

# Japanese EFL Teachers Publishing Academic Research in English: Reflections and Advice from Successful Authors

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## Abstract

For busy native speaker (NS) EFL instructors, conducting, writing, and publishing academic research in English can be a difficult task. For non-native speaker (NNS) instructors seeking to share their interests and insights in English, this challenge is all the more immense given the language barriers involved. Nevertheless, many NNS instructors do manage to conduct and publish such research each year. In order to better understand how this is accomplished and to support and encourage such efforts in general, five NNS EFL teachers were interviewed and asked to reflect on their experiences of successfully writing and publishing an ELT-related article in English. Their insights provide practical guidance and inspiration to NNS instructors hoping to publish English academic research and develop into more active, efficacious teacher-researchers.

## Introduction

Teacher research is an activity that connects the “doing” of teaching with the “questioning” of research. These two ways of working can- and must- be united if teachers are to become fully recognized as contributors who shape educational policy and define effective classroom practice. -Donald Freeman (1998, p. ix)

In my years of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan, I have long felt the tension implied in the quote above. On one hand, my primary responsibility is to focus on my students and help them learn English. Most of my time is consumed with the sorts of activities all teachers do: preparing (hopefully) engaging lesson plans, teaching classes, and evaluating students. In addition, teachers are expected to perform various administrative tasks, such as maintain student records, submit grades, attend staff meetings, and complete additional departmental duties. On the other hand, as an EFL instructor at the tertiary level, I also have a responsibility to the field of TESOL as a whole. Simply focusing on my own work in the classroom is not enough- if it were, then publications of academic research would not have been required when I applied for this job. English teachers based at Japanese universities are expected

to contribute to the profession through participation in professional organizations such as JALT, ETJ, or JACET, regularly conduct and publish research, and give presentations at TESOL-related conferences. Needless to say, uniting the doing of teaching with the questioning of research, of fulfilling our responsibilities as university ELT educators is no small task, even in one's own native language. A case in point is this very paper, which I had agreed to write months ago but now find myself scrambling to finish as the deadline approaches.

Why is doing academic research so hard? I recently asked my NS colleagues this question, and we came up with the following observations:

- **Writing difficulties:** Academic prose can be extraordinarily painful to write. It feels overly formal and unnatural. We don't do it often enough to make it smooth and easy to compose.

- **Finding an audience:** Matching your research interests with journals in our field can be very difficult. For example, some TESOL-related journals may not be interested in Japan-based topics.

- **Research logistics:** Teachers often don't have access to vital information they need to conduct certain types of studies, such as standardized test scores or student bio data. In addition, setting things up, getting permissions, and collecting data are all time consuming and difficult to do. Short 15 week semesters make longitudinal research nearly impossible. Spotty student attendance is another problem.

- **Lack of resources:** School libraries can be thin on on English reference books and journals, and without *Athens* passwords, for example, access to TESOL journals online is also problematic.

For all of these reasons and more, I find the task of publishing academic research a difficult mountain to climb.

Since 2001, I have been working as a volunteer on the staff of JALT Publications' *The Language Teacher* (TLT), a monthly refereed language education journal. From proofreader, to column editor, and now coeditor, I have had the great privilege of helping numerous teachers publish their research. I know from an insider's point of view how arduous the writing and editing process can be. While I have edited many fine papers by NS authors, it is the articles written by NNS instructors that have inspired me most. Add "language barrier" to the list of difficulties cited above, and I can scarcely imagine how my NNS colleges have managed the task. In addition, since TLT policy is to welcome submissions from NS and NSS authors, I have often wondered how I can do more to encourage more of the latter.

While it would be easy enough for me to compile a list of suggestions for my NNS colleagues, I believe it would be far more insightful, informative, and ultimately encouraging if advice for publishing research in a foreign language came directly from NNS teacher-researchers who have

successfully published a research article in English. By examining the experiences of these authors in detail, I aim to clarify practical insights and information that can hopefully guide and encourage more NNS teacher-researchers to publish their research in English.

