

**Commodity, Capital, and Commercial ELT: A Political Economy of**  
***Eikaiwa* English Language Teaching**

Doctoral Thesis

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Signed Declaration:

I, William Simpson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract:

The aims of this research are threefold. Firstly, to understand how the drive for profit in commercial English language teaching (ELT) affects the manner in which language is taught. Secondly, to understand the how the various ways in which teachers are valued (monetarily in wages, valued as a 'good' teacher, and valued as an 'authentic' speaker of a language for example) interrelate with one another. Finally, the research aims to give an account of how teachers' experiences of potential contradictions and tensions between commercial and pedagogic interests, and multiple forms of valuation, inform the way they understand themselves in relation to the economy and society more broadly. The research synthesises a body of research on political economy and language with Marxist political economy in order to understand commercial ELT through the moments of *capital as value in motion*: from the production and consumption of lessons, to the realisation of the lesson's value in its sale, through to the distribution of this value in the form of wages. In focussing in on these moments throughout the circulation of capital, the research gives an account of the contradictory forces and interests at play within commercial *eikaiwa* – a form of ELT in Japan in which teachers are often precariously employed. The thesis illustrates how teachers within *eikaiwa* manage contradictory interests within the school in the act of producing lessons, and how a keen sense of *alienation* was felt in terms of both the *process* of production - how the lesson was to be produced, and *product* – the value that they were producing in *the role of labour*. While many in *eikaiwa* saw this *alienation* as unjust, teachers struggled to ascertain exactly where this value was going to, as well as who had decided it should be that way.

### Impact Statement:

There are a number of ways in which it is hoped that this research might make a contribution, both within academic circles and beyond. In building upon much work which takes a political economy approach to matters related to language, the research aims to offer a thorough theoretical conceptualisation of terms such as capital and the commodity by turning its attention to Marxist political economy. In this way, I see this research as breaking new ground in addressing two issues, firstly, ‘*what* is capital?’, and secondly, ‘*how* do capital and language teaching relate to one another?’. While the second question has been a key concern in socio- and applied-linguistics for decades, the first often remains an unasked question. The theoretical contribution of this research then, lies in addressing capital in a fuller sense – the ‘*what*’ as well as the ‘*how*’. The article offers a dialectical conception of capital, which highlights all of the potential contradictions and antagonisms at stake in its flow. As such, the research offers an account, not only of how various contradictory forces and interests play out within the commercial language school, but also what experiencing and reflecting upon this means for stakeholders such as teachers in their understandings of the economy, class, the state, and ethno-national identity.

While much research has addressed the *dark side of TESOL* (Piller, Takahashi, & Watanabe, 2010), and the dubious *promise of English* (Park, 2011) in relation to learners, the ‘darker side’ of working within commercial ELT, an industry in which a great number of teachers work under precarious conditions, has received far less attention. It is my hope that in addition to contributing to the body of scholarly knowledge within applied linguistics and related areas of study, some of the issues raised here will strike a chord with those who have worked, or continue to work within the many varied guises of the commercial ELT industry, or indeed in any other form of language teaching, especially with those who have felt themselves and their work to have been undervalued and treated in ways they find unjust. In this sense, I hope this research contributes to the highlighting of issues of injustice more broadly in ELT, and perhaps works to establish forms of solidarity among those of us within it, in working towards a less alienated way of teaching and working.

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## Chapter 1: Working in Commercial ELT

*“It’s good money for someone, not teachers”*

*(Dominic)*

The above quote comes from Dominic, an English language teacher, summarising the commercial English language teaching (ELT) industry in Japan in which he works. The notion of teachers as underpaid, and perhaps undervalued more broadly speaking, is one many might share with Dominic. Yet, the kind of questions which Dominic’s pithy summary provoke are seldom raised in applied linguistics in discussion of commercially provided language teaching: how much *do* teachers get? Who is the someone who gets ‘good money’, and why should this be the case? It is fair to say, a great number of teachers teach in order to both educate, *and* to earn money. How then do these two goals coexist in the job of language teaching? How do they relate to one another? If English and ELT are ‘big business’, as is often remarked, then how does this business work? As a preliminary way of exploring such questions, as well as to illustrate the motivation of such questions in the first instance, this chapter begins with a short autobiographical account of my own time working in the commercial English language teaching industry. Following this, the chapter goes on to discuss the extent to which scholarly literature has addressed many of the issues I and others have experienced, arguing that some of the details many would consider fundamental in the discussion of work (wages, length of working time, and benefits among others) are seldom addressed rigorously in scholarly work which deals with the *job* of English language teaching. The chapter goes on to position the research as addressing something of a gap in applied linguistics research, which has tended to position commercial language teaching as something other to, or outside of itself. The chapter concludes with a summary of the aims of the research and an outline of the research as a whole.

Before I begin, a few caveats are in order, so as to avoid any misunderstandings. Firstly, I should make clear from the outset that the term ‘the commercial ELT industry’ encapsulates an all but infinite number of people, practices, and institutions, across the globe, of which my own experiences, and those later related in this work, comprise an infinitesimally small, and not necessarily representative part. I also wish to point out that I am not setting out to give commercial ELT or *eikaiwa* a good kicking, to grind any axes, or to vent frustrations. As with education regulated by the state, a comprehensive account of the full variation of teachers, students, classes, employment conditions etc., within commercial ELT, let alone whether any particular combination of these is by any measure ‘good’, is far beyond the grasp of this work. Undoubtedly, there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (by whatever measure one wishes) students, teachers, lessons, and institutions which exist right across ELT, commercial or otherwise. As for venting, and while it would be disingenuous to say

there has been no cathartic element at all in undertaking this work, it is true that I have painted a rather one-sided experience of working within ELT in focussing on events where senses of injustice are felt. This is not to say that I, nor any other teachers, did not enjoy any of the experiences which such work enabled. I do indeed have many fond memories of rewarding experiences and relationships within my time working in commercial ELT. I have focussed on the issues below, not simply because they are 'bad', but because I believe such issues are yet to be examined in detail within applied- and sociolinguistic scholarly circles, and because such issues involve questions of social justice. While the *dark side of TESOL* (Piller et al., 2010), and the dubious *promise of English* (Park, 2011) have been discussed in relation to learners, the 'darker side' of working within ELT, as I, and many I have interacted with, have experienced, has received far less attention. With this in mind, it is my hope that in addition to contributing to the body of scholarly knowledge within applied linguistics and related areas of study, some of the issues raised here will strike a chord with those who have worked, or continue to work within the many varied guises of the commercial ELT industry, or indeed in any other form of language teaching, and with those who have felt themselves and their work to have been treated in ways they find unjust.

Finally, I fully acknowledge that as a white, British, inner-circle native speaker of English, I have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy a certain privileged position within ELT as a whole. There are undoubtedly others who have worked under worse conditions, earned less money, etc. No rivers need be cried on my account. Nor am I interested in engaging in any sort of petty and pointless competition of who is, or was, exploited the most, had the worst job, is the least privileged etc., and is therefore worthy of attention. Rather, it is my hope that the issues raised below, which I believe have affected a great number of fellow language teachers, many of whom no doubt were, and are, less privileged than myself, might resonate with others, and might contribute to the highlighting of issues of injustice more broadly in ELT, and perhaps to establish forms of solidarity among those of us within it, across lines of race, gender, sexuality, native speaker status, and class, without forgetting that such lines exist.

### 1.1 Working in Commercial ELT: An Autobiographical Account

In the Autumn of 2010, I graduated from university in the UK with a Bachelors' degree in music studies and a TEFL certificate I had received as part of an elective class I had taken. Unsure of what to do next, and with an interest in travel, I did as many young inner-circle native speakers of English had done before me, and decided to work in ELT in China for a year or so, where I worked at a small commercial language school. Enjoying a life of cheap alcohol, cigarettes, and pirated computer games, one year soon became four, and teaching began to become something more than a means to see the world. Though I felt myself something of an imposter as a teacher, wondering how it was

that with so little background in language teaching I had found myself at the front of the class, I did what I could to take the job of teaching seriously, to follow the school's curriculum, rules, and regulations, and to help my students learn English as best I could. It was here that I first experienced some of the tensions within ELT, where commercial interests did not always harmonise with pedagogical ones, at least not with my own (no doubt problematic) notions of what language education and language educators were, or should be.

The school went to significant lengths to ensure that certain standards in the classroom were met. All teachers were expected to write out detailed lesson plans for each and every class they were to teach, and to send this to a teaching manager ahead of the class, who would then check through each individual plan and give feedback as well as a score, which made up part of the teacher evaluation which affected remuneration. Indeed, in my final year at the school I performed exactly this task of scrutinising all of the lesson plans each week. At the same time as this however, many of the teachers who had worked at the school the longest, and were among the highest paid - in line with their popularity with students and their paying parents, engaged in behaviour of dubious pedagogical value. One teacher, by their own admission, would turn up to their morning class still under the effects of ecstasy after a night out clubbing - having 'just come down from a tree'. Another would regularly play a variation of the children's game *sleeping lions* in his class, where students had to silently put their heads down on the desk and attempt to be the last one to look up or break the silence, while the teacher would get on with reading a novel they had brought in. It seemed strange to me, that teaching plans should be so tightly controlled, while what actually happened in the class was often treated with indifference – on the proviso that students and their parents were satisfied.

At times, the tension between keeping students and parents satisfied and other values held by teachers and other staff at the school involved matters of race. There was something of a struggle over the prospective employment of a black Zimbabwean teacher (no better or worse qualified than any other teacher at the school) on account of how the parents of students might react to their children being taught by a teacher who was black and/or African. In the end, the teacher was hired, before leaving a few weeks later. Such a short stint at the school was far from abnormal - it was more or less every month that at least one potential teacher was interviewed or given a 'demo' class at the school. Curiously however, despite many parents complaining about the constant chopping and changing of their children's teachers, there seemed little incentive either monetarily, or in terms of professional development for teachers to stay at the school for longer than between 6 and 12 months.

At the time, and with a cavalier attitude to the 'serious' matters in life, I thought very little of the precarity I was working in, which in retrospect is painfully, and even embarrassingly, clear. Perhaps most indicative of this was the legal status my co-workers and I had, as essentially working illegally under the wrong visa – a practice so widespread in the ELT industry in China at the time, it was easily shrugged- or laughed off by teachers far beyond the school in which I worked. In fact, during my time at the school, there were three unannounced visits from the immigration authority (or 'raids' as we ironically referred to them), in which all of the non-Chinese nationals would literally run out of the back door of the school. On one occasion, a teacher who had missed a warning of a 'raid' was 'caught', and taken to a police station where a representative from the school – the school caretaker, was sent to deal with the situation, which thankfully did not escalate any further. Another former colleague, who worked for the school through a middleman agency, was detained at the airport before flying home for similar visa reasons, and asked to pay a large fine or be formally detained, despite being previously reassured by the agency who employed him that his visa situation was fine. This particular agency seems to have been particularly callous, not to mention positively parasitic, deducting half of the teacher's salary every month for an entire year, for the 'service' of 'taking care' of visas, securing employment (the teaching job which most of the staff found independently), and providing accommodation which consisted of a single small box room with no windows.

Elsewhere, in a brief stint of English language teaching in Thailand, I worked on a pay-per-lesson contract (I was given no other choice), while other teachers were employed on a contract which paid a guaranteed flat rate salary every month. This of course made it essentially cheaper for the school to assign more students to teachers on this flat-rate contract, than to me, or others on similar pay-per-lesson contracts. When the floods of 2011/2012 hit Bangkok where I was working, student numbers fell dramatically. It was of course those on the flat-rate contracts which were assigned the remaining students who could continue to come to the language school, meaning my own monthly income bombed. I soon left my job, and the country. Dissatisfied with a feeling of being stuck in dead-end jobs, I returned to the UK to embark on a masters' degree in TESOL. What struck me, however, was that many of the issues and problems I had encountered as an English teacher seldom came up in discussions of ELT which were otherwise incredibly broad and open in their scope. There was very little about the actual *job* of being an English teacher – at least as I had experienced it: salaries, contracts, workloads, and precarity.

While in the above account of working in ELT I have described certain decisions or beliefs I had made or held as naïve or embarrassing, with hindsight there could have been much more serious consequences which through nothing more than good fortune I was able to avoid. While being

temporarily detained, deported, un- or underpaid etc., are not to be sneezed at, at worst they would likely have resulted in a begrudging return to the UK, moving back in with my parents, and perhaps a change of career – far from the end of the world. However, through my own neglect, and the indifference of my employer, I had lived for years with absolutely no health coverage of any sort in China, nor the financial means to cover the significant medical costs that would have ensued in the event of a serious medical condition or emergency. Whether through indifference, ignorance, or simply no other choice, it is worth remembering that there are a great many who have worked and continue to work in ELT under similar precarious circumstances, often for far longer than I have done, and who, unlike myself, have done so whilst supporting families.

## 1.2 The Commercial English Language Teaching (ELT) Industry in Applied Linguistics

For some time now, there has been an underlying self-questioning within much of applied linguistics as to the status of ELT as a career and/or a profession (Codó, 2018; Johnston, 1997; Maley, 1992; Neilson, 2009; Thornbury, 2001). While not all of this literature addresses the commercial ELT industry directly, many of the issues discussed above are indeed recurrent themes. For example, in terms of the precarity and high turnover of staff within ELT, Johnston describes how those working in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching in Poland “discursively presented [it] as an occupation that [...] is easy both to enter and to leave” (1997, p. 698), “without job security or benefits” (ibid, p. 682). Similarly, Codó describes work within the commercial ELT industry in Barcelona in terms of “easy-to-access jobs that usually require little training and/ or experience” (2018, p. 437), in “an industry that expects docile and inexperienced bodies,[...where] nativeness enables quick access to jobs, but only to unskilled and temporary ones.” (ibid, p. 448). Elsewhere, Neilson (2009) describes English language teaching as being generally low paid and limited in its career prospects. In many instances, the job of ELT is seen less as a career or profession, and more in terms of a temporary endeavour, as indicated by: the title of Neilson’s (2009) book *Travellers’ Tales*; the widespread association TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) has with vacation-based work – especially backpacking teachers (Thornbury, 2001); as well as a burgeoning ELT/TEFL-tourism industry which blurs the line between teacher and traveller, work and leisure (Codó, 2018; Stainton, 2018).

While there is obviously an awareness of many instantiations of ELT work as precarious, poorly paid, and unskilled, there is however, seldom in-depth discussion of the details of what this precarity, pay, and (lack of?) skill, concretely look like. There is scant discussion of salaries, work hours, contracts and the like. For example, here is Johnston discussing the relation between teachers’ work-lives and the social, political and economic contexts in which they work:

Firstly, there is a discursive opposition between the need to do a good job at teaching and the need to make money. Many of the teachers in the study described how the need to make money led them to take on extra work, often resulting in a long working day in which they may have had insufficient time for proper lesson preparation [...]. The socioeconomic discourses of the broader society in this way impinged upon the educational context, showing that it is impossible to conceptualize teachers' lives and work without an understanding of the sociopolitical context in which they are lived. (Johnston, 1997, p. 693)

No doubt Johnston is quite right in suggesting that to understand teachers' lives and work an understanding of the social, political (and I will add 'economic') context is crucial. Such discussion however, deals with the 'socioeconomic' in very broad strokes, and fails to home in on the details which are often central concerns to teachers themselves. For example, we might want to know how much money the teachers Johnston refers to were paid, how they were paid, why they needed to take on extra work to make more money, and how much extra work they had to do. While the "socioeconomic discourses of the broader society" may well "impinge upon" all kinds of educational contexts, so too do the material changes in the socio-political economic situation in which people find themselves. The need to make money, to eat, to pay bills etc. is, at the very least, not entirely a discursive matter, nor are the ups and downs of local, national, and global economies, reducible to 'socioeconomic discourses'. The kind of details which are often front and foremost in the everyday consideration of work – how much will I be paid? how long do I work each day? What benefits am I entitled to? etc., are discussed, if at all, only in passing. Similarly, in drawing on Appadurai's (1990) notion of globalization as a set of *scapes*, Neilson's description of the *financescape of ELT* is as follows: "The cost of delivery of ELT is affected by both global and local economic issues, and is reflected in teachers' remuneration, contracts and conditions, as well as the pricing of materials" (2009, pp. 85–86). Neilson however does not go on to give any detailed examples beyond anecdotal evidence, of how all of these parts interrelate with one another. One is left accepting Neilson's (and Johnston's) overall points, while still wondering exactly what global and local economic issues effect remuneration, contracts, working conditions, or the price of materials, and how.

Pennycook's (2017) discussion within a section entitled *ELT as a service industry* is of interest, in the way it discusses not ELT as a service industry as itself a subject of study, but rather as a form of what Fairclough (2003) might call a *colonising discourse*, where certain discursive elements from the world of business have crept into language teaching, and reshaped discourses therein:

This tendency to celebrate the market-driven expansion of English as an innocent, technical operation, reducing students to 'consumers', teachers to 'suppliers of a product', and schools to

‘corporations’, appears to be an increasingly common way in which teachers and applied linguists have been able to take up the global spread of English. (Pennycook, 2017, p. 165)

And later, in response to discourses which position language schools as synonymous with other forms of service industry businesses:

Such comments are problematic in a number of ways, not least of which are the naïve celebration of international business, as if this were something *we* should be happy to *emulate*, and the reduction of the complexities of schools, students, teachers and curricula to a discussion of manufacturing. (ibid, p. 166, emphasis added)

What is interesting about Pennycook’s discussion is the omission of the notion of language schools *as actually being* service industries outright. Rather, what we have, is a discussion of how language teaching is “emulating” but not *being* a service industry, merely borrowing elements from it – the reduction of students to ‘consumers’, teachers to ‘suppliers of a product’, and schools to ‘corporations’. To be clear, Pennycook’s discussion of ELT as a service industry is a brief section in a far larger complex work, and is of relevance to his wider discussion on the problematic neutrality which such discourses construct languages like English and the practice of language teaching more broadly, and not about commercial ELT or the service industry *per se*. Nevertheless, Pennycook’s discussion poses us with an important question – is ELT only ever discursively packaged as a service industry, or is it, in itself, in some manifestations, a service industry in its own right? The work of John Walker (2001, 2007, 2010) for example, makes no bones about it, and does indeed see commercial language teaching as a service industry. I think, and I doubt Pennycook would disagree, that in terms of commercial ELT which exists primarily for profit, it is not simply a case of *emulation*, but students *really are* functioning as customers or clients, and schools *really do* function as corporations, not least in a legal sense, in terms of how they are regulated by the state in ways which differ significantly from formal education (see Chapter 4). While, as I have said, from an economic and legal point of view there is a rather sharp line of distinction to be drawn between say a chain of commercial language schools functioning as a corporation, and a school or university regulated by the state, in more general terms, it is however, rather difficult to entirely separate them as two distinct bodies, and clearly there is considerable overlap between the two. Work such as Chun’s (2009) study of the provision of Intensive English Programs (IEP) in the university sector for example, offers insights into the intertwining of commercial and pedagogical concerns. In a similarly vein, Walker’s description below, might not sound so alien to many working in ELT in general, be it commercially provided or otherwise:

Managers may, at times, be forced to make business decisions that are incompatible with educational principles. Educators, in turn, may be faced with a choice of acquiescing in practices they consider educationally unsound and/or unethical, or of forgoing employment and income. (2007, p. 332).

Indeed, as work such as Pérez-Milans' (2013) shows, teachers within forms of education regulated by the state are very much aware of how the pedagogical choices they make in the classroom may have implications for their future employment and career prospects. The point here, is not to establish a strict taxonomy of different kinds of English language teaching – those which are and are not 'really' part of a service industry, but rather to highlight the need for greater discussion of commercial ELT within scholarly circles, beyond something which is deemed *other*, or falls outside of the remit of applied- and socio-linguistics. Perhaps this state of affairs is due in part to much research funding centring on state regulated forms of language education rather than the commercial sector. There may also be methodological issues of access involved in research which deals with private enterprises and corporations, which might seek to protect the privacy of their clientele, not to mention the sensitivity of all kinds of operational information which might be jealously guarded in light of competition in the market. Perhaps for some, commercial ELT is tacitly seen as not a 'real' or 'proper' form of language teaching worthy of scholarly attention. Then again, it may be a matter of means, as those within commercial ELT might not have the financial and institutional backing to study, write, publish, attend conferences, and otherwise engage in scholarly activity that others on the inside of academia might do. I am certain however, and my exchanges with other language teachers and scholars in language related disciplines have borne this out, that the experiences of teaching within commercial forms of ELT have much to tell us about how language teaching is happening out in the world, and how language teaching relates to political economic matters, and as such, can tell us about what the lives of a great number of English language teachers the world over might be like.

### 1.3 Aims of the Research

Why then, have I undertaken this research? Firstly, as I have said, I believe that many of the issues revolving around precarity, and a certain tension between commercially and pedagogically motivated interests, while acknowledged in the literature on ELT in general, have not been taken up in the detail that the scope of the industry, and the number of those who work therein, warrants. Secondly, and perhaps more important than the filling in of academic *lacunae* however, is the need to highlight matters of injustice which I and others have felt within ELT, where teachers feel underpaid and undervalued, and are required to teach under precarious conditions which are quickly becoming the norm in workplaces far beyond the scope of language education (Bauman,



2005; Žižek, 2019). Here, I refer to value in the broadest sense of the term, not only in monetary terms, but in terms of value judgements made of teachers and the lessons they produce. Value in this broad sense could refer to: the wages paid to teachers; the price at which a lesson is sold; judgements of a teacher or lesson as 'good' or 'bad'; as well as how teachers may be valued as skilled professionals or easily replaceable low-skill casual labour (see Chapter 7). With this in mind, the three research questions that drive this research are as follows:

1. How does the status of commercial ELT schools as institutions which operate to turn a profit affect how language is taught within them?
2. In what ways are English language teachers and their work valued, and how do these many different forms of valuation relate to one another?
3. How do English language teachers relate their work-lives to the economy and society more broadly?

#### 1.4 Outline of the Research

In order to answer such questions, a number of pre-requisites are in order. First among these is an understanding of what the commercial activity of making a profit actually entails, and how this relates to language teaching in general. This is the subject that opens Chapter 2, which turns its attention to political economy, and to work which has taken up a political economy approach to linguistic matters, and seeks to understand what profit is and where it comes from, by tracing value through the concepts of the commodity and capital. Having established a conceptualisation of capital, Chapter 3 concerns itself with the movement of capital as *value in motion*, and in drawing together much work in applied- and sociolinguistic work, frames the interrelation of capital with matters of language and language teaching in terms of dialectical contradictions – of mutually effecting moving parts within larger totalities. In taking up a dialectical approach to understanding the movement of capital, Chapter 4 expands the dialectical frame from capital to language teaching, discussing the context of this study – the *eikaiwa* English language teaching industry in Japan. Following this, Chapter 5 sets out the methodological approach to understanding how teachers within *eikaiwa* live out the dialectical contradictions of their workplaces, managing, embracing, and resisting the pushes and pulls they experience in producing the language lesson. Chapter 6 gives an account of how these contradictory pushes and pulls shape the production of the language lesson, highlighting the dialectical mediation between homogenising *Taylorised*, and heterogeneous *flexible* forms of lesson production. From production, Chapter 7 turns its attention to distribution, and takes on the question of the distribution of value. Here the matter of 'who gets what' comes to the fore, not only in terms of monetary value such as wages and bonuses, but also in terms of status and prestige in the valuation of teachers and their Bourdieusian forms of capital within *the teacher*

*market*. Chapter 8 attempts to understand how teachers make sense of the contradictory forces and interests which they experience in their daily work-lives, and through the concepts of class and fetishism, discusses the extent to which their own dialectical mediation with their work, has come to change the way they see themselves in and through their work, and how they relate themselves to much larger political-economic structures such as the state and the economy. In the concluding chapter, I will consider the ways and the extent to which the research design has allowed me to answer the research questions, and address any limitations in answering them. I return to the research questions outlined above and discuss the limitations of the research in answering them. The research closes by discussing the implications of this work for further research, both within and beyond commercial language teaching, though the notion of *alienation*.

## Chapter 2: Commodity and Capital<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter concluded by stating that in order to address the question of how commercial forces and interests directed to making a profit affect language teaching, it is necessary to examine exactly what 'profit' is, and where it comes from. Such questions are at the core of political economy, and so it is towards the concepts of commodity and capital within political economy, and to work focussed upon language which has taken up these concepts, that this chapter turns. In doing so, the chapter traces the development of the theoretical point of departure for this research, from the commodity to capital. In highlighting a certain ambiguity in the literature on the commodity and language, the discussion turns its attention to the question of defining the commodity, and commodity production. In juxtaposing influential anthropological work on the commodity with that of political economy however, it is argued that commodity production within capitalism or *capitalist commodity production*, is best understood not in terms of commodities themselves, but rather, in the simultaneous production of *both* commodities *and* capital, that is to say the production of commodities as a means to produce capital. Following this, the chapter further explores the concept of capital in political economic work by and inspired by Marx, where capital is understood as value in motion, which passes through a number of phases: production-, realisation-, and distribution, in a number of states or forms such as money, commodities, and finance. The chapter also discusses the influence of work which takes up Bourdieusian approaches to the notion of capital, incorporating Bourdieu's capital into the *moment* of distribution within the larger the circuit of capital understood in a Marxist sense. The remainder of the chapter examines the upshot of understanding capital as value in motion, and consequently the commodity as only a moment in the circulation of capital, and the implications such a concept has for our understanding of the work carried out within production processes in which language plays a key role such as commercial ELT.

### 2.1 Political Economy and Language

The uptake of language commodification in linguistic anthropology and applied linguistics reflects a recent turn to political economy (Block, 2017, 2018a) in order to explore the interrelations of the political, the economic and the social with regard to language. This emergent body of research attempts to answer calls for more interdisciplinary approaches to doing applied linguistics (Rampton, 1997), while also being a reaction to the way the 2007-8 global financial crisis has highlighted the gap between the promises of neoliberal capitalism and the political-economic realities which undermine those promises, including the linguistic ones (Holborow, 2015b). The recent turn to

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter are based upon an article published in the journal *Language Sciences* – see Simpson & O'Regan (2018).

political economy began to emerge in the landmark linguistic anthropological work of Susan Gal (1989), Judith Irvine (1989), and the less often credited Paul Friedrich (1989), who separately called for a *rapprochement* between ‘idealists’ and ‘materialists’ on each side of an epistemological divide, where “‘idealists’ specializing in cultural and linguistic phenomena [and] ‘materialists’ investigating economy and ecology” (Gal, 1989, pp. 346–347) work within a “false dichotomy” (Irvine, 1989, p. 263). They each argued that what was needed was the integration of the two. In recognition of the redundancy of the ideal/material distinction, Gal pointed to an emergent “set of themes in current anthropological and linguistic research that can be read as investigations of the links among language structure, language use, and political economy” (1989, p. 346).

However, the extent to which scholars have engaged with the political and economic workings of neoliberal capitalism has come into question. Ricento, for example, bemoans a general “lack of sophistication in political economy” (2012, p. 32), and Grin (2003) the metaphorical application of economic terms and concepts to work that deals with language. More generally, Bruthiaux criticizes the “reluctance of many applied linguists to consider the economic dimension of globalization” (2008, p. 20), leading to a one sided ‘cultural’ discussion of globalization at the expense of the economic. Similarly, Block, Gray & Holborow describe political economy as a “blind spot” in the recent sociolinguistic interdisciplinary turn (2012, p. 1), where scholars “ignore the economic and material bases of human activity and social life, or only deal with it in the most cursory of manners” (ibid, pp. 3-4). Indeed, the extent to which a political economy approach to language has bridged the ideal/material divide remains, for some, questionable. While work such as Shankar & Cavanaugh’s (2012) ‘language materiality’ where language is ‘objectified’ rather than ‘commodified’, goes some way towards this, there are some who call for a deeper, more rigorous engagement with political economy. As Block (2018) points out, the more ‘material’ work on the *economics of language* (Gazzola & Wickstrom, 2016; Grin, 2001, 2003, 2014; Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010), where the paradigms, concepts and tools of mainstream economics are taken up, seems to have had a limited impact upon the work of linguistic anthropology and applied linguistics. Given the frequency with which the literature uses the terminology fundamental to much political-economy: *commodity*, *capital*, *use-value*, and *exchange-value* for example, little reference is given to key figures of political economy such as Smith, Ricardo, and Marx (Block, 2014, 2018a; Simpson & O’Regan, 2018). Though Marx writes extensively on the commodity – indeed the first volume of *Capital* is seen by some as a dialectical unfolding from the kernel of the commodity form (Harvey, 2010), and while there has been considerable engagement with Marx’s work more broadly in applied- and sociolinguistics (Block, 2014, 2017, 2018a; Block et al., 2012; Chun, 2017; Holborow, 1999, 2015a; O’Regan, 2014) references to Marx’s work in the literature on language

commodification – where language is discussed as the object of commodification, are rare. For example, in the widely-cited volume *Language in Late Capitalism: Pride and Profit*, edited by Duchêne & Heller (2012), within which commodification is a major theme, no direct reference to Marx is to be found. Neither is Marx referenced in Flubacher & Del Percio's more recent edited volume on *Language, Education and Neoliberalism* (2017). Similarly, the initial ground-breaking work of Rossi-Landi (1977, 1983) on language and economy from a Marxist perspective is also seldom mentioned or discussed. Elsewhere, in works where reference to Marx is present, his work is afforded only brief mentions. For example, within the volume *Language as Commodity* (Tan & Rubdy eds. 2008), the sole reference to Marx comes from Tan (2008), who credits Marx with the development of the notion of commodification within capitalism. It is noticeable, however, that this is not drawn from *Capital* or the *Grundrisse*, which is where Marx's theory of the commodity is principally to be found, but from the pages of the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 2002/1848), whose main purpose was not to serve as a theoretical treatise on capitalist political economy, but to act as a political call to arms. The point here however, is not to dogmatically dismiss such work on the grounds of not being Marxist, or not Marxist enough, but rather to highlight certain ambiguities which emerge in the literature as a whole, as regards the foundational notions of *the commodity* and *capital*.

## 2.2 The Commodification of Language

An emerging body of research has made the argument that recent global political-economic developments have led to the commodification of language. This is evidenced in a series of edited monographs and journal special issues that are centred on the notion of *language as commodity* (e.g. Del Percio, Flubacher, & Duchêne, 2017; Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Heller, Jaworski, & Thurlow, 2014; S Muth & Ryaza/NOVA-Clarke, 2017; Sebastian Muth & Del Percio, 2018; Park & Wee, 2012; Tan & Rubdy, 2008). The following literature discusses either languages themselves or linguistic products as commodities: Alsagoff (2008); Boutet (2012); Bruthiaux (2008); Cameron (2005); Da Silva, McLaughlin & Richards (2007); Del Percio & Duchêne (2012); Duchêne (2009); Gray (2010); Gal (2016); Irvine (1989); Heller (2002, 2010b, 2010a); Heller & Duchêne (2016); Heller, Jaworski & Thurlow (Eds. 2014); Heller, Pujolar & Duchêne, (2014); Hoon (2008); Rahman (2009); Rassool (2007); Singh & Han (2008); Tupas (2008); Wee (2008). The scope of objects of commodification runs the gamut from the macro to the micro, from languages themselves as commodities (Alsagof 2008; Heller 2010b; Park & Wee 2012; Rassool 2007; Tan & Rubdy 2008; Singh & Han 2008), to individual utterances (Irvine 1989), and from concrete objects like ELT course books (Gray 2010) to abstract notions such as pride (Del Percio & Duchêne, 2012). Though the object of commodification varies, there is consensus on two key points. Firstly, that objects or things which once were not considered

commodities, or were ‘non-commodities’, have somehow become commodities – i.e. they have become *commodified* in some sense – and second, that this commodification is related to more recent global political and economic developments, often referred to as the ‘new economy’ (Del Percio & Duchêne 2012; Heller 2003; Heller 2010a; Heller & Duchêne 2012; Heller & Duchêne 2016; Heller, Pujolar & Duchêne 2014; Park & Wee 2012). Thus, it is argued by Heller (2010b) that “Through the various ways in which language has acquired centrality in the work process and work products of the new economy, language has become a commodity itself and, therefore, acts as a resource to be produced, controlled, distributed, valued, and constrained” (p. 108).

### 2.3 Literal or Metaphorical Commodification of Language?

When taken as a whole, there is a degree of ambiguity within the literature which centres around the notion of language commodification. One such ambiguity concerns whether commodification is to be taken in a literal, or a metaphorical sense – that is to say whether the proposition being made is that language has become *like* a commodity, or *actually is* a commodity in its own right (Simpson & O’Regan, 2018). Scholars such as Block (2014, 2018) and Holborow (2015) have suggested a lack of theoretical underpinning to the commodity in work on language commodification, with terms such as *commodity* and *commodification* often lacking explicit definition and being used largely in a metaphorical sense with tacitly assumed understandings. Holborow (2015) also argues that it is not just the notion of the commodity, but the concepts of the market too that have “become so commonplace [...that] it is often unclear whether they are intended to be taken literally” (p.52). It is not always immediately apparent whether language is discussed as a commodity in a metaphorical or literal sense – *like* a commodity or *really as* a commodity (i.e. as something directly exchangeable on the economic market). For example, for Park & Wee “English *is seen as* an economic resource, a commodity that *can be exchanged in the market for material profit*” (2012, p. 124; emphasis added). However, if language, in this case English, may be exchanged in the conventional market (for money or other commodities), then it is not sufficient that it simply be *seen* as an economic resource, rather, it *is* an economic resource as a consequence of its function in exchange. This jump from the discursive (i.e. metaphorical) commodification of language to the concrete conventional exchange of the market has been criticised by McGill (2013), who notes that work on the commodification of language merely highlights the “framing” of language as a commodity which “is not at all the same thing as showing the actual consumption of language as a commodity” (p. 85). In response to such criticism Kelly-Holmes suggests McGill is overly literalist in his interpretation, and suggests that it is indeed primarily as a metaphor that language as a commodity is meant:

He [McGill] takes the literalist position that there has to be an actual exchange of money for ‘language’, and sociolinguistic studies have to show how the use of a particular language, variety,

and so on actually attracts money [...] McGill's literalist stand, however, is in contrast to Bourdieu's metaphorical use of 'the market' for language, which has been so influential in contemporary sociolinguistics, and we can see a particular line of influence from Bourdieu to the current work on political economy and commodification studies. (Kelly-Holmes, 2016, p. 169)

However, Kelly Holmes' insistence that recent work treats the language commodity metaphorically within the bounds of metaphorical Bourdieusian markets seems somewhat at odds with much work in linguistic anthropology which places language in the conventional market of economics. On this matter, most scholars appear unequivocal. Gal (1989) for example discusses how "Language may also constitute a resource in a more narrowly economic sense as well, when linguistic practices or speech acts (e.g. condolences on a greeting cards) are produced and sold as commodities" (p. 353; original parenthesis). Similarly, for Irvine (1989), "linguistic elements and utterances may themselves be goods and services, exchangeable against other goods and services, including material goods and cash" (p. 256), and Heller suggests that "language has become a commodity itself" (2010b, p. 108). Heller, Pujolar & Duchêne (2014) make explicit the interaction between the language commodity and the non-metaphorical 'conventional' market where "'Commodification' is the expression we use to describe how a specific object or process is rendered available *for conventional exchange in the market*" (p. 545 emphasis added). Heller & Duchêne (2016) go so far as to state that the way that "linguistic material of a variety of forms was increasingly presented as an element of economic exchange [...] was no metaphor" (p. 140), and that "The idea of language as commodity helps us understand part of what people are trying to do with language [...] not just in how they think of it but in how they concretely try to turn it into an exchangeable resource with measurable value in economic terms" (p. 144). In response to Grin's (2014) critique that work on the language commodity metaphorically appropriates terms from economics and "offers no economic angle" (p.19), Heller & Duchêne insist that the language commodity and the market are not just meant as metaphors.

## 2.4 Commodification all the way down?

Though languages are *produced* and involve an expenditure of human *labour* in a sense (language acquisition for example certainly requires significant expenditure of mental, and perhaps physical effort), and is indeed treated as a *resource* in a variety of ways, to stretch the meaning of commodity production to languages, if taken 'literally', runs the risk of emptying out the meaning of the commodity and of commodity production. The work of Baudrillard is perhaps the epitome of such stretching of meaning, where "nothing produced and exchanged today (objects, services, bodies, sex, culture, knowledge, etc.) can be decoded exclusively as a sign, nor solely as a commodity [...] but [are] indissolubly both" (1981: 147-148). For Baudrillard, the sign-commodity seems to swallow all

human life – “bodies, sex, culture, knowledge, etc.” – indeed one wonders what Baudrillard would not include within his “etc.” here, if anything at all. If all that is produced, however, in even the most general sense of the term, is a commodity (or commodity-sign as Baudrillard would have it), then the term ‘commodity’ ceases to hold any particular meaning. Despite the dominant discourse of *Human Capital* (Holborow, 2018a, 2018b) for example, most would balk at the suggestion that child bearing and raising is a form of commodity production, though much human *labour*, again in the most general sense of the term, is expended in the process of ‘producing’ a child, and even if later in life it will, in the vast majority of cases, sell its labour on the market as an adult.

As Polanyi (2001/1944) argued via the notion of land and labour as *fictitious commodities*, capitalist societies have universally resisted the inherent drive within capitalism to commodify everything – including humanity itself, by organising social resistance and protection, often through the state, the kinds of which we still see today in labour rights, minimum wages, and environmental protection laws, among others. Polanyi argued that if labour, and therefore people, really were to become ‘fully’ commodified (rather than ‘fictitious commodities’) the consequences would be disastrous:

For the alleged commodity ‘labour power’ cannot be shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused, without also affecting the human individual who happens to be the bearer of this peculiar commodity. In disposing of a man’s labour power the [market] system would, incidentally, dispose of the physical, psychological, and moral entity ‘man’ attached to that tag (2001/1944, p. 73)

Though undoubtedly various forms of capitalism, not least its current neoliberal incarnation, has in numerous times and places cruelly treated people as dehumanised disposable ‘inputs’, it would be difficult to suggest that we have witnessed the *total* disposal of the ‘physical, psychological and moral entity ‘man’, or perhaps better put, ‘humankind’. The case against commodification all the way down however, is not just a moral argument, but also a practical one, as such totalising commodification would destroy the very bases upon which the capitalist system is founded, not least of all the reproduction of human life as a means to supply a necessary labour force. As Fraser argues:

[A]ttempts fully to commodify labour, land and money are conceptually incoherent and inherently self-undermining, akin to a tiger that bites its own tail. For structural reasons, therefore, society cannot be commodities all the way down. (2014, p. 548).

Indeed, as Marx points out in discussing one of the many contradictions of capitalist production, while the capitalist may have an interest in reducing costs and maximising productivity and work time within their own employed workforce, they simultaneously have an interest in the labour



employed by other capitalists as being well paid so as to stimulate consumption and generate *effective demand* in the market (Marx, 1973). If all workers everywhere were paid less than was necessary to sustain them in their daily lives, or were simply worked to death, there would be no one around to buy the commodities produced. One sees this contradiction in microcosm, in the well-known story of car manufacturer Henry Ford reportedly paying his workers double the average wage so they could afford to buy the cars they were producing. In more recent times, the repercussions of treating land and nature as if they were commodities to be “shoved about” or “used indiscriminately” are becoming increasingly clear. If left entirely unchecked, the tendency of capitalism to commodify everything would, and with one eye on imminent climate crisis perhaps does, threaten to undermine its own continuation as a social system of production, and therefore has historically been held in check, to various extents, in order to ensure its own continuation.

The highlighting of the ambiguity between commodification in a metaphorical and/or literal sense, and discussion on the notion of capitalist societies as ‘commodities all the way down’ however, is not simply an attempt to nit-pick imprecise uses of terminology to be ‘corrected’ by the dogmatic imposition of particular (Marxist) concepts or theories. Rather, it is to highlight the considerable diversity and breadth the notion of commodified language covers within the literature, and via dialogue with figures in political economy such as Marx and Polanyi, the need for this work to be precise about pinning down exactly what “it” is that is being commodified, as well as to make transparent what is meant by the concept ‘commodity’ and ‘commodity production’.

## 2.5 From the Commodity to Capital – The Production of Capital

*We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.*

(Oscar Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, p. xii)

At its most fundamental level, *the commodity* is that which is produced for exchange. It is, as Marx puts it, a *use-value* - a thing of utility (in the broadest sense) which “satisfies human needs of whatever kind” (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 125) not for the producer, but rather is a “use-value for others, [a] social use-value” (ibid, p. 131). Rather than a use-value for its producer, it is an *exchange-value* - a thing which has no immediate utility beyond its use in exchanging it for some other thing, whether a further commodity or money. To play on Wilde’s quote above, commodity production makes sense (or is ‘forgivable’) when things produced are useful for others, and makers do not ‘admire’ the fruits of their labour, in the sense of readily handing them over to others in exchange. While it is certainly true that the thing one sells or exchanges may have some utility for the seller, in for example begrudgingly selling one’s possessions (even those one “admires intensely”) in falling upon hard

times, so far as the act of exchange is concerned, one either enjoys the utility of a commodity one owns, or decides to realise its exchange-value by selling or trading it with another, thereby transferring the rights of ownership to that commodity. In other words, generally speaking, you can realise the utility or use-value of a commodity, *or* you can 'cash in' and realise its exchange value by selling it; to play on the proverb – you cannot both sell your cake and eat it, nor can you sell or eat the cake belonging to another (not legally within the free market at least). Not all production however, is commodity production. For example, production of use-values may well involve the production of things, material or otherwise, for oneself, for the hell of it, or along the lines of *art for art's sake* as propounded in the aesthetic movement (Eagleton, 2016) - "making a [socially] useless thing [...] that one admires intensely" as Wilde puts it, rather than for the purposes of exchange.

As Appadurai (1986), Kopytoff (1986), and later Agha (2011) point out in their highly influential discussions of *the life history of commodities* however, even an object produced with no intention of exchange may at some point move into a *commodity register*, and realise an exchange value in commodity exchange. A lock of some celebrity's hair, a fragment of *The Berlin Wall*, a religious icon etc., are all *commodity candidates* (Appadurai, 1986) in so far as they may all be sold as commodities even though during their production no such intention of exchange is to be found. Such work on the life histories of commodities however, focuses exclusively on exchange and consumption. Indeed Appadurai is explicit about the need to get "away from the exclusive preoccupation with the 'product' and 'production'" which allegedly hamstrung Marx in the "epistemic limitations" of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism (1986, p. 9), and to focus instead on exchange where "the question becomes not 'What is a commodity?' but rather 'What sort of an exchange is commodity exchange'" (ibid, p.9). The justification for doing so is sound enough, in so far as Appadurai's interests lie with understanding commodity exchange in its most general sense, both within and outside of contemporary capitalist societies. What he perhaps downplays somewhat in Marx's work however, is the task Marx sets himself, which is to understand and examine *capital* rather than *commodities per se* and not the production or exchange of commodities in their general sense, but in their very specific historical contingency, i.e. within capitalist societies. His unfinished *magnus opus* is, after all, entitled '*Capital*', and not 'the commodity' (although his starting point is indeed the commodity). Marx then, was predominantly interested in *capitalist commodity production* in so far as it is a process whereby *capital* is produced, rather than in the production and exchange of commodities in themselves. There is something of a crossed purpose then in Appadurai advocating "breaking significantly with the production-dominated Marxist view of the commodity and focussing on its *total* trajectory from production, through exchange/distribution, to consumption" (ibid, p.13), and expressing that "all efforts at defining commodities are doomed to sterility unless they illuminate

commodities in motion” (ibid, p.16). Marx, heavily influenced by Hegel’s dialectical thought as he was, does indeed consider himself with *totalities*, and *dynamic motion*<sup>2</sup>, but his object of study is the movement of *capital*, and not *commodities*. To adapt the terminology used by Appadurai, Kopytoff and Agha then, Marx’s work is therefore more about the *life history*, *registers*, and *movement* of *capital* rather than commodities. Marx himself was well aware of things moving in and out of *commodity registers*, noting as he does that things which are not produced as commodities “such as conscience, honour etc., can be offered for sale by their holders, and *thus acquire the form of commodities*” (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 197 emphasis added). There is then, a need for an understanding of the relation between capital and the commodity, to which I now turn.

Marx saw capital as *value in motion* - value which circulates through a variety of *moments*, as a means to expand or *valorise* itself through: production, realisation, and distribution, (Harvey, 2017, p. 6), embodied in a variety of distinct forms such as credit, money, and commodities (Harvey, 2013, 2017; Marx, 1991). Here is Marx’s discussion of what he refers to as “the circulation of capital”, in which we see capital flow through these different moments, and *metamorphosise* (Marx, 1992) in and out of various states:

The transformation of a sum of money into means of production [machinery, materials, work spaces, etc.] and labour-power [workers] is the first phase of the movement undergone by the quantum of value which is going to function as capital. It takes place in the market, within the sphere of circulation. The second phase of the movement, the process of production, is complete as soon as the means of production have been converted into commodities whose value exceeds that of their component parts, and therefore contains the capital originally advanced plus a surplus-value. These commodities must then be thrown back into the sphere of circulation. They must be sold, their value must be realised in money, this money must be transformed once again into capital, and so on, again and again. This cycle, in which the same phases are continually gone through in succession, forms the circulation of capital (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 709)

The point here then is twofold. Firstly, as I have already mentioned, Marx’s object of study is capital and not the commodity, nor commodity production in and of itself. And, secondly, that the commodity, and the production of the commodity, is only an episodic moment in the flow of capital as a whole. Indeed, he describes the commodity as “the bearer of value” (ibid, p. 138) - value which as we have seen above flows *through* the commodity in its circuit. With this in mind, there is a clear

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<sup>2</sup> According to Harvey (2010, 2013), the notion that Marx was in some way ‘stuck’ in production, is often a consequence of an over reliance on interpretations from his only finished work - volume I of *Capital* – which views the flow of capital from the viewpoint of production, and a lack of engagement with his other unfinished work – namely volumes II and III of *Capital*, which view capital from the viewpoint of consumption and distribution.

disjuncture between the projects which Marx on the one hand, and Appadurai, Kopytoff, and Agha on the other, have undertaken. Given that Marx is concerned with the “circulation of capital” it would make little sense for him to follow the life history of the commodity beyond its sale, as it is in the moment of the sale or ‘realisation’ where the value which the commodity is merely the “bearer” of, is ‘realised’ and transformed into money, and is then distributed in wages, taxes, etc., as well as functioning as further capital in the next cycle of capital’s movement. To follow the commodity after the point of realisation, rather than to follow the value (from commodity form, to money form), would be to follow the “bearer” rather than that which is borne, and would not offer much in the way of understanding capital, and the (re)production of capitalism or capitalist societies. So far as Marx being concerned largely with production then, Appadurai is half right, he is indeed concerned with production above all else, however, he is not simply concerned with the “sphere” or “phases” of production (the factory, the workshop, the processes of commodity production etc.), but rather in *the production of capital* throughout its circuit, right across a number of “spheres” or “phases” as he terms it above.

It is, nevertheless true that Marx dedicates a great amount of his attention to the sphere of production (i.e. where labour works to produce value, processes within the workplace – factory, office etc.). The reason for doing so, is that for Marx, it is within the sphere of production that surplus-value is produced - the production of more value than is started with, through the exploitation of labour (a subject to which I will return shortly). An analysis which focuses on exchange and eschews production, has very little to say on capital, in so far as it is not within exchange that value is produced (i.e. it is not within the act of exchange where the production of surplus-value occurs), but rather, where value is realised, and distributed. Exchanging commodities for other commodities or money does not produce value, but merely redistributes the total or ‘social’ value among those in the market in a zero-sum game:

The exchange of two equal values [‘value’ here meaning commodities of various kinds or money] neither increases nor diminishes the amount of the values present in society. Equally, the exchange of two unequal values...*effects no change in the sum of social values*, although it adds to the wealth of one person what it removes from the wealth of another. (Say, 1820, pp. 443-4, quoted in Marx 1990/1867, p. 266)

To put it another way, whether exchanges occur at fair market prices (exchanges of equals), or whether people are buying and selling at way over or under the ‘going rate’, makes no difference to the social total of value (the value of all of the commodities and money combined within a market). What *does* affect the sum total of social values, in other words where profit or ever expanding value

– capital are produced, lies in the sphere of production where labour is paid less in wages than the amount of value it produces (in Marxist terms it is ‘exploited’), and hence the ‘extra’, the surplus value, the growth, the profit - value which adds value to itself - capital.

The issue of production in the literature on language commodification however, seems to refer to the production of language or linguistic products (oral performances, translations, greetings cards messages for example), rather than seeing such linguistic production *as a means for the production of capital* in the sense I have discussed above (value which adds value to itself). The common theme as regards discussion of the value of commodified language is the assumption that value is something bestowed on commodities discursively. For Alsagoff (2008), the language commodity is “given a value based on its association with some form of benefit or ‘goods’ of worth to the society” (p. 45), a notion which suggests a socialist rather than a capitalist society, in so far as the crux of a socialist society is surely the production and valuation of that which is useful and/or necessary to society (use-values), over and above the production of exchange-values and value for the sake of value – i.e. the production of capital. Elsewhere, for Heller (2010), speakers potentially “claim ownership of linguistic resources [...] and the value attributed to them” (p. 110), and for Lam & Wang (2008), both the state and language users “periodically assign and re-assign value as appropriate” (p. 149). Here then, we have value as something *given, attributed, or assigned* to the language commodity by people discursively. While I do not have the space, nor the conviction, to launch a full-scale defence of Marx’s *labour theory of value*,<sup>3</sup> there are nevertheless key ways in which matters of production play a key role in (rather than ‘determine’ as a hard-line proponent of the labour theory of value might suggest) the fluctuations of a commodity’s value. Few would argue for example, that the *speed up* (Harvey, 2013; Marx, 1992) in production through technological innovation which has drastically reduced the necessary amount of labour required to produce commodities of various kinds, has had no effect on their value. As things are produced ever more quickly and require less labour, and hence less expenditure on wages, the price of commodities has the capacity to fall, in for example a producer ‘undercutting’ their competition by saving on labour costs and selling at comparatively cheaper prices. Similarly, the position of strength labour as a class finds itself in relative to capital in terms of; labour rights, minimum wages, benefits, unionisation, etc., in attempting to counteract the tendency for wages to be driven downwards, also has an impact on the value of the commodity. Technological innovation, the offshoring of production, not to mention the mass mobilization of new resources of labour in places such as China (Harvey, 2005)

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<sup>3</sup> See Harvey (2017) and Mohun (2003) for in depth discussion on the labour theory of value in contemporary political economy from a Marxist perspective, and Mazzucato (2018) and Graeber (2001) on theories of value, including the labour theory of value, more broadly.

have no doubt played a significant role in the value realised (or price paid) of many commodities produced in recent decades. These then, are what Marx (1990/1867) has in mind when referring to *phantom objectivities*<sup>4</sup> – factors which affect the value of commodities objectively in the sense that their repercussions for the value of commodities affect all buyers and sellers within the world market. Were commodities valuable only in so far as they were desired or ascribed value discursively, the kind of *commodity fetishism* Marx described whereby the values (in this instance the prices) of commodities move up and down independently of the human will as *phantom objectivities*, would not occur.

## 2.6 Class: The Labour-Capital Social Relation within the Production of Capital

In the sense of commodity production as production with the intention of exchange, it is not a form of production which emerges within capitalism, but predates it, and exists as one of its necessary antecedents (Appadurai, 1986; Marx, 1990/1867). *Capitalist* commodity production, and labour therein however, involves far more than simply actors producing for exchange, but rather involves the production of both *capital and commodity*, within a historically specific social relation. Labour within capitalist commodity production then, refers specifically to the expenditure of mental and physical effort *within a social relation particular to capitalism*, i.e. between those in the *economic roles of capital and labour* (Harvey, 2010; Marx, 1990/1867) – the capitalist and the worker respectively, whereby the value created by labour in production is appropriated by the capitalist. Capitalist commodity production then, is not simply synonymous with the production of commodities writ large, but rather concerns the production of surplus value (i.e. producing more value at the end of production than went into it at the beginning so as to turn a profit), and hence ever more capital. It is not simply a matter of one person producing something for another, but of producing a commodity for an (often unknown) other in the market *while* producing surplus-value *for* a capitalist employer.

Class is among the more contentious of Marx's analytical concepts, and is often cited as an instantiation of an alleged structuralism and determinism in caricatures of Marx's thinking which seldom stand up to in-depth scrutiny (Eagleton, 2018). While I do not have the space here to develop any sort of lengthy and detailed discussion of the concept of class in economic and

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<sup>4</sup> With the caveat that forms of state intervention, 'protectionist' or otherwise, certainly temper this objectivity, in for example the imposition of trading tariffs, where the effects of this objectivity may be felt differently from person to person and place to place. All else being equal, and in the absence of state intervention, within the free market there are, objectively speaking, more or less 'fair' prices beyond subjective desires or valuations – 'the going rate' or 'the market price' in common parlance, though ascertaining *exactly* how much the true or fair value of a thing at any given time is unknowable ('phantom'-like) in the infinite complexity of global production and the world market.

sociological work more broadly (see Block, 2014; Chun, 2019, for just such a discussion), I will nevertheless pin down what is meant by class as it is employed in this work. In taking a dialectical approach to class, the categories Marx uses are two mutually defining sides of a single unity – labour and capital. As a dialectical unity, each of labour and capital are defined in relation to each other, and each is produced and reproduced by the other. Labour (or ‘workers’, if one prefers) is defined as those who work *for* others who accumulate capital. Conversely, a capitalist class is defined as those who have others work and produce value *for them* - what many people are more familiar with as an employee-employer relation. However, such a categorisation is not a stringent categorisation of people into this or that ‘box’, nor a simplistic and static division of society into two opposing parts – an assumption which leads to a great many misgivings about class as a concept in Marx’s work (Ollman, 2003). It is worth emphasising that Marx himself did not see class in *absolute* terms of two poles of a dialectically unity – capital and labour. In his notes which comprise Volumes II and III of *Capital* (Marx, 1991, 1992) for example, Marx discusses a financier class, an emerging middle class (Marx, 2007a), and a self-employed *petty bourgeoisie* (Eagleton, 2012, p. 187). It is perhaps as a result of his unfinished definition of class in Volume III of *Capital* (Marx, 1991, pp. 1025–1026), and an overreliance in subsequent work inspired by Marx’s volume I of *Capital*, rather than his larger body of work, which have contributed to the kind of deterministic caricatures of Marx’s analysis of class discussed earlier.

