

*Positive Teacher Attributes through the Eyes of the Learner:  
in Japan and a Wider Asian Context*

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**Abstract**

Positive teacher influences can contribute to learner knowledge, skill acquisition, and a positive learning environment (Jahangiri & Mucciolo, 2016). The current study provided a year-long cross-sectional analysis of 157 Japanese undergraduate students' perceptions of good teacher attributes using a mixed methods design. This study explored attributes selected by the learners and the contexts in which these individuals formed favorable perceptions as evidenced through their reflective written narratives. Additionally, the variables of learner gender and teacher gender were introduced and explored in the current research. The researcher found that, overall, learners' most commonly referred to high school male English teachers as the profile type of a good teacher in this study. Learners most notably perceived 'good' teachers to be friendly, knowledgeable, empathetic, and humorous. Also, respect for the teacher/student relationship dynamic and a teacher's sternness were important underlying themes elicited from learners' perceptions. The findings were compared with those of other contemporary Asian-based studies (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi, & Al-Maamari, 2015; Çelik, Arıkan, & Caner, 2013; Liando, 2010; Nghia, 2015; Wichadee, 2010) relevant to this field.

Keywords: Asian learners, Japanese learners, learner perceptions, positive teacher attributes

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## **Introduction**

The current study explored learner perceptions of Japanese learners on positive teacher attributes. A two-stage exploratory study was implemented and due to an absence of recent Japan-based studies on the identification of ‘good’ teacher characteristics, the scope of this study was expanded beyond a Japan-centric context to analyze the results in comparison with several non-Japanese Asian-based studies (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi, & Al-Maamari, 2015; Çelik, Arıkan, & Caner, 2013; Liando, 2010; Nghia, 2015; Wichadee, 2010) to develop a foundation for research into the makings of a good teacher through the eyes of Asian learners. The current research explored personal qualities that learners identify with when exemplifying the profile of a good teacher for the benefit of teachers who are teaching in Japan or other Asian countries and who consider the perceptions of their students as being a valuable asset for their own professional teacher development.

## **Literature Review**

Adams and Pierce (1994) argued that [even] many years of experience doesn’t guarantee expert teaching because experience is only useful when the teacher continually engages in self-reflection and modifies classroom techniques to better serve the needs of students. As a professional tool, reflective practice can be used by teachers to understand themselves, their personal philosophies, and the dynamics of their classroom more deeply (Robbins, Ashbaker, Enriquez, & Morgan, 2003).

While aiming to be a perfect teacher is not a realistic goal, to be a good or a better teacher is attainable. Reflection upon one’s teaching practice cannot be viewed in isolation from the daily interactions that the teacher engages in with students. Teachers can gain from what they feel constitutes effectiveness with their students and in their particular educational context (Coombe, 2013). Coppedge and Shreck (1988) acknowledged that teaching effectiveness is influenced by knowledge of subject matter and teaching methods or materials but what really matters to students are the teacher’s human qualities.

Learners’ perceptions of their teachers are valuable because of the thousands of hours that learners spend in direct contact with classroom teachers by the time they graduate from high school: an ‘apprenticeship’ of observation (Lortie, 1975). Student beliefs on good teaching are important because students see teachers on a daily basis and are able to comment on teaching in good (and adverse) teaching situations (Bullock, 2015). The exploration of positive teacher attributes in the form of personal qualities displayed by teachers and as observed and recognized by learners was the main focus of this research. Due to an absence of Japan-based studies about ‘good’ teachers and/or good teacher attributes over the past two decades (see Hadley & Hadley, 1996; Makarova & Ryan, 1997; Shimizu, 1995), the exploration of learner perceptions in the current research was extended to other Asian-based studies to broaden the scope of understanding of the personal qualities that learners identify in teachers as being favorable to their learning and personal development.

The current study’s exploration of the making of a good teacher through the eyes of learners encompassed a broadened scope beyond that of most commonly selected positive teacher attributes to include other variables that can influence perceptions of

good teaching, such as culture, gender, subject area, and school level (Zhang & Watkins, 2007).

