

**CELTA teacher training: Experienced Non-native English Speaker Teachers' Perceptions  
concerning Its Usefulness and Implementation**

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### Abstract

This study examined how three experienced non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) working in Japan and the U.S. perceive the usefulness of their CELTA training and how they implement the CELTA teaching approach in their work situations. Consistent with previous studies (Anderson, 2018, 2020; Aydin et al., 2016), the qualitative findings showed participants highly valued the Teaching Practice (TP) for different reasons and found the theoretical component—language awareness and analysis less relevant. The results also indicated that experienced NNESTs practiced some techniques they learned from the CELTA flexibly to their current settings, suggesting a change to student-centered teaching and demonstrating a personal pedagogy sensitive to learners and local needs. This study expands existing literature on CELTA and NNEST by describing three experienced NNESTs post-CELTA practical experiences.

*Keywords:* CELTA, non-native English speaker, language teacher, experienced teacher, practical teaching, CLT

### **CELTA Teacher Training: Experienced Non-native English Speaker Teachers' Perceptions concerning Its Usefulness and Implementation**

Language teacher education (LTE) emerged as a distinct area of practice and inquiry within applied linguistics comparatively recently. It includes inquiries into what knowledge language teachers need to know, what they are able to do, and how they learn and practice the knowledge (Johnson, 2016). Within this area, one line of efforts to better prepare language teachers took the form of intensive language training courses offered, originally by a private language school, International House (IH), in London in the 1960s, which evolved into the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA). With its validation by the UK National Qualification Framework and recognition by organizations such as the British Council, now it has developed in parallel with the Trinity College London CertTESOL to be one of the two best-known entry-level qualifications for professionals entering the international English Language Teaching field (ELT or TESOL) (Anderson, 2016). As an entry-level intensive pre-service ELT course, the CELTA initially aimed at preparing native speakers of English to gain a teaching certificate and teach at language schools all over the world. Despite the native-speaker orientation, the CELTA has gained increasing recognition and popularity among non-native speaker teachers of English (NNEST) who invest money and time on the course and seek professional development. Interestingly, the majority of NNEST taking the CELTA are experienced teachers (Anderson, 2016). Therefore, there is increasing interest in how experienced NNEST perceive the training course and what impacts the course exerts on their teaching practices.

To date, among the handful of articles on the CELTA and experienced NNESTs, one major issue reported by experienced NNESTs concerns different degrees of difficulty of

implementing the communicative method promoted on the CELTA, which mirrors some characteristics of the communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology, in their post-training contexts (Anderson, 2016, 2018, 2020). Reasons accounting for the varying degrees of implementation of the method have been critically analyzed in Brandt (2006), Ferguson & Donno, (2003), and Stanley & Murray (2013). So far there has been a distinct lack of empirical studies into experienced NNESTs' implementation of the method they learned from the CELTA, and the existing limited literature involved (e.g. Anderson, 2020; Barnawi, 2016) refers to in-service teachers in a small number of areas like the Middle East. Thus, this paper aims to explore how three experienced NNEST working in Japan and the U.S.A. one year after completing their CELTA course in 2019 perceive the usefulness of their CELTA training in retrospect and how they implement the teaching method they learned from the CELTA in their current instructional contexts. The qualitative findings expand the existing literature on the CELTA and experienced NNESTs by showing and discussing their self-reported post-CELTA experiences including instructional practices and roles. The tentative explanations for their changes in instruction also shed light on their professional development. Additionally, the description of some participants' roles as teacher educators after the CELTA course offers new perspectives into experienced NNESTs' lived experiences.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Knowledge Base in CELTA**

The knowledge base of language teaching involves “what language teachers need to know and be able to do in order to educate language learners effectively” (Graves, 2009, p. 116). It has been traditionally divided into two parts—knowledge of language and knowledge about teaching. Therefore, most teacher education programs aim to transmit teacher-learners these two

parts of knowledge—content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Yet given the complexities of language teachers' learning, there is a need for a broader conception of the knowledge base that goes beyond the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Richards (1998), for example, put forward six types of language teacher knowledge, which include content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, contextual knowledge, and process knowledge. Freeman and Johnson (1998) also argued for a reconceptualization of the knowledge base, which should be grounded in the teaching activities, the social context of teaching, as well as language teachers' central roles and agency.

