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Olha Luchenko
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2844-0441
Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia

Olha Doronina
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3470-4172
V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine

Lena Králiková Hashimoto
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7002-1227
Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia

Japanese Native-Speaker Teachers' Use of English in JFL Classrooms: A Comparative Study Across Non-Anglophone Countries Worldwide

Abstract

The article examines the use of English by Japanese native-speaker teachers (NSTs) in their Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) classrooms. A total of 256 Japanese NSTs from 39 countries participated in the research. It also compares English language usage between native and non-native Japanese language teachers (NNSTs) in their teaching practice. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed globally among Japanese language institutions in non-Anglophone countries, and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data analysis. The findings shed light on the preferences for the primary language of instruction and the varying extent of English language use among NSTs and NNSTs. A global perspective of the study provided an opportunity to draw meaningful conclusions concerning: (1) native-speaker teachers' strong preference for using direct methods when teaching in Japan and (2) their becoming more flexible in their choices when teaching Japanese abroad. Native speakers teaching abroad tend to use English more frequently during instructional time compared to those teaching in Japan. The research also suggests that both NSTs and NNSTs utilize multilingual practices (translanguaging and code-switching), incorporating Japanese, students' native languages, and English into their JFL classrooms. The qualitative study of NSTs' beliefs revealed their flexibility and adaptability in tailoring teaching methods to

different students' unique learning needs and preferences, which is essential for reaching and engaging all learners effectively.

Keywords: native speaker teacher (NST), Japanese as a foreign language (JFL), English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as a medium of instruction (EMI), multilingual practices

Japan, with 99.3% of its population speaking Japanese, is among the most monolingual countries (Andreou & Galantomos, 2009; Chapman & Shinya, 2019). The data reflecting the notion of "monolingual Japan" suggest that Japan, as a country, is seen as a cohesive entity with distinct geographical, political, social, and cultural attributes. This leads to the belief that its citizens share common characteristics. As a result, psychology, language, and geography are interconnected in this context (Bouchard, 2018).

Recent developments in methodology indicate that relying solely on one language is not sufficient to maintain Japan's dominance despite its global impact and has consistently faced opposition and debate. Concerns about native speakerism have been expressed in recent linguistic research, highlighting increasing skepticism regarding the importance of native speakers across various domains. For international lingua francas like English, there is an argument that the role of non-native speakers should not be underestimated (Christiansen, 2022; Seidlhofer, 2011). Meanwhile, in Japan, teachers are constantly under public scrutiny due to a perceived lack of English skills and intercultural awareness (Asaoka, 2019).

As stated by Pinxteren (2023), the language of instruction includes not only the language used for oral teaching but also the language found in teaching materials, assessments, and exams. This comprehensive definition covers different forms of language use in educational settings, including dialects, code-switching, translanguaging, and in-class translation. Brock-Utne (2024) points out that "the use of a foreign language, especially English, as the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, has become a social marker of difference" (p. 167). Bichoualne and Rong's research (2024): (1) emphasizes the difficulties associated with using English as the instructional language, (2) stresses the essential need for teacher training in multilingual environments, and (3) recommends incorporating local languages to reflect the region's linguistic diversity.

Several studies were conducted on ELF-oriented research investigating students' beliefs about the use of English in Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) classrooms (Malmborg, 2020; Nakamura, 2005; Turnbull, 2018), international students' willingness to communicate in English versus Japanese as a third language—L3 (Simic, Tanakai, & Yashima, 2007) or code-mixing (switching) by Japanese NSTs and NNSTs (Hobbs, Matsuo, & Payne, 2010; Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020). However, there has been a lack of focus on Japanese teachers' perception

of English as a language of instruction in this setting, especially from a global perspective comparing NSTs' and NNSTs' practice (Hobbs et al., 2010).

Teachers' beliefs largely drive the choice of certain methodological practices and shape classroom activities, often outweighing the emphasis placed by institutional and government policies (Shabir, 2017). Our study, conducted on a supranational level, focuses on teacher-based linguistic practice. The research relied entirely on the teachers' profiles, as opposed to the formal English curriculum offered at various educational institutions.

Literature Review

The Idea of a "Native Speaker"

Researchers problematize the concept of "native speaker" in language research in various countries, highlighting its ambiguity. For instance, Hashimoto (2018) points out that "although the term 'mother tongue speaker' (母語話者—*bogo washa*) has not been widely used by the general public, government offices tend to use the term in order to emphasize the 'non-native' status of Japanese language learners and teachers, meaning that they are foreigners" (p. 61). The term is somewhat technical and is used mainly by Japanese language teachers, scholars and government officials. The term used in Japanese for "non-native speakers of Japanese" is 日本語非母語話者 (*nihongo hi bogo washa*), which literally translates to "Japanese language non-mother tongue speakers." While the kanji for "mother tongue speaker" might seem neutral regarding people and languages, its use in the form of "non-mother tongue speaker" serves as a label for non-native speakers of Japanese. This group largely consists of non-Japanese individuals, essentially marking them as foreigners (Hashimoto, 2018).

Researchers investigate the role of the native speaker ideal in foreign language instruction. They conclude that it is one of the most complex and elusive concepts, making the label "native speaker" quite questionable (Andreou & Galantomos, 2009). Davies (2003) explains that the enduring interest of applied linguistics in the idea of a native speaker stems from the requirement for standards, benchmarks, and objectives, regardless of whether the emphasis is on instructing or evaluating a first, second, or foreign language.

Moreover, researchers point out that such ambiguity in interpreting this term may have harmful consequences. They argue that the term is unhelpful for rigorous theory construction and reproduces normative assumptions about behavior, experience, and identity. They recommend that language researchers

completely avoid using the term "native speaker" and propose alternative methods for describing language experience and usage (Cheng et al., 2021).

In our article, we rely on Medgyes's (1999) classification of English native speakers to define a native Japanese speaker. Therefore, a Japanese native speaker is someone who was born in Japan, learned Japanese during childhood in a Japanese-speaking environment, speaks Japanese as a first language, has a native-like command of Japanese, is capable of producing fluent, spontaneous speech in Japanese characterized by creativity, and has the intuition to distinguish correct or wrong forms in Japanese.

Besides being a complex and multifaceted topic, the issue of native-speakerism intersects with prejudice, discrimination, and language education. The concept of native-speakerism significantly impacts language education by creating a hierarchy that unfairly privileges native speakers over non-native speakers. Dey et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of challenging the native speaker ideal and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of both native and non-native speakers in language instruction. By understanding and addressing these issues, researchers believe we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable language education environment for all (Dey et al., 2023). NSTs must have the necessary qualifications and training to teach a second or foreign language. Being a native speaker does not automatically make someone an excellent language teacher (Gibreel, 2018).