Rather than categorising individual people as belonging to one class or another, labour and capital refer to *economic roles* that people play out, described by Marx as: “characters who appear on the economic stage [who] are merely personifications of economic relations” (1990/1867, p. 179). These “roles are porous and sometimes internally contradictory” (Harvey, 2017, p. 67), as Harvey illustrates with contemporary examples:

Marx is concerned with economic roles that people play rather than the individuals who play them. [...] [I]ndividuals can and do often occupy several different roles, even deeply contradictory positions (as when, in our time, a worker has a pension fund invested in the stock market). This focus on roles rather than individuals is as perfectly legitimate as if we were analysing the relations between drivers and pedestrians in the streets of Manhattan. (Harvey, 2010, pp. 47–48)

Indeed, at times Marx refers explicitly to this difference between economic roles on the one hand, and individuals on the other, in for example referring to different understandings one is able to glean from “conceiving people merely as personified categories, instead of as individuals” (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 265), and vice versa, in his discussion on mercantilism. Here, I employ the labour-capital dialectic in discussion of class, as it is the ‘stage’ of *production* – the focus of *Capital* Volume I,

and the 'roles' which are acted out therein, with which I am chiefly concerned (see Chapter 8), rather than the more cultural approaches to class which focus on consumption and status (Block, 2014) inspired by work such as Max Weber's (2003) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The roles played out in consumption and exchange are quite distinct from that of production. Within exchange in the market, the "economic *dramatis personae*, a buyer and a seller" (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 249), enjoy "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham" (ibid, p.280), in so far as buyers and sellers meet as equals who engage in fair and free exchange, recognising the rights of ownership to their respective commodities and money, and are not coerced to exchange but do so in an expression of their own utilitarian self-interest (hence Marx's reference to Bentham).<sup>5</sup> The realm of production however, is a different matter, with our economic *dramatis personae* playing out very different roles, involving very different, less egalitarian forms of social relation:

When we leave this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities [...], a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He who was previously the money-owner [buyer] now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power [seller] follows as his worker. (ibid, p.280)

Marx's point here, broadly speaking, is to contrast the egalitarian relation between buyers and sellers in the market, where exchange depends on mutual agreement between two people to the interest and benefit of both parties, and the unequal power relation between capitalist and worker within production, in which one 'follows' the other. Of significance to the class relation within production, and in drawing on the notion of *alienation* (see Chapter 4), it is the capitalist who appropriates control of the production process, and the ownership of the products and value produced therein:

[C]apitalist production necessitates that the capitalist be able to devote the whole of the time during which he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as capital personified, to the appropriation and therefore control of the labour of others, and to the sale of the products of that labour. (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 423)

Capitalist production of commodities entails workers in the role of labour, producing in order for a capitalist, or those acting out the role of capital – 'capital personified', to accumulate and valorise their capital (i.e. to make their total volume of capital larger than it was at the beginning of the

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<sup>5</sup> This is the classical liberal utopian vision of a free market which Marx is critiquing throughout *Capital*. There is no assumption being made by Marx here that anything resembling a perfectly fair and free market exists, or ever has existed. The many 'real world' forces which Marx abstracts in the first volume of *Capital*, such as supply and demand, are reinserted in his unfinished second and third volumes, while other variables such as technological innovation which feature heavily in the first volume, are then abstracted away, so as to conduct different, though complementary analyses of different aspects of the *totality* of capital (Harvey, 2013).



production process). This is the crux of capitalist production, as opposed to other non-capitalist forms of production. Marx illustrates this, conveniently enough for the present study, with an example from education:

A schoolmaster who instructs others is not a productive worker [i.e. is not producing capital]. But a schoolmaster who works for wages in an institution along with others, using his own labour to increase the money of the entrepreneur who owns the knowledge-mongering institution, is a productive worker [i.e. is producing capital]. (1990/1867, p. 1044)

To summarise, the definition of labour and capital as classes as I refer to them here, is one defined both by relation and situation. Firstly, relational in the sense that labour and capital mutually define and presuppose the other - there would be no labour class without a capitalist class to employ it, and simultaneously no capitalist class without labour to work for it. It is situated in the sense that the class categories of labour and capital are economic roles which are played out in, and are definitional to, capitalist production, where the worker (or labour) is only 'productive' to the extent that they produce surplus value and profit *for* the capitalist.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.7 Defining Capital

Isolating a readily applicable working definition of 'capital' from Marx's corpus is no simple task. This is not least due to what Ollman describes as the 'Pareto problem' in Marx's style of writing where "Marx's words are like bats. You can see in them both birds and mice" (Pareto, 1902, p. 332, quoted in Ollman 2015, p. 11). Indeed, as Ollman (2015) and Harvey (2015) point out, there are many descriptions of the term capital in Marx's corpus, including descriptions of it as a 'thing', a process, a relation or economic role ('capital personified'), and as a fetishized subject – i.e. as an agentive thing-in-and-for-itself (Žižek, 2008). As a 'thing' Marx refers to capital as: a sum of money used as investment in production; money used for financial speculations and loans; 'constant capital' - the machinery, tools, materials etc. necessary for production; 'variable capital' - labour hired to work and produce value ; and 'fixed capital' – such as various forms of infrastructure (Harvey, 2013; Marx, 1992). As a process, capital is described as: a form of circulation (as described above); as a totality of movements across moments; as the process of value growing. As a relation, as described above, Marx describes capital as a definite social relation involving the alienation of labour in production, and indeed, pulls in labour as itself definitional to the concept of capital in so far as capital and labour are oppositional poles of one and the same capital-producing relation (Ollman, 2015). Finally,

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<sup>6</sup> This is of course not to say that other forms of labour are insignificant or irrelevant. Indeed many forms of labour outside of the capital-labour relation in production, such as work done in the home, the raising of children, education etc. have long existed as 'free gifts' to capital in the way they facilitate the production of surplus value (Fuchs, 2016; Harvey, 2013).

capital as a fetishized 'thing' brought to life, is described as: a vampire-like creature sucking up the value produced by labour; and as a mystical force capable of autonomous self-expansion:

In truth, however, value is here the subject [i.e. a subject - an independently acting agent] of a process in which, while constantly assuming the form of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original value, and thus valorises itself independently. For the movement in the course of which it adds surplus-value is its own movement, [...] By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth live offspring, or at least lays golden eggs. (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 255)

What the fetishism of capital as a magical ("occult"), or mystical (golden goose) "self-moving substance" (Marx vol. 1 p. 256) entails, is people bearing witness to a "movement made by things [...which] far from being under their control, in fact controls them" (ibid, pp. 167-168). In other words, the many movements within capitalism: the prices of commodities; fluctuating wages; the rates of inflation or interest; financial crises; the waxing and waning of whole industries and occupations etc.; though the cumulative products of human action (as opposed to a law of nature or a supernatural or divine force), come to shape the lives and actions of people in a manner akin to forces beyond our control like the changing of weather, the occurrence of natural disasters, or a capricious divine dictator. In this sense, fetishism within capitalism involves not simply an illusion, but things "appear[ing] as what they are" (ibid, p.166) - that is to say that such movements *really are* in many cases beyond human control. Even the most hardened of sceptics can readily see their money 'magically' grow of its own accord in a bank account through interest, or in the event of a crisis, disappear completely (see Chapter 8).

In sum then, capital is not simply a single thing, or process, but both, and understanding what it is and how it moves, is far from a simple task, being as it is shrouded in fetishism. For clarity, I will refer to capital along Harvey's short-hand description of *value in motion* (Harvey, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017), though I wish to emphasise that understanding this motion entails all aspects of the discussion of capital above. The task of understanding capital as I have set it out here then, involves understanding: the nature of capital as perpetually increasing value; that such value is produced via circulation through different phases – production, realisation, and distribution, and different forms or states – money, commodities, finance; is produced through the social relation between capital and labour; and carries with it a form of fetishism which plays an active role in the movement and reproduction of capital, in so far as its appearance of autonomous movement affects the actions of the human actors who produce it.

## 2.8 Capital: Bourdieu and Marx

As has been argued, commodity production within capitalism is not simply about producing for others, but about producing commodities as a means to produce surplus-value for those in the role of capital. It is then, as I have argued, crucial to distinguish what is meant by the production of commodities and the production of capital, and how the two interrelate. In much of the literature, there is significant overlap between the concepts of capital and the commodity, particularly in work which draws on Bourdieu's notions of markets and various forms of capital (1977, 1984, 1986, 1991). Within such work there sometimes seems little difference between the notion of capital, especially linguistic capital, and the commodity. Park & Wee for example describe how "English is seen as an economic resource, a *commodity* that can be *exchanged in the market for material profit*" (2012, p.124, emphasis added), before going on to explain how "[t]he true value of *linguistic capital* lies in its capacity for *conversion into different types of capital*, including economic" (ibid, p. 142, emphasis added). It is rather difficult to see where the commodity ends and capital begins. If commodified English can be exchanged as a commodity in the market for material profit, which presumably involves the conversion of something linguistic (English) into some other form of good - "a material profit", then is this an instantiation of the successful "conversion" one's linguistic capital into another "type of capital"? If so, then commodity exchange, and the conversion of capital, seem more or less synonymous. What distinction is there, if any, in the production and exchange of each of the commodity and capital?

Bourdieu's conception of capital, and Marx's, are far from synonymous (Harvey, 2015). For Bourdieu, the notion of capital is similar to that of figures in classical political economy like Adam Smith (2003/1776), in so far as capital refers to a *universal* category, referring to one's 'stock' of resources – material and/or symbolic. Indeed, within much of the literature on language commodification (*passim*) one finds commodification described in terms of the production and management of language as a 'resource'. This universalism is all but explicit in Bourdieu's work which gives centrality to "the brutal fact of universal reducibility to economics" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 251) in all social exchanges, including gifts and smiles, and where the extension of the "economic calculation to all the goods, material and symbolic" (Bourdieu 1977: 178) is seen equally as applicable to Algerian Berber Kabyle societies, as it is to the new economy of more recent years which takes up Bourdieu's work. For Marx on the other hand, capital refers to a historically specific form of value production predicated on a social relation of capital and labour. While this perhaps raises questions of how applicable Bourdieu's universal notions of capital and exchange are to work which centres linguistic commodification on the emergence of a new economy (Simpson & O'Regan, 2018), there is a further significant distinction to be made between Marx's and Bourdieu's notions of capital as regards

quality and quantity. As has been said, the crux of Bourdieusian capital, is in its capacity for conversion – to be changed into another form of capital. Bourdieusian capital therefore, is about a *qualitative* exchange, that is, the exchange of one thing for another of a different *quality*. Simply put, without some kind of *qualitative* change, an exchange cannot properly be any form of *conversion*. However, for Marx, capital, is about *quantity*, not the acquisition of different forms of capital for the means of conversion into something else of utility, but “[a]ccumulation for the sake of accumulation, production for the sake of production” (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 742). Indeed, he explicitly makes a distinction between “simple” commodity exchange where *qualitative* motivation (i.e. for use-values) takes precedence, with the kind of capitalist commodity exchange in which quantity (i.e. exchange-value) dominates:

Let us take the process of circulation in a form which presents itself to us as the exchange of commodities pure and simple [bartering for example]. [...] Both of them [those participating in exchange] part with commodities which are of no use to them as use-values, and receive others they need to use. [...] It is otherwise with exchange-value. (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 259)

For Marx, exchange of *equivalence* from a qualitative (use-value) standpoint makes sense. I start with a commodity (C) I do not particularly want or need, and I exchange it for another commodity of a different quality, which I do need – what Marx describes as a C-C or commodity(a)-for-commodity(b) exchange (“pure and simple”). As is perhaps more likely in the contemporary world however, if money were to mediate this exchange, and I sell my commodity for money (M) in order to buy the commodity I want later, essentially the process remains qualitative – C-M-C – I have, ultimately exchanged something that is of no immediate use to myself for something that I want or need – commodity (a) for commodity (b). In contrast however, if one were to exchange money for money: M-M - it would make little sense for an exchange of equivalence to occur. Rather, such an exchange only makes sense, if the money received is *quantitatively* greater than that which I part with in an M-M’ exchange (an amount of money for an increased amount of money), as is found in the financial sector where interest accrues for example. Rather than loaning out money however, the commodity producing capitalist lays out money on means of production and labour in order to produce and consequently sell commodities, only as a means to make more money than they started with – a M-C-M’ circuit. This increase – the production of surplus-value – producing more value than existed previously, is for Marx where growth comes from, and is the essence of what capital *is* – value begetting value.

The question this then raises is whether Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital conversion (which would include linguistic capital among other forms) is also a matter of *quantitative* exchange. For

Calhoun it seems not: “Directly economic capital operates in a money-based market *that can be indefinitely extended*. Cultural capital, by contrast, operates as a matter of status, which is often recognised only within specific fields” (Calhoun, 2003, p. 299, emphasis added). This is not to say however, that individuals cannot through capital conversion end up with ‘more’ than they started with, not least of all in successfully negotiating the dynamic shifting valuations of their Bourdieusian capital across multiple fields (Park & Wee, 2012), but rather that *as a social whole*, the conversion of Bourdieusian capital seems not to be about an *aggregate social growth* – a social total of value greater than what it was before (as with Marx’s notion of capital), but rather about *the distribution of the resources* (symbolic and material) *already at hand* – or in Bourdieu’s words, of creating *profits of distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) through “status”, and not profit in the Marxist sense of ever expanding value – what Marx calls capital. Bourdieu then, as with the earlier discussion based on semiotic approaches to the commodity (Agha, 2011; Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986), focusses largely on exchange, and is more concerned with the *distribution* of symbolic and material value within exchange, and the rights claimed for the ownership or access to value, rather than its *production* in the first instance. I hasten to add at this juncture however, that the identification of such difference between Bourdieu’s and Marx’s notions of capital is not a matter of one refuting the other. Rather, for the purposes of this study, Bourdieu’s work is of direct relevance in terms of *distribution*, that is in the manner in which those within the production process (workers, teachers, managers, etc.) succeed or fail in converting their various forms of Bourdieusian cultural capital within the process of capital *production* in the Marxist sense. This interpretation of Bourdieu’s work offers a window into the interrelation between *distribution* and *production* (i.e. the production of capital in the Marxist sense). We might ask for example how valuations of actors’ Bourdieusian capital (qualifications, race, nationality, taste, habitus etc.) impact upon the division of labour – who does what task and why, as well as how the value produced by labour is distributed among the stakeholders of the workplace in terms of wages, commissions, incentives, and disciplinary action (see Chapter 7). For the sake of clarity, throughout the remainder of this work, when the unmarked term ‘capital’ is used, it refers to the Marxist notion of capital, and in all other cases will be marked as ‘Bourdieuian capital’, or derivatives thereof – ‘Bourdieuian linguistic/cultural/social capital’ etc.

## 2.9 Identifying the Commodity

While, as one might expect, a great deal of work in linguistic anthropology and applied linguistics has focussed on language and sought to understand how it may have undergone varying processes in which it is discursively constructed, produced, and exchanged like/as a commodity or resource, in this thesis it is with the commodity (linguistic or otherwise) where the discussion begins. In other words, the task at hand is to examine the commodity being produced and/or exchanged prior to any

consideration of whether it is, or is not, language or linguistic. In so doing, some notions of language as commodity (though not necessarily representative of the larger body of work) become problematic, where discrete languages themselves (English, Mandarin Chinese, Russian etc.) seem to obscure or stand in for other commodities or services that are produced and sold.

For some, discrete languages themselves are described as being commodities in rather literal terms. Lamb & Coleman for example describe how the private sector is “turning the [English] language into a luxury product, sold by high-street language schools” (2008, p.201, quoted in Park and Wee, 2012, p.10), and similarly for Singh & Han “English in itself is sold as a product or service” (2008, p. 221). Placing ourselves within the processes of both production and exchange – of the “high-street language school” mentioned by Lamb & Coleman, it is rather difficult to maintain the notion of a language like English, rather literally being in itself a product bought and sold. Students within private language schools for example, do not simply pay money in exchange for ‘English’, but rather pay for lessons or for a course of instruction. Indeed, if it were the case that English as a commodified thing could be had simply through exchange with money, rather than through the process of language teaching and learning, much of what passes as English language teaching might well become somewhat redundant. Doubtless the authors cited above do not literally believe language is chopped up and sold in the rather literal way I have implied, but it is worth highlighting this form of slippage from the commodity framed as the ‘actual’ thing being produced and sold, toward the reframing of this commodity in terms of language, in so far as this reframing abstracts away from the production of the commodity. Here for example, Shin discusses the language commodity in exchange in the context of South Korean commercial providers of English language education:

[T]he construction of language as a skill which one must master [...] represents commodification because such skills (e.g. an SAT or TOEFL score as a particular credentialised form of linguistic competence) are presumably acquired in exchange for the tuition fee for the course. (Shin, 2016, p. 519)

No doubt, the end-point which students have in mind in pursuing SAT or TOEFL scores is indeed the attainment of proficiency in English (albeit in a credentialised form), yet this is clearly not what is “acquired in exchange for the tuition fee” at the point of commodity exchange (i.e. money for commodity). What one pays for is tuition, or lessons, which enables one to achieve forms of linguistic competence, rather than the linguistic competence itself. Again, were one able to just buy the score or the qualification outright, the necessity to produce lessons or courses would presumably be redundant. As Walker puts it:

A lawyer cannot guarantee that he can win a court case for a client. Instead, the client is entitled to a professional standard of service, which is usually safeguarded ultimately by the statutory body overseeing the legal profession. Similarly, while ELTCs [English language teaching centres] can guarantee certain aspects of their service such as timelines, cleanliness, teacher qualifications, standard of equipment, and the standard of service/treatment, they cannot normally guarantee outcomes. An ELT centre cannot guarantee that a student is going to be ready to sit an external examination within a certain period of time, or that the student is going to pass the examination. (2010, p. 23)

I am therefore in agreement with Coulmas (1992), and more recently Block (2018), who summarises:

the buyer is not exactly buying the language but a service (teaching, translation), which produces products (a lesson, a translated document). Language teaching, as such a service, is obviously not the language being taught, but it can and does impact the actual acquisition of that language by the buyer. (Block, 2018, p. 6)

Elsewhere, and of direct relevance to the context of this study (see Chapter 4), much has been written on how English language *eikaiwa* schools in Japan entail the “commodification of the White Western Male Body” (Appleby, 2013, p. 136), and constitute a world where “a white native speaker becomes an attractive commodity to lure clients and an object of consumption” (Kubota, 2011a, p. 485). While one certainly could suggest that such schools metaphorically sell the English language, or metaphorically commodify white masculinity through native English speaking-teachers (Appleby, 2013; Bailey, 2002a, 2006; Kubota, 2011b, 2011a), it would be with great difficulty that one could argue that the schools are literally selling either English itself, or its teachers. Again, the notion of language itself, or the teacher literally being a commodity, is problematic as soon as one considers the actual transaction – the act of exchange between the consumer (the student) and the school. One typically does not buy a quantity of English in a language school, nor a teacher, rather one pays for a certain amount of lesson time: X amount of lesson time in exchange for Y amount of money. As soon as one recognises this act of exchange – money for lesson, the recognition of the commodity as the lesson, and not language itself, is immediately transparent. It may be said however, in following Kelly-Holmes’ response to such criticism discussed earlier, that I am being overly ‘literalist’ in my discussion, and attacking so many straw men. To reiterate, the authors cited above, I am certain, are not suggesting that language schools sell either tangible chunks of languages such as English, or teachers themselves, in a slave-like fashion, to their students. Rather, the point I am making is that while much has been written on the discursive construction and packaging of language learning, this often tends to be done in abstraction from the production of the lesson itself. Indeed, much of the

commodification of English, Whiteness<sup>7</sup>, Western culture, and native speakers which Kubota describes above, is discussed in relation to non-commercial - i.e. non-commodity producing contexts, where lessons are *not* produced for exchange, but provided free, through voluntary labour in community centres. We run into the issue then of commodification independent of commodity production.

All this is not to say that the discursive construction of English and/or its native speakers, where languages and speakers are indexed (Park & Wee, 2012) as enabling upward social mobility and cosmopolitanism (Gray, 2010), or with the Othering eroticism, exoticism and native speakerism that Bailey (2002, 2006), Kubota (2011a), and Seargeant (2009) discuss, are inconsequential. Rather, it is the recognition that discursive constructions have not replaced or negated the production of commodities for the market place. Discursive constructions of language(s), language learning, and speakers may very well constitute a certain *value-added* to all manner of commodities (Agha, 2011; Appadurai, 1986; Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Heller, 2010b; Heller, Pujolar, et al., 2014) by indexing them in various ways so as to make them desirable, authentic etc., however, one must recognise that such indexical added value, as its name suggests, is added *to* something – added to the commodity produced by labour in production. To put it another way, the commodity is never immaculately conceived, but is the offspring of human labour within production. The activities of advertising, marketing, and the ideological indexing of products of all kinds is premised on the existence of a product in the first instance. This is not to say that such discursive constructions float in ethereal isolation from the actual practice of language teaching and production of the lesson-commodity, but to suggest that they exist in a dialectical relation where the practice of language teaching affects discourses on language and language teaching and vice-versa. The argument I wish to make here, is not that the *discursive* commodification of English or the way the language and its speakers or teachers are indexed are illusory. They are not some sort of false consciousness which dupes students into parting with their money. It is with certainty that many students undertake the learning of English for all sorts of reasons including romantic *akogare* or yearning (Bailey 2006, Kubota 2011a), the promise of upward social mobility (Park, 2011), or the living out of a neoliberal cosmopolitan lifestyles (Gray, 2010, 2012) mentioned earlier. However, such constructions, do not circumscribe the totality of production, and as I have said, value added, is after all, added *to*

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'Whiteness' as it is referred to in much of the literature on *eikaiwa* (Bailey, 2006, 2007; Kubota, 2011a; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Tajima, 2020) can refer to anything from references to the colours of teachers' skin colour, to an Occidentalising trope that delineates and opens up spaces of imagined communities of 'progressive', 'empowering', and/or 'cosmopolitan' values that Japanese learners of English position themselves in: "Whiteness functions in Japan as the transparent and free-floating signifier of upward mobility and assimilation in 'world culture:' it is the primary sign of the modern, the universal subject, the 'citizen of the world'" (Kelsky 2001a, p. 145, quoted in Bailey 2006).



something, which in the case of language teaching, cannot be reduced to language itself. It is certainly true that many commodities through technological innovation such as automation in production require far less necessary labour than they once did, and go to great lengths to discursively package and distinguish their product from others in order to add value, or extract monopoly rents in the market (Harvey, 2002) (think for example of the miniscule amount of labour required to produce *Coca-Cola* in a fully automated production line, set against the extraordinary lengths its marketing and advertising goes in order to index it as '*the real thing*', and not 'just any old thing'). However, in labour-intensive service jobs such as commercial language teaching (Walker, 2010), the expenditure of human labour in production must be of significance not only in terms of how the lesson-commodity is produced, but also in the determination of its value – in addition to the various ways it is discursively indexed, as well as how this value is distributed once realised (sold) to the student/consumer.

In taking a purely discursive or metaphorical approach to commodification and language, many matters of production have not received the attention they might otherwise receive. It is, for example, incredibly difficult to pin down exactly how labour produces English as a thing for students to consume. This is true not least of all when more quantitative questions come to the fore – How much English-commodity is produced? How quickly is it produced? What is the price of X amount of English? etc. Among the more ethnographically oriented work on language commodification it is notable how rarely monetary quantities are specified in terms of value – such work seems to be largely left to those working in *language economics* (Gazzola & Wickstrom, 2016; Grin, 2001, 2003; Grin et al., 2010). In reframing the object of commodification from language, to the lesson, a range of questions open up that allow one to investigate the relationships between teachers, students, and capital, and of production in general. For example, we might seek to understand the relation between teachers' pay and the price at which lessons are sold, the way in which lessons are produced, the division of labour and form of organisation in producing the lesson, and the general state of labour as regards working conditions and legal rights. Indeed, work which deals with the production of language lessons as a form of commodity production has yet to be undertaken (Block, 2018c), at least not to the same extent as other forms of production in various other workplaces such as the call centre (Boutet, 2012; Cameron, 2005; Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003; Rahman, 2009).

In the previous chapter, I claimed that the question of whether commercially provided ELT was or was not an instantiation of a service industry, should be answered positively, not only in the manner in which its *modus operandi* is to turn a profit, but also in its legal status as distinct from state-regulated 'formal' educational contexts (see Chapter 4). Up until this point however, the discussion has revolved around the commodity and not of services, and so it is necessary to consider how the

two terms relate to one another. For the sake of clarity, I see the service and the commodity of commercial ELT as indivisibly one. Students cannot 'have' the lesson without the teacher there to teach/serve them (or indeed without the efforts of other staff beyond the classroom), and the production of the lesson therefore, and the 'service' of paying someone to do something for you, are therefore one and the same. It is to be understood therefore, that in referring to the lesson as commodity or product, I am referring to a commodity or product which *is* a service – an unfolding product in which the student plays a participatory role, rather than a commodity of a more corporeal kind such as shirts, shoes, or shellfish.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to give an overview of the uptake of political economy in applied- and sociolinguistic work in recent decades, particularly in work which has dealt with language in relation to *the commodity*, and to *capital*. In taking a broad view of the literature, I have argued that there is some ambiguity within such work as a whole, concerning whether terms such as the commodity or commodification are to be interpreted in a literal or metaphorical sense. In doing so, I have neither attempted to discard such work, nor suggested it is in need of correction I might provide. Rather, the literature has led me to a theoretical point of departure whereby a rigorous theorisation of what the commodity and commodity production are is undertaken, prior to the question of whether language is or is not (like) a commodity. In doing so I have suggested that there is something of a crossed purpose between much anthropological work on the commodity /commodification such as the influential work of Appadurai and Heller on the one hand, and that of Marx and Harvey on the other, in so far as the former concern themselves primarily with production and exchange of commodities in and of themselves, whereas Marxist approaches to the commodity centre on the production and flow of capital, where the commodity as "bearer" of *value in motion* is only a *moment* of its overall circuit. Hence, drawing on Marx's work, and contemporary work inspired by that work, it is not commodities, or commodity production in and of itself which is of importance, but rather *capitalist commodity production* – the production of commodities as a means to facilitate the production and

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, for those who subscribe to a labour theory of value, the removal of a physical body of the commodity would only leave behind that which gives a product its 'true price' or 'real standard'. Buying a commodity or service are alike in ultimately being reducible to paying others (whether one sees them or not) to labour in the place of the buyer:

At all times and places, that is dear which it is difficult to come at, or which it costs much labour to acquire; and that cheap which is to be had easily, or with very little labour. Labour alone, therefore, is [...] the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared. (Smith 2003/1776, p. 47)

circulation of capital which is at stake. Following this, the task of defining not only the commodity, but capital comes into view, which, as I have attempted to convey, is a task which defies simple working definitions. To recap, I am referring to capital through Harvey's short hand of *value in motion*, which circumscribes a complex dialectical understanding of capital as both thing and process: as value used to produce more value; as a circuit or movement of value across moments of production, realisation, and distribution, where value *metamorphosises* into and out of varying states (money, commodities, finance); as the social relation between those in the economic roles of labour and capital which produce capital; and as a fetishized autonomous agent capable of its own movements independent of the will of its human producers. I have also discussed Bourdieu's concept of capital, and work based on language and political economy which has drawn on it, and having juxtaposed this with the Marxist concept of capital, framed the valuation and conversion of Bourdieusian capital in terms of the *distribution* of capital in the Marxist sense – in other words, the rights to lay claim to the products and resources, material and symbolic, which capitalist production continually produces. Finally, in turning my attention to commercial ELT as a concrete instantiation of capitalist commodity production with which I am familiar (see Chapter 1), I have argued that despite some interpretations of work on commodified language appearing as the overly literalist slaying of straw men, reorienting our focus onto the lesson rather language itself as a commodity highlights some of the slippage between commodities produced by labour, and notions of commodified language which abstract from production. I hasten to add however, that in doing so, work which has uncovered the complex and significant ways in which language or language learning is indexed and thus acts as forms of *added value*, is not to be discounted, but rather to be incorporated into analysis, and put into dialogue with that which it is added to, which in the case of commercial language teaching, refers to the production of the lesson as commodity.

The flow of capital around its circuit, however, is far from a simple, singular, smooth motion, but rather one that involves crises, and social upheaval of various kinds. As with the life histories of commodities, borrowing from Agha, things can drop in and out of what we might call *capital registers*. For example, money invested in means of production which produces nothing ceases to be capital. Likewise, commodities which are produced may well be the bearers of value, but if nobody buys them – if their value is not realised, they cease to be capital. Capital does not move in benign predictable cycles, but rather in often erratic, even violent, ever-expanding spirals (Harvey, 2017), as the flood and flight of capital into and out of markets and nations (Stiglitz, 2002), and the 'shocks' (Klein, 2007) which emanate as a result are testament to. There is then great emphasis on the 'motion' of capital as value in motion, not least of all as any value which ceases to continually circulate and drops out of the circuit, ceases to be capital as it is unable to valorise or grow. There

are then a number of points of disjuncture and contradiction which exist within this circuit, between the different moments (production-, realisation-, and distribution of value), which affect the flow of capital throughout. It is therefore necessary, to identify where some of these bottle-necks, sticking points, or potentials for crises in the overall flow of capital might exist, how we are to approach them theoretically and methodologically, and what these mean for languages and speakers within workplaces such as the language school.

### 3. A Dialectical Approach to Contradiction in Language Work<sup>9</sup>

In the previous chapter the dialectical nature of Marx's conception of capital as value in motion was discussed, and the chapter concluded by pointing to the potential for contradictions and crises to occur in the overall circuit of capital. In this chapter, as a means to elaborate further on a dialectical approach to capital as value in motion, I turn to recent work in sociolinguistics and related fields which take a political economic approach to language, and has identified a variety of contradictions at play, ranging from production processes in the workplaces of the new economy (Boutet, 2012), language policies of states and schools (Heller, 2006), to the underlying forces of capitalism more broadly (Block, 2018a; Heller, 2010b). This chapter ties together many of the contradictory threads which much sociolinguistic work has uncovered, and proposes a dialectical approach to such contradictions as a theoretical path for furthering research on the place of language within contemporary work, not least of all within the ELT industry. A dialectical approach which stresses internal and often contradictory relations, aims to understand the interrelation between concepts which can otherwise appear as two independent bodies. In building upon sociolinguistic work which highlights the continuities and contradictions of capitalism (Block, 2017, 2018a; Block et al., 2012; Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Holborow, 2015b), this chapter draws attention to the contradictory interrelations between the new economy in late capitalism and capitalism more broadly through discussions of the 'freedom' and alienation of commodified labour, and the relation between use-value and exchange-value embodied in both the commodity and commodified labour. It also argues that a dialectical approach which sees subject and object interrelating and interpenetrating one another, offers a view of how those who perform language work in order to produce capital and facilitate its flow relate to their work, and in doing so dynamically produce new subjectivities – understandings of themselves, their work, and the economy more broadly.

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<sup>9</sup> Parts of this chapter are based upon an article entitled 'Producing the Eikaiwa English Language Lesson: A Dialectical Approach to the Contradictions of Commodity Production', which is forthcoming in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. DOI:10.1111/josl.12415

### 3.1 Thinking Dialectically: Contradictory Identities

*If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?*

(from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

At first glance, many would agree with Alice that her world is indeed a nonsense. The idea of a thing being what it is *not* appears an absurdity. Thinking dialectically however, such propositions are not as absurd as they might first appear. For example, one might define *darkness* as an absence of *light*, or vice-versa. In so doing, one is left with a definition of a thing being not *what it is* (light is light, dark is dark), but as the *non-being of what it is not* (the non-being of some other thing) – i.e. light is non-darkness, and darkness non-light. It is rather difficult to think of the concepts of *darkness* and *light* independently of one another, rather, they are an inseparable *unity*. In thinking about either concept, one necessarily flits back and forth between the two. Such thinking forms the basis of Hegel's proposed form of *Logic* (1989/1812), and later Marx's dialectical materialism. For Hegel, formal logic was problematic in that it: "assumes – that apparently opposed or distinct categories are indeed opposed to or distinct from one another [reflecting] a deeper assumption that all thought is founded upon the laws of identity and non-contradiction" (Houlgate, 2005, p. 29). For Hegel, formal logic makes a great number of presuppositions about the distinction of such categories where "infinity is different from finitude, that content is something other than form, that what is inner is other than what is outer, that mediation, similarly, is not immediacy" (Hegel, 1989/1812, p. 41). Such assumptions represent something of a false start in formal logic, as in assuming rather static, discrete and non-contradictory identities, whatever one does with such identities is likely to lead to partial or problematic propositions and conclusions. The way Hegel illustrates how such a logic works, is through the example of the concept of *being*, where in determining the immediate concept of *being* (i.e. in moving from an abstracted to a more concretised and determined conceptualisation of *being*) we end up with a contradictory identity – a *unity of being and non-being*:

At the beginning of the logic we thought of the difference between being and nothing as an immediate difference that did not require determination. We thought that all we needed to do was to think of being, to think that being *is*, in order to distinguish being from nothing. Now, however, we realize that we cannot sustain the thought of the *immediate* difference of being and nothing, and that we can only think the *determinate* difference between being and nothing or not-being if we think of each term *as* the other. The only way we can think even the most minimal determinate difference between being and not-being is by thinking that being *is not* not-being, and that not-being is not being. Unless we can say of being that it is not what it is not, and

of not-being that it is what it is, we cannot think any clear difference between the terms at all. Free, presuppositionless thinking [i.e. Hegel's form of logic] has thus provided us with our first necessary and unavoidable principle: that, however strange the thought may be to ordinary understanding, the determinate difference between being and not-being can only be thought if being and not-being are recognized to be indistinguishable. In other words, it is only to the extent that we can say what something is *not*, that we can say what it actually *is*. (Houlgate, 2005, pp. 34–35, emphasis in original)<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, at an everyday level, we often attempt to define a thing through its relations to some other thing. Darkness is the absence or non-being of light, black coffee is coffee *without* milk, and a cat is an animal *like, but different from* a dog or any other number of smaller furry four-legged creatures.

What a dialectical approach is *not* however, is a set of oppositional dual concepts (like being and non-being, or light and dark) which exist externally in the application of an *a priori* theory, plucked out of the air by the philosopher or researcher. To stick with our previous example of cats and dogs, the following exchange between the comedic television character *Blackadder*<sup>11</sup> and his buffoonish servant *Baldrick* illustrates well just how inadequate simple oppositions are in defining identities, in discussing their work for a preliminary draft of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* in the historical TV sitcom *Blackadder The Third*:

*Blackadder: Now, what about 'D'?*

*Baldrick: I'm quite pleased with 'dog'.*

*Blackadder: Yes, and your definition of 'dog' is...?*

*Baldrick: Not a cat.*

Baldrick's definition is of course humorous in its uselessness, telling us neither what a cat or dog is, or why and how they are related to one another. Rather than simple oppositions then, dialectical notions of identity are about examining a subject *within a set of relations*, where its relations and their development over time show us what our subject of study is and does. It is rather difficult for example, to explain 'who I am' without thinking about the many relations which define me and what I do: a son, a teacher, a student, a brother, a boyfriend etc. In the first volume of *Capital* (Marx, 1990/1867) Marx's reference to gravity and elliptical orbits are instructive of the importance of

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<sup>10</sup> I turn here to Houlgate's summary rather than to the original source material (Hegel's *Science of Logic*), for the sake of brevity and clarity. The summary covers a discussion of considerable length in the original source material, as well as making Hegel's notoriously dense and labyrinthine writing style more accessible to the reader.

<sup>11</sup> *Blackadder* – a British series of pseudohistorical situation comedies produced for the *BBC*. The third of four series, *Blackadder The Third* takes place in the Regency period around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

relational definitions, not only in defining who people are, but in defining any identity, be it a person or some other 'thing' (Harvey, 2010). Gravity, is not a tangible thing one can physically grasp - one cannot cut open a stone and find the gravity inside, any more than I could be dissected and evidence the teacher-ness or son-ness within my physical body. Gravity can only be understood as a relation – one object falling towards or attracting another object, and in order to understand what gravity is, one must see it in motion and in relation to another body. Dialectical approaches to understanding identities (i.e. understanding what something or someone is), view identities within their sets of relations, and aim to understand how such identities move and develop within such relations, ultimately seeing the world not as a conglomerate of static and independent 'things', but rather as a mass of interrelated *processes* which change over time.

Marx's concern with Hegel's logic however, was its idealism insofar as the identities determined by Hegel – Being and Non-being, are absolute and exist ideally and entirely independently of the conditionalities of the material world. The relation of being and non-being exists outside of space and time. In contrast:

The materialist formulation of the identity of opposites [...] denies the immediacy and absoluteness, [and] *inevitability* of this [Hegelian] identity, and affirms in its place that this identity is a process taking place in space and time, requiring material means, inherently limited and conditional in nature.

(from Martin Nicolaus' *Foreword* in Marx, 1973, pp. 39–40)

What is at stake here is the dialectical point of departure. In place of the application of determined identities of mental abstraction *to* the material world, Marx begins with the concrete, and draws out identities *from* the material world, working between concrete and abstract and back again (Ollman, 2003, 2015). One can see Marx's rejection of idealist absolute identities in the way he berates not only the political economists who separate production and consumption from one another, but also those who reunite them through little more than methodological dogma:

The opponents of the political economists [...] who accuse them of barbarically tearing apart things which belong together [production and consumption], stand either on the same ground as they, or beneath them. [...] As if this rupture had made its way *not from reality into the textbooks*, but rather *from the textbooks into reality*, and *as if the task were the dialectic balancing of concepts, and not the grasping of real relations!* (Marx, 1973, pp. 89–90, emphasis added)

The point here is a rejection of the dialectical mapping of the world through absolute concepts – simply framing everything through the application of sets of oppositional dual-concepts - the

application of a 'textbook into reality' as Marx puts it. Dialectical materialism in contrast, attempts to deal with the material matters at hand – drawing relations out from the concrete events of the material world.

### 3.2 Dialectical Relations

As mentioned above, a dialectical view sees the world not as a mass of independent objects that exist in a stable and coherent essential state independently of, and externally to one another, but rather as an amalgam of multiple *processes* which interrelate with one another - what Ollman (2003, 2015) refers to as a *philosophy of internal relations*. A dialectical approach does not simply emphasise that any one 'thing' is simply defined by the relations in which it stands with other things, but that these other things are themselves defined by the 'thing' in question itself. In other words, the traffic is two way – it is dialectical. I am not simply a 'son' by dint of what I do or say to, or think about, my parents, but also by way of what they do, say, or think about me – we continually define each other. As a dialectical unity, subject and object are seen as relating to each other in a constant dynamic interaction. Though most famously associated with thinkers such as Hegel and Marx, such ideas have roots in ancient philosophy. Heraclitus' example is relatively well known: *No man steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river, and he is not the same man*. Crucially however, this is not simply an assertion of the truism that everything changes, or conversely, that nothing lasts forever, though of course both the river and the man inevitably change with the passing of time. The point is rather that it is the *interaction* between the man and the river that changes them both, and the reflection upon this process which permits a transcendence of a given subjectivity or understanding of oneself and the world. Hegel's dialectical approach describes such a dialectical transcendence as involving the *sublation* of subject-object (Fuchs, 2016; Hegel, 1989/1812; Houlgate, 2005). Here one contradictorily occupies both the position of subject and object, and as a result becomes something more than one was. To return to the example of Heraclitus, as one stands in the river, one acts as a subject in altering its flow. At the same time however, as an object, one is affected by the river in feeling the flow of water against one's ankles. It is the synthesis of the subject-object dialectical unity which leads one to become more than they were before – to gain a new understanding of what (or who) one is, what a river is, and how each interrelate to the other. The position of subject and object constantly interpenetrate one another, in shaping, and being shaped by the other.

### 3.3 Dialectical Contradictions

Not all dialectical relations however are quite as benign as that of Heraclitus' river. Standing in a gentle river up to one's ankles is rather different from being swept away by a raging tide. Each 'side'



of a dialectic subject-object unity has its own tendencies, or in the case of people their own interests, which may very well-run counter to each other. Given my own interest in survival, I am likely to attempt to swim counter to, or to somehow divert myself from the flow of a dangerous river I find myself in. There are often contradictory forces at work within dialectical relations which give them their dynamic nature. Rather than the notion of contradiction in terms of Aristotelean logic – for example ‘I am in the kitchen *and* I am in the park’ – two propositions which logically cannot simultaneously be true, a dialectical notion of contradiction refers to ‘two seemingly opposed forces [...] simultaneously present within a particular situation, an entity, a process or an event.’ (Harvey 2015: 1). The materialist notion of contradiction however, does not place contradictory forces outside of the agency of actors, determining their actions in a rather mechanical way, but are on the contrary, meaningless without the expressions of agency which breathe life into them. Heller, for whom contradiction is a recurrent theme, though not through a dialectical materialist frame as such, attests to exactly this: ‘the contradictions inherent in every discursive space I’ve ever come across provide a source of agency and change’ (2011: 193). As such, “different individuals may feel and react to similar contradictions in very different ways. There is a powerful subjective element in defining and feeling the power of contradictions” (Harvey 2015: 3), they are *productive* – often the ‘mothers of invention’ (ibid: 3). A dialectical view of contradiction, enables a view of how agents internalise and manage contradictory forces pulling them this way and that. In focussing in our attention on contradictions large and small, from the contradictions of capitalism at an abstracted global level to the particular intricacies of individual work processes, a dialectical approach opens up vistas from where we might see how the agency of workers manifests itself, in for example dealing with the contradictory demands of the workplace (see Chapter 6). Such an approach enables us to ask what agents do at the junctures of contradictions, and in whose interests such action is taken.

### 3.4 A Dialectical View of Language work in the New Economy:

Much contemporary work in sociolinguistics has taken on questions of contemporary global political economic changes within the neoliberal period, and how these interrelate with language, particularly in regards to the new economy within late capitalism (Del Percio & Duchêne, 2012; Heller, 2003, 2010a; Heller & Duchêne, 2016; Heller, Pujolar, & Duchêne, 2014). This is usually defined as involving a shift away from the industrial mass-production of goods, and towards the production of informational goods involving new forms of technology, networks, and organisation of production, which cater to demand-driven flexible forms of production (Castells, 2010; Fuchs, 2016). Many are keen to stress that the new economy involves more of a ‘logical continuation’ of industrial capitalism than a ‘rupture’ with it (Heller, 2010b, p. 104). Heller & McElhinny for example see late

capitalism and the new economy therein in terms of the *extension* and *intensification* of “the ways in which capitalism operates to produce profit around the globe” (2017, p. 229). Such *extension* and *intensification* involve: the expansion of new markets and products; increased competition and sourcing of ever cheaper labour and materials; the creation of new customers and desires; the expansion of increasingly niche markets; and maximising profit through adding value to products. What a dialectical approach to the development of capitalism offers, in building upon work which stresses both continuity *and* change, is a view of neoliberalism, the new economy and/or late capitalism not as something new and *externally* related to *other* forms of capitalism which are consigned to history – a view Block, Gray & Holborow (Block et al., 2012) describe as *presentism*, but rather as *internally* related to the development of capitalism as a whole, which involves *both* radical developments *and* continuity.

Discussion of the new economy often involves defining it in opposition to an older economy - a new technological/post-Fordist economy of the present in contrast to an old industrial/Fordist one of the past:

[T]he past – [is] characterised by a strict division of labour, and hierarchies reflecting mental and physical work – literacy requirements and linguistic capital were divided unequally along the workforce. [...] But in the post-Fordist era of computerised workplaces in the new economy, all work involves engagement with knowledge, information, and communication [...]. The division between blue-collar workers and white-collar workers has become blurred as everyone has to make informed decisions at work. Information technology has turned all of us into knowledge workers. The new work place also requires a diversity of capabilities and aptitudes. Skills of planning and implementation are required for almost everybody. Computer literacy is universally needed. Professionals have to move from one domain of work to another with ease, as and when they are required. (Canagarajah, 2005, p. xxiv)

It is argued that these shifts within the new economy summarised above, set the scene for new ways of conceptualising and commodifying that which was formerly seen as a public good - not least of all language (Heller, Pujolar, et al., 2014). Of particular importance to much of the literature on the new economy and its interrelation with language, are particular industries referred to as *language industries* – specified as including: tourism; call centres; translation; marketing; and language teaching (Da Silva, McLaughlin, & Richards, 2007; Heller, 2010b), and the *language workers* therein (Boutet, 2012), all of which are often referred to as being ‘emblematic’ of the new economy (Boutet, 2012; Del Percio, Flubacher, & Duchêne, 2017; Muth, 2018; Schedel, 2018). Though such industries

are acknowledged as not new *per se*, they nevertheless are said to embody ‘new[...] forms of institutionalization [...] set up to maintain and develop language as a resource’ (Da Silva et al., 2007, p. 187). Again, these new forms of institutionalisation and organisation within work processes involving language are often defined in contrast to an ‘old economy’:

In the old economy of primary resource extraction and industrial transformation, the working class was not made up of language workers. Instead, it was management that relied heavily on language and communication as they made their rounds around the job site, conducted meetings and produced reports, for example. Today, one of the main features of the new economy is the major role that language plays at all levels of work. (Da Silva et al., 2007, p. 194)

There is however, an issue here with the potential conflation of certain sectors of economic activity (primary resource extraction, industrial production, and services), to particular historical periods – an ‘old economy’ of the past and a new economy of ‘today’. Indeed, Eagleton (2018) suggests that in Marx’s time, the heyday of industrial capitalism, the largest group of wage labourers were not the industrial working class of mills and factories, but mostly female domestic servants.<sup>12</sup> Heller & McElhinny (2017) point out how the *extension* and *intensification* which marks late capitalism applies not only to service jobs in the tertiary sector, but also to the extraction of primary resources. With this in mind, it can be difficult to discern which industries may be a language industry ‘emblematic’ of a new economy, and which are not. Take for example Del Percio, Flubacher & Duchêne’s discussion on processes which demand flexible linguistic practices and repertoires in the work place:

While these processes seem to be emblematic of the late capitalistic service sector, we would like to argue that our observations can be also transferred to other late capitalistic industries – such as the construction industry, the medical sector, and the food industries – where language emerges as a main tool in enabling the coordination of daily work practices. (2017, p. 63)

Categorised above as distinct from the ‘emblematic late capitalistic service sector’ are ‘other late capitalistic industries’. It is unclear however, why some industries listed above as ‘other’ industries,

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<sup>12</sup> As Marx was almost certainly well aware. Marx’s attention was drawn to the proletariat of industrial capitalist commodity production primarily because these workers were ‘productive’ – i.e. were involved in the production of surplus value and hence ever more capital (see Chapter 2), while domestic servants, at least by Marx’s reckoning, did not. In a conducive business environment, one might well get richer by employing ever more hands to produce ever more commodities to sell. Enriching oneself through hiring ever more domestic servants seems somewhat counterintuitive. See Mohun (2003) for further discussion.

such as the medical sector and food industries, are not, at least in part, service sector jobs also emblematic of the new economy (e.g. health care, catering, restaurants etc.). In addition, those service industries which *are* considered to be emblematic of the new economy, such as the tourism industry, education, and the call centre, are certainly not confined to a *new economy*, but predate it. It might well be argued here that it is the changes that concern *language* which are emblematic, and not the industries or the workers in themselves *per se*. However, the danger here is a narrowing view of the contemporary economy to only those industries where language seems to play a key role. The call centre, language classes, and the tourism industry may seem emblematic and central to the new economy for the sociolinguist, but how far can one extrapolate from them to changes in the economy at large? While deindustrialisation and the growth of the service industry in more developed countries has indeed occurred, at the same time mass industrialization and proletarianization has happened elsewhere in the world:

In the advanced capitalist countries, such as the United States, Britain, Germany, Canada, Japan and Singapore, the trends in the division of labour have favoured the production of an educated workforce capable of engaging flexibly in a wide range of different labour processes. [...] By way of contrast, the labour conditions in the clothing factories in Bangladesh, the electronics factories of southern China, the maquila factories strung along the Mexican border or the chemical complexes of Indonesia are much closer to those with which Marx was so familiar. (Harvey, 2015, p. 129)

The extent of this relocation of production around the globe is worth noting. The neoliberal period has borne witness to a mass mobilisation of labour for industrial/Fordist production which dwarfs that of earlier eras. In summarizing the mobilization of labour in China since the opening economic reforms from the 1980's, Harvey describes how 'China is now in the midst of the largest mass migration the world has ever seen, which already dwarfs the migrations that reshaped America and the modern Western world' (Harvey, 2005, p. 127). To talk of a new economy then, or to put it more precisely - to talk about what is new in the economy at large, we must appreciate what it is exactly that is 'new'. The mass mobilization of labour in China – the largest and most rapid in the history of capitalism, as well as the super-exploitation present across the world (including the first) is just as much 'new' as the place of information, knowledge, and flexibility in many, though not all, workplaces (Harvey 2005). Some scholars in sociolinguistics do indeed acknowledge their somewhat one-sided portrayal of 'newness'. Both multi-authored collections edited by Duchene & Heller (2012) and Martin-Jones & Martin (2017) for example, explicitly recognise the relation between off-shoring production from the West to developing nations, and the growth of service sector and

information/knowledge-based jobs, and fully acknowledge that their respective collections are weighted towards contexts within Europe and North America, and are to an extent, one side of the global political economic story. To be clear, I am not arguing here that sociolinguists have made a fetish of the 'newness' of the new economy. Both Boutet (2012) and Heller & McElhinny (2017) for example build upon Marcel Cohen's accounts of *language work* from the 1950's before the onset of a new economy or neoliberalism. As I have said, those quoted above are plainly aware that service industries and language work are not in and of themselves new. Neither am I arguing that nothing has changed since the capitalism of Marx's day. Rather, what I wish to propose in this chapter is a view of a dialectical mediation between *variegated* forms of capitalist production (Harvey, 2015), where elements of old *and* new forms of production coexist, often in dynamic tension with one another, within contemporary workplaces.

What a dialectical view of the economy rejects, is the view of a new economy and old/Fordist economy as two distinct objects – both qualitatively and temporally distinct (with the former *replacing* the latter), and rather towards a view of them as two interconnected and concomitant expressions of a single larger and ever-changing process – namely that of the historical development of capitalism. Indeed, much work in sociolinguistics speaks to such a dialectical mediation. In both Cameron's (2000) and Boutet's (2012) work on the call centre, a workplace often described as emblematic of the new economy, language work does not seem to particularly involve the flexible demand-driven production often associated with the new economy, but rather the precise opposite – the scripting, styling and grooming of language in a Taylorised fashion much more akin to the factory line of industrial Fordist mass production. Similarly, in language teaching, another of the previously mentioned language industries, Block & Gray (2016) describe how language teacher training in the UK has in some cases involved a move away from the notion of teaching as a *craft* which the teacher self-reflectively develops, and towards a Taylorised deskilling model of the teacher, where formulaic and proceduralised approaches to language teaching take hold.

### 3.5 The Relations of Production

While the *forces of production* – the means and materials through which commodities are produced, have undergone much radical transformation in recent decades (information technology, automation, digital products etc.), the *relations of production* – where commodified labour produces value not for itself, but to be appropriated by a capitalist other, though not entirely unchanged, are argued by many to represent more of a continuation than rupture. For example, in discussing a certain conflation between the *forces-* and *the relations of production*, Fuchs warns against a

characterisation of the contemporary period of capitalism as radically different from that which came before:

Speaking of the emergence of a post-industrial, knowledge, network, or information society describes changes of the *productive forces*: Knowledge and information technology have become important means for producing commodities that serve the purpose of capital accumulation. It is a mistake to characterise this transformation as radical discontinuity or new society because the economy not only consists of the productive forces but also of the interaction of productive forces and *relations of production*. (Fuchs, 2016, p. 277 emphasis added)

Along similar lines, Holborow's (2015) discussion of the neoliberal discourse of skills and the place of language within the new economy, emphasises the continuity of the fundamental relation involved in commodity production, the labour - capital relation:

[R]eference is made to post-industrial work as if the use of different skills and networked work patterns [...] have altered social relations. But extraction of surplus value still takes place even if it is through the exploitation of communication skills, multilingualism or IT skills within an overall system of production. And workers, for all their higher levels of skills [...] are compelled to sell their knowledge and skills to make a living and so are compelled to enter the world of work under these conditions. (Holborow, 2015a, p. 21)

Whether one produces material, informational, or linguistic products, for the majority of those living in capitalist market societies, one produces not for oneself, but for others in the market, and despite all the neoliberal rhetoric of entrepreneurialism, a significant proportion of the world's population continues to sell its labour and waive its rights to the value it produces in return for wages. Marx gives an interesting illustration of the importance of this relation within capitalism, with the production of what we might now call a knowledge-based product:

Capitalist production is not merely the production of commodities, it is, by its very essence, the production of surplus-value. The worker produces not for himself [sic], but for capital. It is no longer sufficient, therefore, for him to simply produce. He must produce surplus-value. [...] If we may take an example from outside the sphere of material production, a schoolmaster is a productive worker when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his pupils, he works himself into the ground to enrich the owner of the school. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, makes no difference to the relation. (1990/1867, p. 644)

Whether production of sausages or knowledge-filled students then, the relation of production remains the same – workers produce value as a means to valorise capital (i.e. make a profit for the capitalist). The relations involved in capitalist production are key to a dialectical approach, as it places great emphasis on relational definitions – that is to say what someone, something, or some process is, is best understood in its relations to other people, things, and processes, which come to define who or what it is and does:

A negro is a negro. He only becomes a slave in certain circumstances. A cotton-spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. Only in certain circumstances does it become capital. Torn from those circumstances it is no more capital than gold is money or sugar the price of sugar. (Marx quoted in Lukács, 1971, p. 13)

While knowledge, information technology, and ways in which language is produced, may well represent much that is new within capitalist production, the relations of production are a different proposition. This is not however to suggest that the labour-capital relation is the only social relation worthy of discussion within capitalist societies – we do of course relate to one another in a huge variety of ways. Indeed, in discussing the complex international division of digital labour in the production of smart phones and computing devices, Fuchs argues that a great variety of relations of production such as housework, slavery, Taylorised factory work, and social media prosumers<sup>13</sup> all interrelate with one another in a dialectical mediation of multiple modes of production (2016, p. 177). Nevertheless, the labour-capital relation within capitalist commodity production is key, as it offers a foundation from which to build discussions of control and freedom in the way people relate to their work.

