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Learners' Perceptions of "Good" Foreign Language Teachers: A Quantitative Analysis between Native and Non-Native Teachers

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Abstract

This paper considers Arabian learners' concepts of "good" Japanese language teachers and addresses differences and similarities of these perceptions between "good" native Japanese teachers and Arabian non-native Japanese language teachers. Literature has suggested that language learners have different views on native and non-native teachers, and that learners' ideal teachers differ depending on individual learners' backgrounds. To date, no empirical studies have been conducted concerning "good" teachers for Arabian learners of the Japanese language. Quantitative results show a commonality among learners; that is, they want teachers to demonstrate the characteristics of knowledge, experience, and personality. Additionally, Arabian learners expect native Japanese teachers to be more skilful and to have a wider variety of skill sets than non-native teachers. Learners' gender and study duration are also associated with their expectation for the two teacher groups. This paper considers that learners' excessive expectations toward native Japanese teachers could be attributed to the current developing situation of Japanese language education and teachers in the Arabic region.

1 Introduction

In foreign language courses, native and non-native teachers collaborate on pedagogical duties. This trend is also the case in Japanese foreign language courses. Further, non-native Japanese language teachers make up approximately 70% of the Japanese language teachers abroad (Japan Foundation, 2007). The Arabic region is no exception as Arabian non-native teachers account for about 70% of teachers within departments of Japanese studies in the tertiary sector and 45% in public language courses (Japan Foundation, 2007). The number of Japanese language teachers of Arabic background has grown as Japanese language institutions has increased. However, few empirical studies have been undertaken concerning learners and teachers in this region. Indeed, few native Japanese teachers are familiar with the local learners' understanding of the foreign language learning because of the cultural and physical distance between these countries. Therefore, this paper attempts to disclose Arabian learners' conceptions on "good" Japanese language teachers through questionnaire methods and addresses differences and similarities in learners' perceptions of "good" native Japanese teachers (JTs) and Arabian non-native teachers (ATs).

In 1969, the Japanese government officially launched the first Japanese language course in the Arabic region. Currently, many tertiary and local language institutions in this region are conducting Japanese courses as university subjects or for self-development purposes and, there are more than four thousand learners in the Middle Eastern and North African areas. While the number of learners and teachers in these areas is relatively small compared with other areas, it has been increasing steadily (Japan Foundation, 2007, 2011).

Japanese language institutions and teachers in the region are diverse. For example, some universities offer degree programs in Japanese studies or electives for non-Japanese majors, while the others offer such courses at public institutions where anyone can join and learn Japanese for various purposes. Some JTs are sent from official Japanese organisations that aim to promote the Japanese language and cultural understanding overseas, whereas the others are recruited by the universities and schools themselves. Overall, ATs are proficient in teaching Japanese, but only a few teachers are trained in official pedagogical programs. Therefore, many teachers are keen on attending annual regional and sporadic local seminars that are coordinated by the aforementioned organisations.

2 Review of literature: Studies on good language teachers

Literature has examined characteristics of ideal language teachers. Hadley and Hadley (1996) reported on characteristics of "good" English language teachers by the Japanese university students. They pointed out that Japanese students emphasized teachers' personalities rather than what they do in class. Shimizu (1995) contrasted Japanese students' expectations for native and non-native English teachers. Findings revealed that Japanese students placed a higher value on the seriousness of non-native English teachers than they did for native English teachers (Shimizu, 1995). Students also believed that non-native teachers should be more intelligent and knowledgeable than native teachers.

Official and academic exploration has also been conducted to propose professional competences of Japanese language teachers. Additionally, the Agency for Cultural Affairs (2000) proposed recommendations on qualifications and competences for teachers of Japanese language as a foreign language. These recommendations focus on three domains based on communicative competence: social and cultural, educational, and linguistic. Nuibe et al. (2006) conducted a large-scale empirical survey on learners' "good" Japanese language teachers. The survey targeted Japanese language learners in New Zealand, Thailand, Korea, China, Vietnam, and Taiwan. An analysis resulted in five factorial constructs, "teacher's expertise," "experience and qualifications," "personality," "course management," and "teaching competence." Nuibe and his team conducted a series of studies on foreign learners' perceptions of ideal teachers, which are summarised below in Table 1.

