

Cultural difference in the Teaching Profession: How much does it Count?

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Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of a small ARC project which seeks to better understand the workplace experiences and challenges facing teachers who are overseas born and educated non-native speakers of English in Victorian secondary schools. The title, Cultural difference in the teaching profession: How much does it count? reflects our interest in "counting" the experiences of the overseas born teacher population but at the same time asking a number of questions about the ways in which these teachers are positioned in the Victorian school system. Do overseas born teachers count? Numerically? Professionally? Culturally? To answer our questions we developed a two part research design. The first is a demographic study of the population of teachers in Victorian state secondary schools who are overseas born and educated non-native speakers of English (hereafter referred to as 'overseas born' for the purpose of brevity). The second part is a case study of eight overseas born teachers from rural, regional and metropolitan areas, male and female, both currently and formerly employed. The two aspects of our research design are clearly related, in that information collected from the survey is designed to serve a mapping function, to make visible the diversity, location and characteristics of overseas born teachers and provide the ground against which the second part of our study can be read.

When we first sought demographic information about this population of teachers we were surprised to find so little available. One of the few studies which has documented the nature of Australia's multicultural teaching population was conducted almost ten years ago (Logan et al. 1990). Logan's findings indicated that the Australian teaching profession was largely monocultural and monolingual. 82.8% of teachers were born in Australia, 88% had both parents with English as their first language and those few teachers who were born overseas, were from European countries (1990:5). Ten years later, our study indicates that things have changed little in terms of increasing cultural difference in the teaching profession - only 2 % of teachers in State Victorian Secondary system are overseas born, have had at least secondary schooling overseas and are non-native speakers of English. However, what has

changed, is the nature of the population. While Logan's study showed the majority of teachers were born in Europe, our study indicates that there are increased numbers of Asian teachers entering schools.

This increase is understandable in light of Recent Victorian government policies on teaching Languages Other Than English [LOTE], which have created a demand for teachers who can speak and teach Asian languages in particular (Directorate of School Education, 1993). In many cases, native speakers of Asian languages most readily meet the language proficiency requirements for entry to LOTE teaching. In response to this demand there seems to be a small but significant increase in the numbers of teachers who are overseas born and educated non-native speakers of English entering teacher education courses and then the teaching profession. The Victorian DOE is concerned to promote multicultural awareness and sensitivity through this commitment to LOTE, and the development of a new Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools (Department of Education, 1997). However, it is not clear that they also provide institutional support to these teachers once they have gained entry to the system.

Teacher ethnicity has been a focus of research in North American and British contexts for many years. The work of Zimpher and Ashburn (1992) and Rakhit (1998) in particular, highlights the experiences of teachers of ethnic difference as racially marked subjects. Educational research in Australia however, has largely focused on the experiences of students (rather than teachers) of ethnic difference and contributes to a view of the teaching profession as *de-racialised*. According to Troyna and Rizvi,

...the failure to view the current representations of teaching as racially constituted is not only empirically impoverished, insofar as it turns a blind eye to the diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial mix of the teaching profession, but [...] it is also illustrative of what Iris Marion Young (1990) calls, somewhat provocatively, 'cultural imperialism'. This consists 'in a group's being invisible at the same time that it is marked out and stereotyped' (1997:263).

The lack of attention to teacher ethnicity in an Australian context may be read as simply implying that the individuals comprising this group of overseas born teachers make a successful transition to the Australian education system. However, Santoro's study (1997) of the experiences Chinese born and educated students teachers on their three-week practicum in Melbourne secondary schools suggests otherwise. Her investigation of the way student teacher identities were constructed by their supervising teachers showed strong links between the student teachers' performance, gender, ethnicity, and status as non-native speakers of English.

As the numbers of overseas-born-and-educated non-native speakers of English who graduate from Victorian universities continues to increase to meet the Victorian education

system's increasing demand for LOTE teachers, the need to investigate and make visible the experiences of this particular group of teachers is made all the more urgent.