To better understand the CELTA's knowledge base, it is necessary to take a close look at its syllabus. As an introductory four-week teacher training course designed to prepare language teachers with limited teaching experience to teach English as a foreign language to adults, the CELTA aims at enabling candidates to (1) acquire essential subject matter knowledge and familiarity with the principles of effective learning, (2) acquire a range of practical skills for teaching English to adult learners, and (3) demonstrate their ability to apply their learning in a real teaching context (Cambridge Assessment, 2020, p. 2). The syllabus covers five main topics/themes, which include

1. Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context
2. Language analysis and awareness
3. Language skills: Reading, listening, speaking and writing
4. Planning and resources for different teaching contexts
5. Developing teaching skills and professionalism

In the topic descriptions, detailed content under each major topic is outlined. For example, in the topic of *language analysis and awareness*, the content is split into basic concepts and terminology used in ELT, grammar, lexis, and phonology, etc. Rather than expecting candidates to master a body of specialized knowledge of the language (considering the duration of the course), the CELTA merely lists some simplified learning outcomes such as demonstrating “basic working knowledge of how the verb phrase and the noun phrase are formed” and understanding “basic principles of word formation and lexical meaning” and “some features of connected speech” (Cambridge Assessment, 2020, p. 7). Topics four and five involve learning outcomes more related to the development of teaching skills, which are presumably achieved through six hours of supervised and assessed Teaching Practice (TP)<sup>1</sup>, a significant and highly valued component in the CELTA course. In TP, candidates are expected to design logically sequenced lessons, select and evaluate materials and resources appropriately, instruct English learners at different levels, and build a good rapport with them, etc. In addition to teaching, candidates also conduct peer class observation and post-class evaluation and reflection. Taken together, these five parts, assumed as a reflection of “the subject knowledge and the pedagogical knowledge and skills essential for beginner English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers” (Cambridge Assessment, 2020, p. 2), constitute the knowledge base of the CELTA.

### **Evaluation of CELTA’s Knowledge Base**

From the aforementioned objectives, themes, and content conceptualized in the CELTA syllabus, it can be concluded that the knowledge stressed by the CELTA somewhat echoes the *content knowledge* and *pedagogical knowledge* in the system of knowledge bases essential for

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<sup>1</sup> In TP, CELTA candidates will work with specially arranged groups of learners and apply the theory they learned to practice in the classroom teaching. CELTA trainers will assist candidates in lesson planning and supervise candidates in real teaching.

language professionals discussed above. However, upon a closer examination, the selected *content knowledge* under each theme, defined as the subject-matter knowledge of English in CELTA, is not extensive. It can be assumed that this reflects the relative brevity of the course, even though it is intensive. This is a characteristic evident in most intensive certificate-level courses, and because of this, short-term teacher training courses including the CELTA have been criticized for its lack of in-depth disciplinary knowledge about the language and inadequate coverage of language awareness (e.g. Hobbs, 2013).

Unlike short-term training courses, language specialized diploma courses, such as a two years' master's program in TESOL, ELT, or Applied Linguistics, are believed to provide more comprehensive, in-depth, and explicit knowledge of the language system for language professionals. Stanley and Murray (2013) compared the CELTA courses with the master's course in ELT/ Applied Linguistics based on a teaching capital framework conceptualized from Bourdieu's (1986) model of *capital*. They evaluated English language teachers' qualification in three domains: *Language capital* (knowledge about language), *methodological capital* (knowledge about teaching), and *intercultural capital* (knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences), with each domain subdivided into the declarative (knowing that) and the procedural (knowing how). They concluded that the CELTA course lacks "a more wide-ranging, in-depth, and holistic declarative knowledge of the language system" (p. 107) and prioritizes the *procedural methodological capital* over *declarative methodological capital*.

Yet the focus on *procedural* rather than *declarative methodological capital* is not a drawback; instead, it can be a strength, as Stanley and Murray (2013) further suggested. Referring to the practically focused assessment criteria, they explained that the CELTA training with its practical orientation ensures language teachers' capabilities of managing a classroom and

performing teachers' roles (pp. 110–111). In fact, in the practical teaching component (TP), CELTA participants could acquire abundant procedural pedagogical knowledge and practice their teaching skills in conducting the language sessions. With the practical experience gained from TP, they can utilize the teaching techniques that allow them to “behave competently in the classrooms” (Ferguson & Donno, 2003, p. 30).

The significant value of TP recognized by CELTA participants can be found in the majority of the empirical research conducted to explore CELTA participants' perception of the usefulness of the course after the course completion (e.g. Anderson, 2016; Barnawi, 2016; Borg, 2002; Hobbs, 2013). The results have consistently shown CELTA holders, including both novice teachers with zero or limited teaching experiences and experienced teachers, report positive attitudes towards the course and view the TP as one of the most valuable components.

For example, Aydin, et al. (2016) examined how 44 CELTA-holder English language instructors perceived the course and how the course impacted their teaching with open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The 44 participants completed their CELTA qualification as a form of in-service training funded by the institution they enrolled into located in Turkey; participants included both novice and experienced teachers<sup>2</sup> with an undergraduate education background in ELT (ELT graduates) or related to ELT (non-ELT graduates). The findings from participants' reports showed that non-ELT graduates valued the practical teaching knowledge and skills such as class management, the class material adaptation, and lesson planning. For ELT graduates with teaching experiences, the real-class observation, the feedback from the trainers and peers, as well as the reflection contributed to their re-realization of

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, in this study the “experienced teachers” are defined as those with 6 to 20 years' teaching experiences, while “novice teachers” as those with less than 5 years' teaching experience.



teachers' roles. Regarding their changes after the training, all the participants reported a transition to student-centered classrooms. The author concluded that the CELTA course, with its valued practical component TP, helps both novice and experienced teachers discover who they are, increase their self-awareness with a reflection on their roles and teaching practices and opportunities of learning from their peers, and increase their confidence and motivation (pp. 171-172), which contributes to their professional development.