### **Research methodology and questions**

To learn about how NNS instructors go about the task of writing and publishing academic research in English, I interviewed five Japanese English teachers, four of which I had edited papers for during the past year, and one whom I knew from our shared experience on the Aston University masters degree program. Four of the interviews were conducted via the phone, with the conversations recorded, transcribed, and then lightly edited to improve readability. One interview was conducted via email. Each interview began with the participants detailing their background information, such as job title, affiliation, research interests, professional activities, and publishing experience in both Japanese and English. Each participant was then asked the following questions about a particular paper they had successfully published in English:

**1. Why did you decide to publish in English, especially when it would have been easier to write something in your own language?**

This question was aimed at uncovering the motivations each participant had for writing and publishing in a foreign language. Given the difficulties inherent in such a task, the insights gained from highlighting this basic point made the question worth asking.

**2. What difficulties did you have with conducting and writing up your research, and how did you manage to overcome them?**

This two-part question was designed to uncover the major obstacles each participant faced when working on a particular project. With language difficulties most likely at the top of the list, I was curious to see how each teacher managed to climb this proverbial mountain. Again, this question was chosen to provide insight and practical information useful to fellow NNS teacher-researchers.

**3. Tell me about the help and support you received on this project.**

While similar to the second part of number two, this question was worded in an open-ended manner in order to encourage the participants to elaborate on the support they received during the completion of their project.

**4. Looking back, how have you benefitted from this difficult and challenging project?**

This question was asked in order to facilitate reflection and hopefully elicit some positive insights that could serve as encouragement for fellow NNS teachers considering a similar project.

**5. What advice do you have for other NNS EFL instructors about getting published in English?**

Finally, I wanted the participants to end on a positive note, leaving their NNS colleagues with some practical and useful information.

## Participant profiles

### *Nakamura Mari*

*I've been teaching English to children for over 20 years. I'm the owner and operator of my own school called English Square, with "square" meaning the place in a town or village where people gather. Actually, my classroom is shaped like a rectangle, not a square! My school is based on the concept of providing a space for children, parents, and teachers to get together and communicate in English. In 2001 I helped Pearson-Longman by co-authoring a big project- the creation of the "English Land" textbook series. Since 2004, I've been also working as a teacher-trainer. My main research interest is teaching English to children with picture books. I am currently finishing up my Masters dissertation for Aston University on this topic. In addition, I have published in English quite a lot for the JALT Jr. Newsletter, mainly through non-academic short articles, a regular column, and one feature article (Nakamura, 2003). I have yet to be published in an academic journal. Teaching English to children is my passion, so I really want to be a better teacher for them.*

### *Hayashi Kumiko\**

*I'm an English professor at a University in Fukuoka. This is my seventh year teaching there. My main research interests are classroom interaction and teacher cognition. In the old days this used to be called teacher-knowledge or teacher beliefs. I'm a member of several organizations, such as JALT, TESOL, JACET, and LET (Language, Education, and Technology). I recently published an article with my NS colleague in *The Language Teacher* on the topic of teacher development and reflecting on experience.*

*\*Pseudonym*

### *Okazaki Hiroyuki*

*I just started teaching at Toyama University (富山大学) as an assistant professor about three years ago, so I am still kind of a beginner at teaching at this level. Prior to that, I was a high school teacher for 20 years, and before that I taught for two years in junior high schools. I have also worked for one year as a prefectural advisor. I have lots of research interests, especially teacher development or teacher education. I belong to five different professional organizations here in Japan, and have published three articles in English with one of them- The Chubu English Language Education Society (CELES) (Okazaki 2003, 2007, 2008).*

**Sato Rintaro**

*I have over 15 years of experience working as an EFL/ESL practitioner and am currently working as an associate professor for the Nara University of Education (奈良教育大学). My research interests include English education, second language acquisition theory, intake and output processing, and negotiation of meaning and feedback. I'm a member of JALT as well as two Japanese professional organizations. I have published English articles on various topics, such as making use of code-switching in the classroom (Sato, 2009a), suitable teaching approaches for the Japanese EFL environment (Sato, 2009b), and a piece in the JALT Journal about modified output (Sato, 2008).*

**Togano Fumie**

*I have been teaching English at Hosei Daini High School for more than 10 years. I received an MA in TESL from Saint Michael's College. My areas of professional interest include native/nonnative issues, material development, global education, and teacher education. In February of 2009, I published a research article in English in *The Language Teacher* on the topic of gender roles in high school textbooks (Togano, 2009).*

