

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**The Experiences of New Zealand Assistant Language
Teachers in Japan**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Social Anthropology

At Massey University,
New Zealand.

Stephanie Margaret Elizabeth Spite

2016

ABSTRACT

The objective of the research was to gain an insight into the work experiences of New Zealand Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Japan. Five previous ALTs who were hired through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) were interviewed on their experiences living in Japan and working in Japanese schools. I also provide insights from my own experiences as an ALT. Interviews were analyzed and recurring or major themes were identified; strengthened identities as New Zealanders, shared value with Māori in Japanese culture, very little conflict, different cultural acceptance of working many hours overtime and avoidance of conflict through being indirect, and the ALT being a native speaker celebrity and a joker/entertainer. The research has implications for future ALTs to be more informed and prepared for what they might encounter on the job, and for Japanese teachers to gain an insight into some New Zealand ALT perspectives, which may be illuminating for those who may not have been previously exposed to New Zealand culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the research participants who generously offered to be participants and took the time to be interviewed. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Robyn Andrews and Associate Professor Jeff Sluka for their useful feedback and discussions through the process of creating this master's thesis.

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The JET Programme and ALT position	4
Chapter Two: Japanese Culture	14
Chapter Three: Research Method and Participants	27
Chapter Four: Being a New Zealander in Japan and a Japanese Welcome	38
Chapter Five: Cultural Differences and Understandings in the Workplace	53
Chapter Six: Native Speaker, Celebrity, and Joker	69
Conclusion	81
References	89