	Nuibe et al.(2006)	Sato & Watanabe (2007)	Kobayshi, Yen, & Nuibe (2007)	Ngan & Kobayashi (2009)
Country/Area	New Zealand, Thailand, Korea, China, Vietnam, Taiwan	Thailand, Korea, China, Vietnam, Taiwan	China	Vietnam
Factor 1	Japanese language teacher's expertise	Practical teaching competence	Teaching experience & qualification	Practical teaching competence
Factor 2	Teaching experience & qualification	Creating positive atmosphere in class	Creating positive atmosphere in class	Warm attitude
Factor 3	Personality	Building good a relationship with students	Practical teaching competence	Qualification & foreign language proficiency
Factor 4	Course management	Knowledge on Japanese culture	Building good a relationship with students	Course management
Factor 5	Practical teaching competence	—	—	—

Table 1: Studies on "good" teachers for learners of Japanese as a foreign language

Table 1 shows that the factor, "practical teaching competence," was included in all the prior studies, which suggests it is the most indispensable factor for "good" teachers. Factors concerning "qualification" were revealed in three reports and "building a good relationship with students,"

"creating positive atmosphere in class," "course management," and "teaching experience" were found in two studies. In addition, Lin (2005) reported similar findings that Chinese students viewed their English language teachers from the perspectives of "teaching competence," "relationship with students," "knowledge," and "personality." These reports suggest that teacher's personality factors should be considered when reflecting on foreign language teachers, whereas the government recommendations did not.

Because little empirical research has been conducted in this area, it is of urgent necessity to examine the present conditions in Japanese language education to conduct strategic development efforts for learners and teachers in these countries. It is also valuable to understand learners of different cultural backgrounds and their perceptions of "good" teachers to develop and implement effective pedagogical strategies (Brown, 2009). Further, teachers must bear in mind that different learners have different images of "good" teachers (Shimizu, 1995).

This study examines the characteristics that Arabian learners of Japanese expect from their teachers. The prior empirical studies of Japanese language teachers have not analysed native and non-native teachers separately. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine whether learners have different characteristics of "good" teachers for native and non-native teachers. The present study, therefore, focuses on similarities and differences in learners' perceptions of "good" JTs and ATs.

The present author does not purport that native and non-native speaking teachers should proactively divide their duties because teachers' workloads and responsibilities are extraordinary whether they are native or non-native speakers (Mizuno, 2004). Additionally, the discussion on the difference between "good" native and non-native teachers could provide an impoverished assumption that teachers of a particular background do not need to acquire certain professional competence. Furthermore, the author does not intend to claim that teachers should blindly accept learners' expectations. The implications derived from this study will play a fundamental role and serve as a well-grounded information source by which teachers can reflect on their educational activities (Hadley & Hadley, 1996). If learners' ideal images of language teachers disagree with what teachers consider appropriate, learners and teachers are required to work together to bridge this gap. Moreover, this study does not recommend building a list of teachers' inevitable knowledge and skills that pre and novice teachers should acquire (Okazaki, 2000). It is unrealistic to acquire all the knowledge and skills separately without considering the integrity of the pedagogical setting as a whole (Okazaki, 2000). Currently, researchers rarely advocate these approaches for teacher development, because diversified pedagogical settings have influenced the knowledge and skills required for teachers in different ways (Ryan, 1998). To better foster teachers' self-reflections on their own pedagogical activities, both researchers and teachers should make an effort to explore a variety of characteristics and idiosyncrasies in their educational environment and among learners.

3 Methodology

3.1 Questionaire

This study employed a survey that was developed by Nuibe et al. (2006) and was originally written in Japanese. A bilingual staff member translated the original into Arabic and then translated it back into Japanese to confirm the accuracy of the translation. The assistants and researcher discussed the wording of the survey items to avoid technical terms. For the convenience of this paper, the author translated the inventory items into English.

The survey asked learners about their images of "good" Japanese language teachers of native and non-native backgrounds. The respondents completed 41 survey items regarding their perceptions of competence and characteristics of "good" Japanese language teachers (Nuibe, et al., 2006) (see Table 10 for all the items). They rated each item on a Likert scale that ranged from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (4).

3.2 Survey participants

The author requested the cooperation of Japanese language teachers in Arabic countries to distribute the questionnaire to their learners. Some teachers in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen, and Morocco offered their cooperation for this project. Data were collected between August 2009 and June 2010. For this study, answers from Moroccan institutions were excluded because a valid response rate was extremely lower for answers concerning ATs (31%) compared with those for JTs (60%). This response might have resulted because there was no local teaching staff in Morocco except volunteers at the time of the study. A few learners scribbled notes on their questionnaire revealing the fact that they had never seen any local Japanese language teachers. Thus, the survey sample consisted of 492 learners from five Arabic countries and 11 schools (Table 2). The participating learners belonged to tertiary institutions or open Japanese language courses. The analysis applied casewise deletion of missing data for each 41-item set of native and non-native teachers, respectively. Therefore, if any questionnaire item was skipped in the set of 41 items (case), the case was considered invalid.

