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English in a global voluntary work context: A case study of spoken interaction and its implications for language pedagogy

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This study analyses a sample of spoken interaction between a Japanese volunteer working for JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency) and one of her co-workers in Jamaica. Details of the research context are provided, followed by a theoretical grounding of the project, which relates to publications in English as a Lingua Franca and related fields. The research methodology and epistemology align with discourse analysis, specifically linguistic ethnography and interactional sociolinguistics. After presenting an analysis of the spoken interaction based on these approaches, the resulting implications for language pedagogy are considered. This includes recommendations for specific aspects of language teaching and testing practice based on the research findings, which could be incorporated into a needs-driven localized pedagogy for future Japanese volunteers. These findings also carry significant implications for other contexts of language education, not only in terms of specific pedagogical practices but also regarding broader conceptions of language and communication.

Keywords: Japan; international development; voluntary work; English as a Lingua Franca; discourse analysis; linguistic ethnography; interactional sociolinguistics; language learning; language usage

Introduction

Research context

The Japan International Co-operation Agency (henceforth JICA) is the Japanese equivalent of America's Peace Corps, in other words a governmental organization which co-ordinates global voluntary work opportunities for Japanese volunteers. A large number of such volunteers are regularly dispatched by JICA to live overseas and work on projects related to international development for a period of two years, working in fields such as healthcare, education and engineering. Before departure the volunteers must pass an intensive ten week training course in Japan. This is focused on language lessons which prepare volunteers for using a specific target language in their destination countries, for example volunteers going to Jamaica would take English classes.

This is a dynamic context for applied linguistics research, notable for the target language usage (post pedagogy) taking place in linguistically diverse locations around the world, and in a globally significant way as it relates to international development. The JICA organization encompasses numerous situations which are of interest to researchers of language, pedagogy and culture, including communication between national governments; the planning and delivery of language courses; and situated verbal interactions between Japanese volunteers and their interlocutors around the world. The focus of the research reported here is on the analysis of an interaction

between a Japanese volunteer and an interlocutor she regularly works with in Jamaica. This will be presented as a micro example of spoken interaction deriving from the research context which will allow for a discussion of pedagogical issues at the language training centres in Japan, along with more general aspects of language and communication involving JICA volunteers.

The pre-service English language pedagogy at JICA

The English language courses at JICA are intensive, comprising roughly five hours of language lessons per day, six days a week for ten weeks. Students are ranked according to proficiency as determined by an admissions test, and grouped into classes, each usually containing six students. Students take a morning "home class" to practice general English and an afternoon "technical class" focussing on specific language for their particular field of work. The general principle underlying the course is to facilitate the communicative skills of the volunteers. However, knowledge of standard grammatical forms is also included in JICA's final language test which must be passed before volunteers can be dispatched. This pedagogical situation engages with a series of important questions currently being researched in applied linguistics concerning standards and diversity in languages. For example, if the volunteers will experience a diverse range of linguistic forms during their time overseas, then what role should be played in their pre-service pedagogy by practices aimed at reducing grammatical errors and promoting adherence to "standard" language forms? Such questions have become particularly important in researching English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF).

Theorizing the research

Researchers in ELF have worked to investigate features and processes in communication where English is used as a bridging language across first languages and home cultures. Notable ELF research into linguistic forms includes the work of Jenkins (2000) on pronunciation and Seidlhofer (2004) on lexico-grammar. The central assertion of such work has been that interlocutors are often mutually intelligible without adhering to forms of "standard" English. Similar assertions have been made by ELF research into pragmatics (e.g., House, 2002; Hülmbauer, 2009) which highlights strategies used by speakers to negotiate meaning and maintain intelligibility. An important outcome of such work has been the empowerment of English users whose communication skills might otherwise be viewed as deficient in comparison to unrealistic models (Kirkpatrick, 2006). This connects with a wider trend in applied linguistics which has sought to move away from taking a deficit-based view of language learners and users (Firth & Wagner, 1997).

The ELF movement is not without its problems and issues. Firstly, there is a long-running debate about whether ELF scholars are attempting to define a specific type of communication (e.g., Cogo, 2008; Saraceni, 2008). Furthermore, although the overall ELF project is intended to be empowering and emancipatory for previously marginalized English users (see Seidlhofer, 2004), researchers adopting the term tend to over-rely on the native vs. non-native speaker distinction in their theoretical approach. This either-or distinction has become highly de-stabilized in many global contexts (e.g., Bhatt, 2005; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997) meaning that a categorization of communication as either ELF or non-ELF based on these characteristics can make research prone to essentialist positions (Sewell, 2012). Having adopted ELF as a contestable ontological category for their focus of enquiry, researchers have then been

accused of over-generalizing about the nature of ELF communication across different contexts (e.g., MacKenzie, 2013). Discussing English usage in Japan, Seargeant (2009) questions whether a blanket concept such as ELF can really capture the complexities and nuances of language usage in particular situated environments, an argument also expressed by Friedrich and Matsuda (2010).

