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A COUNTRY IN FOCUS

A critical review of L2 teaching and learning research in Japan (2019–2023)

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Abstract
In our critical review, we explore the progress of second language (L2) teaching research in Japan from 2019 to 2023, focusing particularly on English Language Teaching (ELT) and Japanese Language Teaching (JLT). After scrutinising numerous publications from over 50 academic journals, as well as academic books and chapters, we selected around 40 studies for analysis. These studies met our screening criteria of articles published in Japan, which were written in English or Japanese, peer-reviewed, presented original findings or insights, and focused on the Japanese context. We highlighted six key areas: grammar, language testing, teachers' professional development, the realities and influences of foreign residents and immigration, the identity of language learners/users and language education policy. Through our review, we provide notable characteristics, developments, and challenges in L2 teaching research in Japan for a global readership. This contribution furthers the ongoing conversation and sets directions for future research in this field.

Keywords: Country-in-focus review; English language teaching; Japanese language teaching; research trends; social and policy change

1. Introduction

In this article, we critically review second language (L2) teaching research published in Japan over the past five years (2019–2023). We primarily focus on two L2 teaching fields: English language teaching (ELT) and Japanese language teaching (JLT), which have been studied by significantly more researchers in Japan than other L2 teaching fields (although we also consider other languages). Typical English language learners in Japan are Japanese speakers learning English as a foreign language, whereas Japanese language learners are the non-Japanese living in Japan (as students, workers, and long-term or permanent residents) who are learning L2 Japanese. This contrast reflects the Japanese monolingualism that permeates Japanese society (Heinrich, 2012). The Japanese language dominates almost every public domain in Japan and is spoken by most Japanese nationals living in Japan. By contrast, English and other non-Japanese languages are rarely used as working languages in administration, mass media, and education (Gottlieb, 2005; Heinrich & Ohara, 2019; Seargeant, 2009, 2011). As a result, non-Japanese people, especially those living in rural areas where multilingual support is underdeveloped, need to acquire at least rudimentary Japanese skills to live normally. These rudimentary skills include the ability to understand and use spoken language. Written Japanese uses three character systems, and this complexity is sometimes viewed as a burden for non-Japanese people learning written Japanese.

Table 1. The largest academic associations of ELT and JLT in Japan

	Main Target	Approximate Number of Members	Year Established	Dominant Language in Publication
Association for Japanese Language Education (AJLE)	JLT	3,500	1962	Japanese
The Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET)	ELT	2,100	1962	English and Japanese
The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)	ELT[a]	2,200	1975	English
The Japan Society of English Language Education (JASELE)	ELT	1,600	1975	English[b]
The Japan Association for Language Education and Technology (LET)	ELT[a]	1,000	1961	English and Japanese

[a]ELT is the primary focus, although other languages are also studied.
[b]Its annual journal adopts an English-only policy for research papers but allows practical reports to be written in Japanese. Other non-academic publications, such as newsletters and general announcements, are also published in Japanese.
Source: Scholarly Society Directory by Science Council of Japan. https://gakkai.scj.go.jp/.

2. ELT and JLT research communities

A wide range of L2 research has been conducted in Japan, including studies about the L2 teaching of Chinese, French, German, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and other non-Japanese languages, Japanese Sign Language, and heritage languages, particularly Ainu and Ryukyuan (Heinrich & Ohara, 2019). Among these, the ELT and JLT communities have the largest number of researchers. Table 1 lists L2 teaching associations with at least 1,000 members. They are, in alphabetical order of acronyms, the Association for Japanese Language Education (AJLE), the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET), the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), the Japan Society of English Language Education (JASELE) and the Japan Association for Language Education and Technology (LET). In addition to these major associations, there are more than 50 academic communities with fewer than 1,000 members that examine L2 teaching and related fields. Some of these are sub-branches of the major associations, while others concentrate on specific subfields of L2 research, such as language testing or language policy.

Both ELT and JLT have a long tradition in Japan. In Japan, ELT can be traced back to the early nineteenth century and JLT to the seventh century.[1] Although their research communities existed in pre-war Japan (e.g. 英語教授研究所 [the Institute for Research in English Teaching] founded in 1923; 日本語教育振興会 [the Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education] founded in 1940), their contemporary academic associations were formed after WWII (Stewart & Miyahara, 2016). For example, LET, the first contemporary ELT academic association, was founded in 1961, earlier than some renowned international associations (such as the TESOL International Association and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language [IATEFL], founded in 1966 and 1967, respectively).

3. Literature selection policy

3.1. Procedure and criteria for selection

We carried out our review project using the following procedure: **(1) Primary screening** (August–December 2022). First, we extensively searched databases, such as CiNii (explained below), Google Scholar, and the National Diet Library of Japan. Then, focusing on the abstracts, we identified and compiled a pool of literature that met the six criteria, which are topics, place of publication, language of publication, quality control, original findings or insights, and contextuality (detailed in the

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next paragraph), making them potential candidates for our critical review. In this process, we prioritised the first criterion (i.e. topics) over the other criteria. Specifically, we initially identified six topics for our review based on the study of research trends (discussed in Section 4) and collected the literature relevant to these topics. We then applied the remaining five criteria to the subsequent screening process. As a result, we collected approximately 300 pieces of literature. **(2) Secondary screening** (January–August 2023). We examined these potential candidates carefully and discussed extensively whether each publication should be included in our review paper. Consequently, we selected approximately 80 pieces of work. **(3) Final decision** (September 2023–January 2024). During the writing process of this paper, we meticulously re-examined and deliberated on potential candidates, ultimately narrowing them down to about 40 works that were more highly recommended[2] for this review than others. We also reviewed recent articles published after August 2023, as necessary.

The six criteria were elaborated in more detail as follows:

- **Topics.** We chose six topics for our review, the selection process of which is elaborated on in Section 4. The studies included in our review are related to at least one of these topics.
- **Place of publication**. The studies selected for our review were published in Japan rather than in international journals or books.
- **Language of publication**. They were written in either English or Japanese.
- **Quality control**. The included studies underwent rigorous peer reviews by researchers or editors. Consequently, we focused on papers in academic journals, conference proceedings and books, including book chapters.
- **Original findings or insights**. The included studies were theoretical or empirical studies that presented novel findings or insights explicitly. We excluded replication studies, summaries of the previous work (except for narrative and systematic review studies), survey reports, and practical reports.
- **Contextuality**. The included studies addressed research questions related to specific issues in Japan. We excluded literature that focused on research questions unrelated to the socio-cultural context of Japan (e.g. cognitive sciences and case studies of other countries), as these types of work are less relevant to the scope of the 'Country in Focus' review.

Here, we elaborate on the criterion of the language of publication. Although authors of previous 'Country in Focus' papers in *Language Teaching* selected only articles written in English for the convenience of the global readership (e.g. Aydınlı & Ortaçtepe, 2018; Cornwell et al., 2007), we reviewed the literature in both English and Japanese. We argue that this selection policy is justifiable considering the academic contexts surrounding ELT and JLT in Japan. For example, Japanese academia, especially the humanities and social sciences communities, has a long tradition of prioritising publication in Japanese (Goto, 2018; Y. Sugimoto, 2017). The major language teaching associations, including those listed in Table 1, have also published numerous works in Japanese. Although English also serves as a common language in certain research communities, the majority of which are non-Japanese-speaking (e.g. JALT) or are interested in universal knowledge that is independent of specific socio-cultural phenomena (e.g. linguistic theories, cognitive science and global phenomena), Japanese is generally preferred when discussing local or context-specific knowledge, such as policy, media discourse, and domestic issues. The primary audience for these themes is usually Japanese speakers (either as an L1 or L2), and Japanese publications present little language barrier to them. Unlike English publications, Japanese publications allow authors to omit contextualisation that is self-evident and unnecessary to a Japanese-speaking readership, thereby concentrating on more detailed analyses to offer new insights. This tendency is even stronger among JLT researchers, who typically publish advanced research in Japanese rather than in English. These facts indicate that an English-only selection policy inevitably leads to significant selection bias. Furthermore, recent advancements in machine translation have substantially reduced the language barriers that previous review studies have faced, making it much

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Table 2. Types of publications

	Available Languages (Eng/Jpn)	Open Access (OA) Policy	Review Policy	Accessed Via
Journals of academic associations:				
Those published by national-level associations	Eng/Jpn (depends on the paper)	OA[a]	Peer-reviewed	Associations' websites or databases
Those published by sub-branches	Eng/Jpn (depends on the paper)	OA[a]	Peer-reviewed	Associations' websites or databases
Conference proceedings of academic associations	Eng/Jpn (depends on the paper)	OA	Depends on conferences	Associations' websites
Academic books published by domestic publishers	Mainly Jpn	Non-OA	Reviewed only by editors	Databases

[a]Except for the latest issues.

easier to review non-English language publications. Although machine translation between Japanese and English used to be technologically challenging compared to translations between European languages due to differences in writing systems and linguistic distance, some emerging translation systems[3] have reduced this barrier dramatically. This current condition suggests that the language barriers for global readership are considerably lower than they were a decade ago, although a basic understanding of the Japanese language is still necessary, especially when evaluating translation results.

3.2. Types of publications reviewed

In this section, we elaborate on the characteristics of publications, including journals, conference proceedings, and books, in more detail (see Table 2). Academic journals and conference proceedings are most common as a medium of research publication in Japan, and domestic associations of L2 teaching issue numerous peer-reviewed journals and proceedings every year. Not only national-level associations but also their sub-branches (local chapters and special interest groups) often issue their own peer-reviewed journals (see Appendix 1). Most of these journals are open access, except for the latest issues, and can be accessed via the association websites. These journals are also usually registered in CiNii,[4] one of the most useful and comprehensive databases for surveying the state of research in Japan. A difference between national journals, local or sub-branch journals, and conference proceedings lies in the competitiveness of publishing papers. Papers tend to be scrutinised more rigorously in the peer-review process in national-level journals than in sub-branch journals and conference proceedings.