## Methodology

This mixed methods-based study employed an interpretive paradigm. Wray (2007) noted that an interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to develop an understanding of meanings from learners' actions, their experiences and histories that they have had, and how they are understood in the context of these interactions. In the current research, the researcher explored the perceptions of learners' interactions with one good teacher that they had experienced in their life and the descriptive interpretations provided by the learners of those experiences with reference to the social and historical contexts in which they took place, i.e., the educational setting. The employment of a mixed methods-based approach in the current study aimed at strengthening the persuasive and rigorous collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The current study consisted of a two-stage cross-sectional exploration of learner perceptions of good teachers using three instruments for data collection: two quantitative instruments, a student questionnaire (see Appendix A), a positive teacher attribute checklist (see Appendix B); and one qualitative instrument, a reflective blog activity (see Appendices C and D). These documents were written in both English and Japanese for the participants' comprehension. The researcher analyzed the data using descriptive statistics to illustrate the good teacher examples in relation to the variables of gender, education level taught, and subject taught, which were discussed by learners in this study.

Data were collected via non-random sampling to allow for all blog posts to be analyzed by the researcher with the aim of delving deeply into the details of experience related to the five highest rated attributes identified in aggregate from the participants. The five highest rated attributes provided the themes for analysis. The blogs were analyzed by the researcher for contextualized interpretations of the reasons behind the learners selecting the variables of: learner gender, teacher gender, education levels taught by teachers, subjects taught by teachers, and positive teacher attributes. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of Stage One and Stage Two and the variables used in this study.

Table 1

*Characteristics and variables in the stages of the current research*

<b>Characteristics &amp; variables</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
<i>No. of Participants</i>	35	122
<i>No. of Males &amp; Females</i>	13 males & 22 females	67 males & 55 females
<i>No. of teacher attributes on checklist</i>	24	25
Learner gender	O	O
Teacher gender	X	O
Education level taught	O	O
Subject taught	O	O

*Note:* 'O' denotes variable included in study & 'X' denotes variable not included

## **Student Questionnaire & Teacher Attributes Checklist**

Learner perceptions were initially identified by a questionnaire requiring participants to: identify the profile of their good teacher selection by including the education level, subject, and teacher's gender (added for Stage Two only); and complete a consent agreement to participate in this research, see Appendix A. As noted in Appendix A, the education level of 'Other' includes: Eikaiwa (a Japanese word meaning English conversation school); Juku (a Japanese word meaning cram school); Tutor (a private or school tutor); and 'etc.' (a coach or other educator). Neither participation nor nonparticipation in the research had any bearing on the grading of participants during enrolment in their English course. Participants were informed orally by the researcher that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. Also, participants were requested to select their top five teacher attributes that a good teacher exhibited from a list of attributes (24 attributes for Stage One & 25 attributes for Stage Two, with 'sternness' added) which included spaces for different attributes to be added by participants if they wanted to do so in the boxes titled *other*, see Appendix B. Many of the teacher attributes used for the checklist were adopted from several studies (Azer, 2005; Barnes & Lock, 2013; Bullock, 2015; Coombe, 2013) and those noted in italics in Appendix B were developed by the researcher. The checklist was translated into Japanese and authenticated by several Japanese first language (L1) users (non-participants) to minimize the possibility that participants would understand the attributes through multiple meanings. The researcher refers to the use of 'attribute' to reflect personal qualities that a 'good' teacher may exhibit.

## **Reflective Blog Activity**

Upon their completion of the student questionnaire and the teacher attributes checklist, participants were requested by the researcher to write a blog reflection explaining why that teacher was good, including a description of their experiences with that teacher through their individual interpretations. Students could not see each other's blogs online. Each participant was given several weeks to complete the writing task, see Appendix C. The blogs were to be written in English because the participants were studying in an English course. A sample of a learner's blog reflection is displayed in Appendix D. During the process of completing the blog activity the researcher monitored the participants' blogs to ensure that the writing was comprehensible. One-on-one interactions took place sometimes between the researcher and participants to clarify written meanings. Upon completion of the blogs, participants were given an opportunity to engage in small class group discussions by summarizing any or all of the details of their blog writings, in spoken English primarily. These discussions provided the experience for the participants to communicate their perceptions with others and for the researcher have the opportunity to observe these interpretive experiences that learners shared with each other.

## **Participants**

In Stage One there were 35 participants, i.e., 22 females and 13 males, second year undergraduate students derived from two class groups. In Stage Two there were 122 participants, i.e., 67 males and 55 females, who were a mix of first and second year undergraduates derived from seven class groups. The participants were identified by

the researcher, in a briefing session prior to data collection, as having comprehensive learning experiences in Japanese educational settings.