### 3.6 Commodification and Freedom

When Holborow's account of commodification quoted above, is juxtaposed with some work on language commodification in the new economy, one would be forgiven for thinking the respective authors are describing two rather different political-economic worlds. Take for example Muth & Del Percio's introduction to the recent special issue on commodification and the policing of language:

[W]e understand discourses of commodification as both the result of the extension of neoliberal market logic to all domains of social life including language and in the same time as a means to challenge seemingly exclusive and inevitable dynamics of neoliberal capitalism and the legacies

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<sup>13</sup> Consumers who have a direct hand in the act of production, often taking on tasks which were previously performed by labour. Self-assembly flatpack furniture and self-service supermarket checkouts for example.

of previous regimes of dispossession and exploitation. In that respect, this special issue is not only meant as a continuation of the debate on language commodification, but also as a way to highlight where language-policy and -commodification intersect and continue to serve processes of normalization and ordering as well as emancipation and freedom. (2018, p. 134)

It would appear on first glance, that Muth & Del Percio's suggestion of commodification as 'a means to challenge the legacies of previous regimes of dispossession and exploitation', and as a means of "emancipation and freedom" on the one hand, and Holborow's Marxist view of commodification within capitalism as involving a definite historical exploitative labour-capital relation where workers are 'compelled to enter the world of work' on the other, are two irreconcilable views of what commodification and capitalism are all about – emancipation on the one hand, and subservience on the other. What I wish to do here however, is to take on the issues of exploitation and emancipation as they relate to commodification not as two externally related issues, but rather in taking a dialectical approach, to argue that commodification does indeed contradictorily involve both submission to an exploiting other, and simultaneously, certain forms of freedom. In passing, Del Percio's discussion of the commodification of migrant labour, embodies just such a contradiction:

*In order for migrants to become free and autonomous actors in the employment market, they must adopt a specific role to enable them to read the market [...] and to submit themselves to its disciplining power. (Del Percio, 2018, p. 245 emphasis added)*

The contradiction here is that of a necessary submission to a disciplining power in order to be 'free' and autonomous – a contradiction which appears not dissimilar to Marx's discussion of the freedom of the worker, who is:

*free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and [...] on the other hand, [...] he is free of all the objects needed for the realization of his labour power [i.e. 'free' of everything he needs to reproduce himself – shelter, food, clothing etc. and depends on working for wages to buy them] (1990/1867, pp. 272–273)*

The form of freedom which the commodification of labour entails, is the truncated form of freedom which allows one to select which commodities one buys, or to choose who one will sell oneself to as commodified labour in the market. At the same time however is a second ironic sense of freedom – the position of labour as being 'free' of the possession of life's necessities and thus coerced to work for others in order to survive. Even in successfully submitting oneself to the 'disciplining power' of



the market, the freedom one attains does not permit the freedom to decide what one produces with one's labour, how it should be produced, nor control over the products of one's labour.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.7 The Alienation of Labour

For Marx, the question of freedom and control within production were of paramount importance, as it is within production – within the various work places in which people spend significant proportions of their active lives, where they relate to other people, and to the world around them. Marx then, was concerned with the dialectical interaction between humanity and its external nature which mutually produce each other, in much the same way as described by the subject-object *sublation* of the Heraclitan river example earlier:

[M]an, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature [...]. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, his legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature. (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 283)

This is of particular relevance to the world of work, which by definition involves the interaction between humans, nature, and remade or 'second nature' (Fuchs, 2016) – the cumulative products of society which comprise the environment in which we live. However, what distinguishes between the dialectical experience of standing in a Heraclitan river and working in a factory or call centre, are firstly a highly developed social division of labour, and secondly the social relations involved in capitalist commodity production.

The division of labour involves a division of work processes into ever more discrete, formalised, and repetitive tasks – something which finds its home in the call centre and factory floor alike (Boutet, 2012; Cameron, 2000; Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003; Rahman, 2009). The potential reduction of workers to unthinking automata performing such tasks has been long discussed, since the time of the classical political economist Adam Smith:

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth mentioning in passing here that Marx himself saw the commodification of labour and the truncated 'freedom' of the market as far preferable to the slave- and feudal societies which preceded them. Indeed, he was known to describe in positive terms the bourgeois middle-classes as the most radical force of history to date (Eagleton, 2018), and his accounts of the achievements of capitalism were often written in glowing terms (see for example Marx & Engels, 2002) which make for surprising reading given the baggage a writer of Marx's reputation carries.

The man whose life is spent in performing a few simple operations [...] has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. (Smith, 2003/1776, p. 987)

Dialectically interpreting Smith, the concern here is that the rather limited and monotonous manner in which workers relate to their external world through the endless repetition of mind-numbing tasks, not only breaks down work into increasingly isolated and ever simpler tasks, but also breaks down the worker in a similar fashion (indeed, it is the division of 'labour' in the double sense of the word – division of work tasks, but also division of the peopled workforce who perform such tasks). In a footnote in Marx's *Capital* there is an account of a French labourer escaping the dehumanising effects of the division of labour, through his experiences of working in a variety of work processes and dialectically transforming himself from 'mollusc to man':

A French worker wrote as follows on his return from San Francisco: 'I could never have believed that I was capable of working at all the trades I practiced in California. I was firmly convinced that I was fit for nothing but the printing of books...Once I was in the midst of this world of adventurers, who change their jobs as often as their shirts, then, upon my faith, I did as the others. As mining did not pay well enough, I left for the city, and there I became in succession a typographer, a slater, a plumber, etc. As a result of this discovery that I am fit for any sort of work, I feel less of a mollusc and more of a man. (Corbon quoted in Marx, 1990/1867, p. 618)

However, though the realisation of the French labourer's abilities to work, learn, and produce in a growing variety of ways does indeed represent an emancipation of sorts from the repetitive grind of monotonous work processes, he nevertheless remains 'free' in Marx's double sense – free to choose his employer or trade, but not free to control both the manner of production and the product itself. What Marx adds to the loss of 'understanding' and 'invention' of Smith's concern with the division of labour, is an understanding that it is not just the organisation of production (the division of labour) which has an alienating effect on the worker, but also the social relations involved within production and consumption, where labour produces not for itself, but for an external alien demand:

What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and

mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself [...] his labour is [...] not voluntary but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. (Marx, 1988, p. 74)

Such concerns are hardly confined to the capitalism of Marx's day, but also in the language industries of the new economy. In Cameron's discussion on styling in the call centre for example we find that:

the speaker [the call centre worker], is not the 'stylistic agent' and does not 'own' the style s/he adopts. [...Thus] employees may perceive the prescribed way of speaking not just as 'inauthentic' in the manner of any professional persona, but more problematically, as alien and demeaning. (2000, p. 101).

Such alienation however does not imply an imposed stasis or retardation of the kind of dynamic subjectivity present in the Heraclitan river. Even within, or often precisely because of alienating work processes, workers have become transformed, often radically so. Capitalist commodity production is fundamentally about producing for exchange rather than for utility, or in the terms of Classical Liberal and Marxist political economy – about producing exchange-values, rather than use-values. Capitalist commodity production is fundamentally about the production of things which satisfy a use-value or utility largely *external* to those who labour within production, and which consequently can *realise* an exchange-value in the market by being sold (Harvey, 2015; Marx, 1973). As such, there is an inherent contradiction between a desire to produce and live in accordance with one's own needs or wants on the one hand (producing use-values for oneself rather than for exchange), and the alienating need to produce for others, where production is shaped, not simply by the diktats of one's capitalist employer, but by the coercive laws of competition in the market which capitalists and workers alike must bow to.

For Lukács (1971), the position of workers as commodified labour within capitalism contains within it the dialectical potentiality for radical transformation of the working class. As labour is commodified in capitalism, it occupies the contradictory position of both subject and object – as a subject it produces objects through the act of labouring, yet it is objectified as an ownable and alienable 'thing' through its sale in the labour market as commodified labour (albeit in Polanyi's view a 'fictitious' one – see Chapter 2). In terms related to the commodity – the worker is simultaneously a use-value - something useful or valuable in and of itself (i.e. as a human being), and an exchange-

value – something bought and sold *which exists for exchange*. Lukács thus sees the worker as an embodiment of the commodity form which comes to know itself through a dialectical mediation in the workplace and the market: '[T]he proletariat is [...] the commodity form coming to an awareness of itself, and in the act of transcending itself' (Eagleton, 2012, p. 181). While Lukács' notion of an emerging working class consciousness ready to break the bounds of capitalism may for some lack direct relevance at the *end of history* (Fukuyama, 2012), what Lukács' discussion highlights in relevance to this chapter, is the manner in which people – in this case labour, internalise and live out contradictions, rather than being subject to contradictory forces existing *out there* so to speak. For many of those who have sold their labour to someone else, it is not particularly challenging to think of instances or ways in which they have been treated in an object-like fashion, pushed and pulled around by actors and forces alien to themselves: following rules, regulations, and procedures dictated by others; having their worth quantified through a monetary value; feeling concerned about what their work life *is doing to them*; or losing one's job as a result of de-industrialisation, outsourcing, streamlining, or financial crises etc., among others. It is also not difficult to imagine how being treated in such an object-like way may have had transformative effects on subjectivities and consequent action, in for example the emergence of forms of class consciousness, trade unions, collective bargaining, strike action, and political movements.

### 3.8 Use-Value and Exchange-Value in Linguistic Commodification

Duchêne & Heller's collection (2012) explores the contradictory relation between use- and exchange-value in their discussion of the antagonisms between the production of language in terms of expressing 'authentic' ethno-national identities on the one hand – what they encompass under the trope of '*pride*', and the production of language not for oneself or one's immediate community, but for others in the market – what they term as '*profit*', on the other. They ask:

how do you construct a product as unadulterated [...] How do you maintain its integrity if you sell it to others, in ways which inevitably require different kinds of performances, that is, an adulteration of the product? (Duchêne & Heller, 2012, p. 12)

The struggle which Duchêne & Heller identify then is the struggle between a desire to produce use-values, material or otherwise, which are useful, meaningful, or 'authentic' to the producers themselves, and the imperative of survival in a market-based society – the need to produce that which has realisable exchange-value - to produce for others. The contradiction here pits the expression of one's ethno-national 'authenticity' which is justified so far as it is unique, bounded, and often maintained by the nation-state, against the hegemony of the *exchange-value regime*

within production (Harvey, 2015) which simultaneously permits and threatens such an 'authenticity's existence. Here, participating in the market ensures the continuation of certain practices and products (linguistic or otherwise), but comes at the cost of ceding control to the alienating forces of market demand, which to a degree, come to dictate what such an 'authenticity' should be like. Through processes of commodification, it is not only new ways of seeing language, in terms of *profit* for instance, but also new understandings of the 'authentic' *pride* which precedes and bleeds into it. There is contradictory mutual dependence and antagonism at stake here. The concern of 'diluting' or 'corrupting' one's 'authentic' identity, language, culture etc. through market forces of commodification, exists side by side with the need to participate in the market in order to procure the financial and other resources necessary for the (re)production of identities, languages, cultures etc. To put it more succinctly, commodification in the market both threatens *and* ensures the survival of products and practices.

Along similar lines, in a discussion of Jaffe's (1999) work on Corsican nationalists in France, Canagarajah finds a similar contradiction, where language lies at the intersection of use and exchange, or *pride* and *profit*, between modernist state-bounded linguistic identities and postmodernist global flow. Here one sees how the strategies of maintaining Corsican 'purity' by restricting its use to in-groups on the one hand, and by the use of French-only for public purposes on the other, 'prevents the development of Corsican as a suitable medium for contemporary processes [...] reduces the status of the language, [...] and limits its currency' (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 159). The choice of words here - 'currency' is apt – and returns us to the notion of exchange-value, as it is that form of value which is best able to ride on the back of global capital flows (O'Regan, forthcoming), whether individuals, institutions, or languages, that thrives. Yet at the same time, it is such relentless global flows which in the neoliberal era have become increasingly independent of the control of state apparatuses (democratic or otherwise), which threaten identities, jobs, ways of life, and language.

### 3.9 Conclusion

A dialectical approach rejects the notion of static isolated 'things' which possess essential qualities inherent to them. Rather, it stresses that in understanding what a 'thing' is, it must be seen within its set of relations, shaping and being shaped by things 'other' to it. Such interrelations are dynamic, and often involve the contradictory pushes and pulls of two or more forces or interests, which actors often find themselves in the middle of. A key concern to much work in political economy, is the manner in which people relate to their work, where our attention is drawn not just to what people

do at work, but dialectically, what doing such work does to them, and it is here where the notions of freedom and alienation become salient. What this chapter has attempted to do, in tying together many of the contradictory threads uncovered by contemporary sociolinguistic work, is to illustrate how many of the forces and tendencies within particular variegated forms of capitalism – ‘new’ and ‘old’ interrelate, and interpenetrate one another, and illustrate how these contradictions are lived out by those performing work where language is a key component. While this chapter has largely focussed on interrelating variegated forms of capitalism and contradictions pertinent to language in work, it has done so in rather broad terms drawing on a diverse range of scholarly sources on a range of different forms of work. What is necessary then, is a more focussed dialectical examination of a particular form of work, of its interrelations, its contradictions, and its processes, and it is to this task, towards the work of *eikaiwa* teaching, which the next chapter turns.

## 4 Dialectically Defining *Eikaiwa*

*Eikaiwa* - 英会話 (*eikaiwa*) is usually translated as 'English conversation' or 'the act of English Conversation'. On the face of it, *English conversation* seems a rather mundane and transparent term. There is, however, far more behind the term *eikaiwa* than simply the matter of two or more people conversing in some form of the English language. The American *eikaiwa* teacher Douglas Lummis, captures well the insufficiency of such a translated gloss in the introduction to his autobiographical account of teaching in Japanese universities in the 1960s and 70s:

I never heard the expression "English conversation" (*eikaiwa*) until I came to Japan. Of course, the combination of words is understandable. But, as it is used here, the expression "English conversation" has the quality of a slogan, in that it implies far more than speaking in the English language. The often-heard sentence "I want to learn how to speak English conversation" (rather than "to speak English") is not redundant, as many English teachers naively suppose. "English conversation" offers not simply language training but a world view. Learning "English conversation" is not the same as learning how to speak English (Lummis, 1976, p. 1)

In the decades following Lummis' account, *eikaiwa* schools have sprung up all over Japan. Although the *eikaiwa* industry is not what it once was, peaking in the early to mid-2000s, it remains a major industry with around 3,800 business establishments right across Japan providing around 5 million students with English language education (METI, 2019), with industry growth in recent years of around 2% (Yano Research Institute, 2018). By way of comparison, the figure for the total number of students enrolled in universities in Japan is far lower, at around 3 million (Statista, 2019). It thus remains one of the major players in the teaching, learning, and ideological construction of English in Japan (Seargeant, 2009).

In this chapter, my aim is to present a synthesis of the available literature on *eikaiwa*, so as to build up a picture of what *eikaiwa* is, and what those involved in it do. What follows, is a discussion based on a range of literature on *eikaiwa* including: scholarly work (Appleby, 2013, 2014, 2018; Bailey, 2002a, 2006, 2007; Baldauf, Li, & Zhao, 2010; Bossaer, 2003; Hawley-Nagatomo, 2013, 2016; Kachru, 2005; Kennett & Jackson, 2014; Kitamura, 2016; Kubota, 2011a, 2011b; Nuske, 2014; Okano, 2016; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Piller et al., 2010; Seargeant, 2009; Simpson, 2018; Tajima, 2018b, 2018a; Takahashi, 2013); newspaper articles (Budmar, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Matsutani, 2010; McCurry & Williams, 2007; Stubbings, 2007); union reports (General Union, n.d., 2015b, 2015a); market research reports (Yano Research Institute, 2015, 2018); official literature from *eikaiwa* corporations (*Berlitz*, *Gaba*, *NOVA*, *Rizap*, *World englishes*); as well as other non-scholarly accounts of *eikaiwa* – (Bueno, 2003; Currie-Robson, 2015; Garscadden, 2010; JaDan, 2018; Lummis, 1976). In taking a

dialectical approach to defining *eikaiwa* (see Chapter 3), I argue that much of the discussion of what *eikaiwa* is, has excluded or marginalised many of the people and practices which take place within it, which, in so far as making *eikaiwa* what it is by being a part of it, define it.

This chapter begins with a review of how *eikaiwa* is defined, both implicitly and explicitly within the literature (*passim*). In discussing how *eikaiwa* is defined through relation to its other – ‘formal’ language teaching, I argue that many of the characteristics deemed definitional to each of *eikaiwa*, and formal education, which define each other through opposition, are contradictorily present in their other, in an *interpenetration of opposites*. The chapter then turns its attention to the student-teacher relation within *eikaiwa*, and expands upon discussion within literature by turning its attention towards non-native and female teachers within *eikaiwa*, and by addressing the power relations between three of the main stakeholders within *eikaiwa* schools: the student as customer, the teacher as labour, and the *eikaiwa* school or corporation in the role of capital. Following this, the chapter gives an account of how *eikaiwa* as an industry has related to global political economic changes over time, and illustrates the precarity, and forms of Taylorised deskilled production prevalent in much of the industry.

#### 4.1 Defining *Eikaiwa*

Though the translated gloss of *eikaiwa* as *English conversation* falls short of defining all that *eikaiwa* is, it does nevertheless retain a certain double-sidedness of the term, insofar as it performs the double duty of referring to both object and process (in for example “conversation” as a countable *object* – “a conversation” on the one hand, and conversation as a *process* on the other – a thing one can *do*). As both object and process, *eikaiwa* then is simultaneously *something* one teaches or learns, and *how* it is taught and learnt. Both the workplace and the work-life. It would after all seem slightly strange for any conversation on the topic of *eikaiwa* to merely describe the qualities of the physical spaces in which it takes place, the actors involved, and the resources used, all in stasis, without any mention of the processes which involve and animate all three. Thus, *eikaiwa* as it is used here refers to: physical spaces such as schools; institutions such as corporations who provide English education; an industry; a particular subject one learns or teaches; processes such as particular forms of language teaching and learning; and particular sets of beliefs and values within all of those previously listed.

In attempting to definitively define *eikaiwa* as *this* and not *that*, a great deal of what takes place in the physical and discursive spaces of *eikaiwa* is often excluded. Hawley-Nagatomo for example rather neatly cleaves English language education in Japan in two as follows:



[There are] two prevalent modes of English language education in Japan: *eigo*, which is generally taught by Japanese teachers; and *eikaiwa*, which is generally taught by foreign [predominantly inner-circle native speakers of English] teachers. *Eigo* is considered essential to pass exams, and *eikaiwa* is considered essential to gain communicative skills. (Hawley-Nagatomo, 2016, p. 10)

Following this a range of caveats which blur the initial categorical distinction are added, including how 'foreign' teachers do in fact teach in '*eigo*' contexts, and how '*eikaiwa*' students *do* include those with "concrete educational and/or career goals" (ibid, p. 2), often based on tests such as TOEIC. Furthermore, she also details how in recent years the ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has attempted to put more focus on communication in the '*eigo*' classroom. There is an extent then, to which the definitional characteristics of '*eigo*' and '*eikaiwa*' English teaching interpenetrate one another. The question this immediately raises is whether such contradictions challenge the integrity of the original definitions, or merely add nuance through exception, in for example adding qualifying terms to such definitions: '*eigo* is *mostly* taught by Japanese teachers', '*eikaiwa* is *mostly* taught by foreign teachers' etc. However, maintaining *eikaiwa* (or indeed *eigo*) as a category of essence – i.e. *eikaiwa* is *essentially* this, even if other contradictory things occur within it, comes at a cost. For example, in discussion of the racial/national/linguistic profile of *eikaiwa* teachers, if one were to maintain that *eikaiwa* is *by definition* concerned with inner-circle White native speakers of English teachers, one would be forced to marginalise or exclude completely teachers with different profiles (see Tajima 2018a, 2018b for example), who are involved in producing and reproducing whatever it is that *eikaiwa* is. To be clear, Hawley-Nagatomo makes no such claim of providing any all-encompassing or definitive taxonomy, but rather, as with much of the literature to be discussed in this chapter, comes to implicitly define and bound *eikaiwa* by focussing on certain aspects of what it is over others. What is needed then is an approach which takes on *eikaiwa* as a dialectical *totality*, inclusive of the presence of contradictions which challenge a more static, non-contradictory definition (see Chapter 3). Secondly, a dialectical approach offers a view of *eikaiwa* not so much as a static *thing*, but as a *process*, as something pregnant with contradictions that bear changes through time. To stand at a single juncture in time and claim that *this* is definitively *eikaiwa*, is of course insufficient, as *eikaiwa* is not what it was, and will yet be something different from what it is now. There is however, little discussion of the *motion* of *eikaiwa*. Rather, the literature appears as a disparate collection of *moments* of *eikaiwa*. Thus, a synthesis of the literature, as a foundation for the later discussion of the findings of this study, is necessary to capture the movement of *eikaiwa* as a *process* in constant motion.

## 4.2 Approaching *Eikaiwa* as a Contradictory Identity

A dialectical approach to a subject rejects the idea of an eternal absolute and non-contradictory identity, and as such a single subject seen in its myriad relations can at times appear to be, and mean, all kinds of different and often contradictory things (see Chapter 3). Indeed, this has already been discussed in relation to the ‘bats and mice’ nature of the term *capital* (see Chapter 2, p.34). There is then a certain extent to which *eikaiwa* will become “bat”-like, in so far as the discussion which follows treats *eikaiwa* in a variety of forms, where the term *eikaiwa* encompasses physical and institutional spaces, an industry, forms of pedagogical practice, and ideologies therein. Moreover, it is rather difficult to develop each of these in turn and in isolation of each other, as to do so would rather undermine a dialectical inquiry which aims to grasp how the many parts of *eikaiwa* interrelate to one another and form a *totality*. With this in mind the method of presentation which follows does a certain amount of jumping back and forth between many of the themes discussed. Finally, though what follows is a discussion which approaches *eikaiwa* as a *totality*, this is not to say that the task at hand is any claim of once and for all adequately ‘capturing’ such a totality. What is not being proposed is a ‘total’ description of everything *eikaiwa* is or was, indeed to do so would be contradictory to a dialectical approach that takes constant change and process as its most fundamental precept. Rather, what follows is a discussion of *eikaiwa* which approaches it as a *totality* of myriad relations, in full knowledge that such discussion can only ever give a partial view of such a *totality*.

## 4.3 *Eikaiwa* and the Formal / Non-formal Unity

The following is a joke about a pupil being examined by his biology teacher, which illustrates well a dialectical notion of identity:

*“What is an elephant?” “An animal that lives in the jungle, where there are no horses.” “What is a fish?” “An animal that has no legs, unlike a horse” “What is a dog?” “An animal that, unlike horses, barks” “OK, what is a horse?” Perplexed and totally thrown off balance, the poor surprised pupil starts to mumble and cry, unable to provide an answer.*

(Adapted from Žižek, 2014, p. 104)

We see glimpses of such dialectical thought, though not explicitly termed as such, within much of the literature on *eikaiwa*, where *eikaiwa*, as with the various animals in the joke above, comes to be defined in relation to what it is *not*. In particular, *eikaiwa* is often conceptualised in opposition to the ‘horse’ of formal education and the practices therein. Kubota for example defines *eikaiwa* as the “learning [of] English conversation in Japan *outside of* formal educational institutions.” (Kubota, 2011a, emphasis added). Along similar lines, Takahashi describes *eikaiwa* schools’ “ability to provide

*what [formal] school English education could not offer: small classes, native speaker teachers, conversation-based teaching methods and flexible timetables*” (Takahashi, 2013, p. 9, emphasis added). Moreover, such dialectical glimpses arise not only from scholarly voices, but come from language teachers themselves. Appleby for example found that teachers of English for academic purposes within higher education in Japan positioned themselves via contrasts “between low-status, sexualised, native-speaker language teaching/teachers in conversation schools [*eikaiwa* schools] and high-status, professional teaching/teachers in universities” (2018, p. 46), defining themselves and what they do through opposition to what they are *not* – i.e. *not eikaiwa* teachers. However, as I have pointed out, a dialectical analysis does not simply set out to identify pairs of oppositionally defining terms, but seeks to explore their relations both to, and beyond each other. What is required is an account of the contradictions between formal and nonformal education, how one seemingly slips into the other, and how this interrelates to other spheres and processes such as the state, the neoliberal marketization of education, and a view of *eikaiwa* as an ongoing process in terms of its historical movement.

In their taxonomy of language teaching contexts, Baldauf, Li & Zhao name the category within which *eikaiwa* is a cited example of “Other Language Teaching” (Baldauf et al., 2010) an area defined, again, by what it is not – “Other”. Of particular interest however is their discussion of a certain blurring of lines between an “Other” category and “formal” areas of language education, where Baldauf et al. begin to tease out some of the contradictions within their own taxonomy:

There are some contradictions to be found in OLT [Other Language Teaching]. It is a non-governmental function, but it penetrates many sectors of society; it does not provide accreditation education, but a qualification is the main purpose for many learners; and it is not standard education, but it is marked by the normative use of methods prevailing in the formal educational spectrum. (Baldauf et al., 2010, p. 245)

As an introduction to a multi-authored collection on nonformal education in Japan (though not dealing with *eikaiwa*) Okano begins her discussion of nonformal education, again, along oppositionally defining lines: “Nonformal education [...] refers to intentional teaching and learning activities that occur outside formal schooling.” (2016, p. 1). Having detailed the lack of consensus on a single definition of “nonformal education” however, and in acknowledging the same blurred lines as Baldauf et al. above, Okano proceeds to provide her working definition of formal education as follows:

[F]ormal education is intentional, organized learning provided within schools and educational institutions sanctioned by the government (which requires conformity to various standards and

guidelines), and is offered systematically with clear objectives and is often age-graded. Formal education institutions in the context of this book are approved by the government [...] on the basis that these schools conform to requirements set out in the School Education Law [set by the Japanese Ministry of Education]. Completion of formal education courses provide government-sanctioned qualifications that are recognised as pre-requisites for a higher level of education and/or in the labour market. (Okano, 2016, p. 5)

In following Okano's definition, what then, if any, of the defining features of formal education listed above, would exclude *eikaiwa*? Few would argue that *eikaiwa* is not "intentional" or "organized", however some might suggest that *eikaiwa*, unlike formal education, does not take place in the "educational institutions sanctioned by the government". Seargeant for example discusses *eikaiwa* under the heading of "The Commercial Sector" (2009, p. 64). Indeed, it is true that many, perhaps most *eikaiwa* institutions are positioned more as commercial businesses than educational institutions *per se*, falling under the governmental jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry (METI), and not the department responsible for education – the ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). As such, they are regulated by the state only so far as they follow laws which apply to commercial businesses, and not through any of MEXT's regulations regarding education (Breaden, 2016; Hawley-Nagatomo, 2016). The issue here is the bounding of *eikaiwa* to a particular form of institution as it relates to the state and to the economy. *Eikaiwa* here comes to mean a kind of institution which exists as a commercial enterprise, ranging from corporate giants, to the cottage industry of teachers who work from their own homes (Hawley Nagatomo 2013, 2016), and which do not relate directly to the state in matters of education.

However, such a definition overlooks both the past and present of *eikaiwa*. Lummis's (1976) account of teaching in the 1960's and 70's for example, exclusively deals with *eikaiwa* as a subject taught in the university. Similarly, at the time of writing, a search on the website *Gaijinpots* for university teaching jobs, (a website popular among job hunting language teachers in Japan), yielded a number of vacant positions for teachers of "*eikaiwa*" or "conversational English" classes at universities. While many of these universities are themselves private institutions, and the jobs advertised are largely through private dispatch companies and not directly from the universities themselves, it is hard to argue that *eikaiwa* teaching within universities stands in no relation to the state (consider funding, curricula, length of study, exchanges of information and data, which among others, are all ways in which universities relate to the state). What we are left with is two *eikaiwas* - one which does not relate directly to the state (i.e. it takes no cues from the ministry which deals with education - MEXT), and another *eikaiwa* which does, albeit potentially indirectly through private universities' ties to the state and its policy. Furthermore, it would appear that *eikaiwa* is to be found

within institutions that relate very strongly to states other than that of Japan. At the time of writing, *The British Council* school in downtown Tokyo for example, describes itself as an 英会話スクール ('*eikaiwa* school'), in a sign by the entrance and in advertisements in metro stations. While it is true then to say then that there are *eikaiwa* institutions which do not relate directly to the state, at the same time, there are also *eikaiwa* that do, to varying extents and to varying states. All this, save nothing for the prevalence of English teachers within Japan who teach, and have taught, at both the university or state school, *and* the commercial *eikaiwa* school, either consecutively or simultaneously, and the blurring of lines between formal/nonformal that such movement might facilitate.

Within the formal school system too, we find drawing a boundary which excludes *eikaiwa* as an Other problematic. In discussion of the formal *eigo* sector of English language education in high schools, Hawley-Nagatomo describes the 'communication-based' classes taught by "foreign" (meaning inner-circle native speakers of English) assistant language teachers (ALTs), many of whom work simultaneously, prior, or subsequently in the *eikaiwa* industry. Here one notes the number of *eikaiwa*/non-formal features as detailed by Hawley-Nagatomo, which are contradictorily present in its Other. In contrast to the *yakudoku* – (grammar translation method) characteristic of the *eigo*/formal sector, we find a 'communication-based' class. In place of the Japanese teacher of English, one finds the inner-circle native speaker of English associated heavily with the *eikaiwa*/non-formal sector. Furthermore, the instrumental – exam oriented focus of Hawley-Nagatomo's *eigo*/formal high school classes seems at times absent when classes taught by ALTs "are often viewed more as a means to touch English than actually learn how to speak it" (Hawley-Nagatomo, 2016, p. 1). Though there is no further discussion given of what 'touching' English entails, it nonetheless seems as if an instrumentalism, at least in learning to speak the language, is lacking in the place it is most expected – the *eigo*/formal context, though this may be due in no small part to the way reading and writing skills tend to dominate high stakes tests such as university entrance exams, which often have little or no spoken English components.

To return to Okano's working definition, we find excluding *eikaiwa* from a formal category problematic on the grounds of the former's "Government-sanctioned qualifications – for labour market and higher education". While it is no doubt true that many *eikaiwa* learners have things other than language proficiency, let alone accredited certification or exams on their mind (Kubota 2011a, 2011b), there are, nevertheless, *eikaiwa* institutions which put some measure of language proficiency, and institutionally recognised and sanctioned qualifications, front and centre. Take the official website (at the time of writing) from the *eikaiwa* chain RIZAP (Rizap website), where the

TOEIC test, a test which, in line with Okano's definition at least, is sanctioned by the state and facilitates entry to and upward mobility in education and the labour market, comes to the fore. The *RIZAP* homepage fades between images of various students, each time displaying an improvement in their TOEIC test scores. The TOEIC test is front and centre both literally and figuratively:



(Screenshot from *RIZAP*'s official website)

Whereas in the ALT classes of the 'formal' state-sector we find students content to 'touch' English, rather than as a means to achieve some instrumental end, what we find with the *eikaiwa RIZAP* is precisely the instrumental view of language which was earlier proposed as definitional to *eigo*/formal education.

A further manner in which *eikaiwa* is defined oppositionally to formal education, here both in terms of Japanese formal language education and formal language education more broadly, is in terms of pedagogy. Seargeant contrasts *eikaiwa* with contemporary TESOL orthodoxy:

The most visible context in which the actualities of language learning within Japanese society clash with current trends and recommendations in contemporary TESOL theory is that of the commercial language school, or *eikaiwa* industry. Given that these organisations are first and foremost commercial businesses, the promotion of their services is likely to tend toward the saleable rather than the pedagogically sound (Seargeant, 2009, p. 94)

Seargeant goes on to discuss how *eikaiwa* deviates from contemporary TESOL practise in so far as they propound a variety of what Phillipson (1992) elsewhere terms *the native speaker fallacy*, the notion that a native speaker of English, as an authentic embodiment of linguistic and cultural knowledge, is the *de facto* ideal teacher of English. However, while it is no doubt true that a good deal of the native speaker fallacy and native speakerist hiring practices are far from uncommon within *eikaiwa*, what is worth noting about Seargeant's argument is a lack of empirical evidence in making such claims about an alleged pedagogy definitional to *eikaiwa*. Indeed, within Seargeant's discussion, the only empirical work on *eikaiwa* that is cited is that of Bailey (2006) who focuses on

advertising rather than pedagogic practice, and of a single example of promotional literature from the *eikaiwa* corporation *NOVA*, detailing pseudo-scientific information about the brainwaves of Japanese and English native speakers in relation to language. There is however, no reference to any scholarly work, or even anecdotal evidence of: what actually takes place in the *eikaiwa* classroom between teacher and student; teachers' educational backgrounds and/or training at the schools; or the underlying methodologies of teaching materials and how they are used in *eikaiwa*. While it is certainly true that *eikaiwa* may in many cases 'tend toward the saleable rather than the pedagogically sound', this does not mean that *eikaiwa* bears no relation to formal education or more orthodox TESOL pedagogy, and indeed the manner in which its relation to contemporary TESOL and formal language teaching on the one hand, coexist in some tension and contradiction with the incessant drive for profit in commercial *eikaiwa* that Seargeant quite rightly points to on the other hand, is something yet to be examined in the literature.

Kachru (2005) also seems to imply that *eikaiwa* deviates from orthodox language pedagogy when in his summary of *eikaiwa as an ideology and subculture* he claims "that the ideology of 'English conversation' [*eikaiwa*] is not the same as acquiring competence in speaking English" (2005, p. 76). While this may be true, saying that one thing is not the other does not preclude the two from simultaneously occurring. While there is indeed empirical work that shows some *eikaiwa* students make little if any progress vis-à-vis language acquisition (Kubota 2011a), and indeed some *eikaiwa* practices seem to involve no actual conversation at all (Kennett & Jackson, 2014), this does not necessarily equate to *eikaiwa* bearing no relation to language acquisition, TESOL, and formal language teaching.

In many cases what one sees in *eikaiwa* does very much look like a certain TESOL orthodoxy, though as Seargeant does not elaborate on what the "contemporary TESOL theory" he has in mind is, beyond a rejection of the native speaker fallacy, it is difficult to say exactly what kind of theory and/or practice *eikaiwa* is being differentiated from. Take for example the autobiographical account of Eva P. Bueno, an *eikaiwa* teacher who describes the pedagogical method she was trained to use at the *eikaiwa* chain "*Blitz*" - a thinly veiled pseudonym for the chain *Berlitz*:<sup>15</sup> "introduce the subject with lead in questions, produce short statements, repeat examples, practice drill, mix questions, ask the student to provide two questions, and do a role play." (Bueno, 2003, p. 106). Here, we have a list of procedures reminiscent of the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) format which very often underlies communicative language teaching (CLT). One finds similar overviews of methodological

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<sup>15</sup> Given the detailed account of the history of the method and school which Bueno details in the book, the similarity between the pseudonym 'Blitz' and the name of the school *Berlitz*, and the status Bueno accords the school as a 'leading language school', there can be little doubt she is referring to *Berlitz*.

procedure in the official literature of the *eikaiwa* themselves. Take for example the *eikaiwa NOVA*'s account of their teaching methodology, taken at the time of writing:

[T]he instructor's first priority [is] to put everyone at ease with each other by setting up a simple communicative warm-up task connected to the lesson theme. This then progresses to the introduction of the key language, followed by pronunciation and listening practice. As the lesson progresses, the students gain confidence in their own communicative ability and quickly begin to use the target language independently. This is then brought to bear in the application stage in the final section of the lesson, where the students use the language in a real-life situation while the instructor observes the students and evaluates their performance. (*NOVA official website*)

Again, we have something relatively similar to Bueno's account, a warm up activity to introduce the theme, a presentation stage where key language is introduced, a practice section, then a production section or "application stage" as *NOVA* terms it. Another major *eikaiwa* chain *Gaba* explicitly mentions the "Communicative Language Teaching methodology" as their approach, before summarising, in a step by step manner, a PPP format along similar lines to those just discussed:

<b>1. Introductions &amp; Warm-up</b>	Put your client at ease, build rapport, and elicit existing understanding of the lesson's function. Allowing the client to adjust into speaking English before getting into the lesson proper is a crucial step. (3-5 minutes)
<b>2. Target Language</b>	Formally introduce your client to the function of the lesson and the associated language. (5-10 minutes)
<b>3. Practice Activities</b>	Lead the client through several structured exercises to build familiarity with language in a progressive manner. Each activity allows for more independence on the client's part. (10-15 minutes)
<b>4. Application</b>	The goal of the lesson: Provide a space for your client to produce the language and demonstrate the function independently. (10 minutes)
<b>5. Lesson Record &amp; Feedback</b>	Finally, provide pertinent feedback on your client's performance while entering comments and new vocabulary/ structures on GabaWeb for the client to review later – multitasking is key here! (5 minutes)

(Screenshot from *Gaba* official website)

There is however, a further sense in which Bueno's account chimes in with a certain orthodoxy, in terms of the way teaching methodology is imparted to and practised by the teacher. In an account of the neoliberal marketization of language teacher training, Block and Gray (2016) give an account of how a deskilling of the language teacher reduces questions of methodological training in the CELTA program (the Cambridge Certificate for teaching English to speakers of other languages) to the reception and regurgitation of a 'correct' set of procedures, seldom up for negotiation or innovation.



In reference to the education of PGCE teachers in the UK, teachers most likely in preparation for work in the formal education sector, Block and Gray summarise: “These teachers conceived of CLT as a confining set of prefabricated teaching bites” (2016, p. 491), a sentiment that rings true with Bueno’s account:

And the ‘method’ was not to be challenged, changed, or played with. Each lesson was supposed to follow a very rigid pattern, so that the ‘product’ could be delivered according to the *Blitz* [Berlitz] way of delivering the product. [...A] military straight-jacket of a technique (2003, p. 108)

In putting Block & Gray’s and Bueno’s accounts in dialogue with one another, so far as methodology is approached as a rather rigid set of techniques, one sees one of the contradictions between formal and non-formal sectors marked out by Baldauf et al., where the nonformal sector (which again for them includes *eikaiwa*) often involves “the normative use of methods prevailing in the formal educational spectrum” (2010, p. 245).

It is worth keeping in mind that one of the above examples – *NOVA*, is the same *eikaiwa* corporation as that which produced the pseudo-scientific literature about brainwaves present in Seargeant’s discussion. This however, is not necessarily to say that there has been a great change in *eikaiwa*’s approach to, or representation of, their methodological approaches to the teaching of English. Nor is it necessarily a total rebuttal of Seargeants’ earlier argument. The point here, is that there is not a sufficient body of empirical evidence upon which to base either an argument of a historical shift, or that *eikaiwa* does or does not run against “contemporary TESOL theory”. The question would be to see how both sides of *eikaiwa* – the tendency “toward the saleable” which produces such pseudo-science and *eikaiwa*’s relation to TESOL and formal education coexist, and how the contradictory tensions therein interrelate. Of course, the above examples of teaching methodology from contemporary *eikaiwa* literature tell us very little about the actual teaching practice within *eikaiwa* and how it relates to language teaching elsewhere. The texts are often rather short, summarised in a paragraph or two, or in a procedural diagram, and written in very general terms. It does however, I would suggest, invite a number of questions as to how such methodologies are, or are not, implemented, adapted, or in light of Bueno’s “straight jacket” analogy – resisted.

What I have argued here is that confining *eikaiwa* – its institutions its agents and its practices, to a nonformal or commercial Other of formal language education is difficult to maintain on the grounds of a considerable amount of slippage and overlap between the *eigo/eikaiwa* or formal/nonformal divides. This does not mean to say that such concepts should be discarded, or that the characterisations therein are misapprehensions. Rather, what I am arguing for is what many in the Hegelian/Marxist tradition of dialectics refer to as an *interpenetration of opposites*, that is to say an

identity (non-formal or 'other' education) which is defined *by being what it is not* (it is non-formal or 'other' from formal) though nevertheless displaying many of the features of, and to an extent becoming, its oppositionally defining other. We find those features characteristic of formal education such as: relations to the state through MEXT and state sanctioned qualifications; an instrumental view of language which focuses on certification and exams; and an orthodox form of language teaching methodology and form of implementing such methodology through training; are all also present in certain aspects of a non-formal or Othered *eikaiwa*. And conversely, we find many aspects of a non-formal *eikaiwa*: communication-based approaches to teaching (rather than grammar translation); 'touching' the language rather than acquiring it; the prevalence of inner-circle native speakers of English teachers; all present in *eikaiwa*'s formal others (in for example the university and the high school). Again, this is not to say that the formal/non-formal distinction is defunct, but rather to say *eikaiwa* exists in a variety of possible ways within a formal/nonformal dialectical *unity*, rather than being something *distinct* and *external* to its other.

#### 4.4 *Eikaiwa*: The Student – Teacher Relation

For much of the literature, *eikaiwa* entails a very particular gendered and racialised form of relation between student and teacher, whereby the heart of the matter is said to be the satisfaction of Japanese female learners' romantic yearning or *akogare*, for White, Western, and especially American males (Appleby 2013; Bailey 2002, 2006, 2007; Kennet & Jackson 2014; Kitamura 2016; Kubota 2011a, 2011b; Piller & Takahashi 2006; Piller Takahashi & Watanabe 2010). At the intersection of private for-profit enterprise and such *akogare*, one finds that:

Teaching and learning *eikaiwa* in Japan is a commercialized activity built on the commodification of English, Whiteness, Western culture, and native speakers constructed as superior, cool, exotic, or desirable. (Kubota, 2011a, pp. 485–486)

While no doubt many would instantly recognise Kubota's description of *eikaiwa*, one should not take such a short description of *eikaiwa tout court*, as there are a range of ways in which the *eikaiwa* student and teacher relate to one another (as Kubota herself is well aware), along intersections of racial, gendered, linguistic (native/non-native speaker status), sexualised, and economic relations. Although Kubota (2011a, 2011b) quite rightly emphasises that such *akogare* is nuanced and diverse, there remains much of *eikaiwa* which remains outside such a frame.

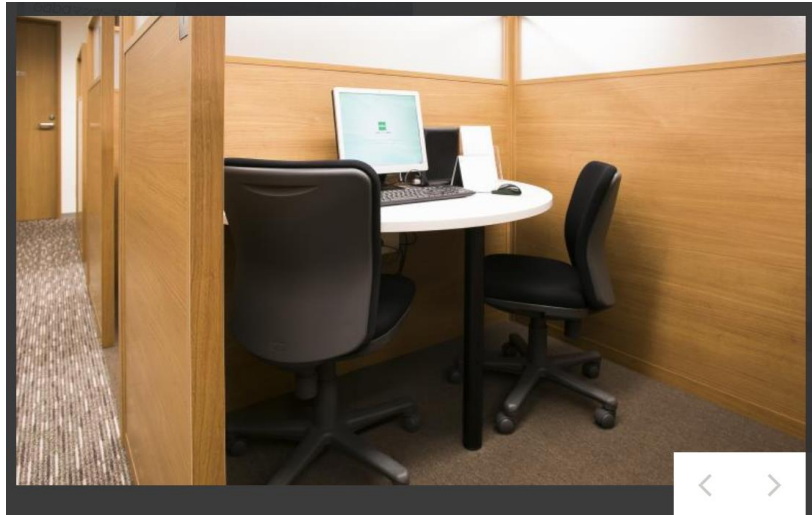
The reference to *akogare* as a yearning or desire for something should not, I argue, be seen solely in metaphoric terms. Though no doubt it *does* involve the desire for participation in an imagined community of global cosmopolitans (Kubota 2011a) and the *eikaiwa* is indeed a 'wonderland' for many students to live out their fantasies of self-transformation (Bailey 2006, 2007), *akogare* within

*eikaiwa* involves more than the imagined. Romantic and/or sexual relationships between teachers and students are not always a metaphorical simulation of a deep-seated desire, but are very often realised. While it is highly doubtful that any *eikaiwa* are literally providing a match-making service, or doubling up as brothels, many students do reportedly enrol in *eikaiwa* to spend time with and potentially develop romantic relationships with a ‘foreign’ teacher, and one does indeed find language learning for “Man hunting” purposes among Japanese female students of English (Piller & Takahashi, 2006, p. 74). Romantic relations between teachers and students in *eikaiwa* are far from uncommon (Appleby 2018; Currie-Robson 2015). Indeed, several of the larger *eikaiwa* chains have explicit contractual rules forbidding their employees (the *eikaiwa* teachers) from fraternizing with students (Appleby 2013, Bailey 2002), which as Nuske (2014) points out, are very often bent and/or broken.

*Akogare* along the lines outlined above however, has tended to be approached from the student rather than the teachers’ side of the teacher-student relation. Appleby is something of an exception to this in giving the voices of *eikaiwa* teachers a platform, attesting to their objectification and commodification. As one male teacher puts it in Appleby’s study: “In many ways you feel like a whore, I suppose, being involved in it. So it's like [being a] glorified hostess”<sup>16</sup> (2013, p. 138). However, while much of the academic literature details the ‘commodification’ of the white masculinity of teachers, it is female *eikaiwa* teachers, an area somewhat neglected within the literature (exceptions being Tajima 2018a, Tajima 2018b, Hawley-Nagatomo 2013, Hawley-Nagatomo 2016), who are objectified and sexualised in often more extreme ways. While the previous analogy between the *eikaiwa* and the hostess bar may seem something of a stretch, it is worth bearing in mind that the sexual harassment of female teachers is a recurring theme in the literature of the *General Union* – the largest union representing *eikaiwa* workers across Japan, and in the press. Within many of the *eikaiwa* schools the lesson is a potentially intimate affair, with many *eikaiwa* offering lessons as one-on-one (*man-tsu-man* – ‘man to man’ in Japanese) as their default form of lesson. Here interaction between teacher and student is somewhat secluded, and sitting together in close proximity can be conducive to a range of sexualised activity. Indeed, as informants from Bailey’s work on advertising suggested, “*Man-tsu-man*” connotes “‘with you only’ or ‘for you only’ [and] a subtle connotation of being ‘available for personal purposes’” (Bailey 2006, p. 118)

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<sup>16</sup> *Hostesses* (and to a lesser extent their male equivalent *Hosts*) are to be found in the hostess bars all over Japan, where an overwhelmingly male clientele drink and flirtatiously chat with the predominantly young attractive women who work there. A range of sexualised activities are on offer at such establishments ranging from flirtatious conversation, to kissing, cuddling, and the groping of body parts.



(An example of a *Gaba* lesson booth, screenshot taken from the *Gaba* official website)

Female *eikaiwa* teachers' experiences range from inappropriate verbal propositions made by male students such as "I want to drink your breast milk" or "I want your blowjob" (McCrostie 2014), to cases of students masturbating under the desk, right up to the tragic case of British 22-year-old *eikaiwa* teacher Lindsay Hawker, who was raped and murdered by her *eikaiwa* student in 2007. Avoiding future tragedies is often cited by *eikaiwa* institutions as part of the rationale for creating and enforcing rules which prevent teachers from fraternizing with students. However, this regulation of the relation between student and teacher cannot be understood outside of the student and teacher's economic relation. In view of the student as a paying client, there is often a clear asymmetry in the way the teacher-student relation is regulated, in so far as the rules on fraternizing and/or inappropriate behaviour often apply far more strictly to *eikaiwa* employees than to its students, if it applies to students at all. Many teachers relate stories of those in management turning a blind eye to complaints of sexual harassment, and even punishing teachers for complaining or refusing to teach students who exhibit such behaviour in their classes (General Union). This asymmetry involves not just the student-teacher relation and the institutional regulation therein (made by the *eikaiwa*, or indeed those from larger legal structures such as national sexual harassment laws), but also relate to methods of teacher evaluation, remuneration, and job security:

Clients can also wield negative evaluations [of their teachers] like a weapon. Carly [an *eikaiwa* teacher and victim of sexual abuse] says that out of 6,000 *Gaba* lessons taught, she received only two negative evaluations, both from students she refused to go on a date with. Carly says the negative evaluations will stay on her record — too many and she risks a pay cut or not having her six-month contract renewed. (McCrostie, 2014)

The asymmetry here is put rather starkly, with students ‘wielding’ power over their teachers through the mechanism of teacher evaluation, and their position of power relative to the teachers as ‘clients’ of the school. The economic relation between each of the teacher, student, and institution however, are seldom discussed at length within the scholarly literature. Rather there tends to be a focus on the student in the role of consumer and the teacher as an object of consumption, rather than the interrelation between all three of labour, consumer, and capital, in the act of producing and consuming the lesson. Furthermore, one should keep in view that *eikaiwa* students and teachers relate to each other in ways in which the satisfaction of a romanticised *akogare* does not seem a particularly apt frame. A range of students and motivations comprise the makeup of *eikaiwa* students including those with corporate aspirations, hobbyists, those wishing to travel overseas, retirees, housewives, professionals such as doctors, high school students, and young children. Indeed, according to Budmar’s interviews with industry insiders (Budmar, 2012a, 2013) recent years have seen a large increase in demand from corporate clients and children, where in the case of the latter one hopes the romanticisation or sexualisation of the relation between teacher and student is zero.

It is also worth putting the teacher-student relation, and the *akogare* therein, in historical context, so as to glean some insight into how *eikaiwa* has, and is continuing to change. For example, in Lummis’ (1976) account of his experiences of teaching *eikaiwa* since the early 1960’s, there is much mention of students’ obsession and infatuation with American Culture and White Americans, yet there is no mention of a sexualised or romanticised aspect to this desire, nor is there any mention of the gendered form of practice – female student and male teacher, dominating *eikaiwa*, so prevalent in later literature. Similarly, there is not any discussion of the gendering of practices or romanticised or sexualised desire in Kachru’s (2005) discussion of *eikaiwa* as an ideology, though being based largely on Lummis’ account this is not altogether surprising. This does not of course mean that such things were not present or prevalent in Lummis’ time, and there is little I have been able to triangulate Lummis’ account with, as literature on *eikaiwa* prior to the turn of the millennium is very thin on the ground. There is however, reason for emphasising the historical contingency of the gendering and sexualisation of *eikaiwa* practices, as these gendered forms of *akogare* so often tied to accounts of *eikaiwa* in more recent decades are strongly linked with social and economic changes in Japan. In advertising for example, “the female agency depicted by the *eikaiwa* [in adverts] articulates with a growing consciousness of female consumer agency, manifested in domestic Japanese product and services advertising and in other social and cultural formations” (Bailey 2006: 106). Moving forward from Bailey’s work on advertisements at the turn of the millennium however, I did not find (Simpson, 2018) the kind of objectification of Whiteness, the West, or male teachers so

prevalent in much of the literature, but rather found that representations of teachers in advertising, both in text and image, were largely absent, linking this to discourses of neoliberal *homo-oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008) – individualised consumer-selves as producers of their own satisfaction. Tajima (2018a, 2018b) meanwhile, found that the *akogare* between teacher and student in skype-based *eikaiwa* reversed the gendering of the relation, relating male Japanese students' romantic *akogare* to their online female Filipina teachers. Such *akogare* clearly does not run along the lines of a desire for Whiteness, or Western males, as the teachers involved are Asian females, nor is it likely to relate to the previously discussed changes in female consumer agency in Japan cited by Bailey. What is at stake here however, is not a claim of sweeping historical changes in *eikaiwa* – once again, there is simply not enough empirical data upon which to make such generalizations. Rather, what is being argued, is that the form of gendered, racialised, western-centric *akogare* which circumscribes much of the scholarly literature on *eikaiwa*, itself being of a particular time and place, leaves much space for discussion of what *eikaiwa* is or was, beyond the frame of romanticised *akogare* for Whiteness, for males, for the West, and for native speakers of English.

#### 4.5 Native and Non-native English-speaking Teachers of the *Eikaiwa*

As I have argued, a great deal of the literature on *eikaiwa* is, to an extent, confined to a discussion of native speakers of English as the prototypical teachers and objects of desire. For Kachru (2005) however, this is much less to do with the kind of socio-economic trends in Japanese female consumption cited by Bailey, and far more to do with ideologies of native speaker supremacy which are not particular to Japan, but global. The picture of *eikaiwa* as an ideology and 'subculture' we get, is of a set of relations which Kachru is almost a lone voice in examining, namely that of how *eikaiwa* relates to language and language teaching outside of Japan. For Kachru:

The idea of *eikaiwa* indeed is not restricted to Japan. It is a subculture, and such subcultures are alive and very much kicking in various reincarnations in other regions of Asia. In fact, even now, Indian men in Indian ethnic newspapers in the USA and the UK – as in India – seek and prefer 'convent educated' brides and reveal their obsession for colour preferences. [...] but the most pernicious examples of it are in our academic centres, professional societies, and professional journals that feed this ideology in various ways (Kachru 2005, p. 77)

This is in stark contrast to the overwhelming majority of the literature where *eikaiwa* is tacitly assumed to be a thing in and of Japan. Indeed, the widespread adoption of the term *akogare* in much of the literature – a form of desire or yearning deemed culturally peculiar to Japan and the Japanese, underscores this. Moreover, as Tajima has shown (2018a, 2018b), *eikaiwa* is no longer a practice which solely takes place within the physical spaces of Japan, but involves the virtual spaces

of internet-mediated classes, and the physical spaces inhabited by participants in the Philippines as well as Japan. Moreover, according to Breaden (2016) *eikaiwa* has become, to an extent, an international affair, with major corporate providers of *eikaiwa* running study abroad programmes for students, and opening language schools as far afield as Bali, Hawaii, and Cairns. However, the relations Kachru draws between Japan and other physical and discursive spaces, especially in the rest of Asia, tend to reduce his ideology/subculture of *eikaiwa* to a sub-branch of the native speaker fallacy, or a form of native speakerism, and a continued resistance to emerging and already existing varieties of English:

The 'English Conversation Ideology' (*Eikaiwa*) is not Anglophone Asia's only continued effort to bark up the wrong tree in order to avoid confronting the functional and pragmatic realities in imparting English education [...] The result of this ostrich-like attitude is that a Brahminic caste hierarchy is sustained – and encouraged – in most of Anglophone Asia. (Kachru 2005: 239)

Here one feels *eikaiwa* as an ideology has been spread rather thinly, in so far as it relates primarily to issues of colour, and linguistic and cultural ownership, and far less to the issues of the gendered and sexualised practices of consumption discussed above, or developments in Japanese and global economies. The choice of Kachru's language here is worth noting. A "Brahministic caste hierarchy" is one into which one is born – where the biologically- hereditarily determined traits such as race, colour, country of origin, supposed cultural heritage etc. determine one's place as a (il)legitimate language user, or indeed language teacher. However, what is necessary here as regards *eikaiwa*, is a view of how such a Brahministic hierarchy intersects with other socio-economic hierarchies. While according to Kachru's ideology of *eikaiwa*, the inner-circle white native speaker of English may well be top of the tree, in terms of precarity, remuneration, career prospects, and social status in the field of language teaching, *eikaiwa* teachers are often far down the pecking order, as is discussed later in this chapter.

In keeping with the methodological emphasis on *processes in motion*, one sees certain moves being made within *eikaiwa* away from the notion of the *eikaiwa* teacher as white, male, and a native speaker of English. *Gaba's* current official *YouTube* channel for example, features a video entitled "*Instructors from around the world / Teaching in Japan with Gaba*" (*Gaba* official *YouTube* channel) where two young female teachers, one from the Philippines and another from India, are interviewed on the subjects of diversity within the *eikaiwa* school and their non-native English-speaking status and its relation to language teaching. In response to the question "Is there a lot of diversity among instructors?", the teachers respond positively, mentioning colleagues from Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and France. When responding to the question "Did *Gaba* offer you a fair opportunity?", the question is immediately interpreted in terms of diversity and native-speaker status: "[Teacher 1]

Yes definitely. *Gaba's* strength is in its diversity, so they want non-native speakers just as much as they want native speakers". Later in the video, the teachers go on to speak of the advantages they have in language teaching over their native speaker counterparts, mentioning their experience of learning English as a second or other language, and their ability to better empathise with their students. Similarly, in the FAQ section of the *Berlitz* website aimed at prospective teachers, the following question and answer exchange is displayed:

[Question] I'm not a native English speaker. Can I still work at *Berlitz*?

[Answer] As evidenced by more than 70 nationalities delivering lessons, primarily in English, we are looking for native or native-fluent instructors (*Berlitz* official website)

The reference to and specification of the number of nationalities of the instructors – “more than 70”, again draws on a discourse of diversity - non-native speakers of English can, and indeed do teach English at *Berlitz*. Simultaneously however, there appear to be explicit limits to such diversity. While there is no explicit limit to the nationality of teachers sought, there is in terms of the *kind of* English they are required to possess, in so far as it is a native speaker model of proficiency which is at stake - “native-fluent instructors”. Elsewhere, there are more emphatic decentring moves being made. The Tokyo based *eikaiwa* ‘*World englishes*’, as its name implies, explicitly propounds the diversity, pluralism and rejection of native speaker norms scholars such as Kachru might well applaud:

Our philosophy of "World englishes" (deliberately spelt with a lower case 'e') emphasizes that in this day and age 'English' no longer belongs to native-speakers of English and that everyone is equal when you use the global language as your own, regardless of whether you are native or non-native speakers of English. (*World englishes eikaiwa* official website)

Curiously however, a little further down the same webpage in a section describing vacant job positions at the *eikaiwa* school, there is a perfectly transparent division of labour along native-speakerist lines:

## Job description

### Positions

#### ■ Native teachers:

Take charge of conversation related classes (Speaking/Writing/Listening/Reading) and Business English classes.  
Write class syllabuses and all kinds of original textbooks.