	Country	Egypt	Syria	Jordan	UAE	Yemen	Total
	# of schools	4	3	1	2	1	11
Students	Tertiary education	136	113	57	32	0	338
	Public course	113	15	0	0	26	154
	Total	249	128	57	32	26	492
Gender	Male	100	72	31	2	20	225
	Female	147	54	26	30	6	263
	Unknown	2	2	0	0	0	4
First language	Arabic	247	123	55	30	24	479
	English	0	1	0	1	1	3
	Others	2	4	2	1	1	10
Length of study	<2yrs	88	51	40	9	13	201
	2-4yrs	81	36	7	12	5	141
	4-6yrs	37	10	2	2	2	53
	6yrs<	3	2	0	0	0	5
	Unknown	40	29	8	9	6	92
Responses on Arabian Teachers	Valid	182	102	48	27	20	379
	Invalid	67	26	9	5	6	113
	Response %	73.09%	79.69%	84.21%	84.38%	76.92%	77.03%
Responses on Japanese Teachers	Valid	191	74	36	30	21	352
	Invalid	58	54	21	2	5	140
	Response %	76.71%	57.81%	63.16%	93.75%	80.77%	71.54%

Table 2: Overview of survey participants

3.3 Statistical analysis

The author used multiple criteria to determine the number of factors including the Kaiser criterion, Scree test, Parallel analysis, and Velicer's MAP criteria (see Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; Ledesma & Valero-Mora, 2007; Osborne & Costello, 2005). Then the author employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to extract basic constructs of "good" JTs and ATs for learners. Specifically, the author employed Stepwise Variable Selection in Exploratory Factor Analysis (SEFA) to drop and add observable variables based on a variety of indices on the Web to develop a suitable factor structure (Kano & Harada, 2000). Maximum likelihood estimation was used because it provides best population estimates when samples are small (Hoyle & Duvall, 2004) and allows researchers to evaluate models based on a wide range of indices of goodness-of-fit (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Osborne & Costello, 2005). Because there is no consensus on a single criterion to evaluate a statistical model (Fabrigar, et al., 1999; Shinn, Good, Knutson, & Tilly,

1992), multiple indexes were used to drop unsuitable questionnaire items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness-of-Fit (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), and Root Mean Square Error Test of Close Fit (RMSEA). As a rule of thumb, CFI, GFI, and AGFI above .90 indicate that the model has adequate fit with data (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988; Suhr, 2006). Additionally, RMSEA of .08 or less is regarded as a reasonable error of approximation (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Fabrigar, et al., 1999; Shinn, et al., 1992; Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen, & Van der Vleuten, 2004). The author also referred to the values of communalities and $\chi 2$. Questionnaire items with communalities beyond one or below .30 were omitted (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Furthermore, oblique rotation method was considered a more appropriate representation for the current models because factors in analytical constructs are expected to correlate theoretically and empirically (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Osborne & Costello, 2005). In doing so, the author obtained some interpretable factor constructs that possessed lower $\chi 2$ values ($p > .05$). Thus, the models had all item loadings above .30, no item cross-loadings, and at least three items in each factor so that the factor interpretations were convincing and stable (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Osborne & Costello, 2005).

The construct validity of several hypothetical models obtained through EFA was evaluated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Osborne & Costello, 2005), which verifies the hypothesis that arises from inductive reasoning. EFA and CFA can be used dyadically to provide more informative constructs (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Of the models generated through EFA, more statistically preferable models of both "good" JTs and ATs were presented referring to CFI, GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA.

To examine whether student gender and study length were related to expectation of JTs and ATs, independent non-parametric statistical tests (two-sided Mann-Whitney U) were conducted because both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests rejected a null hypothesis that the sample was extracted from a normally distributed population. Male and female student expectations were compared and students who studied Japanese longer and shorter formed comparative groups. The median study length of the sample was used as a cutoff point (1.916 years, approximately 23 months). Effect-sizes (Cliff's δ) for nonparametric tests were also computed (Cliff, 1993).

To investigate the degree of learner expectations for JTs and ATs, the Wilcoxon Signed-rank test was conducted between 41 paired questionnaire item results. This is a non-parametric statistical method that tests whether paired values are taken from different samples. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests demonstrated that all data were not normally distributed; therefore, a non-parametric method was appropriate. All the analyses were conducted by R (ver. 2.14) except SEFA.

4 Results

4.1 Factor number tests

Four statistical tests were conducted to determine the number of factors included in "good" teacher models for JTs and ATs. Table 3 indicates that the model for JTs embraced more factors than that for ATs. An EFA was conducted based on these results.