ELF research has been informative and useful, but overreliance on the ELF term and concept can be limiting. This paper adopts a post-modern view of language and communication offered by discourse studies and ethnography (e.g., Rampton, 2006), because it overcomes a reliance on the native/non-native dichotomy when theorizing language usage. Speakers are viewed as having individual linguistic repertoires that they bring to each communicative encounter (see Canagarajah, 2007; Hall, 2013). The speakers' linguistic repertoires are one important aspect of the communicative context (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992) and as such can be usefully incorporated into an analysis of the interaction (Gee, 2010). The discourse is seen in terms of its cultural context and the linguistic resources of its speakers rather than by any pre-defined labels. There have been calls in the literature for this kind of approach to lingua franca communication, for example:

> there… seems to be a compelling case to at least complement the current studies on World Englishes and ELF with an ethnographic… approach in which little in the way of a priori assumptions is taken on board   (Blommaert, 2012, p. 5)

In adopting this approach, this paper also connects with previous research into discourse and intercultural encounters such as the work of Gumperz (1982) who incorporated contextual factors such as the degree of shared cultural knowledge between speakers into his analysis, as indicated by ethnographic data. Following Rampton (2006), this paper adopts Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics method as a route into studying the interactions between Japanese volunteers and their interlocutors, which is supplemented by other forms of ethnographic data such as participant interviews and field-notes deriving from observation.

Methodology

The data reported here comes from a large data set including 29 active JICA volunteers based in 13 different global locations. This paper focuses on the experiences of a single volunteer, Ren (pseudonym), a female arts and crafts teacher working in the west of Jamaica at a school for special educational needs. This selection was made based on the rich data set available for Ren, including: a face-to-face interview, field-notes from observing her in and outside of work and recordings of her interacting with several different Jamaican interlocutors.

In the interaction chosen for close analysis here, the other speaker is Val (pseudonym), a co-worker of Ren's at the school. Ren and Val had worked together for approximately 18 months before the interaction took place, and would regularly come into contact through co-teaching, discussions about classroom set up and so on. The interaction was elicited during a research visit to the school to observe lessons. Elicitation is uncommon in ethnographic research, but has been used before in holistic studies of communication which incorporate context and participant perspectives into the analysis of spoken discourse (e.g., House, 2002). Elicitation was necessary in this study due to the limited amount of time available at Ren's place of work, and because problems were encountered in an exploratory study where volunteers self-recorded naturally occurring interactions in the workplace. Although there are other more

naturalistic recordings of Ren, the encounter with Val is richer in several aspects, including length, the presence of identifiable goals in the data and the fact that it is an audio-visual recording.

Supplementary ethnographic data which goes beyond the interaction itself, will be incorporated into the analysis. Epistemologically, this is with a view to appreciating the "uniquely situated reality" (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 17) of a communicative context, and to gaining an emic perspective on the linguistic and communicative processes which are being studied. Ontologically, linguistic ethnography is a good fit for the project because, as a form of discourse analysis (Cook, 2011) it views language and communication as interactive, co-constructed, contextually situated, related to the identities of its users and multi-layered in its interconnectedness at micro to macro levels.

The extract from the interaction between Ren and Val was selected for close analysis following the method of searching for a self-contained or bounded unit of communication in which an identifiable goal can be observed (Gumperz, 1982). In this case the bounded unit takes the form of a topic which is introduced, discussed and then closed down, with the identifiable goal being the transfer of cultural knowledge about a type of dance or party in Jamaica. This extract was then transcribed, bringing in as much phonetic, prosodic and interactional detail as deemed necessary for current analytical purposes (Gumperz, 1982). The transcription conventions are listed in Appendix 1.

The analysis was conducted following Rampton's suggestion of immersion in the data, looking at it without pre-conceived ideas, trying to take:

> a slow, close look at the moment-by-moment unfolding of (the) episode, bringing in different concepts from linguistics and discourse analysis in provisional ways, exploring whether they could help illuminate what was going on (Rampton, 2006, p. 396)

The intention is to provide an "illustrative case" (Richards, 2011) of a Japanese volunteer interacting with a local interlocutor overseas, so that assertions about her communicative experiences can be made, and implications for language pedagogy considered.