### **Criticism towards CELTA Teaching and Its Implementation**

Despite the highly valued course component of TP and the practical pedagogical knowledge gained from engaging in actual teaching activities, some research critically explores the appropriacy of the practical teaching skills promoted by the CELTA in a variety of teaching contexts (Brandt, 2006). A number of scholars contend that the CELTA, as a training course developed on a performance-based philosophy, merely instills teacher trainees with a superficial, if easily-applicable, practical toolkit of classroom skills (Barnawi, 2016; Brandt, 2006; Mackenzie, 2018; Stanley & Murray, 2013). The discrete strategies in the prescriptive practical toolkit include questioning techniques like asking Concept Checking Questions (CCQs)<sup>3</sup> and Instruction Checking Questions (ICQs)<sup>4</sup>, techniques for task setting-up and management like controlled practice drilling and free practice, techniques for class management and monitoring, etc. As a result of the performance-based ideology, CELTA candidates are assessed by CELTA trainers based on how well they can perform these prepackaged strategies. If they successfully exhibit those classroom techniques in TP, they will be regarded as qualified language teachers

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<sup>3</sup> Asking CCQs is a technique taught in CELTA to check the meaning of language items. For example, "Will you feel relaxed?" would be used to check students' understanding of the meaning of "chill out."

<sup>4</sup> ICQs are given after an instruction to check if students understand the instruction.

who are capable of managing language classrooms and conducting effective instructional practices. Yet it is possible (particularly considering the comparative brevity of a CELTA course) that the participants perform these skills without an understanding of the underpinning theoretical and methodological rationales behind the teaching methodology. Therefore, when it comes to an instructional environment where the use of the CELTA teaching approach is inappropriate, it may be challenging for them to adjust their pedagogical approaches flexibly and critically and accommodate the changing and unpredictable teaching circumstances (Ferguson & Donno, 2003; Hobbs, 2013; Stanley & Murray, 2013).

It is worth noting that the techniques practiced and assessed in the CELTA are indicative of the “shared practices of multilingual adult ELT classrooms in Anglophone countries” (Anderson, 2020, p. 2), which in a sense correspond to some principles/features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a prevailing methodology in the English as a second language (ESL) learning context. For example, the CELTA syllabus clearly states in its assessment criteria that CELTA candidates should demonstrate their professional competency as language teachers by “ensuring balance, variety and a communicative focus in materials, tasks and activities” and “providing clear context and a communicative focus for language” (Cambridge Assessment, 2020, p. 15–16). These assessment criteria echo CLT’s emphasis on using a variety of materials to promote communicative language use and including activities in which students are offered numerous opportunities to communicate in the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 168). Also, CLT classroom procedures often require teachers to acquire less teacher centered-classroom and more student-centered management skills. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 168). Thus, a variety of communicative practices, such as reducing Teacher Talk Time (TTT), increasing Student Talk Time (STT), and engaging students in collaborative

learning with pair or group work are taught and emphasized on the CELTA. The implementation of these techniques makes the class more student-centered and involves learners in communication as much as possible.

### **Application of CELTA Teaching for Experienced NNEST**

Currently, due to the increasing proportion of NNESTs enrolling in the CETLA, more research has started to highlight NNESTs' needs and investigate their perceptions of the CELTA's usefulness. Of the few studies related to NNESTs' experiences in the CELTA, Anderson (2016) is one primary study that compared different backgrounds, needs, and future working contexts between 41 NNESTs and 38 native English speaker teachers (NEST). The quantitative findings demonstrated that NNESTs choose the CELTA mainly for professional development that leads them to improved job prospects and a better understanding of the teaching method. Moreover, most NNESTs who undertook the CELTA course had extensive prior teaching experiences, and unlike NESTs, the majority of NNESTs will return to their home countries after completing the course.

The findings emerging from Anderson (2016) point to a major challenge facing NNESTs, which involves the implementation of the teaching method imparted on the CELTA course in the diverse contexts different from that of the CELTA course. If NNESTs work as language teachers in their home countries, it means they will likely work in the English as a Foreign language (EFL) learning context<sup>5</sup> where the techniques and strategies emphasized on the CELTA might not be contextually appropriate. For instance, teachers working in the public sectors have to follow mandated national curricular and teach mandatory English using their L1 (Johnson, 2016,

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson (2016) discussed in detail the distinction between the EFL and ESL learning context. Refer to Johnson (2016, p. 128) for more explanations.

p. 122). Also, in a monolingual class where all the students share the same L1, teachers could use L1 appropriately in instructions to check students' understanding, which makes the use of CCQs unnecessary. Additionally, it remains questionable concerning how students who have traditionally been used to the grammar-translation method in the EFL context will respond to the pair and group activities advocated by the CELTA.