Academic books published by domestic publishers also play a significant part in ELT and JLT research communities in Japan. Most of these books, if not all, are written in Japanese, making it more difficult to reach a global readership than it would be for academic journals. However, the Japanese humanities community sometimes places greater emphasis on books as publication media than on journals (Goto, 2018); thus, we included books in our review list. Academic books in Japan are rarely peer-reviewed, and quality control for such books usually depends on the scrutiny of editors (professional editors or scholars in charge of editing a specific book). However, academic books are usually based on the authors' own peer-reviewed works, such as refereed journals and PhD dissertations, and we considered the quality of academic books to be at a similar level as that of peer-reviewed journals.

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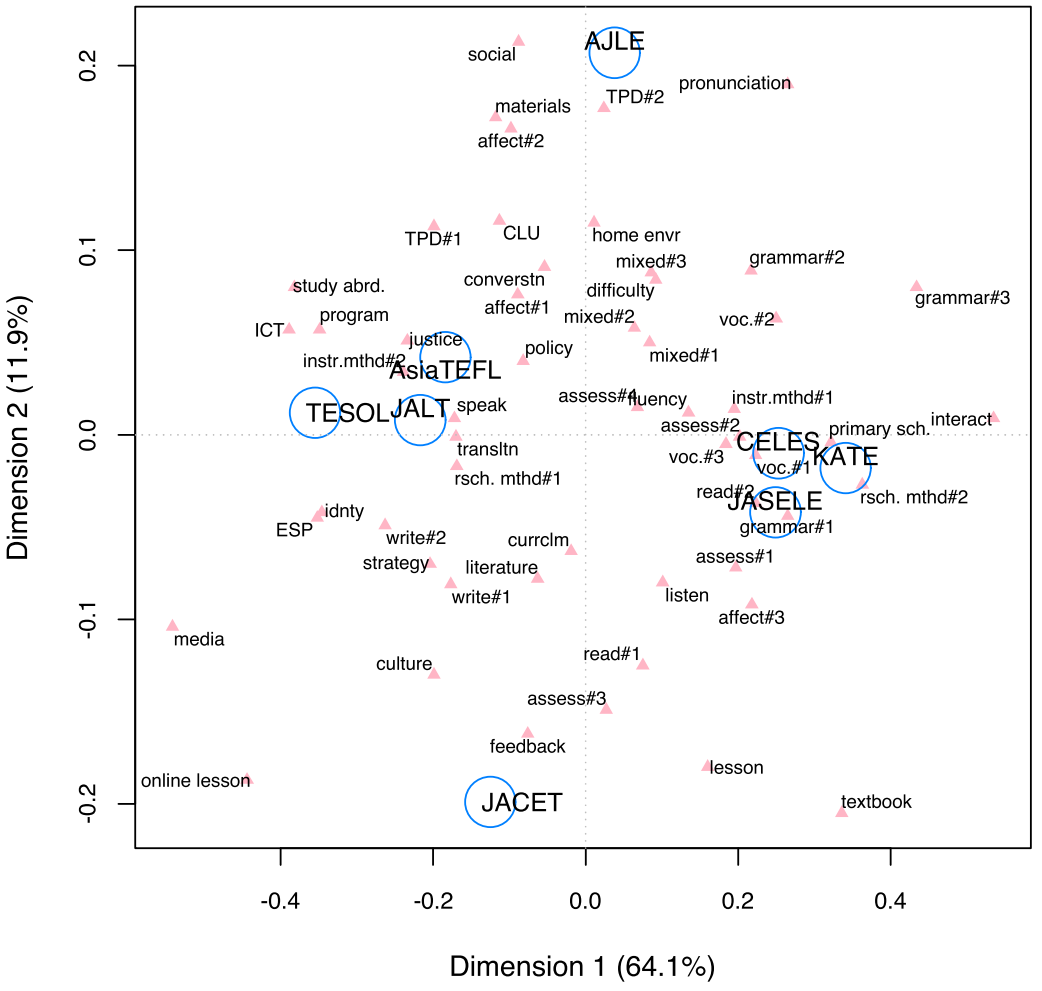

Figure 1. Correspondence analysis of research trends and conferences.
Note: This plot is extracted from Terasawa (2023). The acronyms of the conferences are as follows: **AJLE**: Association for Japanese Language Education; **CELES**: The Chubu English Language Education Society; **JACET**: The Japan Association of College English Teachers; **JALT**: The Japan Association for Language Teaching; **JASELE**: The Japan Society of English Language Education; **KATE**: Kanto-koshinetsu Association of Teachers of English; **TESOL**: TESOL International Association. For the topic labels, see Appendix 2.

4. Topics in focus

In this review, we focused on six topics that characterise ELT and JLT research in Japan. These topics were chosen based on Terasawa's (2023) text mining study of academic trends in L2 teaching research. Terasawa used a structural topic model to analyse conference abstracts and compare the trends between domestic conferences (including AJLE, JASELE, JALT, and JACET) and international conferences (TESOL International Association and AsiaTEFL). He revealed that while Japanese academic communities generally exhibit similar trends to those of international ones, Japanese conferences tend to show more interest in certain topics than international conferences.

Figure 1 is an extract from Terasawa (2023), which depicts the correspondence between conferences and research topics. For instance, this figure shows that grammar-related topics are concentrated around domestic ELT associations, such as JASELE, KATE, and CELES (KATE and CELES are local academic ELT associations associated with JASELE). This depiction suggests that

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Japanese ELT researchers are more inclined to conduct grammar-related research than international ELT researchers. Similarly, other academic communities also demonstrate preferences for specific research topics.

Based on these patterns, we identified three important topics that characterise the current research trends in Japanese ELT and JLT: (1) grammar (illustrated as 'grammar#1′, 'grammar#2,' and 'grammar#3' in Fig. 1), (2) language tests ('assess#2'), and (3) teachers' professional development ('TPD#2'). Previous research has identified these topics as major areas of focus in language teaching studies in Japan (Honda et al., 2019; Terasawa, 2023). We selected three additional topics that reflect recent general education and social trends in Japan (detailed in the next section): (4) foreigners and immigration, (5) identity, and (6) language education policy. The selection of these six topics,[5] particularly the last three, essentially reflects our interpretations and discussions. We acknowledge that our research interests and positionalities have significantly influenced our review process, as both authors of this paper have been committed to a social scientific approach and have studied language education through a critical lens that emphasises the social context of Japan. However, to gain a wider and more balanced perspective, we consulted our fellow researchers informally about these research trends and were provided with important pieces of literature to scrutinise during the screening process.

5. Overview of sociolinguistic and educational circumstances

Before presenting our review, we briefly describe the sociolinguistic and L2 educational conditions in Japan, with a special focus on the six topics listed above. For a comprehensive detailed description of these conditions, refer to works such as Asahi et al. (2022) and Heinrich and Ohara (2019).

5.1. Status of Japanese and English

Although the Japanese language has numerous regional variants that vary greatly in pronunciation, form, and meaning, most Japanese citizens living in Japan comprehend standard Japanese. This condition has contributed to the propagation of the myth of Japan as a monolingual society (Heinrich, 2012), but the country has a considerable degree of linguistic diversity shaped by many linguistic minority groups. They include indigenous groups (Ainu and Ryukyuans), people of Korean and Chinese descent, *Nikkei* (Japanese-descent) Brazilians and other Latin Americans, native signers of the Japanese Sign Language, and immigrants and international students, whose numbers have surged in recent years (Gottlieb, 2005; Heinrich & Ohara, 2019). By contrast, native English speakers, regardless of whether they are Japanese citizens or non-Japanese residents, form a tiny minority in Japan. Similarly, Japanese users of English (L2 users) account for a small fraction of the population. As some social surveys have revealed (Terasawa, 2018), approximately 5% of the total population use English daily. Despite this demographic situation, English is considered more important than any other non-Japanese language. In secondary and tertiary education, English as a foreign language has dominated many other subjects since the Meiji Restoration (1868). The post-war education reform initiated after the surrender of Japan in WWII (1945) provided English with a more rigid status in secondary schools. Moreover, English is considered one of the most important subjects for educational success, especially in entrance exams to the upper levels of schools. As a result, all students have studied the language as a *de facto* compulsory subject since the 1950s (Terasawa, 2018, pp. 289–290). Today, most Japanese people have at least six years of English study experience at the secondary level.

This status of English reflects both historical trajectories and current globalisation. One of the most important factors in the historical background dates to the Meiji Restoration and a myriad of social reforms implemented after it, during which the Japanese government put tremendous emphasis on English as a source of knowledge for modernising its social systems and industries. Since Japan's surrender in 1945, the importance of English has further increased, as Japan developed strong political, economic, and cultural ties with the US through the US occupation in 1945–1952 and the

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US–Japan alliance from 1952. In addition, contemporary globalisation has boosted the importance of the language, which urges the Japanese government to introduce many ELT reforms (discussed in Section 5.3).

5.2. Linguistic tradition of ELT and JLT research

From its inception in the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, L2 education research in Japan was mainly led by linguists and literary scholars. Most of these scholars were Japanese, but they included some internationally renowned British and American linguists, such as Harold E. Palmer (1877–1949) and A. S. Hornby (1898–1978). This academic tradition of being led by linguists continues today. As illustrated in Fig. 1, ELT and JLT research communities in Japan tend to focus more on linguistic analysis, particularly the teaching and learning of grammar, than international ELT communities do. Such a linguistic orientation has been integrated with the relatively recent development of scientific studies of language learning and teaching, which first emerged in Japan during the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, Japanese L2 researchers have explored the language acquisition of major linguistic aspects (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), classroom instruction for these aspects, and language testing, including standardised tests, entrance exams, and achievement tests. Specifically, language testing has long received considerable attention, which can be attributed not only to the aforementioned linguistic tradition but also to the traditional test culture developed in East Asia (Amano, 1990; Onaka, 2019). In the last decade, this trend appears to have been accelerated by recent language testing reforms (discussed in 5.3 and 6.2).

This linguistic orientation may imply a relative lack of attention to non-linguistic issues. As Fig. 1 shows, Japanese ELT researchers, especially domestic ELT conferences, tend to show less interest in issues related to teachers and teachers' professional development (TPD). By contrast, JLT researchers pay much attention to this issue, likely because of the social conditions surrounding JLT. Japanese primary and secondary schools provide only L1 Japanese education for the majority of Japanese students but offer no formal L2 Japanese education for non-native speakers. Consequently, the government has not developed a teaching licence system for L2 Japanese. This situation began to change in 2023, when the government decided to establish new training and qualification systems for L2 Japanese teachers. However, the status of Japanese language teachers remains precarious because the future demand for qualified teachers has not been clearly projected (as discussed in Section 6.3).