#### ■ Japanese teachers:

Take charge of test preparation classes such as TOEIC®, TOEFL®, Eiken (Test in Practical English Proficiency), and classes requiring detailed explanations.  
Write class syllabuses and all kinds of original textbooks.



(Screen shot from *World englishes eikaiwa* official website)

It would appear then that while “English no longer belongs to native speakers of English”, certain forms of teaching do – “Native” teachers doing one thing and Japanese teachers another, a division of labour which Nuske (2014) similarly finds in his study on *eikaiwa*. One is left wondering here whether such an emphasis on ‘diversity’ and openness to the non-native speaker teacher of English is little more than a hollow politically correct discourse on language, race, and nationality, drawing upon a neoliberal ideology which erases much of the broader socio-economic inequality that has characterised recent decades, where, as *World englishes* puts it “everyone is equal when you use the global language as your own”.

In light of the *eikaiwa* industry’s relations to developments in the contemporary global political economy, there is reason to think such moves are indeed more than vapid echoes of ideologically dominant discourses on equality and diversity in the name of profit – what Flores (2017) elsewhere terms the *coke-ification* of diversity. In particular, in relation to the global trends of the opening up of labour markets and offshoring of production, there is perhaps an economic imperative in drawing teachers from the expanded labour market which dropping the insistence on inner-circle native speakers of English prevents, thus facilitating lower labour costs and potentially greater competitiveness and profit. Tajima’s (2018a, 2018b) research on Skype *eikaiwa* lessons suggests that *eikaiwa* may well be following similar trends to the offshoring of production which has characterised the flow of capital enticed by cheap labour during globalisation. In a move akin to that of the mass outsourcing and offshoring of customer service through call centres, we find Filipina teachers of English located in the Philippines teaching students in Japan via Skype and other internet-mediated means. According to Tajima, they are paid as little as ¥100 (approximately 1 US dollar) for a 25 minute lesson, significantly lower than the cost of labour in Japan, which has a minimum wage of between approximately ¥750 – 1,000 (\$7:50 – \$10) per hour depending on the prefecture (WageIndicator, 2019), which although much lower than many of its OECD contemporaries, is nevertheless significantly higher than wages in the Philippines. It is however very difficult to add empirical weight to such hypothesising about the interrelation between global economic trends and *eikaiwa* as an industry, as obtaining the large-scale empirical data to support or refute such claims is extremely difficult. The METI’s (2019) data on “foreign language conversation schools” - the overwhelming majority of which involve the teaching of English, does not break down the number of teachers (‘instructors’ in the original document) employed by race, gender, nationality, first language, or any other sub-categorisation, nor does it deal with any language schools in the physical or virtual spaces outside of Japan. As such, any hypothesis on the nature of the interrelation between *eikaiwa*’s emerging discourse of diversity, the broadening of the labour market, and other

larger macro socio-economic trends, however persuasive, ultimately lack empirical validity. What the above discussion however does rather clearly show, is that various forms of native speakerism, in for example the hiring of teachers on the basis of native-speaker status, the capitalising on racial/cultural/native speaker *akogare* in advertising, and a racialised division of labour, do not monolithically determine what *eikaiwa* is and what it does, but rather contradictorily coexist with neoliberal discourses of diversity and equality, and indeed, with what appears in some cases to be a move towards greater linguistic, racial, and national diversity in the make-up of its teachers.

#### 4.6 *Eikaiwa* in Neoliberal Japan

Though there are instances of *eikaiwa* which are non-commercially driven (see for example Kubota 2011a), the vast majority of *eikaiwa* schools are private for-profit enterprises. While it would be interesting to see the relation between commercial and non-commercially produced *eikaiwa* as Kubota has done, literature and data on non-commercial *eikaiwa* is rather hard to come by. My focus here, is admittedly partial in so far as I focus on commercially provided *eikaiwa*. Though much literature describes the nature of working within *eikaiwa*, seldom is the job of the *eikaiwa* teacher examined in its relations to the national and/or global economy, and its historical movement therein, as will now be discussed.

At the time of writing, Japan is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in the world. Its post war economic development is often referred to as a ‘miracle’, and in the popular imagination Japan is, quite rightly, imagined to be a country of incredible wealth. However, it also has the second highest level of poverty among OECD member countries, with 20 million of its citizens - 1 in 6 people, living in relative poverty (Allison, 2013, p. 5). The stable economic and social relationships which once characterised Japan, a strict gendered division of labour – men enjoying lifetime employment in work and women supporting them in the home, has given way to *ryudoka* – the liquidation and flexibilization of work and domestic life. Successive neoliberal governments have deregulated labour policies, privatised social services and embraced the neoliberal dogma of individual responsibility, leaving a third of its workforce in precarious irregular employment, and often in poverty:

[F]or a country that once prided itself on lifetime employment, one-third of all workers today are only irregularly employed. Holding jobs that are part time, temporary, or contract labour, irregular workers lack job security, benefits, or decent wages. A surprising 77 percent earn less than the poverty level, qualifying them – by the government’s own calibration – as ‘working poor’ (Allison 2013, p. 5)

By the turn of the century, the doubling of corporate profits and tripling of government officials' pay sat side by side with a fall in workers' wages of 4%, and a staggering 70% of homeless people in work (ibid, p. 52) – a 'working poor' indeed.

Concurrent with such *ryudoka* (the liquidation and flexibilization of economic and social relations on the back of neoliberal reforms), has been a now decades old stagnation of the Japanese economy. *Eikaiwa* has certainly not been exempt from the effects of neoliberal reforms and the long drawn out economic slowdown in Japan. According to METI's (2019) annual reports on foreign language schools in Japan, at its peak in 2006 the foreign language conversation school industry as a whole had around 9.5 million students on its books generating sales of around ¥136 billion (approximately \$1.2 billion). Since then the numbers have declined dramatically, with students currently numbering just under 5 million, and total sales of ¥87 billion (approximately \$800 million), though these recent figures are something of a rally from the industry's nadir in 2010 following the global financial crash. Peter Lackner, the director of *GPlus Media* which operates the aforementioned ELT jobs website *Gaijinpot.com*, suggests that in response to these recent economic conditions "the industry has evolved and become more diversified" (quoted in Budmar 2012b). Indeed, the growth in corporate clients, the use of tests such as TOEIC, and the rapid growth of *eikaiwa* classes for young learners previously discussed, all suggest such a diversification *is* taking place (Yano Research Institute, 2018), especially when seen in relation to the female-male western/white/American *akogare* modus operandi of *eikaiwa* discussed earlier.

The job of the *eikaiwa* teacher is often referred to as one of a tedious grind, and to be of relatively low paid and low skilled work. The *Charisma Man* series of comic book satirisations of the *eikaiwa* industry<sup>17</sup> illustrate this in analogising the *eikaiwa* school to the Victorian workhouse, complete with gruel and an *Oliver Twist* inspired request for 'more' (Garscadden ed. 2010, p. 49). However, seldom are the work conditions of *eikaiwa* related in the literature (*passim*) to the neoliberal reforms and increased precarity of workers in Japan in recent decades. There is for example, little discussion outside of the press, of the resulting catastrophe of a highly volatile capitalism and increasingly precarious state of labour as regards *eikaiwa*. *NOVA*'s bankruptcy in 2007 left in its wake some 4000 foreign teachers of English jobless, unpaid, and in the case of those who lived in apartments provided by the corporation, soon to be homeless (McCurry & Williams 2007). The bankruptcy of

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<sup>17</sup> The strip deals with how a Canadian English teacher in Japan - *Charisma Man*, is able to capitalise on his status as a *gaijin* (foreigner). The comic often juxtaposes the 'loser' persona he inhabits back in his native Canada with the superhero-like status he accrues in Japan, in the eyes of Japanese female admirers. Some strips, such as the *Oliver Twist* inspired one discussed above, contrast the 'superhero' status *Charisma Man* enjoys in his romantic escapades with the less than glamorous lifestyle his job as an English teacher affords him.

another corporate *eikaiwa* giant *Geos*, similarly left thousands of its employees jobless and unpaid (Matsutani 2010). Such was the severity of the *NOVA* collapse in particular, at the time the biggest *eikaiwa* corporation in Japan, that the British embassy in Tokyo assisted the now unemployed (and some imminently homeless) British language teachers in procuring cheap flights to return to the UK (McCurry & Williams 2007). For those who stayed or could not leave, the *National General Workers Union* initiated a 'Lesson for Food' program, arranging students who would learn from teachers in exchange for a meal (Budmar 2011).

However, it is not only the catastrophic lurches into crises such as the bankruptcy of giant *eikaiwa* corporations which are illustrative of the precarity of many of its workers, but also the gradual trends which tell us much about the movement of *eikaiwa* in relation to larger neoliberal changes. The METI's report is illustrative of the shift towards more precarious forms of employment in commercial language teaching. The latest survey at the time of writing (METI 2019) illustrates this well through the remarkable shift from full time to part-time employment. The numbers are striking. According to METI's figures, in 2004 the number of foreign language instructors working full time and part time across Japan, were around 9,000 and 4000 respectively (approximately a 70% - 30% split). The latest figures (2019) are almost an exact proportional reversal, standing at around 3,300 full time, and 7000 part time language instructors (approximately 30% - 70%).

One of the most common types of contract offered by *eikaiwa* is the *Gyomu Itaku* contract, whereby, as the *Gaba* website explains:

Instructors are not employees but independent contractors. In essence, each instructor is his or her own business offering a service. Under this status – *gyomu itaku* as it is called in Japan – you decide the hours and days of the week you teach. Submit a schedule of as many lessons as you can comfortably teach factoring in your other commitments (*Gaba* official website)

What this means in practice is that the school is free of any obligation for providing or contributing towards pensions, social security, paid holiday, sick pay, and health insurance, among other benefits that full-time employees are legally entitled to. Even for teachers who are directly employed by schools, it is common for *eikaiwa* employers to avoid the legal obligations of benefits for full-time employment, by keeping the total work time of the employee to within the 29.5 hour per week threshold, which if crossed would then legally obligate the employer to offer benefits such as those above. However, it is often the case that it is *only* lesson time – the time when teachers are actively teaching a student, which qualifies as work time, meaning in effect that teachers often come close to, or do in fact do, 29.5 hours of teaching per week (Currie-Robson 2015), a teaching load which full-time teachers in many contexts would find heavy to say the least. Indeed, there are often

struggles between unions and employers to get even the 5 minute ‘breaktimes’ between classes, which teachers are expected to use to prepare for their next class, recognised as worktime and therefore paid (General Union, 2015a). Within such contracts, teachers are typically paid per class. How the *gyomu itaku* contract works out in practice is that teachers (‘instructors’ in the jargon of many *eikaiwa*), commit to a schedule of availability for teaching students. Crucially however, being available is not the same as teaching, and as it is teaching which is only considered paid work for the teacher, this ultimately means that a lot of unpaid time is potentially spent by the teacher at the school. The *Gaba* website is quite transparent about this:

<b>INSTRUCTOR COMPARISON</b>				
<b>Instructor</b>	<b>Sara</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Daniel</b>	<b>Lisa</b>
Available Lessons / Month	208	200	148	128
Booked Rate	75%	80%	80%	75%
Total Lessons Taught	156	160	118	96

(Screenshot from *Gaba* official website)

Note here that teachers are only ‘working’ – at least according to their contract, between 75%-80% of the time they are at the school, as shown by their “Booking Rate”. Teachers are at the school and available, but if there are no students to teach, then no paid ‘work’ is done. Using the above example then, between 20% - 25% of the time teachers spend at the school, regardless of how this time is spent, is unpaid. It is worth underlining the asymmetrical relation here between labour and capital (the relation between teacher and the *eikaiwa* corporation). On the one hand, the teacher must commit *in advance* to be available to teach at certain days and times, which would then preclude them from securing other teaching work at the same time, either in other schools or privately. On the other hand, the school has no obligation to provide students to any teacher at the times they make themselves available. Such a system of ‘flexible’ working is in part a consequence of how in commercial ELT “[d]emand is variable, and it may not always be possible to predict when students are going to arrive to take advantage of the spare capacity available” (Walker, 2010, p. 10). To put it another way, ‘flexible’ working has the advantage to capital of maximizing capacity - the *active* use of spaces, labour, and resources to produce lessons, rather than needlessly spending money on ‘dead’ or idle capacity – which would include paying labour without it producing.

Moreover, despite highlighting the “flexibility” and “freedom” of such contracts, the “peak hours” as they’re called are rather unsociable, being weekends and weekday early mornings and evenings, and in some cases during national holidays. It is often recommended for teachers to make themselves

available during these peak hours, to ultimately improve their “booking rate”. Again, this is all transparent. Take for example the testimonial of the *Gaba* teacher Jack, taken from a video entitled: *What advice would you give new instructors worried about income:*

I think also if you can work on those peak times such as evenings, weekends, and mornings, those also have a greater chance of being booked and will help you with your income when you start working (*Gaba* official YouTube channel, emphasis added)

All this is not to say that *eikaiwa* schools directly employing teachers under more secure full-time contracts is entirely a thing of the past. *Berlitz* for example offers a one year full time contract with a guaranteed income based on a 38 hour week, with paid vacation (*Berlitz* official site), though there are no further details given on whether this equates to 38 hours of teaching per week, whether other activities are included as work time, or what other benefits beyond paid vacation are given.

It is not only the security of full-time regular employment which has been significantly eroded in *eikaiwa*, but the incomes of teachers too which seem to have declined. Figures relating remuneration in scholarly literature are few and far between, and when discussed, tend to be done so in passing, and are not related to wider processes which have unfolded over time. In Lummis’ account of *eikaiwa* teaching in the 60’s and 70’s, *eikaiwa* “is considered to be relatively easy money” (1976, p. 2), and indeed later in his account he relates that he was paid more than a better qualified Japanese [nationality] teacher who had been at the University some 15 years, on the back of little more than his race, nationality and native-speaker status, although we are never told about the specifics of contracts he or others worked under, or the exact income he or others received at the time. From the 1980’s onwards however, there seems to be reliable evidence of a very definite trend toward a decline in incomes, and less secure work for teachers in *eikaiwa*, mirroring the larger national and global trends. In contrasting the current state of *eikaiwa* teachers precarity and relatively low income with more secure and better paid work in the Japanese economic bubble of the 1980’s, Louis Carlet, the executive president of the *Tokyo General Union*, recalls how “it was not uncommon back then [in the 1980’s] for teachers to earn ¥400,000 (approx. \$3,640) or more per month on open-ended contracts with full regular benefits” (quoted in Budmar 2012b), while job security, benefits, and incomes of recent years have declined significantly. Carlet’s claim seems generally accurate. For example, the *Berlitz* full-time guaranteed income contract offers a monthly salary of ¥275,000 (approx. \$2,500) for a 38-hour work week (*Berlitz* official website), well short of the kind of salary Carlet described from the 80’s. For a similar work load, a former employee of *NOVA* who goes by the name of *JaDan* (see *JaDan* YouTube channel) claims to have recently been earning ¥250,000 (approx. \$2,270) per month for a 40-hour work week. Bailey, puts the similar

figure of young graduates working in the *eikaiwa* industry as beginning at around ¥250,000 per month (2007: 590). Bailey describes this as a relatively good salary for young graduates at the time – around the turn of the millennium, and indeed compared to many parts of the world, this kind of salary does not appear particularly low. However, in more recent years the salaries such as those quoted by Bailey and *JaDan* are thought by many to be less than sufficient for a decent standard of living. Shawn Thir, the owner of *LetsJapan.org*, a website community of English teachers in Japan, quotes the exact same figure as Bailey, but describes it as insufficient in the current economic climate: “It used to be that you worked full-time for ¥250,000 a month and that was enough to make a decent living on” (quoted in Budmar 2011). In Moritz & Bragalone’s *Smart Guide to Teaching English in Japan*, the ¥250,000 figure is again quoted, and described as “enough to survive on” but insufficient for having an active social life or to pay for vacations or trips “back home” to visit family in other countries without the need for financial help from other family members (2017, pp. 78–79). Elsewhere, teachers describe how those working within *eikaiwa* “couldn’t sustain [...] or support a family on any *eikaiwa* type wage” (Joel, an *eikaiwa* teacher quoted in Appleby 2013, p. 142). What must also be kept in mind is the lack of career progression working as an *eikaiwa* teacher engenders. ¥250,000 may well be an interesting proposition for the new graduate, but there is little in the way of upward trajectory from there. *Eikaiwa* teaching is often compared with working in a fast food restaurant (Appleby 2013, Currie-Robson 2015, Seargeant 2009), and seen as a “pseudo-profession” (Bossauer 2004, p. 14), at the bottom rung of the ELT ladder (Hawley-Nagatomo 2016). Even the bottom rung of the ladder may seem a misleading analogy, such is the lack of upward trajectory vis-a-vis career prospects, at least within many *eikaiwa* institutions. Rather, many teachers often see *eikaiwa* as something one gets out of, or escapes from (Appleby 2013, 2018). There is a general consensus then that *eikaiwa* teaching is something of a dead-end job, in so far as there are minimal opportunities to significantly increase one’s career standing and consequent earning potential.

The *eikaiwa* industry seems very much affected by the same kind of stagnation of wages that has occurred nationally as outlined earlier. In Bueno’s account of working at *Blitz* (a pseudonym for *Berlitz*, see p.71) at the turn of the millennium, she details the per lesson rate of pay as ¥1,990 (approx. \$18) per lesson (2003, p. 103), a figure which is identical to the per lesson rate detailed on *Berlitz’s* current website (*Berlitz* official website). It would appear that in the best part of two decades, the per lesson pay rate at *Berlitz* seems not to have increased. Though the kind of figures for salaries (¥250,000 – ¥300,000, approx. \$2,270 - \$2,720) quoted in recent years thus far might not seem particularly low, it is worth keeping in mind the relatively high cost of living in Japan, and the widespread retraction of benefits which formerly accompanied such salaries.

Illustrative of the quality and quantity of work within the *eikaiwa* is *Gaba's* discussion of their *gyomu itaku* contract, where the earning potential of teachers [instructors] is discussed as follows: “For many, *Gaba* is their primary source of income. These instructors regularly teach over 200 lessons a month with top performers taking home well over 300,000 yen for their efforts” (*Gaba* official website). It is worth examining exactly how much work one would need to do in order to earn the kind of salaries quoted above, from the standpoint of the novice and the veteran *Gaba* teacher. According to the official website, *Gaba* has a graded payment scale known as the “belt” system, where instructors can “level up” and receive a higher rate of pay per each of the lessons they are taught (which appears to be the sole way in which their income is calculated). At the lowest end of the “belt” gradation is a rate of ¥1,500 (approx. \$13.60) per 40-minute lesson, and at the higher end, for teachers who have levelled up and are teaching at a “peak time” the rate is ¥2,200 (approx. \$20) per 40-minute lesson:

Belt	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2
Peak Lesson	¥1,500	¥1,600	¥1,700	¥1,800	¥1,900	¥2,000	¥2,100	¥2,200
Non-Peak Lesson	¥1,500	¥1,500	¥1,500	¥1,500	¥1,500	¥1,500	¥1,600	¥1,600

(*Gaba's* “Belt” system of pay gradation – *Gaba* official website)

So then, in order to earn the ¥300,000 quoted by *Gaba* above, if assuming the instructor has “levelled up” as far as they can go up the payment scale, and even in assuming that all classes include the “peak time” extra pay on offer, this would require the teacher to teach approximately 34 classes per week, or 22.5 hours of classes. It is however, unknown how common it is for teachers to have levelled up and to what extent they have done so. The only information provided by *Gaba* on the extent to which their teachers have increased their earning potential is: “nearly 60% of instructors have moved beyond the starting belt level” (*Gaba* official website). This seems to suggest then, that over 40% of the instructors, are on the lowest pay grade at the school. Once again, calculating the amount of teaching necessary to earn the above quoted ¥300,000 monthly salary, this time taking the lowest end of the pay scale – representing 40% of the *Gaba* teacher workforce, (and here there is no extra pay given for teaching at peak times), this would require a workload of approximately 50 lessons per week, or 33 hours of class time. Indeed, the original quote claims that “instructors regularly teach over 200 lessons a month” – which equates to 50 lessons a week. Such heavy teaching loads seem relatively common. Bailey for example recounts teaching between 9 and 13 lessons per day, often totalling 10 hours or more of class time (2002, p. 208). The following table



summarizes the amount of teaching per year measured in hours of the novice and veteran *eikaiwa* teacher, in comparison with teachers in formal education in Japan:<sup>18</sup>

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Number of hours teaching per year (approx.)</u>
Novice <i>Gaba</i> Teacher (lowest rank of the pay scale – 40% of the teacher labour force)	1,650 hours
Veteran <i>Gaba</i> Teacher (highest rank of the pay scale)	1,170 hours
Primary School Teacher in Japan (2005)	600 hours
Lower Secondary School Teacher in Japan (2005)	500 hours
Upper Secondary School Teacher in Japan (2005)	420 hours

In order to earn the ¥300,000 quoted by *Gaba* then, the novice teacher would be required teach more than triple the amount of lower secondary school teachers, and close to quadruple the amount of upper secondary school teachers. This is of course not to say that *eikaiwa* teachers work ‘more’, or work ‘harder’ than those in other educational institutions. It is well known for example that teachers in primary and secondary schools in Japan work incredibly long hours, often involving unpaid overtime. There is also an issue of not comparing like with like, in so far as primary schools and secondary schools have long holidays where no classes take place, whereas *eikaiwa* are open year-round, and indeed often incentivise class teaching during national holidays by classing them as “peak hours”. To be clear I am not making such a comparison to show ‘who works harder’, or ‘who is exploited more’, but rather to illustrate and underline the manner in which “work” within the *eikaiwa* is often equated exclusively with the teaching of classes, in comparison to other forms of teaching in which work circumscribes a great heterogeneity of activities (meetings, lesson planning, curriculum development, materials development, field trips, assessment, school clubs etc.). This is not to say *eikaiwa* teachers do not also perform some these tasks, but rather that they are not designated as work, and so are not paid, as the afore mentioned union struggle for lesson preparation and planning during breaktimes to be considered as work, shows. Work within the *eikaiwa* then appears as monolithic – work is teaching, and more teaching means more pay. The question this then raises, is how the demarcation of paid work (time spent teaching in the lesson)

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<sup>18</sup> figures for number of teaching hours in Primary and elementary schools taken from OECD (2012).

and unpaid work (everything which occurs outside of the lesson) relates to pedagogy and the role of the teacher. If the work of teaching has been reduced to teaching time pure and simple, then what of the myriad other tasks which being a language teacher usually encompasses? In many cases, it seems such work is alienated from teachers, and addressed through the development and implementation of highly standardised materials and procedures which teachers of any degree of skill, experience, and qualification, are in theory, able to follow.

#### 4.7 Skills, Precarity, Casualisation and Taylorism in *Eikaiwa*

Within the literature, *eikaiwa* is often discussed in terms of being a means to accommodate travel or cultural experiences for young sojourners to Japan rather than a bonafide career path (Hawley-Nagatomo 2016). It is also often seen as a low skilled, even McDonaldized form of work (Appleby 2018, Bueno 2003, Currie-Robson 2015), or “as an occupation for Western men who are unqualified to do anything else” (Appleby 2013, p. 142). Indeed, whether it be sojourners who never intended to stay in *eikaiwa* or Japan for very long, or a lack of career progression, a high turnover of teaching staff is relatively common. According to Bailey’s account of an internal memo at *NOVA*, the average retention of an English language instructor was 1.4 years (2002, p. 91). According to *Gaba’s official YouTube channel*, in a video entitled *Gaba’s Gyomu Itaku Contract*, “the average stay for instructors at *Gaba* is 34 months”. For some, such a high turnover is the result of the teachers racial/national/linguistic profile as *the* defining criteria, which all but eclipses any notion of pedagogical or linguistic knowledge or skill, which in turn leads to a revolving door of young native speakers of English teachers as unskilled labour:

The trouble is that some language schools have no compunction about hiring staff that can barely read English, as long as they are ‘native speakers’ [...] because there is an endless supply of young people arriving in Japan. People who can barely flip hamburgers in their own countries once they arrive in Japan wear ties, and acquire the title of teachers. For those who cannot take the rudeness of secretaries, the callousness of the whole enterprise, there are always other, naïve teachers-to-be to take their places. It is no wonder that local newspapers have a weekly ad about teaching positions at these schools. The revolving door is really the only door that interests ‘leading language schools’ (Bueno 2003, p. 113-114)

It is certainly the case that *eikaiwa*, including the large corporations like *Berlitz*, seem to be permanently advertising for jobs, as a visit to any of the popular job listing websites in Japan will show (see for example *gaijinpots.com*). It does also appear to be the case that pedagogical skill or experience do not seem to be very high on the list of hiring criteria, indeed all of the websites discussed here (*Berlitz*, *Gaba*, *NOVA*, official websites) explicitly state that no teaching qualification

or experience is required, as each provide their own in-house training. While it is often stipulated that teachers require as a minimum a BA level degree, this is perhaps more to do with the governmental regulations for procuring working visas than ensuring a level of skilled labour, and indeed those on working holiday visas, spousal visas, or other forms of long-term residence in Japan without a university education can and do teach in *eikaiwa*. Moreover, it is often the case that qualifications relevant to language teaching, or experience of language teaching, bear little, if any impact on one's status and remuneration. Increases in pay scales such as the *Gaba* example above, are often dependant on the completion of in-house training at the *eikaiwa*, and seem irrespective of any external qualifications the teacher might have prior to or gain during their employment. From my own experience of applying for *eikaiwa* jobs and attending interviews at corporate *eikaiwa* *AEON* and *Gaba* prior to this research, my MA TESOL degree seemed of little interest to those at the school, and possessing it did not equate to any difference whatsoever in the positions and contracts I was offered, both of which seem to be the starting point for all teachers uniformly.

This uniform starting point for all teachers, regardless of experience and qualification, does not however equate to a total disregard of all pedagogical and methodological concerns. As I have argued earlier, many *eikaiwa* provide mandatory initial training in their own in-house 'method' (see Bueno 2003 for example). This training however is not only the imparting of pedagogical beliefs, assumptions and techniques for the classroom, but also instruction in following a highly standardised and routinised form of production, as detailed in Bailey's account of his own experience of working in the *eikaiwa* industry:

As far as daily *eikaiwa* operations are concerned, teaching at these schools is highly routinized. Students are streamed into "levels" by their first interview, and then movement up levels occurs once all stipulated lessons are completed and the student is judged ready for the next level [...] Each level has a set of specific grammar and fluency objectives that correspond with a pre-arranged set of workbook lessons. This system allows the schools to swap teachers from place to place and to substitute at short notice with minimum disruption to the operation of the school. The system is an effective means of delivering a product of assured (if not necessarily high) quality with personnel of highly variable skills and experience. (Bailey 2002, pp. 93-94)

Such an account points to a heavily Taylorised work process, a form of productive organisation of labour in which "every action which forms part of a task [is] broken down into a series of segments [...to] control time and movement with a view to increasing efficiency, to say nothing of predictability in the workplace" (Block & Gray, 2016, p. 484). The superintendence of such forms of organization suggest that maintaining such control of the process is paramount to the operation of the *eikaiwa*. In Bueno's (2003) account for example, not only do we find that the methodology she

has been trained in is a “military straight-jacket” as discussed earlier, but its imposition is ensured by the panoptic use of microphones in each classroom which the headmaster of the school can monitor at any time. Controversial among the staff of the school, a microphone was also installed in the teachers’ breakroom, which Bueno claims the management of the school had decided to install after one of the teachers had the temerity to yawn during their break. What the Taylorised work routine illustrates then, is the manner in which the form of organisation which many *eikaiwa* implement does not require any particular level of skill – in the form of qualifications or work experience, nor does it particularly require the skilling of labour over time within the process, meaning so far as the Taylorised organisation of production in the *eikaiwa* is concerned, the newcomer and the veteran are largely indistinguishable. In such forms of production then, it is perhaps no wonder that the turnover of teachers is so high, and the long-term career prospects of the *eikaiwa* teacher so limited.

Some *eikaiwa* actively seek out casual labour, or as Stainton puts it *TEFL tourists* – those “who travel outside of their usual environment to teach English as a foreign language, whose role shifts between tourist and educator at various points in their trip” (2018, p. 128). In targeting just such casual labour or TEFL tourists, *NOVA* for example has a link on their website to a working holiday package. With pictures of temples, castles, geisha, Mount Fuji, and sushi - it looks much more akin to a flashy holiday brochure than anything work or education-related. Towards the end of the page, are the details of the *working holiday contract*, again laid out in a style reminiscent of a holiday brochure:

**PACKAGE** Available to all successful applicants eligible for a working holiday visa

All amounts are in pounds sterling.

**Support**

- Airport pick up
- Baggage delivery (1 piece)
- Welcome party
- Bank account set-up support
- Support line

**£599**

**Job**

- 6 month English teaching contract (25 lessons/week) £900 per month (approx.) + contract completion bonus of £600 (approx.)  
£8 per 40-minute lesson (average)

**Accommodation**

- Homestay £20 per night (incl. breakfast & dinner)
- Share house £15 per night (no meals incl.)

**OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

(screenshot from *NOVA* official website)

Elsewhere on the site the drawing upon discourses of leisure and travel continues in the testimonials of *NOVA eikaiwa* teachers. What is striking here, is how little is mentioned about the job, the workplace, or students. Indeed, in some of the testimonials there is no mention at all of any of these. Rather, they focus on descriptions of the cities or towns in which they live, listing the cultural,

culinary, and leisure experiences available to those living in the area. The following example from a *NOVA* teacher in Imabari is particularly striking, not only in how it occludes the topics of teaching and work, but in how its tenor is reminiscent of holiday promotional material:

I have been based as an instructor on Shikoku for just over a year now and I can unequivocally say my experience on this fair Island with *NOVA* has been everything I hoped for and more. Shikoku is that idyllic oxymoron we should all strive to seek in life. That fine line between 'a blast to the past' and avant-garde living, she is tranquil and yet breath-taking. She is a cultural oasis, and yet a beacon of innovation and 21st century living. And her people are not only kind and welcoming. They are the very definition of beautiful and honest dreams. And it's a pleasure and joy to share in each other's happiness. Don't allow the tag of the "smallest island" fool you. There is much you can do on Shikoku. Ride a bicycle across the 60-kilometer Shimanami Kaido and spend a few days on the gorgeous Islands of the Seto Sea. A must for both the casual and most avid cyclist. Hike Mount Ishizuchi, one of Japan's seven holy mountains and the tallest peak in Western Japan. Go to Kagawa or Ehime and relish the delectable tastes of Takamatsu Udon, Imabari Yakinuku or Saijo beer; bathe and unwind in the wholesome waters of Dogo, visit the numerous beautiful shrines and temples and join the many festivals and events throughout the year. This and so much more can be done on the wonderful Island of Shikoku.

(Testimonial from a *NOVA* teacher from the *NOVA* official website)

It is perhaps unsurprising that a teaching job is described in terms of a list of leisure activities that one can do, as, when one crunches the numbers laid out in the holiday package contract outlined above, the prospect of being an *eikaiwa* teacher is one which would in all likelihood cost the teacher, rather than remunerate them. Considering the would-be-teacher pays £600 (approx. \$780) for the package, this negates the contract completion bonus (also £600), leaving a salary of approximately £900 per month - ¥131,000, (approx. \$1,175) a figure which is well below the average wages for irregular workers in Japan, and, indeed, below the poverty line in Japan (Kamuro 2008 in Allison 2013, p. 32). Elsewhere, a salary of ¥200,000, (approx. \$1,800) way above that paid in the *working holiday package*, is deemed "desperate" and "not enough to live on" by those who work in *Moyai*, an NPO which helps those in dire financial difficulty in Japan (Allison 2013, p. 49). What this means in practice then is that the teacher, on top paying for their own flights, would in all likelihood need to spend more than they earn in order to have anything more than the most basic subsistence lifestyle, and if, as the flashy brochure pictures and testimonial descriptions suggest, one wishes to indulge in the many leisure, travel or cultural activities that Japan has to offer, they would end up spending considerably more than they earned. As Codó has pointed out then, there is something of a symbiotic relation between usually young sojourners with a taste for travel, and a form of work

predicated on low-skilled casual labour, where “the existence of a large pool of educated native speakers of the language, in this case of English, who are on the move globally feeds into the precariousness of the industry.” (Codó, 2018, p. 447).

However, what is to be emphasised here, is that this is all relatively transparent. Indeed, the visual and linguistic holiday and travel discourses the brochures and testimonials draw on are apt, in so far as it is a “package” which one buys, even if this involves some doing some form of work. On the face of it at least, it would appear that those interested in such a contract would not expect to earn much money from it, and may even be perfectly happy with spending more than they earn in return for what they might see as an extended 6-month holiday – a leisure activity which they would otherwise expect to pay for. It must be said however, that the real lived experiences of such sojourners are only just beginning to receive scholarly attention (Codó 2018, Stainton 2018). Of interest here, is the question of how such sojourning labour relates to the more permanent labour in Japan – i.e. those *eikaiwa* teachers who work in *eikaiwa* for years rather than months. If for example there was a significant proportion of sojourning labour in *eikaiwa*, one would expect this to exert a downward pressure on *eikaiwa* teacher labour as a whole in terms of wages and benefits. However, as the *eikaiwa* which offer such programs are private corporations, accessing data such as the make-up of their workforces is difficult. What is of importance for the purpose of this study however, is not the particular experiences of such sojourners (interesting though that may be), but what such package deals tell us about the kind of labour required for *eikaiwa*. Though it is debatable whether the following can or should be classed as a ‘skill’, the only prerequisite requirements for the working holiday package are that applicants must be “native English speakers” and “between 20 – 30 years old”.

Although the notion of the *eikaiwa* teacher as a deskilled or McDonaldised worker is a thread running through much of the literature as discussed earlier, this is seldom related to the actual practices of *eikaiwa* in the process of production – i.e. in the teaching of classes, but is rather assumed, or related anecdotally. Moreover, while there has been much written about the *akogare* relation between the teacher and student in *eikaiwa*, there has been little discussion of the time dimension of this relation, in for example examining how the trajectories of teachers and students within the *eikaiwa* interrelate over time. One wonders the extent to which, and how, *eikaiwa* teachers and students develop relationships (pedagogical and otherwise) over shorter and longer time spans. One might inquire for example whether the *eikaiwa* school is a kaleidoscopic flux of constantly new teachers and students chaotically bumping into one another forming transient relationships, or whether longer relationships can and do thrive in the face of the precarity of labour and high turnovers of staff. Here it is worth considering the *ticket system* form of payment which

*eikaiwa* often use, whereby students pay in advance for a bulk bundle of lessons, which must then be subsequently used up within a certain time limit, often with discounts in the per lesson rate the bigger the bundle of lessons one buys. One might expect then for this to be a powerful incentive for students to stay with the school longer term, and hence with a teacher, for a longer rather than a shorter period of time. However, as Kubota points out, in practice “many learners, especially men who work long hours, often drop out; they do not request for a refund because it is only a partial refund, the paperwork is cumbersome, and they feel embarrassed about failing to continue.” (Kubota 2011a, p. 485). Such a situation is presumably a boon to the *eikaiwa* which utilises the *gyomu itaku* contracts outlined earlier. Given that the full price of the lesson has been paid for, and that teachers are often only paid per the volume of teaching they do, the *eikaiwa* can retain every penny, without outlaying anything on the cost of employing labour (see Chapter 7). As such, one might ask whether the *eikaiwa* has more of an incentive to have a constant stream of new students who sign up but soon drop out (thus maximizing profits by saving on labour costs), or whether it is in their interests to keep customers long term and have them renew or purchase ever greater bundles of classes. While much has been written about the *akogare* dimension of the teacher-student relation, there is room for further discussion of the temporality of this relation, especially in its interrelation to precarity in and beyond Japan, the deskilling of labour in Taylorised work processes, the high turnover of teaching staff, and the ticket system of payment in advance that so many *eikaiwa* utilise.

#### 4.8 Context: Three Large Corporate *Eikaiwa*: *Berlitz*, *NOVA*, and *Gaba*

*NOVA*, *Gaba*, and *Berlitz* are three major *eikaiwa* corporation chains on which this study focuses. Though each of the three are by no means identical and devoid of any meaningful differences at all, their common features relate to their organisation of production, detailed below, which unites them as a distinct form of English language education. With this in mind, what follows is a description of their common features, as well as some of the nuances which exist between them. Typically, large corporate *eikaiwa* premises are located close to major transport hubs in towns and cities right across Japan. *NOVA* and *Gaba* are both largely Japan-centred businesses, with all of their business premises located within Japan, with the one exception being *NOVA*'s Honolulu branch in Hawaii which caters to Japanese English language learners on holiday (Currie-Robson, 2015). *Berlitz* in contrast operates in over 70 countries, however it is only their Japan based operation with which this research is concerned. Given that *Berlitz* has a much more international profile than the other two corporations concerned, and that *eikaiwa*, as I have defined it, relates to a form of English language teaching practice largely within Japan specifically, there is indeed a sense in which *Berlitz* is to some degree distinct. It is, perhaps, a shortcoming of this study that practicalities prevent me from comparing the

operations of *Berlitz* within Japan to its operations in other countries, however it has been grouped together with the other two more or less exclusively Japan-located *eikaiwa* corporations on the grounds that each of the following consistently refer to *Berlitz* as an “*eikaiwa*”: *Berlitz*'s official Japanese language website; job listings for vacant positions within *Berlitz*'s Japanese operations (*Berlitz* official website in English); the two participants interviewed for this study who work within *Berlitz*; and the literature on the subject of *eikaiwa* such as books (Currie-Robson, 2015), scholarly work (Appleby, 2018; Bailey, 2006; Baldauf et al., 2010; Seargeant, 2009), and newspaper articles (Stubbings, 2007).

The three *eikaiwa* corporations share commonalities in terms of both *quantity* and *quality* of production (by which I mean the production of lessons), and in terms of their organisation of production. In terms of the quantity of production, all three operate on a very large scale. *NOVA* for example, at its height in 2007, produced lessons for more than 400,000 students (Budmar 2013) in over 600 school branches across Japan, employing over 5,000 English teachers alone (Currie-Robson, 2015). In terms of the quality of lesson production, they stress the role of spoken interaction and communication in their methodological approaches to teaching, often seen as something of a tonic to a grammar-translation method of language teaching in formal education (Seargeant, 2009). Class sizes are usually very small ranging from one-on-one (referred to as *man-to-man* in the *eikaiwa* terminology), up to small group classes of 5 students; and classes are typically, though not exclusively, taught by inner-circle native speakers of English. In terms of the organisation of production: each are large ‘chains’ in so far as they have large numbers of schools located right across Japan, ranging from 60 (*Berlitz* official website English) to around 300 (*NOVA* official website). Each corporation is an employer of large numbers of English language teachers – *Berlitz* for example employed around 1200 teachers (or in their words ‘instructors’) in Japan at the time of writing (*Berlitz* official website English). Production is organised on-demand - that is to say the students (or ‘clients’) can choose when they want to attend their lesson, how many lessons in total they wish to attend, and are generally free to come and go as they please. Finally, the organisation of production is motivated by profit insofar as they are all private, for-profit corporate organisations as opposed to charitable organisations or formal public educational institutions.

#### 4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to give an account, partial though it may be, of *eikaiwa* as a *totality*. Rather than the kind of neat and exclusionary definition of *eikaiwa* as definitively being *this* and not *that*, a synthesis of the literature and an examination of the relations in which *eikaiwa* sits, often contradictorily, have shown the dynamism of *eikaiwa* as a constantly changing process. I have argued that *eikaiwa* is not something confined to a non-formal or ‘Other’ section of education, but



rather that actors, practices, and beliefs permeate between both formal and non-formal language educational contexts in Japan in an *interpenetration of opposites*. I have also argued that while the frame of gendered *akogare* - female Japanese students' desire for America, the West, or White inner-circle English native speaking males, certainly speaks volumes about many of the practices within *eikaiwa* and its relations to wider social developments such as patterns of consumption and tropes in advertising, there is much that such a frame excludes of *eikaiwa*, as more recent work on *akogare* for Filipina female teachers, and the problems of sexual harassment in *eikaiwa* illustrate. Moreover, I have also argued that while discussion of the student-teacher relation has much to say about the student as consumer – of imagined wonderlands and communities, and commodified Whiteness, there is room for further discussion of the interrelation between each of the roles performed by: student as consumer, teacher as labour, and the *eikaiwa* institution's role as capital. In doing so, asymmetries of power begin to come to light, in for example the intersection of institutional regulation of the student-teacher relation, evaluation systems of the teacher, and the precarity of labour, as well as the *akogare* of the student in the role of 'client'. In attempting to grasp the movement of *eikaiwa*, I have argued that in contemporary *eikaiwa* there often appears to be a contradictory simultaneous drawing upon of discourses of diversity, equality and non-native/native speaker parity on the one hand, with transparent native-speakerist divisions of labour on the other. Finally, I have also attempted to trace the relations of *eikaiwa* to national and global economic developments, in terms of stagnating wages, increased precarity for workers, and the casualisation and deskilling of the workforce through Taylorised methods of organising production in *eikaiwa*.

Once again, I wish to stress I make no claim of 'capturing' the totality of everything *eikaiwa* is and was, but rather offer a partial discussion of *eikaiwa* from approaching it as a *totality* dialectically. There are for example many relations which are largely undeveloped or absent from the above discussion such as the non-commercial production of *eikaiwa*, or other forms of commercially produced language education outside of Japan such as the *Hagwon* of South Korea - a lack of literature available preventing discussion of the first, and practical limitations of time and space the latter. In addition, there are many aspects of *eikaiwa* in relation to gender and/or ascriptions of native speaker status that are not addressed in this research, largely due to insufficient data. For example, how identity as LGBTQI+ teachers or learners of English intersects with the kind of gendered *akogare* relation between teacher and student, or how ascriptions of native or non-native speaker status and race interrelate in the case of native speakers of English with Japanese backgrounds (Americans of Japanese descent for example). Moreover, practical limitations prevent a more precise discussion of the organisation of production within commercial *eikaiwa* - being privately owned institutions, they are under no obligation to publish or grant access to information

concerning contracts, salaries, the details of their workforce, or any of the copyrighted material which they produce. I have then been somewhat limited to the information produced by *eikaiwa* on such matters to that which is in the public domain – more often than not in websites, and even then, only from three of the larger big corporate *eikaiwa* chains. As a result, and as I have pointed out in the preceding discussion, there are many instances in which empirical authentication of claims of any changes in, or characteristics of, *eikaiwa* is lacking. Having said this, the above discussion has focussed on unearthing the many contradictory relations within *eikaiwa*, as a means to sketch out possible avenues of inquiry. For example, what happens when a heavily Taylorised form of production meets a very personal *akogare* or customer demand – what wins out and why? How do teachers feel about the ways in which they and their work are valued - do they see themselves as part of a deskilled casual labour force, or as part of a skilled profession? What does reflecting upon such questions mean for teachers' understandings of economic life more broadly construed? In the next chapter I will address how such questions might be approached, in detailing the methodology employed within the research.

## Chapter 5 – Methodology

The chapter begins with a synthesis of work on language and political economy with Marxist political economy, and lays out an approach to answering the research questions through addressing the multiple and contradictory ways in which teachers, and the lessons they produce, are valued in economic as well as other senses (see below). There then follows a discussion of how limited access to research sites meant that first-hand observation of lessons being produced was not always possible. As a means to address this, the study worked through processes of abduction and triangulation, in relating the accounts given by participant teachers in interviews to a larger corpus of digital and hard-copy data. In refining the research to a smaller number of participants, it is argued that the sample of *eikaiwa* teachers within this study offers generalisability not in the sense of participants as archetypal representatives of the mass population of teachers as a whole, but rather in terms of generating *general theories* based on *conditions* (Gobo, 2017) within and beyond the context of *eikaiwa* language teaching. The method of data collection is then presented, detailing the collection of materials and the interviews of participant teachers, where particular focuses on crises, control in production, and interstitial ambivalence are given, in accordance with the notion of contradiction. In narrowing in on contradiction, the chapter concludes with an illustration of how the methodology as constituted in this study aimed to rise from *the abstract to the concrete* – by focussing initially on the ‘parts’ of *eikaiwa* teachers’ work-lives, before seeing how each part interrelated with one another in increasingly complex, and often contradictory ‘wholes’.

### 5.1 A Political Economy of Language Teaching

While I have been somewhat critical of the ambiguity with which concepts such as the commodity and capital have been employed in some scholarly work on language and political economy (Chapter 2), much of this work has nevertheless proved a key resource in attending to questions of value as it is more broadly construed. Scholarly work in language related studies has, for example, detailed a great variety of ways in which languages and speakers are valued, including: judgements of the ‘good’ teacher and student (Pérez-Milans, 2013, 2015); the valuation and conversion of Bourdieusian forms of capital (Heller & Duchêne, 2016; Kelly-Holmes, 2016; Park & Wee, 2012); the construction and valuation of professional academic identities through gender, race, and sexuality (Appleby, 2013, 2014, 2018); the value of ‘native’ English within the commercial ELT industry (Codó, 2018); valuations of authenticity and ethnicity in relation to work within the tourist industry (Da Silva et al., 2007; Heller, Pujolar, et al., 2014), and in language work more broadly (Duchêne & Heller, 2012); the value of language as a skill in relation to the job market (Holborow, 2018b; Park, 2011;

Shin, 2016); and struggles between newcomers and locals in the valuation of linguistic products (Heller, 2003).

Understanding how such value judgements relate to value in the Marxist sense (see Chapter 2) however, necessitates the kind of theorising of the commodity and capital which have preceded this chapter, in order to address the research questions (see p.17). It is difficult to see how, for example, one could address the crux of the first research question – how the drive for profit affects how language is taught (or the question of who is a ‘good’ teacher and what a ‘good’ lesson is), without first setting out what profit is and where it comes from. Similarly, and in relation to the second research question - understanding how teachers are valued at work, the research must address not only discursive value judgements made of teachers and their lessons at the schools, but also how they, as commodified labour, are valued monetarily in the form of wages. It is an understanding and reflection upon the relation between multiple forms of valuation (valued as: a good or bad teacher; a skilled professional; replaceable casual labour; worth X amount of money in wages etc.), and points of potential tension and contradiction between these multiple forms of valuation, which begins to address the third research question - how teachers relate their work-lives to the economy and society more broadly. If for example, teachers feel they perform a valuable social role as educators, how do they square this with the relatively low pay they receive and their often precarious terms of employment?<sup>19</sup> I have found much of the language related work described earlier illustrative in understanding the multiple and potentially contradictory ways in which languages and speakers are valued in the broad sense of the term (i.e. valued as ‘good’, ‘authentic’, ‘correct’ etc.), and it is to this end that I draw upon such work, though I have done so in relation to a Marxist understanding of capitalist commodity production.

A political economy of *eikaiwa* then, in so far as this research is concerned, is not about seeing participant teachers simply as sources of econometric data (wages, hours worked, number of lessons taught etc.) from which a teacher’s value can be ascertained as a single sum, but to attend to the more nuanced and situated ways in which teachers are valued, and an attempt to understand how various forms of valuation interrelate with each other. Here value judgements constitute a wide range of actions and mechanisms such as: the actions of individual students within classes (e.g.

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed, throughout the Covid 19 pandemic crisis of 2020, this question of the value of work has often been raised. In the UK for example, many of those designated as ‘key workers’, whose work is so crucial to society that they are required to continue working rather than isolate, are often those in precarious and/or relatively low-paid work (supermarket employees, delivery drivers, care staff, hospital cleaners etc.). It is easy to imagine how such a situation might presage some questioning of the logic or fairness of a system which economically values those performing crucial roles at the bare minimum – often literally paying them only the national minimum wage.

disinterested yawns, approving nods, flirtatious behaviour etc.); evaluative mechanisms such as lesson observation, customer satisfaction forms, and staff evaluation; the allocation of students to teachers – which kinds of students are allocated to which kinds of teachers and why, as well as the question of which teachers are more in demand than others; and monetary valuations of work performed, in wages, bonuses, and other pecuniary incentives or disciplinary measures.

Despite some noteworthy efforts to bridge a gap between ethnographic political economic work on language on the one hand, and work inspired from the field of economics on the other (Gazzola & Wickstrom, 2016), the two bodies of work have developed somewhat independently of one another, like “two ships passing in the night” as Block puts it (2018a, p. 20), perhaps mirroring feelings expressed elsewhere that much applied- and sociolinguistic work has engaged with political economy more broadly in somewhat limited ways (see Chapter 2). While making no claim to bridge such a gap, in drawing upon work by, and inspired by, Marx (Block, 2018b; Block et al., 2012b; Chun, 2017; Fuchs, 2014, 2016; Harvey, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017; Holborow, 2018b, 2018a, 2007; Marx, 1973, 1990/1867, 1991, 1992, 2007a, 2007b; Marx & Engels, 2002/1848; O’Regan, 2014, 2020; Ollman, 2003, 2014, 2015; Simpson & O’Regan, 2018), this research ventures down what I see as an as yet lightly trodden path, in taking up Marx’s theorisations of the commodity, capital, and class (see Chapter 2), as well as his dialectical method (see Chapters 3 and 4). The aim of this research then, is to give an account of the lives of those who work in the commercial ELT industry, which much ethnographic work has addressed in detail (Appleby, 2013, 2014; Codó, 2018; Neilson, 2009; Stanley, 2013), but to do so in relation to the continual flow of capital – which is the *raison d’être* of the commercial provision of language teaching.

## 5.2 Issues of Access to Sites

Unfortunately, it was not always possible to access the schools (sites) at which teachers worked and lessons were taught. While two smaller independent *eikaiwa* schools permitted me to visit their schools, the larger corporate chains did not grant me access beyond very quick visits to certain branches of their schools, and did not permit me to conduct any observations of the production of lessons. Such issues of access to the larger commercial providers of *eikaiwa* has been well noted in the literature (Bailey, 2002a; Kubota, 2011b, 2011a). It should be noted however, that a lack of access to workplaces as sites of investigation in and of itself, does not prevent highly descriptive and illuminating accounts of work processes and people’s work-lives being given. Cameron’s (2000) work on the call centre industry for example, remains among the most detailed and incisive account of language work to date, despite a lack of access to the spaces in which the call centres operated. As Hammersley (2006) points out in response to more radical critiques of interviews, the charge that interview based methodologies do not in and of themselves afford the researcher a thorough

understanding of participants' practices perspectives and understandings, can equally be levelled at those of a more observational nature. Neither interview nor observation in themselves afford a 'better' or 'worse' way of understanding participants and their practices. The question then is not one of the *right* method to follow, but rather, given the circumstances and limitations the research was presented with, which available methods would best answer the research questions, and what steps need be taken in accounting for the absence of unavailable methods of data collection such as observation.

### 5.3 Abduction and Triangulation of Data

Given the problems of access to physical sites, teachers' interviews about their practice of producing the *eikaiwa* lesson were largely not triangulated with first-hand observation of the practices themselves. This obviously raises issues of validity, in so far as it was not always possible to cross-check the data which emerged from interviews where practices were described and discussed, with first-hand observation of these practices actually taking place. This problem is further compounded in acknowledgement of the ways in which interviews are *performative*, in the sense that they involve "what a certain kind of person tells another certain kind of person, in certain ways, under certain conditions" (Heller, 2011, p. 44). Here, my positionality as a foreigner or *gaijin* (Bailey, 2002b, 2007), especially one who was often assumed to have had experience of teaching *eikaiwa* (which I had not), led to participants ascribing me with an *empathetic stance* (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In early interviews for example, many participants described much of their work in a 'you know what I mean' manner, describing many of their daily practices at work as the 'normal' or 'standard kind of thing' which was assumed to happen within *eikaiwa* more generally. I then had to prompt participants for further explanation, often in tandem with a disclosure of my own lack of experience of teaching in *eikaiwa*.

In facing issues of access in their work on judicial proceedings, Scollon & Scollon (2004, 2007) turned to the process of working through *abduction* (Peirce, 1992) as follows:

There was a 'black box' within which we could not collect any data. But we could search in our other research for situations which had the same (or similar) input and output conditions and then, by abduction, assume that what happened in our black box was enough like what was happening within the situations we could openly research (Scollon & Scollon, 2007, p. 619)

In following Scollon & Scollon, it was necessary to build up a corpus of data which provided the grounding from which abduction – the opening up of an otherwise sealed 'black box', was possible. As a means to achieve this, digital sites provided rich sources of data. These included the official websites of the corporate *eikaiwa* in which participants were/had been working (Berlitz, 2019; Gaba,

2019a, 2019b; NOVA, 2019). Many of these contained representations of the production of lessons within the schools. The *Official Gaba YouTube* site for example, includes video recordings of lessons being produced, and *A day in the life of a teacher* videos which shadow various teachers throughout a complete working day at various branches of the corporation. Further materials found on official websites of the *eikaiwa* corporations gave teacher testimonials on working for the company, explanations of teachers' employment contracts, explanations of teaching methods, and staff training, among other information, in a combination of written text, photographic image, and video. In addition to the interviews with teachers, there was also a considerable body of materials collected from the teachers themselves including: teaching materials, textbooks, copies of training manuals, e-mails and letters to and from *eikaiwa* institutions, student assessment forms, teacher evaluation forms, contracts and payment slips, and teacher profiles among others.

From the corpus of data, I was able to increase the validity of the accounts teachers themselves gave of the production of lessons in interviews, through triangulation. For example, it was relatively easy to confirm things like contractual details, wages, price of lessons sold etc. by checking teachers' accounts with the official online material. This also served to maximize the internal generalisability (Dörnyei, 2007) between teacher participants, in for example asking how their experiences of *eikaiwa* teaching differed, if at all, from those of other teachers I had interviewed. For example, for those who were unable to provide me with hard copies of the teaching materials they use(d) while teaching, I used materials I had collected from other teachers as a prompt whereby teachers were able to discuss how their own practice, and the materials utilised within, were similar or different to that of other participants in the research.

I was also able to use data from the corpus to prompt teachers during interviews, in for example asking them if the layout of the school, the working day, and the production of the lesson were the same as how they were depicted in textual descriptions, photographs, or videos, collected from the digital sites such as the official websites, and if not, in which way they diverged. Participants were also able to comment upon what was missing from the depictions of work in these digital sites. In this sense, interviewees, were often prompted to conduct elementary forms of critical discourse analyses of the *recontextualization of social practice* (Fairclough, 2003, 2009; Van Leeuwen, 2005, 2008) - the question of how "elements of one social practice are appropriated by, [and] relocated in the context of another" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 222). As such, participants were able to juxtapose their own experiences of the social practice of producing the lesson with its recontextualisation in other written textual and audio-visual media, not only as a means to confirm or correct such recontextualisations – 'yes teaching really is like it is in the video' or 'no, that's not what it's really like', but further to speculate on the interests behind the foregrounding, backgrounding, or omission

of particular elements. The particular way in which the production of lessons and the working day were recontextualised in videos from the official websites of corporate *eikaiwa* for example, were often seen as somewhat one-sided representations of the job designed to attract would-be teachers from overseas to come to Japan to work as teachers for the corporation in question. Many participants felt it necessary to ‘correct’ or ‘fill in the gaps’ of such recontextualisations, and in doing so provided in depth descriptions of their work life practices.