In this paper we report on some findings from the demographic survey. We briefly examine the general characteristics of the overseas born teacher population, the impact of geographical location and the vulnerability, in particular, of young Asian teachers in rural schools. To better understand the experiences of this vulnerable group, we also look at one case study interview with a twenty-seven year old Japanese teacher of LOTE in a small rural community and explore issues of difference and otherness which shape his experiences of teaching.

The Demographic Survey

The questionnaire was sent to every state secondary school (308) in Victoria during term 1, 1998 and directed to the attention of the principal. It was a self-administered questionnaire consisting of a combination of closed questions and open questions (linked to limited response items). Principals were asked to provide general details about the teachers on their staff, including questions about:

- total number of teachers on staff
- total number male/female teachers and of those, number employed part time or full time
- number of teachers ongoing, fixed term or casual employment agreement
- total number of overseas born teachers currently on staff
- whether there have been overseas born teachers on staff in the past
- if so, whether any have left the school in the past five years and for what reasons.

After the completion of these questions by the principal, the questionnaire was then passed on to teachers at the school whom principals knew to be overseas born and educated non-native speakers of English. The teachers were then required to complete the remaining sixteen questions, providing details about:

1. gender 9. other languages spoken
2. employment status 10. number of years teaching in Australia
3. time fraction 11. no.of years teaching in current school
4. age 12. method of recruitment to the school
5. qualifications 13. current teaching subjects
6. country of origin 14. year levels currently taught

7. date of arrival in Australia 15. positions of responsibility held

8. mother tongue 16. teaching experience in country of origin and if so, subjects taught

The analysis comprised descriptive statistics expressed as frequency distribution, histograms and averages and was conducted in two parts;

- the schools that responded to the survey
- the individuals who satisfied the criteria indicated (ie. Teachers who are overseas born, have completed at least secondary schooling overseas and are non-native speakers of English).

Statistical inference tests conducted were; Chi-squared test of independence on the crosstabulations t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests, Least Significance Difference (LSD) post-hoc tests for significant ANOVA tests. (Statistical inference tests with a p -value < 0.05 or f -prob =value < 0.05 mean the findings can be inferred to the wider population).

When the questionnaires were returned the replies were sorted according to the schools' geographic locations. Our division of Victoria into three regions, metropolitan, regional city and rural reflects our interest in developing a better understanding of the location of overseas born teachers in Victoria. We have been guided by the boundaries established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and used by the Victorian Department of Education (DOE) for their demographic planning. Schools outside of the ABS metropolitan boundaries considered regional city schools are in the cities of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Shepparton, Traralgon, Warrnambool and Wodonga. All others outside the metropolitan boundaries are considered rural.

Of the total number of schools sent questionnaires (n.308), there was an overall return rate of 38% (n.117). Of those returns, 38.5% were from metropolitan schools, 45.4% from regional city schools and 54.2% from rural schools.

The Schools

Of the total number of staff in the surveyed schools (n. 5, 886) only 2.0% (n. 118) are overseas born and of the responding 117 schools, 42.7% have at least one overseas born teacher currently working at the school. Table 1. provides details of the location of overseas born teachers in schools across the three areas of the state.

Table 1.

State Areas	Overseas born teachers % (no.)
Metropolitan	79.7% (94)
Regional City	7.6% (9)
Rural	12.7% (15)
	(118)

Of the overseas born teacher population, 79.7% are in metropolitan schools, 7.6% are in regional city schools and 12.7% are in rural schools. Of the schools which have more than one overseas born teacher, 64% are metropolitan schools and 40% are regional city schools. No rural schools have more than one overseas born teacher.

The substantially higher numbers of overseas born teachers in metropolitan schools is not surprising given Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA 1996) statistics regarding settlement patterns of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) immigrants in large urban centres and the associated cultural support services which continue to draw immigrants to these centres. However, greater numbers of overseas born teachers in rural schools rather than regional city schools is more surprising. Given the fewer numbers of immigrants generally in rural areas, those overseas born teachers in rural schools are likely to be more culturally isolated, not only within their working context where they are likely to be the only overseas born teacher, but also within the community.