Data and analysis

Ethnographic data
The ethnographic vignette presented in Appendix 2 is based on the interview with Ren, the observational field-notes and the audio-visual recordings of her communicative practices in and outside work. This is presented as a short narrative, which is line-numbered so that it can be cross-referenced during the analysis below. The reader may wish to refer to the ethnographic vignette before reading on.

Interactional data
The interaction below was extracted from a longer discussion between Ren and Val which took place directly after Ren's "towel art" lesson (see Appendix 2, lines 82-104) with Val's students. The discussion was elicited by first presenting the speakers with the following text (originally hand-written):

1. 'Work talk'

2.   Jamaican Culture / Living in Jamaica
3.   Usain Bolt / Sport in Jamaica
4.   Other

They were then asked to discuss the topics for around 10 minutes, before the audio-visual recording was started and they were left to continue alone. The audio version of the complete interaction is 11m03s long. The extract transcribed below takes place between 7m54s and 9m07s in the audio recording. At the point where this interaction begins, Ren had already guided the discussion through the initial topics, and is considering what topic to introduce for "other" (topic 4):

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1      Ren:  other (1.2) ah I'd like t'know (.) what
2            Jamaican people usually do like weeke::nd go
3            to chur::ch
4            (.)
5      Val:  yeah (.) persons go to church (.) or they go
6            to parties (.) like the clubs or dance
7      Ren:  mm-hm
8      Val:  dance >where is the thing where< (.) that's in
9            (.) in not really club itself but like a lawn
10           (.) a place that you know have no roof
11     Ren:  ah [outside?
12     Val:     [but it's
13           (.)
14     Ren:  yes
15     Val:  it's a building but it don't have any [roof
16                                                 [mm-hm
17     Val:  so you go >inside and then dance and get dark
18           and they play loud music and so< ((laughter))
19     Ren:  mm-hm ((laughter))
20     Val:  that's it that's they call dance [yes
21     Ren:                                   [okay not a
22           club
23     Val:  not the club because it don't have any roof
24     Ren:  ah
25     Val:  it's just in area where it's like (.) it's
26           made with >something like an area like this<
27           but it don't have any roof
28     Ren:  no drink (.) like is anyone (.) selling
29           drinks?
30           (.)
31     Val:  not (.) >you don't go inside they would be
32           outside< (.) >the person who will be selling
33           it will be the person who is be keeping it<
34     Ren:  mm
35     Val:  the person who's responsible the [dance
36     Ren:                                   [mm-hm
37     Val:  they would have it inside, but you have to
38           stay outside or you pay money to go in
39     Ren:  mm-hm
40     Val:  but it's not a club though
41           okay
42     Val:  it's like (.) >dance and everyone come and
43           dance and play music until< (.) police lock
44           out the party
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45    Ren:  oh
46    Val:  daylight ((laughter))
47    Ren:  okay ((laughter))
48    Val:  ((laughter))
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Data analysis
Following Rampton's approach, a slow, turn-by-turn examination of the discourse was used to uncover features of the interaction which would lead to an overall interpretation. This started with a micro-analysis of specific turns and built towards a broader interpretation of the discourse. Based on this analysis and interpretation, four assertions on the nature of the interaction are presented below. Assertions 1 and 3 relate mainly to linguistic features and mutual intelligibility in the extract, whereas assertions 2 and 4 are mainly concerned with interactional resources and pragmatic features.

Assertion 1: There are numerous examples of linguistic forms which could be viewed as "non-standard" or "incorrect" which do not hinder mutual intelligibility or the unfolding interaction
Focusing on lines 1-11 of the interaction, here are three examples of linguistic features which could be viewed as non-standard in some language learning contexts (or as mistakes requiring correction):
- weekend (Ren: 2) used without preposition or article
- persons (Val: 5) could be seen as an incorrect plural (although some ambiguity can be found in prescriptive grammars regarding people vs. persons)
- have no roof (Val: 10) from an error perspective, there is marked verb agreement

The interactional moves which follow these linguistic forms offer no internal evidence for a subsequent reduction in intelligibility, specifically:
- Val completes the adjacency pair of information request – provision in (5-6) following Ren's weekend
- Ren follows Val's persons with a minimal response/continuer (7)
- Ren responds with a confirmation question (11) following Val's turn ending have no roof, implying comprehension of the concept

As there are no marked or dis-preferred interactional moves following the three examples given, this suggests that the "non-standard forms" here are having little or no impact on mutual intelligibility in this micro-stretch of the discourse. Throughout the entire 11 minute discussion there are no instances of minor grammatical issues (plurals, prepositions etc.) with evidence of a subsequent reduction in intelligibility.