Mogi (2022) studied the changing perception of English among Japanese NSTs in *nihonjin gakkō* (full-time day school for children of Japanese expatriates) and concluded that "while the school principal and English language teachers appreciated the diversity of English, the school's English education policy and classroom teaching were shaped by native-speakerism ideology and traditional assumptions of Standard English as the only recognized variety" (p. 59).

Native-speakerism in the context of Japanese language teaching is evident in the following beliefs among NSTs about the perceived "advantages" of native speakers, as highlighted in Hashimoto's study (2018):

- They can provide learners with the satisfaction of being taught by native speakers;
- They can take advantage of students' native-speakerism;
- They are favored by ordinary people;
- They may receive preferential treatment simply because they are Japanese, regardless of their actual abilities. (p. 73)

In Medgyes's (1994) study, an international survey was conducted involving a questionnaire distributed to 216 teachers, both native and non-native, across ten countries. The findings indicated that 68% of the participants recognized variances in the teaching approaches of native and non-native English teachers, while only 15% did not observe any differences. In the subsequent research, however, when participants were asked to compare the teaching effectiveness of

NSTs and NNSTs, the results showed a nearly equal split, with 27% favoring the former and 29% favoring the latter. In comparison, 44% of the respondents selected "both" (Medgyes, 2001).

A survey conducted by Hashimoto (2018) among Japanese NSTs reveals their beliefs on whether they think it would be better for Japanese language teachers to be "native speakers" of Japanese. Even though over 50% of the participants provided a neutral response to the initial question, 40% expressed disagreement with the idea that the best Japanese language teacher is a native Japanese speaker. Hashimoto concludes: "This is an interesting finding given that Japanese is predominantly taught by native speakers in Japan and the respondents themselves are native speakers of Japanese" (pp. 71–72). The researcher presumes that the respondents' views on this question might have been affected by their experience since 90% of them had collaborated with teachers who were non-native speakers (Hashimoto, 2018).

The differences between native and non-native English teachers in their teaching methods, choice of topics, and perceptions of communication were noted in previous studies. Chiba and Matsuura (2004) observed that, compared with native English teachers, Japanese teachers of English varied their approach depending on the subjects they taught, employed a different style of nonverbal cues, and were less concerned with conversational skills. The main difference was that most Japanese teachers supported using the Japanese language (their first language—L1), while native English teachers were hesitant to use it in English classes.

Demir (2011) concludes in his study that language programs should be designed to promote the collaborative work of both NSTs and NNSTs rather than favoring one over the other. In essence, a mix of NSTs and NNSTs could be more beneficial for language programs as each brings unique strengths.

According to Christiansen (2022), "[p]roblems regarding the status of native speaker arise within the specific context of language teaching because the concept itself is often conflated with other issues such as language competence and the questionable advocacy of the so-called direct method" (p. 495).

Direct Method and the Shift towards Multilingual Practices

Historically, teaching methods have relied heavily on the use of learners' first language when teaching a second language (L2), based on the belief that it was unattainable to teach a new language without incorporating the learners' native tongue. However, in the latter half of the 20th century, the monolingual approach gained popularity, advocating for L2 instruction without the use of the learners' first language.

Using the target language as the language of instruction is known as the direct or natural method. The direct method is "a method for teaching language that avoids the use of the native tongue and emphasizes listening and speaking over reading and writing" (Nunan, 1999, p. 306). The direct method, despite its focus on spoken communication, has notable limitations. It can be challenging for students to grasp abstract vocabulary, and the method's lack of emphasis on reading and writing may hinder the development of comprehensive language skills. At the same time, its reliance on auditory learning may not suit all learners, particularly those who benefit more from visual aids (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024).

Okamura (2008) explored the experiences of NSTs teaching Japanese in New Zealand and noted that some NSTs valued the direct method they had learned in Japan. However, while the direct method worked for some teachers, many found it challenging to use in actual teaching settings abroad, as students needed explanations in English to fully understand the material.

Experts have largely discredited the direct method (Graddol, 2007). Rather than viewing language transfer from the learner's L1 as unwanted linguistic "interference" causing errors, its positive aspects have been acknowledged. However, in numerous countries, the myth of the direct method's efficacy persists among non-experts, particularly among the general public (Christiansen, 2022).

Research on second language teaching indicates a significant shift towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, with studies showing that the limited use of L1 can positively affect certain activities (Shabir, 2017; Kraemer, 2006). Furthermore, Mori and Mori (2011) emphasized that approaches used for teaching widely-studied European languages cannot be readily or quickly applied to JFL settings.

Studies on *translanguaging* have highlighted that multilingual language users view their entire linguistic repertoire as a common resource to draw from when communicating and expressing themselves. Consequently, language learners are encouraged to utilize their extensive linguistic knowledge of their L1 and other L2s when learning a new foreign language—L3 (Christiansen, 2022). Similarly, Macaro (2024) notes that while the use of the L1 (or translanguaging) and strategies for enhancing L2 learning have been well-researched, these areas have not been adequately applied to contexts like English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education and therefore, have not been thoroughly investigated.

Using both L1 and L2 in class is commonly referred to as code-mixing or code-switching. *Code-mixing* involves the mixing of elements from two or more languages within a single sentence or clause. *Code-switching*, on the other hand, refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties within a conversation or across sentences and is considered to be an umbrella term. It is regarded as a valuable resource in the communicative repertoire of bilingual or multilingual teachers, allowing them to signal and negotiate various frames and footings, cultural values, role relationships, identities, and other classroom dynamics (Lin, 2017).

The difference between code-switching and translanguaging was summarized by Sato (2023) as follows:

> Code-switching emphasizes language switching due to a lack of L2 proficiency, whereas translanguaging is a pedagogical practice that maximizes the use of languages available in the classroom for L2 learning. Teachers should be aware that translanguaging often occurs as a more natural, internal process, based on the speaker's linguistic repertoire and the need to convey meaning most effectively, while code-switching is often used to accommodate the linguistic preference of the interlocutor or the social setting. (Sato, 2023, p. 3)

Code-switching in JFL classrooms was mostly studied regarding beginner-level students (Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020; Putu Dewi Merlyna, 2023). Putu Dewi Merlyna (2023) concluded in her study conducted among Indonesian students that in their speaking activities, beginner learners of Japanese employ three variations of code-mixing: inner, outer, and mixed code-mixing. The data on outer code-mixing indicated English vocabulary usage combined within a single Japanese sentence. The identified forms of code-mixing included doubling and insertion at both word and phrase levels. The researcher noted that "insertion in mixed sentences occurs because inserting a foreign language noun in a sentence is very easy. Not only nouns, however, but other grammatical categories can also be inserted, such as adjectives, adverbs, or others" (Putu Dewi Merlyna, 2023, p. 10).