### **Why bother publishing in English?**

For NS teachers such as myself, there is often no choice involved when it comes to deciding which language to publish academic research in. My Japanese is good enough to carry on light conversation, book a hotel room, or navigate intricate subway systems, but it is no where near good enough to even consider the idea of writing up a research paper. For my Japanese colleagues, however, a viable choice does indeed exist given their status as advanced English speakers. Since the choice to write and publish in English requires greater time and effort, why would an already busy instructor even bother, especially when they can fulfill their responsibilities to the TESOL field by doing research in their own language? In other words, what motivates someone to take on all of this extra work?

The most frequently cited reason for making extra effort to publish in English was a rather surprising one, at least to me. Three out of the five interviewees mentioned that writing academically in English was something that came naturally to them. In the following extracts, each respondent makes essentially this same point:

*To me it's kind of natural, meaning that it's really really tough, actually. In my mind it is like, "of course I should write in English- I'm an English teacher!" I've been reading quite a lot of reference books, all in English. Actually, I'm not used to writing in Japanese when it comes to do*

*with anything about teaching or anything academic. I'm a horrible writer in Japanese! <Laughs> So of course, when I want to know more about teaching, or more about learning environments or so, I've wanted to do some research. Most articles about these topics are in English, so it was a natural choice for me to write in English (Nakamura-sensei).*

*I didn't decide to write in English because I usually write in English. My first academic paper was written in English at an American university, so it is natural for me to write in English. I do read a lot of journals and books in English. It can be, in a sense, easier to write in English... Of course, to write in Japanese is more comfortable, but I'm reading English journals and magazines, so I usually write my papers in English (Prof. Sato).*

*Since I studied TESL at a college in the U.S., I've written all my papers on TESL-related topics in English. I like writing in English and am used to it. On the other hand, I don't know the terminology in Japanese, and I'm not familiar with how to write an academic paper in Japanese. With this background of mine, it was rather easier for me to write in English. I suppose that with no experience of studying in English, it would be quite difficult for non-native speakers to write an article in English (Togano-sensei).*

In all three accounts, doing academic research in English was “natural” because of each respondent’s long history of study and high degree of fluency. Additionally, since they have all made their livings from teaching English, they are accustomed to using it on a daily basis. It is therefore not surprising that doing research in another language could be considered an obvious thing to do. These comments have led me to reflect on the premise of my first research question. I asked this because I wanted to know how people could do something I considered impossible, such as publishing research in another language. From the point of view of someone fluent in only one language, of course it would seem incredible. However, what seems unimaginable to me is well within the realm of possibility for someone with language skills gained from years of dedicated study and use. So while doing academic research in a foreign language can still be “really really tough,” it is still an integral and therefore natural element of a chosen profession.

Responsibility to personal and professional growth was another theme evident in the answers given to the first research question. For example, two respondents claimed that producing English research was a useful way of developing their language skills:

*Well, as I told you, I was a high school teacher with no chance to brush up on academic writing. I wanted to do research... At the same time, I wanted to brush up or improve my academic*

*writing skills. By doing research, I could brush up on my English at the same time (Prof. Okazaki).*

*I want to improve my writing through writing papers (Prof. Sato).*

These comments hint at one of the main benefits of doing academic research in another language- it provides the researcher, who has already attained an advanced level of fluency, with a built-in way of developing their language ability while they attend to their responsibilities to the larger field of language education as teacher-researchers. This drive for personal development can also be intertwined with a sense of duty and responsibility to their students, as these comments indicate:

*Also, I have to support or sometimes help graduate students. Maybe I have to give some advice- not only the contents, but also about academic writing- how to organize and write a paper. So I also have to practice myself (Prof. Okazaki).*

*At the same time, I think it's very important to write it in English because I'm an English teacher. I should be a model example for my students as a writer (Prof. Sato).*

Taken together, these remarks highlight the interrelatedness of personal and professional growth, at how improving oneself better enables one to serve others. This is a very powerful source of motivation, one that shows clearly how taking on and struggling with a greater challenge can lead to increased personal and professional satisfaction. NNS teachers willing to take on the challenge of producing research in English are, in effect, giving themselves, their colleagues, and their students a great gift- a better, more confident person and teacher.