Zimpher and Ashburn (1992), highlight the extent to which many people who choose to enter the teaching profession -- and thus the colleagues of overseas-born-and-educated non-native speakers of English -- are often "culturally insular", and claim that this "may be a function of limited access to diversity and little tolerance toward difference" (p.44).

The Teachers

Personal and Demographic Profile

Of all overseas born teachers, 42% are aged between 40-49, 29.5% are in the 50+ age group, 19.6% are between 30-39 years of age and only 8.9% are aged 20-29. Although it is not the focus of this research to compare overseas born teachers with the general teaching population, these figures would appear to reflect the age range of the wider teaching population. The following table provides details of overseas born teachers' ages and their geographic location across the state.

Table 2.

State Area	50+ age group % (no)	40-49 age group % (no)	30-39 age group % (no)	20-29 age group % (no)
Metropolitan	31.5% (28)	40.4% (36)	21.3% (19)	6.7% (6)
Regional City	37.5% (3)	50.0% (4)	12.5% (1)	- (-)
Rural	13.3% (2)	46.7% (7)	13.3% (2)	26.7% (4)

Of the overseas born teachers in metropolitan schools, the vast majority are in the 40-50+ age group (71.9%), and of those in regional schools, 87.5% are in the 40-50+ age group. In contrast, only 60% of overseas born teachers in rural schools are in the 40-50+ age group. Of the youngest teachers (20-29 age group), 90% are from Asia while 62.5% of teachers from the Indian sub-continent are in the 50+ age group.

The findings indicate that it is the youngest overseas born teachers who are working in rural areas. Younger staff are probably less financially established and have fewer family ties than older teachers and are more able to seek employment away from metropolitan and regional

city areas. There may also be greater opportunities for teachers to find employment in rural areas. The greatest growth, for example, reported in the provision of LOTE instruction over 1995 was 6.4% for country schools (non-metropolitan) for year nine students (DOE 1997). Given the relatively low numbers of immigrants of non English speaking background and associated support networks in rural areas compared to the metropolitan and regional city areas, job opportunities rather than lifestyle may be the main attraction for shifts to rural Victoria.

There is a significant diversity in the range of countries from which overseas teachers originate. Forty countries were listed by participants. They are: Algeria, Austria, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Fiji, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana Holland, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, USSR, Vietnam, Yugoslavia.

For ease of analysis, Table 3 divides these countries into five demographic and cultural regions: Europe, Asia, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent and Other. The last category comprises South American countries, Pacific Islands and African countries.

The majority of overseas born teachers are Asian 36.0%, European 27.2%, Middle Eastern 17.5%, Indian subcontinent 12.3% and 'Other' 7.0%. These findings differ to those of the Australian-wide survey conducted by Logan et al. (1990) which indicated that the majority of overseas born teachers were born in Europe (67.5%). The significant increase in teachers from countries other than those in Europe, particularly Asia, is not surprising given the recent development of LOTE policies. The introduction of Asian languages into Victorian schools has seen an increased demand for teachers who can speak and teach Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and to some degree, Korean. In response to the DOE 1996 LOTE survey, regional Victorian schools (rural areas including regional city) expressed a strong desire to develop two Asian language programs, in particular - Indonesian and Japanese (DOE 1997). Native speakers of these languages who satisfy LOTE language proficiency requirements for entry into teacher education courses have recognised the employment potential in Victorian schools and are increasingly completing teacher education courses and entering schools as teachers of LOTE. Numbers of younger Asian teachers also reflect Australia's recent immigration patterns (Dima 1996). Many of the teachers from Europe and the Middle East have been in Australia since the early 1960s when there were large numbers of immigrants from these regions.

Table 3. Overseas born teachers countries of origin and teaching location across areas of the state.