5.3. Recent social and political changes

In recent years, Japanese ELT and JLT have experienced significant social changes and educational reforms. One is concerned with the increase in non-Japanese workers and residents, many of whom are non-native Japanese speakers, with these populations steadily increasing over the past 30 years except during certain periods, such as the Great Recession, the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2013–2023; Ministry of Justice of Japan, 2013–2022). Although immigration levels in Japan remain well below those in most developed countries (OECD/European Commission, 2023), the ongoing increase in non-Japanese residents has had a tremendous impact on Japanese society, creating a soaring demand for JLT. As a result, JLT communities are struggling to establish appropriate approaches to include these non-Japanese residents in Japanese society linguistically and socially (see Segawa, 2012, for the inclusion discourse in post-war JLT research). Consequently, JLT researchers are paying greater attention than ever before to the issue of immigration and foreigners' identities as L2 learners/users of Japanese.

Recent years have also witnessed radical policy changes. In terms of JLT, the Japanese government enacted the Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education in 2019, in response to the growing demand for JLT. In terms of ELT, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has implemented many ELT reforms over the past 20 years (Aspinall, 2022; Erikawa, 2018;

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Hashimoto & Glasgow, 2021). These reforms include the *Action plan to cultivate Japanese with English abilities* (MEXT, 2003a), the *Five proposals* and *Specific measures for developing proficiency in English for international communication* (MEXT, 2011) and the *Report on future measures to improve and enhance English language education: Five recommendations for English language education reform in response to globalization* (MEXT, 2014a). One of the most important recent reforms was to make English a mandatory formal subject in all primary schools in 2020 (Terasawa, 2022). Another reform that provoked heated debates nationwide was a series of English language testing reforms for university entrance examinations. Since the early 2010s, MEXT had planned to introduce a comprehensive assessment, including a speaking test, to the national examination for university admissions, although it eventually failed to be implemented due to nationwide criticism (Saito et al., 2022; Terasawa et al., 2024).

JLT research has also been greatly influenced by the government's policies, especially recent initiatives to accept more immigrant workers than ever. In 2017, the Japanese government reformed its immigration policies to address severe labour shortages in the senior care and manufacturing sectors. These reforms included the introduction of a new residence status, 'Nursing Care,' and modifications to the Technical Intern Training System. In 2019, the government introduced a new residence status, 'Specified Skilled Worker,' to invite even more foreign workers. However, obtaining these residence statuses requires passing specific Japanese language tests, which guarantee only a low level of Japanese proficiency. This situation has prompted JLT researchers to take seriously the issues of developing and maintaining Japanese proficiency among non-Japanese workers. Furthermore, JLT researchers have also addressed this issue through a linguistic analysis approach, carrying out a project to establish 'Easy Japanese' (Iori et al., 2019), which is discussed in Section 6.1.

The growing non-Japanese population includes not only workers but also their family members, especially children, who do not speak Japanese as their L1. To ensure learning opportunities for these children, the government incorporated L2 Japanese teaching into the regular curriculum of primary and secondary schools in 2014. However, the JLT programme is not officially recognised as a formal subject and is not covered by the existing teacher licensing system. Instead, it is considered part of the 'Special Curriculum,' in which students with limited Japanese proficiency take L2 Japanese lessons instead of regular lessons. Consequently, the programme's uncertain status poses a significant challenge to the professional development of the instructors responsible for this JLT programme.

6. Review

6.1. Grammar

Language teaching researchers in Japan have paid considerable attention to studies on grammar, ranging from syntactic theories to learning and instruction. Their interest has been directed towards Japanese language as well as other languages, especially English. Japanese scholars of English have dedicated themselves to establishing English grammar theories that specifically target Japanese learners of English (e.g. Onishi & McVay, 2011; Tajino, 2017), rather than merely importing existing theories from English-speaking countries. Among these theories, the most notable early work was accomplished by Hidesaburo Saito, a Japanese linguist of English (e.g. 実用英文典 [*Practical English Grammar*] published in 1898–1899), and more recently, numerous historians have conducted studies on various grammar theories developed in modern Japan (H. Ito, 2002; Mozumi, 1989).

Saito (2022) synthesised these studies, revealing the origins and evolutions of English grammar theories established in Japanese education systems. Through meticulous examination of historical texts, Saito traced the development of this original Japanese grammar system back to the early phases of Japan's modern educational reforms (the late nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century). Although Japanese educators and linguists initially relied on grammar theories developed in the UK and the US, they gradually developed their own theories. Notably, Saito (2022) highlighted

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that this Japanese-made English grammar was not only understood as a mere refinement of grammar theories or improvement in learning resources but was also underpinned by a nationalist drive to establish ELT tailored for the Japanese. He also identified that English grammar was viewed as a means of assimilating modern knowledge that helped Japan escape its subordinate position to Western powers, particularly during the era of unequal treaties up to 1912. This study implied that Japan's English grammar system should be understood not only in terms of teaching materials and technologies but also as a broader counteraction to colonialism.

In JLT research, however, scholars have almost completely established a descriptive grammar of the Japanese language, and they are now exploring ways to utilise it to address educational and social issues (Honda et al., 2019). A notable development is Easy Japanese (やさしい日本語), a simplified form of Japanese used to convey information to Japanese as a second language (JSL) user in emergency situations (Sociolinguistics Research Laboratory, Faculty of Humanities, Hirosaki University, 2013).[6] For this purpose, Easy Japanese was crafted using rules such as replacing complex vocabulary with simpler and more comprehensible words, shortening sentences to simplify their structure, and avoiding the use of onomatopoeic expressions. Since its proposal, Easy Japanese has been adopted not only by JSL users but also by medical and caregiving professionals, people with disabilities, and the deaf community (Iori, 2022; Iori et al., 2019). Recently, scholars have paid greater attention to the attitudes of Easy Japanese users. For example, Yanagida (2020) investigated such attitudes through discourse analysis. She first recorded a conversation in which native Japanese speakers explained specific public announcements to non-native speakers and then requested another 60 non-native speakers to evaluate their explanations. Yanagida's analysis revealed that non-native speakers did not highly value linguistic improvements, such as simplified language forms, but put greater emphasis on attitudinal aspects, such as proactive participation and cooperative approaches to explanation. Yanagida's study is pioneering, as it empirically presented that attitudes and communication approaches can be more crucial for conveying information than mere linguistic intelligibility.

Many scholars have also theoretically examined Easy Japanese. For example, Nakajima (2021) scrutinised the development of the Easy Japanese approaches, identified various challenges, and proposed solutions for them. Nakajima argued that requiring JSL users to use Easy Japanese does not necessarily contribute to JSL users' welfare but could hinder them from ensuring their linguistic rights to use their own languages and pose a risk to their assimilation into the dominant Japanese-speaking society. To overcome these challenges, Nakajima insisted on analysing interactional dynamics to understand how communication is achieved through mutual categorisation and how the collaborative construction of the relationship is facilitated. However, we argue that this proposal carries the risk of being misinterpreted and reduced to an excessive focus on micro-level communication events, which could dismiss wider structural issues surrounding non-native speakers in Japan. Such a micro-level concentration could shift the responsibility for communication success or failure from society to individuals, thereby justifying the current lack of institutional support for language learning. As exemplified by the wider societal issues and controversies highlighted in Nakajima's (2021) study, research on Easy Japanese should not be confined to a mere analysis of the linguistic system. Instead, it should broaden its analytical frame to highlight the intrinsic political dimensions as well as the impact on education and society.

6.2. Language testing

Japan has a long-standing culture of examinations (Amano, 1990), which is evident in the extensive research on language testing in both ELT and JLT. In ELT in Japan, language testing research has recently garnered great attention, mainly because of two controversial policy trends: the recent reforms of entrance exams and the widespread implementation of national assessments of academic abilities.

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First, in the last decade, the Japanese government has used entrance exam reforms as a policy tool to improve ELT (Saito et al., 2022; Terasawa et al., 2024). This stance is based on the belief that exams and tests not only assess examinees' abilities but can also influence learners and educators and change their behaviours and attitudes. This phenomenon, known as the washback effect in testing research, has been studied extensively in Japan in recent years. Allen and Tahara (2021) conducted a comprehensive narrative review of 32 empirical washback studies in Japan. They identified positive effects in some, but not all, of the studies reviewed, suggesting that English testing reform is less effective as a policy tool than they had previously believed. Furthermore, based on the list of publications reviewed, most washback research in Japan aimed at test validation (Messick, 1996) rather than examining the outcomes of testing policy. Therefore, it remains uncertain whether such testing reforms are effectively implemented amidst numerous institutional and financial obstacles and whether they have any positive impact on ELT, highlighting the need for further exploration.

Second, the National Assessment of Academic Ability (NAAA), a nationwide assessment of sixth and ninth graders' academic performance, has had a significant impact on educational policies and practices recently. MEXT has used this assessment not only as an assessment but also as a policy tool to incentivise each board of education and each school to improve their education practices. To assess the impact of the NAAA in ELT contexts, Saida's (2022) study is important. Saida conducted a detailed analysis of the English test results in the 2019 NAAA (English tests were first implemented in 2019). Using individual data ($n = 920{,}638$), Saida applied a two-parameter logistic IRT model to analyse the characteristics of each test item, such as difficulty and discrimination. Based on the analysis results, Saida concluded that, despite some items showing low performance, the test was largely considered suitable for a nationwide test for junior high school students.

JLT researchers also have paid considerable attention to speaking tests. In Japan, JLT programmes are usually divided into skill-specific courses, except for the initial levels. Thus, for accurate level placement, various skill-specific assessment packages that include speaking tests need to be developed. Another important context is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has influenced various immigration policies, especially for accepting immigrant workers. Certain visa statuses require non-Japanese individuals to pass a Japanese language examination and demonstrate a specific level of Japanese proficiency on a CEFR scale. However, this has posed a challenge because there are no large-scale tests that assess Japanese-speaking abilities through actual spoken communication or oral proficiency interview (OPI), despite oral proficiency being an important component of the CEFR scale (Japanese Language Subcommittee of the Council for Cultural Affairs, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2021).