Assertion 2: Ren successfully uses pragmatic strategies of collaboration and active listening as interactional moves
During Val's talk, Ren shows that she is a competent and capable active listener. Pragmatically, her moves can be viewed as successful and appropriate in this example of intercultural exchange. Her turns are collaborative, displaying affiliation and interest. For example in lines 12-29, during Val's continuing description of the dance, Ren uses the following pragmatic moves to signal comprehension and continuing interest:
- minimal responses and continuers: yes (14), mm-hm (16 & 19),
- ah (24)

- on-cue collaborative laughter (19)
- a clarification statement / re-formulation (21-22) and an on-topic expansion question (28-29) which is sequentially relevant

Whereas all of these moves *signal* comprehension, it is the latter two which offer tangible evidence that Ren finds Val's talk intelligible at this point.

Assertion 3: Ren does not find Val's talk fully intelligible

As the episode draws to an end in lines 31-48, the following aspects of Ren's interaction indicate a change of footing (Goffman, 1981) as her participation level reduces, offering less evidence that she finds Val's talk intelligible:

- her minimal responses reduce to only mm (34), mm-hm (36 & 39), and her response tokens oh (45) and okay (41 & 47) demonstrate alignment but not tangible evidence of comprehension
- there are no further reformulations, expansion questions or other form of topic continuers
- her laughter (47) again follows Val's (46) which works again for alignment / affiliation but does not provide any evidence for receptive intelligibility

These co-occur with the following features of Val's talk:

- her turn beginning in line 31 is relatively unclear for several reasons, e.g. her reply to Ren's question (28-29) is a dis-preferred circumlocution instead of a plain affirmation or negation, her use of the anaphoric reference "it" in line 33 (second usage) could refer to either alcoholic drinks or the party itself
- there is a rapid succession of related topics: the person and what they are selling/keeping (31-33), responsibility for the dance (35), being inside vs. outside and whether money is paid or not (37-38), activities at the dance and how it ends (42-44)

The claim for a reduction in intelligibility here is a fairly high-risk assertion but there is other evidence to support it. During the interview with Ren, she makes the subjective assessment that she does not always achieve 100% receptive intelligibility with her Jamaican interlocutors (Appendix 2, lines 13-51). She says this is especially true "when the ladies... talk a lot... and very quickly" (Appendix 2, lines 31-34), going on to state that on such an occasion she can follow what the topic is but not all of the content.

In addition to this, soon after the extract under analysis here, there is another interactional episode in Ren and Val's discussion (see Appendix 2, lines 121-171) which follows a very similar pattern (topic discussion with Ren initially engaged followed by Val expanding on the topic and Ren subsequently withdrawing engagement). This supplementary evidence seems to support the assertion that intelligibility becomes an issue in lines 31-48 in the extract above.

It is important to consider why this happens. Val's talk after line 30 shows a lack of accommodation to Ren as interlocutor, as she either cannot or does not make an effort to be maximally intelligible. Furthermore she seems to be unaware that Ren's intelligibility level has become an issue. Aside from the pragmatic dimensions of Val's talk mentioned above (increased speed, fast topic shifts, etc.) Ren also does not possess the cultural knowledge about Jamaican dances which would facilitate interpretation of lines 31-48. The fact that Ren is guiding the discourse through questions and topic

changes is significant, as she is able to "let pass" (Firth, 1996) any talk which she finds unintelligible.

Assertion 4: The speakers employ a range of interactional resources in their communication which relate to culture, identity and the moment-by-moment unfolding of the discourse

In the opening lines of the extract, Ren orientates herself to an interviewer-type role as she instigates the new topic of weekend activities. She also displays semi-insider knowledge of Jamaican culture through her understanding that going to church is a significant weekend activity. There are numerous examples of how Ren orientates herself to this role of interviewer which was fairly consistent throughout the discussion, for example:

- as in this case, Ren tended to introduce a new topic and then sit back as a passive receiver of information on it
- before the discussion began, it was Ren who orientated herself to the instructions about the suggested topics and timing
- it is Ren who initiates an end to the discussion (Appendix 2, line 150)

To complement Ren's role of interested, inquisitive sojourner in Jamaica, Val takes on the role of cultural insider who is happy to give information about her home country. Two points of interest are that:

- in the interaction above and elsewhere in the data, Val tends to emphasize the difference of things in Jamaica to elsewhere, for example, the "nots and buts" constructions (9, 12 & 15)
- Val particularly indexes the bright, vibrant and colourful aspects of life in Jamaica. Aside from the dance/party topic she introduces here, she also brings up the following topics elsewhere in the discussion: friendliness with neighbours, food and Jamaican national dress

The two speakers co-construct these identities and roles through their interaction together (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The main interactional significance of Ren's adopted role as interviewer, as mentioned above, is that it offers Ren the resource of being able to let pass anything which she does not find intelligible (or comprehensible or interpretable, Smith & Nelson, 1985). Instead of relying on intelligibility to construct her next turn as in other types of interactive discourse, she is able to simply introduce a new topic or to ultimately end the discussion (see Appendix 2, line 156). This ability to let pass is not dependent on the overall genre or type of discourse, but rather the particular interactional moments and moves which occur within it. For example, Firth (1996) demonstrated that in business negotiations some turns can be allowed to pass without comprehension and some cannot. Hypothetically, if Val had reversed the identity roles at some point in the discussion and asked Ren specific questions, then we would have seen different interactional features coming into play.

Discussion

This analysis indicates that Ren is communicatively competent and able to interact "successfully" in Jamaica (also see Appendix 2, lines 64-80 & 104-120), although there may be some upper limits to what she finds intelligible in the spoken discourse she experiences there. These limits should not automatically be attributed to deficiencies in

Ren's linguistic repertoire or receptive skills, as other factors such as non-accommodation by her interlocutors may also be significant. Taking Ren's experiences as an illustrative case, let us now consider what would be a suitable kind of pre-service pedagogy to assist with this type of communicative experience. In other words what are the implications of the above analysis for language teaching at the JICA training centres?

It is important to stress that a one-size-fits-all approach to language teaching is never appropriate (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) as pedagogic practices need to be tailored to particular learners. Due to her previous experience, Ren's communicative repertoire for this situation may have already been fairly advanced at the point of her language lessons at JICA (see Appendix 2, lines 9-10) and the way specific teachers approach specific groups of learners will certainly depend on this factor among others. Nevertheless, some general pedagogical principles can be discerned, and the experiences noted here can be used to raise parameters of awareness for JICA language teachers, and those in other educational contexts where the target is successful lingua franca communication, for developing a well theorized overall approach to language pedagogy.

To begin with, teachers must be wary of fronting lessons with a "standard language ideology". Whereas a focus on language forms may be beneficial for learners at JICA, for example exposure to useful vocabulary and patterns of expression, teachers may do the learners a dis-service if they implicitly pass on a view of language which is overly form-based, in that the "correctness" of the linguistic forms take primacy over the delivery of message. This is related to assertion 1 above, which indicates that spending long amounts of pedagogical time on minor aspects of language form (for example prepositions and articles) would not be time well spent for the learners. Conceptually and empirically, this connects with the literature referred to earlier (see, for example, Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2004). Teachers may struggle with such an approach if a core part of their professional identity is the ability to "spot errors" and speak with authority about which forms are grammatical or not. Learners may also struggle with it if a core part of their identity is to try and avoid "errors" in terms of the idealized, *language as subject* (Widdowson, 2003) which they would have studied in the Japanese education system.

A useful approach for teachers is to demonstrate examples of lingua franca communication and other instances of English usage in its diverse global functions as input for the learners. For example, Matsuda and Duran (2012) suggest a listening activity based on a speech by Ban-Ki Moon about global warming. This activity can be seen as suitable for JICA language learners for at least two reasons beyond the traditional pedagogic benefits of processing a linguistic text:

- the topic is relevant to the learning context, as it is of global importance and linked to the overall goal of global development
- the text can raise critical awareness that language which, from a deficit perspective contains "errors", is in fact fully intelligible and furthermore is being used by a speaker of high international importance and authority

This point is related to the idea that Japanese users of English should be encouraged to use the language flexibly and without a feeling of inferiority (Baxter, 1980; Hino, 2009). As discussed above, Ren communicates naturally and confidently, without the need for complete adherence to standard grammatical forms. Teachers can implicitly foster this kind of belief in their students by sensitively reacting to their language output, discouraging linguistic forms which may reduce intelligibility, but encouraging

freedom of expression at other times. Furthermore in terms of input, providing examples of lingua franca interactions will help learners to understand that intelligibility is mutually and collaboratively achieved, and raise awareness of the natural diversity which exists in global uses of English (Sewell, 2012).