All of this is, of course, not to say that I took the participants’ words at face value. Even in the light of such triangulation between accounts given in interviews (which are, after all, themselves spoken recontextualisations of their practices within the workplace), and the corpus of data from digital sites, a certain degree of criticality was called for, not least of all in the certain one-sidedness of accounts coming from some actors within schools but not others. While those who work(ed) in teaching and management positions gave their accounts, the voices of other stakeholders at the school – those who worked as sales staff, as counsellors, or the students themselves, are either ventriloquised through the teachers and managers interviewed, or otherwise absent, largely on account of a lack of Japanese proficiency on the part of the researcher. Where I was unable to verify claims being made by an individual participant through either triangulating with the accounts of other participants and/or cross checking with data from digital sites or other collected materials, this has been signalled in the discussion of the data in the following chapters. For example, in participant claims about sales staff working under commission based incentives, or on the distribution of value (i.e. where the profit was going) to various other non-teaching sectors of the workforce (see Chapter 7), I have retained a healthy sense of scepticism in discussion, and make it transparent to the reader that such claims could not be verified.

Having said that however, and without dismissing altogether the need to verify data – especially that of a more econometric kind such as salaries and lesson prices, there is a sense in which the validity of data collected does not depend entirely upon a ‘veridical’ reading of informants’ accounts in interviews (Block, 2000; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Neisser, 1981, 2011). Rather than an adherence to “objectivity as freedom from bias [...], undistorted by personal bias and prejudice” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 140) where the question of validity centres around whether accounts correspond to what ‘really’ happened, I have employed a *symptomatic* reading (Block, 2000; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) (as opposed to a *veridical* reading) of teachers’ accounts, which focusses less on the relation between the actual event described and its representation in the interview, and more on the “interviewees themselves and their individual reasons for making a given statement” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 144). A *symptomatic* reading seeks to understand the participants’ relationship to a particular topic being discussed - not to seek whether a discreet event ‘really’ did happen, but rather



narrows in on how and why certain accounts emerge. It is quite possible for example, that events recounted by teachers, or ventriloquised speech of students or co-workers in their accounts, were embellished, altered, or perhaps even fabricated entirely. Nevertheless, it is what such data points towards – and not its ‘objective’ origin in any event, which is key; namely, expressions of struggles over the control of producing the lesson (Chapter 6); feelings of being undervalued (Chapter 7); and a sense of alienation from one’s work (Chapter 8).

Furthermore, there is also the matter of considerable overlap between what Neisser terms *episodic* and *repisodic* forms of memory:

The single clear memories that we recollect so vividly actually stand for something else [...]. Often their real basis is a set of repeated experiences, a sequence of related events that the single recollection merely typifies or represents. [...] Such memories might be called repisodic rather than episodic: what seems to be an episode actually represents a repetition. (Neisser, 1981, p. 20)

The important point here is that the recounting of particular discreet events does not happen in a vacuum in isolation of all other experience, but rather is situated within a *nested structure* of multiple events and cumulative experience (Neisser, 2011), as well as being situated within the dynamics of the interview itself as an event (Block, 2000). In this sense, the recounting of a particular episode, even if largely embellished, contradictory, or a selective representation of a discreet event, can nevertheless speak volumes about a much larger series of events and cumulative experience, of which the discreet event can be seen as functioning as a conduit. In other words, in giving accounts and narratives, it is not simply the case we describe *either* an individual event *or* our cumulative experiences and reflections thereon, but often *both*. *Repisodic* readings therefore, approach the accounts participants give of particular events and interactions as microcosms of much broader amalgams of experiences and feelings. It would presumably be very difficult for the teachers interviewed in this study to select a single lesson, student, colleague, or event, which sufficiently circumscribed every aspect of their experience and understanding of their work lives within their *eikaiwa* schools. We often have *more to say* about a particular experience than a ‘faithful’ episodic recounting will permit. In this sense it is quite understandable how certain events may have been embellished, or how multiple events may have merged into single accounts, perhaps consciously perhaps not, as a means to express a broad and complex understanding of what working in *eikaiwa* is like through the conduit of particular events and actors.

The rationale for the inclusion of digital sources of information in the public domain lay with their status as sources of institutionally legitimised forms of information, in so far as they are the *official*

websites of the particular *eikaiwa* corporations in question. During the data collection, there were many other online resources which were considered as candidate sites of data, particularly social media groups and message boards where those with an interest in the *eikaiwa* industry interacted. However, these tended to be short-lived and discontinued groups (perhaps an indication of the ‘revolving door’ hiring practices of *eikaiwa* – see Chapter 4). As an amalgam, such sources provided somewhat disparate and sparse data on *eikaiwa* teaching, with short interrupted and discontinued threads on particular issues which often lacked detail and descriptive depth. As for the sources of information which were not in the public domain but came from the teacher participants themselves, these were provided upon request. Some materials, which were fundamental to the process of lesson production, were requested in a more or less systematic fashion. For example, all teachers were asked if they could show and talk me through the materials they used while teaching. However, many teachers were not able to provide these as such materials were often not taken outside of the schools, or in the case of discussing previous teaching jobs, had already been discarded. The collection of such materials then, was subject to the availability of such information, and even if the collection of, say, teaching materials was approached in a systematic manner, this did not provide systematic or ‘complete’ sets of data. Many other materials collected emerged more spontaneously, prompted by the interviews themselves, and were more idiosyncratic in nature. For example, the letter and e-mail exchanges between participants and other actors at the school provided useful points from which to explore particular events which had taken place.

#### 5.4 Refining the Focus of the Research to Corporate *Eikaiwa* Chains

While some turned their attention away from the larger corporate *eikaiwa* chains and towards smaller, often non-commercial providers of *eikaiwa*, often citing the issues of access I have described above (Kubota, 2011a), I have elected to do the reverse – that is, to turn my attention to the corporate providers of *eikaiwa* in spite of the issue of access. The reasons for doing so, emerged during the process of conducting the research. Over multiple visits to one of the smaller independent schools to do fieldwork, the owner of one school began to listen in on interviews I was conducting with staff, going so far as to comment and even ‘correct’ interviewees during interviews. Given the school was a small-scale affair, and comprised of a single large room layout, there were no private spaces in which interviews might have taken place. The challenge to the integrity of the data collected in these interviews, collected under the gaze and comment of someone in a position of power relative to the staff being interviewed, as well as the potential risk that my presence as a researcher in the school might have had in potentially causing stress or discomfort to participants under such a gaze, both came into question. As a result, I terminated the research at this particular school.

As for the remaining smaller independent *eikaiwa* I made visits to, it became something of an outlier in a set of data which was heavily weighted towards the larger corporate providers of *eikaiwa*. It became increasingly clear in making visits to the site, that the kind of social relations involved in a large corporate organisation, and those in far smaller scale schools, were very different propositions. Within the smaller *eikaiwa* for example, the labour-capital relation of employer-employee, and issues of alienation and exploitation therein did not particularly feature, perhaps unsurprisingly given that the school was owned and run by its three self-employed staff. The kind of social relations involved blurred over into familial relations, seeing as the staff/owners of the school comprised of a brother, a sister, and her husband. Running the school, teaching classes, and doing various other duties necessary to keep the school running were balanced with the care giving work necessary for the two young children of the husband-wife staff. All of this is not to say that smaller *eikaiwa* schools such as those which I was able to visit do not involve alienation or exploitation in some sense, or are not subject to many of the other trials and tribulations an educational institution competing in the market might face. It is nevertheless, somewhat distinct from the issues which I myself experienced in the ELT industry and which have motivated this research (see Chapter 1), and which emerged in the collection of data from those working in corporate *eikaiwa*. There was also the issue of generalisability, given that only one site of its type (a smaller independent *eikaiwa*) featured in the data set. In contrast to the corporate providers of *eikaiwa* which taught mostly adult and teen language learners in small group, or one-on-one classes, the smaller independent *eikaiwa* I visited taught exclusively very young learners aged from around two – eight years old, in classes of around ten students. To juxtapose the data collected from this single school with that from the numerous employees of corporate *eikaiwa* would have been, to a certain extent, to compare a single apple with a number of oranges. It was for these reasons, that I decided to exclude the data collected from this site from the data corpus. The research then, focussed in on the experiences of teachers who were working, or who had worked, in three of the largest corporate providers of *eikaiwa* across Japan: *Gaba*, *Berlitz*, and *NOVA* (see Chapter 4), though this was often complemented by teachers' experiences of other work they had done, or continued to do, in for example work they had done at smaller commercial *eikaiwa*, or 'freelance' teaching they had done through agencies (see Chapter 6).

Refining the research down to those who work(ed) for the larger corporate *eikaiwa* sector, had the effect of reducing the number of participants down to six. While a larger number of participants would have generated more data, as I have said, given the many differences between working in a smaller independent *eikaiwa* and working for a large corporation, I would have ended up with a large but blurred, and perhaps incoherent corpus of data. Indeed, even within the participants who worked at smaller independent *eikaiwa* schools, the variation in the tasks they performed at work

(administrative, marketing, sales, teaching, decorating, cleaning etc.), their employment status (full-time, part-time, self-employed, voluntary), as well as variations in the lessons produced (in terms of: form, content, duration, kinds of students, materials, etc.), varied considerably, and this became clearer over time as data was collected. In collecting data on the 6 participants who work(ed) within larger corporate *eikaiwa* on the other hand, similar themes and practices emerged, in for example their employment status, the tasks they performed at work, and the manner in which classes were produced. Refining the focus of the research to these six participants then gave me a more stable and focussed kernel from which to work outwards, which the more heterogenous data from the smaller independent *eikaiwa* teachers simply did not afford me. There is one exception to this, namely the participant Dominic who had been working 'freelance' through an agency who paired him up with students through a smartphone app. This form of work differed from those working in the larger corporate *eikaiwa* in so far as the lessons took place in public spaces such as cafes rather than in physical spaces designed and run by the corporations themselves – i.e. school branches. However, many of the features of the job such as the one-on-one nature of the classes and the pay-per-lesson form of remuneration for example, were similar to those found in the larger corporate *eikaiwa* schools (as distinct from the smaller *eikaiwa* school teachers whose data was excluded from the research). As a relative newcomer to the industry, and one who was in the process of applying for, and attending interviews for larger corporate *eikaiwa*, Dominic was a valuable informant in getting a newcomer's point of view, particularly as regards the processes and pre-requisites necessary in order to obtain a job within the larger corporate *eikaiwa* industry. His account provided information on how, and why, one might become an *eikaiwa* teacher within the corporate sector.

### 5.5 Sampling and Generalisability

Issues of generalisability must also be raised, given the relatively small number of participants in the study. Even after narrowing a focus to those who predominantly work in the larger corporate *eikaiwa*, there remains the problem of generalising about a huge industry comprising hundreds of schools, thousands of teachers, and millions of students, all from data generated by 6 participants. As Boddy (2016) has pointed out in reference to reviews of academic work, while many are quick to describe sample sizes as 'too small', far fewer are able to suggest how big a sample is 'big enough', and why. As Boddy goes on to argue "the issue of what constitutes an appropriate sample size in qualitative research is only really answerable within the context and scientific paradigm of the research being conducted" (ibid, p. 430-431). In terms of context, there are indeed issues which arise, not least of all in the heterogeneity (or *variance*) within the sample population – corporate *eikaiwa* teachers. As has been pointed out, the thousands of *eikaiwa* teachers across Japan form an increasingly diverse and mobile population. Highly mobile in terms of job precarity and the

casualisation of labour, and diverse in respect of: nationality; the kinds of classes and students taught; and native speaker status, among many other variables (see Chapter 4). While a review of much of the scholarly literature might seem to tacitly imply the archetypal *eikaiwa* teacher to be a male, white, young, inner-circle native speaker of English, it is certainly the case that the population of *eikaiwa* teachers contains a degree of variance beyond such an archetype. Indeed, without specifying any criterion for participation in the research, within the convenience sample of 6 teachers here, 2 are female and from the outer-circle (the Philippines), while 3 identify a language other than English as their first. As regards mobility, it is worth restating that for many, teaching in *eikaiwa* is a short-term job, and as such, those who stay in *eikaiwa* for the short term may have been difficult to get hold of for the purposes of research and are thus not represented. It is certainly the case that most of the participants sampled here (see below) have experience of working in the industry far longer than the average. While four out of 6 participants have experience of working within *eikaiwa* for between 10 and 20 years for example, the average tenure of an *eikaiwa* teacher ranges between one and 3 years, at least according to the figures provided by the corporations themselves (see Chapter 4). It cannot be said therefore, that the teacher participants of this study are generalisable in the sense of representing a larger population in microcosm, at least in terms of ethnicity, nationality, gender, English native speaker-status, and length of experience within the *eikaiwa* industry. However, in terms of many of their practices – what they actually ‘do’ at work, a certain degree of generalisability right across much of *eikaiwa* certainly does hold, in so far as they largely taught small group or one-on-one classes of between 40-45 minutes in length; were employed as labour by a commercial for-profit corporation; and taught in contexts where standardised methodologies, materials, and evaluation existed right across the corporations for whom they worked.

For Gobo (2017), when dealing with issues of variance within a sampled population one need not necessarily follow the positivist logic of a greater sample equating to greater generalisability, but rather, in research of a more constructivist nature which aims to understand participants practices and their reflections thereon, one can view the concept of generalisation not “in terms of making generalisations to a larger population [...] but to specify [...] *the condition under which our phenomena exist*, the action/interaction that pertains to them, and the associated outcomes or consequences.” (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p191, quoted in Gobo 2017, emphasis added). What this study offers then, is not an account of what *eikaiwa* teaching in all its *totality definitively is*, nor, at the other extreme, an entirely idiographic account of 6 atomised individuals. Rather, the aim is to illustrate how research might approach the co-presence and management of contradictory forces within language teaching under certain conditions that neither typify, nor are endemic to, *eikaiwa*.

Generalising in this sense, does not concern *probability* - the validity with which one can extrapolate to a larger population (these teachers do and think this, and so most others are likely to do or think in similar ways), “but to develop theoretical ideas that will have general validity” and form part of a body of *cumulative knowledge* (Gobo 2017, p. 198) both within, and beyond *eikaiwa*. Conditions, for example, of: being employed in a pay-per-lesson manner; producing lessons for learners positioned as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’; lessons being sold in bulk in advance payment; and teacher evaluation in reference to standardised forms of teaching methodology and materials, among other things, certainly exist beyond *eikaiwa* (Chapter 9).

## 5.6 Ethical Considerations

In line with the ethical guidelines set out by *BERA* (the British Educational Research Association), all participants were asked to give signed consent prior to the collection of any data (see Appendix vii), a copy of which they were required to keep. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw their consent at any time during the research, without the need for any justification. Teachers who responded to calls for participants in *eikaiwa* and English teaching related private groups on *Facebook*, were instructed to express their interest via an e-mail address given in the post, and not to directly comment or reply to the post. Any such comments were deleted to protect the anonymity of potential participants. To further protect participants’ anonymity, all participants, as well as the names of other people (e.g. co-workers, students, managers etc.) and places (e.g. the names of places of work or schools) mentioned by participants in interviews, were given pseudonyms. With supplementary oral consent from all participants, the names of places of work, either prior to, or at the time of interview, were not given pseudonyms in the case of these being any of the large nationwide corporate *eikaiwa* chains (e.g. *Gaba*, *NOVA*, and *Berlitz*). Given that the large corporate *eikaiwa* each consist of schools numbering in the hundreds, and employ thousands of teachers, identifying the corporation for which teachers worked, or had worked, posed no reasonable risk of compromising the participants’ anonymity. The location of any places of work were anonymised through phrases such as ‘the Tokyo area’. All participant interviews were held in locations external to places of work (former or current), and the researcher did not visit, or make himself known to anyone at places of work mentioned by any participant. One exception to this was Frank, who invited me briefly to visit a school he had previously worked for. Given Frank’s interviews occurred at the end of his *eikaiwa* teaching career - literally a matter of weeks before he moved back to Canada to retire, I concluded that conducting such a visit to a former place of work posed a minimal risk in the circumstances.

## 5.7 Method

Over a period of 2 years, multiple interviews with 6 *eikaiwa* teacher participants took place, with the simultaneous collection of a range of hard copy and digital materials to make up the corpus of data. A combination of convenience and snowball sampling strategies were used to find participants for the research. Participants were found through requests in public digital spaces such as *eikaiwa*- and English teaching related groups on *Facebook*, which returned the initial participants. These then recommended and put me in touch with further potential participants. One participant – Jacque, whom I came into contact with in the latter stages of the data collection was unable to continue with the research due to other commitments in his personal life. I was therefore only able to conduct two interviews, and not able to collect a body of interview-generated data of comparable quantity and quality to the other participants, each of whom were interviewed at length, multiple times. However, Jacque proved a rich source of other data – especially as regards teaching materials, official documents, and e-mails, and as such I have retained him here as a participant within the research. The profiles of the participants are summarised below, in terms of gender (m=male, f=female), age, nationality, and experience in the *eikaiwa* industry:

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Nationality (self-identified)	Experience within <i>Eikaiwa</i>
Alan (m)	30's	British	12 years' experience as an English teacher and headteacher, at <i>NOVA</i> and smaller commercial <i>eikaiwa</i> schools
Frank (m)	60's	Canadian-British	19 years' experience working as an English teacher working at <i>Gaba</i> , as well as other smaller commercial schools
Jacque (m)	40's	French-Canadian	19 years' experience working as an English teacher for <i>Gaba</i> , smaller commercial <i>eikaiwa</i> schools, as well as for dispatch agencies for the state sector
Michelle (f)	30's	Filipino	13 years' experience as English teacher and Regional Manager at <i>Berlitz</i>
Dominic (m)	60's	Scottish	1 year experience of working as a 'freelance' English teacher for an agency, and in the process

			of applying for jobs at <i>Gaba</i> and other large corporate <i>eikaiwa</i>
Maria (f)	20's	Filipino	5 years' experience of working as an English teacher at <i>Berlitz</i>

## 5.8 Interviews

In accordance with participants' availability, each participant was interviewed between two and seven times. The length of each interview varied in line with the participants' convenience, and lasted from between 40 minutes to over 3 hours. Where possible, and in line with the participants' own convenience, interviews were scheduled around a month apart, in order for transcriptions to be completed, and used as prompts in consecutive interviews. Due to the convenience and snowballing strategies used, different participants were interviewed across overlapping periods across the two-year span of data collection. For example, within a single month different participants may have conducted their first, second, third, etc. interview. Where data emerged in the interviews of participants who had their interviews over a later period than others, and where new insights came to light, or where information contradicted data collected earlier, further interviews were requested from those who had given interviews earlier, so as to achieve a general level of data saturation across the participants. Interviews were largely semi-structured, and involved discussion based around a set of prompting questions, which were gradually refined during the process of data collection (see Appendix i). In addition to these, many of the materials collected either from public sites such as the official websites, or provided by the participants themselves, acted as prompts for further discussion. In the interviews which followed the initial interview, opportunities for participants to reflect on, correct, or restate either what they had said during previous interviews, or the researcher's own understanding and interpretation of what had been said previously, functioned as a means to raise the interpretive validity of data from the interviews (Maxwell, 1992).

Furthermore, across multiple interviews there was the opportunity to prompt participants with some of the contradictory forces or interests they had described, often in isolation of each other. For example, many teachers described their job as being repetitive and machine-like in reference to the teaching materials they used such as textbooks, while in other interviews they would describe in great detail the heterogeneity of kinds of lessons they would produce – seemingly with little to do with efforts to script and tightly control the way lessons were produced, embodied in the teaching materials (see Chapter 6). In later interviews teachers were asked to reflect upon such contradictions, and especially prompted on questions of how such contradictory forces were managed, and who decided they were to be managed in that way.



## 5.9 A Focus on Contradiction in Interviews

Many contradictory forces and interests at play in *eikaiwa* were relatively transparent and therefore formed relatively easily collectable data. For example, all of the teachers interviewed experienced the push and pull between the scripted repetitive teaching material and more flexible heterogenous production of classes just mentioned. However, many contradictory forces and interests were more opaque in nature, often stretching beyond the immediate space and time of the production of the lesson as a discrete event, to other stakeholders at the school, and beyond. It is all very well asking teachers for example to identify and describe the different contradictory forces they experience and try to balance at work, and doing so may well produce valuable insights, yet it is rather more likely to produce an account of those contradictory forces which are most visible (arguments, soured personal relationships, perceived falsehoods etc.), than it is to elicit discussions of how participants relate themselves to more macro abstract concerns such as ‘capitalism’ or ‘value’ for example. While descriptions of conflicting interests or viewpoints between any number of teachers, management staff, sales staff, students, or any other actors within the school were relatively common in participants’ accounts, the kind of dialectical interrelations which work outwards – the links between the participant as an individual and more macro political economic concerns, did not emerge with the same level of frequency.

In order to investigate how participants related themselves as a *part* to much larger *wholes*, the research drew on the notion of crisis, as described here by Martin Nicolaus in his *Foreword* to Marx’s *Grundrisse*:

In short, for Marx and Hegel, the problem of grasping a thing is firstly the problem of grasping that it is in motion.[...] *Only when things suddenly crack and break apart does it become obvious that there was a dynamic within them all the time*; but ordinarily, things present an appearance of rest. (Marx, 1973, p. 30 emphasis added)

The cracks and crises of contradictions then offer a window into ascertaining processes at work which might otherwise be overlooked. As Eagleton (2012) points out, it is when contradictions weigh in most heavily on our daily lives which lead to us relating our economic parts to larger wholes. While one’s work life is trundling along quite steadily, one is unlikely to relate oneself to the economy or capitalism in quite the same way as one who has had their salary and benefits cut, or has just lost their job. Indeed, some teachers’ accounts of dismissal and job precarity prompted them to relate themselves to larger more abstract structures such as the state and the economy. It was to such cracks and crises which the research often turned its attention. In order to gather such data, the research focussed in on how teachers related themselves and their work both within and

beyond the school. For example, in discussing relationships which teachers found difficult within the school (see Appendix i) teachers were asked to recall how such a relationship *became* difficult, rather than simply why it was so. Similarly, teachers were prompted to relate their current *eikaiwa* work to previous *eikaiwa* work they had done, to the *eikaiwa* industry more broadly, to other experiences of work more generally that they had experience in, as well as to broader changes in the economy such as decreasing levels of job security (see Chapter 4). In eliciting teachers' career trajectories, points of cracks and crisis emerged in for example accounts of teachers quitting, being fired, choosing this job over that, or experiencing changes in their circumstances at a particular place of work, and in doing so, participants often related themselves to larger more abstract notions such as class, capitalism, the state, and ethno-national identity (see Chapter 8).

In addition to the cracks and crises of contradictory processes, the research also focussed on relations of power within the school which were expressed through the control of the production process, and through evaluative positions certain stakeholders at the school were able to adopt, often in contradiction with one another. Questions of the control of the production process sought to understand who at the school was in control of what, what claims certain stakeholders made of the right to control certain aspects of production, and how issues of control were negotiated during production itself. In doing so, the research aimed not only to uncover the potentially contradictory demands and interests from teachers, management, the school as an institution, and students themselves – the struggles over how lessons were to be produced, but also to highlight how the relation between each of these actors underscored the manner in which their control was legitimately expressed – the 'why' of who controls what. For example, as I will discuss in more detail later (see Chapter 6), in students relating as customers to the school and to their teacher, they often redirected the production of lessons in ways which ran contrary to the institutional norms of the schools, and/or the interests of teachers themselves. Where struggles over the control of production ensued, competing notions of 'the good' emerged, in the expressions of how teachers and lessons *should be*, and what the 'good' teacher and the 'good' lesson were. Here, once again, relations are key, as it is the manner in which stakeholders relate to each other (employee – employer, business – client, teacher- student/customer etc.) which illuminates how some concepts of 'the good' win out over others, sometimes temporarily, sometimes more systematically.

A further way in which the research aimed to understand contradictions was through the notion of interstitial ambiguity, where an absence of clear rules, or presence of contradictory rules, leads to a breakdown in what at other times seem relatively stable and easily taken for granted processes. I emphasise here the difference between an absence of rules, and an absence of *clear* rules, as the presence of human actors within a social space always presupposes the presence of some form of

'rules' (whether explicit or otherwise) in the sense that actors do not and cannot exist in a social vacuum abstracted away from all norms, conventions, rules etc. By interstitial ambiguity then, what is meant is not some vacuum where no rules apply, but rather where contradictory norms and rules exist in potential, to be later determined by actors in practice. Indeed, this is something I (as a Western European) experience on a fairly frequent basis working within academia in Japan, where both I, and my Japanese interlocutors are often unsure about 'whose rules apply' as it were, in addressing each other by: first name, by surname, and whether a prefix or suffix is necessary (for example: Will; Mr. Simpson; Will-sensei; Simpson-sensei). Such interstitial contradictory spaces, often literally the physically interstitial spaces such as the hallways between the classrooms of a school (Heller 2006), are productive of ambiguities and contradictions which permit us to see processes, norms, rules, and ways of doing things being (re)established (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Canagarajah, 2006; Heller, 2006; Jaspers, 2011, 2015; Pérez-Milans, 2013). Indeed, for Pérez-Milans, such interstitial ambiguity in interaction between participants was a point of focus in so far as it offered "especially rich sites for exploring the social process by which norms and rules [...] are made explicit and salient" (2013, p. 33). Therefore, in addition to focussing on the cracks and crises discussed above, the research also aimed to understand how contradictory forces were managed by actors in the interstitial spaces (literally and figuratively) in which rules or norms were ambiguous. This was mostly prompted by the question "Were there ever times in your job, when you felt it was unclear, or you were unsure, about what you should do?", before asking them how such situations were resolved, and what 'rules' made explicit (see Appendix i).

### 5.10 Transcription, Analysis, and the Method of Presentation

Audio recordings of all interviews were transcribed in full, in line with the transcription conventions in Appendix ii. As the research entailed a content analysis of the transcriptions, where the focus of the research was primarily on understanding the practices of eikaiwa teaching (rather than say a conversation analysis of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee itself), pauses in speech have been estimated, and features such as breaths taken, intonation (aside from rising question intonation), and volume of speech, were not entered into the transcription. All interviews were transcribed in full before the subsequent interview of each participant, by way of providing the researcher with prompts to use in the following interviews (see Appendix ii for the full list of transcription conventions that were used). During the transcription process, generalities and specific items of interest were noted by the researcher as part of an initial coding process, which consequently gave rise to an initial list of codes used to carry out a content analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). While some of these codes or categories, such as "the ticket system" or "students as customers" are what Cherryholmes refers to as "first-order constructs" (1988, p. 433), in so far as they are

constructs understood and used by participants themselves in the work place, other first-order constructs which emerged from data were drawn together under broader categories (see Appendix iii). For example, all participants referred to prescribed forms of training, the use of prescribed teaching materials, and evaluative procedures, somewhat independently of one another, as what might be termed first-order constructs. The point, however, is not simply to employ codes or categories, first-order or otherwise, for the sole reason that insiders themselves use them, but rather, as Heller puts it, to attempt to “understand why certain categories are meaningful to people and in what ways” (2011, p. 36). What became clear rather early on, is that these constructs (training, teaching materials, evaluations) were brought up, largely in reference to matters of control in the way lessons were to be produced, and so have been grouped together under the code of “Taylorised Production”.

The first level of coding which took place in analysing the data did not produce codes and order analysis along the lines of contradictions (though elementary notes on contradictions were indeed taken at this stage), nor did they seek to establish dialectical interrelations between multiple people and practices, but rather sought to order the data gathered into manageable chunks which lent themselves to being expanded upon, and built up in subsequent interviews, right across all of the participants. There were both practical and methodological reasons for doing so. From a practical standpoint, it was far easier for participants to talk about abstracted parts of their job – what the teaching materials they used were like, how students pay for classes, their working schedule etc. in isolation of each other, rather than to have a complex *a priori* dialectical totality and all its contradictions foisted upon them by the researcher demanding an immediate explanation. Once an understanding of each of these abstracted parts in isolation had been established, the research began to ask how each of these parts related to each other, by prompting participants with questions about potential contradictions, such as the example of the Taylorised teaching materials and more open spontaneous forms of lessons produced discussed earlier.

There was, in addition, a methodological reason for the iterative back and forth between data collection and analysis which form an understanding of the part’s relation to the whole. Working in such a manner followed Marx’s method of *rising from the abstract to the concrete*, in the understandings of both the researcher and the participants themselves (Ollman, 2003). By working from an initial understanding of a part abstracted in isolation, before reinserting it back into a larger system (totality) so as to understand not only how such parts work in motion so speak (much like with deconstructing and reconstructing an engine to understand how each part works and effects the others for example), but also to gain insights into how relations come to shed new light on what a single abstracted part is, or does, which might otherwise remain unknown. For example, the kind

of Taylorised control or scripting which teachers mentioned tended to be abstracted and embodied, or circumscribed, to discrete objects such as teaching materials, or practices like teacher evaluations. However, when prompted in interviews to dialectically relate this to the more spontaneous and heterogenous forms of lessons they had given accounts of elsewhere, some found upon reflection that the control of the lesson lay more in the hands of the student as customer (i.e. a student relating to the teacher as a customer or client, and not 'just' as a student) than with the materials or institutional evaluations. Others described how the very forms of lesson production which they positioned *outside* of such control – the 'free conversation' classes, came to nevertheless replicate much of the scripting and predictability they had discussed previously as something external and unrelated to such classes (see Chapter 6). Parts which were previously constructed as isolated and even oppositional to one another – 'doing the textbook' as opposed to 'doing free conversation' classes for example, began to blur into and interpenetrate one another, giving a much more nuanced and dynamic understanding of how lessons were produced. In this sense, many of the interviews had a dialogic character (Gitlin, Siegel, & Boru, 1989), both between the researcher and participant, and across the participants themselves. This enabled what Brinkman & Kvale term "dialogical subjectivities" (2018, p.140) where participants were able to dynamically come to terms with, and construct an understanding of how the various parts of their job coexisted, often in tension and contradiction with one another as a whole. The data generated by these dynamic dialectical understandings of lesson production gave rise to the second level of coding in terms of contradictions.

As a means to organise this second-level coding, I turned to Marx's conception of *capital as value in motion*, moving through distinct yet interrelated moments of *production, realisation, and distribution* (see Chapter 2). While in doing so, I am to an extent organising the data along lines which did not emerge from an *insiders' view* (no participants referred to such terms), it was nevertheless necessary to adapt a form of organisation of the material, for the sake of presenting the data in a coherent way. In presenting the material in what appears as a sequentially logical way: production – realisation – distribution (producing the commodity – selling the commodity – distributing the profit), my aim is for the method of presentation to follow that of investigation – that is to say by first addressing and detailing abstracted parts, before synthesising them together in increasingly complex and dynamic wholes. For this reason, the following chapters begin primarily with matters of production (Chapter 6), before building up a more complex picture of how production, realisation, and distribution relate to one another (Chapters 7 and 8).

## 5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to position the research methodologically in relation to, firstly, work on language and political economy, and secondly, to work inspired by Marxist political economy and his dialectical method of inquiry. The chapter has also described the numerous challenges encountered during the research, not least the issue of access to sites, and the problems a relatively small sample size of teacher participants might pose, before detailing how practical issues were methodologically worked around in the case of access to sites, and in positioning the research as productive of *general theories* relevant to a *cumulative knowledge* as regards generalisability. The chapter has also given an account of the iterative back and forth between data collection and analysis, in collecting and analysing abstracted parts of teachers work-lives, before later synthesising them in increasingly complex, and often contradictory wholes. As I have already mentioned, in doing so, it was not simply a matter of the researcher's own understanding of *eikaiwa* becoming more sophisticated or complete, but rather, often a certain dynamism in the participants' own understandings of their work-lives which emerged from the dialectical mediation of the different 'parts' of their experience and practice. In the following chapters, I have attempted to give a sense of this increasingly complex synthesis, working outwards from production (Chapter 6), to questions of distribution (Chapter 7), and finally to matters of how teachers understand how they as individuals relate to 'the economy' or 'capitalism' as a whole (Chapter 8).

## Chapter 6 - The Production of the *Eikaiwa* Lesson

In this chapter an account of how *eikaiwa* lessons were produced is given. In so doing, the chapter addresses the first research question - how the status of *eikaiwa* as a commercial provider of language education affects the manner in which language is taught. The chapter draws on a notion of Taylorised and flexible forms of production as a dialectical unity of two mutually occurring forms of production, each of which embody certain tendencies and interests that pull *eikaiwa* teachers in potentially contradictory directions in the production of the lesson. On the one hand, the use of prescribed scripted plans, teaching materials, and methods, are all ensured by evaluative observations of teachers' lessons, as a means to guarantee a standardised level of quality of lessons, as commodities of a homogenous use-value. Running contrary to this however, the manner in which students related to their teachers as 'customers' or 'clients' necessitated that students were not only to be taught, but also to be 'satisfied'. Delivering such satisfaction called for the bespoke flexible production of lessons which catered to the demands of individual students, and thus pulled the production of the lesson commodity towards a heterogeneity of use-value production. In balancing the contradictory pulls of Taylorised and flexible forms of production, the delivery of satisfaction tended to determine (il)legitimate deviation from the Taylorised script. However, for some teachers the use-value of the lesson-commodity became a site of struggle where teachers' own senses of what the lesson should or should not be, often clashed with institutionally sanctioned scripting, student demand, and the character of the lesson as commodity as an exchange-value – as something produced for sale.

### 6.1 Freelance and Corporate *Eikaiwa* Teaching: Two Vignettes

The chapter begins with vignettes of two *eikaiwa* teachers as a means to sketch out what working in *eikaiwa* is like, before moving on to deal in detail with specific aspects of production. Though this study has not attempted to comprehensively capture and relate the many varied forms which *eikaiwa* teaching in Japan can take (see Chapter 4), it does nevertheless aim to address two common organisational forms of production of the *eikaiwa* lesson as commodity – in other words, the commercial for-profit provision of *eikaiwa* English language education. Firstly, there is what I refer to as *freelance eikaiwa* teaching which refers to short-term arrangements between students, schools, agencies, and teachers. Typically, those doing freelance jobs create a patchwork schedule of teaching jobs of various kinds in multiple locations, often through an intermediary such as an agency, which connects freelancing teachers with students, schools, or other institutions looking for English teachers. Secondly, *corporate eikaiwa* teaching refers to teaching within the larger corporate run *eikaiwa* institutions that span the length and breadth of Japan. In this study, teachers with

experience of teaching in the corporate *eikaiwas* *Gaba*, *NOVA*, and *Berlitz* were interviewed. It is important to note however, that much of the work within the corporate *eikaiwa* sector is also ‘freelance’ in the sense that the common *gyomu itaku* contracts (analogous to zero-hour contracts – see Chapter 4) pay teachers only for the amount of lesson-time they have taught. While contracts within corporate *eikaiwa* that guarantee a set number of lessons and/or salary do exist, only one of the participants in this study had worked under such a contract. The key differences then between the *freelance* (as I am using the term) and *corporate eikaiwa* teaching are twofold. Firstly, it is largely the case that corporate *eikaiwa* teaching takes place in a more limited number of physical spaces – often an individual ‘school branch’, ‘language centre’, or ‘language studio’, whereas the former occur in a greater variety and number of locations such as schools, cafes, or other public spaces which individual teachers travel to. *Freelance eikaiwa* teaching typically involves teaching at several locations, and the duration of work at each particular location is generally short term, and is unlikely to last more than a year, more commonly lasting a matter of weeks or months. Corporate *eikaiwa* schools are seen as generally offering more reliable work, in so far as their ability to continually attract large numbers of students to their schools through their reputation, and extensive marketing and advertising campaigns, combined with a single workplace, rather than the often extensive travelling freelancers do, means it is generally easier to fill up one’s schedule than would be the case with freelancing through various agencies or other middlemen for example.

There is of course some overlap between these two forms of production. Many of the teachers interviewed worked jobs both in the freelance and the corporate *eikaiwa* sector for example, and two of the participants had taken up off-site teaching through their corporate *eikaiwa* employer, teaching at locations external to the school on behalf of the corporation. That being said, I have largely followed the manner in which participants themselves divided up the kind of work they had done, or continue to do, in their description of their trajectories as *eikaiwa* teachers.

## 6.2 Vignette 1: Dominic - Freelance *Eikaiwa* Teaching

Dominic, originally from Glasgow in Scotland, has been living in Japan for the past 5 years. While previously working as a contracted engineer, he has now been freelancing as an English teacher in the Tokyo area for over a year, working on short-term contracts with private schools, and through an agency which allows students to book private one-to-one lessons with teachers through a smartphone application. At the time of the interviews, he had two part-time one-lesson-per-week contracted jobs at private institutions for the length of one semester (approximately 3 months). While initially the pay for such work seemed good - ¥5000 (approx. \$45.50) for a 40-minute lesson, the cost and time of transportation often makes such work far less attractive. For Dominic, who lives in one of the prefectures outside of Tokyo, it takes an unremunerated round trip of 3 hours to the



schools, which Dominic calculates as bringing his earnings down to around ¥1200 (approx. \$11) per hour.

To supplement the contracted part time work, Dominic uses an agency which provides him with individual students which he teaches in public spaces in central Tokyo, usually in cafes. His students request lessons with him through a smartphone application, arranging date, time and location for the lesson which he then accepts or refuses. Students often book at very short notice, the night before or even on the same day of the lesson, meaning Dominic cannot predict his schedule or his weekly income in advance. He says it is not unusual to have a week with no bookings at all. Students book and pay for one lesson at a time, and a relatively high level of student attrition occurs, with many students often “disappearing” after 5 or 6 weeks of regularly scheduled classes. Dominic estimates he has taught well over 250 students, all one-on-one, for the agency over the past year. As almost all of these lessons take place in central Tokyo, he spends a great deal on transportation - ¥250,000 (\$2,325) in the last 6 months according to his own accounts, for which he is not reimbursed. Dominic expressed some frustration at this, especially his lack of control over his travel costs, in so far as students choose the venue for lessons:

Dominic: and yeah I was trying to organise it better as well but it was virtually impossible because you've got no control of where the students are coming from or want to learn / so you could never bunch them all together / you can't bunch all the Ikebukuro [an area of downtown Tokyo] ones together in one day / so I would be all over the place.

As lessons take place in cafes, Dominic is also obliged to purchase something from the cafes in which he teaches. As students choose the venues of the lessons at their own convenience, he often ends up reluctantly buying drinks and snacks at multiple cafes within a single day, all of which eat into his income. In some of the more upmarket cafes of central Tokyo that Dominic's students have chosen, a single cup of coffee can cost as much as ¥900 (approx. \$9.40), almost half of the ¥2000 (\$18.60) per lesson fee he earns. The combined costs of travel and drinks were especially a challenge in the first 6 months of working as a freelance English teacher through the agency:

Dominic: in the beginning it was horrible / in that I was trying to do absolutely as much as I possibly could to be a good teacher and employer sort of thing / and I was actually losing money / I was finding that I was going too long distances and by the time it takes / and your coffee fee for the venue / and the transport fee off / the initial (.5) wages that I was getting paid / there were times when I was actually in a negative pay situation / (.5) however / I pushed for that / and then during the first / sort of / six months / five months / I virtually made nothing (.5) / I didn't even break even.

Things seemed to pick up after that however, when he was rewarded for the number of students he was attracting to the agency:

Dominic: However (.5) / because of my work and the amount of students that I was teaching I then went on to a bonus scheme / which worked really well because suddenly that bonus which was an extra ¥1000 (\$9.30) per lesson became my profit / and that worked really well for me / and I was doing maybe 20 or 25 sometimes students a week

Soon after however, for reasons Dominic is unsure of, the bonus scheme was scrapped, significantly cutting into his income. At the time of the interviews he said he was teaching around 6 or 7 lessons per week through the agency. His general feelings about the agency that he works for are that they seem rather indifferent to the specific situations of individual teachers, something which he thinks is exacerbated by the large number of teachers registered with the agency – some 5,000 English teachers in the Tokyo area alone:

Dominic: they know perfectly well what it costs to get to places and to buy coffees and you know / they're a business so they know perfectly well / and I have spoken to them about this / about sending me to Yokohama you know / that's ¥1700 (\$15.80) / for train fare / and I've said to them look its left me with ¥300 (\$2.80) yen for my hour lesson / is there anybody in your office who works for ¥300 an hour? / but they don't care

Despite frustration with a lack of control and stability in his work, he greatly enjoys and wants to continue teaching English in Japan. Dissatisfied with losing so much of his income through travel, and wanting more stability and predictability in his work life, Dominic is currently applying for full time jobs with many of the major corporate *eikaiwa* chains. At the time of interview however, he had had several unsuccessful interviews for such jobs, feeling that his age – 65 is something of a barrier to such jobs. He has an ambivalent attitude towards such jobs. While on the one hand potentially providing more stability and security than his current situation gives him, he is well aware that such jobs seldom provide substantial benefits such as social insurance and healthcare etc., and involved what Dominic often referred to as “profiteering” - the payment of low wages to teachers despite the high price of the lessons sold by the schools. While he wants to continue teaching, his mixed feelings towards the *eikaiwa* industry, and his concerns about the future, may lead him away from it. At the age of 65 he says he needs to work another 5 years in Japan in order to qualify for a Japanese pension to supplement his “tiny” British pension, and he also needs to bring up his average annual earnings to over ¥3,000,000 (\$27,900) over the next coming years in order to obtain permanent residency in Japan to settle there with his girlfriend. He is now considering alternatives to English

teaching, and is planning to buy a removals van, targeting removal and electrical work for expatriate residents in the Tokyo area.

### 6.3 Vignette 2: Frank – Corporate *Eikaiwa* Teaching

I caught Frank at the tail end of his English teaching career. In fact, our last interview together was the week before he would return to Canada as a retiree, to pursue his long-standing interests in film-making, and screenplay and novel writing. Frank is something of an *eikaiwa* veteran with over 19 years of experience. After his own business in Japan fell on hard times in Japan's economic downturn of the 1990s, he started teaching English in and around the Tokyo area. His experiences range from teaching conversational English over the phone, to 8 years of teaching for the corporate giant *Gaba*, followed by teaching at smaller *eikaiwa* schools right up until 2019. Working through a standard pay-per-lesson contract, Frank set himself the monthly target of earning ¥300,000 (\$2,780) per month, teaching one-to-one lessons throughout the day, from 7 in the morning until 9 at night. Typically, Frank would teach a variety of the students, or 'clients' in the nomenclature of *Gaba*. Frank described the variety of students he would teach throughout the day as including: students learning English before they start work in the morning; housewives, retired hobbyists, and doctors in the early afternoon; young learners later in the afternoon; and then students learning English after finishing their work in the evening. Weekends were the busiest times, with Frank regularly teaching 13 lessons on each of Saturday and Sunday. On average, Frank was teaching around 55 lessons per week. On arriving at work, Frank would go to sit in his teaching booth, equipped with a desk and two chairs, and wait for students to arrive. The branch of *Gaba* that he worked at, which he very briefly showed me around, contained 17 identical booths, all designed for one-on-one teaching (see the photo in the Chapter 4 for a near identical layout to that which Frank worked in). In each booth would be a teacher and a student, their 45-minute lesson punctuated by the ringing of an electric bell to signify the beginning and ending of each class, with a 5-minute break between each class for teachers to prepare for the next student. With 17 lessons all occurring simultaneously in close proximity to one another in adjoined booths rather than enclosed classrooms, Frank described the noisy and claustrophobic atmosphere of working in the school as being like a "Chicken house" – an analogy similar to Currie Robson's (2015) satirical reference to teachers in *Berlitz as "Battery Hens"*. As Frank was paid per lesson taught, he would mark out his availability each week on a schedule. Other non-teaching staff at the school would then assign students according to this availability, or students themselves would request a particular teacher at a particular time. According to Frank, students were regularly encouraged to choose their own teacher rather than have one assigned to them, something which often worked against him in terms of relying on a stable schedule and income:

Frank: So you had the flexibility to put in any hours you wanted / between 7 am and 9 pm / however if you didn't cooperate with what they wanted then you found yourself sitting there for hours [with no students, and therefore earning no money] / so / the thing about *Gaba* is the student can go anywhere / they like / like the school I work for now [a smaller independent *eikaiwa*] / if I had / let's say I had 80 students a month / (.5) those are my students only / unless I'm sick or on holiday / nobody else gets them / they come to me only / they like me I like them / we're going fine / not at *Gaba* / *Gaba* pushes the client [student] to go anywhere / [...] they can move around like a butterfly / so you / you have no guarantee

Students are greeted in the reception/lounge area of the school, a place reminiscent of an upscale dentist's or doctor's waiting room with sofas, coffee and tea making facilities, armchairs and reading material. Here, students can flick through magazines with profiles and pictures of the teachers working at *Gaba*, so that they can, in Frank's words, "choose the flavour of the month", and flit between teachers like "little bees that can go wherever they want". Students were heavily encouraged to purchase as large a bulk of lessons as possible in line with the ticket system (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 7). On a few occasions buying in bulk entailed students making one-time advanced payments of as much as ¥1,000,000 (\$9,280) worth of lessons. These lessons bought in bulk could then be 'spent' at any time convenient for the student, and on any teacher available to teach them.

#### 6.4 Taylorised Lesson Production in *Eikaiwa*

Before further discussion of Taylorised production within *eikaiwa*, it is worth clarifying what is meant by the term as I am using it, as well as acknowledging the limitations of describing *eikaiwa* work in terms of being 'Taylorised'. As discussed in Chapter 3, in drawing upon Braverman's work (1974), Block & Gray summarise Taylorised production as involving "every action which forms part of a task [being] broken down into a series of segments [...] to control time and movement with a view to increasing efficiency [...] and] predictability in the workplace" (2016, p. 484). Obviously, the factory production line and the language school are two very different prospects. Taylorised production, in its original application to mass produced supply-driven production of the early- and mid-twentieth century, most famously associated with the mass production of the *Ford Model T*, is obviously quite distinct from the flexible forms of production the demand-driven service sector cater to, of which commercial language teaching is a part, which deal face to face with consumers and their demand for products of a more bespoke nature than those rolled off of the production line. As I will go on to argue, there are nevertheless, very clear ways in which *eikaiwa* schools attempt to 'break down' the 'task' of teaching into proceduralised steps, with the clear aim of increasing predictability and control in producing lessons, and it is in this sense in which I refer to Taylorised production within

*eikaiwa*. However, Taylorised production as I refer to it here does not point to an independent form of production in itself, but rather as one side of a dialectical unity of Taylorised and flexible forms of production, two sets of tendencies and interests expressed in production which often run into contradiction with one another.

For those working in the corporate *eikaiwa* sector, teaching a lesson often involved following proceduralised lesson plans prescribed by the school. In conjunction with these, textbooks and other supplementary materials, again prescribed by the school, were typically used in the production of lessons. The production and sale of in-house textbooks and other teaching materials to students often supplemented the sale of lessons within corporate *eikaiwa*. At *Gaba* for example, Frank explained how the textbooks produced by the corporation were sold to the students. While students were not obliged to buy the textbook and use it in the classes with their teacher, according to Frank, they were heavily encouraged to purchase the textbooks, with sales staff motivated through bonuses and commissions on textbook sales. This seems to reflect the general trend in Japan's foreign language schools of producing and selling their own teaching materials. The latest figures from the financial year 2017 (METI 2019), show that teaching materials generated annual sales of around 6 billion yen (\$55.5 million) alone, accounting for around 7% of the total sales of foreign language schools in Japan.

For all of the participants, the lesson plans and the textbooks they used were a core point of reference for explaining what they did at work. Within such lesson plans clear attempts to exert Taylorised control of the lesson were present in the way the 'task' of producing the lesson was broken up and managed. For example, in the *NOVA* lesson plan provided by one participant (see Appendix iv), the lesson is presented as a series of 8 distinct stages each of which are given a specified allotment of time for their completion, ranging from 2 to 10 minutes. Here, there is a clear effort to control a number of aspects (whether teachers follow this or not is another matter), as regards the content, and the order and duration of the plan's composite steps. Other lesson plans evidence attempts at controlling or *scripting* (Cameron, 2000) the language to be produced in the lesson by teacher and student. The *Gaba* lesson plan (see Appendix v) for example, specifies the kind of response students are expected to produce at various stages of the lesson: "Student to respond with question and answer; Student to repeat; Student to respond with answer; Student to respond with full sentences", and further, specifying word for word the desired interactions between teacher (or 'instructor') and student at each stage, through transcribed speech acting as a model for replication.

Typically, lessons and their respective plans were divided by level of English proficiency, and number in the hundreds. While in some schools the lessons were set out in a determined order of succession (for example lesson A1, is followed by A2, then A3 etc.), in other schools the teacher had the responsibility of choosing the lesson. Choosing the lesson usually entailed selecting a lesson appropriate for the students' English proficiency level, but also a consideration of whether the student had already 'done' the lesson before, and if so, how recently. Here is Alan describing a typical day at *NOVA*, and how the lessons were 'rolled out':

Will: so, what would your typical schedule be

Alan: Ok / so going / so weekdays I would go in like 12:30 / 30 minutes to get ready then from 1 all the way through to 9 / with like a lunch break you would just be teaching straight / but you know it's just like McDonaldisation right? / so, there's no planning / it's like [lesson number] 'B41' / it's literally like a menu right? /

Alan later explained the 'menu' and how it was used in more detail:

Alan: Ok you / you have from A which is like CEFR A1 all the way up to H which is like CEFR C1 or something / you have these in-house materials which are like divided by level / and you basically / before every class you would go in and see the 5 students or 4 students in your class / check their schedules 'when did they last do B1 Ah! they did it 2 weeks ago we can't do that' / and then you'd just quickly skim through and see 'ah C46! they didn't do that recently they can all do a C lesson ok we'll do that one' / [...] and then you just rolled it out

Alan went on to describe the lesson plan and materials used at *NOVA*, detailing a basic PPP structure along the same lines as those discussed from *Gaba* and *Berlitz* in Chapter 4:

Alan: it's just really a very simple lesson plan / [...] it's (.5) basically PPP so you would have like an intro question and a warm up question / then you would have some kind of like you know language structure / generally like isolated phrases / then you'd have a listening activity / then a couple of like closed activities you know / you know substitution drills or something like that / then a more open activity at the end

However, it was not simply the way in which such lesson plans were structured and proceduralised which lend themselves to comparison with the Taylorised forms of mass production akin to the production line, but also the manner in which individual lessons, were repetitively produced. It was not uncommon for teachers to find themselves producing multiple lessons from the same lesson plan within the same day. Maria for example, described her experience of reproducing the same lesson numerous times for successive classes of young learners:

Will: so, you do the class for the first time and then a 10-minute break and then you do it again and a 10-minute break and again and again

Maria: yes [...] this is for the whole day / 4 times / 4 times a day because its 4 classes / I guess that's when boredom gets you / doing the same thing

Will: is it once a week?

Maria: that was 3 times a week

With a teaching schedule that required her to teach the same lesson 4 times a day, 3 times a week, it is not particularly difficult to imagine how Maria felt the job was repetitive or boring at times. What was particularly interesting about Maria's account however, was that it was not only the repeated use of the same teaching materials and lesson plans which made the job feel repetitive, but also the repetition of interactions between her students and herself in the classes:

Maria: but it's funny that ((laughs)) the flow and the content are the same / the mistakes of the students / even their mistakes

Will: oh, I see / so it's not just / you have pre-made material and you take it out and use it in the class / it's not just that

Maria: it's not just that [...] / let's say for example a grammar mistake and you repeat the mistake of the student and you explain /

Will: so, you found you were doing this again and again

Maria: again, and again

Will: the same mistakes would come up and you would kind of react to it in the same way

Maria: in the same way / which was kind of a surprise to me too / I / so I felt like some of my responses were like templates / I don't know what affected it maybe it's the repetitive (.5) teaching / or you know it's the same material and the same lesson sometimes

As Maria's account illustrates, Taylorised elements of production, the repetitive production of products of a predictable and uniform standard, did not only exist in the preconceived and prescribed mechanisms which attempted to exert control over the production of the lesson – the textbooks, the lesson plans, the training etc., but were also embodied and reproduced in the spontaneous unscripted interactions between teacher and student within the lesson. Indeed, even in forms of lesson production where one might expect greater spontaneity such as the 'free conversation' lessons for which there were no prescribed plans or materials, Maria nevertheless

expressed a certain repetitive and uniform quality to the lesson in the manner in which the same topics, questions, and interactions between herself and her students would emerge.

Though many teachers echoed Maria's sentiments of producing lessons in the *eikaiwa* as being repetitive, boring, or akin to work on the 'factory line' (Frank), the Taylorised form of production was legitimised by many within *eikaiwa* through its role as a guarantee of a level of quality. As a manager overseeing several language centres, one of Michelle's responsibilities was to regularly conduct observations of lessons (often unannounced and recorded), to ensure lessons were produced in line with the prescribed materials and the in-house method. For Michelle, the value of carrying out these observations was to ensure that a lesson-commodity of a desired and known quality (use-value) was produced, and thus to ensure students received 'what was promised' and got 'what they paid for'. While Alan spoke of the 'McDonaldised' production of lessons at *NOVA* in less than complimentary terms, he nevertheless similarly referred to a need to guarantee a certain level of quality. Taylorised forms of lesson production, were seen as necessary for maintaining a standard of quality across lessons produced, firstly in order to deliver a predictable uniform product to the student - 'what was promised to them', and secondly to mitigate against any variation the heterogeneity of teachers might produce. Alan expanded on this second point, describing the significant variation with which his former co-workers in various *eikaiwa* institutions embodied in terms of: educational attainment, teaching experience, attitude, motivation, and sense of professionalism, among other variables. For Alan, the 'McDonaldised' form of production as he termed it was necessary in order for teachers with a limited level of educational attainment, experience, or skill, to produce lessons of an acceptable quality:

Alan: It's predicated on this idea that a resus monkey could do it / you've got a sheet and you just follow it / and if you (1.5) / if you wanted just an average lesson in *NOVA* you don't need a university graduate to do it

He contrasted the 'McDonaldisation' of working at the corporate *eikawia NOVA* with the more unpredictable and varied forms of lessons produced at the smaller independent *eikaiwa* he worked at subsequently. In one such account he referred to 'nutritional supplement guy' – a teacher who was notorious among his co-workers for spending large sections of his classes talking to often uninterested and/or uncomprehending students about nutritional supplements, apropos of his own personal interests:

Alan: and like when I read Ritzer's McDonaldization book / like it's [the lesson's] not going to be amazing but it's not going to be awful either / it's just going to be (.5) / mediocre / but that will do



Will: yeah you know what you're getting

Alan: whereas in the second place [a smaller *eikaiwa* school] I had a lot more freedom which means if a student gets (.5) my friend [as their teacher] who had an MA [masters' degree] / it could be amazing / but if you get nutritional supplement guy

Will: right yeah

Alan: so, in that way I kind of re-evaluated my experiences at *NOVA* and I thought hmm which is better / it's a double-edged sword right / you know is mediocrity better than rolling the dice and seeing who you get?