## Research Questions

1. What are the learners' most commonly selected positive teacher attributes? (Stages 1&2)
2. What influence may variables such as learner gender, teacher gender, education level taught by a teacher, and subject taught by a teacher have on learners' perceptions of a good teacher? (Stage 2)
3. What themes could be found in learners' blog reflections? (Stages 1&2)
4. How do the learners' most commonly selected positive teacher attributes from this study compare with those found in other Asian-based studies? (Stages 1&2)

## Results & Findings

### Top Teacher Attributes

In Stage One, the five most common teacher attributes and the number of times that they were selected by the participants were: friendly (23); knowledgeable (18); empathetic (15); enthusiastic about teaching (15); and humorous (14), see Table 2. In Stage Two of the study, the top five attributes and the number of times participants selected them were: friendly (63); enthusiastic about teaching (61); empathetic (59); kind (43); and knowledgeable (40), see Table 2.

Table 2

#### *Top five positive teacher attributes (Stages 1&2)*

Stage 1 (n=35)			Stage 2 (n=122)		
1.	Friendly	n=23	1.	Friendly	n=63
2.	Knowledgeable	n=18	2.	Enthusiastic about teaching	n=61
=3.	Empathetic	n=15	3.	Empathetic	n=59
=3.	Enthusiastic about teaching	n=15	4.	Kind	n=43
5.	Humorous	n=14	5.	Knowledgeable	n=40

*Note:* Stage 1: 24 attributes (Sternness not included) / Stage 2: 25 attributes (Sternness included)

### Top Teacher Attributes by Learner Gender

An analysis by gender in Stage Two revealed general agreement in the top five teacher attributes across both genders, despite some variance in their rankings. As displayed in Table 3, the attributes 'compassionate' (17) among males and 'humorous' (12) among females were the only attributes which were not shared between the genders. Additionally, 'sternness', which was introduced as an attribute for Stage 2, was rated sixth for males and equal sixth for females. Top teacher attribute selections based on learner gender for Stage One could not be combined with Stage Two results because the attribute of 'Sternness' was absent from Stage One data collection and analysis. Also, results for the top teacher attributes for each learner gender for Stage One are not been included in this paper because of the small number of participants in Stage One in relation to learner gender, i.e., 13 males and 23 females.

Table 3

*Top teacher attributes for each learner gender (Stage 2 only)*

Male (n=67)			Female (n=55)		
Rank	Attribute	Total	Rank	Attribute	Total
1.	Enthusiastic about teaching	23	1.	Empathetic	23
2.	Knowledgeable	19	2.	Enthusiastic about teaching	20
3.	Empathetic	18	3.	Friendly	19
=4.	Compassionate	17	4.	Knowledgeable	14
=4.	Friendly	17	5.	Humorous	12
6.	Sternness	16	=6.	Sternness	10

As displayed in Table 4, a breakdown of learner gender for Stage Two top five teacher attributes showed similarities among the total male and female populations respectively for the top three attributes: friendly (31/32); enthusiastic about teaching (33/28); and empathetic (27/32). However, differences existed for the third and fourth attributes when comparing the gender populations respectively: kind (27/16); and knowledgeable (28/12).

Table 4

*Learner gender breakdown of top five attributes (Stage 2 only)*

Teacher Attribute (ranking)		Total (n=122)	% of total pop.	Male (n=67)	Male % of total pop.	Female (n=55)	Female % of total pop.
1.	Friendly	63	52%	31	49%	32	51%
2.	Enthusiastic about teaching	61	50%	33	54%	28	46%
3.	Empathetic	59	48%	27	46%	32	54%
4.	Kind	43	35%	27	63%	16	37%
5.	Knowledgeable	40	33%	28	70%	12	30%

**Top Teacher Attributes by Education Levels Taught by Teachers**

Learners' perceptions of good teachers taken from Stage Two included the variables of teacher gender and education level taught by teachers. In Figure 1, data indicates that high school teachers, specifically of the male gender, were most commonly chosen for learners' good teacher examples. The selections of good teachers at two education levels, i.e., elementary school and university were too few to offer any meaning in the current study. Based on Stage Two data, Table 3 provides an analysis of the three main education levels referred to by learners and the numbers of times that they were referred to: high school (63); junior high school (28); and other (17).