Muliadi and Haristiani (2020) conducted a study among international students from seven different countries to explain the various types and functions of code-mixing in Japanese language teaching. They discovered that incorporating English alongside Japanese serves several purposes: (1) aiding cross-language transfer, (2) facilitating comprehension of the language being taught, and (3) encouraging students to respond to questions. The researchers concluded that the use of ELF in teaching Japanese is needed to enhance language acquisition and development (Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020).

From the teachers' perspective, Champ's (2014) study revealed that one limitation affecting the usage of *gairaigo* (loanwords from English) in the classroom is the teachers' confidence in using English. Teachers with less confidence struggled with code-switching between English and Japanese, which impacted the extent to which *gairaigo* was used in their instruction.

Overall, as pointed out by Christiansen (2022), the "nativeness" principle (for the use of native speakers as models for non-native speaker learners) in applied linguistics has faced considerable criticism, particularly in research on ELF, which examines language use among predominantly non-native speakers. This critical examination extends to the "native speaker" model in foreign

language education, receiving significant scrutiny in intercultural communicative competence, ELF, and World Englishes (WE).

English as a Medium of Instruction or Lingua Franca

Researchers refer to monolingualism as the illiteracy of the twenty-first century. In the global context, multilingual skills and cultural competence are crucial in shaping the future workforce (Roberts, Leite, & Wade, 2018). At the same time, the worldwide prominence of English is largely driven by the globalization of higher education, the involvement of countries in various international bodies (e.g., NATO, OECD) where English holds official status, and the significant role of multinational companies that rely on English as a lingua franca (Kapranov, 2021).

Until now, most studies on sociolinguistic variation in English have come from inner-circle contexts such as the USA and the UK, which have traditionally favored monolingual ideologies. On the other hand, outer and expanding circle societies usually have a higher prevalence of multilingualism (Botha & Bernaisch, 2024). The complex multilingual dynamics of WE environments raise inquiries about code-switching, translanguaging, language acquisition, contact, and usage (Botha & Bernaisch, 2024; Jenks & Lee, 2020).

EMI and ELF are both growing phenomena in the Japanese context (D'Angelo, 2020; Kikuchi, 2021; Kojima & Fukui, 2024; Konakahara & Tsuchiya, 2020; Kriukow & Galloway, 2019; Morrish, 2020; Toh, 2016). D'Angelo (2020) pointed out that Japan was "one of the first expanding circle countries to embrace WE and other pluralistic perspectives on the English language, known as English as an International Language (EIL), which serve as precursors to the ELF paradigm" (p. 279).

EMI is "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018, p. 37). However, according to the author, this definition is "deliberately open to challenge" (Macaro, 2018).

In their study of EMI in higher education, Hopkyns, Dovchin, and Sultana (2024) pointed out that a major theme in the discussions focused on "monolingual ideologies and the lack of acceptance of the translingual practice, which resulted in translingual discrimination" and challenging conditions for students in EMI contexts. Moreover, the language classroom "would become a site of *translingual socialization*, with activities designed to develop translingual competences" (pp. 15–16).

Nowadays, EMI has been greatly promoted in the Japanese tertiary context (Curle, Xie, Huang, & Yüksel, 2024). However, several challenges have emerged,

such as students struggling to understand and use English in their academic work, difficulties in communication between lecturers and international students, lecturers being unsure if students fully grasped the material and key terms, low participation from Japanese students in class discussions, and students lacking the ability to think critically in English (Curle, Lin, & Aizawa, 2023). From the students' perspective, both domestic and international learners face obstacles, with international students specifically reporting language-related issues in classrooms where their peers have different levels of English proficiency (Galloway & Curle, 2022). From the teachers' viewpoint, since these programs are frequently implemented through top-down policies, various hurdles need to be addressed. One issue is the lack of structured support for EMI educators, as EMI training in Japan has received minimal attention (Uehara & Kojima, 2021).

Furthermore, the ideology of English-only creates difficulties in EMI practices. Although a small number of elite universities in Japan emphasize linguistic and cultural diversity in their policies, the majority still maintain an English-only approach (Qiu, Zheng, & Liu, 2022).

English as a lingua franca is a term that describes:

> […] the function of English as a contact language in communications involving primarily non-native users of English from various international, multilingual and heterogeneous settings. Each user brings a variety of English that he or she is most familiar and comfortable with and employs various strategies to communicate effectively. (Sifakis & Tsantila, 2018, p. 1)

Sifakis and Tsantila (2018) point out that research in ELF and WE has significantly advanced our understanding of the structures, functions, and communication skills of non-native speakers of English. As awareness of the fluidity and unbounded nature of ELF interactions grew, the need to redefine ELF within a more realistic and authentic framework of translanguaging and multilingualism became central.

In his study on the status of ELF in Japan, D'Angelo (2020) concludes:

> ELF makes more sense for Japan than WE, as in Japan the main uses of English are in international rather than intra-national domains. ELF can give Japanese users more confidence in their English-medium interactions, as it does not privilege native speakers, and can raise awareness that each user's unique "idiolect" is what they naturally bring to any ELF situation. (p. 292)

Aizawa, Rose, McKinley, and Thompson (2023) compared the content learning outcomes between Japanese and English Medium Instruction (JMI and EMI) for students studying Chemistry. The quantitative data showed no substantial overall differences in the obtained results between EMI and JMI students. It

was emphasized that the advantages of EMI may not always have to be studied in relation to academic progress compared to teaching in the native language. Instead, the benefits of EMI should be studied independently, considering various possible results and risks (Aizawa et al., 2023).

Some studies are devoted to teaching traditional Japanese culture (Groff, 2020) and Japanese linguistics (Hiroyuki, 2020) through English. Despite much controversy, researchers have also studied the use of English in L2 or L3 learning. In particular, the use of English in teaching JFL was studied by Luchenko et al. (2024a, 2024b), Mitarai and Kelava (2021), Muliadi and Haristiani (2020), Putu Dewi Merlyna (2023), and Turnbull (2018).

