

***Multiculturalism, Language, and Race in English Education in Japan: Agency, Pedagogy, and Reckoning.* Gregory Paul Glasgow, Ed.
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Multiculturalism, Language, and Race in English Education in Japan: Agency, Pedagogy, and Reckoning is an extensive collection of research papers and personal essays that span a wide range of issues relating to English pedagogy and English-language research in Japan. Weighing in at a formidable 456 pages, the anthology consists of 15 chapters in four parts: “Inner Reflections” (chapters 2-4), “Research Perspectives” (chapters 5-8), “Pedagogical Interventions” (chapters 9-13), and “Sustainability Advocacy” (chapters 14-15).

In Part I, university educators share in their respective chapters their experiences with the discriminatory status quo of native speakerism in the English teaching industry in Japan. Tracing their professional journeys, the authors detail how their non-native English-speaking status and/or non-Japanese ethnicity give rise to challenges both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, in chapter 3, Lee expresses that he initially assumed Japanese students wanted to know more about their teacher as an authentically English-speaking Canadian rather than as a Canadian immigrant from Hong Kong. This resulted in him emphasizing his Canadian-ness in classroom content and even “hid[ing]” his Chinese heritage. Describing experiences outside the classroom, Matikainen (chapter 2) shares how her non-native status was graded “D” by her department in an attempt to categorise their English teaching staff—apparently denoting the lowest level English nativism. Lastly, Oo raises the issue of how gender further complicates linguistic and ethnic/racial prejudice as it intersects with sexism when she shares experiences of unfair treatment in the workplace next to “White male colleagues” (chapter 4: Section: Working as a Female TESOL Professional in Japan, paragraph 2). Although the author does not go as far to evoke Orientalism or postcolonial feminist critique by name, she alludes to the long-standing tropes in colonial and post-colonial discourse of disempowering Southeast Asia by feminizing the region and people, writing, “I felt that I was bullied because I was a diminutive southeast Asian woman” (chapter 4: Section: Working as a Female TESOL Professional in Japan, paragraph 2).

Contributors present their primary research findings regarding both student and teacher-focused research questions in Part II. Carpio and Stewart (chapter 5) compile diary accounts from Filipino English teachers in Japanese high schools and identify some instances of administrative prejudice—such as the failing to include Filipino teachers in safety protocol information. In Okada’s contribution (chapter 8), the author adds credence to Carpio and Stewart’s assertion that there are also important instances of agency whereby non-native teachers are able to maintain simultaneous insider/outsider subjectivity that can be leveraged in ways to motivate students through appreciation for sociolinguistics and to guide students towards a critical stance on native speakerism. Both aforementioned contributions conclude that inclusion of Filipino ethnic/national subjectivity in the classroom provides students the opportunity to broaden their awareness of Filipino culture and also to develop greater self-awareness about their own culture and subjectivity.

In Part III, contributors continue to discuss their experience with teacher subjectivity as it informs their classroom experiences. Minematsu and Morgan (chapter 9) identify “Hidden Diversities” (Chapter 9: Insider/Outsider Perspectives: Utilizing Educator Funds of Knowledge to Explore “Hidden Diversity” in University English Courses in Japan) and offer self-reflexive contemplation of their linguistic teaching biases. Minematsu admits in her chapter that she was surprised that her Japanese students had “grown up overseas, had a non-traditional home culture, or were Japan-born foreign nationals” (Chapter 9: Section: Aiko’s Voice: Uncovering Intercultural Lives, paragraph 1). Coauthor Morgan considers how her English monolingualism limits her lesson planning and potentially introduces a Western bias. Minematsu shares that despite being a Japanese speaker, she intentionally plays “the role of ignorant foreigner” demonstrating that hidden diversities are also ones that can be strategically implemented in the classroom (Chapter 9: Section: Theme 3: Challenges in the Classroom, paragraph 1). Also in Part III, two authors share their experiences teaching both Blackness and issues relating to sexuality/gender in both university and high school classes. Myskow (chapter 10) provides a thorough consideration for how grammar and rhetoric implicate certain ideological discourses surrounding race. He includes lesson/activity outlines that show how processes of teaching linguistic structure also can lead to discussions of knowledge production. High school teacher Ellis’ essay (chapter 12), which reflects in part on his experience teaching topics related to sexuality, is the anthology’s only direct contribution to the subject. Ellis finds that high school students responded generally well to ideas about rethinking sexual prejudice. The author notes that one of his students built on an interest in drag culture and pursued the topic for their senior high school thesis which then inspired two other students to also research this area.