The points above connect with the issue of how language is actually conceived of by individuals in language education contexts. Rather than viewing a language such as English as a solid, bounded entity, it may be more useful for language learners and teachers to see it as a flexible set of resources for communication. Hall and Wicaksono (2013) provide a web-based resource which could be utilized by teachers and learners for developing this kind of perspective. One fundamental issue which may require sensitization is that the ability to communicate competently has very little to do with an individual's status as a native speaker based on the traditional either-or dichotomy (Leung, 2005). Sifakis (2007) suggests that teachers can expand their own critical awareness of issues in lingua franca communication by reviewing real-life examples in professional development sessions and building features of those interactions into their language lessons.

Following on from this, and considering assertions 2, 3 and 4 above, the issue of pragmatic skills in lingua franca communication comes into focus, as other researchers have emphasised (House, 2003). In the data presented here, Ren's pragmatic abilities were of great benefit to her interaction with Val. But other Japanese volunteers with less intercultural experience than Ren may be dispatched before developing such pragmatic skills. Also, based on the fact that Ren does reach the upper limits of what she finds intelligible (especially in the extract included in Appendix 2), consideration should be given to whether any extra pragmatic training could have helped her deal with the situation, or perhaps more importantly, situations where full comprehension is necessary for current purposes.

For the JICA context, it would seem highly appropriate for learners to become familiar with pragmatic issues in communication, particularly those occurring in intercultural encounters. It would be useful for teachers to present the learners with a range of interactions such as the one between Ren and Val in order to guide them through examples where pragmatic success is achieved and others where it is not (with suggestions for how success could be achieved). This type of language learning activity would have the advantage of not studying linguistic forms as external to interaction, but as residing within real-life lingua franca interactions. Therefore learners may slowly build up a number of useful linguistic forms which are linked with particular pragmatic outcomes. While a traditional TESOL fill the gap activity might include the selection of a "correct" linguistic form in terms of grammar, such activities could be adapted to prompt learners to select an appropriate interactional move to achieve a pragmatic outcome based on a an unfolding contextualized interaction. Taking the idea further, written language tests of this kind could be produced which would allow students to demonstrate the pragmatic skills that would later be useful in real-life communicative encounters. This would be one example of a test which provides assessment of abilities such as language awareness, sociolinguistic sensitivity and negotiation skills which, as Canagarajah (2006) points out, reflect proficiency in lingua franca encounters.

Another implication which can be drawn from this data and its analysis, is that pre-service JICA volunteers may benefit from being encouraged to take an ethnographic perspective themselves when they get out into their new contexts of communication (Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001). For example, pre-dispatch volunteers could work through illustrative examples of individuals entering new environments of culture and language usage, which demonstrate that it can take time to build up

contextual frames of understanding for discourse (Agar, 1996). At an appropriate time in their linguistic development, JICA language learners might benefit enormously from awareness raising activities which empower them with the understanding that to access cultural frames of reference can be extremely significant for comprehending a flow of communication.

In conclusion, the JICA context of language learning has provided an important platform for engaging with issues of standards and diversity in language usage, and for raising awareness of key issues in interpersonal discourse, as exemplified by the meeting of cultures. Perhaps the core issue here is the need for a critical re-evaluation of the role of standards in language education and a consideration of other pedagogical targets, towards which this paper has sought to contribute.

Acknowledgements

About the author
Nathan Page is a practicing English language teacher and lecturer in discourse studies, TESOL and applied linguistics. His research interests include discursive, ethnographic and reflexive aspects of language, communication and culture and their implications for language education. He is nearing the completion of his PhD research at York St John University, UK.

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Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions

(.)	brief pause (under one second)
(1.0)	longer pause (the number indicates length in seconds)
<u>text</u>	emphasised relative to surrounding talk
°text°	relatively quiet
[[	overlapping talk or action
>text<	speeded up or compressed relative to surrounding talk
te::xt	stretched sounds
=	latched turns, no pause between turns
((text))	"stage directions", or description of non-verbal activity including laughter
( )	transcription uncertainty (including text within parentheses for transcriber's best guess and blank spaces in parentheses for utterances which could not be made out at all)
t-	utterance cut off
.	falling intonation (particularly when the usage is marked pragmatically and/or significant as a discourse move)
?	used to highlight a noticeable occurrence of rising intonation with a question-like pragmatic move NOT to highlight all questions in the dialogue or all instances of rising intonation