Another interesting issue brought up by Anderson (2016) involves experienced NNESTs undertaking the CELTA course. As experienced student teachers with prior teaching experiences, they have developed personalized teaching practices informed by their previous experience, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning. Thus, when they are introduced to an alternative pedagogy advocated in the CELTA, will they practice it after receiving the CELTA qualification, if it might conflict with their personalized teaching approach? How does the interplay of their previous teaching and the CELTA's teaching impact their post-CELTA instructional practices? These questions pinpoint the challenge specifically facing the group of experienced NNESTs taking the CELTA course, which is how experienced NNESTs implement the method promoted on the CELTA in various contexts.

Therefore, there is a need for further research that focuses on experienced NNESTs' teaching experiences after their CELTA training. To date, two primarily relevant studies are Anderson (2018) and the follow-up study Anderson (2020), which both reveal significant variations in the implementation of CELTA's teaching reported by experienced NNEST in varied contexts.

To explore how experienced NNESTs evaluate the training course such as the CELTA and/or the CertTESOL and the course's impact on their professional development, Anderson (2018) interviewed 19 experienced NNEST representing 15 nationalities who completed either

the CELTA or the CertTESOL. These experienced NNESTs consistently referred to the TP as the most useful element. They also reported using many techniques and strategies including collaborative learning such as pair or group work and mingle activities, interactive teaching, and reducing TTT (p. 42), indicating a shift to learner-centered teaching style. At the same time, some respondents revealed some difficulties in implementing the communicative method in adult and secondary bilingual contexts (p. 43). However, the researcher did not provide any detailed information on the experienced NNESTs' post-training workplace settings like where they teach and what their learner population is. In this sense, despite the participants' reports of difficulties in the method implementation, it is hard to critically analyze the appropriateness and compatibility of the method with the instructional settings the method is involved in.

Anderson (2020) focused on the experienced NNESTs' actual classroom practices by interviewing 29 experienced Egyptian teachers of English working in Egypt and Saudi Arabia six months after their completion of the CELTA. In this study, participants' post-course teaching settings varied from primary, secondary, and tertiary schools, to private language schools teaching adults. Consistent with the findings from Anderson (2018), the questionnaire and interview results showed varying degrees of implementing communicative practices in a range of contexts. Due to the "constraints, beliefs and attitudes of learners and institutions" (p. 9), a majority of the experienced NNESTs in this study creatively appropriated and adapted the CELTA approach to make it work in their current classrooms. Despite the challenges of implementation, teachers expressed a strong commitment to practice CLT and transition to communicative, learner-centered classrooms, indicating their changes in beliefs about teaching.

### **Research Questions**

The findings emerging from Anderson (2018, 2020) provide valuable insights into the post-training experiences of experienced NNESTs. Yet since the participants in existing studies are primarily in-service teachers working in two countries Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, there still exists a significant gap in the literature in terms of experienced NNESTs' post-CELTA experiences in other locations. Thus, building on previous studies, this paper seeks to fill the gap by investigating how experienced NNEST working in Japan and the U.S.A. perceive their CELTA training in retrospect and their post-CELTA instructional experiences in terms of applying the communicative practices advocated by CELTA. The research questions are as follows:

1. How did NNEST with prior teaching experiences perceive the usefulness of the CELTA course for their teacher development?
2. To what extent did the experienced NNEST implement or adapt the teaching techniques and skills they learned from the CELTA in their real-life teaching practices?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Since this study aims to explore how experienced NNEST who received the CELTA certificate perceive the usefulness of their CELTA training for their teacher development in terms of developing their knowledge and teaching practice and how they apply the teaching techniques they learned from the course in their post-course instructions, I limited participation to the teachers who qualified, in terms of the following criteria:

1. Consider themselves as a non-native speaker teacher of English
2. Had prior teaching experience (one year or more) before enrolled in the CELTA course

3. Has taught language or language-related subjects at any level after receiving the CELTA certificate

As I myself took and completed the CELTA course at the Hawai'i English Language Program (HELP) in summer 2019, I invited potential participants who met the criteria mentioned above from the same cohort to participate in the study via personal contact. Three participants agreed to participate in the study; all of them participated in and passed their CELTA course conducted at HELP in the U.S. in the summer of 2019. After the course completion, they had been working as either language teachers or teachers in a language-related field when they were interviewed. Table 1 summarizes their demographic information including their first language (L1), years of teaching experiences prior to the CELTA course, and their teaching context including the location, the institution they work in, and their learners. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' privacy.