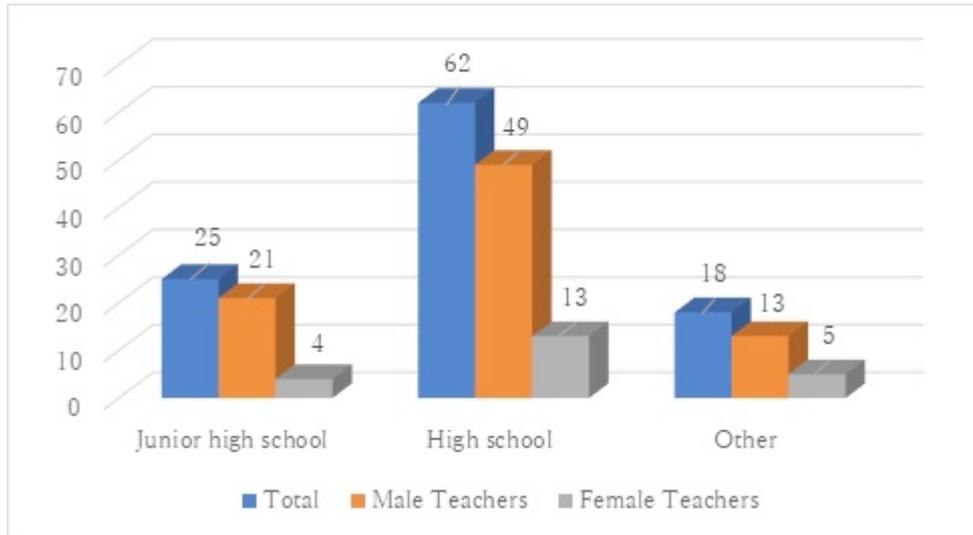


Figure 1: Teacher gender & education level taught (Stage 2 only)

The top five teacher attributes by education level taught by teachers for Stage Two, see Table 5, indicated that the majority of these attributes were present across the three most commonly selected education levels. Three attributes, i.e., humorous, compassionate, and knowledgeable, were the only exceptions with each of them appearing in only one education level respectively.

Table 5

Top five teacher attributes by education levels taught by teachers (Stage 2 only)

Other (n=18)		Junior High School (n=25)		High School (n=62)	
Attribute & Total		Attribute & Total		Attribute & Total	
Friendly	10	Enthusiastic about teaching	16	Friendly	36
Enthusiastic about teaching	9	Compassionate	9	Empathetic	35
Empathetic	8	Empathetic	9	Enthusiastic about teaching	28
Kind	7	Friendly	9	Knowledgeable	28
Humorous	7	Kind	9	Kind	24

### Top Subjects taught by Teachers

The top subjects taught by teachers as selected by learners from Stages One and Two, in total, are displayed in Figure 2. Two of the top six subjects and the number of times they were referred to by learners in their selection of good teachers were: English (38); and Mathematics (37). Among the 157 participants there was one case of a student who was taught two subjects by one teacher, i.e., English and Mathematics, and two students who were each taught three subjects by their teacher, i.e., English, Japanese, and Mathematics.

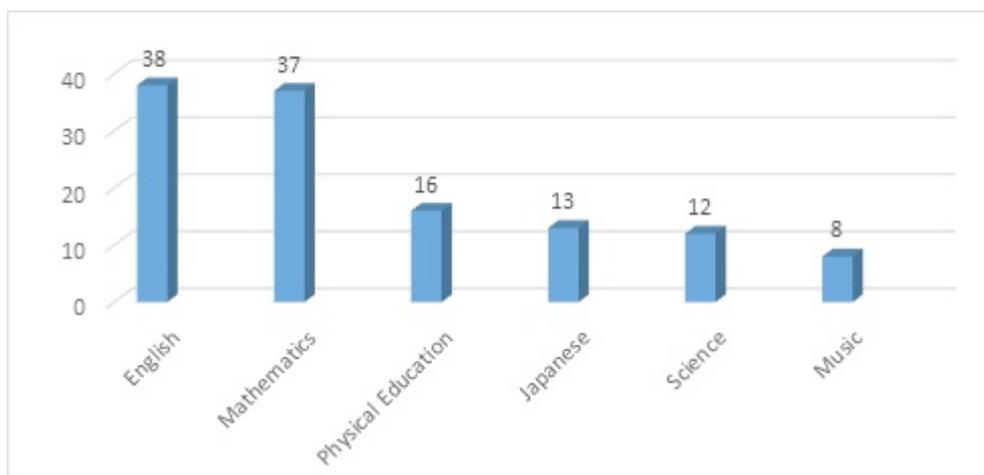


Figure 2: Top subjects taught by teachers (Stages 1&2)