In this context, the ACTFL-OPI is the sole OPI test administered by officially certified testers. Although training programmes for ACTFL-OPI Japanese testers were launched in Japan in 1990, the official version of these tests was not widely used because the ACTFL-OPI headquarters set a high standard for implementation, requiring qualified testers to do the examinations in face-to-face or telephone settings. Consequently, unofficial advisory OPIs have typically been used in educational institutions (Shimada, 2020). The last decade has witnessed further developments in the OPI. Notably, the introduction of the internet-based Japanese OPIc in 2016 and a collection of OPI study papers published in 2020 (Kamata et al., 2020) marked significant advancements. Unlike the traditional OPI, which involves a conversation with a human examiner, OPIc features an illustrated character on the screen with whom the examinee can interact. However, this modification seems to have sparked controversy in some circles. For example, Kondo-Brown (2022) raised fundamental doubts regarding its validity in predicting speaking ability in interpersonal situations. She highlighted the fundamental dilemma between conceptualising oral proficiency as speaking performance in real life interpersonal situations and measuring it through automated techniques without human involvement. Additionally, a more convenient alternative has been developed. One example is the Japanese Oral Proficiency Test, which is composed of predetermined questions so that even untrained testers can administer the test within a 15-minute time frame (Lee et al., 2019). However, these

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predetermined questions have the same issue as that mentioned above regarding whether they can accurately measure speaking performance in real life interpersonal situations.

6.3. Teacher professional development (TPD)

There are numerous language teachers in Japan, and their professional statuses vary widely, leading to diverse approaches to TPD. In Japan, ELT teachers are generally more likely to experience relatively more stable employment compared to JLT and other language teachers. This is because a significant proportion of the ELT practitioners are engaged in formal English instruction within the public education system, including national, municipal, and private institutions ranging from kindergartens to universities. Both national and local governments provide these teachers with established in-service training systems (especially for primary and secondary school teachers). Consequently, research focusing on this group of teachers typically centres on the effectiveness and potential improvements of these systems. By contrast, teachers outside this formal system – such as volunteers and Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in public education as well as language instructors in the private sector – do not have access to such established training. This situation has compelled these teachers to manage their own professional development. As a result, ELT scholars have explored the methods and conditions that support this autonomous growth. Thus, ELT professional development has been studied in both institutionalised and autonomous TPD frameworks.

Hisamura and Jimbo (2020) offered insight into linking these two approaches. Their large-scale case study explored the potential of the Japanese Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (J-POSTL), a localised version of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), a self-reflection tool for language teachers. Their study, composed of theoretical and practical parts, examined the theoretical foundations of J-POSTL and revealed its potential benefits. They also provided evidence for exploring numerous case studies on secondary school teachers' experiences of utilising J-POSTL, including its intended and unintended impacts and the challenges that they encountered. As J-POSTL is still in its developmental stages and its efficacy has yet to be explored sufficiently, further research will hopefully verify its potential.

Rather than examine the established TPD system for school teachers, Pearce (2021a) focused on the professionalism of ALTs, who often hold peripheral positions in Japan's teacher development framework. Despite the presence of over 20,000 ALTs working in Japanese schools,[7] their official status is that of teaching assistants rather than regular teachers. As assistants, they are normally allocated to certain classrooms with almost no formal ELT training, limited cultural training to manage their classroom effectively, and minimal Japanese lessons. This status marginalises them from formal teacher training programmes (see Hiratsuka, 2022; Pearce, 2021b). In Japan, ALTs are typically from outside Japan, but their demographic composition has been criticised for its racial or native-speakerist biases. For example, ALTs who are white, from the Global North, and English native speakers greatly outnumber ALTs who are not (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). There is another type of bias: the government, administrators, schools, teachers, and students often excessively expect ALTs to play an 'authentic' role of monolingual native speakers of English. Pearce (2021a) questioned this situation and conducted a questionnaire survey on the linguistic resources of ALTs. The findings revealed that ALTs are more multilingual than typically assumed, providing counterevidence against the common belief that ALTs are monolinguals. Although his findings obtained from a convenient sample survey require careful interpretation, they could challenge the prevailing dichotomous assumption that Japanese learners of English are monolingual and that English-speaking ALTs are also monolingual. They could also provide insights into new approaches towards integrating ALTs' multilingual resources into their professionalism.

On the other hand, traditional views of language teachers' professional abilities are being redefined, and attention to various new competencies is growing. One such competency is classroom interactional competencies (Walsh, 2012), which teachers strategically use to manage their classroom

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interactions and communication, improve learners' learning environments, and achieve their educational goals. Ishino (2020) explored how ELT instructors performed these competencies, taking into consideration the contexts of English teaching in Japanese junior high schools and their peculiar classroom cultures. It is well recognised that silence often prevails in Japanese English classrooms (Nakane, 2007), particularly at the secondary level and above, where students frequently feel unwilling to make mistakes and refrain from expressing their opinions in English spontaneously. Ishino (2020) examined this phenomenon through conversation analysis, and she intricately described how Japanese teachers of English managed such challenging situations and facilitated students' 'spontaneous' speech. She revealed that teachers strategically avoided overtly demanding responses from students because forcing such responses undermined the ideal classroom image. In a classroom, students are expected to respond spontaneously to their teacher, and therefore, if a teacher requests responses too explicitly and too frequently, it could diminish their authority as educators. Instead, Ishino (2020) identified that some teachers employed more nuanced and intricate strategies to encourage silent students to speak spontaneously (or, more precisely, to create a mutual recognition that speech occurred spontaneously). Ishino's (2020) study is noteworthy for bridging the gap between the local tacit knowledge of classroom management in Japan and the relatively universal concept of interactional competencies, thereby suggesting that these skills should be integrated into a TPD framework for ELT practitioners in Japan.

Compared to ELT teachers, JLT teachers are in much more precarious employment. According to a survey conducted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, there are approximately 44,000 Japanese language teachers in Japan, but about half of them are unpaid volunteers. Among the paid teachers, about 70% are part-time (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2013–2023). The Japanese government has not extensively developed a legally and financially robust JLT system for immigrants and their families. This structural condition makes it difficult to predict the total provision of JLT teachers because the number of immigrants fluctuates due to social changes, such as economic downturns or disasters, which directly affect the demand for teachers. However, the government and its councils have not directly addressed these structural challenges but have only disseminated the discourse that the quality and quantity of JLT teachers are insufficient (e.g. Japanese Language Subcommittee of the Council for Cultural Affairs, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2018; Cabinet Office, 2020). Based on this sense of urgency, the government decided to establish new training and qualification systems for JLT teachers in 2023.

Many scholars have explored these challenging situations related to the JLT profession. In a historical analysis of governmental reports, Yoshinaga (2020) highlighted that the government often assumed that JLT teachers should possess many kinds of qualities, including specialised knowledge and the competence and attitude necessary for goal-oriented actions. However, she argued that these expectations were unrealistic, considering the difficult circumstances that JLT professionals faced, such as unstable and low-paid work environments where their commitment was taken advantage of, leading them to provide unpaid labour for personal fulfilment. She contended that, in light of these harsh conditions, placing pressure on JLT teachers to enhance various skills, attitudes, and qualities could create tension and conflicts within JLT communities.

The JLT working condition has also been empirically studied, particularly through statistical analysis. Yanagisawa et al. (2020) conducted a questionnaire survey of JLT teachers and found that they tended to earn less than the average annual salary of workers in Japan. The Agency for Cultural Affairs (2021) conducted a similar survey, which revealed that many JLT institutions acknowledged a shortage of teachers and highlighted a significant disparity in treatment between those teaching in universities and those teaching in other institutions. However, we argue that both studies had methodological limitations. The respondents in Yanagisawa et al.'s survey did not accurately represent the population of JLT teachers in Japan. The Agency for Cultural Affairs' survey may have overestimated the critical situations, as it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic rather than under normal conditions. Due to a lack of surveys on JLT working conditions, it remains unclear

how great the demand is for JLT instructors and how urgently new policies for teacher training and qualifications are needed.

Ushikubo (2021) examined the structural issues surrounding the JLT professions – especially their expertise – through document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews. Ushikubo (2021) argued that JLT teachers tend not to reflect on the goals or philosophy of their teaching practices but perceive their expertise as methods and techniques to teach the language effectively, which has led to the widely held belief that JLT teachers should be responsible for developing their own practical skills. He stated that this belief has led to teachers becoming more isolated in educational institutions, with many teachers having different employment statuses, thus depriving them of opportunities to enhance their teaching practices. To address this situation, Ushikubo (2021) highlighted the importance of fostering teacher collegiality to reflect on the goals and philosophies of their teaching practices together. His analysis showed that introducing study groups in universities helped cultivate a sense of collegiality across different employment statuses and promoted innovative educational practices. The concept of collegiality[8] has significant potential to transform the TPD methods of JLT practitioners. However, since activities based on this concept remain unpaid and voluntary, greater emphasis should be placed on advocating for the improvement of their precarious working conditions across all teaching positions. Further, it is essential to change the exploitative social and institutional structures that allow employers to take advantage of these teachers' goodwill while not providing adequate compensation for their efforts.

6.4. Foreigners and immigration

In Japan, ELT research has traditionally shown a strong preference for focusing on the Japanese rather than the non-Japanese, and has incorrectly assumed that English learners in Japan are all Japanese nationals who speak Japanese as their L1. As a result, Japanese ELT scholars have long overlooked non-native Japanese speakers learning English. However, these assumptions are quickly becoming outdated, as the number of non-Japanese residents and their children in Japan is rising rapidly (MEXT, 2023). This shift is gradually leading to significant research efforts to transform the traditional paradigm of 'English learners in Japan = the Japanese.' Although these efforts are still in their early stages, there are some important relevant studies.

Moriya (2021) conducted an ethnography in a high school with a large number of non-native speakers of either Japanese or English (NNSJoE). In this study, Moriya (2021) paid special attention to NNSJoE students' linguistic identities and language ideologies, and she revealed that their attitudes towards Japanese and English languages differed significantly from those of middle-class, ethnically majority Japanese high school students, who are often the focus of Japanese ELT studies. Specifically, the NNSJoE students whom she interviewed were somewhat pessimistic about the profitability of English and barely recognised its relevance in their lives. This attitude was intertwined with their strong Japanese monolingual ideology, stemming from the belief that proficiency in Japanese is crucial for a better life in Japanese society. Moriya concluded that these beliefs mirrored their complicated status as non-middle class and non-ethnically majority individuals.