State Area	Europe % (no.)	Middle East % (no.)	Indian Subcontinent % (no)	Asia % (no.)	Other % (no)
Metropolitan	28.9% (26)	22.2% (20)	6.7% (6)	33.3% (30)	8.9% (8)
Regional City	22.2% (2)	- (-)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)
Rural	20.0% (3)	- (-)	- (-)	66.7% (10)	13.3% (2)

There is a significant difference in the countries of origin of overseas born teachers and their teaching location, ($p=0.00237$). The majority of overseas born teachers in rural schools are Asian while regional city schools have the fewest Asian teachers. Teachers from the Indian sub-continent are predominantly in Regional City schools as are teacher in the 'other' category. 100% of all Middle Eastern teachers are located in metropolitan schools.

While the population of overseas born teachers certainly appears to represent a diverse range of countries of origin, it does not reflect the vast range of non-English speaking countries from which Australia receives immigrants (Dima 1996), nor is the percentage of overseas born teachers (2.0%) reflective of the numbers of people who are overseas born and educated non-native speakers of English living in the community. This is problematic for two major reasons. Firstly, according to Rizvi, relatively low numbers of bi-cultural, bi-lingual overseas born teachers in Australian schools as one of the reasons teachers often fail to "recognise the role schools play in the perpetuation of racism" (1992, p.73). Secondly, teachers of ethnic difference may counter the tendency of teachers of Anglo-Australian background to see multicultural education as simply a way to give students of language background other than English (LBOTE) a way to display their culture through celebratory activities rather than as a set of values that challenge the "ethnocentricity implicit in the content of the conventional curriculum and organisational practice" (Rizvi, 1992:74).

Overseas born teachers are multilingual. They speak an average of 3.3 languages each (including English). This linguistic and cultural knowledge is an enormous resource which may well be underutilised in schools, given that 7.3% of LOTE teachers (2.5% of total overseas born teacher population) teach only one language. While many of the languages spoken by overseas born teachers are not languages which are currently taught in school LOTE programs, many of the teachers indicated on the questionnaire that they speak several of the languages which are currently on offer.

The number of years overseas born teachers have been in Australia ranges from two years to 40 years. The average is 17.1 years. Overseas born teachers in metropolitan schools have been in Australia an average of 18.5 years, in rural schools an average of 12.4 years and in regional city schools an average of 21.3 years. These figures appear to be related to current and former immigration patterns. The older teachers who have been in Australia for longer periods of time are European or Middle Eastern, having immigrated during the 1960s and 1970s. The more recent immigration from South East Asia occurred during the 80s and the 90s.

Professional and Teaching Profile.

Table 4 documents the teaching subjects of overseas born teachers, many of whom teach across several KLAs, nominating three to four different subjects on the questionnaire.

Table 4 - Teaching subjects

Key Learning Areas	Overseas born teachers (no.) %
LOTE	(41) 36.3%
Mathematics	(37) 32.7%
Science	(33) 29.2%
Info. technology	(20) 17.7%
SOSE	(19) 16.8%
English	(18) 15.9%
PE/Health	(12) 10.6%
Arts	(3) 2.7%

Although the majority of overseas born teachers are teachers of LOTE (36.3%), the figures are not greatly different to the numbers of teachers teaching Mathematics (32.7%) and Science (29.2%). Information technology teachers are the next most highly represented group (17.7%) followed by Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) (16.8%), English (15.9%), PE/Health (10.6%) and Arts (2.7%).

This distribution of teaching areas is similar across regional city, rural and metropolitan regions. However, in regional city schools, the majority of overseas born teachers teach science (33.3%) followed by maths (26.7%). 51% of teachers of LOTE are Asian.

Teachers nominated several year levels taught but are more likely to teach the year levels requiring greater class management strategies and often regarded as less prestigious year levels to teach. Thus only 36.6 % teach year 12 even though they are generally of mature age with 12 years teaching experience in Australia. 79.5% of overseas born teachers teach year 9, 76.8% teach year 8, 71.4% teach year 10, 64.3% teach year 7 and 50% teach year 11.

Of the respondents, 17.7% have positions of responsibility with the majority being LOTE coordinators (7.6%). Of LOTE teachers 21.% are also LOTE coordinators. While it is impossible to clearly draw comparisons between overseas born teachers and the wider teaching population in regard to positions of responsibility, these findings suggest overseas born teachers have a significant chance of taking on positions of responsibility as LOTE coordinators. In many cases the LOTE coordinator may also be the only LOTE teacher in the school, particularly in smaller rural schools, thus increasing the chances of 'professional isolation,' already compounded by limited access to subject associations and other support networks.