Appendix 2: Ethnographic Vignette

1   When I met Ren on September 25th 2012 in a large coastal city in the west of Jamaica, we

2   conducted a semi-structured interview at an al fresco restaurant / bar about her experiences

3   since joining the JICA organization, with an emphasis on language and communication. The

4   interview was 34m04s in length. Early on in the interview, I learned basic facts about the nature

5   of Ren's voluntary work assignment, and the following biographical information:

6   ▪   She had been living in Jamaica for 1 year & 9 months at the time of my research

7   ▪   She had applied to extend her JICA contract for an extra 6 months beyond the usual 2

8   years

9   ▪   She had previously lived in the UK (London and Brighton) for almost 3 years, including

10   time spent attending English lessons at a language school

11   In the main part of the interview, we discussed various aspects of her communicative

12   experiences in Jamaica and the overall linguistic landscape, including the interplay between

13   Jamaican Creole (known locally as patois English, or simply "patois") and Standard English. In

14   the following interview extract, after prompting from me, Ren makes a subjective assessment of

15   how intelligible she finds Jamaican speakers to be (23 & 45-46):

```
16   NP:   let's try number two (.) can you understand
17         local people easily (.) when they speak
18         English to you
19         (.)
20   RE:   hh er (.) they ta::lk to me (.) i::n
21         standard English
22   NP:   yeah
23   RE:   er:: (.) it's about seventy per cent
24   NP:   okay (.) okay
25         (.)
26   NP:   er::m (.) but with the patois is that (.) is
27         it difficult to catch when someone's speaking
28         patois (.) can you understand (.)
29   RE:   mmm
30   NP:   some of it?
31   RE:   some (.) but you know (.) especially the
32         ladies (.) talk a lot=
33   NP:   =yeah
34   RE:   and very quickly
35   NP:   yeah
36   RE:   er I can't catch
37   NP:   right
38   RE:   maybe (.) I can guess the situation [like
39   NP:                                        [mm
```
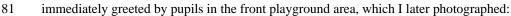
```
40  RE:  oh they're talking about >something like<
41       talking about the foo::d
42  NP:  right
43  RE:  talking about [guys
44  NP:                [right right right
45  RE:  but you know (.) so maybe I understand like
46       (.) half.
47  NP:  yeah (.) yeah yeah
```
                              (Ren interview: 17m47s – 18m40s)

On the subject of who she finds more or less intelligible, she also mentions that taxi drivers can
be harder to understand than her students and co-workers, particularly as they frequently use
Creole to communicate with passengers (23m21s). Her overall impression is that English and
Creole usage is demarcated and separate, with the two operating as distinct languages
(11m16s) with their interplay varying by speaker and context (15m50s). Here are some further
experiences and impressions of language and communication in Jamaica that Ren mentioned in
the interview:

▪ some general features of Jamaican English pronunciation, such as

vowel stress: e.g. where the o in "sec<u>o</u>nd" can be stressed (rather than being a
schwa), making it rhyme with "pond"(11m34s)

"y insertion": e.g. where "name" might be pronounced as "n**y**ame" (32m45s)

▪ some pragmatic features, such as ">do that for me<" used as a normal request in
Jamaica where the lack of politeness features is not marked (27m25s)

The morning after the interview (September 26th), I travelled with Ren to her place of work, a
school of special educational needs (the students had been diagnosed with conditions such as
down's syndrome and autism). The following exchange took place between Ren and the taxi
driver during this journey, and can be taken as an example of her communicative practices
outside work:

```
67  RE:  but you know I'm not so (.) I don't come to this
68       road so much
69  TX:  so okay (.) you mostly go bottom road
70  RE:  yes from the (   )
71  TX:  right (1.3) but it's the same drive right?
72       (.) you have to know it's like that (.) you
73       understand?
74  RE:  I understand.
```
                              (Ren exchange with taxi driver)

I take this extract as indicative of Ren's confidence and communicative success in Jamaica as
she: successfully conveys a message (67-68), responds appropriately to a collaborative
completion or receipt confirmation move by the driver (69-70) and seems to resist being
positioned as a complete cultural outsider who needs to be told about the local environment (71-

80   74). We arrived at the school before 9am. It had a bright, vibrant atmosphere and we were

81   immediately greeted by pupils in the front playground area, which I later photographed:

Picture 1: The School where the discussion with Val and lesson observations took place

82   I observed Ren teaching two lessons (and assisted her to some extent). The lessons focused on

83   how to make "towel art" which is a way to make decorative displays out of towels by using

84   techniques of rolling and folding, to some extent influenced by Japanese origami. Here is an