Sato (2022) also performed an ethnography of NNSJoE high school students, but her findings differed somewhat from Moriya's (2021). Sato examined NNSJoE students' linguistic identities towards their L1s, the languages of their home country (e.g. Brazil, Nepal, Peru, and the Philippines), Japanese and English. The study found that the students' perceived roles of English varied significantly depending on their language resources. For instance, for students from the Philippines or Nepal, English served as the foundation for a strategic identity to survive in a foreign country. By contrast, for Japanese South Americans (*Nikkei* Brazilians or Peruvians with Japanese ancestry), English was positively viewed as a third language. Specifically, they perceived English as a neutral language that was independent of their collective identity entangled with both their L1s (Spanish or Portuguese) and ethnic language (Japanese) and thus helpful in symbolising their own individual, rather than

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collective, identities. The findings of Sato's (2022) and Moriya's (2021) studies highlight the complex identity politics of NNSJoE students and offer insights into overcoming the simplistic and Japanese-centric assumption of 'English learners in Japan = the Japanese.' Their studies challenge this widely held assumption in ELT research in Japan and demonstrate that it does not necessarily reflect the realities of students. Thus, they have the potential to provide alternative views of 'English learners in Japan' and expand our understanding of students' linguistic diversity, which is relevant not only to foreign students but also to various linguistic minorities, such as those who speak local varieties as their L1, Japanese Sign Language users, and those with linguistic disabilities.

In contrast to ELT, JLT in Japan has primarily focused on non-Japanese residents, particularly in recent years, as the Japanese government has been promoting the acceptance of immigrant workers to compensate for the labour shortage caused by the declining birth rate and ageing population. In this context, JLT scholars have enthusiastically conducted studies focusing on the language learning of non-Japanese residents. Furthermore, unlike Japanese ELT scholars, who have mainly focused on school education (primary, secondary, and higher education), JLT scholars have explored a broader range of educational settings. These settings include traditional school environments, family language management, corporate training programmes, and community-based learning initiatives, such as local volunteer JLT circles. This broader scope is a direct consequence of JLT's aim to understand and support the language needs of foreigners living in Japan.

Fukihara (2021) examined language learning by Indonesian-born residents working in a town facing the issues of an ageing population. Specifically, he focused on the level of success in their Japanese language acquisition and the factors that facilitated or hindered it. Most participants (95%) exhibited basic-level oral proficiency, with only a small portion reaching intermediate levels (5%). Notably, there was no significant correlation between their language proficiency and the duration of their stay in Japan. Fukihara (2021) attributed this generally low level of proficiency to the fact that Japanese language skills were seldom required in their workplaces. Even when they needed to communicate with Japanese employers, they did not have to use Japanese because a small number of Indonesians proficient in Japanese often served as interpreters. They were also able to manage daily life in their L1 or Bahasa Indonesia by utilising the well-established social network of the Indonesian community. By contrast, Indonesian workers who successfully achieved a relatively high level of Japanese proficiency exhibited some common characteristics: they arrived in Japan at a younger age (in their twenties) than others did, had numerous opportunities to learn Japanese directly from Japanese tutors, and were willing to expand their social networks even to non-Indonesian communities. Based on these findings, Fukihara (2021) proposed that the government, non-governmental organisations, and workplaces should provide foreign workers with incentives and support for learning Japanese. However, we argue that it is uncertain whether such incentives would truly encourage immigrant workers to learn Japanese in the workplace if many immigrant workers do not face serious communication problems. Fukihara's (2021) participants exemplified this situation because they managed to work without using Japanese by instead relying on their bilingual Indonesian co-workers. Further studies and empirical evidence are needed to examine this issue.

In contrast to Fukihara (2021), Iida (2021) focused on technical intern trainees (TIT) working in the agricultural sector. She conducted participatory observations and examined how they worked with native Japanese speakers. Although the TIT programme has been strongly criticised both domestically and internationally as a forced labour system (Institute for Human Rights and Business, 2017), its actual working conditions are rarely disclosed to the public, making Iida's (2021) study valuable. Her study found that one company paired a Japanese trainer with a foreign trainee for one-on-one work. In this company, operations began with the trainer calling the trainee's name, followed by concise and straightforward instructions or questions in Japanese. However, in other companies that she studied, a Japanese trainer did not directly give instructions but used a liaison trainee who had extensive training experience and a relatively higher level of Japanese proficiency than other trainees. In this communication, a trainer initially gave directions to a liaison trainee in Japanese, and this trainee

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relayed the directions to other trainees in their L1. Iida's (2021) analysis revealed that Japanese companies showed a preference for hiring liaison trainees over non-liaison trainees. This finding highlighted the critical role of Japanese language proficiency in securing employment, prompting Iida (2021) to advocate for preparatory education that encourages trainees to participate actively in Japanese lessons during the training phase. However, we argue that this finding can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, Iida's (2021) proposal for preparatory education might be overly demanding for trainees because, according to her observations, liaison trainees do not need a high level of Japanese proficiency to handle complex discussions and because companies require only a limited number of liaison trainees. Rather, her findings seem to suggest that language training as part of on-the-job training (OJT) is adequate.

Ogawa (2022) also focused on a TIT programme, engaging in participatory action research on JLT practices involving nursing care TITs, care facility staff, and supervisory organisation staff. During this project, Ogawa and the staff members collaboratively provided Japanese language advice in response to the trainees' requests. Based on these experiences, she highlighted the need for JLT instructors to work closely with stakeholders. Considering the specialised Japanese expressions and high-level interpersonal skills required for caregiving, her proposal could be beneficial. It can encourage foreign workers and other Japanese staff to participate in JLT programmes, such as OJT. However, providing OJT Japanese lessons could face many challenges. In fact, Ogawa's study revealed that some lessons were conducted outside of working hours, not as OJT, with Ogawa herself volunteering as a teacher without compensation. Therefore, we argue that the crucial factor is whether stakeholders can fully recognise the effectiveness of OJT Japanese lessons and schedule them during working hours. The government should also secure this OJT approach by providing financial and institutional support.

Another critical issue is JLT for children. Each year, from 2012 to 2021, the number of young pupils requiring L2 Japanese learning steadily increased by approximately 2,500 students (MEXT, 2023). However, children of non-Japanese nationalities are not subject to compulsory education in Japan, and the government does not provide them with appropriate support for language learning.

Kakihara (2021) explored the challenges of young learners of JSL through classroom observation and interview surveys, and he compared the programmes that he observed in Japan with those of English for Speakers of Other Languages in Auckland, New Zealand, highlighting the inadequacies in Japan's support system for non-Japanese residents. Based on his findings, Kakihara (2021) provided ten recommendations for Japanese national and local governments, which include developing JLT guidelines and assessment criteria, introducing a formal subject of JSL into schools and establishing formal licensing and training systems for school teachers who specialise in JSL. However, we suggest exercising caution regarding his assessment of Japan's lack of support for young JSL learners because he did not specifically analyse the recent policy developments in Japan, such as *The JSL Curriculum in School Education: Elementary School Edition* (MEXT, 2003b), *The JSL Curriculum in School Education: Junior High School Edition* (MEXT, 2007), and *Dialogic Language Assessment for JSL Children* (MEXT, 2014b). Moreover, although we acknowledge the critical importance of his innovative proposals, their realisation will inevitably face substantial hurdles due to budget constraints. Although Kakihara also recognised these obstacles, he did not elaborate on specific strategies to address them. To materialise these proposals into actual practices and policies effectively, future research should focus more on the implementation aspects.

The Japanese government has not yet developed a system that guarantees opportunities for non-Japanese residents to maintain their L1 or to learn their heritage languages. Compared to other 'mainstream' JLT issues, JLT researchers have also paid less attention to this issue. However, a notable exception is Majima et al. (2022), who examined the language skills of culturally/linguistically diverse (CLD) children attending public primary schools in foreigner-concentrated areas. Majima et al. (2022) focused on the development of children's bilingual abilities in Japanese and their native/inherited languages. They also examined various programmes introduced in some schools

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aimed at enhancing CLD children's language skills. Their findings showed some paradoxical realities: whereas the maintenance of native/inherited languages was primarily influenced by the children's home environment, school education played a limited role in developing the children's bilingual abilities. However, Majima et al. also demonstrated the positive role of school education: the school programmes providing L1-medium instruction for CLD students who spent their early years in a home language environment helped enhance their sense of security. The programmes also empowered parents who were not proficient in Japanese to participate in supporting their children's learning of subjects, which contributed to changing the children's views of their parents to more positive ones. Majima et al. also cited a memoir of a teacher who initiated and led this programme, illustrating the school's challenges that eventually brought about innovative practices. In summary, the innovative practices of this school have depended largely on the capabilities and dedication of individual teachers. However, such a limited number of educators or schools cannot provide a sufficient volume of language support for the many CLD students currently living in Japan. Given this situation, we argue for a critical need for broader policy measures and research to underpin them.

6.5. Identity

In terms of language learner identities in Japanese settings, ELT and JLT tend to focus on different issues and phenomena. Numerous studies have been conducted by ELT researchers on how Japanese learners of English as a foreign language confront various ELT ideologies, such as global English discourses and native speakerism. More attention by JLT researchers tends to be paid to non-Japanese residents who learn or use Japanese and their identities as learners/users of the language.

In ELT, Lowe (2022) examined the identities of Japanese teacher trainees who studied ELT, focusing specifically on their native-speakerist beliefs through analysis of research journals and interviews. Lowe's participants initially reproduced a native-speakerist master frame that prevailed in Japanese society. However, as they took critical applied linguistics lectures and familiarised themselves with counter-discourses on native speakerism, their perceptions gradually shifted. Lowe illustrated that they developed new identities as language users, which were relatively autonomous from native speaker norms, suggesting that such transformations could serve as catalysts for more transformative education. Nevertheless, Lowe also noted that some participants showed reluctance to discard the master frame of native speakerism, suggesting that such ideological ELT conceptions are so persistent that a short-term education programme may not be sufficient to overcome them.