Table 5 contrasts the period of residency in Australia with Australian teaching experience and the period of time in their current school.

Table 5 - Period of residency and teaching experience

State Areas	Period of time living in Aust.	Period of time teach'g in Aust.	Period of time teach'g current school
	Yrs. (mn)	Yrs. (mn)	yrs. (mn)

Metropolitan	18.5	17.2	6.3
Regional City	21.3	17.2	9.5
Rural	12.4	7.3	3.6

Overseas born teachers have been in Australia for an average of 12.1 years and employed in their current schools for an average of 6.3 years. Those in regional city schools have been in Australia for a much greater period of time (17.2 years) and have been in their current schools for 9.5 years. Those teachers in rural schools are the least experienced, having taught in Australia for the shortest periods of time (7.3 years) and having been employed in their current position for an average of 3.6 years.

The ways in which overseas born teachers have found positions in schools is also of interest. Overseas born teachers are recruited to schools by either transfer (35.1%), advertised vacancy (37.8%) or other means (27.0%). The 'other' category could include recruitment through casual relief teaching (CRT). Rural teachers are more likely to be recruited through advertised vacancy (46.7%), regional city teachers are least likely to be recruited through advertised vacancy (11.1%) and metropolitan teachers are recruited fairly evenly across all categories of recruitment. Overseas born teachers in rural schools have generally entered the state education system at a time when transfer or centralised appointments have been abolished in favour of school-based recruitment though newspaper advertisements.

Of the respondents 44.1% of teachers were previously teachers in their countries of origin and 88.9 % of those who taught science currently teach science. 80% of those who taught English before now teach LOTE. 87.5 of those who taught maths currently teach maths. Rural teachers are more likely to have been teachers previously (53.3%) and regional city teachers least likely (33.3%). The gap between arriving in Australia and beginning to teach (see table 8) might suggest overseas born teachers were involved in re-training or in the process of having qualifications assessed by government authorities. Rural teachers are more likely to be currently teaching LOTE than the subject they taught in their country of origin. This is not surprising given the demand for LOTE teachers and the increased job opportunities in country schools which generally find their LOTE staffing requirements more difficult to fulfil. We can assume, therefore, that most overseas born rural teachers have undergone teacher education in Australia (as would most overseas born teachers across all state areas), but they are more likely to have undergone re-training in a totally different subject area. Anecdotal evidence suggests that native speakers of foreign languages which are in demand are often asked to teach these subjects to fill a shortfall in staffing, regardless of whether they have obtained formal language teaching qualifications. For these teachers, the task of teaching LOTE without adequate professional preparation would be an extremely challenging task.

Table 6 summarises the main characteristics of teachers from each of the three geographic locations.

Table 6 - Teacher Profiles - The Three Demographic Areas

Metropolitan Regional City Rural

<p>In comparison to their rural and regional city colleagues, overseas born teachers in metropolitan schools are more likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · be fairly experienced within the Aust. education system · transfer schools · be European or Middle Eastern 	<p>In comparison to their rural and metropolitan colleagues, overseas born teachers in regional city schools are more likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · male · aged 40+ · South American, South Pacific Islander or of African background · very experienced teachers within the Aust. education system · stable and not transfer or change schools · a long term resident of Australia · non-teachers in their country of origin but if they have been, will probably still be teaching 	<p>In comparison to their regional city and metropolitan colleagues, overseas born teachers in rural schools are more likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · female · in the 20-29 age group · Asian · teachers of LOTE · casually employed · part time · teachers of science in their countries of origin and therefore are more likely to have undergone re-training in LOTEducation. · inexperienced teachers within the Australian education system · employed in their current schools for short periods of time · reasonably recent immigrants
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	<p>the same subject - science</p> <p>· employed on an ongoing basis</p>	
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Yoshi: An interview with a Japanese born and educated teacher in rural Australia

The survey alerted us to the vulnerability of young Asian LOTE teachers who may find themselves professionally and culturally isolated when they are located teachers in small rural schools. As they will often be working alone as the school's only LOTE teacher and without the support available to those teachers working in faculties with several colleagues, the challenges, demands and stresses seem to be of a different magnitude than for their metropolitan peers.

