’ of sorts with the English language and creating a friendly environment for its promotion. Yet to be sure, Japan still struggles with a tentative if not tenuous relationship with the language, and this is to be felt even among teachers, who are often caught in the wake of prevailing contestations (see chapter “[On Teaching EIL in a Japanese Context: The Power Within and Power Without](#)” by Giri and Foo).

Of course, from a strictly ‘TESOL’ standpoint, accustomed routines and practices would not be too different from English teaching elsewhere: choosing textbooks and graded readers, contemplating ways to organise web-based learning like on-line drills, tests and exercises, planning for self-access learning including running self-access centres, arranging library visits or conducting diagnostic tests.

There are, nevertheless, certain aspects of ELT which can assume special meanings or take on special significance in Japan and these may or may not accord with the teaching of EIL.

5.2 *Native Speakerism*

Despite attempts at conceptualising a Japanese variety of English, the fact remains that these attempts will need to be carried through by way of adequate lexical, morphological and phonological description as well as deeper understanding of the pragmatic and other sociolinguistic realisations of such a variety. Without pouring cold water on such important work as well as sincere attempts to expose students to different varieties of English, one observation is that in the daily living of Japanese

people and in Japanese work places, English receives scant attention even as its use and/or relevance remains marginal (Kubota 2011).

Indeed, I note from experience that the Anglo-American identities of English remain fairly intact and there continues to be a strong influence of ideologies associated with native speakerism, the belief that native speakers represent a western culture and are the final arbiters of the English language in terms of ‘correctness’ and good teaching methodology (Holliday 2006). Seargeant (2009) observes the following about native speaker teachers in Japan – which is that they actually

become specimens of that foreign culture, their role as instructors of specialised knowledge overshadowed by their status as foreign nationals, so that it is the emblematic presence of a foreign culture in the classroom that is the defining factor for their appointment in schools. (Seargeant 2009, p. 56)

Visible outworkings of native speakerism one gets to see include the practice of getting native speaker teachers to proof read documents (to ‘correct the English’). English language departments must have a requisite number of native speaker teachers to realise their authenticity (and veracity). Preference is given to native speaker teachers when it comes to employment and they tend to get paid better (Kubota 2011). Japanese applicants invariably have to include their TOEIC scores in their resumes as proof and measure of their proficiency (Kubota 2011), whereas the proficiency of a native speaker is taken (for granted) as a given. Native speaker teachers are often asked to pose for advertisements or sent on road shows to attract students. All of this makes for a rather skewed and reductionist form of ‘internationalisation’ while being, subjectively speaking, patronising on teachers, native or non-native (see chapter “Teaching English in Asia in Non-Anglo Cultural Contexts: Principles of the ‘Lingua Franca Approach’” by Kirkpatrick).

As Singaporean and Chinese, native speakerism occasions introspection about my own positioning. Employers may, for lack of another category, classify me as non-native, through my not being white or western, very much determinant features in Japanese apprehensions of the native speaker construct (Kubota 2002, 2011). Of late, job advertisements have been seen using the term ‘near-native speaker’ and someone like me may well be slotted into this category. In either situation, native speakerism is upheld and legitimated as controlling ideology, drawing attention away from more expansive conceptualisations of English as an international language.

5.3 English as Subject Area

Related to the above is also my experience that in day-to-day work, it is not unusual to find that there are actually hardly any practical or curricular realisations of how internationalisation can be associated with the plurality of canons and identities that English has come to assume. English is still viewed as an area or subject of study or even as an ornament or artifact of erudition and there is still the mentality that there

is an ‘English’ culture to be epitomised, for example, by the Shakespeare Country Park in Maruyama (Seargeant 2009) replicating aspects of Elizabethan England complete with village green, duck pond and maypole. British culture is essentialised in materials featuring the maze at Hampton Court, British tea-clippers and the Loch Ness monster (Vaughan-Rees 1995) as well as English gardens, English eccentrics or Scottish bagpipes (Dennis et al. 1996).

5.4 *Businesses as Stakeholders*

Even as internationalisation is linked to business and other entrepreneurial interests, the overarching pronouncements of business stakeholders on ELT tend to have a bearing on teaching. Businesses in Japan measure English ability by TOEIC score. Indeed, some companies specify minimum scores for potential employees. In some universities, TOEIC scores are factored into students’ final grades. University career centres, which are directly in charge of successful student job placements, invariably lobby for this. Student recruitment advertisements even undertake to ‘guarantee’ TOEIC achievement. Administrators may also use TOEIC as a measure of the quality or effectiveness of teaching itself.

In my own experience, teachers are obliged to teach to TOEIC during class time because administrators and parents want to see improvement in scores. Discussions at textbook adoption meetings include choosing TOEIC preparation books. Such superimpositions are all the more worrying when it comes to teaching English for academic purposes (EAP), where drill techniques in answering TOEIC test items come into direct conflict with the teaching of academic discourses and practices.