Compared to Lowe (2022), Enomoto (2019) examined more micro aspects of language learner identities, especially their rapidly changing and evolving nature. Drawing on various concepts from educational linguistic anthropology (Wortham & Rymes, 2003), Enomoto conducted long-term ethnography in English classrooms in a Japanese high school and examined the fluidity and uncertainties of the ELT concepts usually taken for granted, such as 'communication in English,' 'lectures,' and even 'English language.' For instance, Enomoto analysed how high school students formed relationships with native English speakers (ALTs or guest speakers) during their initial encounters in class. In this event, English speech not only performed a referential function of denoting factual statements or making requests but also served as social indexing, contributing to the establishment of identities by confirming and negotiating 'who I am (we are),' 'who you are,' 'who s/he is,' and so on. For instance, some students playfully asked ALTs overly personal questions that may have seemed inappropriate for a communication activity in formal English lessons, testing the extent to which ALTs tolerated such questions. Students interpreted the reactions of ALTs and others and adjusted their relational distance accordingly with ALTs, who tended to have fluctuating roles and identities as a teacher, assistant, outsider or potential friend. In this process, Enomoto identified the fluidity of some notions taken for granted, including 'teacher,' 'native speaker,' and 'English lessons.' Enomoto also examined the process by which students invested various resources in their communication events. They not only relied on their (limited) English proficiency but also strategically used

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their Japanese language skills, common knowledge about communication patterns and rules, various contextual information within the classroom (e.g. the arrangement of the courses and lessons, their interpersonal relationships, and their memories of past classroom events) and broader societal contexts (e.g. the social status of English in Japan, native speakerism, and students' extracurricular social interactions). Although it is challenging to interpret such communication events fully while considering many of these contextual factors, Enomoto successfully achieved this through long-term ethnography.

In contrast to the ELT cases above, JLT scholars generally focus on non-Japanese residents' language identities. For instance, Shinya (2020) illustrated such identities through her action research on Japanese lessons for immigrant women in rural Japan. She uncovered that these individuals leveraged their limited abilities in Japanese or other resources to carve out their roles within their communities, engaging in 'identity work' (Snow & Anderson, 1987) as a means to enhance their lives. For instance, Monica, who had the lowest Japanese literacy among the research participants, taught Japanese characters to her inexperienced foreign-national colleagues in her workplace. Thanks to this dedication, she gained more trust from them and from her Japanese supervisor. Although this finding is valuable, we note the need to examine how much it offers insights into the broader context of Japan; the current Japanese society does not provide non-Japanese residents with sufficient opportunities for such identity work; rather, such opportunities seem to be undermined by an assimilationist language ideology insisting on native-level Japanese proficiency for a fulfilling life in Japan.

As a counter-discourse to such assimilationist ideologies, JLT scholars see potential in the concept of 'metrolingualism' – a theoretical and practical approach that 'does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality or geography, but rather seeks to explore how such relations are produced, resisted, defied or rearranged' (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 246). Otsuji (2021) advocated for the application of this approach in language education. Specifically, she conducted a case study of an educational project for international students studying in Japan and examined how they were engaged in local activities, utilised a diverse range of semiotic resources, and explored the plurality, diversity, and dynamics of language, society, and culture.

While the concept of metrolingualism has not only received wide acceptance in the academic communities in Japan, it has also sparked considerable controversy. Kimura (2021) critically examined the ontological assumption of metrolingualism through an intensive reading of Emi Otsuji's texts (e.g. Otsuji, 2020). Kimura (2021) argued that its theoretical view of language as semiotic resources, rather than a countable set of languages, has caused a considerable gap in our actual language use and research practices. Kimura argued that whereas it is easy to emphasise the ontological radicality of metrolingualism in an abstract way, it is quite hard to describe specific metrolingual phenomena in a metrolingual way without using a countable set of languages. Kimura pointed out that publications advocating metrolingualism sometimes use traditional, non-metrolingual expressions, such as 'Japanese word' or 'linguistic resources from Nepali, English, Japanese, Bengali, Tagalog, Ghanaian and Hindi.' Kimura also mentioned that metrolingualist accounts often use an analytical lens of language ideologies, but these ideologies are totally derived from our representation of a specific, countable language, analysing the examples of the brand-like image attributed to specific languages (e.g. English or French use in Japan). Otsuji (2022) rebutted this criticism by stating that metrolingualism highlights the fluidity of not only discourse and language but also material elements, perspectives, gestures, senses, and elements of time-space. This controversy has not appeared to reach a definitive conclusion. We need further exploration to examine whether this radical view of language genuinely acknowledges and illustrates the everyday experiences of language users and their identities and, if so, whether such recognition could pave the way for tangible innovations in the realms of research and education.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies based in Japan, Ichishima's (2020) interview study focused on the identities of two Syrian women in their thirties and forties, Rama and Maryam, who

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learned Japanese in a conflict zone. In particular, Ichishima discussed the significance of acquiring and maintaining cultural and linguistic capital under such extreme conditions and identified several key moments in which the two women positively redefined their learning experience. For example, Rama sent Ichishima a message in Japanese stating,

> I don't know what will happen in the future. But I want to study Japanese and create a new me again. It is necessary for my life. Thinking and writing in Japanese is necessary to discuss myself. And then I will find a new me. (Ichishima, 2020, p. 51; our translation)

On the other hand, Maryam had continued learning Japanese since university and had been striving to survive the Syrian civil war by incessantly shaping her identities as the 'new me' through language learning, despite some interruptions. Their lives were filled with numerous crises and they did not recognise the necessity of learning Japanese in their daily lives. However, these cases suggested that Japanese serves not only as a target language of study but also as an image in which learners can invest a 'new self,' and this investment is possible precisely because the language is viewed as a countable set. Since this implication contrasts starkly with the theoretical assumption of metrolingualism discussed above, it would be worth examining whether or how we can reconcile the two views in future explorations.

6.6. Language education policy

Numerous studies examine ELT and JLT policies in Japan. Although many of these studies have been published in English, the vast majority are in Japanese for several reasons. These include the fact that Japan has a long tradition of conducting policy studies in Japanese, most policy documents and minutes are published only in Japanese, and the primary beneficiaries are educators and policymakers within Japan. In this section, we introduce studies primarily, yet not solely, written in Japanese.

In terms of ELT policy, the late 2010s witnessed the release of many important studies and resources focusing on its history. Erikawa's (2018) 500-page work discussed the chronology of Japan's foreign language education policy over 1,500 years, from the fifth century to the 2010s. Erikawa (2018) examined policy contents, processes, and outcomes through meticulous reading of policy documents of each era and interpreting the historical significance of each policy. Although summarising his voluminous work briefly is challenging, one key highlight is the historical consistency of the power dynamics between policy and teaching practices. Erikawa (2018) empirically revealed that the Japanese government has historically employed top-down, ideologically driven policy decisions. By contrast, school teachers collaborating with parents, students and local residents have utilised grassroots resistance movements to challenge the government and actively shape and organise their own ELT curriculum. Due to his systematic and exhaustive approach, the work can be read as a single study, but also as a reference book. Erikawa (2017-2019) was also engaged in a large-scale archiving project that collected and compiled a significant number of historical ELT documents, including policy documents. This project has already published more than 20 volumes that reprinted key historical documents, particularly from the modern to early post-war period, which are difficult to access today, accompanied by commentaries from Erikawa. This historical approach to ELT policies has seen a notable increase in important contributions in the last five years, with key publications including Erikawa (2022), Hirokawa (2022), and Shimo (2022).

By contrast, there is a relative scarcity of studies on contemporary ELT policies that strictly analyse primary rather than secondary sources of policy documents,[9] underscoring the necessity for extensive future research. In recent years, key movements in ELT policies in Japan have included (1) ELT reforms in primary schools, (2) the Teaching English in English (TEE) policy, and (3) an English testing reform. As we examined the testing reform in Section 6.2, this section focuses on the first two policy trends.

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Terasawa (2020) comprehensively examined ELT reforms in primary schools. Integrating micro-level analysis of policy deliberations with macro-level analysis of the historical dynamism of educational conditions, Terasawa explained why the government selected and implemented a specific policy package for primary ELT, among various options, during a specific period. Important findings included that primary school ELT has been shaped not only by global trends observed in many countries, such as the growing perceived profitability of English, the impact of global business and neoliberal education policies, but also by domestic conditions that have been relatively independent from the global trend. These domestic factors include educational policies *AGAINST* formal ELT programmes for primary schools during the 1990s and reforms of election, administration, and cabinet systems implemented in the 1990s–2000s. The study empirically demonstrated that these domestic dynamics, often neglected in previous studies, hold more weight in shaping policy.

Strictly speaking, the TEE policy is not a single policy package but refers to a reform initiative by MEXT regarding the medium of instruction. This reform originated from the high school curriculum guidelines implemented in 2011 (i.e. the *Course of Study*; MEXT, 2009) that stipulated a medium of instruction for the first time in the guideline's history, stating that 'classes, in principle, should be conducted in English' (MEXT, 2009, Article 3, 2.–[3]). However, this announcement lacked legal binding force, and its wording ('in principle, should') allowed for some degree of teacher discretion, making its actual impact uncertain. In this regard, Iwai (2019) empirically investigated this impact. In particular, Iwai conducted a questionnaire survey from 2014 to 2017, asking university students to report retrospectively on the implementation of TEE during their high school English classes. Iwai divided the respondents into two groups: those who had experienced the previous curriculum (i.e. non-TEE curriculum) and those who had experienced the current TEE curriculum. Then, he statistically compared the two groups in terms of their English proficiency and other attitudinal factors. The results showed only a slight difference between the two groups, suggesting that the TEE reform did not have a large impact on learners' learning outcomes. Iwai also found that, even under the TEE curriculum, the use of English in classrooms was generally low, with the average rate being around 20% to 40%, indicating that translating this policy into a classroom context was challenging.

The implementation difficulties were partly due to the teachers' reluctance. Machida (2019) investigated teachers' responses to TEE, with a particular focus on their anxiety. This focus was crucial because the MEXT and local education boards were aware that the TEE lacked legal binding authority and that they therefore needed to articulate its importance repeatedly. The government's emphasis on this policy provoked significant anxiety among teachers, especially those with little experience in monolingual English instruction and communicative language teaching. Machida explored the nature of these anxieties through questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The findings revealed that while many teachers recognised the validity of the TEE approach, they had concerns about their English proficiency and students' readiness, highlighting the need for more effective training programmes. Although these findings may not be surprising, they offer valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of the TEE policy on teachers and the challenges that it posed for policy implementation.