To get a deeper understanding of the dilemmas faced by young inexperienced Asian teachers located in rural areas, we present the point of view of Yoshi, one of the eight overseas born and educated non native speakers of English we interviewed. Yoshi is 27 years old, educated in Japan, although he interrupted his study of economics in 1995 to enrol in a ten month intensive English language course in the Sydney metropolitan area. During that time Yoshi began to think about the possibility of teaching and living in Australia on a more permanent basis. In 1996 a year after completing his university course, he enrolled in a one year graduate diploma at a university in Sydney to credential him to teach LOTE in Australia. He obtained a teaching position at Meadowside, a rural community in Victoria, and in 1997 began his teaching career in the country. While he would have preferred to stay in the city, he needed to find a school prepared to undertake the extensive paperwork involved in "sponsoring" a teacher who did not have a residency visa. Such schools were few and he accepted the position without fully understanding the nature of the community he was about to enter.

In this paper we have chosen to present Yoshi's words in an alternate format to the normal sociological interview where the research subject's voice is typically 'sandwiched' between the researcher's commentary (Thomson 1998). Instead, we have opted to present 'his story' as a transcript poem, a form of presentation which uses Yoshi's exact words- but calls attention to the fact that the transcript is already a representation of experience, rather than truth, and that it is *produced* by the researcher, rather than simply *found*.

We are influenced here by our interest in narrative methods of research, in particular, the recent work of Thomson (1998) and Richardson(1997) which explore the potential of narrative to develop alternate ways of knowing and telling. Thomson thinks about research as a literary process and experiments with a number of literary devices and techniques for data selection, analysis and re-presentation in text. In her own doctoral dissertation (Thomson 1999, in preparation) she disrupts the conventional sociological genre of third person narrative, analytic prose and indented direct transcript quotations with what she calls 'acts of delinquent storying' - a borrowing of techniques of representation from other genres and disciplines.

Richardson developed the technique of creating poems from transcripts as part of her solution to

postmodern issues regarding the nature of the 'data', the interview as an interactional event, the representation of lives, and the distribution of sociological knowledge...Using the standard conventions and procedures of sociological writing...we conceal the lived interactional context in which a text was co-produced, as well as the handprint of the sociologist who produced the final written text. We also mire ourselves in 'Derrida's Dilemma' (Denzin 1990) or the problem that transcribed materials do not recover the reflexive basis of accounting/ storytelling (p. 140)...

In poetically representing lives the sociologist poet writes in the pauses, signals them by conventions such as line breaks, spaces within lines and between stanzas and sections. The sociologist poet chooses how and where and why and for how long quiet will counterpoint the sound, thus creating a text that mimics more closely the actual conversation and that builds upon both sounds and silences...(p. 142)

By violating the conventions of how interviews are written up, those conventions are uncovered as choices authors make, not rules for writing truths. The poetic form, moreover, because it plays with connotative structures and literary devices to convey meaning, commends itself to multiple and open readings in ways that straight sociological prose does not...Knowledge is thus metaphored and experienced as prismatic, partial and positional, rather than single, total, unequivocal.' (p. 143)

Thomson, who uses the poetic representation of lives in her work with disadvantaged schools describes the process of constructing transcript poems this way:

This is a confronting move, it pares down, hones what has been captured on tape to a narrative that tells both emotionally and intellectually. It creates a stand alone text from transcript rather than encasing the transcript extracts in commentary. It presents a story rather than having the story told. It does not present truth, but aims to re-present truthfulness. This approach has been labelled invalid, subjective trivial, and un-academic because it challenges the conventional norms of sociological selection and presentation. Yet all data collection is a process managed and manipulated by the researcher and all research texts are constructed through writing and reading. The method draws attention to the acts of the researcher in manipulating and selecting and makes them visible, un-natural, needing to be defended and explained. (Thomson 1998:p 10)

Following Thomson and Richardson, as well as Kamler's (1999, in preparation) recent explorations with the form, we have constructed the interview with Yoshi as a transcript poem by asking a number of questions about the transcript:

What is the dominant story being told?