85   extract of Ren giving instructions to her students, which took place 21m35s into the first lesson I

86   observed:

```
87   RE:   okay first (.) use the big one (.) bigger one
88         (2.2)
89         then use the short side
90         (2.7)
91         okay fold it like this
92         (1.9)
93         fold the two sides into middle
94         (2.5)
95         okay then (.) roll this part (.) tight
96         (1.4)
97         and then (.) fold this part (.) and make
98         it stand
```

99   (Ren lesson observation 1)

100   The lesson lasted for approximately one hour and culminated with Ren asking a watching

101   teacher to judge which was the best effort of those made by the students. Here are some

102   examples of the finished products:

Picture 2: The finished products of Ren's "towel art" lesson

103   Ren mentioned in our interview that, by teaching the students towel art, she hoped to boost their

104   employment opportunities at local hotels and resorts. My impression was that she was well liked

105   by students and teachers alike, and that she was confident and competent at her work. I noticed

106   that she spoke with the other teachers at the start of the lesson (about class set-up) and again

107   at the end. She mainly spoke to the students to give instructions either as a group or

108   individually, to advise, give feedback and praise. I did not observe any noticeable occurrences

109   of a lack of mutual intelligibility or difficulties communicating. There were two occasions when I

110   could not make out what a student was saying but Ren appeared to. In one case, a student

111   asked me a question which I noted as:

112   ST: you ca<u>n</u> make dog?

113   I did not understand his question at the time, but Ren successfully understood that he was

114   asking the equivalent of:

115   can't we make a dog (instead of an elephant)?

116   I believe that Ren's success at receptive intelligibility here was related to her far greater

117   experience with features of language and communication in Jamaica, and also within the

118   specific educational context. In this specific instance, my status as the "native speaker" of

119   English had little relevance to the communicative needs of the situation, with Ren's linguistic and

120   pragmatic repertoire being better suited to comprehending the question.

Further Extract of Ren's Interaction with Val

121   This extract supplements assertions made about the first interaction reported in the Data and

122   Analysis section above. The extract begins roughly one minute after the previous episode ends,

123   and lasts until the end of the recording (10m11s-11m08s). Before the extract begins, Ren and

124   Val had been discussing the topic of Jamaican funerals for several turns.

125   Ren: people cry there?

126   (.)

127   Val: yeah (.) cry and bawl (.) not cry bawl

128   (.)

129   Ren: °bawl°

130   Val: yeah not [cry ( ) bawl

131   [((*Val illustrates this difference*

132   *with hand movements away from the*

133   *eyes getting bigger from when she*

134   *says 'cry' to 'ball'*))

135   they call it bawl ((*laughter*)) the Jamaican

136   language

137   Ren: mm

138   Val: so they drop (   ) the casket and they roll up

139   on the ground and (then   )

140   Ren: mm

141   Val: you know (.) like (.) they roll (dirt   )

142   Ren: oh

143   Val: and they (   ) their shoes and (   )

```
144        ((laughter)) saying that they miss the person
145        so they cry (.) a lot (.) loud
146  Ren:  mm-hm [okay ((Ren makes brief eye contact with
147        Val then averts gaze))
148  Val:        [yeah
149        (1.5)
150  Ren:  is that ten minutes (.) about
151        (1.0)
152  Val:  mm (.) yeah
153        (1.5)
154  Ren:  oh yes eleven minutes
155  Val:  eleven, oh okay ((laughter))
156  Ren:  I think that's enough (.) thank you very much
157        ((laughter))
158  Val:  you're welcome
159                          (Ren and Val interaction: 10m11s-11m08s)
```

160   Ren is engaged at the first line of the extract, but the problematic vocabulary "bawl" (127) signals
161   the beginning of intelligibility issues and from there onwards she only supplies minimal
162   responses until suggesting they had spoken for long enough (156). This example supplements
163   the assertions made above about a lack of full intelligibility in talk between Ren and Val, for
164   reasons including the lack of shared cultural knowledge between the two speakers. Although
165   there is a more formal linguistic and pragmatic intelligibility issue here – lack of awareness of the
166   term "bawl" by Ren (129) and Val's attempt to explain the term through gesture seeming to lack
167   success (130-134) – Val's increased speed and topic transitions (135-145, note the open
168   brackets showing lack of transcription certainty) can be viewed as a lack of accommodation
169   towards Ren as interlocutor. We can only guess the reasons for this, but they could potentially
170   include Val's lack of experience in communicating with interlocutors who are not bi-dialectal in
171   English and Jamaican Creole.