In JLT policies, one of the most influential reforms is the enactment of the Act on Promotion of Japanese Language Education in 2019. A comprehensive summary of this policy change was provided by S. Ito (2019). In his study, Ito not only elaborated on recent JLT policy trends but also traced the historical progression of the policies from the post-war period to the present. He also identified many critical shortcomings, including the non-existence of legal backing for minority language promotion and the insufficiency of JLT and societal education for immigrants. However, we argue that his view of policy may provoke considerable controversy. In his article, Ito explicitly stated that his focus was not on the critique of the government's policies of accepting immigrants but on the discussion of how JLT stakeholders should respond to policies and programmes issued by the government. This statement suggested that he did not recognise the active role of JLT researchers and instructors

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in shaping policy but rather viewed them as mere implementers of the government's immigration strategies.

Compared to S. Ito's (2019) stance, Kawakami (2019) put greater emphasis on the agency of JLT instructors, stakeholders, and associations to scrutinise various challenges of the existing policies and create better ones. In an effort to redefine JLT policies in terms of immigration policies, Kawakami examined several citizenship tests from countries that either welcome or restrict immigration, criticising these tests for marginalising immigrants by assessing their cultural and linguistic knowledge. He argued for the importance of recognising that cultivating multilingual and multicultural competencies within a monolingual-oriented JLT is paradoxical in nature. Despite this, he emphasised the necessity of establishing dialectical research practices among JLT educators and researchers to overcome this paradox. He also stressed that we should create practices that help critically scrutinise the government's top-down definitions of language competence and propose new definitions.

The legal issues of the Act on the Promotion of Japanese Language Education were examined by A. Sugimoto (2020). Analysing its deliberation process, he identified that the act lacks provisions for protecting the linguistic human rights of non-Japanese residents and focuses solely on an assimilationist rationale for promoting JLT. Sugimoto also criticised the perspective on the relationship between the act and linguistic rights expressed by several JLT researchers who argued that non-Japanese residents' rights to access language learning should be conditional upon fulfilling their own duties and obligations. He strongly criticised this view for its misconception of the relationship between rights and obligations, asserting that (linguistic) human rights, by definition, are guaranteed to all humans regardless of whether one fulfils certain obligations. Sugimoto also criticised the act for relegating mother tongue maintenance to a secondary concern and treating it as a mere adjunct to the main goal of JLT promotion. He remarked that the act failed to offer clear policy directions for mother tongue maintenance, potentially contributing to the further marginalisation of linguistic minorities.

Finally, it is worth noting that language education studies in Japan have re-evaluated scientific knowledge concerning language education policy. While language policy studies in English-speaking academia often display scepticism towards empirical/scientific knowledge (see Gazzola, 2023; Johnson, 2013), the Japanese researchers of ELT/JLT policies, under the influence of public policy studies and other social sciences, are increasingly advocating for evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) approaches in language education (see Terasawa, 2018). A leading work on this trend is Watari et al. (2021), who referred to their approach as evidence-based English education (EBEE). Watari et al. centred on ELT policies and practices and interrogated how they could be justified by scientific or empirical evidence. They scrutinised key concepts of EBPM epistemologically, proposed a possible EBEE framework, and discussed feasible approaches and methodologies for creating and utilising evidence. Their approach neither completely affirmed nor completely rejected EBEE. Instead, their work was grounded in extensive philosophical and theoretical discussions on EBPM, seeking to translate the concept of evidence practically into the context of language education policy and practice.

Much attention has also been paid to EBPM by JLT researchers. Segawa et al. (2019) proposed that a JLT policy should be firmly based on sound evidence and thus advocated for the crucial role of researchers in producing such evidence. Their propositions include the following: (1) JLT researchers should fully consider research evidence, and JLT shoud be positioned within the broader framework of immigration policies, (2) the current working conditions of JLT teachers should be surveyed comprehensively and improved based on these findings, and (3) university education for international students should further expand the use of the Easy Japanese approach to counter the rapid expansion of English-medium programmes, and thus more research should be done to accumulate evidence for the effectiveness of Easy Japanese. Additionally, Kamiyoshi (2022) stressed the importance of JLT policy research from an EBPM perspective, criticising the government for advancing a national certification framework for 'Registered Japanese Language Teachers' without a solid foundation. He

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argued that JLT policymakers, including policy-oriented researchers, should be more aware of how language education policy is constructed in a policy cycle (e.g. problem identification, investigation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation) and how research evidence should be used in this cycle.

7. Discussion

7.1. Characteristics of language teaching and learning research in Japan

Our review reveals several important insights, which we discuss in greater depth below. We identified some characteristics of language teaching and learning research in Japan. A notable issue is the difference between ELT and JLT research. Although ELT and JLT researchers in Japan generally share similar academic interests, our review identified a stark contrast in their relationship with established social and educational institutions. In Japan, JLT – especially JLT for immigrants – is relatively independent of institutionalised social systems and has traditionally been offered voluntarily and free of charge. This volunteer-driven approach is evident across all six topics discussed in this review. For example, the development of Easy Japanese emerged from researchers' voluntary initiatives. While the past decade has seen a significant increase in government initiatives, we are still deeply concerned that the government will remain minimally involved in the implementation of various JLT programmes, relying heavily on voluntary actions from researchers and practitioners. To truly enhance JLT, active government involvement is essential, including the creation of legal frameworks and the provision of financial support, particularly for hiring specialists. This characteristic of JLT contrasts sharply with ELT in Japan. Japanese ELT research has predominantly focused on English as a foreign language within formal education, with research topics heavily influenced by the established school system and government initiatives. This formal education-centred trend is evident in this review, especially in sections discussing grammar, language testing, teacher development, and policy. However, this trend does not necessarily indicate a strong and sound relationship between research communities and the governmental or administrative sectors. As discussed in Section 6.6, various ELT reforms by the government often disregard research evidence and fail to propose initiatives supported by empirical and theoretical studies. These JLT and ELT situations suggest the need for a meta-level examination that bridges academic knowledge with stakeholders' actions and establishes an epistemological base that supports appropriate research and practice.

Another issue relates to the general limitations found in language teaching research in Japan, which applies to all of the studies that we reviewed. We found a scarcity of research on recent societal and policy changes in language education, particularly the sheer lack of empirical surveys. As a result, we might not fully understand the realities and impacts of current social changes. Although this research gap may have resulted from the time lag associated with recent phenomena, an excessive focus on established themes can prevent researchers from addressing emerging issues, thereby hindering research innovations. Since such structural issues in research trends cannot be resolved through individual efforts alone, academic communities should engage in comprehensive discussions to address them.

7.2. Research trends

It was not our aim to provide a general and comprehensive overview of ELT and JLT research in Japan, as we focused on the six specific topics from the initial stage of our screening process. Consequently, this paper does not fully represent the overall research trends. Acknowledging this limitation, we discuss three issues related to research trends by drawing on existing research trend studies (Honda et al., 2019; Japan Society of English Language Education, 2014; Kamiyoshi et al., 2015; Mizumoto et al., 2014; Terasawa, 2023).

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First, while this paper has introduced numerous studies reflecting the 'social turn' in applied linguistics (Block, 2003), it includes few linguistic and cognitive scientific studies. However, the actual trend in ELT and JLT research in Japan is the opposite. As previously mentioned, language teaching research in Japan has traditionally focused on linguistic analysis, with less consideration given to social aspects (Honda et al., 2019; Terasawa, 2023). Despite this tradition, the situation appears to be undergoing a radical change, driven not only by external factors, such as the 'social turn' trends in applied linguistics, but also by internal conditions related to domestic changes in Japanese society. One significant change is the recent surge in immigrants and their children, which directly affects JLT research trends. This social condition has rendered traditional views of JLT obsolete. Although JLT researchers previously viewed JLT primarily as classroom teaching (especially at the university level), they are now addressing broader social aspects. As stated throughout this review, a growing number of JLT researchers are exploring social justice, inequality, ideologies, and other socio-economic and socio-political issues. This trend also appears to influence ELT researchers in Japan, as discussed in Section 6.4.

Second, although qualitative studies outnumbered quantitative studies in our review, the actual trend is the opposite (Honda et al., 2019; Mizumoto et al., 2014). The predominance of qualitative research in this paper likely stems from the fact that the topics that we selected are more suited to qualitative examination than quantitative analysis. Research methodologies, being relatively independent of local context, do not seem to show significant differences in trends between Japan and other countries. In Japan, as in applied linguistics elsewhere, quantitative research often involves laboratory experiments, quasi-experiments in classroom settings, questionnaire surveys, and corpus studies. Qualitative research typically includes interviews, ethnographies, and document analyses. Despite this general trend, some language teaching researchers in Japan have developed several unique research methods or techniques that are seldom or never used in applied linguistics in other countries. Over the past decade, a growing number of Japanese applied linguists have used personal attitude construct analysis (known as PAC analysis), the trajectory equifinality approach (TEA), and quantitative text analysis (QTA). These methods claim to advance qualitative techniques systematically or scientifically and possess a unique epistemology that may interest international readers. Due to space limitations, we do not detail these methods here. For more information, please refer to Delgrego (2019) for PAC analysis, Sato et al. (2021) for TEA, and Higuchi (2016) for QTA.

Third, in our review, the publications written in Japanese outnumbered those in English, possibly reflecting the overall trend of language teaching research in Japan, as discussed in Section 3.1. It is noteworthy that we identified numerous quality Japanese language publications during the review process, despite the current global academic trend towards the predominance of English publications, which also affects Japan. However, this also has a downside: such studies are less likely to be recognised by the international academic community than studies written in English (Y. Sugimoto, 2017). Many of the authors whose work we reviewed are nationally acclaimed but not necessarily recognised internationally, and their contributions are sometimes overlooked by international journal articles on language education in Japan. This disparity can largely be attributed to the fact that their works are predominantly published in Japanese. In contrast, there are numerous scholars of language education in Japan who rely exclusively on English-language literature, even among those proficient in Japanese. They often contextualise Japanese society using international journal papers, English-language newspapers published in Japan, and translated official documents. However, this approach can lead to significant misunderstandings, as information disseminated in English is sometimes highly biased.[10]

Bridging this gap requires mutual effort. Researchers who have primarily published in Japanese may need to disseminate their findings more in English, while those who have relied solely on English language literature should show greater respect for Japanese language literature when studying Japanese phenomena. We hope that this paper will serve as a starting point toward linking the efforts of both groups of researchers.

