

*The Japaneseness of Japanese English:  
Thinking Through Esyun Hamaguchi's Contextualism*

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**Abstract**

This research explores the phenomenon of Japanese English (JE) as a reflection of Japanese cultural identity within the broader paradigm of World Englishes (WE). Focusing on the city of Kyoto, the study delves into how Japanese speakers' English usage exhibits distinct cultural patterns, influenced by Japan's linguistic heritage and cultural values. Using Van Manen's phenomenological approach, the research reflects on the lived experiences of Japanese individuals engaging in English conversations, aiming to uncover the nuanced ways in which Japanese cultural patterns are expressed through language use. The study first provides an overview of JE within the WE framework, highlighting its unique phonological, lexical, syntactic, and discursive features. It then employs Esyun Hamaguchi's concept of Contextualism to analyze the cultural underpinnings of JE, revealing how Japanese speakers prioritize relationships and context in their communication, often employing back-channeling and topic-comment constructions that reflect their cultural norms. The findings suggest that JE is more than a mere linguistic variation; it is a legitimate variety of English that embodies Japanese cultural identity. By recognizing JE and its distinct features, Japanese speakers can communicate more effectively and confidently, preserving their cultural identity in global interactions. This study contributes to the understanding of JE as a valid form of English and underscores the importance of incorporating cultural perspectives into the study of language varieties.

Keywords: World Englishes, Japanese English, Contextualism, Esyun Hamaguchi

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## Introduction

Kyoto, a city of unparalleled beauty, epitomizes traditional Japan. Despite its age and delicate heritage, Kyoto stands at the forefront of global cultural exchange, attracting visitors worldwide who come to experience its unique “Japaneseness.” This term encompasses expressions of Japanese spirit, culture, and values. The juxtaposition of tradition and globalization places Kyoto squarely within the broader national dilemma of balancing indigenous values with global needs. Hino (2009) highlights the tension between the dominant use of the Japanese language in domestic life and the global demand for English proficiency. Japan faces the significant challenge of integrating English into its educational system and daily life without compromising its cultural and linguistic heritage.

In Kyoto, English conversations are common in temples, shrines, campuses, and virtually everywhere, as Japanese and foreign visitors engage in dialogue. This phenomenon underscores the city's role in addressing this national issue. While the Japanese language and cultural heritage are deeply rooted in Kyoto, the necessity for English proficiency reflects the increasing influence of globalization. The dilemma is further complicated by the fact that English, with its Anglo-American cultural roots, is linguistically distant from Japanese, making it a challenging language for Japanese learners. Thus, Kyoto exemplifies the challenge Japan faces in harmonizing the preservation of its rich cultural identity with the practical demands of global communication, serving as a microcosm of the national struggle to navigate this complex linguistic and cultural landscape. As an international student living in Kyoto, I find great joy in listening to or participating in these conversations. They are like intricate cocktails, each one offering endless creativity and possibilities. Immersing myself in these dialogues, I began to notice a distinct pattern in how Japanese speakers use English. This observation sparked my curiosity: Why do the Japanese speak English in this particular manner? This question led me to explore the cultural foundations of English acquisition in Japan. I realized that from ordinary citizens to academic scholars, regardless of their English competency, many possess a pattern of expressions—a certain Japanese English, or “English with Japanese flavor as a reflection of Japanese values” (Hino, 2021, pp.4).

To delve deeper into this phenomenon, this study will first review the characteristics of Japanese English from the perspective of World Englishes, providing a foundational understanding of how Japanese English fits within the broader paradigm. Following this, this research employs Van Manen’s phenomenological approach to reflect textually on the lived experiences of Japanese English conversations to uncover the nuanced ways in which Japanese cultural patterns are expressed through language use. Phenomenology, as defined by Van Manen (2016), is the study of human science that aims to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence. This approach, deeply rooted in the German concept of “Geist,” focuses on the study of “persons”—beings that possess “consciousness” and “act purposefully” within the world, creating objects of “meaning” that are “expressions” of their existence. Unlike other social science methodologies, phenomenology seeks to engage with human beings’ lived experiences as they naturally occur in their worlds. Lived experience, a central concept in phenomenology, refers to the immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life. It represents a determinate and meaningful aspect of one’s life, capturing the essence of how individuals exist and interact with their surroundings. Consider a scenario where you are participating in a panel discussion. Suddenly, all eyes are focused on you, and this intense gaze disrupts your natural relationship with your voice and body, forcing you into awkward movements. However, once you become engaged in the debate, the presence of the audience fades from your consciousness, allowing you to immerse yourself directly into the activity