However, as we shall see, it was never quite as clear cut a distinction as Alan's double-edged sword metaphor suggests. It was not a case of two independent forms of production – a Taylorised prescribed form producing uniform lessons of a predictable and known quality on the one hand, and more chaotic 'rolls of the dice' on the other. Teachers did not blindly follow 'scripts', but interpreted, supplemented, adapted, and deviated from them in a number of ways. The Taylorised form of lesson production then, did not exist in isolation as an independent form of production, but was mediated by a number of other forces and interests within the school which necessitated more flexible forms of production.

## 6.5 Flexible Lesson Production: Meeting the Demands of Students as Customers

### *Total Customer Orientation:*

In a rapidly changing marketplace, only a customer-driven and oriented company can survive. As such a company we must:

- Fully understand our customers and the kind of results they are trying to achieve.
- Cultivate long-term relationships with each customer.
- Encourage each employee to think from the customer's point of view.
- View the satisfied customer as our best salesperson.

(*Berlitz Instructor Qualification Program*, 2011: 5)

The above, describes the tenets of *Berlitz's* "Total Customer Orientation", one of the *Berlitz Five Principles* laid out in the *Berlitz Instructor Qualification Program Resource Pack* provided by one participant.<sup>20</sup> References to 'rapidly changing marketplaces', 'customer-driven' orientations, and the 'cultivation' of 'relationships' with each individual customer, seem a world away from the faceless mass production of standardised goods on the factory floor. Indeed, the very nature of commercial

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<sup>20</sup> At the time of writing, Total Customer Orientation was also listed in the *Instructor Qualification Program* found on the *Berlitz Japan* official website.

language teaching in *eikaiwa* in general, is a very personal affair, with students and teachers coming into face to face contact with each other, often in one-on-one lessons, and potentially spending significant amounts of time together through the continued production and consumption of lessons. As such, *eikaiwa* lessons involved a significant degree of flexibility in their production, in so far as students as ‘customers’, would come with their own particular needs and demands, which teachers then produced bespoke lessons in order to meet. However, as with many other service industries, there can often be a significant degree of tension “due to an asymmetry of skills and knowledge between client [or customer] and provider. [...] Clients may be right about their wants but not about their needs” (Walker, 2010, p. 23), and so there is potential for disjuncture between what a student as a customer, and the teacher as bearer of ‘knowledge’ and ‘skill’, might deem desirable in the production of the lesson.

Perhaps the clearest example of flexible production came from the freelance teachers, who through middlemen agencies would teach lessons at a time and location largely dictated by the student’s convenience. Similarly, students within corporate *eikaiwa* could ‘book’ classes at their convenience, and could, to varying extents, request (or ‘disrequest’) particular teachers they wished to be taught by. However, it was not only the time of the lessons, and who was to teach them, which students had a large say in, but also the content of the lessons, which required a high degree of flexibility on the part of the teacher. Forms of flexible lesson production were deemed by many participants to be a corollary of the way the student related to them as a ‘customer’ or ‘client’, and who was thereby empowered to have their demands met, rather than to have forms of lesson dictated to them by a teacher as an authoritative professional figure of expertise, or master of a *craft*. Indeed, in both the official literature of the corporate *eikaiwa* themselves (*Berlitz*, 2019; *Gaba*, 2019a; *NOVA*, 2019), and to varying extents in the accounts given by participants, the term ‘student’ is used relatively interchangeably with the terms ‘client’ and ‘customer’, as are ‘instructor’ and ‘teacher’. What this meant for the *eikaiwa* teachers was a need to flexibly adapt to the student in a number of ways related to, and beyond, matters of language acquisition and/or proficiency by any sort of measure:

Alan: you have to be reactive / you have a complete / not just in terms of language proficiency but in terms of you get to know personalities / and you get to know who rubs who up the wrong way or who is going to be potentially offensive

In echoing the sentiments of one teacher from Appleby’s (2013) work, Alan saw the provision of a ‘service’ for a ‘customer’ as making teaching in an *eikaiwa* analogous to working in a host club (see Chapter 4). This came out particularly clearly in the way he discussed the relations between teacher

and student in the *eikaiwa* schools in which he taught, where students played out the role of ‘customers’, in opposition to what he called the ‘traditional’ teacher-student relation:

Alan: and (.5) it's not students right? (.5) / it's customers / [...] this is a distinction (.5) that people I think overlook / [...] so this distinction between the like traditional student where like the teacher has power or whatever and now which is more like a service industry / this is growing! / and I had to keep them satisfied / all of them / and the metaphor I always used was its like plate spinning / you had to 'oh is this person ok? oh this person looks quiet are they ok?' / and it was service / it was hosting / it was a host club!

As students in *eikaiwa* related to the teacher as ‘customers’, Alan described a loss of ‘power’ on the part of the teacher, in so far as he felt obliged to keep students ‘satisfied’, in ways that jarred with his own ideas of what a language teacher and a language lesson should be. What this meant for Alan was a need to keep students happy, contented, and active in the lesson. Unlike the one-on-one lessons at *Gaba*, the *NOVA* school that Alan worked in provided small group lessons of up to 5 students. The overall dynamic and balance of students within the class, at times provided a further dimension on keeping students satisfied. Not only did the production of the lesson here involve relations between the student and the teacher, but also between the students themselves. There was then the potential for conflicting senses of what a ‘satisfying’ lesson should be between individual students, leaving the teacher in the position of needing to balance the individual and potentially contradictory demands from individual students within the class – something Alan described above as ‘plate spinning’, with the need to deliver customer satisfaction. Alan gave the further example of his brother and former co-worker, who was faced with the challenge of teaching a class comprising of a young high school girl and a middle-aged man who repeatedly made inappropriate comments of a sexual nature during the lesson:

Alan: ok so here's an example / my brother / he worked in the same branch right / and he had this awful situation where someone who had bought a ton of lessons / a very very wealthy guy in his 50s / was in a class consistently with this high school girl / and he would keep making these sexual comments / not towards her / but he was / [...] like he was trying to be a problem / and the management came to my brother and said you need to sort this out because this girl's parents are complaining / but you can't upset him either! / so who has to deal with that! [...] / so he had to do this kind of weird tightrope act where (.5) while teaching this lesson he had to keep this guy from making sexual comments whilst making sure he was still satisfied because he was such a valued customer

Alan's brother was left ‘plate spinning’ in the classes, walking the ‘tightrope’ between the contradictory demands of lesson production from his students. While one student clearly wanted a

lesson to involve discussion of sexualised and/or risqué topics, another clearly did not. As a highly valued customer – one who had ‘bought a ton of lessons’, those in management were reluctant to potentially upset the older male student by reallocating him to a different class or teacher, or requesting that he adapt his behaviour. Such eventualities were clearly not catered for by Taylorised scripts, which though they allow for some degree of variation in students’ language proficiency levels, assume students to be largely passive recipients of the lesson, rather than as active agents involved in shaping the form of the production of the lesson – a topic taken up further below.

Frank similarly portrayed a certain loss of power and agency on behalf of the teacher, in feeling forced to meet the demands of the student as a ‘client’. In response to the question of how much freedom he had to decide what he would do in each lesson at the corporate chain *Gaba*, Frank explained how teachers did not necessarily have to follow the plans or textbooks prescribed by the school, but soon qualified this as depending upon the demands of the student:

Frank: it’s not really what you want to do [the lessons] / unless you have / well you can do that if the student agrees to it / and there are students who agree to it / [...] but (.5) basically you have to do what the student wants / even if its ridiculous / I mean it does sometimes get ridiculous / like the ‘if’ lady / [...] yeah 45 minutes on explaining what “if” means ((laughs))

Frank went on to describe his lesson with the student he referred to as ‘the if lady’, detailing how at the very beginning of one of his classes a student asked him to explain the meaning of the word ‘if’. According to Frank, they then spent the entire 45 minutes of the lesson, at the student’s insistence, having a somewhat absurd and frustrating conversation about the precise meaning (rather than correct grammatical usage) of the word ‘if’. As a result of this class the student gave Frank a poor score on an evaluation form which meant he had to go and explain himself to management, where he received a verbal warning. Frank expressed a sense of unfairness and a lack of agency in two senses. Firstly in that he felt obligated to acquiesce to the pedagogic demand (the precise meaning of ‘if’) which the student brought with her, and secondly in being evaluated poorly as a teacher on the basis of being unable to meet a pedagogic goal which he felt was foisted upon him, and which he himself thought was inappropriate.

Students also brought more unorthodox pedagogic goals with them, many of them loosely, if at all, related to the acquisition of English proficiency in an orthodox language learning sense (Kubota 2011a). It was not the case however, that such ceding of teacher-power to students as customers was necessarily seen as an imposition which teachers either acquiesced to, or resisted. Indeed, it was often the case that student demand for more flexible production of lessons which pulled

teachers away from Taylorised production were positively embraced. Such was the case in Frank's description of teaching students who were looking for 'titillation' in their classes:

Frank: and the women that come in they have a lot of money / you can see the bling / and the way they dress with leather pants / hot leather pants / I mean there was one gorgeous / she was a doctor / she used to come in and I was like oh my god / just like / you know I just really had to behave myself ((laughs))

Will: sure

Frank: you know / but (1) they come in there and no doubt about it / you know women are different animals / they get off on titillation / they don't necessarily need a date / or they don't necessarily need to go to bed with a guy / they have a thrill just (.5) spending 45 minutes / coz your this far away ((shows distance of a few centimetres with fingers)) / your knees are this far away / so you know they get off on that / and there's a lot of women that come in just for that / I had one and we / she knew / I knew what she was doing and she knew that I knew but / and she was a sweetheart / she used to bring double coffees we'd have a little picnic there / you know I'd put out a table cloth / I had a little table cloth / she'd bring some buns and we'd have a little picnic and / wonderful! / I had her for about 200 lessons

As Alan's and Frank's examples show, teachers in the *eikaiwa* produced lessons of a considerable heterogeneity. Doing so involved what was perceived as a ceding of power away from the teacher, and towards a student as customer who must be 'satisfied' as well as taught. Though at times this ceding of power to customer satisfaction meant teachers felt forced to acquiesce to producing forms of lessons in ways they might not necessarily deem desirable or appropriate, and this often involved balancing contradicting senses of what 'satisfaction' might be for classes of multiple students, there were times in which the ceding of teacher control to customer demand which pulled teachers away from Taylorised scripts was embraced by teachers. For teachers like Frank, producing the lesson in his booth could entail anything from the drudgery of 'factory line' production following lesson plans, to tense and frustrating encounters with the 'ridiculous' 'if lady', to 'titillating' 'picnics' with 'sweethearts'. Delivering customer satisfaction in its various guises, was of immediate interest to both the school - as a commercial for-profit enterprise seeking the continued patronage of its customers, but also to teachers, who under conditions of pay-per-lesson remuneration were very well aware of the financial implications that losing, or being 'disrequested' by a dissatisfied student would have – an issue developed further later.

## 6.6 The Dialectical Unity of Production and Consumption: Lesson-Object and Student-Subject

Student satisfaction however, was not something which existed externally to the school and imposed upon teachers. Though students no doubt came to the school with all manner of demands, *akogare* (desire), and notions of what a 'satisfying' lesson might entail, these were themselves continually mediated and shaped by their continued consumption of lessons within the school. To put it another way, while students as customers shaped production through demand, the way lessons were produced and consumed conversely shaped the students and their demand. In order to illustrate this more fully, I turn to Marx's conception of production and consumption as a dialectical unity. For Marx, "Production is consumption, consumption is production" (1973, p. 93). One cannot exist without the other, each pre-suppose and mutually depend on the other. Production involves its dialectical other – consumption, in for example the consumption of the means of production (materials, tools, and machinery etc.) – all themselves products required to produce something further. The reverse also holds. Consumption involves production. Consumption produces all manner of physical and/or psychological products. Consuming alcoholic drinks for example, contributes to the production of conversations, arguments, belches, and hangovers. Production and consumption then, complete one another: "The product only obtains its 'last finish' in consumption. A railway on which no trains run, hence which is not used up, not consumed, is a railway only potentially, and not in reality." (Marx, 1973, p. 91). In the case of producing lessons-as-commodities this is immediately clear. One cannot teach a lesson without a student present to consume it – to give it its 'last finish'. However, this 'last finish', in the case of *eikaiwa* teaching, is far from a passive condition to be met at the end of a process. Students do not simply sit passively while receiving a lesson from the teacher, gracing the product with its completeness merely through their presence alone. Rather, they actively participate in the production of the lesson, as the need for flexible forms of lesson production clearly illustrate. 'Last finish' here then, does not simply refer to something like a 'finishing touch' or a 'cherry on the cake', but rather a meeting of a necessary pre-requisite for the completion of the production-consumption dialectic. A lesson is only a lesson if it is taught to / consumed by a student. To continue the analogy, far from merely crowning the cake with a cherry, *eikaiwa* students had an active hand in changing the recipe – they are, as Walker puts it elsewhere, "co-producers of the ESL [or ELT] service" (2010, p. 7).

It is not only however, consumption which gives production its 'finish' but also, dialectically, the reverse:

Production also gives consumption its specificity, its character, its finish. Just as consumption gave the product its finish as product, so does production give finish to consumption. Firstly, the object [product/commodity] is not an object in general, but a specific object which must be consumed in a specific manner, to be mediated in its turn by production itself. [...] Production thus produces not only the object but also the manner of consumption, not only objectively but also subjectively. Production thus creates the consumer. [...] Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object. (Marx, 1973, p. 92)

The *eikaiwa* lesson commodity then, is a specific commodity which to certain extents 'must be consumed in a specific manner'. Considerable though the degree of flexible production within each particular *eikaiwa* institution may be, nevertheless, at some level, all students of a particular school consume lessons in line with certain conditions, regulations, and norms particular to that school. There are a number of ways in which the manner of production and consumption of the *eikaiwa* lesson are 'set', including: a set lesson time (usually of between 40 – 50 minutes), the location in which the lessons take place, the numbers of students within a class, the manner in which lessons are paid for (for example through the ticket system), the layout of physical spaces, and lastly, the obligatory presence and involvement of a teacher employed by the school. Factors such as these contribute to the production of the 'manner of consumption' – i.e. the way lessons are consumed, and ultimately the 'production' of the consumer. The 'titillating picnics' which Frank described earlier for example might well be entirely different prospects had they involved large numbers of students taught in a large spacious lecture hall, rather than one-on-one encounters in the risqué semi-seclusion of a booth where legs rest inches apart under the desk. Ultimately then, there is an extent to which schools regulate the manner in which lessons are produced and consumed by students, and so 'create the consumer' and a form of consumption particular to their school. There is then, to repeat Marx's words, simultaneous and inseparable production of an object (lesson) for a subject (student), and production of a subject (student) for the object (lesson). Traffic however between object and subject is not one way but dialectical – in other words it was not simply that a lesson produced in certain ways under certain conditions produced a certain form of lesson consumption and hence certain kinds of students in a rather flat deterministic fashion. Rather, the subject (students) also affected the object (the lesson), with students exercising influence over elements of flexible production through the mechanisms of evaluations, (dis)requests, and their co-participation in the lesson with teachers. As such they actively participated in shaping the production, and hence consumption, of the lesson directly. The 'titillating picnics' would not have been complete without the table cloth, coffee, and snacks which Frank's student brought with her

every week. The production of a lesson-object, and simultaneous consumption of that object by a student-subject, thus dialectically produced and reproduced each other in the *eikaiwa*.

### 6.7 Contradiction between Taylorised and Flexible Forms of Lesson Production

Teachers often found themselves in the position of producing lessons according to Taylorised and flexible forms of production pulling them in contradictory directions. As I have said, rather than two mutually exclusive forms of production which teachers switched between, each form of production encompassed a range of tendencies and interests to produce in particular ways, which could simultaneously pull in opposing directions. On the one hand were: the scripting of lesson plans; the incentive for sales staff to maximise sales and use of in-house textbooks and other materials; and observational mechanisms which evaluated teachers according to how well lesson plans and a 'method' was adhered to; which all pulled in a Taylorised direction. On the other hand, were the heterogenous demands of individual students in the role of client or customer, and the need to deliver customer satisfaction, pulling in more flexible directions.

This contradiction often manifested in conflicting forms of evaluation of the teacher and the lesson. Teachers and the quality of the lessons they produced were evaluated using various Taylorised yardsticks, in for example assessing whether teachers used the 'correct' textbooks, followed the lesson plan, and delivered the lesson in conjunction with the schools' official 'method', through observations of lessons. At the same time however, teachers were also continuously evaluated by their students, often in line with heterogenous senses of 'customer satisfaction'. Here is Alan describing the need for flexible production as it relates to the teachers' responsibility for ensuring student/customer satisfaction:

Alan: I think *eikaiwa* teachers get a bad rep because people assume it's just mindless but no! / it's just the opposite / you have to be (.5) on it (.5) and you have to make on the spot decisions which you know / it's your ass / if students are uncomfortable or unhappy it's on you you know / so (.5) yeah it taught me to be very very reactive / and I'd look at the lessons that were open and be like ok she had a bad experience with something related to this so I can't talk about this

Teachers often found themselves required to produce lessons of a standardised quality consistent with the production of lessons in general at the school, while having to be flexible in meeting customer demand so as to keep students satisfied, which often entailed deviating from, or abandoning altogether, the Taylorised scripting of lesson production. As Alan's example above shows, avoiding lessons or topics which might make students 'uncomfortable' or 'unhappy' often lead teachers to significantly deviate, or do away altogether with prescribed lesson plans or materials. Though routine and highly organised evaluation procedures often existed within schools



to ensure that the Taylorised scripts were followed, this seemed more or less subservient to the need to deliver student-customer satisfaction.

The textbooks and proceduralised lesson plans in the *eikaiwa* played a key reference point for participants in terms of describing the expected norms of production of the lesson, reinforced through evaluative mechanisms such as lesson observations. Michelle, a former teacher now working in a managerial role at *Berlitz* gave an especially rich account of this process in describing how in overseeing 22 teachers, teaching at a range of schools ['language centres' in the parlance of *Berlitz*], she was required to evaluate each teacher at least once every three months through class observation. This equated to 3 or 4 lesson observations per week. Each teacher was observed 4 times a year, 2 of these observations being what Michelle referred to as 'announced' - where teachers were made aware in advance of the date and time of their upcoming observation, and the other 2 observations 'unannounced' - to be conducted at a time and date unknown to the teacher. For Michelle, the observations were not a matter of assessing whether teachers were blindly following lesson plans or textbooks, but rather an assessment of whether teachers displayed an understanding and application of what she referred to as the 'structure', a core set of PPP / CLT precepts underlying all of the prescribed teaching materials and lesson plans:

Michelle: once you've mastered the structure you could pretty much teach anything / [...]

Will: right / so what's the structure then

Michelle: the structure is / without going in to too many details<sup>21</sup> ((laughs)) / it's / as long as there is (1) some sort of presentation and practice / and it's (1) talk time for the students / in that direction / that goal

Maria, who also worked at *Berlitz*, though as a teacher rather than a manager, largely echoed Michelle's assertion that adherence to a basic 'structure' or 'method' at *Berlitz* was the yardstick by which teachers were evaluated in observations:

Will: what is a good teacher from the point of view of the company / the school / or the management of the school / what would they think a good teacher is

Maria: good teachers follow the method! ((laughs))

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<sup>21</sup> As Michelle explained, the reason for not going into detail about the 'structure' was due to *the Berlitz Method* being a registered trademark, the details of which were not to be made public.

For Maria however, her experience of being evaluated through observations involved stricter expectations of sticking to the method than in Michelle's more flexible interpretation. Following the method for Maria, seemed to run antithetically to what she herself deemed a 'good lesson':

Maria: I don't understand it at times / like even if you had a good lesson like you know the students had fun and you were able to develop a good lesson I say / but if you did not / or if you skipped some of the criteria for that method (.5) you'd fail the evaluation / I failed actually ((laughs)) / once

As Maria went on to explain, staying true to the method without 'skipping' or flexibly adapting parts often ran into contradiction with other constraints such as the time limit of the class, and a certain desire to adapt the lesson to suit variation in students' English language proficiency:

Will: so what are they looking for [in the evaluation]

Maria: they're looking for the flow of the method I was telling you about / but there are times when you really can't do the method / like I skipped the practice for example / sometimes I don't have time to reach the production part [from the PPP model]

Will: so do you skip the practice bit to get to the production bit

Maria: right / there is / well they have their system and for the practice part you have to (.5) ask / let's see for example you have to ask questions to the students like / for example you say / there's a picture there / you have to say 'is there a lady in the picture?' / 'Is the man wearing a blue shirt?' or something and then the students have to say 'yes there is' or 'no there isn't' / but you know when I feel the lesson is too easy for the student I don't do it / you know I think 'what is this for!' / I don't see the need for this kind of method / and it's hard to follow when you have students of different levels [...] if you've got a student who you know personally is very good very quick and you think 'this is too easy I'll skip this' / [...] and for example for beginner students they can't even reach the production part because they can't get through the practice part /

Will: I see right

Maria: and of course I panic 'oh my god I'm running out of time!' / I have to fit everything in one 40-minute class / I don't know their criteria but I think if they / I think if you don't complete the whole method in 40 minutes that's when you fail the evaluation

There are then contradictions at play between Maria's desire to adapt or *craft* a lesson by skipping or adapting prescribed 'parts' in line with the student's level, and the need to deliver the lesson as an uncorrupted whole within a strict time limit – 'completing the whole method' and 'fitting everything in'. However, though heavily proceduralised lesson plans and teaching materials were

commonplace in the accounts of all of the participants who had experience of working in corporate *eikaiwa* schools, it was not the case that all teachers at all times followed prescribed forms of lesson production. All participants expressed that there were cases in which deviation from 'the plan', 'the script', 'the method' or 'the structure', occurred within their workplaces.

Deviation from the 'structure' for Michelle, was categorised as illegitimate, not so much in when it was adapted in ways Maria described above, but rather when it entailed teachers abandoning the lesson plan and/or textbook all together, and going into 'free con' ('free conversation'). Though 'Free con' was a form of lesson widely understood and used by those working in *eikaiwa*, definitions of what it actually involved were rather vague, and generally ran along the lines of involving student and teacher talking conversationally about any number of topics in an 'unplanned' or 'free' way. There was no mention of it in the official *Instructor Qualification Program*, and indeed, as Michelle's account suggests, it did not seem to be an institutionally sanctioned form of lesson production:

Michelle: I do see the reasons why some people deviate from the structure? / I guess they have their own ideas and knowledge and I respect that / but what I do not and will not ever tolerate is free conversation / that's bullshit

Will: by free conversation what do you mean

Michelle: just talk ((laughs)) / there's no direction / there's no / half the time the student is looking for some kind of clue of where the lesson is going

As an illegitimate deviation from the 'structure', 'free con bullshit' was a problem in so far as it was seen as a corruption of the lesson-commodity's quality – its use-value, a matter exacerbated in Michelle's eyes by Japanese students' reticence to speak out in a class so as to redirect the teacher and the lesson towards the prescribed form of lesson. For Michelle, the ultimate danger here lay in the paying student-as-customer not getting the commodity they paid for:

Michelle: and if the teacher constantly encourages questions that are off topic what would a student do / they wouldn't say 'I don't want to answer that I would prefer to do the book please' / they're culturally not trained to be like that / and if the students actually enjoy the lesson the free conversation they will not complain / but sometimes they will go and say 'that wasn't what I paid for' / 'I don't want that teacher's class' / and then we have a problem

Of significance here is Michelle's utterance 'and if the students actually enjoy the lesson the free conversation they will not complain', which sheds light on the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate deviation from the 'structure'. For Michelle, if the student is satisfied with the lesson, free conversation or otherwise, then it does not seem to be an issue, in contrast to when students

do complain which is then when they 'have a problem'. This distinction between legitimate and illegitimate deviation in lessons as determined by the student's (dis)satisfaction is made explicit later in the interview:

Michelle: if the teacher is doing his or her own thing and is getting disrequests [i.e. students requesting *not* to have a particular teacher again] because of that / [...] then we have a legitimate problem / but if someone's doing their thing and I listen to it and it makes sense and it doesn't cause any problems (1) with the students and they love the teacher / fuck it

Will: You'll let it go

Michelle: I let it go

However, despite more or less explicitly stating that the student's demand for 'structured' or 'free conversation' based classes determines the legitimacy of the manner in which the lesson is produced, Michelle nevertheless seems to suggest that it is the teachers' responsibility to take charge and determine what kind of lesson is produced:

Michelle: I will not be breathing down your neck / I mean I'm quite flexible / the only thing I will never ever understand is the free conversation / 'the student made me do it' / what the fuck you are the teacher! / you control the situation! /

Michelle emphasised this further when describing what was for her illegitimate deviation from the 'structure'. Here, Michelle sees other teachers' rejection of the 'structure' as illegitimate insofar as it is a negation of one's job responsibilities. Following the 'structure' becomes part of the job or 'what you were hired to do':

Michelle: those who are (1) very adamant about having their own ideas and 'this is what I want to do' / and they even tell me 'I just don't believe in your parameters' / 'well ok this is what you were hired to do!' ((laughs)) / right? / I mean if you can't do the job what does that mean

There is then an immediate contradiction here between on the one hand, the role of the students as paying customer and arbiter of legitimate lesson production, and on the other the role of the teacher to 'control the situation' and decide what kind of lessons to teach. Michelle herself experienced exactly this contradiction:

Michelle: I had a fantastic lesson plan in mind and then [the student said] 'I don't want to do the book' / [Michelle then said] 'ah well really why?' / and one time I forced the student to do the book / not forced forced but kind of communicated that I didn't want to do free con / he was not happy with me

Will: really?

Michelle: yeah / he didn't say anything bad but (1.5) he unfortunately / he happened to get a survey form about how the lesson went and he gave me (1) some decent scores but in terms of adapting it to his needs he gave me a pretty low score / he wanted free con but he didn't say 'I want free con' / so each time the students don't say it / my default is I do my job

For Michelle then, it seems that 'doing one's job' involves sticking to the 'structure' and delivering the 'product' by 'doing the book', something which in her account above comes into contradiction with students who do not want to 'do the book' and would rather 'do free con'. The contradiction between Taylorised and flexible pulls crystallises in the divergence between the criteria by which management and students evaluate teachers, in for example following 'the structure', and 'adapting the lesson' respectively. In summary, 'doing one's job' involved sticking to the plan and the book, while delivering student satisfaction often required diverging from it. In the face of such a contradiction, it was generally the students' satisfaction with the lesson produced which tended to win out. The bottom line in general seemed to be that the students' satisfaction and continued patronage trumped concerns of following lesson plans, 'doing the book', or following a method, from the perspective of both teachers, and those in management positions such as Michelle.

## 6.8 Customer Satisfaction: Student Evaluations of Teachers

The students' evaluation of teachers at the schools were significant, as it was through these systems of evaluation that the students often related to their teacher, often indirectly, about their (dis)satisfaction with the lessons produced. While students did of course relate directly to their teacher in the lessons themselves, involving a range of nuanced evaluative postures, utterances and other behaviours within the production of the lesson, the formal institutionalised forms of student evaluations of teachers were key insofar as they acted as the mediation between all three of: the management of the school, the students, and the teachers; and acted as the institutionally recognised form of evaluating the labour of the teacher, which resulted in the carrot-and-stick of remunerative incentives and disciplinary action respectively. The student evaluations of teachers thus provide a useful vantage point from which to observe the flows of both power in production (i.e. who got to decide what was produced and how), and surplus value (i.e. profit), through the interrelations of student/consumer, teacher/labour, and management.

Frank described how the student evaluation of teachers was conducted at *Gaba*, through a series of 1 to 5 score ratings:

Frank: so let's say (1) the bell rings and 45 / I think it's 45 minutes are up / and as everybody's leaving this guy with a clipboard would say / would catch some of these [students] at times and

say how was your lesson / (.5) now the problem is that the client [student] doesn't know what the 1 to 5 means / so if the client had a bad day and says 'ah Frank he was a bit off today you'd better give him a 1' / they don't realise what the 1 / what happens with the 1

According to Frank, students had little idea of what the evaluations of their teachers were actually for, or who would read them. Teachers themselves often did not have access to the evaluations their students made of them, which meant that teachers were unable to use the evaluations as a means to adapt their classes to better suit or satisfy their students. Where there were serious problems, such as students scoring their teacher a '1', verbal, and then written warnings were given, though even in these cases it can be unclear exactly what the problem was, which student the evaluation came from, and thus what the teacher could or should do about it:

Will: What kind of things were on the 1 to 5 forms (.5) / I mean was it specific? / they said like oh you've / you've done this or you haven't done this / or you should be doing this

Frank: No / never really specific / there was a problem there / number 1 you never knew who gave it / who did it / you could guess / but you never were told oh this particular student

Will: Oh so you don't know which student it is that's (.5) got an issue

Frank: no / that's right / and that was a big issue because you can't just like (1)

Will: You don't know what to do about it

Frank: yeah yeah!

At *Berlitz*, Michelle described the method of evaluation through the 'counselling system', where students have a one to one session with a 'counsellor' 3 times throughout their course, or by request, within which they evaluate their lessons and their teacher:

Michelle: we have a system called counselling / so the counsellors get feedback from the students

Will: so what's a counsellor / what do they do

Michelle: a counsellor is a Japanese staff who is directly responsible for the well-being of the customers [students] / they make sure they're happy / they do the follow up

[...]

Will: so what kind of questions are in there

Michelle: umm mainly their [students'] overall satisfaction with the lessons on the scale of 1 to 5 / for example 'how happy were you' / and if they want to give comments [...]

Will: and so what kind of comments do you get [...]

Michelle: 'I didn't talk a lot in the lesson' / 'I couldn't understand the teacher' / 'The teacher did not explain the concepts very well' / 'the teacher didn't look interested'

When asked about whether students gave much input directly to the teachers on what they wanted their lessons to involve, Michelle suggested this more direct communication was the exception:

Will: do they [students] give the teachers much input on what they want in the lessons

Michelle: directly?

Will: yeah directly to the teacher

[...]

Michelle: it's the norm to go through the counsellors

Michelle seemed unsure as to why the less direct mediation of a third party 'counsellor' was necessary in contrast to a more direct student-teacher relation which would be in her eyes 'ideal':

Michelle: now ideally, I would do it [directly] / why not right? / but the thing is (1) / I guess / I don't know why / the students are more comfortable talking about their fears and concerns to the counsellors?

Though neither Michelle, nor Frank, nor any of the other participants stated as such, it is perhaps the nature of the lessons within corporate *eikaiwa* as one-on-one or small group classes of 4 or 5 students, which contribute to the feeling of a need for a less direct mediation, either through management staff in the case of *Gaba*, or the counsellors of *Berlitz*. Whether one agrees or not with Michelle's earlier ascription of certain cultural proclivities to Japanese students of generally avoiding speaking out in a somewhat critical manner directly, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that many students would feel that directly giving suggestions to teachers about what and how they should teach, would be something of a face-threatening act. They do relate to the teachers as 'students' as well as 'customers' or 'clients' after all. The issue takes on a further dimension when one considers just how 'personal' the 'service' offered by *eikaiwa* is often seen to be. It is not difficult to imagine how a direct injunction from the student on how the teacher should teach might be taken personally, or as a challenge to their ability or professionalism. According to Alan, many teachers practiced what he described as 'Charisma Man Pedagogy' (in reference to the Charisma Man comic strip discussed in Chapter 4) – a style of class where teachers talked at length to their students about themselves, their personal lives, interests and experiences. In such situations, a student directly intervening and asking to hear less about their teacher and do something else in class might well be

taken as something of a judgement on the teacher's own personality or life choices. All this however, is not to say that students never made direct requests or demands of their teachers in the lessons. As Frank's example of 'the if lady' shows, they clearly can and do. However, as Michelle described, it seems to be the 'norm' for this relation to be mediated through an indirect third party or mechanism such as evaluation forms given by students to management (and not to teachers), or through the counselling system.

It is not only negative or critical feedback on their lessons and teachers from students which seldom seem to be expressed to teachers directly however, but also positive evaluations. Alan for example describes his experience of teaching one of his former students Saya:

Alan: ok when I was working in *NOVA* there was one student I had called Saya and she was a junior high school teacher / very experienced I think she was like vice principal or something / very good English like TOEIC 900

Will: ok right

Alan: and she would only take my classes / and she was always very vocal about why / she would say I don't want to flush my money down the toilet basically / and she would say that to the staff implying that all the other teachers were crap

Will: ((laughs)) right ok

Alan: but again she would never say it to me / always through / I would always hear about it through the staff / she would never ever tell me 'I only want to take your classes because the other classes are crap'

In sum then, whether of a positive or negative nature, the students' expression of (dis)satisfaction with their teachers and lessons, at least as far as institutional recognition was concerned, was seldom communicated directly to the teachers themselves, and at times not communicated at all.

There were also other, institutionally unrecognised forms of students evaluating their teachers which occurred at schools. Frank for example interpreted the gifts and letters he received from students as an informal positive evaluation of him as a teacher:

Frank: and if you have a good rapport with your student / and you talk to them quite often (.5) / especially the women they brought little chocolates on Valentine's day / or thank you gifts / I've got thank you letters and cards / even from the kids in elementary / they made me a big poster thing / yeah it was really nice / stuck stuff on the paper / took their picture with me / it was nice you know / that's / that actually is the most / I really keep those things because they're the proof



that you did your job you know / and *Gaba* doesn't know about that and / and they don't care / but between the student and you it's important

For Frank such informal evaluation – ‘proof that you did your job’ as he puts it, seemed to escape the bounds of *Gaba*'s institutionalised system of evaluation, existing as something ‘between the student and you’, something Frank feels *Gaba* does not know or care about. In returning to Frank's earlier comments on the institutional forms of student evaluation of teachers, there appears to be some disjuncture between various forms of evaluation – official and unofficial, with students often unaware of the consequences a low score on an official evaluation form might have for their teacher, and simultaneously the management of the school largely unaware or disinterested in the more subtle and unofficial ways in which students evaluated their teachers in the lessons, which for Frank exist between the student and him. The key distinction however, between institutionally recognised and informal student evaluations, whether positive or negative, was in the repercussions the former exclusively held as regards the remuneration or discipline of the teacher. It was only the evaluation through the official channels of management, sales staff, customer satisfaction surveys, and counsellors, which had any impact on the teachers' bonuses, future earning potential, and job security.

Though both working within the same corporation – *Berlitz* (though not within the same schools or ‘language centres’ as they are called), Maria and Michelle discussed the evaluation system in different ways. While Michelle gave a comprehensive account of how the counselling system worked in broad terms as a means to ensure a standardised quality of lesson production, for Maria, the student evaluation of teachers was more or less exclusively interpreted in terms of remuneration. Here is Maria discussing how a new student feedback system similar to that in *Gaba*, functions in addition to the counselling system in her experience of working at *Berlitz*:

Maria: I think if you get feedback / like satisfied feedback from the students you get some incentive

Will: oh ok

Maria: [...] / I think you need 20 or 30 a month / and if you don't teach that many [students] / yeah it's really impossible to get [...] this one is new it's the new system / this is after the lesson they get an e-mail for feedback

Will: after every lesson

Maria: after every lesson yes

With 20 or 30 positive feedback reports from students a month, teachers would then receive a bonus on top of their per lesson rate. However, such is the frequency with which students are requested to fill out the feedback form, Maria doubts whether students will regularly complete the evaluation forms. She seems to be slightly indifferent as to exactly how the system would work, whether she would benefit from it, and in keeping with the general trend of student evaluations, seems unsure of both the criteria by which students are asked to evaluate her, and the results:

Maria: I actually thought it was ridiculous / I mean students get tired of it / who wants to fill out a form after every lesson? / what if they come both Saturdays and Sundays? I don't think students would fill out those forms

Will: so what's on this form?

Maria: yeah 'were you satisfied?' / 'not satisfied' [...]

Will: do many students fill this in?

Maria: no [...] / some students do / the really passionate ones who are so into the lessons and the teachers then they / and if they really like the teacher they would / but I don't think they do it every single time / they might do it like once a month / I did not understand the purpose of this system ((laughs))

For Maria then, the student evaluation of teachers seems to exist solely as a form of incentive, one she is largely indifferent to, and not as a channel through which she can better adapt her classes, better meet the needs of students, or ensure an improved standard of quality of the lesson, as Michelle described earlier.

In general, and keeping in mind the relatively small sample size of both corporate *eikaiwa* institutions and teachers therein from this study, it would seem that the evaluation of teachers existed more as a means of quality control, than as a means for teachers to improve their lessons or develop in a professional sense. However, this 'quality' seemed to contain within it an inherent contradiction – two senses of 'quality' which at times clashed. Firstly, the homogeneous quality control in terms of following the 'script' as illustrated by measures such as the observations that managers like Michelle describe. Simultaneously however, there is quality as dictated by individual students through surveys or counselling, forms of quality which are as heterogeneous as the students themselves, and which are not always expressed directly or explicitly to the teacher, but rather through the proxy of rating systems under broader, more vague statements such as 'were you satisfied with the lesson', or 'did the teacher adapt the lesson to your needs', questions which often prescribed somewhat reductive answers to sets of numerical scores between 1 and 5.

## 6.9 Struggles over the Use-value – Exchange-value Relation in Production

Many teachers felt very acutely the contradictions and tensions between use-value and exchange-value in their experience of producing lessons at their *eikaiwa*. Indeed, we have already seen how some teachers have expressed a loss of power or agency, ceding control of the content of the lesson that they produce in ways they might not necessarily themselves wish. Ensuring customers were satisfied and thus that produced lessons were saleable (were realisable exchange-values) thus dominated the content or quality (use-value) of what was produced in the class. Alan in particular talked at length about how he felt a tension between certain pedagogical goals and ideals about English language education he held, and how they clashed with the interests of what he termed 'business'. To put it in terms discussed previously, there were tensions between the use-value of the lesson commodity – its qualitative properties, and the exchange-value aspect of the commodity – its ability to be quantified and realised in monetary exchange. For Alan, pedagogical goals were at times overshadowed by the drive for profit, or as he put it: 'business as a detriment to education'. For example, in his description of the owner of one *eikaiwa* he previously worked in, he seems in no doubt that profit came a long way before any educational ideals or aspirations:

Alan: it was a guy who was a banker right? / and just made a ton of money and it [the school] was just a business he started

Will: a Japanese guy or

Alan: yeah yeah / a Japanese guy / as a side project / like zero interest in education / and he sadly / he passed away just before I joined the company and his son was forced to take over the company / now his son had even less interest than him in it / it was the golf club fund / that what's we used to joke about right / it was paying for the golf club membership right? / and (.5) yeah he had almost a kind of contempt for education ((laughs)) was my impression / one time in particular that kind of stuck with me / we had one student I think she was like an elementary school student like maybe 10 or 11 right / and (1.5) she / they recommended me because they knew I knew my ass from my elbow and like (1) / I went up to my boss and one of the Japanese staff members and said 'ok so are we going to do like a needs analysis' / like you know 'what would you like me to focus on' / and he was like 'just English' / and I was like well that's quite broad right? / you know does she want to take *eiken* [a certified examination in English proficiency in Japan] does she want to do overseas study / is this going to be for more kind of like junior high school exams / and he said 'just English' / and I wouldn't let it go I was like 'no no no within English what would you like me to do for this girl whose family has paid quite a substantial amount of money' / and he was like 'Alan it doesn't matter, just do something'

While this seems a more extreme example of the dominance of exchange- over use-value, producing anything – ‘something’ as long as it sells, it is quite consistent with much of Alan’s description of working in the *eikaiwa* industry more broadly. Alan repeatedly expressed frustration with the schools’ indifference to the quality of the lessons produced, describing how ‘Charisma man’ teachers could ‘fly under the radar’ and ‘get away with’ producing lessons that offered students very little in the way of developing their proficiency in English as he saw it:

Alan: [teachers] being ‘the foreigner’ talking about themselves / being wacky / like being a kind of clownish figure / like (.5) talking ‘at’ students rather than allowing them opportunities to use the language / right?

Later, Alan discussed his unsuccessful attempts in his managerial role at the school to instigate forms of professional development as a proposed corrective to the ‘charisma man’ pedagogy he described above:

Alan: when I was manager they could have had me check in on these lessons right / but then that’s time which / that’s 5 students’ worth of money that’s not being made right / and it was the same with professional development in the other place / even when I was head teacher I was like ‘so can we have a meeting and talk about maybe reflective practice or something’ / ‘catch up on what we were doing’ / [answering voice] ‘that’s an hour of teaching time’ / ‘we’re going to lose out’

In Alan’s experience, time spent producing lessons – ‘teaching time’ took precedence over time spent reflecting on, or developing the content and quality of the lessons produced. This seems to more or less ring true with the corporate *eikaiwa* industry more broadly. At least in the experiences of my participants, after an initial period of training lasting from 2 days to a week, most of which involved learning ‘the method’ and understanding aspects of the day to day running of the schools, there is little in the way of continued professional development, beyond a few half and one-day training programmes which often deal with the diversification of *eikaiwa* clientele (see Chapter 4), preparing teachers to teach corporate or young learners for example. Indeed, as Alan explained, the possession of qualifications such as an MA in TESOL seemed to have little impact either on teachers’ remuneration, or in the hiring processes of new teachers – a process Alan had a role in as head teacher. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily result in an indifference to the quality of the lesson on the part of labour. It was not the case that teachers regularly took an apathetic retreat into the Taylorised materials and plans – ‘doing one’s job’, doing the bare minimum, or abrogating themselves from any sense of responsibility over the quality of the lesson. Teachers like Alan maintained a sense of professional pride in producing ‘something of quality’:

Alan: that was the point of the materials / [just] page blah - go! / but if you weren't happy with that / that's hurting your (1) professional pride / you don't want to be just that guy / you don't want to just open a book and be like 'duh' [moronic moan] / you want to give them something of quality right?

However, staking a claim on the quality, especially on the quality of commodity production in general at the school, rather than merely his own lessons, came at a cost to Alan. His insistent calls for forms of professional development for teaching staff that would ultimately improve the quality teaching in his eyes, were met with increasing antagonism from other non-teaching members of staff. Work relations became strained as he came to be seen as something of a 'rabble rouser' or a 'troublemaker' at the school, for suggesting that some teachers were producing lessons of dubious quality, or that some of the major stakeholders of the schools should have more concern for the quality of lessons produced in general, and were only concerned with making money. While he was able to practise and refine his own pedagogical practice in producing lessons with students who made significant progress in language learning – 'the ones that kept me sane' as he puts it, he was unable to affect the quality of lessons produced around him more generally. In fact, such was the seriousness with which Alan took the issue of lesson quality across the school, in speaking with students of 'Charisma-man' teachers who were providing lessons of poor quality as he saw it, he advised them to use their 'power' as 'customers' and complain to the Japanese staff, learn independently, and/or leave the school.

## 6.10 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to give an account of how teachers experience the contradictory push and pull of Taylorised and flexible forms of lesson production within the *eikaiwa*, and how the interrelation of production and consumption, come to produce an object-lesson and a subject-student/consumer which dialectically mediate each other. At the juncture of these contradictory forms of production, teachers engaged in struggles over the quality or use-value of the lesson, at the intersection of the demands and interests of teachers, students-as-customers, and managers. However, while struggles over the use-value of the lesson played out in number of ways, the lesson commodity as an embodiment of exchange-value – a product to be sold, was key in so far as it legitimised and afforded the continued production of lessons of a variety of use-values. In other words, the continued production of lessons of whatever kind was necessitated by their continued sale. This chapter has discussed the complex interrelations involved in production from the perspective of the use-value, or quality of the lesson. In the next chapter, exchange-value comes to the fore, as an account is given of how the lesson commodity's exchange-value is realised in its sale, and consequently how this realised value is distributed throughout the school.

## Chapter 7 - The Distribution of Value within Eikaiwa

In following Marx's notion of capital as *value in motion*, this chapter discusses how the production of the *eikaiwa* lesson (Chapter 6) relates to other *moments* in the circuit of capital: consumption and realisation. In focussing in on the potential for contradictions and disjunctures between such *moments* which effect the flow of capital, the discussion focusses on how capital as value flows and is distributed unevenly throughout the *eikaiwa* school, and on how this distribution of value is seen by teachers. This chapter then, primarily addresses the second research question by focussing on teachers' dissatisfaction and resistance to the way in which both they, and their work, are valued. The chapter begins with an account of *eikaiwa's* ticket system of payment (realisation) where bulk quantities of lessons are paid for in advance. In exploring the disjuncture between this form of realisation and the production of lessons which does not always follow from it, the contradictory *non-consumption* and *non-production* of the lesson commodity takes place. Following this, is a discussion of the winners and losers of the *teacher market*, whereby some teachers are better able to capitalise on their forms of Bourdieusian capital than others in a *regime of value* particular to the *eikaiwa* school which is met with considerable disapproval and resistance by some teachers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of teachers' accounts of an unjust distribution of value, in relation to the discrepancy between the value distributed to them in the form of wages on the one hand, and the price at which lessons are sold on the other, in a calculation of a *crude rate of surplus value* production. While such *crude* calculations problematically abstract away many important aspects of production and rely on the *appearances* of production, such accounts nevertheless speak to a strong sense of an unjust distribution of value within the workplace, where labours' control over their product – teachers control over the value they produce through teaching, is alienated from them.

### 7.1 Disjuncture Between the Realisation and Production of the Lesson Commodity: The Non-Production and Non-Consumption of the Lesson-Commodity

To recap from Chapter 2, the notion of capital as *value in motion* sees capital as a continual flow through multiple *moments* of production, realisation, and distribution. For Marx, such flow through distinct, though interrelated moments, contains within it the potential for disjuncture, struggle, and crisis. (Harvey, 2013, 2015; Marx, 1991, 1992). There is a circuit which the accumulation of capital generally follows (Harvey, 2015), which goes along the following lines. A commodity is produced and taken to some form of market for sale by its owner. A consumer buys the commodity, the ownership of the commodity changes hands, and so the consumer, as the new rightful owner of this commodity, can then consume it. In order to ease the flow of capital through each of these stages or

*moments*, however, a plethora of systems have evolved, such as the credit system, helping to overcome certain barriers and to keep capital flowing through its circuit. It would for example be rather difficult for industrialists or home owners to procure their means of production or housing without a credit system to lend to them. What this means however, is a certain disjuncture between these ‘moments’ leading to contradictions and crises, in for example the run-away toxic consumer debt at the heart of the 2007/8 financial crash where borrowed value – i.e. credit, what Harvey refers to as *anti-value* (2017, p. 72), and the value embodied within produced commodities such as housing, detach from, and violently fluctuate quite independently of one another.

*Eikaiwa* too has been subject to just such disjunctures. Through the ticket system method of payment, a certain disjuncture between the moment of realisation (i.e. the payment for the commodity) – when the commodity’s embodied value becomes *realised* exchange value (Harvey, 2013) and production (i.e. when the lesson occurs/is simultaneously produced and consumed), makes possible the non-production and non-consumption of lessons. Within the *eikaiwa*, consumers usually pay in advance through the ticket system, and thus *realised value* (the sale) precedes the production of value (the production of the lesson). The volume with which students pay for lessons in advance is remarkable. Both Alan and Frank referred to multiple instances of students buying packages of lessons in the hundreds costing students up to a million yen, paid in a one-time advanced sum (1 million yen = \$9,280). Corporate *eikaiwa* aim to persuade their customers to buy as large a number of lessons as possible with increasing per-lesson discounts the larger the number of lessons one buys. Such a system offers clear advantages to the school, where the non-consumption of pre-paid classes amounted to *realised value* without the need to produce, which in the case of *Gyomu Itaku* contracted workers, equated to the production of surplus value (profit) without the need to incur labour costs through the payment of wages to teachers. The exception to this is the payment of a cancellation fee to the teacher, though this was usually conditional on the cancellation being short-notice (often less than 24 hours prior to the scheduled lesson), and beyond the cancellation or ‘no-show’ of a student to a scheduled lesson, the teachers received no cancellation fee or other form of remuneration from students that had ‘dropped out’ or left any remaining ‘tickets’ for lessons unspent.

The corporate *eikaiwa* industry has for some time been seen by many as notorious for its use and abuse of the ticket system. Here is Bailey’s account of the *eikaiwa* industry from around the turn of the millennium:

In fact, around that time, there were a number of scandals reported in the English-language press. Mostly these centred on “misleading” *eikaiwa* advertisements, promising students that

they would receive a certain number of classes. However, after booking and paying the entire course fee in advance, the students found it very difficult to obtain lessons at certain times. Because every course package invariably had an expiration date, it meant that those customers whose schedules were constrained were not able to take all of the lessons they had ostensibly paid for. At various times, most of the large *eikaiwa* have been criticized for these or similar practices. (Bailey 2002: 249)

Furthermore, *eikaiwa* are also able to accumulate surplus value in bypassing production when students who often feel a sense of shame or embarrassment in 'giving up', do not return to the school to ask for a refund of the lessons they have not consumed (Kubota, 2011a). Perhaps the most notorious instance of an *eikaiwa* corporation operating in such a way, and ending up in crisis as a result, is *NOVA* during the 1990s and 2000s. According to Currie-Robson (2015) lessons were regularly sold in packages of up to 600 lessons, but when students requested a refund, perhaps due to overestimating their own availability to have lessons outside of their busy work-lives, they found that the lessons they had already consumed were charged at the higher non-discounted rate (the discounts given in proportion to volume of lessons bought), while their remaining unspent lessons were refunded using the lower, discounted rate. As Currie-Robson explains: "Simply put, *NOVA* overcharged the customers for the lessons they'd already had, and then underpaid their refund. In such cases the disparity could be as much as a thousand [US] dollars" (2015: 47). Following over 7000 complaints about this refund practice to the *National Consumer Affairs Center*, a Supreme Court ruling stating that *NOVA* had violated commercial law, and an investigation carried out by the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry lead to punitive restrictions being placed upon the corporation. All this culminated in a loss of consumer faith in the corporation, and when students began dropping out of the school and demanding refunds *en masse*, the company went bankrupt in 2007 (Budmar 2011, 2013, Stubbings 2007, see also Chapter 4).

While the non-production and non-consumption of the lesson occurred to the benefit (in the short-term at least) to capital (capital as a class, see Chapters 2 and 8), in so far as the appropriation of surplus value without the need for outlay on teacher-labour costs was concerned, some teachers did at times embrace the non-production of the lesson, in for example those who received cancellation fees. Late cancellations were in some cases welcomed by teachers, and seen as 'money for nothing' or 'a good break' (Maria) from otherwise tiring working schedules. For Dominic working freelance, cancellations of lessons contradictorily earned him more than actually producing the lesson with a student would. Due to the need to spend money on travelling into central Tokyo and buying a coffee in the cafes where he taught, a cancellation from a student before he had travelled, earned him more than teaching the lesson would, even though the cancellation fee he received was around half



the fee he received for teaching the lesson. However, while cancellations from students who regularly frequented the school may have been welcomed by some teachers, if such a cancellation signalled that a student was dropping out, this obviously worked against the interest of the teachers in so far as losing a student equated to losing paid work.

Ultimately, as far as the school's accumulation of surplus value was concerned, the sale of lessons became, at times, disjoined from their production. The realisation of the lesson-commodity's exchange-value (its sale) could occur without the production of the lesson, while the reverse could not occur – no lessons were produced *gratis* (i.e. without being paid for). Indeed, within the corporate *eikaiwa*, it was often the case that not even as much as a minute of 'free' lesson could be had, given that the length of the lessons was tightly kept by a school bell. With a sharp turnaround time from student to student between lessons of as short as 5 minutes, in which teachers could go to the toilet, get a drink or snack, take a break, evaluate students in standardised forms, and/or prepare for their next student, there was precious little time during peak periods for much interaction with students outside of the production of the lesson. Furthermore, while the rationale for the rules and regulations prohibiting employed teachers from fraternizing with students is often said to be for the protection of teachers (see Chapter 4), doing so nevertheless also ringfences the time and location within which teachers and students can interact – and co-produce, to that of the lesson time. If among a student's main motivation for joining an *eikaiwa* school was to develop a form of romanticised '*akogare*' relation between themselves and a teacher, then in accordance with the *eikaiwa*'s rules, this would exclusively have to occur within the lesson, and would therefore have to be paid for – a situation which would presumably ring true with Alan's comparison of the *eikaiwa* school to a host club. Whether students' motivations involved improving proficiency in English, or the kind of 'titillation' Frank described earlier, if doing either involved the presence and participation of a teacher, the institutionally legitimate form of doing so was exclusively through the production of a paid-for lesson. So, while realisation could occur independent of production (lessons could be paid for without ever taking place), the production of a lesson (no matter its content) could not occur independently of realisation. To put it somewhat more pithily, there were no 'freebies' given.

This disjuncture between moments of realisation and production bring into focus one of the most fundamental contradictions of the commodity form – that between exchange-value and use-value (see Chapter 3). What the non-consumption of lessons, and the non-consuming student illustrate, is the manner in which producing the lesson as commodity prioritised the production of exchange-values above and beyond use-values – producing what is profitable rather than what is useful, to the point where any notion of use-value itself simply vanishes. This is a step beyond Seargeants' earlier quoted summary of commercially provided *eikaiwa* as tending "toward the saleable rather than the

pedagogically sound” (2009, p. 94). It is in fact at times a tendency towards the saleable over the production of any form of lesson, pedagogically sound or otherwise. While we can identify with some ease the quantitative exchange-value of the un-produced/un-consumed lesson – we can ask how much was paid for how many lessons (regardless of whether these lessons actually happened), we can say very little, if anything at all, about the quality or use-value of a lesson which has not been produced. An unproduced and unconsumed lesson has no use-value, though an exchange value is realised. Indeed, from the view of capital accumulation, were it sustainable, the ideal form of operation might well be for all students to buy lessons without ever coming to consume them, thus negating the need for any production costs at all – capital as *the goose that lays golden eggs* indeed (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 255).

However, while the discounted buying in bulk ticket system, and the sometimes-dubious ways in which corporate *eikaiwa* operate their refund system point towards disjuncture between realisation and production, students clearly do come to the schools to consume lessons. Indeed, many students seem to make good use of the bulk discounts in the ticketing system. At the same time as attesting to a high level of student attrition at the schools, many participants said they had, or knew of students who had regularly been coming to their place of work for years, and even decades. Michelle for example spoke of one student who was so attached to one particular teacher at the school, that when the teacher left to work for another different corporate *eikaiwa*, the student followed him there to continue taking lessons with him. Profitable though it may be to bypass production altogether, it is rather obvious that the schools do produce something and some level of consumption does take place. At the same time as the ticket system which often works in the interest of capital accumulation through non-production and non-consumption, there were certain ways in which schools seemed to permit an endless (at least theoretically) production and consumption of lessons, through the negation of any determined endpoint or goal for students to aspire to reach. Michelle for example described how many *Berlitz* ‘students don’t have any tests so there is no sense of achievement’, while Alan described lessons as cumulatively having ‘no measurement’ and ‘no assessment’ of students’ progress and where students had ‘floated along and were in the school since it started 31 years ago’.