### Reflective Blog Accounts of the Top Five Attributes (from Stage Two)

Learners provided written reflections on their selections of one good teacher in their life. Non-random sampling of the blog postings resulted in the following extracts being selected by the researcher to represent learners' interpretations of their good teacher examples in the light of the top five positive teacher attributes found in Stage Two. The top five attributes in Stage Two and the number of learners who referred to them in the checklist and blogs were: friendly (63); enthusiastic about teaching (61); empathetic (59); kind (43); and knowledgeable (40).

#### *Friendly*

'Friendly' was often referred to by learners in relation to positive conversations that learners had with teachers:

She taught me Math since when I entered high school. She is a friendly woman. Her class is very happy and everybody laugh because she talk about many topics (*Stage 2 Participant 14, Female/Female High school Mathematics teacher*).

Also, he was friendly with students. They talk happily when he talks to them. So there were always students around the teacher (*Stage 2 Participant 44, Female/Male High school Science teacher*).

#### *Enthusiastic about teaching*

Learners depicted good teachers as being 'enthusiastic about teaching' when they demonstrated a passion for their job and a desire to support students' interest and effort in curricular and extracurricular activities:

He is enthusiastic about teaching. His method of teaching is easy to understand. He uses many examples and related words to explain things we don't know (*Stage 2 Participant 92, Female/Other - Male Eikaiwa English teacher*).

I didn't like Physical Education, so I gave up exercising. But my teacher was enthusiastic about teaching. Now, I like exercising very much (*Stage*

*2 Participant 97, Female/Female Junior high school Physical Education teacher).*

#### *Empathetic*

Learners referred to 'empathetic' in relation to their perceptions that a good teacher has an understanding of, and a desire to accommodate, a learner's point of view or circumstances:

He is a very caring and empathetic teacher. Thinking always a student first. I was helped many times. For example, he kindly answered the question of the homework (*Stage 2 Participant 29, Male/Male High school English teacher*).

She is an empathetic teacher. When I cried in hard school life, she listens to my worries (*Stage 2 Participant 41, Male/Female High school Social Studies teacher*).

#### *Kind*

Being 'kind' was referred to by learners in their good teacher examples and exemplified as acts that made students feel respectfully considered:

He was very kind because he never was angry at us (*Stage 2 Participant 51, Female/Male High school Mathematics teacher*).

I liked him because he was kind. He always smiled and said hello to us in our class (*Stage 2 Participant 21, Male/Male Elementary school Physical Education teacher*).

#### *Knowledgeable*

Learners perceived good teachers as being 'knowledgeable' when they were well-versed on a range of topics or subjects and could communicate their depth of understanding to a student's advantage for learning:

The teacher is a knowledgeable person. When I study agriculture, he told me a lot of agricultural knowledge. I don't know much about agriculture. But I am glad to get new agricultural information (*Participant 81, Male/Male University Biology teacher*).

He is very knowledgeable. He taught Japanese, Math, English, Science, & Social Studies (*Participant 63, Male/Other - Male Juku English, Japanese, & Mathematics teacher*).

### **Themes from Reflective Blog Accounts (from Stage One and Stage Two)**

From analysis of learner's interpretations in Stage One, three themes emerged from the written reflections. These themes and the number of times that they were selected by learners from Stage One and Stage Two were: recognition: gratitude/respect (37); life-changing impact (24); and bonds & ties (10). An additional theme emerged in Stage One analysis and was introduced as a teacher attribute in Stage Two data collection, i.e., 'sternness'.