**Table 1**

*Interview Participant Profiles*

Name	First language	Year of teaching prior to CELTA	Post-CELTA teaching context (location, school, learners)
Sakura	Japanese	11 years	Japan, private language training school, students of all age range
Jeff	Japanese	6 years	Japan, private language training school, mainly adults
Hiro	Japanese	10 years	The U.S.A., private high school, high school students

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In this qualitative study, I interviewed three experienced teachers who completed their CELTA training in the summer of 2019 and self-identified as non-native speakers of English.

One or two days before the interview, I emailed participants the consent form, 14 open-ended interview questions (see Appendix) adapted from Anderson (2016), and the CELTA syllabus to obtain their consent as well as help them recall the course content. Follow-up questions were asked depending on participants' responses. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the video conferencing application, Zoom, and each interview lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English and audio recorded. The interview data were transcribed verbatim using the website Otter.ai for later data analysis; the transcripts were also checked multiple times for accuracy. To ensure methodological integrity, after I summarized the findings, participants were invited to read the findings relevant to their responses and provide feedback.

### **Findings**

During the interviews, participants narrated their previous educational and work experiences, as well as their current teaching settings, which helped me have a clearer picture of their experiences before and after the CELTA course. Therefore, I feel it is useful to include their detailed information and reasons for taking the CELTA before discussing their responses relevant to the research questions.

Sakura: Sakura is an experienced female NNEST who completed her Bachelor's in English Linguistics in Japan. Before taking the CELTA, she had mainly taught children English for 11 years in a private language school<sup>6</sup> in Japan with nearly 300 students. Since she had hoped to study abroad for a long time, she took the CELTA course hoping to improve her English and receive a certificate for her job. She had regularly attended seminars and workshops and took

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<sup>6</sup> The private language school has more than 300 branch schools located in different prefectures in Japan. The curricula and lessons are the same across all schools.



courses related to second language acquisition in graduate schools in Japan to improve her teaching skills and learn more about English education.

Following the CELTA course Sakura began working for the same school but in a different region; to her surprise, she was promoted to head teacher in charge of 500 students (230 adult students), Japanese teachers, as well as employed NESTs at her school. Thus, Sakura performed the roles of both a language teacher and a teacher trainer. Her students range from young children (the youngest one is three-year-old) to senior adults (the eldest is over fifty), and the course content varies depending on learners' different needs. For example, some adult learners including programmers and engineers study English to prepare for their future workplace, some for traveling purposes, and high school students for test preparation. Even though her learners are Japanese speakers, she uses English in instruction as a result of the English-only policy set by the school. But sometimes she uses both Japanese and English in grammar lessons.

Jeff: Jeff received his bachelor's degree in the U.S. and initially worked as a certified accountant in New York for three years and one year in Tokyo. Having seen many Japanese speakers' difficulties and struggles of communicating in English, he founded a private language school specialized in improving Japanese English language learners' speaking and listening skills. A majority of the students are adult learners who know basic English vocabulary and grammar from their general education yet have difficulties with pronunciation and spoken English.

Before the CELTA, Jeff had worked as a language teacher and a language educator for around six years at his school. There are two reasons for him to take the CELTA: One is to learn

the teaching method and understand how to help students learn effectively from the CELTA<sup>7</sup>, and the other one is to receive a qualification that shows his professionalism in the ELT field. Upon completing the course, he continued running his school in Japan. His main job responsibly includes training teachers, and sometimes he teaches English when the school is short-handed.

Hiro: Hiro received his Bachelor's Degree in Science in Japan and Master's Degree of Education in Teaching in the U.S. Different from Sakura and Jeff, Hiro used to work as a science teacher working at an international junior high school in Okinawa, Japan for 10 years, and the school implemented Project-based learning (PBL) integrated with English learning. Yet Hiro realized the way of teaching adopted in the school did not benefit learners' language learning since the subject teachers did not have any knowledge of language teaching and just translated the scientific terms to English and asked students to memorize them. Therefore, after earning his master's degree in summer 2019, Hiro attended the CELTA and hoped to learn the effective language teaching method. Completing the CELTA, Hiro was hired as a science teacher in a private high school in Honolulu, and he mainly taught science knowledge through project-based learning. Hiro was clear that he will return to the international school in Okinawa in the hope of improving the program by incorporating language learning with subject learning effectively.

RQ1: How did NNEST with prior teaching experiences perceive the usefulness of the CELTA course for their teacher development?

### **Valued Course Components**

Three participants all held positive attitudes towards the course and thought the course contributed to their teacher development in different ways. Sakura mentioned the CELTA helped

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<sup>7</sup> Jeff and his coworkers developed their curriculum and original way of teaching in the school, yet none of them had studied in the language-related field before.

increase her confidence in teaching adult learners because she had practiced teaching multilingual adult learners in the TP every day. Therefore, she felt more comfortable interacting with adult learners and became more confident with her teaching and improved spoken English. She especially found the grammar analysis she learned from the CELTA useful because with it she could better explain the differences of tenses to her learners as well as her native English speaker colleagues. She also contrasted the multilingual class in the CELTA with her previous monolingual class and felt the experience of teaching multilingual learners helped her be more aware of Japanese learners' strengths and weaknesses, which in a way helped her better understand her Japanese students.