again. The latter moment, where you are fully engaged in the activity, is what can be termed as "lived experience." This lived experience can be understood as a unified whole, given a distinct significance. Such experiences are constructed through reflection and inherently possess a temporal structure. They cannot be grasped directly as they occur; rather, they are apprehended reflectively as past occurrences. We cannot capture the "living experience" itself, as it always becomes meaningful only when we reflect upon it as something that has already been lived. In the context of this study, the lived experience is the moment of "engaging in English conversations with Japanese." At the time, I was deeply engaged in my role, unaware of the significance of my observations. It was only through later reflection that I could demarcate this experience as a unified whole, imbued with special meaning. This lived experience, constructed in hindsight, revealed the complexity of cultural interaction and language use in a way I hadn't grasped in the moment. The temporal structure of the experience became apparent; its significance emerged only as I looked back, assigning meaning to what had already transpired. Thus, the manifestation of Japaneseness became a profound reflection on cultural expression and communication, a moment that was lived and later understood.

In reflecting on this experience, phenomenology aims to insightfully describe and express the essence of how we pre-reflectively engage with the world, without categorizing, classifying, or abstracting these experiences. By elucidating the meaning of lived experience through phenomenological description, we are guided toward a more direct interaction with the world of Japaneseness. The text, once reflectively expressed, is lived again in a non-reflective manner, undergoing repeated cycles of reflection and lived experience. The choice to apply a phenomenological approach is motivated by the desire to deeply understand the manifestations of Japaneseness in the speech of English speakers in Japan. This research is not merely an academic exercise but a personal journey to articulate and interpret my own experiences within the Japanese cultural context. By doing so, I aim to connect with readers, particularly Japanese English speakers, who may share similar experiences and perspectives, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of the research. In contrast to traditional studies that often draw on Western theorists, this research is anchored in the works of Japanese scholars. This decision underscores the importance of an emic perspective—understanding phenomena from within the cultural context itself. Japanese thinkers provide insights that are closely aligned with the cultural and social realities of Japan, offering a more intimate and resonant framework for analysis.

### **JE: A Legitimate Variety?**

The global dominance of English leads to the emergence of diverse, localized varieties of English, each reflecting distinct cultural and linguistic influences. The World Englishes (WE) paradigm developed by Kachru (1985) was therefore established to examine the different varieties of English spoken around the world, and these varieties can be distinguished by their various phonology, lexicon, syntax, pragmatic and cultural patterns. He presented a model of three Concentric Circles to analyze the spread of English. The Inner circle includes countries that are considered the traditional bases of English, and where English is primarily used as L1 or mother tongue, such as United Kingdom, United States, anglophone Canada, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. The Inner circle produces norms because of its authentic cultural and linguistic base of English. Included in the Outer Circle are countries where English is spoken as an official, and domestic communication language, such as India, Pakistan, Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. Many countries of the Outer circle are significantly and historically influenced by the Inner circle's countries, often as their former

colonies and thus norm-developing. Today, English is still considered to be a dominant language after their independence. Finally, the Expanding circle is made up of the vast number of countries that do not hold historical and governmental significance towards English, but speak and teach English as a foreign language of the most importance. It includes, for example, China, Japan, South Korea, Egypt, and Indonesia. These countries are norm-dependent.