#### *Recognition: Gratitude/Respect*

Approximately 1-in-5 learners referred to their feeling of appreciation and respect for the good teacher that they selected:

He thought of everyone's mental anguish until late at night. In addition, he was a head teacher of a grade for three years so he must have been quite tired. I cannot thank him enough. Thanks to him I could have an enjoyable daily school life (*Stage 1 Participant 3, Female/Male High school English teacher*).

He had many inspiring words so I could have confidence when I heard them before a contest. I was able to grow up thanks to him. I want to become the person like him (*Stage 2 Participant 40, Male/Male High school Music club activity teacher*).

### *Life-Changing Impact*

Approximately 1-in-6 learners talked about the influence that a good teacher had on changing their life for the better:

When I got lost about my course for university he advised me how to decide the course of university and what I want to learn in university. I was helped by his advice and I was able to decide my course (*Stage 1 Participant 33, Female/Male High school teacher, Unknown subject*).

I was a very naughty boy...I played tricks on my friends...I made the same error many times. I was reprimanded by him for my behavior. If he had not seen the event I would have repeated the action. Thank you to him for pointing out my bad thing...this is a memory that I will not forget for the rest of my life (*Stage 2 Participant 16, Male/Male Elementary school Physical Education teacher*).

### *Bonds & Ties*

Approximately 1-in-16 learners mentioned their feelings of a strong personal connection with the good teacher that they selected:

His life story is very strange. His life history has many interesting episodes. And he is friendly. I am in contact with him now. I will go to his home and eat lunch with his family. His family is very friendly too. So I love his family (*Stage 1 Participant 6, Female/Male High school English teacher*).

After my high school graduation I contact him by Facebook even now. We meet and talk about our lives when I go back to my hometown (*Stage 2 Participant 52, Female/Male High school Mathematics teacher*).

### *Sternness*

'Sternness' was a theme that emerged in Stage One with 9 out of 35 learners referring to it. Consequently, it became an overarching term used by the researcher to identify with learners' interpretations from keyword associations that were found in data analysis. These words and the number of learners who referred to them were: frightening (1); get mad at me (1); hit by him (1); scared (1); scolded (1); serious (1);

severe (2); sharp tongue (1); strict (1); and tell off me (1). In Stage 2, sternness was added to the teacher attribute checklist (see Appendix B) and 26 out of 122 learners selected it. An example of sternness from a learner's blog in Stage Two was:

She is stern in my club. She was always mad at me. I didn't like her at first. I had known she was kind when I continued for a long time. I was inspired by her that she was mad at me (*Participant 89, Female/Female High school Physical Education teacher*).

Extracts from learners' written reflections provided snapshots of the interpretations of individual learners based upon the understanding that the learners wanted to express their perceptions of personal qualities which good teachers exhibited.

## **Discussion**

### **Teacher Attributes**

In relation to the first research question: 'What are the learners' most commonly selected positive teacher attributes?' - the most popularly selected attributes from Stages One and Two showed consistency across these stages with four attributes present in the top five lists: enthusiastic about teaching; empathetic; friendly; and knowledgeable, see Table 2.

### **Education Levels and Subjects**

In regard to the second research question: 'What influence may variables such as learner gender, teacher gender, education level taught by a teacher, and subject taught by a teacher have on learners' perceptions of a good teacher?' - the most commonly selected education levels taught by teachers and the number of times that they were referred to by learners in Stages Two were: high school (63); junior high school (28); and other (17). Elementary school and university 'education levels' were not selected enough times by learners for the researcher to make a position on their significance to this study. The range of subjects taught by the good teachers selected varied significantly, see Figure 2). In Stage Two, English (38) and Mathematics (37) were the subjects taught by teachers most commonly referred to by learners. Although the learners were enrolled in a mandatory English course at the time this research was being conducted, none of them were undertaking an English major at university. So, the reason/s why English was the most commonly referred to subject taught by teachers can only be speculated.

#### *Teacher Attributes and Learner Gender*

In Stage Two, four of the five most commonly selected teacher attributes by male and female learners were the same: enthusiastic about teaching; empathetic; friendly; and knowledgeable. The sample pool for Stage One was too small to draw any significance from in relation to a connection between teacher attributes and learner gender.

#### *Teacher Gender and Education Level*

Both male and female learners in Stage Two most commonly selected high school teachers and male teachers for their good teacher, see Figure 1. High school male

teachers were selected 49 times and high school female teachers were chosen 14 times, while junior high school male teachers were chosen 21 times and ‘other’ male teachers were selected 12 times. It can only be speculated as to why male teachers were selected more often than female teachers. This difference and the low number of selections of elementary school and university teachers warrants further investigation.