Our previous research conducted among NNSTs of Japanese showed that over 40% of all JFL classrooms taught by NNSTs were multilingual (Luchenko & Kovinko, 2024). It also revealed that in these multilingual JFL classes, NNSTs used English 26.14% more than in non-multilingual JFL classrooms (Luchenko et al., 2024b).

This article examines the utilization of English by NSTs and seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are NSTs' preferences for the primary language of instruction, and how are they different from those of NNSTs?

RQ2: To what extent do NSTs use English in JFL classrooms, and how does this compare to usage by NNSTs?

RQ3: What are NSTs' beliefs on the primary instructional language and the use of English in particular?

Methodology

Participants

It was assumed that Japanese language teachers, both native and non-native, used English differently in their teaching practice, and this assumption was included in two of the research questions in this article. We had to compare the preference for the primary languages and the extent to which native and non-native Japanese language teachers use English in their classrooms. To address these questions, the results of the questionnaire conducted among NNSTs (Luchenko et al., 2024b) were also used for further analyses. The sample for this study consists of 256 Japanese NSTs from 39 countries: 131 taught abroad in predominantly non-Anglophone countries and 125 taught in Japan. These teachers were employed at officially registered Japanese language institutions across various educational stages in the following countries and regions around the world: Austria, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Czech Republic,

Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam (The Japan Foundation, 2021).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilized a questionnaire to gather the necessary data to address the research questions. The questionnaire was distributed to Japanese-language institutions globally via official email addresses (The Japan Foundation, 2021). Furthermore, the survey invitation was shared with JFL teachers through professional networking groups on Facebook. Each email included a cover letter in Japanese and English explaining the research objectives and ensuring anonymity. Two separate links for Google Forms or Jotform (in the case of China) were provided for NSTs and NNSTs of Japanese. The questionnaire included questions in Japanese for NSTs and in both Japanese and English for NNSTs. All JFL teachers, regardless of whether they employed English or not in their practice, were invited to participate.

In our study, we selected countries where most of the population speaks a native language other than English. Stated otherwise, countries where English is the primary language were not included in our analysis. The pilot survey was created and carried out in August 2023 at the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa, Japan. It was developed after extensive discussions with Japanese language experts at the institute and elsewhere. The main data collection from NSTs lasted six months, from September 13, 2023, to March 10, 2024.

The questionnaire, designed for NSTs of Japanese, consisted of 35 questions and included a comments section at the end (see Appendix A). To address the RQs of this article, we selected eight questions for the analysis (see Appendix B). The article uses both quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis. For the quantitative analysis, the MS Excel statistical program was used to calculate the data and apply descriptive statistics, which helped to summarize and present the findings. The final section of the questionnaire, where teachers were asked to share their thoughts and experiences on the topic, provided data for the qualitative analysis in which subjective interpretation was applied. A total of 74 comments from native Japanese teachers in the corresponding field of the questionnaire were received and analyzed through the content analysis relevant to the article's overall purpose. Due to this analysis, we selected 31 comments about the Japanese teachers' practice, shedding light on the background of Japanese language practice, the choice of instructional

language, and the preference for using English, which cannot be explained solely by qualitative results.

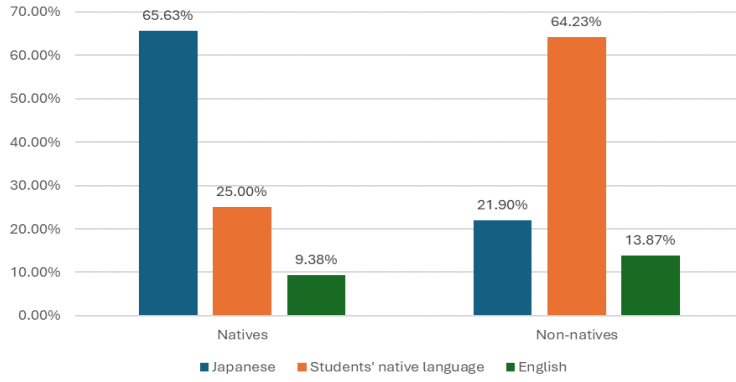
Results

The NSTs' Preference for the Primary Language of Instruction

The survey asked the participants to specify the primary language of instruction used in their Japanese language classrooms (see question 4 in Appendix B). According to the survey results among NSTs, most teachers (65.63%, *N* = 168) indicated that the main language of instruction was the target Japanese language. On the other hand, one-fourth (25.00%, *N* = 64) of the respondents stated that it was their students' L1, while only 9.38% (*N* = 24) mentioned English as the main language of instruction. The comparison of these findings with the previous results for the NNSTs of Japanese (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b) can be seen in Figure 1. A closer look at the comparison shows that the use of Japanese as a mother tongue by NSTs is almost the same as the use of a native language by NNSTs as the primary language of instruction. At the same time, the extent to which the NSTs of Japanese use students' native language is close to the extent to which NNSTs use Japanese during the JFL lesson, and the difference is only 3.10%. The difference increases (by 4.49%) when using English as the primary language of instruction but cannot be considered significant.

Figure 1

The Comparison of the Primary Language of Instruction Used in Classes of the Native (N = 256) and Non-native Japanese Teachers (N = 274)



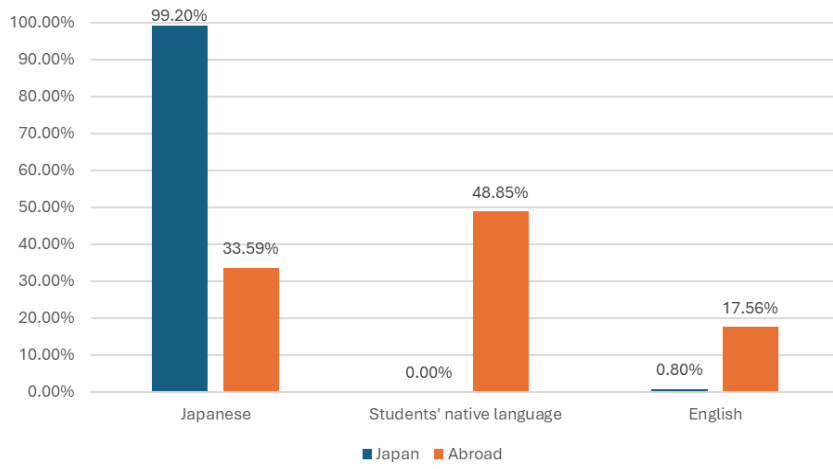
We can state that the JFL teachers' native language was mostly the primary language of instruction, regardless of whether they were NSTs or NNSTs. However, we should note that only 2.19% of NNSTs stated they had moved abroad and taught Japanese there, so most of them teach in JFL classrooms in their home country, where they have a common native language with most of their students (Luchenko & Kovinko, 2024).