Jeff's perception of the course's useful elements revolved around the TP. Specifically, Jeff thought highly of the TP since he believes a teacher knows how to teach by teaching. He explained:

When it comes to like teaching, it all comes to experience, like how, how much you're taught. If you have experience teaching one on one or small group or a big group, you know like, I think, like, and the more you teach, the better you become as a teacher, like less nervous, you know what you are talking about, and you look more confident and that's what students will realize and sense too and, and they they'll trust you as a teacher, so it's not about like how much you know the way of teaching.

In Jeff's follow-up explanations, he admitted that the theoretical part of the course such as the theories of teaching is important, yet he indicated the experiences of teaching and doing the lessons are more important. Jeff also spoke of the peer evaluation and feedback in the TP, which he thought helps teachers reflect on their teaching. Thus, he implemented the peer observation and evaluation practices in his school where teachers evaluate and give feedback to each other.

Additionally, since his school focuses on pronunciation, speaking, and listening, he also referred to the useful textbooks and materials he found from the HELP, which provided him good ideas of adding fun pronunciation games<sup>8</sup> specially designed for Japanese English language learners.

Similar to Sakura, Jeff also remarked about the differences between the multilingual classes he encountered on the CELTA and the monolingual class in his job with a majority of Japanese learners. Having seen the different atmosphere in the class of multilingual learners, he realized creating international classroom settings with students from diverse backgrounds makes the class fun. Thus, upon returning to Japan, he hired some non-Japanese staff with English as their second language to sit in classrooms together with Japanese learners, which Jeff referred to as “Study Abroad Buddies.” With learners, for example, from Latin America who speak a different L1 in the same class, Japanese students, in Jeff’s words, “are forced to use English to speak with classmates and that then gives them motivation for them to learn English.”

Jeff is also concerned with NEST’s lack of qualifications in the job market. He points to the reality that NESTs are hired in Japan because they are native speakers, but most of them do not know how to teach the language, which leads to students’ decreased motivation in learning the language. This echoes Sakura’s comments on her new NESTs’ poor performances when she conducted class observation at her school. From the perspective of a manager who decides language teachers’ employment, Jeff suggested that NESTs without any teaching experiences should take the CELTA to understand “the basics of teaching” before working in Japan or other foreign countries.

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<sup>8</sup> Jeff provided an example of the pronunciation game. For example, putting pairs of “see” and “she” or “pen” and “pain” together and asking students to listen and tell the difference.

Hiro felt the course was useful in terms of introducing to him a new approach of language teaching, which he referred to as the “CELTA method.” In particular, he shared that he used to think the science teacher’s way of teaching is different from a language teacher’s way of teaching, but the CELTA course made him realize he could also apply the CELTA method to science subject teaching and vice versa (detailed examples of how he implemented certain techniques were described later). So he indicated that he learned how to teach in general.

As an experienced science teacher, Hiro expressed that he had developed his ways of teaching from his previous jobs and his master’s studies, and the alternative CELTA method was naturally added to his method toolkit, just as a drawer was nicely added to a shelf. So he commented that the various teaching methods he developed from his learning helped him teach more effectively and allowed him to shift from one approach to another depending on the changing situation.

### **Less Desired Course Elements**

When asked about the least useful areas of content delivered on the course, participants specified the “CETLA survivor session<sup>9</sup>” and “required written assignments.” Sakura explained that she did not feel the session relevant because the guest speakers are all native English speakers or residents in Hawaii; therefore, their experiences might not work for her—a non-native English speaker. Therefore, she expressed her stronger interest in knowing how non-native English speakers can find jobs in other countries.

Jeff identified the required reading and writing assignments as less useful because of his personal belief. As discussed above, he thought the “teaching” itself as the most important for a

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<sup>9</sup> In this session, certain previous CELTA graduates were invited to share their course experiences as well as how they found teaching jobs in Hawaii or other countries after the CELTA.

teacher, so he felt the teaching practices on the CELTA are more valuable than the theoretical content for most CELTA participants by commenting that “Actually, like you know standing in front of the students and teaching, that's a great experience for pretty much everyone who did the CELTA. I think for like the homework reading and stuff I think it was not.”

RQ2: To what extent did the experienced NNEST implement or adapt the teaching method they learned from the CELTA in their real-life teaching practices?