JE is often viewed through the lens of WE as a variety of English influenced by the Japanese language and primarily used by speakers in Japan. In Japan, English is the most widely studied foreign language, with almost all students learning it from middle school onward (Ikegashira et al., 2009). Despite this widespread study, JE remains a performative rather than an institutionalized variety due to its limited use within Japan (Morrow, 2004; Yano, 2001). This raises the question: Can JE be considered a distinct variety of English? Numerous studies have identified unique phonological, lexical, syntactic, and discursal characteristics of JE, suggesting it is indeed a legitimate variety despite its performative status.

English vowels pose significant challenges for Japanese speakers due to their wide range of sounds. D'Angelo et al. (2021) cite Thompson (2001) to emphasize that Japanese learners often default to their native /a/ sound when attempting to pronounce several English vowels, such as /æ/ and /ə/. Wiltshire (2014) notes that while many non-native English accents blur the tense/lax distinction, JE speakers uniquely retain it, highlighting the deep influence of native Japanese phonology. Except for familiar English vowel sounds like "i" in "happy," "e" in "bet," and "a" in "heart," many English vowels can be problematic for Japanese learners. Consequently, vowels like the "i" in "bird" or the "a" in "arrive" often shift towards the more recognizable Japanese "a" sound.

Studies of Japanese speakers' spoken and written English also indicate the distinctiveness of JE. D'Angelo et al. (2021) found that while Japanese grammar includes a past tense, JE speakers exhibit diverse tendencies when using it. Some adhere strictly to standard past tense rules, even if they omit tenses in their native language. Others default to the present tense for past events, leading to expressions such as "Canada summer is not hot" instead of "The summer in Canada was not hot." Another group switches between past and present tenses within the same context, revealing inconsistent application. Additionally, plural formation in JE is influenced by the notion of countability rather than strict grammatical rules. For instance, nouns like "seasons" are typically pluralized, but more abstract concepts are not, reflecting the influence of Japanese grammar on JE (Yamaguchi, 2018).

JE is further distinguished by its discursal and pragmatic features, influenced by the Japanese topic-comment structure and culture. For example, a native English speaker might say, "I saw many people at the park," whereas a JE speaker is more likely to say, "There were many people at the park," emphasizing the setting. This frequent use of the there-construction reflects the Japanese inclination to emphasize settings or situations over subjects or agents, mirroring the topic-comment construction in Japanese (D'Angelo et al., 2021).

JE is also characterized by frequent back-channeling, where short words, phrases, or sounds indicate active listening. Studies by White (1989) show that Japanese speakers in English conversations use back-channeling more frequently than American speakers. This is not merely an imitation of Western styles but a manifestation of Japanese cultural emphasis on making others feel comfortable (Todd, 2019). The word "hai" in Japanese, often translated as "yes," can also indicate listening or understanding, even without agreement (Galtung &

Nishimura, 1983). Thus, frequent back-channeling in JE helps maintain smooth communication and confirm relationships.

While JE is often perceived to have “washu” (the scent of Japan) and be understood primarily by Japanese speakers, studies suggest that JE is intelligible, acceptable, and comprehensible to English speakers (D’Angelo et al., 2021). It operates under a different set of rules than the English of Inner Circle countries, legitimizing JE as an independent variety of English. This perspective supports the view that JE, although performative, is a valid and distinct form of English.

### **JE as a Language of Self-Expression**

In my participation in dialogues between Japanese individuals fluent in English and native English speakers, I’ve noticed that Japanese individuals often struggle to express certain concepts or emotions in English. Consequently, they prefer to use Japanese to convey certain attitudes or cultural contexts, regardless of whether the non-Japanese speakers can understand them.

During my Master’s studies, I worked part-time as a concierge at Kyoto City Bus in Kyoto Station. My coworkers are fluent in English or capable of communicating effectively in English. We are required to perform “omotenashi” when providing route guidance to our guests. While “omotenashi” translates to “hospitality,” its connotations run deeper, indicating a heartfelt, earnest approach that suggests an intuitive understanding of others’ needs before they’re even voiced (Morishita, 2021). The service given is unselfish, expecting no reward and viewed as an act of sacrifice. I observed that my coworkers, when interacting with English-speaking guests, use certain phrases to try and convey the spirit of “omotenashi.” When bidding guests farewell, they use the honorific Japanese phrase “O ki wo tsukete itterasshaimase,” which translates to “Take care and be safe on your journey,” a phrase carrying implicit concern for the guest’s well-being. However, having lived in New Zealand and accustomed to communicating in English, I prefer to use more typical English expressions like “Have a nice day.”