After analyzing the NSTs' responses, we obtained significantly different results. Out of the total sample size of 256, 51.17% (N = 131) taught abroad, while 48.83% (N = 125) taught in Japan. This almost equal split in our NSTs' sample allowed further analysis. We hypothesized that the preference for the primary language of instruction could correlate with these variables.

Figure 2 illustrates the variance in NSTs' language preference for instruction based on their teaching location—Japan or abroad. Almost all the NSTs teaching in Japan opted for Japanese as their primary instructional language (99.20%, N = 124), while nearly half of the NSTs teaching abroad chose students' native language (48.85%, N = 64). Only one-third of the NSTs teaching abroad preferred Japanese (33.59%, N = 44), and 17.56% (N = 23) opted for English as an instructional language.

Figure 2

The Comparison of the Primary Languages of Instruction Used in Classes of the NSTs Teaching in Japan (N = 125) and Abroad (N = 131)



This notable distinction motivated us to investigate further. Table 1 displays the countries where the NSTs taught and the primary languages of instruction they used in JFL classrooms (see question 5 in Appendix B). Out of the 64

NSTs, almost one-third used Spanish (Catalan (N = 1) and Galician (N = 1) were included) in their teaching, followed by German and French in terms of frequency of usage.

Table 1

The NSTs' Use of Students' L1 and the Countries of Teaching

Students' native languages	%	Country of teaching	*N* of NSTs
Spanish/Catalan/Galician	29.69	Spain	17
		Colombia	1
		Mexico	1
German	20.31	Germany	11
		Austria	1
		Switzerland	1
French	17.19	France	11
Swedish	4.69	Sweden	3
Italian	3.13	Italy	2
Korean	3.13	South Korea	2
Portuguese	3.13	Portugal	1
		Brazil	1
Uzbek	3.13	Uzbekistan	2
Chinese	1.56	Taiwan	1
Czech/Slovak	1.56	Czech Republic	1
Dutch	1.56	The Netherlands	1
Estonian	1.56	Estonia	1
Finnish	1.56	Finland	1
Hungarian	1.56	Hungary	1
Khmer	1.56	Cambodia	1
Norwegian	1.56	Norway	1
Polish	1.56	Poland	1
Vietnamese	1.56	Vietnam	1

Note. N = 64.

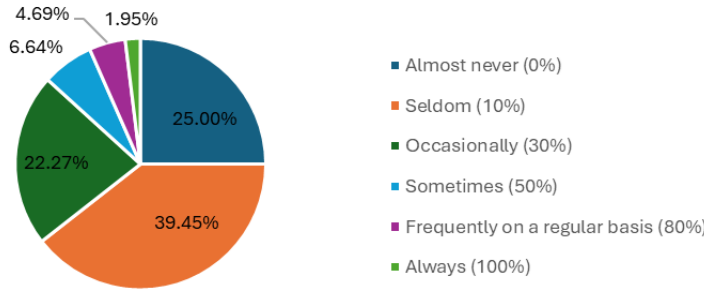
The Extent to Which NSTs Use English

We were fully aware that the question about the primary language of instruction used was not intended to give a detailed picture of the state of ELF in Japanese language classrooms. Instead, we used it to determine teachers' overall preferences. In Japanese classrooms, English is not strategically used as the main instructional language but is viewed as an additional form of support.

To conduct a more detailed investigation, we asked all the participants about their experience with English as an instructional language, namely, to provide an approximate numerical value of how frequently they used it in the teaching process (Figure 3). The teachers self-assessed the extent to which they used English and reported it approximately. For the convenience of future data presentation, the respondents were asked to describe their beliefs in numerical value (see question 6 in Appendix B). However, if teachers wanted to provide more explanations on actual situations, the comment section at the end of the questionnaire gave them more freedom.

Figure 3

The Extent to Which English is Used in the JFL Classroom by the Japanese NSTs (N = 256)



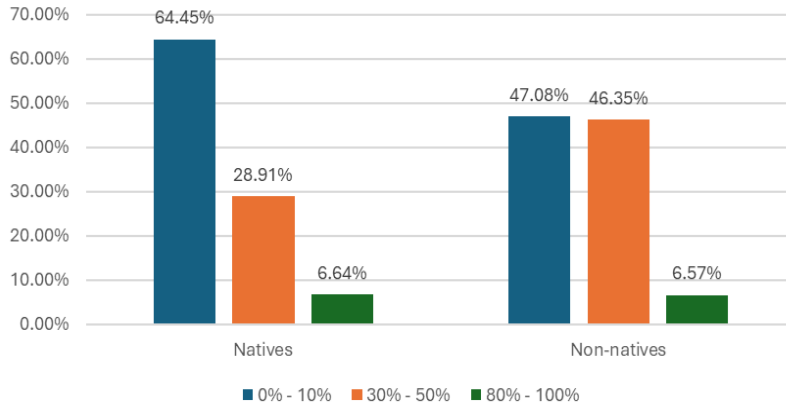
Even though most NSTs initially indicated that Japanese was the main language of instruction, further investigation uncovered the significant role of English as a medium language. Over one-third of the respondents (35.55%, $N = 91$) stated that English was used for 30%–100% of the instructional time in their JFL classrooms. Most of them (28.91%, $N = 74$) reported that English was used occasionally or sometimes, falling into the 30%–50% of instructional time category; however, only a small percentage (6.64%, $N = 17$) claimed that English was frequently or always used (80%–100%).

Since the academic subject under consideration was JFL, we believe that the use of English as the language of instruction might be partial. Japanese NSTs can engage students in multilingual practice, switching between Japanese, students' L1, and English. Therefore, for this research, a 30% utilization could be deemed sufficient. When discussing the use of English in JFL classrooms, the use of English from 30% to 100% of instructional time will be considered significant.

The comparison with the NNSTs' results of English usage (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b) shows that the NNSTs employed English in JFL classrooms by 17.37% more than the NSTs in the range from 30% to 100% of instructional time (Figure 4). The results also show that a higher percentage of the NSTs used English minimally (0%–10%), whereas the NNSTs' results are more evenly distributed between the minimal and moderate use (30%–50%). The use of English to a high extent (80%–100%) is similar and relatively low for both groups.