What are the recurring themes?

Where is the repetition - of phrase and rhythm?

Where are the silences, pauses, hesitations?

We have cut and pasted sentences from the twelve pages of transcribed conversation - never changing words - but sometimes changing the order, paring down, omitting phrases, smoothing the text but trying to keep the intonation and syntactic rhythm. Initially, our attention was taken by Yoshi's almost refrain- like repetition of certain phrases (e.g. *to be honest, when I was in Sydney, I don't take it personal*) and from these identified themes of cultural isolation, covert/overt racism, city/country binaries, an attitude of forgiveness and belief in childhood innocence . In the editing, we experimented with line breaks, how to divide the lines to recapture points of emphasis and mimic the sense of sadness and despair so pervasive in the interview - but also the pleasure and recognition of having someone to talk to about such matters.

Yoshi Transcript poem

But to be honest,
the first time I came down Meadowside as a teacher.
students were not listening to teachers.
I didn't take it as really negative.
I thought, oh ,just because it's the countryside,
so maybe kids are more
lively.
It's not naughty,
just lively,
that's my first impression.

This is my second year and I've got used to it.
And I know the kids more than before.

First time I was in here I was from Sydney
and I felt the people were really conservative.
I mean, maybe I could,
Say, whenever I ... let's say, go to shopping
of course I'm Asian looking.
Some Asians were here but not many -
there's not many Asians
you feel people just staring at you.

Even the parents,

like when I had the parent interviews,

the first time it was a bit strange.

Like when I rung and I mention my name

Just they stop, they change

tone.

So not everyone, I'm talking about some.

I'm ringing, I say I've got a concern with your son or daughter's behaviour in the classroom.

And they ask my name again,

I say it again.

"I'm new and I'm from Japan and I'm a native speaker,

I'm teaching Japanese".

Actually, some parents just say "oh...

oh you teaching Japanese.

Now look,

my son or my daughter doesn't like Japanese".

Maybe didn't mean Japanese person,

Japanese language

but in my first year the kids said "oh my Dad said he doesn't like Japanese person".

I didn't take it personally because they are just kids,

just 13 or 14 years old,

they don't know anything.

But still I feel maybe parents think like this.

The first year some honest staff said "why did you come to Meadowside"?

So I said

"what do you mean,

how do you mean by that"?

Then they said

"if I were you, single and you were in Sydney,

how come you come to Meadowside"?

I had no idea what they are talking about

because again I did not know Meadowside.

To be honest, I like to move to a city.

But again, immigration laws or rules restrict me.

It's my second year so it's much better than last year.

I go to some Australian teachers around the city.

some have students who have got a very positive attitude to Japanese,

it is simply that they've got more opportunity to communicate

or just talk with some other people.

But here, like this kind of area

it's a bit hard I think.

The people here.

They don't tell me like racism, comment to me directly

but they sometimes

they're talking about like aborigines.

To me it's very narrow.

It's

very

narrow

minded.

maybe people around here don't see city life,

relationship with other countries.

when students talk about racism things

of course I feel bad.

Although I don't take it really personal

They are really young..

Maybe it's just their background,

talk about those sort of topics,

maybe parents.

I just wonder why they took Japanese language

They say "what's the point of doing this"?

"why do we have the Japanese, the language and LOTE?"

I'm not interested,

I'm not going to Japan,

I haven't got Japanese friends".

Some are very nasty especially the clever ones.

They say "we're studying Japanese, what about your English"?

I don't know, I feel, I take it more positively,

maybe I shouldn't.

They say "you've got a very funny accent and

do Japanese people talk like that all the time? "

I don't know about the schools in the city
but maybe I think
it's a bit better than this
because they have to see other peoples around the city.