Notwithstanding the fact that the ‘I’ in TOEIC stands for ‘international’, the point here is that there are localised priorities that bear on English programmes and these need not necessarily service the expansive cultural synergies that belong to teaching of English as an international language per se. Teaching to TOEIC may well be likened to serving a different master.

5.5 *Academic Literacies and Academic Communities of Practice*

Concerning the use of English in higher education, one feels that there will have to be deeper thought given to the teaching of EAP. Countries like Australia, Hong Kong or Singapore have stepped up on the teaching of EAP to students with backgrounds very similar to those the Global 30 Project is targeting. Students from countries where English is not mother-tongue are given pre-sessional courses to prepare them for academic study. Given the nature of how the use of English in academia involves engagement with different academic literacies associated with different discourse communities and communities of practice (Barton and Hamilton

2000), English teaching in Japan may well have to incorporate elements of teaching such academic literacies. Japan in its hope to attract 300,000 overseas students into courses conducted in English cannot assume that these students will come ready with an English alongside literacy and learning practices poised for academic pursuit (Barton and Hamilton 2000).

My own experience here is that both EIL and EAP can be made to work in tandem. The teaching of different academic literacies can also mean fostering a critical awareness of the way English can bring about broader understandings of issues relating to language, culture and identity which would well come within the purview of EIL. Concerning this, if policy makers are going to take matters seriously, steps will have to be taken to prime teachers accordingly. There would be teachers who routinely operate within an autonomous positivist mainline TESOL framework (Pennycook 1999) that does not take into account broader socio-cultural or socio-political issues that bear on language use in higher education (Pennycook 1999). Steps to encourage positive changes in this area will only benefit the students.

6 Looking Ahead

Speaking as a language teacher in Japan, one cannot but feel that policy makers are (1) a little late and tentative in their responses to the challenges that have come with the spread of English (2) opting for cosmetic or piece-meal type arrangements in their speaking of 'international' English, such talk for all intents being in (knee-jerk) response to pressing needs, whether they be to attract more students, deal with overseas customers or be understood abroad. This is apart from the fact that, if truth be told, the question of whether one is teaching an *international* English (or otherwise) does not actually feature that prominently in the day-to-day exigencies of teaching practice so described. Given such current realities, ELT in Japan may come across as teaching English for 'cosmetic' purposes, as an outward lip-service to internationalisation, rather than for deeper substantive communication, meaning-making or for promoting closer cultural understanding.

Nevertheless, looking forward as a teacher, I turn to teaching approaches that promote broader transcultural understandings and empathy. Spack (1998) examines the implications of teacher identity and cultural affiliation on classroom discourses and lesson delivery. Coming from my background and married cross-culturally in Japan, I feel the importance of keeping students aware that while English remains pre-eminent as an international language, there are nonetheless other languages used internationally and transculturally (including Mandarin, Spanish or Arabic). I favour materials that speak of plurality and/or hybridity – passages about Vietnamese Amerasians, Japanese war orphans in China, Brazilian Japanese people, descendants of Koreans or Chinese migrants in Japan, Japanese who live in France or work in Africa – in my hope to dialogise monolithic or reductionist conceptualisations of language, identity and subjectivity. Only with variety can one truly teach and represent English with an international and transcultural dimension that keeps

with English being an international resource. This is while also recognising the possibility that beyond English and economic, educational and political transactions in English, there is already an emerging trend towards increased plurilingualism regionally, where such important transactions take place in languages besides English.

Given such impending changes, in barking up only the English tree (even if only for cosmetic purposes) Japan may once again find itself a step behind.

7 Conclusion

I have in this discussion sought to capture the subtleties and realities to be encountered in the professional practice of a teacher of my own subjectivity. In terms of policies, outworkings and practices, Japan appears to have some way to go with teaching English as an international language insofar as the focus on native Englishes, particularly American English, prevails in ELT portals and insofar as English purportedly for internationalisation may rather be found for being an English for cosmetic purposes. Prevailing cultural and rhetorical formations, resultant policy-related indecisions and contradictions as well as conceptualisations of knowledge and professionalism that remain fairly reductionistic and monolithic prove to be strong challenges against more invigorating paradigms and practices related to EIL. This is while calls for a Japanese English have been, in the main, weak, and while English itself continues to be viewed as a threat to local culture among conservative quarters, in part contributing to an under-theorisation of Japanese English as a variety among the rich plurality of Englishes. This situation may persist for a period of time while articulations or pronouncements about English continue to be followed by voices of fear or resistance, in turn to be followed by voices of placation or counter-proposal, before the start of another round of the same.

In the interim, the effects of such uncertainties on the work of teachers will be palpable. For teachers like me, one way forward will be to work dialogically within the relative safety of one's own classroom alongside genuine and open-minded colleagues and learners prepared to learn and let-learn for better international understanding.

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