Tests	JTs	ATs
Eigenvalue-more-than-one	9	6
Scree Plot	4 or 3	3
Parallel Analysis	7	4
Velicer's MAP	3	3

Table 3: Factor number tests – statistically reasonable number of factors from 41 questionnaire items

4.2 Native Japanese teachers' factor structure

The factor structure of "good" JTs resulted in a four-factor solution (Table 4). After CFA, the following results were found ($\chi 2$[147 df] = 298.31): RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, and CFI were .054, .92, .90, and .91, respectively. These results indicate a good model fit with the data and provide support for the postulated model of "good" JTs. Cronbach's alpha showed reasonable internal consistency that ranged from .67 to .80. Although the fourth factor "Friendly atmosphere" showed a relatively lower value, it was considered reasonable because the number of items in the factor was small (Cortina, 1993; Schmitt, 1996; Streiner, 2003) and deletion and addition of items resulted in exacerbating other aforementioned indexes.

#. Items	F1	F2	F3	F4
Factor 1: Knowledge and experience (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$, $M = 3.34$)				
26. Have extensive teaching experience.	0.72	0.05	0.08	-0.08
35. Have ample knowledge about classical Japanese literature.	0.70	-0.18	-0.07	0.28
30. Have a qualification of Japanese language education.	0.69	0.23	-0.02	-0.20
6. Conscious of one's professional responsibility.	0.50	-0.10	0.07	0.04
39. Have experience learning a foreign language.	0.41	0.08	0.16	0.13
17. Possess a basic knowledge of linguistics.	0.40	0.26	-0.06	0.11
Factor 2: Practical teaching competence (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 3.71$)				
33. Able to use Japanese language accurately and fluently.	0.02	0.60	-0.23	0.16
12. Skilful in Japanese teaching methods as a foreign language.	0.13	0.54	0.00	-0.06
29. Able to correct student's mistake properly.	-0.06	0.49	0.17	0.07
16. Happy and able to answer student's questions.	-0.06	0.49	0.06	0.14
19. Able to manage class properly.	0.05	0.46	0.22	-0.06
Factor 3: Support for student learning (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 3.18$)				
24. Provide consultation for students even on matters that are irrelevant to Japanese language.	0.03	-0.11	0.76	-0.05
25. Able to explain in student's mother tongue (or vehicular language).	0.09	0.06	0.44	0.07
18. Praise and encourage students.	0.01	0.04	0.40	0.25
14. Accept student's suggestions and ideas.	-0.06	0.20	0.40	0.16
21. Warm, kind, and understanding.	0.09	0.01	0.36	0.33
Factor 4: Friendly atmosphere (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.67$, $M = 3.44$)				
37. Make class friendly and comfortable.	0.10	0.00	0.02	0.75
34. Do not embarrass students or make fun of them when they make mistakes and errors.	-0.15	0.20	0.04	0.48
5. Cheerful and humorous.	0.17	-0.02	0.13	0.39
31. Make class interesting and fun.	0.05	0.20	0.20	0.32

Factor Correlation	F1	F2	F3	F4
Factor1:Knowledge and experience	1.00			
Factor2:Practical teaching competence	0.39	1.00		
Factor3:Support for learners' learning	0.44	0.36	1.00	
Factor4:Friendly atmosphere	0.42	0.40	0.49	1.00

Table 4: Factor model of ideal JTs for Arabian background learners

Table 4 illustrates that the first factor construct, "knowledge and experience," was relevant to teachers' intellectual competences and experiences about foreign language pedagogy. The second factor included teachers' competences for better classroom learning. Therefore, the second factorial construct was summarised as "practical teaching competence." The next factor was "support for students' learning," which consisted of components that were attributable to teachers' encouraging attitudes toward learners. The fourth grouping, "friendly atmosphere," referred to students' and teachers' emotional rapport in a positive way.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.65	29.75	29.75
2	1.68	8.85	38.60
3	1.52	7.987	46.59
4	1.11	5.827	52.41

Table 5: Eigenvalues, variance, and cumulative variance for JTs' construct

Table 5 lists four factors with eigenvalues more than one. An eigenvalue indicates the amount of variance that can be accounted for by one average variable. In this study, four factors accounted for 52.4% of variance in scores.

4.3 Arabian Japanese teachers' factor structure

The EFA and CFA yielded three factors for ideal Japanese language teachers who had an Arabic background (Table 6). Factor 1, "interaction with learners," concerned teachers' and learners' communication that contributes to their mutual compassion. The survey items relevant to teachers' intellectual competences were categorised in Factor 2, "knowledge about Japan and Japanese language." Factor 3 comprised four items labelled, "experience and qualification," which described teachers' job-related experiences and qualifications. The factor correlation matrix in Table 6 shows that the three factors revealed a high correlation, which suggests that these three factors were reciprocally influential.