To me it's common sense.

I wouldn't say to teacher

"look my son or my daughter doesn't enjoy or doesn't like Japanese".

Because they know I am Japanese.

To be honest

I feel a bit,

not a positive feeling,

just . .

it's really sad the situation.

They are very very noisy, you know - everyday.

So I sort of yell at the students

be quiet or sit down.

But some just don't listen to the teacher.

I talked to them very seriously,

"look that comment is not funny, I feel very unhappy with that
so could you stop it please".

Then still laughing.

They are so rude to me all the times

I kind of get used to it.

I 'wrote down report

but nothing happened. I can't do anything.

I rung the parents.

But they don't turn up to interview,

they don't turn up

so I can't do anything.

It's really frustrating

but

I

can't

do

anything.

That's a problem of our school

because, our policy is just

forgive,

forgive,

forgive.

Implications for Teacher Education

Our findings suggest a number of implications for teacher education and teacher educators. Firstly, we need to acknowledge that many overseas born teachers have taught in their countries of origin and that we need to value and accept their previous teaching experiences. At the same time we need to be more self conscious about the Australian

practices of schooling we take for granted and adequately prepare students for a system which might be vastly different to that in which they have previously worked. Some overseas born teachers, like Yoshi, have never been in Australian schools prior to their first practicum. Their understandings of everyday practices in Australian schools may be limited. Teacher education courses often assume rather than make explicit this knowledge. Providing exactly the same teacher education as for student teachers who have been schooled in Australia may not be appropriate in many cases.

Secondly, we need to better understand the professional and cultural isolation overseas born teachers may experience in rural and/or small communities. In particular, we need to ensure the adequate preparation of student teachers who may find themselves 'professionally isolated' if they are LOTE teachers in small schools. They need to be resourceful and independent professionals who will often be working alone as the school's only LOTE teacher and without the support available to those teachers working in faculties with several colleagues. They need to develop effective class management strategies given the likelihood they will teach the more junior year levels in schools. They will also need to develop motivational strategies for students who are in many instances, negative towards the study of foreign language. Many teachers will struggle in their early years of teaching to cope with not only the demands of what might be a new way of working, but the extra responsibility of establishing LOTE programs and taking on the duties of subject co-ordination - a task normally reserved for more experienced teachers. Many overseas born teachers will be young and inexperienced and those who take jobs working outside of the metropolitan area may find themselves culturally as well as professionally isolated. If overseas born teachers are to remain teaching and make effective contributions to schools, it is essential that such stresses be addressed in teacher education programs.

Thirdly, teacher education can not simply focus on developing effective teaching skills in overseas born student teachers. We need to look towards our teacher preparation programs as a way to broaden the cultural awareness of our mainstream teacher education students. Our findings in part, support the view of Dooley and Singh who note "Australian teachers remain overwhelmingly monocultural and their culture and language is that of the Australian majority" (1996:64). The problems this can cause for the successful education of indigenous and other students whose cultures differ from the majority has been noted in a recent statement by the Australian Deans of Education (ACDE 1998) who see teacher education as an important site for the development of more aware and sensitive understanding of cultural difference. The DOE Multicultural Policy (DOE 1997) promotes a whole school approach to the development of multicultural perspectives in Victorian schools through curriculum and policy development. It advocates acceptance of cultural diversity, communication in intercultural settings and the development of skills and understandings based on students knowledge and awareness of their own cultures and those of others, understandings of the multicultural nature of Australia's past and present history.

It would seem that these goals may be more achievable if our teaching population more adequately reflected the make-up of our multicultural society, ethnic difference counted as an asset and overseas born teachers were able to develop more prominent and powerful identities within Victorian schools. It is not enough to simply encourage such teachers to work in the country without instituting systematic networks to ensure their survival. If we acknowledge that parochial attitudes and covert racism are a part of the experience of

overseas born teachers, then we are obliged to rethink the kind of resources required to support young isolated LOTE teachers like Yoshi once they are located in schools.

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