The observed phenomenon can be interpreted from several viewpoints. Firstly, it’s legitimate to consider the language proficiency of my coworkers. Their English skills might not be sufficient to find an equivalent English phrase that fully captures the essence of “omotenashi.” This explanation is plausible, given that English proficiency is not necessary for the job. However, it falls short in accounting for why some coworkers, who have advanced English skills due to their overseas education, still opt for Japanese phrases instead of typical English responses. Secondly, we could consider the possibility that this practice adheres to company guidelines, emphasizing the use of Japanese to maintain the spirit of “omotenashi.” However, this explanation presents a paradox. If the spirit of “omotenashi” is maintained throughout the English-language route guidance, the sudden switch to Japanese for farewells seems inconsistent. Why should there be a linguistic transition at the conclusion of the service interaction, particularly when the rest of the conversation has been in English? If the use of non-Japanese language for farewells is indeed restricted, why am I granted the flexibility to use English? This exception contradicts the supposed rule and raises further questions about the actual reasoning behind the language choice. Another possible explanation is that my coworkers acknowledge the limitations of the English language in expressing the depth and nuances of “omotenashi.” In other words, they might believe that

the concept can be truly conveyed only in its native language and thus deliberately switch to Japanese for farewells after providing route guidance in English.

The phenomenon in question is not exclusive to my experience. A close look at these various phenomena leads to an interesting realization. The choice to employ specific Japanese terms and phrases, even when fluent in English, goes beyond linguistic preferences. It captures the distinctiveness deeply rooted in the Japanese worldview by speaking to the interplay of language and culture. It isn't merely about words but the embodiment of values and cultural nuances that cannot be conveyed accurately through translation. Despite being able to speak English, why do the Japanese still choose to use Japanese for certain expressions? There are deeply embedded aspects of Japaneseness that are hard to express in English, so they choose to use Japanese eventually. These phenomena implicitly hint at a preference among Japanese individuals for applying this Japaneseness in their interactions. It demonstrates the profound ways in which language preserves and reflects the fundamentals of a culture, affirming that some things are preferred in their distinctiveness, transcending the simple use of words and finding expression in the interdependence of human connection.

Reflecting philosophically on Hino's claim, it is insightful to recall Kitaro Nishida's observation. Nishida, a prominent Japanese philosopher and founder of the Kyoto School of philosophy, states:

*"I think that often the study of things Japanese is equated with the Japanese spirit and that it is forgotten that the Japanese spirit comes alive in the Japanese way of looking at things and thinking about things. We should not forget that the Japanese spirit can manifest itself through that study. And this Japanese spirit, in turn, works toward things Japanese. We must not be misguided by mere outward labels." (Theodore et al., 2005, p. 1171)*

As Nishida points out, the study of things Japanese cannot be divorced from the unique Japanese spirit. This spirit is not just about the tangible products of the culture; more significantly, it manifests in the distinct Japanese way of thinking and perceiving things. Similarly, when a Japanese individual communicates in English, their distinct cultural perspective and way of thinking are likely reflected in their English use. This aligns with what Nishiyama (1995) identified as "speaking English with a Japanese mind."

In conclusion, the use of Japanese phrases by fluent English speakers in Japan reflects a deeper cultural phenomenon. It is a conscious choice to convey specific cultural values and nuances that cannot be fully captured by English. This practice underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting the cultural context in language use, and it highlights the intricate relationship between language and culture.

### **The Japaneseness in Japanese English**

In the previous section, I have explored the manifestation of Japaneseness when Japanese people speak English. The exploration into the Japaneseness of JE has remained somewhat underdeveloped in the thesis so far, with linguistic investigations predominantly orienting towards the phonological dimensions of language (Suzuki, 1973). The culture embedded within languages was largely sidelined, deemed as a non-linguistic phenomenon, and thus almost excised from the core linguistic discourse. This exclusion predominantly stemmed from the perception of culture as an elusive, abstract domain that ostensibly offered no

tangible material for objective examination. Even as we delineated the distinguishing attributes of JE, the examination from a cultural lens remains scant, highlighting a substantial gap in existing literature.