### **Emergent themes**

In relation to the third research question: ‘What themes could be found in learners’ blog reflections?’ - the emergence of three themes, i.e., recognition: gratitude/respect, life-changing impact, and bonds & ties, from the written reflections in Stage One was collaborated by their presence in Stage Two. These emergent themes provided evidence from the learners of the influence that good teachers can have on their learners.

#### *Emergent Attribute*

Twenty-six participants selected ‘sternness’ in the teacher attribute checklist in Stage Two, while nine participants made a total of eleven keyword associations which the researcher noted as relating to the concept of sternness. However, its presence in the data may be related to the prominence of the sempai/kohai relationship between teacher and learner in Japan (Hadley & Hadley, 1996). However, to what extent the learners may have considered sternness as a positive teacher attribute is unclear.

### **Positive Teacher Attributes: Comparisons with Other Asian-based Studies**

In relation to the fourth research question: ‘How do the learners’ most commonly selected positive teacher attributes from this study compare with those found in other Asian-based studies?’ - five Asian-based studies were introduced to explore comparisons among learner perceptions of teacher attributes with the current research, see Table 6. These studies were selected for: their recency; sample size; participants’ profile; and focus on positive/effective/best teacher characteristics, which complemented the current study.

Table 6

#### *Comparative Asian-based studies*

<b>Country/Study</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>	<b>Participants’ Profiles</b>	<b>Focus of Study</b>
Indonesia Liando (2010)	126 students 28 teachers	Undergraduates	Best EFL teacher characteristics
Japan <i>The current study (2016)</i>	<i>157 students</i>	<i>Undergraduates</i>	<i>Positive attributes of good teachers</i>
Oman Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015)	171 students 233 teachers	High school students	Characteristics of good EFL teachers
Thailand Wichadee (2010)	400 students 53 teachers	Undergraduates	Characteristics of effective English teachers
Turkey Celik et al. (2013)	998 students	Undergraduates	Qualities of effective EFL teachers
Vietnam Nghia (2015)	358 students	Adults (18-27 yrs. old)	Qualities of English teachers for enhanced learning

Among the five other Asian-based studies, ‘friendly’ was selected by learners in three of the studies, while ‘enthusiastic about teaching’ and ‘fair’ were selected twice. ‘Friendly’ and ‘enthusiastic about teaching’ were top five attributes in the current study. Other attributes which were selected one time across those five studies, see Table 7, and found in the current study’s teacher attribute checklist (see Appendix B) were: caring; creative; good communicator; good listener; and patient. Although ‘helpful’ was absent as an attribute in the current research, it was listed as a top attribute in two of the studies, see Table 7.

Table 7  
*Comparative Studies & their top attributes*

Country & Study	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Attributes & Rankings	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
[Indonesia] Liando (2010)	Friendly	Intelligent & Explains things well	Nice	Interesting & Humorous	Patient
[Oman] Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015)	Fair	Caring	Just	Good communicator	Enthusiastic about teaching
[Thailand] Wichadee (2010)	Interested in students	Helpful	Alleviate students’ anxiety in class	Listens to students	Approachable & Friendly
[Turkey] Celik et al. (2013)	Fair & Just	Enthusiastic	Friendly	Loving	Creative
[Vietnam] Nghia (2015)	Dedicated*	Friendly*	Helpful*	Understanding*	Trusted & Respected*

*Note:* \* denotes attributes from Nghia’s (2015) study do not include rankings

There are several significant results from the studies that are worthy of reflection in the study of good teachers. In Liando’s (2010) study, 100% of participants selected ‘friendly’ as a quality that they want in a teacher. In Nghia’s (2015) study, participants wanted teachers whom they could ask for consultation in learning methods or constructive feedback, both in and after class. While in Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) study, participants valued a teacher’s ability to build good rapport and a strong relationship with them.