Lastly, in Part IV, co-authors McCandie, Smith, Clark, and Taylor (chapter 14) share their journey to raise awareness of inequality in English-language teaching in Japan through the creation of their website, Equity ELT Japan. While the website's resources focus specifically on issues of gender representation from 2018, in this article, the four co-authors call for a widening of equity discourse to also include "Japanese privilege, Whiteness, sex, and mother tongue" (paragraph 4). In the last article of the anthology (chapter 15), Yokota offers a colorful yet uneven metaphor in which "tilling," "planting," "watering," "weeding," and "crop rotation" act both as section breaks of the essay and represent aspects of teaching practice. These can be read figuratively as scaffolding, supplementing activities, nurturing/inspiring, content filtering, and attending to teacher mental health, respectively, which Yokota frames as a sustainable model not only for effective student learning, but also for teachers' work-life balance.

While the anthology expansively covers a number of topics from a variety of professionals, I believe that the project would benefit from the inclusion of a discussion of religion, specifically, Islamophobia. Japan continues to perpetuate religious discrimination towards Muslims at the highest levels of police and government (Takahashi, 2018; Yamashita, 2022). Given that the anthology underscores the hypocrisy of initiatives that promote global interconnectedness while also sustaining systemic discrimination—and thereby constrain multiculturalism, of which Muslim subjectivity is among the marginalised voices—the perspective of a Muslim educator/researcher would have been beneficial. This would have also fulfilled what the editor sets up in the introductory chapter when he calls attention to an apparent moment in racial politics marked by the murder of George Floyd, the rise in violent anti-Asian hate crime during COVID-19, and the enduring spectre of *Islamophobia*.¹

Framing this anthology as part of a broader discussion about protecting multiculturalism discourse amid, for example, pushback against affirmative action and Critical Race Theory in classrooms could have more effectively kept the context of these works within the scope of institutional hiring

¹ The editor situates the contributors' works within an apparent moment in racial politics and evokes the politically charged term "reckoning" in the book's title. Indeed, while the stakes for these educators and researchers are high, likening their experiences to fundamental human rights violations—such as state-sanctioned police brutality, the racialized violence witnessed during the pandemic, and the persistence of anti-Islamic hostilities—all of which have, at their worst, included murder, is, in this reviewer's opinion, an overreach. Admittedly, a more tenable discussion of "reckoning" may emerge given the growing popularity of Japanese nationalism and xenophobic discourse, as exemplified by the formation of the ultranationalist Sanseito party in 2019. Sanseito's political establishment was apparently validated by far-right white nationalist Charlie Kirk when he visited Tokyo in 2025 to meet with the leader of Sanseito (just three days before Kirk's assassination in the US) (Geddie & Smith, 2025). From this reviewer's perspective, efforts to promote multiculturalism and diversity in Japanese institutions and classrooms may face entirely new challenges if Japanese ultranationalism continues to be emboldened.

practices and curriculum—both central topics of this anthology and fixtures in contemporary multiculturalism discourse. Lastly, while the anthology does make interventions into issues relating to gender with regards to intersectionality and women teachers, for the GALE readership, perhaps more representative works also pinning down White male heteronormative patriarchy and its linkages with the English language education could have rounded out this project.

This collection brings together educators and researchers from a variety of professional disciplines and cultural-linguistic backgrounds, united by a shared commitment to interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches in the field of English language education and research. As Japanese institutions and systems continue to wrestle with outdated racial and ethnocentric ideologies and practices, the works represented in this anthology succeed at contributing to and standing with a broader practice of decolonization that seeks to unseat hegemonic notions of authentic and legitimate perspectives and discourse.

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