This calls for an investigation into the Japaneseness embodied in JE. It is here that the concept of Kanjinshugi (Contextualism), as proposed by the Japanese sociologist, Esyun Hamaguchi (1982, 1988), emerges as a potentially illuminating framework, offering a lens through which the cultural pattern of JE could be reinterpreted and understood anew.

According to Hamaguchi et al (1988), contextualism refers to a way of living where one places importance on relationships between people and finds one's own identity within those relationships. It differs from those general contextualisms at the epistemological level but dives into the ontological level. The term "Kanjin" is crucial in grasping the concept of contextualism.<sup>1</sup> Kanjin signifies the interconnectedness of individuals, emphasizing that one's sense of self is deeply rooted in the relationships they forge with others.

Every culture has its own perspective on humanity, which is essentially an understanding of human nature (Hamaguchi et al., 1988). This belief in each society serves as a clear benchmark for comprehending what it means to be human, and "self," helping members of that society recognize how individuals socially coexist. In certain cultures, there is a strong conviction that humans fundamentally exist as distinct and autonomous entities. In contrast, other cultures see it as a natural condition for individuals to rely on one another when they are part of a community. According to Hamaguchi et al (1988), East-Asian people including the Japanese emphasizes the importance of relationships in shaping an individual. In this model, an individual is not determined a priori but by their interactions and relationships with others. This individual recognizes the functional ties they share with others and forms a cohesive system by integrating these relational roles. Self-recognition is progressively built through personal interactions with those in proximity, and behavioral guidelines emerge from these interactions. In such a view of a human being and self-existence, Hamaguchi, referencing the philosopher Arimasa Mori, pointed out that one does not engage with the other simply as "I" to "you." Instead, one always interacts as "your you," perceiving oneself in a relative context to the other.

This concept from Mori can be puzzling. To better understand his words, let's consider the lyrics from a Japanese song, "Kimi ga tame" (For Your Sake). The song goes:

*In what kind of color am I reflected in your eyes?  
If you wish it to be deep red, then I shall give you the light of the sun.  
...  
In what kind of color am I reflected in your eyes?  
If you wish it to be deep indigo, then I shall give you the endless sky.  
...*

Here, the recurring question, "In what kind of color am I reflected in your eyes?," we are confronted with a metaphorical quest for self-understanding. This isn't just about an internal

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<sup>1</sup> For the usage of the word "contextual" as an English translation of "kanjin," see Kumon Shumpei, "The New Middle Mass in Japan," Proceedings of the International Symposium "Japan Speaks," 1980, 11-15. See also Kumon Shumpei, "Some Principles Governing the Thought and Behavior of Japanists (Contextualists)," Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1982), p. 19. As a more precise expression for kanjin, we may use "manin-nexus." (See Hamaguchi, "Nihon shakai-ron no paradaimu kakushin o mezashite," (p. 38-39.)

self-assessment, but about how one is perceived by others. The “self” is not purely intrinsic. It's shaped by the reflections, perceptions, and relationships with those around us. As we navigate this relationship, it becomes evident that our understanding of “I” or the “self” is influenced, if not defined, by the “other.” Consequently, while seeking answers about oneself, it might be said that in many ways, the “I” is not just influenced by “you” but becomes “you.” The “I” or “self” is not an intrinsic or inherent entity, but a self-perceived from the perspective of another.

For Japanese, Hamaguchi argued, the concept of “self” does not refer to an abstract and inherent entity within oneself. Instead, it signifies a reality that is continually adapted and acquired in “Hito to Hito no Aida,” the space between oneself and others. The Japanese do not view the self as having its foundation rooted within. Who one is, and who the other is, is determined by the human relationship between them. There exists a human relationship before an individual is identified as such. Such pattern of the Japanese belongs to a type that sets its reference point based on others, emphasizing relationships and an interdependence nature. This stands in contrast to the Western individualism, where actions are based on an inner set of standards, “the self.”