Along with personal and professional growth come two related themes, namely the desires of gaining wider exposure of one's research and reaping rewards of increased stature and prestige:

*Also, maybe in the future... Right now, my English articles have only been published in a Japanese organization. Maybe, I hope if I'm more confident about my research area, maybe in the future I could introduce it to people abroad so more people could read it. I'm now only focused on Japanese research areas, Japanese teachers (Prof. Okazaki).*

*If you publish in English, a lot more people can read it. And if I can publish a paper in a*

*prestigious journal, then it's an honor. I always try to publish my papers in prestigious journals. Up to now I have been very busy, and I needed to sort of establish my credentials, so I wrote a lot of papers in Japanese also. But from now on, I'm really planning to submit my papers to more prestigious academic journals* (Prof. Hayashi).

Taken as a whole, the answers to the first research question highlight universal motivations, ones that speak to our desires for personal development and professional achievement. And as the respondents noted, this process can be entirely obvious and natural.

### **Facing challenges**

No matter how “natural” it may seem for a NNS instructor to write and publish research in English, the process is still by no means easy. This fact was emphasized strongly in responses to the second research question. Again, I asked this in an attempt to find out how successful NNS teacher-authors had overcome barriers of language. As expected, each respondent mentioned that dealing with English and the academic style of writing was their number one challenge. The following comments highlight the various ways each interviewee has struggled with this issue:

*One obvious challenge was that with English not being my native language, I didn't have enough English resource to express my thoughts or to write an academic paper* (Nakamura-sensei).

*I mean, there are different levels of language. I can write in a very childish manner very easily, but it's difficult for me to write papers in a very very professional way, just like native speakers would. In Japanese I can do that, but I'm not a native speaker of English, and also I have been in Japan for a long time now, so my skills in English- some of them are already gone...* (Prof. Hayashi).

These remarks suggest that finding one's academic writing voice was the primary difficulty. English output could be accomplished, but expressing that output in smooth, professional ways was a task often beyond reach. Struggles with academic expression slowed the writing process down, which led to another cited problem- the lack of time for conducting research:

*One of the biggest challenges was to find time to do research and writing in the first place. As a high school teacher, it's not rare for me to work 10-12 hours at school and additional few hours at home. Besides, writing in English takes me a huge amount of time, especially because I'm a slow writer. So I did much of the research and writing during the spring and summer vacations*



(Togano-sensei).

Dealing with the rewriting process after less than favorable peer reviews was another challenge:

*Another big challenge was rewriting. I was devastated by the reviewers' comments on my first draft. If I ever wanted to get published, I had to rewrite virtually the whole paper according to those comments (Togano-sensei).*

How did the interviewees overcome difficulties of writing in the academic prose of another language? The most common strategy was the use of note-taking during the background reading stage of research:

*So I've been taking notes of the phrases I thought would be useful for my writing. For example, very simple phrases like, "This study embarked on... something something", or "This data indicates...", or "This chapter examines..." Those phrases were not in my repertoire of English language. So whenever I read literature, if I found expressions that seemed to be useful for my writing, I wrote them down (Nakamura-sensei).*

*I always tried to read English articles close to my area. By reading carefully, I could pick up some English expressions. I think, "oh, that I can copy," or "I can use this expression," or something like that (Okazaki-sensei).*

*Yes, what I do is before I submit my paper, I read a number of articles I really like and pick up certain phrases and words that I like that sound very very professional that I feel I can also use in my paper. Then I sort of ... use them (Prof. Hayashi).*

By taking notes as they read, NNS teacher-researchers can pick up necessary vocabulary and phrases that provide cohesion, smoothen transitions, introduce evidence, or express research findings. However, as effective and efficient as this practice is, it does tend to slow things down:

*So sometimes it was distracting. Sometimes when I was supposed to be thinking deeply about what was written and reflecting upon my own teaching and experiments, I realized I was paying attention to the writing style (Nakamura-sensei).*