Since Sakura's students are mainly lower-level beginner students, she mentioned utilizing many practical language teaching strategies she learned from the CELTA tutor like drawing *clines* (see the example in Figure 1) and finger correction<sup>10</sup> in teaching vocabulary and grammar. Sakura indicated that despite the strict structured lessons set by her school, she used various communicative teaching techniques like reducing TTT and increased STT for her current instruction, which she also shared with peer teachers while observing their classes. She expressed a change of her belief in teacher's roles in managing classes by comparing the teacher-centered teaching style promoted in her company with her current student-centered teaching. According to her, teachers in her school generally act as class leaders who keep leading and pushing students. But she learned from the CELTA the importance of student's autonomy. Thus, in class discussion, she tried not to control the class and intrude in students' conversations; she stood aside and allowed students to discuss by themselves.

### **Figure 1**

*Example of a cline used to teach vocabulary related to temperature*

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<sup>10</sup> Finger correction is a non-verbal error correction strategy used to indicate to students the grammatical errors in spoken English. Refer to an example in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFZvntFym88>



*Note.* Clines in language teaching, 2014, (<https://eflrecipes.com/2014/03/18/clines/>)

Unlike Sakura, Jeff did not report much change in terms of his way of teaching after the CELTA. He explained that as an experienced teacher, he had used some of the techniques like teaching a new vocabulary item in the order of meaning–pronunciation–form before taking the CELTA. So CELTA’s way of teaching was not new to him. Besides, Jeff mentioned that he used both English and Japanese in instruction, a different practice from the CELTA practices. His reasons were two-fold: For one thing, most of his students are quiet and shy, so they would not respond to the teacher if the whole class was conducted in English. Another reason is related to their low-level proficiency which makes it hard for them to have English-only classes. Overall, the two major changes for Jeff are regarding the implementation of the peer evaluation and feedback and the inclusion of some fun pronunciation activities in class.

As Hiro mentioned above, he applied the CELTA method to his class of teaching science. For example, he reduced TTT and increased STT by pairing up students in discussion and then asked them to report and present their discussion results. Also, he checked students’ understanding of homework with ICQs; he described he used to get angry with students if they kept forgetting homework, but using ICQs allowed him to have “peaceful” conversations with

students by asking them questions like “Hey, what’s the homework by next Monday?” and “How many pages should you write for a report?” He felt these techniques worked well in his science class because he felt students do not like lecturing and having students to work in pairs or groups also saved him effort in class.

### **Discussion**

This study suggests that three experienced NNESTs uniformly found the CELTA useful with its practical component TP, which echoes previous findings and points to the value of TP identified by most CELTA participants (Anderson, 2018, 2020; Aydin et al., 2016; Hobbs, 2013). During the TP, they gained practical skills by teaching and became more familiar with the communicative method promoted by the CELTA, as in Hiro’s case. Additionally, the comments from Sakura and Jeff in the interview showed that the experiences of teaching multilingual classrooms in TP further helped them be more aware of their local learners’ needs. To meet their learners’ learning needs, they utilized certain techniques they learned from the CELTA and created specially designed language learning materials with their professional knowledge. One additional benefit reported by Sakura is increased confidence in her teaching skills and her improved English, which is consistent with the results from Anderson (2018, 2020).

Participants’ responses do not address the CELTA’s theoretical component much, which resonates with the finding from Anderson (2018) in support that linguistic or learning theory is less valued by most CELTA participants. In fact, Jeff noted in the interview the need to teach his learners “basic concepts and logic behind pronunciation.” He did not explain explicitly what the concepts and logic are, yet implicit in his comments is an awareness of the necessity of understanding foundational subject knowledge for language learning. Also, Sakura is the only participant who mentioned her constant interest in grammar analysis as well as her understanding



of certain principles underlying connected speech like linking and assimilation, However, she shared with me that she gained the pronunciation-related knowledge before the CELTA. Possible explanations for this result might be related to the four weeks' course length as well as its emphasis on its practical element TP.

Regarding the implementation of the CELTA teaching strategies and principles to their classroom practices, participants did not report much difficulty in applying them in their teaching contexts. They selected and utilized the CELTA techniques and principles appropriate to the classroom to meet their learners' and their needs, as seen from Sakura's use of clines and finger correction in teaching grammar and vocabulary. Instead of adhering to the English-only policy, Sakura and Jeff flexibly used the L1 in explaining difficult grammatical and phonological terms to beginner learners, which shows a personal pedagogy that is sensitive to learners' needs and local situations (Kumararvadivelu, 2003b, as cited in Sulaimani & Elyas, 2015). Their greater flexibility in using the strategies in this study could be attributed to their abundant teaching experiences. With a teaching history of six to 11 years, they are likely to have developed *personal practical knowledge* (Golombek, 2009) shaped by their previous stories; they have built greater awareness of the learning context and a better understanding of students and student learning. Therefore, they have greater fluidity in teaching and are able to make flexible and sound decisions in class.

Besides, both Sakura and Hiro noted a shift to student-centered teaching by having freer class discussions and group work and reducing TTT, which is consistent with the previous findings in Anderson (2016, 2020). This change also reflects their beliefs in a teacher's role: Rather than being controlling and dominant in class, teachers should believe in students' capabilities and allow for students' autonomy in learning.