Further, the lyrics also suggest a willingness to unlearn a “self” while adapting another “self,” that is to embody the “light of the sun” if seen as deep red or represent the “endless sky” if perceived as deep indigo. This coincidentally resonates with what Hamaguchi called “outside-in” type of behavior of the Japanese in which they behave with the frame of reference set in the partner. Generally speaking, Euro-Americans base their social actions on the ego, the “self,” acting from an individual-centric viewpoint and are “inside-out”. In contrast, the inclination of Japanese is to adjust their behavior based on the environment, and the people they're with, applying an “outside-in” approach. This is why the Japanese can navigate interdependence effectively by empathizing and seeing things from others' perspectives. Japanese indigenous concepts such as “Omotenashi” can therefore be explained thorough this perspective. “Omotenashi” is not just about reacting to expressed needs but proactively anticipating them. This anticipation requires an acute sensitivity to one's surroundings and a keen ability to read subtle cues, both verbal and non-verbal. Such attentiveness is deeply ingrained in the “outside-in” approach, where the contextualism, the in betweenness shapes individual and influence individual behavior.

To wrap up, the Contextualism is not just an intellectual concept, but a profound insight into the way many in East Asia, perhaps especially the Japanese, perceive their place in the world. It underscores the significance of interconnectedness, where the perception of “self” is not just isolated nor inherent, but a dynamic and fluid understanding molded by relationships with others.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Intersection of JE and Contextualism**

Although many scholars have successfully identified pragmatic characteristics of JE, they failed to dive deeper and ask how Japanese culture is manifested in JE. In this section, I shall apply Contextualism to analyze the pattern of Japanese language by contrasting it to English, and explore how it effects Japanese people when speaking English.

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<sup>2</sup> However, it should be reminded that neither Hamaguchi nor I is claiming the distinctiveness of Japaneseness drawn from contextualism is so unique that it cannot be observed in another cultural context. We're simply saying that Japan puts more emphasis on this interdependence orientation.



In the English language, the distinct prominence of the capitalized "I" serves as a symbol of the culture's emphasis on individualism (Galtung & Nishimura, 1983; Kashima & Kashima, 1998). For instance, statements often begin with a clear "I think" or "I believe," highlighting personal opinions and stances. This frequent and assertive use of "I" is a linguistic pattern which encapsulates the Western ethos of personal autonomy and self-expression.

On the contrary, "I" in the Japanese language can be understood better when viewed through the lens of Contextualism. As previously discussed, Contextualism emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of relationships. In the Japanese language, this interconnectedness becomes evident through the multiple ways one can refer to oneself, each signaling different nuances about the speaker's identity, relationship to the listener, and the context in which it's spoken. For instance, "Watashi" might be used in generic situations, not tying the speaker down to a particular gender or age, making it neutral and adaptable to different contexts. "Boku" or "Ore," on the other hand, provides information not just about the speaker's gender but also about their relationship with the listener, be it one of respect, camaraderie, or dominance. Further, historically, "Chin" is used by emperors to refer to themselves, it carries with it not just the weight of individual identity, but a whole institutional and historical context. Its use symbolized the emperor's unique position in the societal and cosmic order (Makino & Tsutsui, 1986).

Based on these examples, each term for "I" in Japanese serves as a marker, as a relational concept, of their relationship to the listener and the wider context. I'm a teacher, not by destiny's design, but because there are students, seeking knowledge, awaiting my words; An "I" is defined not only by birthright but by the place as a leaf on the family tree, as a treasured friend, and as a memory in the hearts known and unknown. I am Nishida Kitaro, beginning with the family name "Nishida" to signify biological ties, followed by "Kitaro," what a Westerner might understand as "myself." The notion of "I" is only grounded when there's a relational context.