Figure 4

The Comparison of the Extent to Which English is Used in the JFL Classroom by the Native (N = 256) and Non-Native Japanese Teachers (N = 274)



Having analyzed the practices of NSTs teaching abroad and in Japan separately, we better understood when respondents tend to use English more often (Table 2). The results show that English was used by 40.46% (N = 53) of NSTs teaching abroad from 30% to 100% of instructional time during the lesson, which is 10.06% more frequently than by NSTs teaching in Japan (30.40%, N = 38).

Table 2

The Degree to Which English is Used by the NSTs Teaching in Japan and Abroad

Frequency of use	Teaching in Japan		Teaching abroad	
	N	%	*N*	%
Almost never (0%)	33	26.40	31	23.66
Seldom (10%)	54	43.20	47	35.88
Occasionally (30%)	32	25.60	25	19.08

Table 2 continued

Frequency of use	Teaching in Japan		Teaching abroad	
	N	%	*N*	%
Sometimes (50%)	5	4.00	12	9.16
Frequently on a regular basis (80%)	1	0.80	11	8.40
Always (100%)	–	–	5	3.82
Total	125	100.00	131	100.00

Note. $N = 256$.

To gain a deeper understanding of the actual English language situation in JFL classrooms, we analyzed the groups with different primary languages of instruction separately (Table 3). The results showed that among those participants who stated Japanese as the primary language of instruction, almost one-third of the teachers (30.95%, $N = 84$) used English as an additional language from 30% to 50% of the instructional time. Almost one-fourth of the respondents (23.44%, $N = 15$) who stated students' native language as the primary language of instruction used English for additional help to the same degree. The presence of an entirely English-based learning environment in JFL classrooms, where English was stated as the primary language of instruction, could not be verified. English was used by 29.17% of the participants ($N = 7$) for 30% to 50% of instructional time.

Table 3

The Degree to Which English is Used by the NSTs with Different Preferences for Primary Languages of Instruction

Frequency of use	Japanese		Students' native language		English	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Almost never (0%)	47	27.98	17	26.56	–	–
Seldom (10%)	69	41.07	32	50.00	–	–
Occasionally (30%)	45	26.78	11	17.19	1	4.17
Sometimes (50%)	7	4.17	4	6.25	6	25.00
Frequently on a regular basis (80%)	–	–	–	–	12	50.00
Always (100%)	–	–	–	–	5	20.83
Total	168	100.00	64	100.00	24	100.00

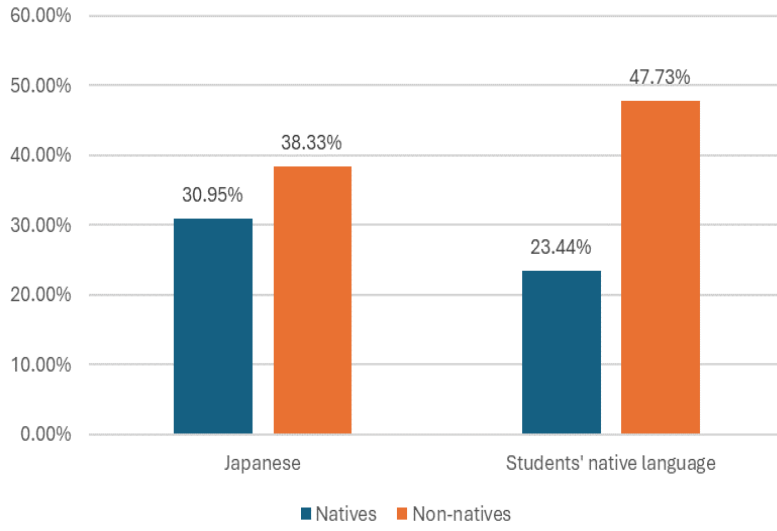
Note. $N = 256$.

Our research revealed that it is common practice for NSTs to translate or code-switch between Japanese, students' native languages and English in JFL classrooms. In this sense, the results coincide with those of the NNSTs of Japanese (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b). However, the difference is not significant for those

respondents who stated Japanese as the primary language of instruction—the NNSTs use English 7.38% more frequently than NSTs (Figure 5). A more significant difference was observed for the respondents who used students' native language as their primary language of instruction and constituted 24.29% more for the NNSTs than for the NSTs.

Figure 5

The Comparison of the Extent to Which English is Used in Classes of the Native (N = 256) and Non-Native Japanese Teachers (N = 274)



Considering that instructional language also includes using Japanese–English textbooks or additional teaching materials, we asked the participants if they used them in JFL classrooms (see question 7 in Appendix B). As a result, 53.90% (N = 138) of the respondents answered positively. This is very close to the data received from the NNSTs—56.57% (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b).

Interestingly, our findings show that 43.03% (N = 71) of those who stated that they "almost never" or "seldom" employed English in their JFL classroom used Japanese–English textbooks in their practice. The result is very close to that received from the analysis of NNSTs' practice previously—44.19% (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b).

If we consider the NSTs' data on the "passive" use of Japanese–English textbooks and add them to those who stated the "active" oral use of English in JFL classrooms, the total degree of employing English will increase to 63.28%. For the NNSTs of Japanese, the result will be 73.72%.

The NSTs' Beliefs on the Topic of the Primary Language of Instruction and the Use of English

The decision to include the following subsections was based on the recurring key themes identified through a content analysis of respondents' comments. The qualitative analysis was performed at the sentence level. NSTs' replies were translated into English and reviewed multiple times, focusing on data relevant to the research questions while excluding unrelated information. The subsections reflect core areas of concern among NSTs. Subsection "Prerequisites for Teaching Effectively" emerged from reflections on essential skills and knowledge. The following subsection on teaching methods highlights NSTs' preferences for direct or indirect approaches based on context. Subsection "English as a Lingua Franca" addresses its role in multilingual settings, particularly outside Japan. Finally, subsection "Emphasis on the Result of Teaching" highlights how teachers ensure students apply their learning in practical ways beyond the classroom.

Prerequisites for Teaching Effectively

The respondents were enthusiastic about sharing their beliefs (almost every third NST left a comment), and many were keen to learn about the study's results.