#. Items	F1	F2	F3
Factor 1: Interaction with learners (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$, $M = 3.18$)			
40. Accept students' emotions.	.83	-.10	.09
21. Warm, kind, and understanding.	.77	-.12	.08
37. Make class friendly and comfortable.	.74	.02	.06
28. Have patience.	.66	.19	-.06
38. Able to develop courses that meet students' needs.	.55	.24	.09
20. Give a lesson on the basis of student proficiency.	.53	.25	.03
5. Cheerful and humorous.	.53	.06	-.04
14. Accept students' suggestions and ideas.	.51	.31	-.09
32. Able to make language tests based on aims such as achievement and proficiency tests, and analyse and interpret results statistically.	.40	.17	.15
41. Make students maintain disciplines in class.	.36	.22	.10
Factor 2: Knowledge about Japan and Japanese language (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$, $M = 3.21$)			
11. Teach beyond textbooks, if necessary.	.03	.70	-.06
12. Skilful in Japanese teaching methods as a foreign language.	.22	.69	-.05
10. Able to analyse Japanese language objectively as one of the world languages.	.10	.58	.18
27. Have a broad knowledge of Japanese culture, customs, and history.	-.13	.49	.37
Factor 3: Experience and qualification (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.75$, $M = 3.13$)			
36. Have master's (or higher) degree.	.00	-.01	.72
30. Have a qualification of Japanese language education.	-.02	.05	.68
39. Have experience learning a foreign language.	.26	.14	.48
25. Able to explain in student's mother tongue (or vehicular language).	.19	-.08	.43

Factor Correlation	F1	F2	F3
Factor1: Interaction with learners	1.00		
Factor2: Knowledge about Japan and Japanese language	.63	1.00	
Factor3:Experience and qualification	.55	.55	1.00

Table 6: Factor model of ideal ATs for Arabian background learners

The indices of CFA revealed an acceptable fit ($\chi 2$ [149 df] = 215.79). Goodness of fit indices for this 3-factor model exceeded the .90 criterion: GFI = .92, AGFI = .90, and CFI = .96. The RMSEA value was .053, which indicates an acceptable fit. Table 7 reports the initial eigenvalues for the components; the three extracted factors account for 59.6% of the total variance.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	8.22	45.68	45.68
2	1.41	7.83	53.50
3	1.09	6.05	59.55

Table 7: Eigenvalues, variance and cumulative variance for ATs' construct

4..4 Gender and study length difference in expectation towards JTs and ATs

Table 8 shows the values for male and female students' expectations toward JTs and ATs based on the models developed above. Whereas no statistically significant difference was seen concerning male and female students' expectations on factors for ATs, the results showed that female students expect more from JTs than male students do. Additionally, female students' expectations were statistically higher regarding three of the four factors. However, the effect size values indicated that the differences were small.

		Male			Female			Effect size	
	Factors (FA)	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	δ	
JTs	FA1: Knowledge and experience	169	3.31	0.05	215	3.35	0.04	0.038	Small
	FA2: Practical teaching competence	180	3.66	0.03	221	3.75*	0.02	0.091	Small
	FA3: Support for students' learning	182	3.13	0.05	230	3.21*	0.04	0.078	Small
	FA4: Friendly atmosphere	184	3.38	0.04	231	3.49*	0.04	0.109	Small
ATs	FA1: Interaction with learners	195	3.24	0.05	226	3.14	0.05	0.105	Small
	FA2: Knowledge about Japan and Japanese language	200	3.26	0.05	235	3.16	0.04	0.100	Small
	FA3: Experience and qualification	193	3.11	0.05	217	3.14	0.05	0.032	Small

Note. δ = Cliff's (1993) delta
*statistically higher mean values compared to counterparts ($p < 5\%$)

Table 8: Expectation level of students with different study length – Mann-Whitney U test

Similar but more robust differences were seen between groups of different study length (Table 9). The results indicate that students who studied Japanese for a relatively shorter period (less than 1.916 years) had stronger expectations for JTs regarding three factors (Factors 1, 3, & 4); however, this was not the case for ATs. Furthermore, the effect sizes of the three pairs indicated a medium level of difference. In contrast, for ATs, only Factor 1 "Interaction with learners" was statistically significant with a medium size effect and the strongest effect size of the factors.

	Factors (FA)	Shorter			Longer			Effect size	
		N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*δ*	
JTs	FA1: Knowledge and experience	145	3.42*	0.04	180	3.26	0.05	0.151	Medium
	FA2: Practical teaching competence	152	3.73	0.03	186	3.71	0.02	0.025	Small
	FA3: Support for students' learning	155	3.29*	0.05	192	3.12	0.04	0.170	Medium
	FA4: Friendly atmosphere	161	3.53*	0.04	192	3.37	0.04	0.162	Medium
ATs	FA1: Interaction with learners	174	3.34*	0.05	173	3.04	0.06	0.302	Medium
	FA2: Knowledge about Japan and Japanese language	178	3.29	0.05	181	3.18	0.05	0.107	Small
	FA3: Experience and qualification	171	3.15	0.05	168	3.10	0.06	0.049	Small