The relational approach to self-existence is deeply embedded in the Japanese language and culture and stands as evidence to the profound influence of Contextualism. When Japanese speak English, this approach is carried over as they often prioritize and give precedence to context before delving into other details. Take one of the characteristics of JE, for example, topic-comment construction as I previously mentioned. It's a structure where the background, setting, or context (the topic) is introduced before any action or specific detail (the comment) is provided. It allows for diverse connections between a subject and a verb, as the function of a subject often serves as the "topic" of a sentence, while the predicate provides a descriptive "comment" about it, such as in "Kyo wa isogashii (Today is busy)" (D'Angelo et al., 2021). When a JE speaker says, "There were many people at the park," the emphasis is immediately on the setting, the park. The park, as the topic or context, is brought to the forefront, anchoring any subsequent information within that setting. This reflects the topic-comment construction of the Japanese language, which, influenced by Contextualism, prioritizes context over individual agents. Contrast this with standard English, where the subject or agent is often given prominence, as in "I saw many people at the park." Here, the emphasis starts with the individual "I", reflecting a more individualistic or agent-driven approach.

Another characteristic of JE, frequent back-channeling, a prevalent characteristic among JE speakers, is deeply rooted in the cultural framework that emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the speaker and the listener. Japanese often use words such as "hai" to signal the speakers that "I'm listening," "I'm receiving the signals you emit" (Galtung &

Nishimura, 1983). Even when speaking in English, Japanese speakers carry over this ingrained habit, highlighting its significance in their interpersonal communication style. When a JE listener frequently nods or uses short affirmative responses, they're doing more than signaling that they're following along. Each nod and every "mmhm" or "uh huh" is a reaffirmation of their presence in the conversation. It's as if they're continuously saying, "I'm here, I'm with you, and I value what you're saying" in order to maintain the relationship and have a smooth conversation. And if the listener stops giving these "mmmhmmm" vocalizations, the JE speaker will usually stop. Meanwhile an American or Australian will just keep on going.

Although there is much more to explore regarding how JE is influenced by its Japaneseness through Contextualism, the pragmatic characteristics of JE are more than just linguistic features. They are manifestations of a philosophy deeply rooted in Japaneseness that places importance on the intricate web of interpersonal relationships. This perspective offers an alternative understanding of self-existence and stands as a principle central to Contextualism. Encapsulating philosophical studies within Global Englishes is essential, as it aids in fostering cross-cultural studies and communication, enabling us to uncover the hidden patterns of an English variety.

## **Conclusion**

Over the decades, linguistics has significantly evolved, largely due to Chomsky's theories (Everett, 2009). Contemporary linguistic studies often focus on analyzing the phonology and grammar of languages, frequently sidelining the people and cultures associated with these languages. Most linguistic theories today do not adequately acknowledge or incorporate the role of culture in shaping a language's structure and usage. This oversight underscores the importance of studying English varieties, such as JE, where cultural influences distinctly shape the language in ways not typically envisioned in traditional linguistic theories. The question arises: How should we speak English—Americanly, Britishly, Chinesely, Japanesely, or internationally? The ultimate goal of mastering a language is to convey the speaker's intended nuances of meaning, facilitating effective communication and interdependence. Simply imitating native English speakers would not necessarily allow Japanese speakers to express their distinct viewpoints and cultural contexts effectively (Saito, 1928). Language is not just a decontextualized tool for communication; it is a reflection of worldview. Speaking JE represents more than a linguistic combination of Japanese and English. It embodies the Japanese spirit articulated by Nishida, allowing speakers to respect and maintain their Japanese identity without compromise.

By acknowledging JE and increasing studies of Japaneseness reflected in JE, Japanese speakers can communicate more positively and comfortably, expressing themselves in English. The significance of JE lies not just in effective communication but in the preservation and promotion of cultural identity and worldview in a global context. Through this approach, a Japanese individual can confidently declare, "I speak English."

## **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

I utilised generative AI and AI-assisted technologies, specifically ChatGPT-4 (<https://chatgpt.com/>), to enhance the readability of my paper. However, I did not use any AI

to generate information for background research, nor did I employ it during the drafting stage or in creating the outline structure for this paper.

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