The respondents expressed their beliefs on possible differences in teaching by NSTs and NNSTs. One comment addresses the challenges JFL teachers face, pointing out that some native speakers may lack broader language awareness or have limited perspectives:

> I am sometimes surprised when Japanese language teachers assert, "Such an expression does not exist in Japanese." The expression might exist, but the teacher is unaware of it, reflecting a narrow perspective shaped by their limited experience as native speakers.

The respondent continued with concerns that some NNSTs might convey incorrect or inappropriate Japanese language usage and felt that this shows a lack of effort in teaching Japanese and viewed this as a serious issue. We can say that the author of the comment emphasized the importance of being open-minded and knowledgeable about different linguistic nuances and cultural contexts when teaching or learning the Japanese language.

The respondents shared their diverse experiences, beginning with the training courses. In some courses, they were taught to use the direct teaching method, while in others they were taught the indirect teaching method. One respondent mentioned "having been taught to use English as little as possible"

at a Japanese language teacher training course. Since more than half of the students nowadays do not speak English at their JFL school, this respondent suggested "to create a separate class for those who can speak the language when providing instruction in English."

Another participant who uses English as the primary language of instruction while teaching abroad mentioned receiving education on two methods:

> Although I specialized in Sino-Japanese history in a graduate school and was not a linguistics major, I have taught Japanese in China and Finland after taking Japanese language teacher training courses on direct and indirect methods and passing the Japanese Language Teaching Proficiency Test.

One respondent discussed the varied language learning experiences from students' perspectives, emphasizing the differences between those learning Japanese in an immersive language environment and those studying it outside of such an environment:

> The situation differs for those studying Japanese in Japan versus abroad. Students in Japan can use Japanese daily, while those abroad primarily use it in specific contexts. As a teacher, I would choose a method that minimizes reliance on English or other intermediary languages for students learning abroad.

However, our quantitative results revealed the opposite tendency: NSTs teaching abroad tend to use English more frequently than those teaching in Japan.

Preference for Direct or Indirect Teaching Methods

One participant who occasionally used English in a JFL class teaching abroad believed that "in Japanese language classes in Japan, ELF is used most of the time, especially at the beginner and intermediate levels." The results of our qualitative study revealed a preference for the direct method among the NSTs who teach in Japan. The following comment can elucidate this situation: "Japanese language schools in Japan accept international students of various nationalities. Therefore, since English is not always the lingua franca, many aspiring Japanese language teachers take training courses to learn the art of teaching Japanese using the direct method." Another respondent confirmed that language schools in Japan mostly avoid using the indirect method: "When teaching Japanese at a Japanese language school, English is rarely used. Many schools adopt the direct method." Several other participants supported the preference for using a direct method (teaching in Japanese) for non-English speakers.

Among the NSTs, some respondents advocated using students' native language as a medium of instruction. One teacher reflected on their previous experience as a student of a foreign language:

> English is spreading as a global lingua franca, but I believe it is better to use the learner's native language when possible. I struggled while learning Portuguese without any intermediary language, making the lessons difficult to understand, especially at the beginner level.

The idea of employing students' L1 for instructions depending on the level of Japanese taught was supported by the following comment:

> For total beginners, I give simple explanations in Japanese, and when it becomes complicated, I switch to my students' language [Spanish]. From the end of the A2 level, I reduce the use of their language, and at the B1 level, I speak only Japanese.

According to the data discussed previously, Spanish emerged as the predominant primary language of instruction within the domain of "students' native language" in the JFL classroom. The following observation provided valuable insight into the prevailing language dynamics within the educational university setting:

> I try to take as many opportunities as possible to speak in Japanese, but I teach complex grammar explanations in Spanish. I majored in Spanish at a university in Japan, so I believe I can use my knowledge of the Spanish language to teach effectively.

German also appeared to be one of the most frequently used instructional languages preferred by the NSTs teaching abroad. The following comment sheds more light on its status: "In my context, all of my students (foreigners, residents, or international students) speak German, so I do not feel any need to use English as a third language." This was supported by another experience: "Many of my students are foreigners and study all subjects in German using German textbooks. They also study Japanese in German, which works without problems." However, the respondents mentioned using other languages for comparison purposes.

One university teacher from Poland stated that "teaching methods vary between the first three years of bachelor's programs and the first and second years of master's programs." Therefore, they advised "studying these methods separately, depending on the difficulty level of learning Japanese." However,

a previous study on the topic of English usage among NNSTs showed that the use of English did not align with this benchmark (Luchenko et al., 2024a).

One respondent teaching Japanese to high school students in France advocated for the direct method for intermediate–advanced levels and the abundant use of students' native language for elementary students. This situation was confirmed by another NST from France teaching in a high school who stated the high requirements for students' Japanese level, which was supposed to be JLPT Level 1, as a prerequisite for successfully passing their graduation exam. This attitude is grounded in the perception that Japanese was not even considered the second foreign language but was rather treated as the first, with the same demands imposed on students. Therefore, teaching is conducted exclusively in Japanese without the use of English.

English as a Lingua Franca

One of the NSTs teaching abroad mentioned the frequent use of English in class, despite only a few students being native English speakers, and provided comments about the multilingual situation in Europe. The following comment was received from a participant in Luxembourg who used English as the primary language of instruction: "The majority of students come from various European countries, with only a few being native English speakers. For French-speaking students, I also provide some explanations in French and use some French teaching materials."

The participants mentioned that "using English might be acceptable" in a multilingual environment. One respondent continued to occasionally use English as a medium, even after relocating to a non-Anglophone country (the UAE):

> I have taught Japanese to non-native English speakers for the last five years, after many years of teaching native English speakers in the USA. These non-native English speakers' mother tongue is mainly Arabic, but English is used as the medium of instruction.

The respondents differed in their opinions on the status of English as a medium for instruction. Some mentioned that "English has become too much of a standard," while others emphasized that "in Europe, many languages other than English are used" for instruction. Several respondents expressed surprise upon discovering that Japanese could be taught using English as a medium of instruction. One participant who taught in Japan stated:

> I also studied foreign language teaching methods abroad, but even then, it was a direct method, not a method considered from an English perspective.

> Therefore, I do not feel the need to use English as a medium of instruction when I am using the local language.

There were also some concerns about the use of English in JFL classrooms. One participant who taught in Japan shared specific examples from their experience and concluded that "it is important for teachers to understand the advantages of the direct method and use the indirect method when necessary. However, beginning teachers may struggle to use this approach appropriately, so focusing on the direct method can ensure the quality of language acquisition."