One interesting finding as a result of Sakura's and Jeff's dual roles as a language teacher and a teacher trainer/educator also depicts how experienced NNESTs share their knowledge and apply some of CELTA's practices such as peer observation and evaluation to help other language teachers develop professionally. This offers a new perspective into experienced NNESTs' professional development as teacher educators.

### **Conclusion and Limitations**

This study investigated how three experienced NNEST working in Japan and the U.S.A. one year after completing their CELTA course in 2019 perceive the usefulness of their CELTA training and how they practice the teaching method they learned from the CELTA in their current instructional settings. In line with previous studies (Anderson, 2018, 2020; Aydin et al., 2016; Hobbs, 2013), this research showed experienced NNEST highly valued the course with regard to its practical part—TP, which provided them with opportunities to learn a different teaching approach, experience multilingual classrooms, as well as inspiring them to designed learning materials suitable to their learners. After the course, they flexibly applied the teaching techniques promoted by the CELTA, such as ICQs, pair and group discussion, reduction of TTT to their classroom, which signals a transition to more student-centered pedagogy as well as a development of *personal practical knowledge*. The results also highlighted a less-focused component on the CELTA course—language analysis and awareness, which indicates a greater need for the inclusion of the subject matter knowledge in the CELTA.

This study is not without its limitations. First, this research involves only three experienced NNESTs, which represents a small number of participants in light of the increasing population of NNESTs enrolling on the CELTA every year. Additionally, the inclusion of experienced NNESTs from a wider range of instructional settings such as the public and tertiary

sectors is needed to have a better understanding of experienced NNESTs' practices in varying contexts. Lastly, power dynamics could also play a role in teachers' implementation of practices. As two experienced teachers in this study work as teacher educators, their less-reported difficulty in conducting communicative procedures could be explained by the power that comes with their relatively higher status. In this sense, more in-depth discussion regarding power dynamics could be added in further research to understand teachers' beliefs as teacher educators.

Ferguson and Donno (2001) questioned the viability of one-month training courses as optimal entry-level qualifications into the ELT considering the changed circumstances such as the changes in teacher supply, changed views regarding NNS' position in ELT, and the appropriacy of ELT methodology in the post-method era (also mentioned in Murray, 2009)). They called for a change in the courses by suggesting "a greater recognition of realities of the work situation" and "increased attention to language learning as opposed to teaching" (p. 31). Their concerns and suggestions are also applicable to the current ELT field 19 years later, or even make much more sense given the increasing population of experienced NNEST taking the training courses such as the CELTA. After this investigation, I, as an experienced non-native language teacher and a CELTA participant, propose to end this paper with two suggestions for the CELTA program in better service experienced NNEST.

1. Conduct critical needs analysis of experienced NNEST's previous experience, needs, and future teaching context. Incorporate and encourage critical class discussion with questions such as what their students' population and learning needs are and how they will flexibly use the knowledge and skills from the CELTA to their instructional contexts. Make the CELTA course content more relevant to the setting and circumstances in which experienced NNEST live and work, teachers will make sense of their lived experiences and reconceptualize and reconstruct

their existing knowledge in a reflective and transformative way to a new type of specialized knowledge which experienced NNEST can use to make the content of their lessons relevant, usable, and accessible to their students (Johnson, 2016, p. 124).

2. Include explicit explanations of the underlying theoretical and methodological rationales of CLT before teachers conduct their TP. Invite teachers to explicitly explain why certain techniques are used in their TP. At the same time, engage experienced NNESTs in discussing alternative techniques they have used before, how well the techniques worked, and students' responses. This critical discussion will allow experienced NNESTs to bring their experiential knowledge to the program and reflect on their teaching.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

1. Do you consider yourself a non-native English speaker?
2. What's your current position/ job? Like your location, school setting, student population, the subject you teach, etc.
3. What language do you use to teach currently?
4. What's your prior position/job before taking the CELTA? (location, school setting, student population, the subject you teach, etc.)
5. What language did you use to teach prior to taking the CELTA?
6. How long had you taught before taking the CELTA course?
7. What was the reason(s) for you taking the CELTA course?
  - a. Career-related reasons: Does this certificate help you to get a job afterward?
  - b. Personal reasons
  - c. Any other reasons?
8. How useful did you find the course in general?
9. Which areas of the CELTA course were most useful to you for your development in terms of knowledge and teaching?
10. Which parts of the course were least useful to you?
11. Did you apply any of what you learned from the CELTA to your current instruction? If yes, can you explain what they are? (i.e. knowledge, teaching approach, etc.)
12. Has your view of teacher's roles and learners' roles changed after the CELTA?
13. How has your way of teaching changed after the CELTA?
  - a. If yes, how has it changed?



- b. If your way of teaching has not changed much/at all, what are the reasons?
14. Is there anything that you want to share with me that comes to your mind?