Note. δ = Cliff's (1993) delta
*statistically higher mean values compared to counterparts ($p < 5\%$)

Table 9: Expectation level of students with different study length – Mann-Whitney U test

4.5 Comparison of each questionnaire item

Wilcoxon Signed-rank tests compared the degree of expectations of Arabian learners for the two teacher cohorts. As seen in Table 10, shaded cells indicate statistically greater values compared to the corresponding group. Regarding all items except two (#24 & #30), statistically higher scores were produced for learners' perceptions of "good" JTs. The range of mean scores for the JT results were 3.85 (#33) - 2.85 (#25), whistle those for ATs were 3.53 (#13) - 2.68 (#35). Overall, mean values in the JT results were slightly higher than those for ATs. These outcomes imply that "good" JTs for Arabian learners are anticipated to be more proficient than ATs in terms of most characteristics.

No significant difference was seen with item #24 "provide consultation for learners even about matters irrelevant to Japanese language" and #30 "have a qualification of Japanese language education." Only the mean score of item #25 "able to explain in student's mother tongue" for ATs was statistically higher than that for JTs. It is unquestionable for ATs are able to explain in Arabic. Therefore, this result would reflect learners' perceptions that JTs' proficiency in Arabic is not highly counted. The mean of the item was lowest for JTs, while Arabic command was the third highest for ATs. This outcome suggests that Arabic linguistic skills are low in learners' priority lists for JTs.

#	Questionnaire Items	*M* (*SD*) JTs	*M* (*SD*) ATs	*p*	
1	Optimistic about self, others, and life.	3.48(.69)	3.03(.92)	.00	**
2	Received sufficient training for Japanese language education.	3.66(.59)	3.17(.90)	.00	**
3	Enthusiastic about teaching.	3.69(.59)	3.26(.80)	.00	**
4	Able to speak in standard Japanese.	3.78(.48)	3.30(.83)	.00	**
5	Cheerful and humorous.	3.36(.76)	3.11(.95)	.00	**
6	Conscious of one's professional responsibilities.	3.30(.84)	3.10(.93)	.00	**
7	Tolerant of other languages and cultures.	3.71(.55)	3.48(.80)	.00	**
8	Have a broad knowledge of international economy and concerns.	2.95(.86)	2.76(.88)	.00	**
9	Enjoy teaching.	3.67(.58)	3.27(.90)	.00	**
10	Able to analyse Japanese language objectively as one of the world languages.	3.45(.70)	3.13(.86)	.00	**
11	Teach beyond textbooks, if necessary.	3.34(.80)	3.13(.89)	.00	**
12	Skilful in Japanese teaching methods as a foreign language.	3.63(.61)	3.28(.87)	.00	**
13	Able to give straightforward explanation when students have difficulty.	3.71(.62)	3.53(.76)	.00	**
14	Accept students' suggestions and ideas.	3.38(.79)	3.13(.92)	.00	**
15	Hard-working teacher.	3.83(.42)	3.43(.79)	.00	**
16	Happy and able to answer students' questions.	3.72(.52)	3.38(.87)	.00	**
17	Possess a basic knowledge of linguistics.	3.52(.69)	3.18(.85)	.00	**
18	Praise and encourage students.	3.35(.80)	3.09(.93)	.00	**
19	Able to manage class properly.	3.66(.59)	3.22(.92)	.00	**
20	Give a lesson based on student proficiency.	3.39(.83)	3.15(.93)	.00	**
21	Warm, kind, and understanding.	3.21(.89)	2.98(1.03)	.00	**
22	Encourage students to speak in Japanese.	3.81(.46)	3.39(.88)	.00	**
23	Use a variety of teaching methods, materials, and audiovisual tools.	3.65(.62)	3.19(.96)	.00	**
24	Provide consultation for students even on matters that are irrelevant to Japanese language.	3.03(.91)	3.11(.93)	.15	
25	Able to explain in student's mother tongue (or vehicular language).	2.85(.96)	3.44(.82)	.00	**
26	Have extensive teaching experience.	3.20(.87)	2.92(.95)	.00	**
27	Have a broad knowledge of Japanese culture, customs, and history.	3.66(.65)	3.17(.83)	.00	**
28	Have good patience.	3.61(.63)	3.23(.97)	.00	**
29	Able to correct students' mistakes properly.	3.67(.61)	3.38(.79)	.00	**
30	Have a qualification of Japanese language education.	3.48(.81)	3.40(.88)	.08	
31	Make class interesting and fun.	3.57(.68)	3.18(.96)	.00	**
32	Able to make language tests based on aims such as achievement and proficiency tests and analyse and interpret results statistically.	3.45(.71)	3.08(.88)	.00	**
33	Able to use Japanese language accurately and fluently.	3.85(.42)	3.42(.79	.00	**
34	Do not embarrass students or make fun of them when they make mistakes and errors.	3.54(.84)	3.17(1.10)	.00	**
35	Have ample knowledge about classical Japanese literature.	3.30(.88)	2.68(.98)	.00	**
36	Have master's (or higher) degree.	2.91(1.05)	2.76(1.08)	.01	*
37	Make class friendly and comfortable.	3.42(.78)	3.12(.98)	.00	**
38	Able to develop courses that meet students' needs.	3.51(.69)	3.15(.94)	.00	**
39	Have experience learning a foreign language.	3.18(.87)	2.94(.95)	.00	**
40	Accept students' emotions.	3.29(.83)	3.12(1.02)	.00	**
41	Make students maintain disciplines in class.	3.65(.62)	3.37(.81)	.00	**