Depending on their level of fluency, NNS researchers must often do twice the work as they are

forced to operate simultaneously at two different levels: deep knowledge processing and building surface form expression. In this situation, NNS must be ready and willing to call upon reserves of patience and persistence, all the while keeping a positive attitude. This is easier said than done, as the following exchange suggests:

**Nakamura-sensei:** *But I've been in this profession for a long time, and I've never lived in a foreign country, so I'm kind of used to slowing down. You know, my idea is that if something is challenging, and it takes twice as much time as a native speaker, then that's okay- I can spend that much time. So I try to be positive about it. My idea is that "yes, I'm not a native speaker, but perhaps I can do it if I spend more time than native speakers.*

**Interviewer:** *So as long as you were willing to invest the time and energy it takes, you're okay with that.*

**Nakamura-sensei:** *Yes, I'm kind of prepared for that. Sometimes I've wanted to cry, actually! Because it was so hard. But in general, I'm prepared for that.*

Finally, the interviewees all noted the entire publication process is not one that can be accomplished alone. All relied on native speakers for assistance, be it from a friend, colleague, peer-reviewer, or editor. The ways and degrees to which NS assistance was utilized varied. However, each interviewee made it clear that such help was an integral part of overcoming the language barriers impeding expression of academic discourse:

*And I did it, because I didn't want to give up. The editor's words of encouragement and my colleague's feedback also helped me overcome the difficulty. The reviewers' comments were actually helpful, too (Togano-sensei).*

### **Types of support**

As stated previously, reliance on NS assistance for publishing English-based research was a common element each interviewee expressed. However, this help was utilized in various ways, to varying degrees. One way of receiving NS help was through a student-mentor relationship. As the following comment demonstrates, this sort of relationship can be conducted online and may be especially effective if the mentor's specialty is not ELT:

*I have one mentor who lives in the States. I met her online, which was very rare. She is a retired English teacher in the States. So she doesn't have a background in teaching English as a foreign language, or teaching English to younger learners, but she is a retired teacher, and she has been*

*very very supportive during the Aston project. What I did with her is that whatever ideas I had in my mind, I write to her. Because her major is not teaching English to foreign language learners, she asks me very good questions. She asks me very basic questions. It has helped me a lot to organize my thoughts by answering her questions. Sometimes I have my ideas, but they are very vague. When I try to explain things to her, I have to think more deeply about it, and that really helps (Nakamura-sensei).*

Here it is clear that a crucial element of a productive mentor relationship is the space it provides for the NNS researcher to articulate ideas, a languaging process which leads to clarification of thought (Swain, 2005). This is an important step, for without a degree of clarity, coherent English sentences are all the more difficult to compose. In addition to acting as a sounding board for ideas, a good mentor can proofread text and offer a vital sense of confirmation and closure that allows the NNS researcher to progress:

*She did reading for me, gave me suggestions, and of course if was very helpful in a practical way to make my writing sound better, or to improve my writing. And also what really meant a lot to me was sending her one chapter and getting some positive feedback from her. This allowed me to move on mentally. It kind of marked the end of one chapter in my mind. So I had a sense of security to move on. That meant a lot to me (Nakamura-sensei).*

While working closely with a friend-like mentor is one viable way of utilizing NS assistance, other more independent-minded interviewees preferred to have NS colleagues focus their attention exclusively on the language:

**Interviewer:** *You got help from your colleague?*

**Prof. Sato:** *Yes. There is an American instructor. I often asked him to help me with my English.*

**Interviewer:** *So how did it work? So you would write something and then give it to him and he would give you feedback and commentary?*

**Prof. Sato:** *Mmm, he's not my mentor. I usually do it by myself, but when I don't have any confidence in some English expression or sentences, I sometimes asked him for help. But usually I do it by myself.*

Similarly, friends were enlisted to provide proofreading assistance at the language level. However, as the following comment exemplifies, this sort of help has its limits:

*Of course. I have a good friend of mine who edits my papers. But he can only go as far as he can go, of course, you know. He's not me, and he always respects my thoughts that I have expressed in my papers. Because he does not try to change the thoughts I've expressed in my papers, he can check my grammatical mistakes, but he cannot improve my paper in terms of the language (Prof. Hayashi).*