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8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have reviewed important ELT and JLT studies conducted in Japan over the past five years, with a special focus on six topics: grammar, testing, TPD, foreigners and immigration, identity, and policy, highlighting the evolving trends and critical developments in these areas. We acknowledge that numerous significant studies in Japan examine other topics such as second language acquisition (both its cognitive approach and instructional approach), vocabulary, pronunciation, skill instruction (especially reading), and motivation.[11] These areas, being more aligned with international frameworks and less dependent on Japan's specific social and cultural contexts, are often published in international journals. Consequently, we encourage readers interested in these areas to consult international databases for further exploration. It is our hope that this review not only underscores important works on language teaching in Japan but also serves as a catalyst for critically examining research trends and practices, and for fostering greater collaboration between domestic and international scholars in the field.

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Notes

1. The beginnings of ELT in Japan can be traced to the HMS Phaeton Incident in Nagasaki Harbour in 1808, which prompted the Tokugawa shogunate, the then central government, to recognise the urgent need to learn English. Following the revolution around the 1870s, governmental efforts to promote ELT accelerated, with English learning being encouraged nationwide as part of radical reforms aimed at modernising education and social systems. The beginning of L2 Japanese learning dates back to the seventh century. According to Takamizawa (2004, p. 2), the *Nihonshoki* (the Chronicles of Japan) records that Japanese language learners came to Japan from the Korean Peninsula around 680. This indicates that JLT may have been initiated either in Japan or on the Korean peninsula by that time. Another important development was accomplished by the Jesuits in the mid sixteenth century, who organised JLT for missionary purposes. One of their works, *Arte da lingoa de Iapam* (the Art of the Japanese Language, or 日本大文典; Rodrigues, 1604–1608), is regarded as the most valuable work that characterised JLT in the early years. Furthermore, the modern JLT policy was first implemented by the Government-General of Taiwan in 1895, the year Japan colonised Taiwan.

2. During the writing process, we focused closely on the details of each publication, which enabled us to conduct thorough evaluations of their quality and contextual relevance. This led us to prioritise approximately 40 publications over others.

3. Although Japanese-English machine translation was once widely considered to be of poor quality, recent advancements in AI-based translation services, such as DeepL, Mirai Translator, and ChatGPT4, have largely dispelled this negative reputation.

4. https://cir.nii.ac.jp/

5. During the drafting stage of this paper, we considered including online teaching as the seventh topic, considering the significant societal changes prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, online teaching was rarely implemented in Japanese school education. However, the pandemic abruptly prompted the government, educators, and learners to adapt to online learning (Iwabuchi et al., 2022). Despite this consideration, we ultimately decided to omit this topic from the final manuscript because we failed to identify sufficient studies that met our established criteria. This may suggest that, despite receiving considerable attention, this topic remains underexplored and warrants more thorough future examination.

6. The original phrase *yasahii nihongo* carries two different meanings, and it denotes not only 'easy to learn/use' but also 'friendly to non-native speakers.' However, we generally use 'Easy Japanese' in this paper.

7. According to the 2022 English Education Implementation Survey conducted by the MEXT, there were 19,251 ALTs participating in classes at public elementary, junior high, and high schools across Japan. This figure does not include ALTs working in national and private schools.

8. The concept of collegiality has garnered considerable attention in JLT communities. For example, Arita (2019) advocated for the importance of developing 'small, informal solidarity' among teachers and underscored collegiality for TPD.

9. Numerous studies on Japanese ELT policies have been conducted analysing secondary sources written in English, but this approach has been criticised for neglecting some key policy documents that played a crucial role in Japanese ELT policies (Terasawa, 2022).

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10. For example, although the Japanese government has translated many policy documents into English in recent years, some crucial documents necessary to understand certain language education policies have not been translated yet (Terasawa, 2022). Additionally, there are language-related biases in media coverage. For instance, the grassroots-level civic protest movement against the English entrance exam reforms in the late 2010s, mentioned in Section 5.3, was frequently reported in Japanese newspapers but not in English-language newspapers.

11. For a comprehensive overview of ELT and JLT research in Japan, the following open-access resources are valuable. For ELT, see Japan Society of English Language Education (2014). For JLT, see Working Group on Structuring Japanese Language Education of Association for Japanese Language Education (2023).

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Appendix 1: Domestic Journals

We have provided the URL for bibliographic information referring to CiNii, a national academic database, rather than the journals' own web pages. This ensures access even if the journal websites are closed or changed.

Journals and conference proceedings issued by major L2 teaching associations

- **AJLE** (https://www.nkg.or.jp/) issues the *Journal of Japanese Language Education* three times a year (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AN0018947X).
- **JACET** (https://www.jacet.org/) annually issues the *JACET Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12208671). Its subbranches also issue their own journals, such as the *JACET Hokkaido Chapter Journal, JACET Kanto Chapter Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12679598), *JACET Chubu Chapter Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12507388), *JACET Kansai Chapter Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12398078), *JACET Kyusyu-Okinawa Chapter Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12507402), and *JACET ELF* (English as a Lingua Franca) *SIG Journal* (https://jacetelf.wordpress.com).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444825000072 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Additionally, conference proceedings of Japan Association for Applied Linguistics (JAAL) in JACET (*JAAL in JACET Proceedings*, https://www.jacet.org/publication/jaal-in-jacet-proceedings/) also have numerous academic papers.

- **JALT** (https://jalt.org/) issues the *JALT Journal* semi-annually and *the Language Teacher* bi-monthly. Its conference proceedings (*JALT Post-Conference Publication*) also contains numerous academic articles. For access to these publications, visit JALT's website.
- **JASELE** (https://www.jasele.jp/) annually issues the *Annual Review of English Language Education in Japan* (*ARELE*, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA10890588). Coordinated with JASELE, local ELT associations also issue their own journals annually, such as the *HELES Journal* (issued by the Hokkaido English Language Education Society, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA1161095X), *TELES Journal* (the Tohoku English Language Education Society), *KATE Journal* (Kantokoshinetsu Association of Teachers of English, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12522111), *CELES Journal* (the Chubu English Language Education Society, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AN00146342), *KELES Journal* (the Kansai English Language Education Society, https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/keles/-char/ja), and *CASELE Journal* (the Chugoku Academic Society of English Language Education, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AN00145179).
- **LET** (https://www.j-let.org/) annually issues *Language Education and Technology* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA11577049). LET's sub-branches also issue their own journals, such as the *LET Kanto Journal* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12779275), *LET Journal of Central Japan, LET Kansai Chapter Collected Papers* (https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12423856), and *LET Kyushu-Okinawa Bulletin* (https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/letko).

Other applied linguistics or language education research journals focusing on specific fields

- *Asian English Studies* (Japanese Association for Asian Englishes), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12542312
- *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society* (Japanese Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA11510423
- *JES Journal* (Japan Association of English Teaching in Elementary Schools), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12560970
- *JLTA Journal* (Japan Language Testing Association), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12587252
- *Journal on Historical Studies of English Teaching in Japan* (Society for Historical Studies of English Teaching in Japan), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AN10226233
- *Language Policy* (Japan Association for Language Policy), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA12468901
- *Studies of Language and Cultural Education* (Association for Language and Cultural Education), https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/gbkkg/-char/ja
- *Sociolingvistiko* (*Sociolingvistiko* Publishing Society), https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/AA11574834 (see also https://syakaigengo.wixsite.com/home)

Appendix 2: Legend for Figure 1 (research topics)

- affect#1 = Affective factor 1 (attitudes, feelings and beliefs)
- affect#2 = Affective factor 2 (anxiety)
- affect#3 = Affective factor 3 (motivation)
- assess#1 = Assessment 1 (self-assessment)
- assess#2 = Assessment 2 (standardised test)
- assess#3 = Assessment 3 (sub-skills of standardised test)
- assess#4 = Assessment 4 (general assessment)
- CLU = Classroom language use
- converstn = Conversation/interaction
- culture = Culture
- currclm = Curriculum
- difficulty = Difficulties in learning
- ESP = (English) language teaching for specific purposes
- feedback = Feedback
- fluency = Fluency
- grammar#1 = Grammar 1 (nouns)
- grammar#2 = Grammar 2 (acquisition, teaching methods)
- grammar#3 = Grammar 3 (general)
- home envr = home language learning (home language; family bilingualism)
- ICT = ICT
- idnty = Identities of language users/learners
- instr.mthd#1 = Instructional methods 1 (general)
- instr.mthd#2 = Instructional methods 2 (new technologies)
- interact = Interaction

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- justice = Social justice, gender
- lesson = Lessons
- listen = Listening
- literature = Literary works
- materials = Teaching materials
- media = Media materials
- mixed#1 = Mixed: pragmatics; survey studies (failed to generate a single distinct topic)
- mixed#2 = Mixed: corpus; academic communities (failed to generate a single distinct topic)
- mixed#3 = Mixed: CLIL; artificial intelligence (failed to generate a single distinct topic)
- online lssn = Online lessons
- policy = Policy
- primary sch. = Primary schools
- program = Language teaching programmes
- pronunciation = Pronunciation and phonology
- read#1 = Reading 1 (extensive reading)
- read#2 = Reading 2 (cognitive mechanisms)
- rsch. mthd#1 = Research methodology 1 (survey)
- rsch. mthd#2 = Research methodology 2 (linguistic competence measurement)
- social = Social role of language teaching
- speak = Speaking
- strategy = Strategies
- study abrd. = Study abroad
- textbook = Textbooks
- TPD#1 = Teacher professional development 1 (autonomous and reflective)
- TPD#2 = Teacher professional development 2 (formal training)
- transltn = Translation
- voc.#1 = Vocabulary 1 (cognitive mechanisms)
- voc.#2 = Vocabulary 2 (specific words)
- voc.#3 = Vocabulary 3 (actual language usage)
- write#1 = Writing 1 (general)
- write#2 = Writing 2 (academic)

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