At the juncture of both the consumption and non-consumption of lessons (and their synonymous production and non-production of lessons), pay-per-lesson contracts ensured the maximum flow of surplus value by minimising and even bypassing production costs vis-à-vis the payment of teacher-labour. The unpredictability of not only *when* students will want to have a lesson, but also *if* they require one to be produced, meant that having a highly *flexible* pool of teacher labour which can meet the fluctuating demand for production, while making no claim on value accumulated through

non-consumption (outside of cancellation fees). As Holborow has pointed out (2015a, 2018a), describing such labour as ‘flexible’ often obscures the manner in which such arrangements suit the interests of capital accumulation, adapting to the needs and demands of the workplace, and hence the accumulation of capital, far more than labour who often experience such flexibility in terms of precarious employment. Indeed, the promise of a flexible schedule many *eikaiwa* refer to often equates to a necessity for teachers to work at the unsociable ‘peak times’ (see Chapter 4) of weekends, evenings, and holidays, or to work split shift-style ‘donut days’ - teaching in the mornings and evenings, with large unproductive gaps in the afternoon, in order to earn a liveable wage.

## 7.2 The Teacher Market and the Distribution of Value within *Eikaiwa*

In contrast to much formal state-provided education where the content and scheduling of classes are largely set and dictated to the student, in the branches, language centres and studios of corporate *eikaiwa*, lessons were produced at a time and frequency determined by the students’ convenience, and their content often shaped according to the individual students’ particular demands (see Chapter 6). Through the ticket system, students would pay upfront for large numbers of lessons, which they could then ‘spend’ at their own convenience, and on any teacher they pleased. As Frank has already mentioned, this could mean that a student was free to move from teacher to teacher, ‘moving around like a butterfly’. The student’s position as customer or client whose convenience and satisfaction were key factors, and the relation of an individual student to a multitude of teachers within a single school, created a teacher market.

There are however, two senses in which I will be referring to a market. Firstly, I am referring to what Kelly-Holmes (2016) terms the *market as domain or site*, that is to say the schools as bounded physical spaces in which the exchange of goods between buyers and sellers takes place, but also in the case of *eikaiwa*, where production (of the lesson-commodity) takes place. In doing so, I hope to give an account of how work (the act of producing lessons and hence value in the Marxist sense) was distributed throughout the schools, and consequently how value in the form of wages was distributed among teachers. Secondly, I am also referring to Kelly-Holmes’ complementary second conception of the “market in/of/for language [and speakers]” (ibid: 169), or as Park & Wee see it, a *market-theoretic perspective*, where drawing on Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1991) the “notion of a market [...] is a more abstract construct that highlights the constraints on the structure of relative assessments of different resources of capital [social, cultural, linguistic etc.], linking the idea of context to value” (2012, p. 30). To play off Bourdieu’s well-known phrase: “a language is worth what those who speak it are worth” (1977, p. 652), so too with the lesson, the worth of which was inextricably tied up with valuations made of the worth of the teacher producing it. As I will go on to discuss, who it was that was producing the lesson was often inseparable from the use-value or

quality, and judgements thereon, of the lesson itself. As Bourdieu himself highlighted however, these two senses of value and markets are not entirely distinct from one another. Rather, what Bourdieu terms 'economic value' lies "at the root of all other types of capital and [...] these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal the fact that economic capital is at their root" (1986, p. 91). Discussion of the distribution of value as I intend it here then, involves examining the relation between two interrelated forms of value – value in the Marxist sense of capital, and value in the Bourdieusian sense of capital (see Chapter 2). Where Bourdieusian forms of social-, cultural-, and linguistic capital come in to play in relation to the *eikaiwa* school, are through the subjective valuations of the worth of speakers and their linguistic products, made through judgements about the value or worth of individual teachers and their lessons, and the degree to which teachers were able to successfully convert their forms of Bourdieusian capital into value in the form of wages (what Bourdieu might term 'economic capital'). As a "site of struggle in which individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of the forms of capital" (Thompson, 1991, p. 14), the evaluation and conversion of Bourdieusian capital into 'economic capital' involved struggles, "revaluations" and dissent towards what were seen as unjust "regimes of value" (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 143), which produced the winners and losers within the teacher market through the distribution of value.

What counted as 'work', at least in terms of work that was paid, was often synonymous with the act of producing lessons, and little, if anything else (see Chapter 4). Teachers' remuneration was therefore significantly influenced by, if not entirely determined by, the amount of lessons they produced, and so the distribution of work to teachers is key in understanding the distribution of value to them in the form of wages. Seeing as the production of the lesson (and hence paid work) necessitated the participation of at least one student, the distribution of students to teachers – how students were guided towards or away from particular teachers, or how students themselves (dis)requested particular teachers, was key in assessing the way in which paid work was distributed. Students were largely free to choose any teacher they wanted, for any reason, the teacher's availability permitting. This market (as *domain* or *site*) however, true of markets more generally, involved certain degrees of influence and regulation (Galbraith, 1989; Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009). Through the institutional regulations and norms (physical space, duration of classes, payment system etc.) and the interests of three interrelating actors; the sales staff of the schools, the students, and the teachers, the teacher market channelled students, and hence paid work and the distribution of value as wages to teachers, in unequal ways throughout the school. While the exchange-value of lessons, all else being equal, remained constant (i.e. a 45-minute lesson taught by any teacher within the same school would have been sold at the same price), what it *was seen to be*

*worth* – its use-value in the eyes of the student, varied considerably. This sense of worth or use-value as dictated by students in the teacher market however, could entail anything from teachers with certain forms of experience, credentials, particular physical appearances, ethnicities, nationalities, gender, age, and ascribed personality traits, among other variables, but was not always expressed explicitly by the students themselves. Rather, it emerged over time through the workings of the market – the cumulative flow of students to teachers of particular kinds, through the interrelation of the desire of students and the self-interest of sales-staff on commission. The market thus produced the ‘winners and losers’ of the teacher market in the uneven distribution of students, hence work, and hence value in the form of wages at the school. From interpreting such emerging patterns in the market – the production and distribution of winners and losers, teachers then made judgements on the valuation of their, and other teachers’ forms of Bourdieusian capital, the extent to which these were convertible, and whether such a state of affairs was just.

According to my participant Frank, new students arrived at *Gaba* and were greeted by the Japanese sales staff at the school. If a sale was made (i.e. if students bought a bundle of lessons from the school), the sales staff would then recommend a teacher to the student. The convenience of the student was obviously a large factor in allocating students to teachers - after all, students could only have lessons with teachers who were in the school on the dates and times requested by students. However, as there were often a large number of teachers within the school – as many as 17 at peak times, there were often a number of available teachers for each student at any one time. As the sales staff were working on sales commissions, the continued success or failure of each allocated student had a cumulative effect on the interrelation between sales staff, students, and teachers. If a teacher generally satisfied the student and secured more sales of lessons as a result, then those members of sales staff would be more likely in future to assign more new students to that teacher. However, if a teacher left a student dissatisfied in some way, the student had the option to talk with the sales staff (or ‘counsellors’), and ‘disrequest’ a teacher they were unsatisfied with. Following such a course of events, sales staff were less likely to assign new students to teachers who had a track record of unsatisfied students, or of being ‘disrequested’, as doing so negatively impacted upon their future commissions on sales. There were thus relationships of both virtuous and vicious circles between sales staff and teaching staff at the school:

Frank: those staff are also sales people / so they get a commission / if somebody walks in the door [a student] and signs up / so they get to decide who that person goes to / right? / so if they give someone to Frank and Frank screws it up or the client [student] doesn't like Frank / of course that staff member will remember that and not give you somebody next time / so you end up / for whatever reason you could end up with less and less until you have nothing

Will: yeah

Frank: you could end up with nothing

‘Ending up with nothing’ – i.e. having no students, would have equated to zero income for teachers like Frank at *Gaba*. It should be pointed out however, that while many teachers did experience lulls and dry patches where they were spending unpaid unproductive time at the school (unproductive in so far as they were not producing lessons and hence value), it was rare for teachers to literally end up with no students and no pay, and indeed some participants intimated a sense that some efforts to spread the students around so to speak, were made. That being said, such efforts may have tempered, but certainly not negated, the unequal distribution generated in the market. It was a widely accepted fact of *eikaiwa* teaching that some teachers were more in demand, and so able to teach and earn more in wages than others within schools. In any case, even in the event of institutional efforts towards more equitable distributions of work, students in the end always could, and often did, make specific requests or ‘disrequests’ for individual teachers to teach them, which the schools themselves granted as far as was logistically possible (for example in concerns of scheduling).

Teachers could also affect the allocation of students to teachers, and thus the distribution of work, in more direct ways, though in a much more limited sense in comparison to that of sales staff and students. While teachers could not directly choose their students, they were in some cases able to reject a student, though not without considerable consequences. As the earlier example of Alan’s ‘tightrope walking’ brother suggests (see Chapter 6 p. 135), there is significant pressure for teachers to continue teaching students that might well be causing problems for teachers and other students, and refusing to teach a student could cause significant damage to the relationship between teacher and sales staff, with detrimental effects on one’s future potential earnings. In general, however, such cases seem to be quite rare. In fact, aside from Alan’s example of his brother, and Frank’s ‘if lady’ student, there was no mention of other students who were so problematic as to warrant attempts or desires on the part of the teacher to stop teaching them altogether.

The exact criteria by which sales staff would try to meet the requests of students in choosing a teacher were not often known by the teachers, given that such consultations happened in private between the sales staff and the students. Nevertheless, there are some criteria which, though not often expressed explicitly within the schools, clearly played a major role in the allocation of students to teachers:

Frank: there was one teacher / the guy from New York / I forget his name the black dude / he was a really nice guy / and a very good teacher and nice guy / a good looking guy he was about

38 or 40 / he does taekwondo and everything / the girls used to come to him one after the other / just gorgeous women lined up you know? / if you went out in the foyer and you looked in there / if there were 5 good looking women there you were sure he was gonna get them ((laughs))

Though Frank was unsure about the role of race in the case of this teacher's popularity, he was in little doubt that this particular teacher attracted, and was allocated, many students on account of his good looks and athletic physique:

Frank: some particular [sales] staff like some particular teachers for whatever reason / the guy I was mentioning - the handsome black guy from New York / obviously the staff (.5) passed on all the cutie girls to him

For Frank, the overriding concern with the allocation of students, at least as far as the sales staff were concerned, was in keeping the student satisfied as a means to maximizing sales of lessons to the student, something encapsulated in his analogy of the sales staff allocating students, to placing bets in a casino:

Frank: so it's like a casino / I'll staff put my money over here [on this teacher] but if that doesn't work I'll put my money over here

Alan was more critical of the way in which students were allocated to teachers at *NOVA*, again as a means to maximise sales, in terms of how it created barriers to what he saw as desirable pedagogical practice in the classroom. According to Alan, students new to *NOVA* were given a 'level check' of their English proficiency and then assigned a certain numbered level. Each level was then paired with a range of proficiency levelled pre-planned lessons which were labelled according to letter. Students could then decide which group class, of up to 5 students, to join, in line with their level:

Alan: so for example if you were a level 6 [student] you could do a C, D, or an E lesson/ so if you really wanted to push yourself you could go to an E lesson / but if you know you wanted a chilled out one [you could go to a C lesson] / so there was a margin / as long as you were within that margin

However, as Alan went on to explain, this did not mean that students would choose a lesson to join based purely on their level. In fact, it was often the teacher rather than the level of the lesson which was the more important factor in students deciding which class to attend. As with Frank's account above, this often had a lot to do with physical appearance, but also to do with the teacher's age, skin colour, nationality, and ascriptions of native speaker of English status.

Alan: So it's a big popularity contest / and that's where I started to come across the whole *akogare* and the whole commodification of Whiteness thing? / is where I would see people who came in who were just like you know baby faced pretty boy / looked like someone out of [the boy band] *One Direction*<sup>22</sup> but they couldn't teach to save their lives / and their quotas would be like 'boom' / and other people who were teaching for years and in their 50s / you know theirs would start trailing / and I was like / again it's a host club right?

According to Alan, the popularity of '*One Direction*' teachers was not simply a result of schools stepping back and allowing students to choose their own teachers according to whatever criteria they liked – a *laissez faire* interpretation of student demand freely running where it will. Rather, for Alan, the schools themselves capitalised upon students' *akogare* (desire) for teachers they found physically attractive, 'stylish', and which played on what he termed the 'occidental fantasies' students had for young 'pretty boys'. In keeping with the host club analogy, Alan described the *teacher profiles* displayed at one of his former workplaces, which he and his former co-workers referred to ironically as 'dating profiles'. In likening these profiles to those found on the dating application *Tinder*, Alan described how the profiles included photos of the teachers, information on their personality, hobbies and interests, and nationality, but excluded information about educational or professional qualification:

Alan: The most striking example was one of my co-workers / so [he had an] MA TESOL, really prestigious institution, had already written research / was just in *eikaiwa* to get some experience before he got a university job right?

Will: right

Alan: amazing teacher! / [but in his profile it reads:] 'he likes going to cafes and he always wears a necktie' / 'he's so stylish!'

Will: ((laughs))

Alan: not a mention of his MA / not a mention of his experience as a teacher / irrelevant / [just] his face / 'he's stylish' / that's it

For Alan, the 'host club' system of students choosing their teachers largely based their 'style', skin colour (the 'commodification of Whiteness' as he refers to it earlier), or 'pretty boy' good looks, was positioned antithetically to notions of what he deemed pedagogically desirable. While the 'baby faced pretty boys' who 'couldn't teach to save their lives' attracted large numbers of students, the

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<sup>22</sup> *One Direction* are a UK-Irish pop boy band made popular through their emergence in the British televised singing competition *The X Factor* in 2010. In so far as the band is comprised of young attractive male singers who appeal to a young, predominantly female audience, they are relatively typical of the boy band genre.



more experienced teachers with qualifications from 'prestigious institutions', found their student numbers dwindling and hence their earnings diminishing. For Alan this signalled an unjust disjuncture between the valuations of teachers' Bourdieusian capital on the one hand, and the distribution of work and value (economic capital) in the form of wages on the other. Schools and teachers were able to capitalise upon students' *akogare* (desire) for young, white, attractive, 'stylish', inner-circle native speakers of English, and were thus able to convert such forms of cultural capital into value (economic capital) as profit and wages respectively. Alan clearly saw this as coming at the cost of an undervaluing of forms of cultural capital such as educational qualification and professional experience, which were less successfully converted into value (economic capital). One finds a parallel here in Walkers' discussion of the importance of a teachers' *service orientation* - a loosely defined set of behaviours and attitudes ranging from civility, to respect, to congeniality, and the way such orientations, overlapping with personality, can take precedence over technical knowledge or credentialised educational qualifications:

So important do some service firms consider the issue, that they pay particular attention to aspects of a job applicant's personality indicative of a service orientation, rather than solely to technical knowledge or academic qualifications. [...] Where ESL [or ELT] teachers are concerned, for example, possession of formal qualifications does not guarantee that a teacher has the necessary service orientation attributes to function as an effective service provider in a commercial environment. The corollary is that a teacher may possess limited or no teaching qualifications, depending on the ELTC {ELT centre} employment policies, but be highly service-oriented. (Walker, 2010, p. 33)

In his role as headteacher, Alan became increasingly frustrated by hiring practices where interviews focussed on the personality of applying teachers, asking questions about their travel experiences in Japan and their hobbies for example, rather than on either the attainment of, or aspiration toward, language teaching related qualifications, or experience of language teaching. Dissatisfaction with the distribution of value (here in both the Marxist and the Bourdieusian sense of forms of capital) motivated attempts to resist and reshape the way in which teachers' forms of Bourdieusian capital were valued. Alan for example, objected to the precedence which teachers' physical appearance and 'style' took over educational credentials and professional experience, and the winners and losers this produced among teachers as regards wages - what he referred to disparagingly as 'a popularity contest'. Through the sustained, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to instigate reflective pedagogic practice through training and meetings at the schools he worked at, he made sustained attempts to redress the valuation of teachers in ways which he felt were more just, through calls for institutional recognition of the forms of cultural capital he felt were under-valued - the professional

development of teachers and qualifications from ‘prestigious’ educational institutions. While these attempts to redress the unjust valuation of teachers’ Bourdieusian capital were made overtly, in the sense that he attempted to affect the institutional valuation of teachers through addressing those in management and other teachers at the school, more covert attempts to reshape the valuation of teachers, were also made. In multiple interventions with students directly, Alan encouraged students to wield their power as customers to complain about the ‘less professional’ teachers and their ‘*Charisma Man*’ lessons (where teachers talked primarily about themselves and their personal lives – see Chapter 6), or even to quit the school altogether:

Alan: complain! / you’re a customer! / [...] well depending on the teacher but if you got one of the let’s say less professional teachers the only benefit of coming here is conversation practice right / so if they [teachers] just talk about themselves, complain or quit / and find another school

As Alan himself conceded however, such interventions had a somewhat limited impact, either in the reluctance of students to make such complaints, or in some students’ desire for the *Charisma Man* pedagogy he objected to, both of which he himself acknowledged. It is interesting here that the forms of cultural capital which Alan felt to be under-valued are of the kind often given as examples of “disguised forms of economic capital [which] conceal the fact that economic capital is at their root” (Bourdieu 1986, p.91) discussed earlier. The attainment of educational qualifications from prestigious institutions for example is generally predicated on the availability of a certain level of ‘economic capital’, not to mention the cumulative social and cultural forms of capital acquired in previous educational and other practices, which are themselves predicated on certain levels of ‘economic capital’ in order to gain access to. Within *eikaiwa* however, such forms of Bourdieusian capital did not seem to convert particularly well into ‘economic value’, indeed, as has been discussed, the Taylorised work routine and extensive training in an in-house ‘method’, seemed to run on the assumption that previous experience or qualification were of little immediate concern in the hiring and remuneration of teachers (see Chapter 4).

What Alan’s attempts to negotiate and reshape the distribution of value speak to, is the disjuncture between the movement of capital in what Bourdieu refers to as *unified markets* (1986, 1991) on the one hand, and *specific markets (or fields)* on the other. I return here to Calhoun’s discussion of Bourdieusian capital quoted once before (see Chapter 2):

Directly economic capital operates in a money-based market that can be indefinitely extended. Cultural capital, by contrast, operates as a matter of status, which is often recognised only within specific fields (Calhoun, 2003, p. 299)

Bourdieu's conception of the market in which capital ('economic capital') circulates as Calhoun summarises here, brings to mind much of Marx's discussion on the *cosmopolitan* nature of capital, the establishment of a *world market*, and the status of money as the *universal commodity* (Marx, 1990/1867; Marx & Engels, 2002/1848) - that is the notion of universally recognised and convertible forms of value. In contrast to this are the specific markets (or 'fields'), in which Bourdieusian forms of capital are not uniformly valued or convertible, but see their value fluctuate across distinct and specific markets and their respective *regimes of value*. There is then, clear potential for disjuncture and contradiction between these two senses of value and markets – the universal *unified markets* of cosmopolitan value, and the specific markets and their partial recognition of certain forms of capital.<sup>23</sup> Alan expresses just such a disjuncture, where his own "socialised anticipations about what is possible and appropriate in the given market" (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 154) came into contradiction with the *regime of value* particular to the school. For Alan, educational qualifications represent a certain objective measure of the value of teachers (certainly at least, more objective than good looks, skin colour, or nationality). Indeed, as Bourdieu was keen to point out, forms of credentialed qualification often represent potent forms of cultural capital, which may be *misrecognised* (1991) as universal, something which many of us are familiar with in the way qualifications or 'getting an education' are said to translate into employment opportunities, which ultimately enforce notions of a meritocratic society:

As an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function, the scope of the educational system tends to increase, and together with this increase is the unification of the market in social qualifications which gives rights to occupy rare positions. (Bourdieu 1986: 12)

Indeed, the disjuncture between a misrecognition of certain forms of linguistic capital such as English as a *universal* form, and the pecuniary benefits anticipated by its holders which do not always materialise in *specific* markets, has been well documented (J. S.-Y. Park, 2016; J. S. Y. Park, 2011; Shin, 2016). The disjuncture which Alan experienced then, juxtaposes the devaluing of qualifications which he *misrecognises* as a universal form of capital in a unified market, with the valuation and conversion of forms of Bourdieusian capital in markets which he *recognises* as non-universal non-unified and partial – as things which 'happen in *eikaiwa*' so to speak.

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<sup>23</sup> A point which brings to mind Marx's discussion of the exchange of money for commodities – as universal and particular forms of value respectively (Marx, 1990).

## 7.3 Value in Production and Distribution: The ‘Crude’ Rate of Surplus Value

### Production

As outlined in Chapter 4, the *eikaiwa* industry is huge, involving millions of students and billions of yen in sales each year. However, the production of the *eikaiwa* lesson affords glimpses of capital as value in motion, which many other forms of commodity production, consumption, and realisation might not. In many forms of commodity production, the consumption and realisation of the produced commodity occurs *externally* to production, spatially and/or temporally. For example, I have little to no idea about the production of the laptop I am current using - of where, how, or by whom the constituent parts were made, let alone the materials necessary for its production. The realisation of its value took place as a one-time event in the virtual space of an internet retailer website, and its consumption continues to play out over time in a variety of spaces; in offices, classrooms, cafes etc. In contrast, teachers at *eikaiwa* participated in the simultaneous production and consumption of the lesson from start to finish, a situation in which producer and consumer come face to face (as with a number of *services* - see Chapter 1). Realisation – the payment for lessons, also generally took place within the schools (hence the presence of sales staff), though the exchange of money for lesson tickets seldom involved the teachers themselves directly. The way the school as a singular site embodied all three processes of: production (where lessons were produced), consumption (where students consumed lessons), and realisation (where money was exchanged for lessons in their sale), granted certain affordances to teachers in sensing the flow of value.

For teachers paid per lesson produced, it was immediately known to them both how much the labour they expended in producing each lesson was worth, as well as how much each lesson was sold for, as students paid for lessons at the school, and prices of lessons were generally public knowledge. It was possible then for many teachers in *eikaiwa* to calculate a certain ‘crude’ form of the *rate of surplus value* (Marx, 1990/1867, p. 320), that is the discrepancy between the amount of value labour receives (usually in the payment of wages), and the higher amount of value which labour produces through working and producing commodities which are then sold, thus generating profit. In other words, the discrepancy between what labour receives for producing value, and the greater value of the product that they produce. However, I refer to such calculations as ‘crude’ as they focussed on the discrepancy between the value received and produced by an individual teacher, and not by labour as a whole. There was a sense in which *eikaiwa* teachers *appeared* as the sole producers of the commodity, though this was never the case. I stress the term *appearance* here, as the lesson is not purely the product of one single teacher, but involves a complex net of cumulative labour performed outside of the class, temporally and spatially, including those who produce the materials used for teaching, the managers, the sales staff etc., without whom the lesson

could not be produced in the form that it was. Moreover, the matter is more complicated than simply the differential between wages paid and the price at which the commodity is sold. While it is perhaps fair to say that teaching-labour is a considerable part of the total labour expended in producing the lesson, there were of course other forms of labour expended by other non-teaching staff at the school, and perhaps beyond it, in for example advertising and marketing, though including this in calculations of surplus value depends on one's definition of productive/unproductive labour, a point of considerable contention in political economy (Fuchs, 2016; Mohun, 2003), and a matter beyond the scope and reach of this study given a somewhat limited access to sites, people, and data (see Chapter 5). There is also the matter of the costs of *constant capital*, such as the furniture, rent, electricity bills and all other manner of overheads, the cumulative cost of which must be covered by the value realised in the sale of the commodity. Despite this, the differential between pay and the selling price of the lesson, as a recurring theme in the accounts of teachers, spoke to glimpses of the flow of value, albeit imperfect ones subject to appearances, through production, consumption and realisation.

As 'crude' a measure as it may be, the discrepancy between pay and price of lessons was a common point of reference for participants in their descriptions of the distribution of value within the *eikaiwa*. This was especially significant in the case of freelance teachers such as Dominic, who did not produce lessons in schools or language centres which necessitated considerable expenditure on *constant capital*, but in 'free'<sup>24</sup> public spaces such as cafes. Dominic referred to the discrepancy between teachers' pay and the price at which lessons were sold as 'profiteering' - a means to make 'huge' profit. 'Profiteering' however, was not something confined to his freelancing work, but also something Dominic saw as endemic to corporate *eikaiwa* in general:

Dominic: *Gaba* was actually really interesting / (.5) I think *Berlitz* is much the same / there's massive profits to be made out of this for the big companies / as I say / the difference between charging 7000 yen (approx. \$65) and paying your teachers 1500 yen (approx. \$14) / that's just huge profit / so / and *Berlitz* I think is much the same / it's / their offering 1250 or something to start with then it goes up to 1500 / I know for a fact they charge between 5000 and 7000 yen per lesson / more for corporate lessons

Frank was likewise in little doubt that the profit motive lay behind the discrepancy in pay and price. Frank also discussed the 'crude' rate of surplus value in other smaller *eikaiwa* he had worked in, quoting one of his more recent places of work as charging 5000 yen (approx. \$47) for a 40-minute

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<sup>24</sup> 'Free' in the sense that the agency for whom Dominic worked did not need to pay rent or overheads necessary for providing a physical space in which lessons should be produced. Not free however for Dominic who was obliged to buy a drink or a snack every time he visited a café to teach (see Chapter 6).

lesson set against a payment of 2,500 yen. For many of the teachers, such a state of affairs represented an unjust distribution of value:

Dominic: There's a lot of profiteering going on / there's a lot of not really caring about the quality of education going on / you know it's really just a body / they're getting very high fees for supplying somebody and paying basically minimum wage / (1) so it's / I don't know if I'm very happy with the commercial side of it [...] what the individuals pay for tuition / is actually quite good money / it's only when you filter it down to the actual teachers that there's very little left over [...] they charge 7000 yen an hour / and they pay 1200 an hour \*laughs / you know / it's good money (.5) for someone / not teachers

The 'someone' to which value was unjustly redistributed to however varied among participants. Somewhat at odds with his notion of 'profiteering', where value as profit would presumably go into the pocket of owners and/or shareholders of the corporations, Dominic seemed to suggest that significant proportions of value were redistributed toward the hiring of an unnecessarily high number of administration staff kept in an unwarranted level of luxury in their head office workplaces, separate from schools:

Dominic: reading their [*Gaba's*] company literature they have something like (.5) / ah I can't remember / something like two and a half thousand teachers in Tokyo / and 500 administration staff!

Will: Ok

Dominic: And I thought maybe that's a mistake or something but when I went to their offices/ their offices are enormous! / palatial and absolutely full of people sitting behind desks ((laughs)) / what do they do!

Dominic returned to this theme in a later interview, making clear that this was not just an issue particular to *Gaba*, but one he felt applicable to English teaching in Japan in general. Here, he is explicit about a more just redistribution of value involving cutting back on excessive administrative costs:

Dominic: you know that you can get in [to Japan] if you're an English teacher [...] / there's plenty of money there / people are willing to pay / I think it just needs to be redistributed better

Will: when you say redistributed better / I mean you mean teachers should be paid more?

Dominic: I mean teachers should be paid more yes! / and if the reason that teachers are not being paid more is that because the administration costs are so high / then (.5) you've got to look at it you know / cut down your administration

Frank similarly expressed dissatisfaction with the way he saw the distribution of value towards other employees, specifically the non-teaching staff within the *eikaiwa* corporation, though for him, it was facilitated through the commission system to sales staff within the school at which he worked. Frank saw it as particularly egregious that though he was the one producing the lessons and keeping the student satisfied (at least he *appeared* to be the only one), large commissions and bonuses were going elsewhere to the sales staff. Though he did not know exactly how much the commissions and bonuses the sales staff received were, Frank felt a strong sense of injustice over the distribution of realised value (i.e. the distribution of money made from sales) among those in the school:

Frank: So if they [students] put down a million yen (\$9,200) for 200 more lessons / which happened quite a few times with me and other / and other teachers / I think (.5) our bonuses were 1500 yen (\$14)

Will: 1,500 yen

Frank: 1,500 yen / I told them don't even bother / don't / don't insult me like that / you know / if you can't give me 100,000 or 50,000 don't even talk to me / you know I don't even want your 1,500 yen

While many would agree that teachers who in all likelihood play a major role in securing the future patronage of students, in this case to the tune of a million yen, deserve far more than Frank received, it is important to recognise however, that Frank is unaware of exactly what kind of commission or bonuses the sales staff, or other unmentioned employees of the corporation within and beyond the particular school Frank worked for, were entitled to, and how these might relate to other aspects of their job. For example, in Nuske's study of a smaller commercial *eikaiwa* school one teacher-employee describes the lot of the sales staff as follows: "I felt really bad for the Japanese staff [...] They would often work from 10:30[am]-9pm, for lousy wages and were given ludicrous sales targets and pathetic commissions." (Ray quoted in Nuske 2014: 119-120). Sales targets are of course the other side of the commission/bonus carrot and stick. One might be rewarded in some sense for selling over a certain volume of goods, but then again one might be penalised for not meeting targets of whatever kind. While the question of where the money went is rather difficult to answer in terms of who benefitted most from the large sales which Frank described, it is with some certainty one can say that he is not among the major beneficiaries, and as such it is difficult not to sympathise with Frank's description of such a distribution of value as an 'insult'.

The 'crude' rate of surplus value drawn upon by teachers, does not indicate an accurate approximation of the rate of surplus value, problematically relying on *appearances* and abstractions away from *constant capital* and other costs as it does. Indeed, some claims, such as Dominic's, seem

contradictory (in the Aristotelean sense of logic, not in the dialectical sense of the term, see Chapter 3). Are corporations 'profiteering' and pocketing surplus value, or is it being wasted on bloated administration departments and their 'palatial' surroundings? It is well beyond the scope of this study to begin to test the validity of many of the claims made by teachers, or indeed to offer a credible calculation of the 'correct' rate of surplus value production at any of the schools mentioned. Acknowledging this does not however prevent one from empathising with the relatively low pay of teachers, their precarious conditions of employment, or the 'insulting' bonuses teachers like Frank received. What the teachers' discussions on the distribution of value do illustrate however, is a very palpable sense of frustration with, and objection to, the alienation of their commodified labour (see chapters 2 and 3), where they are very much aware of the limited control over both process and product they are able to exert. Limited control over how lessons are to be produced, and seemingly even less control over how the value they produced is distributed.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to give an account of how value in motion flows through moments of production, realisation, and distribution. In drawing on Marx's work, I have also aimed to give an account of how value does not always flow smoothly between moments, and how certain disjunctures and contradictions involved in the flow between these moments carries with it the potential for disjuncture, contradiction, and crisis, as well as the interests involved in the mediation of these. The contradictory coexistence of the production/consumption and non-production/non-consumption of the lesson-commodity for example, works to the benefit of capital accumulation while at the same time necessitating 'flexibly' employed teachers who can accommodate such a contradiction. In drawing on a Bourdieusian market-theoretic perspective, I have sought to give an account of how teachers at the schools interpret the teacher market, and ensue in struggles over the *regimes of value* within the schools, and their valuation and conversion of Bourdieusian forms of capital into 'economic capital' – value in the form of wages. Finally, I have discussed how teachers interpret the distribution of value in the school, in juxtaposing the price of the lesson at the moment of realisation (its sale), with the value they receive in wages in the distribution of this realised value. While such interpretations are problematic as 'crude' calculations of the distribution of value, they nevertheless communicate a powerful and consistent sense of labours' alienation – a dissatisfaction with the ceding of the value they produce to an other.



## Chapter 8 – ‘Good Money for Someone, Not Teachers’: Class and the Fetishisation of Capital

*We're sorry. It's not us. It's the monster. The bank isn't like a man.*

*Yes, but the bank is only made of men.*

*No, you're wrong there – quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.*

(A landowner explaining to farmland tenants about their impending eviction, from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*)

As Marx, and countless other socialist and anti-capitalist thinkers have pointed out, our experience of capitalism, the economy, and the market, is often one in which what we well-know to be man-made structures, institutions, and practices, appear as *Frankenstein*-like ‘monsters’ beyond the control of their creators. What this chapter aims to achieve, is an account of the ways in which teachers within the *eikaiwa* construct capital, not as something which they as value-producing labour relate to and produce, but as a fetishized living ‘thing’ which stands outside of their social relations and control, as a ‘thing’ possessing value as a naturally inherent quality of itself.

The previous chapter closed by underscoring the sense of alienation that teachers in the role of labour expressed, in so far as the value which they produced was distributed in ways that seemed to them to be unjust. What remains to be discussed however, are matters related to the third research question – how teachers relate their work-lives to economic and social structures more broadly. Who is this value-appropriating ‘other’ in teachers’ notions of an unjust distribution of value, and what light can this shed on teachers’ understandings of their work, their role as labour, and the way they relate to larger economic structures? How do they relate their economic *parts* to larger *wholes*, and construct what Chun (2017, p. 22) elsewhere terms as their *economic common-sense making*? In this chapter I argue that for teachers, the question of the distribution of value was framed in terms of where value was distributed to, but excluded matters of who it was that was doing the distributing, and how they came to lay claim to this value in the first place. The chapter revisits the notion of fetishism as structural effects appearing as inherent or natural properties of things, and argues that within teachers’ discourses, capital is constructed as something outside of their social relations, as a ‘thing’ able to accumulate value by nature of an inherent quality it possesses in itself, and as a matter if not totally occluded, then seemingly unrelated to matters of value production and distribution. In drawing on Marx’s notion of labour and capital as relational classes situated within

production, the chapter goes on to argue that certain fetishistic obfuscations and occlusions of capital as a class were evident in the teachers' discourses, at the intersection of neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurialism, and a certain distance between labour and capital which teachers experienced in their daily work-practices at the *eikaiwa* schools. While in discussing the unjust distribution of value and issues of exploitation within their workplaces, teachers constructed themselves in relation to other factions of the labour force, and to oppositional groups defined along ethno-national lines. They struggled however, to construct relations along labour-capital class lines, often resorting to nominalised stand-ins for those in the role of capital, or occluding capital as a class altogether.

### 8.1 The Commodity Consciousness: Labour Living out the Contradictions of the Commodity

As discussed in Chapter 4, for Lukács, labour in its commodified form within capitalist commodity production lives out the contradictions of the fundamental form of capitalist production – the commodity, and as such bears the potential for the commodity form to come to consciousness of itself, and ultimately for new radical understandings of class to arise. While there was little in the data to suggest the emergence of any radical new forms of class-consciousness among teachers, the living out of the fundamental contradictions of the commodity form was keenly felt in expressions of frustration and dissatisfaction with aspects of their work-lives. In his discussion on *the fetishism of the commodity and its secret* (Marx 1990/1867), Marx asks the question of what a commodity would say, if it had the ability to speak. Here, I attempt to give an account of the commodity speaking as it were, of teachers as commodified labour relating their experiences of what living out the contradictions of the commodity is like, and how they understand such experiences. While this may not have nurtured an appetite for revolution, there were nonetheless frequent references to frustrations with being undervalued, dehumanised, and treated as a 'thing'.

Teachers expressed frustration in reconciling the two antagonistic forms of value, use- and exchange-value, which they, as commodified labour, embodied. Many teachers saw themselves as underpaid and underappreciated, and saw a disjuncture between the worth or use-value of their labouring activity; 'producing something of quality' (Alan), and doing 'a highly skilled job' (Dominic) on the one hand, and a low level of remuneration they received - 'basically minimum wage' (Dominic) 'insulting bonuses' (Frank) - the exchange-value of their commodified labour on the other. However, it was not simply a disjuncture between an exchange-value quantification of their worth they deemed appropriate, and the far lower one they received as wages which was the sole issue

(i.e. perceiving themselves as being underpaid), but rather the manner in which teachers were treated like ‘things’ and ‘commodities’.

Alan: so yeah I kind of learned that (1.5) you know / the / you know the game was kind of stacked against us because we were commodities / and easily replaceable commodities / and like it comes back to the native speakerism thing too / if your qualification is being a native speaker / is your passport / anyone can take your place right? / [...] (.5) if they boiled down your worth to your passport (1) / you're goods / and (.5) that's (.5) that's it / and I really felt (.5) the longer I was there the more I felt that / and this constant revolving door of teachers

Though Alan here interprets the commodification of teachers like himself through the intersections of race, nationality, and native speakerism – a discourse already much commented on in scholarly literature and elsewhere (see Chapters 4 and 7) and one I will return to later, the frustration Alan felt with people being treated as ‘easily replaceable commodities’ was not limited to such concerns. Indeed, at times, Alan illustrated a much deeper fundamental objection to the ‘dehumanising’ commodification of himself and his former colleagues:

Alan: one of the teachers was diagnosed with throat cancer / and I didn't like the guy at all / he was insufferable / but he had a kid

Will: well throat cancer is throat cancer!

Alan: yeah it's fucking horrible right? / he had a 5 year old kid / and I was really affected when I heard / maybe because I didn't like him I don't know / it really got to me and I came downstairs when I heard / to the main reception area and I said 'so and so has got throat cancer!' / and I guess I was visibly upset / and one of the Japanese staff said 'we're going to need to get someone to cover his classes – how annoying'

Will right! yeah

Alan: and I thought you psychopath!

There was then a very discernible sense in which teachers struggled to come to terms with the duality of value they embodied as commodified labour. On the one hand, was their worth in terms of use-value: as people engaged in useful, meaningful activity – teaching others; producing things of quality; and feeling value in one's humanity. And on the other, as things objectified by an exchange-value: becoming a replaceable thing, and subject to a ‘psychopathic’ dehumanisation. The question remains however, of how this commodity consciousness affected teachers' notions of class-consciousness, and consequently what this meant for their understandings of the unjust distribution of value (see Chapter 7) within their work-lives.

## 8.2 Fetishism and the Capital-Labour Class Relation

To recap from the discussion in Chapter 2, the concept of class as I am referring to it here, is a dialectical one in the sense that each of labour and capital mutually presuppose the other for their existence and reproduction. Labour is defined by its relation to capital, and vice versa. In other words, you work for someone, or someone works for you, but without this ‘someone’ to relate to, neither position makes sense. Rather than labour and capital as simple static classifications of people as *this* or *that* however, each refer to *economic roles* that are played out *within production*, which are distinct from the more egalitarian roles played out in other spheres such as in market exchange, where buyer and seller meet and exchange as equals. Within production then, the labour-capital relation involves labour alienating both its claim of ownership over its product, and the process of production, in working to produce value for their capitalist employer – capital personified.

Though the capital-labour relation of production continues into the present, the relation has become subject to much obfuscation relating to both ideological and material developments, not least of all in recent decades. There is for example, the neoliberal rhetoric which recasts all and sundry as *entrepreneurs* (Block et al., 2012; Foucault, 2008; Holborow, 2015b), who as *bundles of skills* (Urciuoli, 2008) are encouraged to ‘invest’ in their own *human capital*, even as they work within clear labour-capital relations (Holborow, 2018b). Indeed, it is not just rhetoric which has obscured notions of class, but “the exploding rise of precarious work [which] deeply affects the conditions of collective solidarity” (Žižek, 2019, p. 47). Compare this with the mass concentration of labour flowing into industrial urban hubs during the industrial revolution, and the different potentials for those in the labour force for forming collectives, unions, and other forms of solidarity or class consciousness become apparent. The notion of a world of entrepreneurs managing and investing in their own capital however, is a conception of class which is not relational but rather treats people as somewhat atomised individuals. In contrast, the Marxist notion of class seeks to understand how people economically *relate to one another* within production. Whatever one thinks of the notion of individuals as entrepreneurs, the notion of class as *relational* holds considerable weight when one thinks of production and people’s work-lives, in the way a considerable proportion of humanity work *for* someone else, in the sense of being paid a wage in return for *alienating* or waiving the right of ownership of the products and hence value they produce.

The obfuscation of the labour-capital relation which the neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurialism affords however, is not simply a matter of some form of ideological brainwashing, but relates to developments in the material world which produce the potential for such obfuscation to occur. It is in the sense of *necessary appearances* that I refer to *fetishism* here, the ways in which our *inescapably* incomplete and partial experiences of everyday economic life shape our understanding

(see the discussion of commodity fetishism in Chapter 3), and not the implementation of some sort of ideological apparatus by a clandestine coercive force. As Žižek puts it: we “are fetishists in practice, not in theory” (2012, p. 315). Just as recognising that money in the form of paper, plastic, or digital numbers on a screen, are all tokens and do not themselves hold any value in some sort of animistic sense, this does not prevent one from buying or selling in the market, or making a fetish out of money. Believing that such tokens really do hold value rather than represent it, or that X commodity is or is not worth however much money, in no way impinges on the ability of money and commodities to exchange in the market at values beyond the control of their holders. It is not necessary for people to believe this or that about markets, commodities, or money, rather “*the things themselves believe for them*” (ibid, p. 317, emphasis in original). Fetishism in this sense: “designates not a (bourgeois) theory of political economy but a series of presuppositions that determine the structure of the very ‘real’ economic practice of market exchange” (Žižek, 2012, p. 15). Just as the increasing complexity of supply, production, and consumption chains over the historical development of capitalism have made penetrating the surface appearance of the commodity all the more difficult, so too with the increasingly complex division of labour and organisation of production which makes some social relations within production far clearer than others. The relations involved in say a small-scale business involving a handful of people for example, is a very different prospect from a multinational corporation, in so far as understanding how all of the constituent actors relate to one another.

While even in Marx’s day discourses abounded concerning how free trade permitted ‘golden opportunities’ for any members of the working classes with enough foresight and financial self-discipline to themselves become capitalists (Marx, 2007b), these seem to centre around the transformation of class status (from worker to capitalist), rather than the recasting of workers as self-skilling individual entrepreneurs outright. To put it another way, the entrepreneurial neoliberal *homo-oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008) of recent decades does not become, but is *born* an entrepreneur, and the matter of success or failure a matter of how well they marshal and cultivate their own capital, rather than a question of transcending any notion of class lines. Moreover, as Block (2014) notes in his discussion of Dahrendorf’s *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959), the concept of the capitalist often discussed in Marx’s *Capital*, the individual industrialist who owns and has a direct hand in the running of a particular workplace (a figure parodied to great comic effect in more recent times through the character of *Mr. Burns* in the animated sitcom *The Simpsons*), has long since given way to more complex forms of joint ownership of companies, and the development of a managerial superintending staff representing the interests of the capitalist(s) in the workplace – the early development of which was noted by Marx (1990/1867). The

‘personifications of capital’ within production then, may not necessarily be those who relate to labour as capital. Expressing the *interests of capital* and *being a capitalist*, are not necessarily one and the same thing. It is often the case that given the sheer size and complexity of many companies and corporations, workers often have no direct contact with, and limited knowledge of, those who they relate to as labour to capital – that is to say those who appropriate the value produced by labour, who make large scale decisions about how such value is to be produced, and largely dictate the manner in which this produced value is then to be distributed (for example, paid in wages, reinvested as capital, used up in capitalists’ own consumption etc.). Rather, they regularly come into contact with various superintending managerial staff who though they represent the *interests of capital* (broadly speaking), and take up the role of the *personification of capital* within production, are not themselves capitalists in the Marxist understanding of class.<sup>25</sup> While CEOs and entrepreneurs like *Steve Jobs* and *Donald Trump*, have obtained a certain celebrity status and as such are recognised far beyond the realms of their employees, for many workers, the faces of those for whom they work – those at the very top of the organisations who call the shots, are faceless unknowns. It is far from uncommon for the question of who one works for, to elicit answers along the lines of the name of a company corporation or other institution, rather than the names of individuals.

### 8.3 Fetishism in Class Relations: The Social Horizon

In the teachers’ discourses on the unjust distribution of value, the obfuscation of *capital as a relational class* manifested in struggles to nominalise personifications of capital, the ascription of value appropriation by a range of agents who act out the role of labour and not that of capital, and the fetishisation of corporations and institutions themselves as agentive entities. Given that nominalization in discourse can “obfuscate agency and therefore responsibility and social divisions” (Fairclough 2003: 144) the manner in which participants nominalised agents to whom they ascribed responsibility for the distribution of value which they felt was unjust, warranted analysis. Teachers such as Frank and Dominic who began their discourse on the distribution of value through terms such as ‘profiteering’, and who described the way in which teaching was ‘good money for someone, not teachers’, both went on to describe this ‘someone’ not as ‘owners’, ‘shareholders’, or ‘capitalists’, but rather suggested other sectors of the labour force – administration and sales staff,

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<sup>25</sup> Representing the interests of capital broadly speaking that is. Employed managers for example are well known to balance often contradictory demands of labour and capital within production. To call on another sitcom reference, the middle-management character of *David Brent* in *The Office* is an effective illustration of just such a set of contradictions. The series mocks *Brent’s* cringeworthy attempts to reconcile a need to be seen as a popular, liked, and ‘chilled-out’ boss among the labour force, with the need to placate and follow orders from his superiors, including implementing a downsizing of the company which involves involuntary redundancies for workers he describes as ‘friends’ and even ‘family’.

as where the problem lay (see Chapter 7). It may well be the case that significant amounts of value are indeed distributed to other employees of the corporations in which they worked. As I have said, validating such claims is beyond the reach of this study. What is of significance so far as this work is concerned however, is that in such cases (whether accurate readings of the distribution of value or not) it would not be administrative staff, or other members of the labour force within the corporation who would make such a decision, it would be those at the higher levels of decision making – those expressing the interests of capital, who would do so. It seems rather unlikely for example that any corporation would permit administration staff or sales staff to entirely set the terms of their own remuneration or spending budgets. Whether or not value really was or was not distributed here or there is besides the point. Rather, what is significant is that many teachers seemed unable to go beyond discussion of the (alleged) recipients of such distribution, and towards where such distribution came from, and how such an agent came to have value to distribute in the first place.

While the increasing size and complexity of organisations discussed earlier, may have a hand in limiting the focus to the recipients of distributed value, rather than those doing the distributing, one finds similar discursive constructions long before the onset of neoliberal globalisation. Take for instance the account of George Orwell's homeless companion in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, where an acutely felt sense of injustice, is aimed not at those who were 'rich', but rather at others he was competing with in the labour market:

*He [the 'tramp' Orwell accompanied in London] had a worm-like envy of anyone who was better off – not of the rich, for they were beyond his social horizon, but of men in work. [...] If he saw an old man working he would say bitterly, 'Look at dat old --- [expletive] keepin' able-bodied men out o' work'; or if it was a boy, 'It's dem young devils what's takin' de bread out of our mouths.' And all foreigners to him were 'dem bloody dagoes' – for according to his theory, foreigners were responsible for unemployment.'* (Orwell, 2013 [1933], pp. 153–154)

The point here then, is to bring attention to the 'social horizon' as Orwell puts it, and what people are, and are not able to 'see', before and beyond it. As with the fetishism of the commodity in exchange, this is not a matter of the 'tramp', *eikaiwa* teachers, or anyone else for that matter, not knowing that there is a world beyond such a horizon, nor of being entirely ignorant of what may lie there, but rather an emphasis that we live and experience the world within the bounds of such horizons even as we are well aware that the world continues to exist beyond them. As many astronauts have attested to, knowing the world exists out in space, and seeing first hand that it is so,

mean very different things for the way one 'sees' the world.<sup>26</sup> I am not therefore, suggesting that teachers for example, are entirely ignorant of how capitalism works, who they work for, or how value is (or should be) distributed. Rather, I am drawing attention to how teachers' *practice* in their work-lives, and the horizons therein, relate to the way they construct their discourses on class and the unjust distribution of value. While some social relations may fall before the social horizon, some lie well beyond it, and this has implications for the way one understands one's relations to others and the economy more broadly. There is then a certain distance, often both physical and metaphorical, which can exist between those in the role of labour and capital. The views from the boardroom and the shop floor are worlds apart. Labour for example, seldom has access to information on profit, expenditure, business strategies and the like, while shareholders may well never set foot in the properties in which production actually takes place. The lack of a presence, or direct contact with a CEO, owner, or other such personification of capital within labour's daily practice then, is only one such instantiation of such a distance. Nevertheless, just as the confluence of production, consumption, and realisation which all take place within the physical boundaries of the schools, enabled certain vantage points from which teachers could glean a sense of their alienation and a crude rate of surplus value production (see Chapter 7), the distance between labour and any personification of capital within their daily practices in *eikaiwa*, constricted the vantage points afforded to teachers in understanding who they relate to and how.

It is interesting to put teachers' accounts of alienation from the point of view of labour, into dialogue with their dialectically oppositional pole, capital. Here is Chun's discussion of his capitalist participants' discourse on capitalism:

[He] attributes a powerful singular agency to capitalism [...H]is discourse framing occludes the agency of people who are reproducing the economy through their labour, and instead, valorises the agency of the system itself [...]. What seems to be missing in this discourse of wealth creation is a collective group – in this context, the participant's employees – who produce surplus value. This omission, unintentional or not, is nevertheless indicative of how certain agents are usually never included in both the personal success stories and the triumphal narrative of capitalism itself.[...] business ventures and companies are often presented as stand-alone entities and the

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<sup>26</sup> One such example from NASA astronaut Edgar Mitchell:

You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it. From out there on the Moon, international politics look so petty. You want to grab a politician by the scruff of the neck and drag him a quarter of a million miles out and say, 'Look at that, you son of a bitch'.



heroic personification of either the founder or the CEO, rather than the people who helped bring them into being – the employees. (2017: 61-62)

What is remarkable here, is the manner in which the fetishistic views of capital and labour seem to be the inverse of one another. On the one hand, the founders and CEOs in Chun's account occlude the role of labour in producing value and ultimately the businesses which they own, and so all that accrues to them – profit, wealth, heroic status etc., appears either as individual accomplishments, or fetishistic accomplishments of an agentivised system – 'capitalism'.<sup>27</sup> For teachers such as Frank and Dominic however, they have no trouble in identifying that they, as labour, are the ones producing value within the corporation, and that the value they produce is alienated from them: 'good money for someone, not teachers', though they are less able to ascertain exactly where this value is going and who this 'someone' might be.

#### 8.4 The Construction of Class Relations in *Eikaiwa: Working 'For' and Working 'With'*

There is a sense of fetishism evident in the way Frank described his relation to his capitalist employer(s). Of particular interest was a short one-page letter (see Appendix vi) he had written during his time at *Gaba*, expressing his dissatisfaction with the way he had received, what he perceived to be, unjust threats of dismissal from managerial staff (see Appendix A). The letter is simply addressed: "Dear *Gaba*: To whom it may concern". While the description of relations in the letter hint towards the addressee as an employer, at the same time the letter also contradictorily seems to reject the addressee's status as an employer relative to Frank (or capital relative to labour). Given the letter refers to 'your company' twice in the letter, it would seem that Frank is directing this letter towards the owner or CEO of the corporation. Indeed, in a follow-up interview in which I hoped to better understand the letter, Frank explicitly stated that the letter was intended for the CEO of *Gaba*, although he was not able to name them, nor able to recall exactly where he had sent, or to whom he had given the letter. He was ultimately unsure of where the letter had ended up and who had, or had not read it. Despite the addressee, at least in intent, being clear (the CEO of the *Gaba* corporation), in the letter Frank seems to describe a relation between himself and the anonymous CEO in terms which seem to reject a labour-capital / employee-employer relation. In simultaneously, and somewhat ambiguously, addressing both *Gaba* as an institution, and the unknown CEO of the corporation, the letter twice makes it clear that teachers such as Frank "work WITH you, not FOR you" (emphasis in original), while going on to claim that teachers such as Frank

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<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, there is no information on the particular individual capitalist-participants from Chun's study. We do not know for example, whether they run their business in a very 'hands on' or 'hands off' manner - whether they regularly come into face to face contact with employees or operate through a number of proxies for example.

“are not staff”, again a statement emphasised twice in the letter. Frank signs the letter off by adding next to his name “Retired CEO of *CCE Japan*”, in reference to a small business Frank previously ran in Japan. It would seem that in the letter, Frank sought to establish a sense of parity between himself and the addressee, as both he and the implied addressee have the status of ‘CEO’, and a work relationship ‘WITH’ each other, and explicitly not a relation where he is working ‘FOR’ someone. When I asked Frank to expand on this it became clear that by ‘staff’ working ‘for’ *Gaba*, he meant those members of staff on regular full-time contracts, as opposed to those on *gyomu itaku* zero-hour style contracts (see Chapter 4) (as Frank was) who were described as ‘non-staff’, and who work ‘with’ *Gaba* rather than ‘for’ it:

Will: in the first two interviews / and also in your letter / you talk about the difference between teachers and staff / so you said the teachers are not staff

Frank: yeah

[...]

Will: Yeah! you're very insistent on that / and I'm a bit unsure as to what exactly you mean by ‘teachers are not staff’ / so is it not the case that you are employees?

Frank: The big difference / not only you remember last time I talked about the words ‘for’ and ‘with’ / so if you’re staff you work ‘for’ *Gaba* / now if you work ‘for’ a company as a staff member then you’re entitled to health benefits, pension (.5) paid sick leave, holidays, bonuses / none of those if you're a contract teacher / zero / [...] you pay your own taxes / and for some people that’s ok / but (.5) you know you do / you do suffer if you're sick there’s no pay / no pay for sick days / and there’s no bonuses and no paid holidays

[...]

Will: right so the staff work ‘for’ / in your words / they get all the social security stuff

Frank: yeah that’s right yeah / [...] and they work a regular 8 hour a day or whatever it is / [...] you're guaranteed work ((laughs)) / because as a teacher you're not / at *Gaba* especially you're not / not guaranteed [work]

From the above description, it becomes confusing why working ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ someone would be preferable, given the multiple benefits which fulltime employees on regular contracts were entitled to (mostly non-teaching staff at the schools). For Frank, despite the many benefits of regular contracted employment for those ‘staff’ working ‘for’ the company, working on a *gyomu itaku* contract ‘with’ the company was a matter of maintaining one’s dignity and independence:

Frank: I don't work for anybody / I work with people / [...] for me there's a big difference there because (.5) when people start pushing me around / I just tell them I'm not your staff / you know / and there's a red line here which you can do or say something to me

Frank however, did not give any concrete examples of any ways in which 'staff' at *Gaba* were pushed around in ways that he was not. This may well be because the teachers, who for Frank were 'not staff', operated in a somewhat isolated fashion from the 'staff' of the company – often those working in different areas of the school or different offices owned by the company. Nevertheless, given Frank's highly detailed and informative account of the relation between teachers and the sales staff who have significant levels of influence in the allocation of students to teachers (see Chapter 7), and the manner in which management staff would take student evaluations of their teachers as grounds for disciplinary procedures (the motivation for Frank writing the letter in the first place), it would certainly appear that teachers were indeed subject to a certain deal of being 'pushed around' regardless of whether one worked 'with' or 'for' the corporation. Clearly, Frank acknowledges that labour-capital relations exist within the school, in for example describing how 'staff' working 'for' the company are subject to being 'pushed around'. However, he seems to exclude himself from such a categorisation, and rather, in line with wider neoliberal cultural shifts in identity (Chun 2017), identifies himself not as a worker but as an entrepreneur of sorts, one who exists on a level of parity with the capitalist, circumscribed by a 'red line' which cannot be crossed - something the reference to himself as a former CEO reinforces. While, as I have said in Chapter 2, it is true that much has changed since Marx's day including the class relation between labour and capital, the notion of commodified labour as being 'free' in a double, ironic sense (see Chapter 3) – free to choose who to work for, but 'free' of the means to sustain their own reproduction (food, housing, clothing etc.) and therefore coerced to sell their labour on the market, remains. This duplicitous notion of freedom then, as Frank's example illustrates, continues in the present in the guise of precarity taking on the "form of appearance" of entrepreneurialism and its associated notions of freedom. As Žižek puts it:

[T]he external opposition is internalised, so that one opposite becomes the form of appearance of the other: bourgeois freedom is the form of appearance of the unfreedom of the majority, and so on. But does not exactly the same hold for today's precarious 'self entrepreneurs'? Their unfreedom – a precarious existence with no social welfare – appears to them in the guise of its opposite, as freedom to renegotiate the terms of one's existence many times over. (2019, p. 47)

To return to Marx's point on the contrast between exchange and production and the relations and roles therein, Frank positions himself within a social relation similar to that of the *freedom, equality, property and Bentham* (see Chapter 2, p.33) between buyer and seller in *exchange*, rather than the less egalitarian capital-labour relation in the realm of *production*. What is of note, is the manner in

which despite Frank expressing numerous ways in which red lines were indeed crossed, and how he himself had been ‘pushed around’, and his membership within a union representing *eikaiwa* teachers, in our interviews he nevertheless insisted on a relation to capital on terms of parity.