In addition to seeking help from NS friends and colleagues, the interviewees also mentioned seeking help from their Japanese colleagues, when possible. Naturally, the feedback sought in these instances usually focused on non-English matters such as technical questions regarding research methodology and statistical analysis:

*Oh, this time I only asked one Japanese professor. I asked him for some comments about the main ideas, not about the English. Is this logic sufficient? Not about English expressions. Actually, I'm not so familiar with statistics, so I'm still learning about it. So I have sometimes asked questions about that (Prof. Okazaki).*

To summarize, based on the comments from the five interviewees, NNS teacher-researchers tend to all make use of NS assistance at some point during the writing process. Whether this help comes through a close personal or collegial relationship, or whether it simply consists of relying on the help of a peer reviewer or editor, it is important to remember that tackling such an ambitious and difficult project does not have to be done in isolation. In fact, publishing in English may afford NNS teacher-researchers with valuable opportunities to increase NS-NNS collaboration and the subsequent benefits such interaction can bring.

### **Benefits of publishing in English**

When asked to reflect on their successful publishing experiences, the interviewees pointed out a wide variety of benefits from having put themselves through this arduous process. Naturally, completing such a project would lead to a strong sense of confidence-building accomplishment:

*This was the first time for my research paper to be published in an academic journal. So, first of all, this experience gave me a great sense of professional achievement (Togano-sensei).*

*After I finished completing the English paper, I felt kind of more confident about that area, that academic research area. So, I thought, "oh, I've finished writing in English. I want to learn and write more." That's good (Prof. Okazaki).*

Additionally, interviewees remarked on how publishing in English increased their exposure in NS teaching circles, which, in turn, resulted in constructive feedback and opportunities to expand professional networks:

*I wrote it in English, and TLT is read by many many native speakers. Actually, I was given a lot of feedback from native speakers. I learned a lot from being given feedback (Prof. Sato).*

*When you publish in English, you can get a broader audience than when you write in Japanese. After my article was published, one (native-speaking) reader sent me his feedback about it as well as his article on a similar topic. Getting connected with other researchers like this seems to be another benefit (Togano-sensei).*

The following exchange reveals a diverse mix of increased personal and professional growth, as well as the interconnected nature of these processes:

**Nakamura-sensei:** *I've learned a lot. One thing is about how to write a research paper. And the other thing I learned is that I built a kind of habit for looking at my teaching situation or my students' learning with a critical eye all the time when I'm in the classroom. And also I learned how important it is to be patient. As a teacher I learned a lot, but also as a person, I think it helped me clearly to be a better person- more patient and persistent.*

**Interviewer:** *Oh, so you developed personally and professionally.*

**Nakamura-sensei:** *Yeah, and I realize how important it is to work with my colleagues, colleagues meaning my teacher friends, and how important it is to network, how important it is to seek advice or seek help. I think that will help me become a more helpful person for my teacher friends. So I've been willing to help my friends.*

**Interviewer:** *Right- because you got help yourself, now you are more willing to help others.*

**Nakamura-sensei:** *Yes, that's right.*

**Interviewer:** *Like right now!*

*<Laughter>*

In addition to improved academic writing skills, we have here professional development in terms of increased reflection and self-awareness, qualities conducive towards effective teaching (Mori & Gale, 2009). There is also personal growth, as tackling such a challenging project represents an excellent opportunity for developing patience and persistence. These qualities can lead, in turn,

to an enhanced sense of involvement in the profession as a whole, exemplified through greater appreciation of the value of networking, collaboration, and development of one's identity as a efficacious teacher-researcher (Girod, 2002) and *near-peer role model* (Murphey, 1996).

### Advice for fellow NNS teacher-researchers

For NNS English teachers intrigued by the dream of publishing in English someday, what practical advice can be gleaned from colleagues who have successfully published in English educational journals?

First of all, **make use of your native language**. The research will be done in English, but Japanese still has a role to play as it can be used to capture initial ideas:

*I sometimes take notes quickly in Japanese because your first thoughts are very important. I wrote down my thoughts or took notes in Japanese. Then after that I'll start to write in English* (Prof. Okazaki).