### Limitations

Several potential issues were identified in the current study. English was selected most commonly as a subject taught in the good teacher examples in the reflective blog activity. It can only be speculated that this subject selection may have been influenced by the situated research setting, i.e., the researcher is an English teacher and the research was conducted in an English course setting. However, Mathematics was an almost equally common subject selection. To reduce the potential for the meanings of the check listed teacher attributes (see Appendix B) having multiple meanings, 5 non-participant Japanese L1 users volunteered their translated choices for each of the attributes and all had the same Japanese meanings which were then included below each attribute on the checklist. Due to a significant variation in the number of teachers selected by the learners in regard to the five education levels, elementary and university teachers were not commonly represented and an analysis of these two education levels could not be successfully explored. Finally, the Asian-based studies

and their findings discussed in the current research are only snapshots of learner perceptions of teacher characteristics (attributes) and cannot be said to represent nationwide learner perceptions of good teachers.

### **Conclusions & Recommendations**

The current study explored Zhang & Watkins (2007) notion that perceptions of good teaching can be influenced by a variety of factors, i.e., learner gender, teacher gender, subject and education level taught by a teacher. The top teacher attributes selected by learners in Stages One and Two of the current study were very similar. There were no significant gender differences found for good teacher attributes in the current study. This result was paralleled by findings in the studies by Nghia (2013) and Wichadee (2010). The results of the current study and other Asian-based studies (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi, & Al-Maamari, 2015; Çelik, Arıkan, & Caner, 2013; Liando, 2010; Nghia, 2015; Wichadee, 2010) discussed in this paper may be useful in both a practical and a theoretical sense, as they can inform teachers about the personal qualities that are perceived by learners to be most important. Thus, allowing them to shape their practice in order to better meet the needs of learners. Additionally, the findings may assist administrators and educational policy makers in formulating decisions concerning curriculum design, teacher development programs (Celik et al., 2013), and student-centered teacher evaluation.

With future progress of this research in mind there are several elements that can be added to the current research. An expanded sample pool may offer the opportunity for a deeper exploration of the variables included in the present study, such as learner gender, teacher gender, subject level taught by a teacher, and education level taught by a teacher. A shift from an exploration of learner perceptions of a good teacher example to a good 'English' teacher example, utilizing the same five education levels taught by teachers, will realign the research to focus on one specialist area of teaching and complement the researcher's professional English teacher development. The continued improvement of giving instructions to participants can improve the accuracy of answers submitted in the student questionnaire, such as accurately naming a subject taught so that no unknown subjects are listed by learners. The inclusion of focus groups, for a post reflective blog activity, could provide a greater detailing of the reasons made by learners about the good teacher profiles that they select. Also, a further exploration of comparative studies in this field may support the development of culture as a variable that influences learner perceptions of personal characteristics found in good teachers.

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## References

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Student Questionnaire

<p><b>Choose one – mark X</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>My teacher was <input type="checkbox"/> Male / <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p>My teacher taught _____ (write the subject here).</p>	<p><b>Education level</b></p> <p>Elementary school</p> <p>Junior high school</p> <p>High school</p> <p>University</p> <p>Other (Eikaiwa/Juku/Tutor, etc.)</p>
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### Appendix B Teacher attributes checklist

	Flexible		Friendly		<i>Compassionate</i>
	<i>Honest</i>		Fair		<i>Plays games</i>
	Humorous		Caring		Polite
	Prepared		<i>Good communicator</i>		Motivational
	Enthusiastic about teaching		Knowledgeable		<i>Self-confident</i>
	Kind		<i>Leader</i>		<i>Inspired</i>
	Creative		Organized		Empathetic
	Patient		Good listener		Unbiased
	<i>*Sternness</i>		Other		Other

*Note:* Attributes developed by the researcher are italicized - Sternness was added for Stage Two use

## Appendix C

### Reflective blog activity task

Write an experience you had with one teacher who you think was a good teacher for you.

What happened? Why do you think that your teacher was good? (100-150 words)

## Appendix D

### Reflective Blog activity sample

My good teacher is a cram school. She taught me English. She was a very friendly woman that I like. In class time she always interesting talk with me in English. Not only talking partner but enthusiastic about teaching teacher. She taught me very politely but I can't speak English. However she taught very politely. She never give up taught for me. In addition she is a good listener. Always getting tired, she tried to understand my easy English. telling of an enthusiastic teacher is my motivational up. I'm very thankful to this teacher. I hope is to be like her. (101 words)

*Stage 2 P8 Female/Other - Female English Juku teacher*