The respondents shared their experiences about balancing their use of English in class. One participant who taught abroad and occasionally used English explained that students often preferred to receive explanations in English when they had a good command of the language. However, even when this was not the case, the teacher preferred to strategically use English to explain words or give instructions, prioritizing Japanese conversation in the Vietnamese class and encouraging the Bangladeshi students to speak Japanese as much as possible due to their proficiency in English.

Emphasis on the Result of Teaching

One respondent expressed a valid concern about the discrepancy between making students understand the subject in class and ensuring they can actively use the language outside the classroom. Moreover, being an experienced teacher with thirty years of experience, the respondent stated that they had "never worked with a particular focus on teaching methods."

> I feel that there is too much emphasis on teacher instruction. The teacher's intention to "make students understand" and the students' intention to learn are not the same. Even if students understand instructions provided in English during the lesson, it does not necessarily mean they have truly learned the material.

We also noticed that some respondents expressed flexibility in choosing the teaching method depending on the country where they teach. Therefore, the teaching method can be considered not just a personal preference but also a requirement of the particular location.

> In my teaching environment, I use German frequently because all of my learners are native German speakers or at least students who can study in German. In other situations, such as teaching in different countries, I would use the direct method or sometimes English.

Teachers also try to listen to students' wishes and tailor their teaching to their needs. One respondent from Norway with abundant experience who uses English on a regular basis stated: "I have experience with large classes, small groups, and private lessons, and I am constantly reminded that there are different teaching methods that may or may not suit different people." Another respondent teaching in Vietnam mentioned, "when Japanese was being taught in English, learners said that what they wanted to hear from the teacher was not English, but Japanese," as "when learning Japanese, the main focus is Japanese."

The focus on learners' outcomes and flexibility in choosing teaching methods can be noted in the following comment from a teacher in Thailand who occasionally uses English in JFL classes:

> Whether you teach using the direct method or an intermediary language, the important thing is for learners to understand and speak correctly. Other people's arguments about agreeing or disagreeing are meaningless. If teachers are competent and learning outcomes are maximized, that is the best approach.

Another respondent, teaching in a language school in Japan, believed that leveraging students' existing knowledge of English in Japanese language education could significantly enhance their learning experience and overall progress. Overcoming the obstacles posed by language schools' insistence on the direct method might lead to more effective and efficient language education.

> Most language school students have already studied English as a second language. Not utilizing their existing knowledge of English in Japanese language education is a waste of time. The school's insistence on the direct method may be the biggest obstacle.

One "veteran" teacher from Japan supported this opinion, emphasizing that it is not important whether teachers use the student's native language or English; both will suffice as long as "students learn more effectively by utilizing their existing knowledge" and "then output it in the final target language—Japanese." The respondent argues that instruction using an intermediary language is effective only when the teacher can appropriately control the situations in which English (the intermediary language) and Japanese are used.

Overall, the respondents unanimously agreed that flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods are essential. Recognizing that individuals have unique learning needs and preferences underscores the importance of tailoring instruction to suit different students. This highlights the significance of being open and responsive to various teaching approaches to effectively reach and engage all learners.

Limitations

Despite a cover letter inviting all JFL teachers to participate regardless of their use of English in JFL classrooms, the voluntary nature of the survey suggests that the respondents may have been more motivated than other teachers, potentially affecting the results. Furthermore, since the survey was conducted in non-Anglophone countries, the sample may not accurately represent the entire population of Japanese NSTs. Therefore, the study's results should be interpreted with this limitation.

Another limitation of the study is that almost all the comments were translated by the authors from Japanese to English, which may have potentially introduced some translation bias or inaccuracies. Although the English translation was also proofread by a native Japanese speaker with a PhD degree in philology, the short format of comments alongside the predominantly abbreviated style of presenting them could not allow us to grasp the subtle nuances of teachers' beliefs. If follow-up interviews had been conducted, they might have provided an in-depth understanding.

Further examination of Japanese NSTs' English proficiency level and students' Japanese proficiency can provide valuable insights into how teaching methods and language choices interact.

Conclusions

The quantitative analysis of the survey revealed that the vast majority of the NSTs primarily use Japanese as the language of instruction in their classrooms, followed by a significant number of the NSTs using the students' first language and a smaller percentage using English. These findings are consistent with the previous results for the NNSTs of Japanese, indicating similar patterns in the use of teachers' native language as a language of instruction. The differences in the extent of using English as the primary language of instruction between the NSTs and NNSTs are minimal and not considered significant.

Further study revealed that English plays a significant role as a medium language in JFL classrooms. Despite Japanese being identified as the primary language of instruction in NSTs' classrooms, it was found that English was used extensively during instructional time, explicitly indicating a general shift from a monolingual to a multilingual approach. The research suggests that NSTs may utilize multilingual practices (translanguaging and code-switching) on a regular basis, incorporating Japanese, students' native languages, and English

into the classroom. However, the comparison of the extent to which the NSTs and NNSTs used English as additional help in JFL classrooms revealed that the NNSTs employed it much more frequently than the NSTs.

The findings also indicate a notable difference in the use of English by NSTs teaching abroad compared to those teaching in Japan, with a higher percentage of NSTs teaching abroad using English for instructional purposes. This suggests that factors such as classroom context, student proficiency, and educational environment may influence the extent to which English is used during lessons. These results provide valuable insights for developing language teaching methodologies in JFL classrooms.

The results of the qualitative study revealed that the respondents emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods. They acknowledged that individual learning needs and preferences vary, highlighting the necessity of customizing instruction to different students. This reinforces the need for being open and responsive to diverse teaching strategies to effectively engage all learners.

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Appendix A

Data Availability

The entire Google Forms questionnaire is available online (in Japanese) at the following link:

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14677681

Appendix B

Questions from the Questionnaire Used for the Analysis in this Article (Translated from Japanese)

1. What is your native language?
2. What is your country of origin?
3. What country do you teach in?
4. What is the primary language of instruction?
   - Japanese
   - Students' native language (in this case, the next question was asked to specify it)
   - English
5. What language is used as a mother tongue?
6. Do you use indirect teaching methods using English?
   - 0% – Almost never
   - 10% – Seldom
   - 30% – Occasionally (e.g., to explain words and grammar patterns)
   - 50% – Sometimes (to the same extent as Japanese)
   - 80% – Frequently, on a regular basis
   - 100% – Always
7. Do you use Japanese-English textbooks or supplementary teaching materials?
   - Yes (in this case, the next question was asked to specify it)
   - No
8. We would like to hear if you have any comments on the questionnaire.