The next bit of practical advice is to read a lot of research in English and take notes in order to build necessary vocabulary:

**Nakamura-sensei:** *And also to read research papers written in English to get used to the writing style.*

**Interviewer:** *That's right. And take notes as you're reading about key phrases.*

**Nakamura-sensei:** *Yes, yes! That would be my advice. Yeah, I'm not sure if that is the best way, but it is one of the ways to expand your vocabulary.*

Third, it is important to build upon reading and vocabulary acquisition by finding time to **write a lot in English**, for the more one writes, the easier it becomes:

*Once I start writing in English, it becomes easier and easier because I have already been there. So I guess my advice would be don't be daunted by the idea of writing in English. Your skills are always there, and they will come back to you once you start writing. That's what I say to myself!* (Prof. Hayashi)

Next, **take the initiative to help colleagues with their projects**. In return, you will find it easier to **ask for help** when you need it most.

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*And to try to be helpful to others. You can then ask for help when you need it (Nakamura-sensei).*

**Finding a co-author** is another useful bit of advice. This can be especially helpful if you share interests with fellow NS or NNS colleagues and feel daunted by the task of publishing a paper on your own.

*I recommend you to find someone around you who is interested in getting published in English. Then you can support and help each other. You could even do research together and become co-authors of an article if you share the same interests (Togano-sensei).*

Finally, **focus on doing good research** and don't worry too much about the language:

*I believe that, whether you write in Japanese or English, the most important thing is the content of the article, or the quality of the study itself. Nobody can really help you with these aspects. When you've done good research, however, it will not be difficult to find someone to help you with the language. You can ask your native-speaking co-worker to proofread your manuscript, like I did, for example (Togano-sensei).*

### **Final thoughts and an invitation**

I began this inquiry by seeking to learn how NNS English teachers can manage what to me is a seemingly impossible task: publish academic research in a foreign language. I felt if I could somehow uncover some of the process of how this successfully occurs, then the insights and information gained could somehow encourage NNS colleagues with dreams of following suit. It goes without saying that more research needs to be done in order to clarify and expand on the findings here, but despite the small sample of data, the insights uncovered seem typical of ELT professionals here in Japan. Given a high basic level of English fluency, NNS instructors can publish in the language if they are inclined towards personal and professional growth. Strategies exist for overcoming language barriers, such as taking notes on vocabulary while doing background reading, finding opportunities to interact and collaborate with colleagues, or seeking help from a writing mentor. Specific tips and advice for managing the entire process are plentiful. Finally, the benefits and rewards for taking on such an ambitious project can more than repay the initial investment of time and energy: continued development of language skills, positive personal qualities, and a revitalized relationship with one's chosen profession.

For NS instructors who know full well how difficult it is to publish in their own language,

gaining an appreciation of what our NNS colleagues go through can help motivate us to reach out and seek opportunities to be of service. As the comments from the interviewees indicated, even a small investment of time spent proofreading or offering constructive feedback can make a big difference in someone's work life. Such small and simple collaborations can, over time, contribute towards a more collegial work atmosphere, one where walls of language, culture, and experience are more easily overcome.

I would like to end this report by extending an open invitation to all Japan-based NNS teachers interested in publishing an English article to consider submitting to one of the many Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT) publications <<http://jalt-publications.org/>>. For example, while the prestigious and highly competitive *JALT Journal* <<http://jalt-publications.org/jj/>> may be too difficult for most, teachers who manage to present at the annual JALT conference have an open opportunity to write up an article for the annual peer-reviewed *Conference Proceedings*, currently accessible online at <<http://jalt-publications.org/proceedings/>>. In addition, there are numerous opportunities for publication in *The Language Teacher*: challenging projects such as full-length feature research articles or academic essays, as well as shorter, more accessible content such as interviews, conference reports, successful lesson activities (My Share), or book reviews. Feature articles and essays for the Readers' Forum column are peer-reviewed, but submissions for other columns are not. Full details on submission guidelines can be found in the back of any issue of TLT or online at <<http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/submissions/>>. Finally, other opportunities for publication can be found in one of the many JALT special interest group (SIG) newsletters. A full list can be found online at this address: <<http://jalt-publications.org/other/>>.



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