**p<.01

Table 10: Results of Wilcoxon Signed-rank Test

5 Discussion

5.1 "Good" teachers of Japanese language for Arabian background learners

The results of the present study indicate some similarities and differences between Arabian learners' perceptions of "good" JTs and ATs. This study underpins that teachers' knowledge and experiences associated with language acquisition appear to be crucial for learners in Arabian countries. Teachers' interactive competences, by which learners can build healthy relationships, are also regarded as important, for example, "support for learners' learning" (Factor 3) and "friendly atmosphere" (Factor 4) for JTs and "interaction with learners" (Factor 1) for ATs. These factors have also been reported in prior literature (Hayashi, 2010; Kobayashi et al., 2007; Ngan & Kobayashi, 2009; Nuibe et al., 2006; Sato & Watanabe, 2007). Furthermore, exclusively seen in the results of JTs were two factors that were strongly related to pedagogical activities, "practical teaching competence" (Factor 2) and "support for learners' learning" (Factor 3). These factors were not distilled in the results of the constructs for ATs. With the fact that all mean scores on the items for ATs were more than 2.6, it is understood that the learners appreciate ATs' pedagogical competences as well. However, these results imply learners' latent expectations for "good" JTs to contribute more proactively to their learning activities.

The statistical analysis produced a four-factorial model for JTs and a three-factorial model for ATs. Factor number tests also suggested that the model for JTs could have more factors than that for ATs (see Table 3). Furthermore, the factors in the construct of ATs were more closely correlated than the factors for JTs (Table 5 and Table 6). This finding indicates that JTs are evaluated exclusively from more aspects than ATs by learners. As such, these results imply that current learners in an Arabic area tend to view JTs from more facets of perspectives than they do ATs.

The results also revealed that students' expectations toward JTs differed based on student gender and learning history. For example, female students' reported higher expectations for JTs than males did; however, this gender difference was not seen for ATs. Basow (1995) reported that female students assessed their university teachers highly. This study adds insight that language teachers' cultural backgrounds are also associated differently with female and male students' evaluations. However, this study did not provide evidence for why no gender difference was seen in students' expectations for ATs.

Prior studies have shown that the length of study is associated with student expectations of teachers (Kobayashi et al., 2007; Ngan & Kobayashi, 2009; Sato & Watanabe, 2007); however, these results fluctuate among different countries. The present study found that students with shorter study experiences placed more importance on JTs' knowledge, experience, pedagogical support, and friendliness, but they placed more importance only on ATs' interactive orientation with learners. The expectation level of students with short and longer study backgrounds appears consistent for ATs, but moderated for JTs over time. This outcome could be attributed to learners' higher expectations toward unfamiliar native speakers at the onset of their language study. As their studies proceed, their expectations might be moderated.

5.2 Present situation of Japanese language education in Arabic world

The comparative exploration suggests that the extent of learners' expectancies for JTs is higher than for ATs. This imbalance between JTs and ATs may be due to the current state of Japanese language education in the Arabic area. Specifically, there are insufficient numbers of teachers who specialise in Japanese language pedagogy or who have substantial experience as a Japanese language teacher. In addition, many ATs are relatively younger than JTs, which might prevent learners from anticipating many and highly competent skills for ATs. It is worth noting that the mean values for ATs were not low (ranged approximately from 2.7 to 3.5), yet were lower than the mean values of JTs at the time of this study.

Additionally, ATs had a statistically higher mean score only on item #25 "able to explain in student's mother tongue." With the fact that all ATs are able to explain in Arabic, this result should

be interpreted as learners' weaker expectations toward JTs' Arabic competence as an instructional language. This analytic outcome might result from the fact that most JTs in the region do not have a good command of the Arabic language and they teach Japanese via direct methods. Previous studies have not disclosed the scores of items (Kobayashi et al., 2007; Ngan & Kobayashi, 2009; Nuibe, 2010; Nuibe et al., 2006); however, it is conjectured that the result varies depending on the extent to which the possible medium language of instruction is prevalent worldwide.

