

# Pronunciation Pedagogy and Teacher Cognition: A Case of an EFL teacher

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## Abstract

Over the past few decades, the increasing number of research examined teacher cognition (i.e., knowledge and beliefs) of second language teacher (Baker, 2011), and it has contributed to teacher education. However, there is few numbers of research and courses in which pre-service teachers can learn pronunciation pedagogy through teacher education in Japan. As a result, they are relying on their intuition to teach pronunciation. Therefore, the current study examine a Japanese EFL teachers' cognition and the relationship between the actual teaching practice in relation to teaching English pronunciation. This is a qualitative case study in which data were collected from a semi-structured interview, classroom observation with video recording and filed notes, and stimulated recall interview. Findings reveal that the Japanese EFL teacher has developed teacher cognition especially through her teaching experience and her beliefs is both consistent and inconsistent with her actual teaching practice.

## Keywords

teacher cognition, teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, pronunciation pedagogy, English as a Foreign language, EFL teacher

## 1 Literature review

In second language teaching, the teacher is "central" with regard to best promoting students' language learning. Their ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their practice (Nespor, 1987). This psychological dimension is called *teacher cognition* (Borg, 1997). According to Borg's framework, teacher cognition is connected to teachers' learning experience, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice.

Although there are increasing number of teacher cognition research, Borg (2006) points out there

is still a need that teacher's actual teaching practice should be integrated with teachers' subjective data (e.g., self-report). Also, relatively little is known in terms of pronunciation pedagogy, whereas pronunciation is a key element of the learning of oral skills in a second language (Macdonald, 2002). As a result, it is still under-researched that how teachers are prepared for teaching pronunciation (Baker, 2011; Baker & Murphy, 2011). Moreover, teacher cognition research has mainly examined in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, and Buss (2016) points out a certain need for more research examining teachers' cognitions and practices in different English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Especially, it should be examined in Japan, where the preparation of pronunciation instructors represents a minor role in educating EFL teachers (Kochiyama, Nakanishi, Arimoto, 2013).

Therefore, the purpose of the study is (a) to investigate a Japanese EFL teacher's cognition in relation to teaching pronunciation, and (b) the dynamic relationship between teacher cognition and the actual teaching practice.

## 2 Research questions

The research questions guiding the study were the following:

- (1) How has a Japanese EFL teacher developed teacher cognition in relation to teaching second language pronunciation?
- (2) What is the relationship between teacher cognition and their actual teaching practice?

## 3 Methods

An experienced Japanese-speaking EFL teacher who works at Japanese high school participated in this study. The gathering of data

came from semi-structured interview, classroom observation, and stimulated recall interviews. This study carefully selected the data resources based on Borg's (2006) claim. The participants joined in the semi-structured interview before classroom observation. In the first semi-structured interview, the participants responded mainly about two issues: (a) what beliefs and knowledge the teacher has concerning pronunciation teaching, and (b) how the teacher teaches pronunciation in the classroom. All the data which were transcribed and segmented were analyzed by using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

#### 4 Results and Discussion

Findings reveals that the Japanese EFL teacher has a unique teacher cognition to teach English pronunciation. Her teacher cognition has influenced by Borg's (1997) 4 factors. Especially, classroom practice at her current school has greatly impacted her teacher beliefs and strong confidence to teach pronunciation. Through interaction with students, she shaped her beliefs that she should not always give students feedbacks regarding pronunciation and should focus more on suprasegmental (e.g., intonation) for mutual comprehensibility.

This beliefs is both consistent and inconsistent with her teaching practice. She used techniques to teach suprasegmentals, whereas she focus more on segmental sounds.

Another finding was that she uses different strategies to teach L2 pronunciation depending on contextual factors. She teaches the first and the second grade students, and depending on grades, she changes how to approach segmental sounds. This implies that the researchers should carefully look at teachers' back ground, such school settings and the class the teacher is teaching when looking at the relationship between teacher cognition and the actual teaching practice.

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