5.3 Implications for Japanese language teaching and teachers

Learners' pictures of "good" language teachers would be useful information for those who work with language learners. Of course, teachers cannot always cope with learners' expectations for personal, temporal, or institutional reasons; however, it would be the teacher's responsibility to seek a learner's understanding of his or her own views and a learning setting (Brown, 2009). To accelerate student learning outcomes, it is important that teachers and learners have harmonious conceptions of pedagogical activities (Virtanen & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2010). Furthermore, current findings suggest that teachers should re-examine their priorities in maintaining teaching activities within specific educational settings. In particular, to the best of this author's knowledge, most JTs work on short-term contracts in the Arabic area (a few years or on a part-time basis). During such a limited time, it would be important for teachers to reflect upon their own activities and manage priorities for professional development in a suitable manner.

This study also calls attention to the careful transition of course management initiatives from JTs to ATs. For example, JTs in major institutions have attempted to hand over course management duties to their corresponding local teachers. However, learners' expectations toward JTs are considerably high compared with those for ATs, which partly reflects a certain extent of teacher competence. Therefore, it is urgent that ATs develop their professional competence and that JTs support ATs' development continuously.

5.4 Limitations and further consideration

Admittedly, there are some limitations regarding methodological procedures. Firstly, the results cannot confirm whether the survey respondents properly understood the questionnaire items and instructions. Secondly, the survey results strongly depend on the scope of survey items. The respondents are forced to provide their replies under a prefabricated framework built by the author, which could restrict the respondents from producing unforeseen insights (Brown, 2009). For example, the questionnaire used in this study included no items vis-à-vis teachers' competencies in institutional administration (Hirahata, 2007), IT, or information literacy skills. The third limitation is that this study could have more factors; the factor number tests suggested that, theoretically, more factors could be produced. This study developed the factor structures so that one factor included more than two items to prioritise the factor interpretation validity. With more survey items, this study could have generated more factors or, with less rigid criteria, different outcomes could have been shown.

For further consideration, it would be valuable to understand teachers' own conceptions of good teachers and compare teachers' and learners' perceptions of what characteristics teachers should possess (Brown, 2009; Kobayashi et al., 2007; Ngan & Kobayashi, 2009; Nuibe, 2010; Sato & Watanabe, 2007), because teachers and learners often have discrepancies about language learning (Brown, 2009). Furthermore, although a modicum of research has suggested the potential impacts of study length, as this study revealed, an association between learners' expectations of their teachers and their target language proficiency level remains unclear. Learners' perceptions about their ideal language teachers, by means of an in-depth methodology, certainly warrant further investigation.

In addition, it is worth examining teachers' characteristics as expected by other relevant personnel in cultural and official organisations that work for the promotion of Japanese language and cultural understanding, and attention should be drawn to language teachers' social perspectives,

such as international sensitivity and administrative skills, which prior research has overlooked (Hirahata, 2007). Based on these findings from a variety of perspectives, it is indispensable to discuss the diverse nature of Japanese language teachers' competences that are required to effectively promote cultural understanding across the globe.

6 Concluding remarks

This study quantitatively addresses learners' perceptions about "good" Japanese language teachers with native and non-native backgrounds in the Arabic region. Learners' views about "good" JTs were four fold: "knowledge and experience," "practical teaching competence," "support for students' learning," and "friendly atmosphere." "Good" ATs were seen from three viewpoints: "interaction with learners," "knowledge about Japan and Japanese language," and "experience and qualification." Learners' "good" JT and AT models share some characteristics concerning teachers' professional knowledge, professional experiences, and warm relationships with learners. Further, the current results suggest that JTs' stronger contribution to students' learning is expected more explicitly than that of ATs. Overall, this study found that Arabian learners expected JTs, more so than ATs, to possess many teachers' competencies. This clear dependence of learners' expectations on JTs appears to be rooted in the present peculiar situation of Japanese language teaching in the area. More trained and experienced local teachers are needed for the future development of Japanese language education in the Arabic world. As such, this paper stressed the urgent necessity to promote continuing commitment for the development of local teachers. This study also found relatively novice students' higher expectations for JTs than those who had longer study experience; however, this tendency was not seen for ATs. In addition, female students expected more for JTs, yet this was not the case for ATs.

In foreign language teaching, many personnel are engaged directly and indirectly. Therefore, it is important for language teachers to make their pedagogical decisions based on their own institutional condition. With broader perspectives, teachers are also required to look closely at expectations and movements of learners, institutions, governments, and the world. Therefore, foreign language teachers must be sensitive to overt and covert differences among the people around them.

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