In formerly playing out the economic role of capital (‘capital personified’) in his role as the CEO of his own small business, in comparison to being ‘pushed around’ as an *eikaiwa* teacher, one could read Frank’s letter as an instantiation of an *injury of class* (Sennett & Cobb, 1977). Being pushed around, and being the one doing the pushing, are clearly very different, and being subject to the former having enjoyed the position of the latter, may well have been a bitter pill to swallow. Frank’s positioning of himself in contrast with an othered group of those who work ‘for’, and indignity at being treated *as if he was one of them* – so to speak, certainly suggest so. Nevertheless, not all of the possible roles of capital that can play out are alike. The small family run business, or the self-employed one-person company, is rather different from sitting atop a large corporation that employs thousands of workers. Being one’s own boss, is not necessarily the same as being the boss of others. Seeing as Frank’s former business was run out of his home, it is reasonable to suggest his experience as a CEO was closer to the former than the latter.

The distinction between being in control of production as opposed to being pushed around is a powerful frame of reference for matters of injustice in Frank’s account. However, it would be something of a stretch to read Frank’s frustration and anger at being treated as one who works ‘for’ someone as a dawning realisation of capitalist relations (capital and labour) being unjust and/or in need of upheaval. Where Frank does not go with his account, is to link such injustices and indignations across labour as a class. Nor does he object to the existence of a class position in which someone is able to ‘do the pushing’ – i.e. capital as a class. There was no objection to the way in which those who worked ‘for’ the corporation were pushed around (in contrast to himself). Frank’s objections are expressed largely at the level of him as an individual – while it was wrong that *he* was treated in certain ways, it was not necessarily wrong that others were. Indeed, in referring to the staff (those who work ‘for’) as enjoying a considerable number of advantages which he did not (regular employment contracts, health insurance, paid vacation, etc.) Frank seems to suggest there being something of a trade-off between the freedom and equality which he claims as his right as someone who works ‘with’, and the benefits which ‘staff’ enjoy that come at the cost of ceding their freedom and control in the workplace.

## 8.5 Class Fetishism and Ethno-National Identity

For many participants, the description of an unjust distribution centred on a division of the labour force into oppositional factions (as we have seen Frank do with ‘staff’ and ‘non staff’ above), each

with interests antagonistic to one another. Such antagonisms revolved around issues of distribution, with one faction of the labour force (administration staff, sales staff, or 'staff' in general) receiving all manner of pecuniary benefits (sales commissions, 'palatial' surroundings, social insurance etc.) to the alleged detriment of another faction of the labour force (teachers). As teachers within *eikaiwa* tend to overwhelmingly be comprised of non-Japanese nationals, and conversely the non-teaching employees at the schools comprise a significant proportion of staff who *are* Japanese nationals, there is often a sense in which 'foreign' teachers are constructed in opposition to, and in tension with, 'Japanese' (non-teaching) staff at *eikaiwa* schools (Nuske, 2014). Discussions on an unjust distribution of value often centred on the ascribed antagonisms between these two oppositional factions of labour, which were drawn along ethno-national lines, and in doing so obscured the framing of distribution in terms of class, capitalists, or capitalism more broadly. Frank constructed the 'staff' and 'non-staff' distinction as a matter of two opposing 'sides' one must choose to be on:

Frank: you know so you have to choose which side you're going to be on

Will: when you say choose a side / what's the choice

Frank: well I mean some people actually started as a ['non-staff'] teacher and decided they wanted to be staff / so they've gone down to the main HQ and got a job there

[...]

Frank: the staff / so they got parties (.5) / and they got rewarded and this that and the other / they got the full treatment / but teachers just got / you got your pay check for how much teaching [you did] / there's no bonuses or any of that

In discussing further some of the former teachers who became 'staff' there was a certain element of betrayal involved, in so far as Frank's construction of the 'staff' and their interests were diametrically opposed to those of the 'non-staff' teachers. Teachers who later became managerial 'staff', were described by Frank as 'bully boys with clipboards' who 'made life miserable for everyone' through their wielding of disciplinary techniques such as the evaluation forms discussed earlier, and checks on teachers' punctuality. The sense of betrayal cut across lines of ethno-nationality, in so far as it involved those defined as non-Japanese 'foreigners' switching sides, so to speak. This came out strongest in the analogy of those 'foreign' teachers who became managers, to Jews assisting Nazis:

Frank: It's the same as why they hire foreigners as managers

Will: right

Frank: I hate to use this (1) simile but (.5) / example / but during the war the Nazis hired the Jews to round up Jews and put them in the cattle cars / well I kind of like ((laughs)) / I felt like that / with the foreigners

For Frank, there was a clear sense of two oppositional camps within labour – ‘foreign’ teachers on the one hand, and ‘Japanese’ (and ‘foreign’ turncoats) on the other. While the staff seemed to receive all manner of pecuniary rewards – ‘the full treatment’, teachers got their pay check and little else. The question of distribution here then, was discursively framed in terms of where value was distributed to, but occluded who it was that was doing the distributing, and how it was this occluded force had acquired value in the first place.

Similarly, Alan discussed divisions between factions of the labour force along ethno-national lines, where the ‘foreign’ teachers of the *eikaiwa* he had worked in experienced a sometimes-tense relation with the Japanese (non-teaching) staff of the schools. Unlike Frank however, Alan reflectively examined the way he framed these divisions and tensions within the schools along ethno-national lines:

Alan: I've really tried to chip away at this (.5) us and them mentality which grew throughout my time in *eikaiwa* / with like the foreign staff versus the Japanese staff / but when you're in it [...] (.5) it's really really easy to feel like they're exploiting us and they don't think we're human right? / and (.5) I know it's wrong / and I don't feel it now

What is interesting here, is the manner in which Alan frames the relation of ‘exploitation’, not in terms of a class relation, but in terms of one built upon oppositional ethno-national groupings, which upon self-reflection he comes to reject as ‘wrong’. When asked why he thinks his feelings that he and other teachers are being ‘exploited’ are ‘wrong’, he replies as follows:

Will: why do you think it's wrong that you're being exploited

Alan: because I'm essentialising / I'm saying Japanese staff do this and that's ridiculous because they're all individuals right? / and not everyone does that

Will: perhaps / but I mean they are two distinct roles / I mean it's not like you're saying they're doing that because they're Japanese

Alan: and I'm saying they might have been pressured to act in that way by the institution or whatever but at the same time they have the ability to resist that / they're not sheep / as much as people claim Japanese people are sheep they're not they're humans / they have empathy right? / I don't think they're cold and heartless towards us as a rule / but yeah ok maybe the

institution frames their role in a way that might encourage that kind of treatment of us perhaps /  
let's put it that way

The first move Alan makes here, in addressing his 'essentialisation', is a discursive jump in *scale* (Blommaert, 2007) a move away from the level of groups or collectives, and towards the level of individuals – 'they're all individuals'. This is something Alan follows through with in his next turn in the manner in which he claims actors as individuals have the 'ability to resist' institutional roles and pressures. At this level, the question of benefiting from, being complicit in, or on the receiving end of relations of exploitation are only considered at the level of individuals, albeit ones who are subjected to the force from which exploitative behaviour emanates - 'the institution'. Rather than discussing relations within his workplace in terms of class roles (labour-capital) or the roles of particular jobs within factions of the labour force, Alan reframes the discussion of exploitation in terms of ethnicity, nationality, and native speaker status - a 'foreign' 'native English speaker teacher 'us', and a Japanese 'them', and his own reflective work in rejecting what he refers to as his own essentialism. However, what this reframing and its consequent deconstruction of essentialist groupings does (whether one approves or not), is to obscure discussion at the level of collectives, and of class. Once Alan has rejected his own self-ascribed essentialism, and the groupings he had constructed, the matter of exploitation, which as a relational concept necessitates at least two distinct parties, ceases to express anything. Indeed, Alan expresses as much in his own words: 'it's [the feeling of being exploited] wrong and I don't feel it now'. Though one may interpret 'exploitation' in a number of ways, and the 'exploitation' of labour in Marxist terms is indeed a very precise and particular form of exploitation of many possible, it is nevertheless worth keeping in mind that the exploitation Alan referred to elsewhere involved a 'dehumanizing commodification', and the treatment of people as 'replaceable things' at his workplace, and not simply a matter of one individual or group taking advantage of another in an unspecified way. It is for that reason that the nominalised stand-ins for capital – an agentivised 'institution', the framing of exploitation through frames of ethno-nationality, and the redrawing of scale at the level of the individual, are all significant. It may well be 'wrong' to blame some form of 'Japaneseness' for teachers such as Alan being treated like dehumanised commodities, yet for Alan, that is where the matter rested, and he seems to have resolved the issue of exploitation as a matter of correcting his own subjective defaults as he sees them – the manner in which he views race, nationality, and native speaker status. In the absence of an exploiting agent to which Alan could relate himself, the matter of exploitation was left as a somewhat spectral remainder, a gap which was filled by an agentivised 'institution'.

Dominic talked at some length about an ascribed 'Japanese' way of doing things, which for him involved an intransigence to altering the status quo, ultimately preventing a more just distribution of

value as he saw it. Dominic too, utilised nominal stand-ins for the agent representing the interests of capital. Here, after some hesitation in Dominic's speech marked by a short pause, the agent 'some Japanese man' acts as a stand-in for an unknown personification of capital:

Dominic: but you know / there is absolutely no reason that some (1) Japanese man is sitting creaming 7000 yen (approx. \$65) an hour off all of these students / and we're talking tens of thousands of students / which they're prepared to pay / and there's teachers only getting 1200 (approx. \$11) of that / (.5) that's ridiculous / and that's only done / being done because (.5) we've got no way of changing it or altering it you know

Despite this however, for Dominic, a more just distribution of value does not seem to involve any objection to the appropriation of value – the 'creaming off' of thousands of yen by 'some Japanese man'. His reference to having 'no way of changing it or altering it', is not an acquiescence to capitalism as a mystified, natural, and therefore unchangeable form of society, encapsulated best in the neoliberal dogma *there is no alternative* (TINA), nor a radical objection to capital appropriating the value he as labour produces. Rather, it is an expression of an alleged intransigent and inefficient 'Japanese' way of doing things which he is unable to change:

Dominic: I mean teachers should be paid more yes! / and if the reason that teachers are not being paid more is that because the administration costs are so high / then (.5) you've got to look at it you know / cut down your administration / and that's changed you see because the Japanese won't change that / if they did they would answer their employment problems overnight / because I can guarantee you there are plenty of people in Japan that can do all the jobs that are required / it's just that 10 of them are doing each job / (.5) split it up (1) / and there'd be more than enough people / [...] you look at it and you think it makes it so obvious why can't they see it / but (.5) / there we go

Will: yeah

Dominic: but that's not going to change until the government changes and that's not going to change

The unjust distribution of value as Dominic saw it then, did not involve class relations, but rather drew attention to the unnecessary costs of a bloated administration, and an inefficiency in the organisation of production - '10 of them are doing each job', both of which were attributed to a 'Japanese' form of organisation. Later in the interview, Dominic positioned teachers such as himself in a relation of exploitation to 'the Japanese':

Dominic: the English teaching industry I think could be a lot better / it seems to lack (1) a universal organisation / there are organisations around (.5) but I think it could be a lot better



organised to the advantage of English teachers / I think at the moment it's so fractured that the Japanese can just do what they like and pay what they like and get away with it /

For Dominic, the 'fractured' state of teachers who lack organisation worked directly to the benefit of 'the Japanese [who] can just do what they like and pay what they like and get away with it'. What is of note here, is the manner in which 'the Japanese' act as a stand-in nominalisation for the personifications of capital – those who benefit most from the precarious position of labour in the neoliberal market, a position which Dominic knows only too well (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, it is not through concepts of class which Dominic discusses how his, and other teachers' precarious position in the labour market are exploited, but through the prism of ethno-nationality – 'the Japanese' in place of 'the capitalist'.

However, it was not simply the case that teachers working in large corporations in which the personifications of capital existed beyond their social horizon as it were, explains the reason for the occlusion and obfuscation of capital in the teachers' discourses. There were indeed, cases in which personifications of capital existed well within teachers' horizons. While the above discussions all focus on large corporate providers of *eikaiwa* where owners, CEOs or other personifications of capital were largely unknown, in an earlier interview, Alan described working in a small family run *eikaiwa* in which he regularly came face to face with the owner of the school. Indeed, the tense interactions between Alan and the school owner who seemed disinterested in the quality of the lessons produced: 'just do English [...] it doesn't matter just do something' have already been discussed (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, Alan's concerns with the distribution of value therein centred around how teachers' various forms of Bourdieusian capital were valued relative to each other (see Chapter 7), rather than seeing himself in a relation of exploitation to the school owner, as regards the alienation of the value he produces. It is worth noting that this remains the case even as he acutely experienced the alienating 'dehumanising' effects of 'commodification'. Indeed, later in the interview, he claimed he never had any complaints about matters such as pay or benefits. Thus, while personifications of capital existing over the horizon so to speak, may well contribute to certain forms of obfuscation and occlusion of the capital-labour relation, they do not explain or determine them.

## 8.6 Conclusion: Fetishising Capital Outside of Social Relations

As I have said, the point of this section has not been to illustrate a form of false consciousness or incorrect understanding of capital and capitalism evident in the discourse of teachers, nor to explain the way teachers think and talk about their social relations within production as a deterministic product of their work-lives and the horizons therein. Rather, it has been an attempt to explore how

teachers understand their own sense of alienation as living commodities, and their sense of injustice over the distribution of value, through the way they experience and discursively construct their social relations within production. It is not a matter of a false understanding of what capitalism or capitalists are, or an ignorance of the institutions in which they work being primarily commercial for-profit ventures owned and run by real people. As Alan's account of working in a small family owned *eikaiwa* school illustrates, putting a face to those in the role of capital, does not in itself necessarily illuminate the capital-labour relation. It is not that the names of such actors are unknown which is of significance. Rather, it is the distance between labour and capital, often in both a physical and metaphorical sense, which makes it difficult for labour to grasp a sense of *value in motion*, - a sense of where the value they produce is going. The struggles to nominalise personifications of capital and the use of stand-ins are *symptoms, not causes*, of such a distance. To return once more to Žižek, fetishism consists of:

a certain misrecognition which concerns the relation between a structured network and one of its elements: what is really a structural effect, an effect of the network of relations between elements, appears as an immediate property of one of the elements, as if the property also belongs to it outside its relation with other elements.[...] 'Being a king' is an effect of the network of social relations between a 'king' and his 'subjects'; but – and here is the fetishistic misrecognition – to the participants of this social bond, the relationship appears necessarily in an inverse form: they think that they are subjects giving the king royal treatment because the king is already in himself, outside the relationship to his subjects, a king; as if the determination of 'being a king' were a 'natural' property of the person of a king. (2012, pp. 308–309)

What tended to emerge in teachers' discourses then, was a sense in which the distribution of value was framed in terms of who received what, rather than those doing the distributing, or where such value originated. Here, capital as value to be distributed *appeared as a natural property of capital itself*, rather than as the product of a social relation involving labour and capital. In other words, it seems always to have been presupposed that value 'just existed', ready to be given out, rather than having to be produced. Those in the role of capital, however nominalised and/or occluded, came to *have* value, and the divine right to distribute such value, as some form of inherent 'king'-like property outside of social relations, rather than it being appropriated as the alienated product of labour.

## Chapter 9. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I return to the research questions stated at the beginning of this work (Chapter 1), and discuss how the data collected, analysed, and discussed, has addressed each of them in turn. Following this, the limitations of the research will be discussed further, as well as the implications the research might have for future scholarly work. Before doing so however, it is worth summarising some of the points made in Chapter 5, on the scope of the research – what questions and issues it does, and does not address, as well as restating what the study aims to achieve as a contribution to applied linguistics. To restate some of the caveats from the opening chapter, this research has not sought to give a comprehensive account of ‘how commercial ELT works’, and so makes no claims of generalisability so far as either *eikaiwa* or commercial ELT are concerned. Rather, what I have aimed to give an account of, is the way many of the complex forces and interests at play *can* play out in ELT, and not an assertion of how they *do* play out - akin to sets of natural laws. My object of study has been neither people nor capital, but indissolubly *both*, with the aim of understanding how each dialectically shapes the other within commercial *eikaiwa* ELT. I believe that many of the issues at the forefront of this work – alienation, the distribution of value, the flow of capital, and precarity, are concerns which are found throughout contemporary applied- and socio-linguistics (see Chapters 2 and 3), as well as the participants in this study, and those involved in language teaching more broadly.

### 9.1 A Return to the Research Questions

Here, I will return to each of the research questions set out at the beginning of this study and recap the major themes from the discussion in previous chapters which addresses them.

1. How does the status of commercial ELT schools as institutions which operate to turn a profit affect how language is taught within them?

There can be little doubt that the profit motive inherent within commercially provided education – the production of both lesson-commodity *and* capital, has a significant impact on how language teachers teach, and how lessons are produced. While both language lessons and capital can be, and indeed are, produced in many contexts entirely independently of each other, they coalesce within commercial language teaching in a mutual interrelation of forces and interests that often run contrary to one another. In some instances, the contradictory pulls of capital and pedagogical concerns – broadly construed, were plainly expressed, in for example the development of reflective teaching practice being seen by management as ‘lost time’ that would be better spent on teaching (i.e. on the direct production of capital), or indeed the injunction to ‘just teach English’ and to ‘just do something’ in the class. Similarly, many teachers saw the ‘cramming in’ of students, many of

whom brought disparate and clashing needs and personalities with them, as serving the interest of making profit over and above any notions of what was pedagogically desirable. Perhaps the most striking example, however, of the potential for disjuncture between capital and education, was in the *non-production of the lesson* (see Chapter 7), when the production of capital was rent asunder from the production of a lesson of any kind.

However, as I have aimed to relate in the preceding chapters, understanding how lessons occurred within *eikaiwa* was not simply a case of a *tug-of-war* between ‘capital’ as some monolithic block *here*, and ‘education’ as another *there* - as two externally related oppositional ‘things’. It is not simply a case of ‘business as a detriment to education’ as one of the teachers within the study put it, but rather a complex set of dialectical interrelations – a totality of complex moving parts and agents, which affect, and are affected by each other. For example, the efforts to tightly control the production of the lesson through Taylorised scripting and forms of teacher evaluation, were rationalised on the grounds of ensuring a certain standard of quality (or use-value) of the lesson, delivering on ‘promises made’ to students as customers, and thus facilitating the realisation of the commodity’s value – in other words producing a product that would continually sell to satisfied customers. At the same time as this however, students as individuals brought with them a heterogony of desires, some of them loosely, if at all, related to matters of language teaching as it is usually understood, which teachers were expected to take into account in *flexibly* producing lessons to meet bespoke demand, once again as a means to ensure the continued sale of lessons and the flow of capital. In some cases, the contradictory rationales behind these two intermediating regimes of production crystallised out into evaluation systems which often ran counter to each other – one evaluating teachers based on Taylorised yardsticks of following scripted procedures, and another by the *flexible* yardstick of delivering ‘student satisfaction’ by ‘adapting the lesson’. The dialectical tensions and contradictions then which run between coexisting Taylorised and flexible forms of production, far from an instance of how profit or capital *does this or that to* education, illustrate how the drive for profit may be potentially contradictory *within itself*, in so far as *both* distinct forms of production were rationalised, by teachers, managers, and in the official literature of the institutions themselves, *on the same grounds* of maximising the production and realisation of value and hence facilitating the flow of capital. In other words, they are contradictorily *both* the best mode of lesson production to facilitate capital accumulation.

2. In what ways are English language teachers and their work valued, and how do these many different forms of valuation relate to one another?

At times struggles over production between various stakeholders within the schools flared up into conflicts. Teachers like Alan for example, who took great pride in 'producing something of quality', resisted Taylorised forms of production which he felt devalued and reduced the craft of teaching to a deskilled drudge, and made consistent calls at his workplace for the professional development of teachers, and greater recognition of the value of credentials related to language teaching. Staking claims on the quality of the lesson however, came at a cost for Alan who became positioned as something of a troublemaker in the eyes of his employers, and some of his colleagues. Such struggles did not only entail questions of 'the good' - what lessons should or should not be like, but also questions of *the distribution of value* within the *teacher market*. Here, the manner in which the allocation of students, and hence the distribution of work, and hence value in the form of wages, took place within the schools laid bare the ways in which individuals were and were not able to capitalise and convert their various forms of Bourdieusian capital into value in the form of wages. The allocation of students via sales staff to teachers, often allegedly based on physical appearance, age, and personality for example, was often seen as unjust, as was the perceived undervaluing of teaching experience and qualifications from educational institutions within the teacher market, and the consequent allocation of students that followed. Struggles over production then, were not just limited to the issue of how each individual lesson was to be produced, but involved larger attempts to resist and reshape the *regimes of value* throughout the school – the questions of who was a 'good' teacher, who got given students, and who got paid how much. The distribution of value, in both a Bourdieusian and Marxist sense, the winners and losers of the teacher market, was at the heart of matters of justice for many of the teachers.

As the schools themselves encompassed processes of production and consumption (the lessons being produced and simultaneously consumed), and realisation (lessons being paid for), a certain *crude rate of surplus value production* became a key reference point for many of the teachers. With the price at which lessons were sold to students known, and teachers' remuneration calculated on a pay-per-lesson basis, the discrepancy between the value distributed to teachers in the form of wages and the price at which lessons were sold, was often transparent. As such, teachers expressed a sense of alienation in regards of the flow and distribution of value. They, as teachers, had produced value (a lesson), only for this value to be realised and appropriated elsewhere – 'Good money for someone, not teachers', as Dominic put it. In place of the realisation of the value they had produced (the monetary value from the sale of the lesson) was the receipt of wages and bonuses some saw as 'insulting', not least in view of students spending yen in the millions (1 million yen = approx. \$9,280).

3. How do English language teachers relate their work-lives to the economy and society more broadly?

While the distribution of value from the point of view of Bourdieusian capital involved the question of which teachers were best able to convert their forms of capital within the teacher market, and whether such a regime of valuing Bourdieusian capital was just or not, the theme of an unjust distribution of value in purely the Marxist sense – the question of who got what in the overall flow of capital as value in motion throughout its circuit of production, realisation, and distribution, was a key way in which teachers related themselves and others within their workplace to questions of social justice that encompassed larger, more abstract notions such as the state, ethno-national identity, and class. Here, many of the themes at the core of Marxist political economy became salient, not least of all the alienation of labour, class consciousness, and fetishism. As regards alienation, there was a very keen sense of the alienation of both *process* and *product* in the accounts of the teachers. Maria's account in particular was illustrative of the alienation of process within work. Upon reflecting on the manner in which, dialectically, she produced her lessons *while her lessons produced her*, she gave an account of how her actions within lessons seemed 'a surprise' to her, as sets of behaviours and formulaic spoken interactions which were unwillingly scripted and repeated by her which seemed to occur in an almost subconscious manner. For many teachers, a lack of control over how and when they worked were common themes, some seeing themselves as being treated like disposable and dehumanised 'things' or 'commodities' at work. In Lukácsian terms, teachers described living out the contradictions of the commodity, where their own sense of worth or use-value – of engaging in activity socially beneficial or useful in some sense (i.e. teaching), and their exchange-value in the form of remuneration described as 'insulting' – well below their own sense of what they and their work were worth, seemed to them poles apart. Following this, was a certain degree of class consciousness, in so far as teachers expressed a strong sense of their economic role as labour – producing value through working which was appropriated elsewhere – 'good money for someone, not teachers'. Identifying who this 'someone' to whom value was unjustly distributed to however, seemed less clear. It was in terms of ethno-national identity, rather than class, that teachers tended to address what they saw as the unjust distribution of value, pointing to other 'Japanese' factions of the labour force within their companies, a 'Japanese' way of doing things, or the Japanese state, by way of explanation. When such explanations were reflected upon and discarded by some participants however, matters of 'exploitation' or being 'treated like a dehumanised commodity' which had previously been relayed, seemingly disappeared. Other teachers, in drawing on neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurialism, related themselves to their employer not in terms of a labour-capital relation, but as equals - a situation where a precarity that

teachers were well aware of nevertheless took on the guise of freedom and equality. The teachers' discussion of the unjust distribution of value then, narrowed in on (the ascribed) recipients, but tended to overlook the *agents* of distribution – the question of who got what, but not who decided it should be that way. In short, while teachers seemed to object to their value being alienated, in no way did they object to someone else deciding where this value, once alienated, should go. It is in this sense that capital took on fetishistic qualities as an agentive thing-in-itself, born of human labour but flowing where it will, rather than as a flow of value people could, or indeed should, determine for themselves.

## 9.2 Limitations and Implications of the Research

As I have discussed in Chapter 5, there were a number of ways in which the scope of this study was limited. There was the issue of access, whereby I was seldom able to access sites and observe first-hand how lessons were produced, or indeed how the schools operated on a day to day basis. Though much of the information related in the interviews given by teacher-participants was more or less verifiable by triangulating with other sources (other teachers, and hard-copy and digital materials provided by the institutions themselves for example), other information, and other claims made by interviewed participants was far less easy to verify. Claims such as those made about the remuneration of other non-teaching staff at school for example, were ultimately unverifiable due to a lack of access to such information. Further than the issue of verifying the accounts of teachers however, the lack of access to first hand observation of lessons as they are produced significantly limited many of the details of the description I was able to give. A greater amount of observation would undoubtedly have helped in giving a finer-grained account, in for example examining the subtle ways in which teachers and students expressed their interests in more nuanced struggles over how lessons were produced, where certain ambivalences or forms of resistance might be expressed through paralinguistic forms such as facial expressions, gesture, and posture, not to mention an account of spoken interactions between teacher and student in and out of the act of producing lessons in far greater detail than this study has been able to do. It remains the case however, that so far as research interested in the relation between sensitive information like wages and terms of employment and the teaching of languages is concerned, access to such commercial sites seems rare.

There is also the omission of a number of voices within this study – the students, the non-teaching staff, the owners or CEOs of the institutions etc, due to, again, the methodological problem of access, and also to logistical limits (chiefly time, and limited proficiency in Japanese). In that sense, the story of commercial ELT which has been told, is very much one from the perspective of a particular kind of labour – a teachers' account of working within the commercial *eikaiwa* industry.

While I have positioned this research as a movement away from a view of commercial ELT in terms primarily of consumption, not least of all in how the English language, native speakers of English, the West, masculinity, and whiteness, are all discursively commodified in the discourses of students and advertising (Chapter 4), and towards a view of the full circuit of capital through production, realisation, consumption, and distribution (Chapter 2), there remains a certain one sidedness to the account given, in so far as it is the voices and experiences of teachers in the role of labour, which are heard first and foremost. This is, of course, not to say that the voices of others, not least of all students, would not add to an understanding of how contradictory interests play out in the teaching of languages and its relation to the flow of capital. This is especially true in light of the less than direct manner in which many students and teachers communicated their own desires of how they wanted lessons to be produced (communicating via ‘counsellors’ or other intermediary staff, or through the mechanism of evaluation forms). A better understanding of what it was students did or did not want, and how they perceived the actions of their teachers is a direction in which future study might turn.

Furthermore, as I have said, unlike the production of many more corporeal commodities where moments of production, realisation, consumption, and distribution often happen in distinct times and places, as a form of commodity-service which brings labour and consumer face to face, *eikaiwa* encompasses all of these moments. As a result, it is not only teachers who are able to grasp some sense of capital in motion (fetishistic or otherwise), and so relate themselves to the economy more broadly, but surely students do as well. We might then ask how the flow of capital is understood from the perspective of student-consumers, and how the perspectives of teachers in the role of labour, and students in the role of consumers meet, overlap, or clash with one another. In discussing the role of language in adding value to niche products Heller & McElhinny give a description of a certain distance between labour and consumer:

We like products even better if we can meet the people who make them, though not imagining the hands. We are rarely interested in seeing the hands that touched those products; instead their pictures and their stories help anchor the product in place and time and in social and cultural practice. (2017, p. 248)

While this is certainly true of many products, commercial ELT, not to mention other services where labour and consumer come face to face, is perhaps a different matter. Here, it is not only meeting the producers of the product (the teachers who produce the lesson), but more significantly, the way in which the ‘hands’ which ‘touch’ and produce the lesson, belong not only to labour, but also to the student who, as a co-participant, not only sees, but directly has a ‘hand’ in production. In light of this



there are a number of questions we might ask. For example, do students ‘swallow whole’ the discursive commodification of languages and language teachers and treat them as dehumanised, disposable ‘things’? How much do students know about the pay or precarity of their teachers, and how would such knowledge affect the way they approach language learning? Students who themselves labour elsewhere in precarious forms of employment (and here it is worth repeating Allison’s claim that a third of the Japanese workforce are employed on ‘irregular contracts’ - see Chapter 4), might sympathise or build potential forms of solidarity between them. Then again, many students might consider such matters as taboo, with indifference, or as the just rewards of a free market. What is worth keeping in mind however, is the very personal nature of *eikaiwa* in particular, where matters of the teachers’ personality, personal history, and lifestyle often play a key role in the hiring of teachers, as well as in the allocation of students to teachers – one teacher is not as good as another within the teacher market (Chapter 7). Indeed, though not in this study, it is well known that many *eikaiwa* students and teachers enter into extra-economic roles and relations, not least of all friendships and romantic relationships. Moreover, the perception of *eikaiwa* teaching as a relatively low-paying, and low status job, is not one confined to teachers, but found in public discourse more generally too. In an industry which capitalises so much on ‘the personal’ as it were, the question of how matters of class in the profiling and discursive commodification of teachers is present or erased, is a significant one. Do students and teachers discuss things like pay and their employment conditions? If so, how is this done – in an overt or a covert fashion? If not, then how are such issues kept out, and who does the keeping?

While admittedly, topics such as pay and contracts are taboo in a great range of interactional contexts, including perhaps in the interactions of a language lesson, a personal experience of mine has prompted such questions. In taking Japanese classes at a commercial Japanese language school in the last few years, certain aspects of the precarity, and senses of injustice in the way teachers were employed echoed those of many English teachers in *eikaiwa*. Through a mixture of my own observations, hearsay among students, and intimations and direct conversations which teachers themselves had initiated, a palpable sense of frustration, or downright injustice with the job of teaching Japanese became apparent. While no doubt such topics are often taboo in the language classroom, there is perhaps reason to think that such matters *are* discussed, and may be meaningful to both students and teachers. Such matters seem to transcend the teaching of English to the provision of language education more broadly.

The relatively small sample size of 6 participant teachers should also be acknowledged as limiting the scope with which generalisations from this study are to be made about either *eikaiwa*, or commercial ELT more broadly. As I have emphasised (see Chapter 5), this study has not set out to

make grand generalisations or theories which may be validated or refuted through the application of further research, but rather, proposes this study as *one* example among many possible, of how applied linguistics might examine the juncture of many of the key concerns of contemporary applied linguistics: language, language teaching, precarity, the new economy, commodification, and capital, among others. While many of the themes which emerged across participants do indeed seem generalisable to an extent, and are backed up by other data in the corpus collected, as well as in previous research (the ticket system, pay-per-lesson contracts, standardised materials and methods etc.), many of the accounts given, focussing on the experiences of individual students, lessons, or other events in the accounts of teachers, are of a somewhat more idiosyncratic nature. The contribution of this study then, is not so much about what the experiences of six individual teachers can tell us either about their own individual lives, or *eikaiwa* more broadly, but rather what their experiences can tell us about how we might understand the tense and dynamic interaction between the continuous circulation of capital, and the provision of language education, as they intertwine in their mutual reproduction, and what this means for language teachers in particular contexts. In this sense, the research has implications beyond the scope of commercial *eikaiwa* ELT. Walker's work on commercial ELT in New Zealand for example, mentions in passing certain tensions between standardised materials and curricula and an expectation for teachers to be flexible and "design lessons according to student wishes" (Walker, 2010, p. 57). In ELT more broadly, some have noted the prevalence of commercial ELT having an increasing influence on what teachers within non-profit sectors of language education do (Lamos, 2017).

In this study I have largely treated *eikaiwa*, as an instantiation of commercial ELT, as a form of language education in some sense distinct from others. Though I have flagged up some of the ways in which *eikaiwa* interpenetrates its opposite 'formal' language education (Chapter 4), out of logistical limitations much of the discussion has stayed within the bounds of both *eikaiwa* and commercial ELT. Such boundaries however, as I have said, are often blurred and readily crossed. *Berlitz* for example, is particularly well known for providing teaching services to universities according to Tanaka (2007), while other universities in Japan have raised eyebrows in outsourcing as much as half of the entire teaching staff of English language education programs to commercial *eikaiwa* (Breaden, 2016). Indeed, at a former university in which I have worked, the question of outsourcing English teachers to *eikaiwa* corporations was mooted as a possibility, before meeting resistance from university faculty, and finally being rejected. Such matters are certainly not confined to Japan. Even *eikaiwa* itself is, to a certain extent, an international affair, more recently involving teacher labour in the Philippines in providing online *eikaiwa* lessons to students back in Japan, often at prices significantly lower than those found in face-to-face *eikaiwa* (Tajima, 2018b, 2018a). Here,

cost-saving outsourcing crosses boundaries not only of a commercial/non-formal – ‘formal’ kind, but also international boundaries, as well as those drawn along native-speakerist lines. In conferences and other teaching related forums I have attended, it is already the case that teachers of English within Japanese high schools and universities are using ‘offshored’ *eikaiwa* in places like the Philippines as a low cost way to supplement classroom learning with extensive speaking and listening practice outside of the class.

### 9.3 Further Research: Universal Alienation within Language Teaching

Ultimately, the extent to which this research does or does not break new ground in research centring on political economy and language and language teaching comes down to what Gobo refers to as *transferability*, defined as:

a choice made by the reader, who on the basis of argumentative logic [...] produced by the researcher, may decide [...] to transfer this knowledge to other situations that she/he deems similar [...]. The reader, basing this on the persuasive power of the arguments used by the researcher, decides on the similarity between the (sending) context of the case studied and the (receiving) contexts to which the reader him/herself intends to apply the results. (2017, pp. 196–197).

With the above in mind then, it is my hope that many of the themes this research has highlighted are of importance not only to myself, or the participants of the study, but are more wide-reaching. One does not have to be a fully paid-up Marxist to keenly feel issues of precarity and alienation. Indeed, in the broader sense of the term, Harvey sketches out a range of issues and concerns with which many might empathise, encapsulated by what he terms *universal alienation*:

The verb to alienate has a variety of meanings. As a legal term it means to transfer a property right to the ownership of another. I alienate a piece of land when I sell it to another. As a social relation it refers to how affections, loyalties and trust can be alienated (transferred, stolen away) from one-person, political institution or political cause to another. The alienation (loss) of trust (in persons or in institutions such as the law, the banks, the political system) can be exceedingly damaging to the social fabric. As a passive psychological term alienation means to become isolated and estranged from some valued connectivity. It is experienced and internalised as a feeling of sorrow and grief at some undefinable loss that cannot be recuperated. As an active psychological state it means to be angry and hostile at being or feeling oppressed, deprived or dispossessed and to act out that anger and hostility, lashing out sometimes without any clear definitive reason or rational target, against the world in general. (2015, p. 267)

Such issues are as relevant to today's new economy as they were in the heyday of industrial capitalism, and consequently ought to be high up on the list of work which addresses the *job* of language teaching, commercially provided or otherwise. In looking back on this study, the theme of alienation as outlined above by Harvey, brings together many of the complex intertwining aspects of life teaching within commercial *eikaiwa*. The alienation of teachers' control in their work-lives, as well as feelings of sorrow, frustration and anger at various forms of injustice, as teachers saw it, which they experienced and often had limited agency over. It is doubtful that such issues taken broadly are entirely confined to commercial language teaching and are not also relevant to other forms of education related work.

Why then, aside from a certain empathy which my own experiences of working in ELT have furnished me with, are such notions of alienation of importance? Harvey's answer is as follows:

Dare we hope for an unalienated (or at least less alienated and more humanely acceptable) relation to nature, to each other, to the work we do and to the way we live and love? For this to be so requires that we understand the source of our alienations. And this is exactly what the study of capital's contradictions does so much to illuminate. (2015, pp. 268–269)

While it would be disingenuous to describe this research as either unearthing or stoking revolutionary fires in the teachers who participated in this study, I think it would be reasonable to suggest that some form of hope of a less alienated way of working, and of teaching language, was present. As Dominic put it: 'there's got to be a way of getting more permanency into the business, because this is just no way to have a life'. It is without doubt that much struggle over such hopes for an "unalienated" way of teaching and learning language are taking place more broadly within language teaching. For example, the struggles detailed in Chapter 4 within *eikaiwa*, where unions have fought, and continue to fight for recognition of the work done outside of the lesson – the planning and other preparation necessary to teach, as work that should be paid, as well as struggles for the recognition of the right to paid breaktimes, exist in struggles in commercial ELT in the UK and Ireland (Cónal, 2019). The questions that this research may lead us to then, are to further understand how issues of alienation occur within language teaching, how teachers, students, and a range of other stakeholders relate to such issues, and to understand struggles that ensue in the pursuit of a hope for less alienated forms of teaching and learning.

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## Appendices

### Appendix i. Semi-Structured Interview for *Eikaiwa* Teachers and Managers

(i) Basic information on participants

- Where are you from?
- How long have you been an *eikaiwa* teacher in Japan?
- Can you give a summary of your career as a language teacher?

(ii) Job details

- Where do you work?
- How long have you worked there?
- How long is your current contract?
- Full time / Part time?
- Contract details – pay, length, what counts as paid work, benefits

(iii) How were lessons produced at the school?

- How was your last day at work? Can you describe it?
- How many teaching hours do you usually have per week?
- Can you describe your weekly work schedule?
- What kind of things do you do at work? (responsibilities, tasks, regular events)
- Can you describe a typical day at work?
- Describe the school physically. The building, decorations, room layout.
- Describe a typical lesson
- Describe a lesson you taught recently
- Describe a lesson you taught to one of the students you have mentioned

(iv) Relationships

- List all of the people at the school you come into contact with (roles/individuals)
- What do other people in your workplace do?
- Who do you feel closest to?
- Which relationship do you find the most difficult – how did it become that way?
- What kind of students do you teach? / Describe your students

(v) Control over production

- Who decides what you do in the classes?
- What parts of your job would you say you have most control over?
- What parts of your job would you say you have the least control over?
- How much control do you have over [X]?
- Why is it those parts in particular that you think you have the least control?
- What about your job would you like to change?
- Do you think those changes are possible? If not, then what is stopping them?

(vi) Interstitial ambivalences

- Were there ever times in your job, when you felt it was unclear, or you didn't know what you should do?
- Why is it unclear?
- What do you do when this happens? – Do you always do that?

(vii) Relations outside of the school (to people, institutions, and structures – e.g. capitalism)

- How does the place you currently work at compare with others you've worked at previously?
- Do you see *eikaiwa* teaching as part of your short/mid/long term future?
- How would you describe the *eikaiwa* industry?
- What kind of people do you think are suited to working in *eikaiwa* schools?
- How would you compare working as an *eikaiwa* teacher to other kinds of work?
- Do you think the *eikaiwa* industry has changed over the years? What has changed, and what has remained the same. Why do you think those changes happened?
- Would you recommend working at your current school to others? (have you?)
- Do you feel your job is secure?

(viii) Questions on distribution (of symbolic and/or material resources)

- What do you think a 'good' lesson would be (in your own opinion, from the viewpoint of students, from the viewpoint of the school)
- What do you think a 'good' teacher would be (in your own opinion, from the viewpoint of students, from the viewpoint of the school)
- How do students get assigned to teachers?

- If I was a student and went to your school, what would happen. What would be the process?

(ix) Probing questions

- Asking for examples – recounting instances of something happening
- Asking for participants to describe generality or exceptions. ‘Is that an exception?’ ‘How often does that kind of thing happen’ – ‘is that the same for all teachers there?’
- Describe the documents (example evaluation forms, teacher profiles etc.) [often supplemented by documents participants have given, or ones I had found online and triangulated with teachers]
- What is the purpose of doing X / why do they do that? / Why do you do that? (example, what is the purpose of the sheets you fill in, the evaluation forms etc.)
- How do you think X (something they brought up) impacts or effects how you teach your lessons?
- What happens when [X], but [Y]? (What happens at the juncture of two contradictory forces)



## Appendix ii. Transcription Conventions

/ indicates the minimal but clear pause between phrases/sentences in normally paced speech.

(.5) indicates pause of half a second

(1) indicates pause of one second

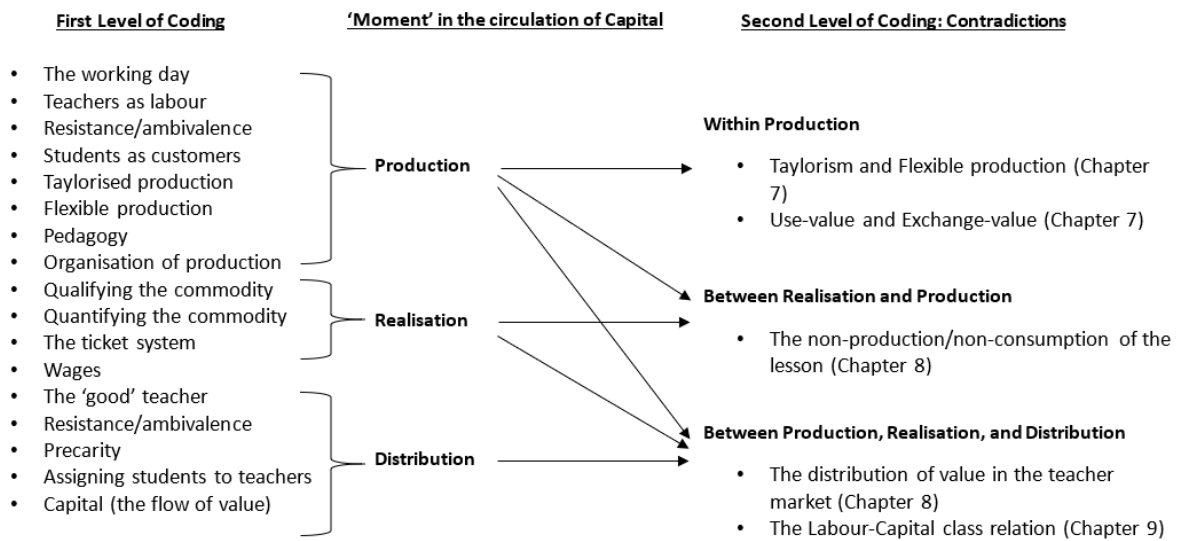
(?) indicates rising intonation (including questions)

(xxx) comments describing aspects of extra-linguistic communication, such as laughter.

'xxx' indicates the speaker ventriloquising the speech of either themselves, or others from past or imagined interactions

[...] indicates a short part of the speaker's discourse has been elided in the transcription

## Appendix iii: Coding Map



## Appendix iv. A Lesson Plan from NOVA

### B01 Aims

Students will be able to:

1. Make and respond to simple introductory statements/questions (e.g. *Nice to meet you.* → *Nice to meet you too. What's your name?* → *Sam.*).
2. Understand and respond to simple questions about jobs (e.g. *What do you do?* → *I'm a nurse.*).

#### 5 Assessment and Focus

1. *You are meeting someone for the first time. Introduce yourself.* Give brief example if required, e.g. *Hi, my name's Bill.* Monitor and assess student ability with Aims. →1 Pairs brainstorm different jobs.
2. Open book. Point out the main picture and Student Aim. *Today we're practicing introducing yourself and talking about your job.*

#### 10 Language Input

1. Focus on character cards. I: *I'm a nurse.* Students identify Linda Collins' picture. Repeat with other pictures. + Pairs continue.
2. Focus on Main Language. Listen and repeat.
3. Cover right column. I: *Hello.* S: Responds [true response]. Repeat with rest of left column. + S1: Jenny Lee. S2: Bill Bryers. Pairs role play Main Language.
4. Pairs practice asking/answering using Main Language.

#### 2 Tune In

1. Students read out the example sentences.
2. Model the example sentences naturally. Elicit/clarify the sound changes e.g. *meetch.* + Listen and repeat the sentences.

#### 5 Listening

1. *Look at the picture. Two people are meeting for the first time at a party.* + Pairs role play the main picture.
2. Set listening task:
  - \* *What does Steve do?*
  - \*\* *What does Sally do?*
  - \*\*\* *What company does Steve work for?*
 + [if +1 used] *Is your conversation the same or different?*
3. Model Dialogue:
 

Sally: *Hello. My name's Sally Jones.*  
 Steve: *Pleased to meet you. I'm Steve Smith.*  
 Sally: *Pleased to meet you too, Steve. What do you do?*  
 Steve: *I'm a sales manager. I work for Sony. And you?*  
 Sally: *I'm a nurse.*  
 Steve: *Oh, really?*
4. Check answers. + *Which job would you prefer? Why?*

## 10 Activities

### 1. I'm a waiter

1. Focus on the completed example and model it.
2. *In pairs please match the statements.* S1: Cover the right-hand column. S2: Cover the left-hand column. Students take turns to read out the statement and respond appropriately.
3. Pairs take turns modeling completed sentences to class.
4. *Imagine you're a famous person. What's your name? What do you do?*

+ True/False Game: S1 makes a statement about a character. S2 says if it is true or false.

### 2. Hi, I'm Linda

1. Pairs complete the conversation.
2. Plenary check answers.
3. Assign new characters from left-hand page. Pairs make conversations.

+ Brainstorm job locations, Pairs introduce using the information, e.g. *I work in a hospital as a nurse.*

## 10 Application: At a party

1. Assign roles and check understanding.  
*Introduce yourself to the other guests at a party. Find out everybody's names and jobs.*
2. Feedback, rotate partners and repeat with famous people.

### Alternative Application Options

- \* S1: Gives information about the people on the first page. S2: Guesses the name of the person.
- \*\* Brainstorm jobs and location. Role play introductions using their 'dream' job. Introduce language such as *Really?* And some follow up questions. E.g. *How long for?* Etc.
- \*\*\* Instructor brings in pictures of different people. Students think of their names and jobs. Then complete the roleplay.

### Evaluation

#### Were the students able to:

1. Make and respond to simple introductory statements/questions (e.g. *Nice to meet you.* → *Nice to meet you too. What's your name?* → *Sam.*)?
2. Understand and respond to simple questions about jobs (e.g. *What do you do?* → *I'm a nurse.*)?

### Additional Resources


1. Focus on names and jobs. Check for understanding.
  2. Students choose one character and in pairs introduce themselves.
- +2 *What other questions can you ask about someone's job?*

## 3 Wrap Up

1. Feedback and review Aims. Students ask and respond to introductory questions.
2. Review Tip: *Write an introductory conversation in English.*

### Related Units

- B02 → Exchanging names and greetings.  
B41 → Introducing and offering information about yourself.



**Lesson 4**

LESSON  
**4**

**What vocabulary did I learn during the last lesson?**  
この前の授業で習った単語は何ですか?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 1 Answer the following questions with a positive response.**  
肯定文で答えましょう。

Ex. Is there a rubbish bin? Yes, there is a rubbish bin.

1. Is it an apple? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are they bananas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there any staplers? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is there a computer? \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2 Circle the following words in the grid below.**  
下の単語表の中からみつけて、丸で囲みましょう。  
単語表で、よこ、たて、ななめ、斜めをつづいていることもあります。に圈れています。

i	c	c	r	e	a	s	k	y			
r	o	a	k	e	y	t	h	i	d		
e	h	t	c	a	a	t	e	t	o		
i	o	i	o	p	e	n	t	e	g		
p	d	m	i	p	g	t	i	m	g		
a	e	a	c	i	g	i	u	i	o		
t	r	t	b	e	d	s	t	z			
s	u	r	r	e	t	u	p	m	o	i	c

**Activity 3 Complete the dialogues.**  
会話を完成させましょう。

Ex. A: Are there any rubbish bins?  
B: Yes, there is a rubbish bin.  
A: Are there any apples?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: Are there any staplers?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: Yes, there is a computer.  
A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: There are five suits.

**Activity 4 Circle only sentences where they are incorrect.**  
間違っている文を、丸で囲みましょう。

1. How many apples are there?
2. Are there a stapler?
3. Is there a apple?
4. How many computers are there?
5. No, there is a rubbish bin.
6. Yes, there are a suit.

**Activity 5 Rewrite the sentences from Activity 4 in the correct form.**  
Activity 4 の文を全てを正しく書き直しましょう。

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson 4

**Countable objects**  
Are there any?  
It is \_\_\_\_\_  
What is it? \_\_\_\_\_  
There is / are \_\_\_\_\_

**Warm up**  
Complete the "Let's Talk Section" of the Student Book.

**Visual Drilling**  
Introduce each picture. Student to look at the picture and listen. Student does not repeat.

1. It is an apple.
2. It is a stapler.
3. It is a rubbish bin.
4. It is a trash can.
5. It is a suit.
6. It is a computer.

**Drill 1. Student to repeat**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. It is an apple. / It is an apple.
2. It is a stapler. / It is a stapler.
3. It is a rubbish bin. / It is a rubbish bin.
4. It is a trash can. / It is a trash can.
5. It is a suit. / It is a suit.
6. It is a computer. / It is a computer.

**Drill 2. Student to respond with answer**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. What is it? / It is an apple.
2. What is it? / It is a stapler.
3. What is it? / It is a rubbish bin ( / trash can).
4. What is it? / It is a suit.
5. What is it? / It is a computer.

**Drill 3. Student to repeat**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. There is an apple. / There is an apple.
2. There is a stapler. / There is a stapler.
3. There is a rubbish bin ( / trash can). / There is a rubbish bin ( / trash can).
4. There is a suit. / There is a suit.
5. There is a computer. / There is a computer.

**Drill 4. Student to respond with full sentences**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. apple / There is an apple.
2. stapler / There is a stapler.
3. rubbish bin ( / trash can) / There is a rubbish bin.
4. suit / There is a suit.
5. computer / There is a computer.

**Drill 5. Student to repeat**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. Are there any apples? / Are there any apples?  
Yes, there is an apple. / Yes, there is an apple.
2. Are there any staplers? / Are there any staplers?  
Yes, there is a stapler. / Yes, there is a stapler.
3. Are there any rubbish bins ( / trash cans)? / Are there any rubbish bins ( / trash cans)?  
Yes, there is a rubbish bin ( / trash can). / Yes, there is a rubbish bin ( / trash can).
4. Are there any suits? / Are there any suits?  
Yes, there is a suit. / Yes, there is a suit.
5. Are there any computers? / Are there any computers?  
Yes, there is a computer. / Yes, there is a computer.

**Drill 6. Student to respond with answer**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. Are there any apples? / Yes, there is an apple.
2. Are there any staplers? / Yes, there is a stapler.
3. Are there any rubbish bins ( / trash cans)? / Yes, there is a rubbish bin ( / trash can).
4. Are there any suits? / Yes, there is a suit.
5. Are there any computers? / Yes, there is a computer.

**Drill 7. Student to repeat**  
INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. Are there any apples? / Are there any apples?  
Yes, there is an apple. / Yes, there is an apple.
- question / Are there any staplers?  
answer / Yes, there is a stapler.
- question / Are there any rubbish bins?  
answer / Yes, there is a rubbish bin.
- question / Are there any suits?  
answer / Yes, there is a suit.
- question / Are there any computers?  
answer / Yes, there is a computer.



### Drill 8. Negative response / Student to respond with question and answer

INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. Are there any apples? / Are there any apples?  
No, there aren't any apples. / No, there aren't any apples.
  2. Are there any staplers? / Are there any staplers?  
No, there aren't any staplers. / No, there aren't any staplers.
  3. Are there any rubbish bins? / Are there any rubbish bins?  
No, there aren't any rubbish bins ( / trash cans). / No, there aren't any rubbish bins ( / trash cans).
  4. Are there any suits? / Are there any suits?  
No, there aren't any suits. / No, there aren't any suits.
  5. Are there any computers? / Are there any computers?  
No, there aren't any computers. / No, there aren't any computers.
- \*Additional drills can be added using, "Is there an apple?" "No, there are no apples," etc.

### Drill 9. Question form - Student to respond with question and answer

INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. How many apples are there? / How many apples are there?  
There is one apple. / There is one apple.
2. How many staplers are there? / How many staplers are there?  
There is one stapler. / There is one stapler.
3. How many rubbish bins ( / trash cans) are there? / How many rubbish bins ( / trash cans) are there?  
There is one rubbish bin. / There is one rubbish bin.
4. How many suits are there? / How many suits are there?  
There is one suit. / There is one suit.
5. How many computers are there? / How many computers are there?  
There is one computer. / There is one computer.

### Drill 10. Question form - Student to respond with question and answer

INSTRUCTOR / STUDENT

1. How many apples are there? / How many apples are there?  
There are many apples. / There are many apples.
  2. How many staplers are there? / How many staplers are there?  
There are many staplers. / There are many staplers.
  3. How many rubbish bins ( / trash cans) are there? / How many rubbish bins ( / trash cans) are there?  
There are many rubbish bins. / There are many rubbish bins.
  4. How many suits are there? / How many suits are there?  
There are many suits. / There are many suits.
  5. How many computers are there? / How many computers are there?  
There are many computers. / There are many computers.
- \*Also can be completed using "There aren't many....." etc. or "There are no....." etc.

### Dictation

Have the student dictate the following key sentences in the Student Book.

1. How many suits are there?
2. There is an apple.
3. No, there aren't any apples.
4. How many rubbish bins are there?
5. How many cars are there?
6. Yes, there are many trash cans.
7. There are many computers.
8. There are many staplers.
9. Yes, there is one stapler.
10. Are there any apples?

### Activity

Understanding the difference between countable and non-countable subjects is so important for students to be able to grasp from the very beginning. The following activity is a way to introduce the next lesson and to build a foundation for understanding this concept.

Together with the student complete the following chart. Draw one with the student. At the end of the activity it should look something like the following. Try and think of as many examples for each as possible. If you have some flash cards, pictures or magazines at hand - this would be the ideal way to introduce new vocabulary and to decide whether the object is countable or non-countable. Make sure the student copies down this table and adds her own examples to it.

Countable Objects	Non-Countable Objects
There are A few Any / Some Many A lot of	There is A little Any / Some Much A lot of
pens books computers tissues sausages	water gas beer chocolate meat

- EX) There are 5 pens.  
There is some water.  
There are a few tissues.  
There is a little gas.  
Is there any beer?  
How many pens are there?  
How much water is there?

## Appendix vi. Frank's letter to *Gaba*

Dear *Gaba*:

To Whom this May concern:

Once again, I am being forced to listen to Studio managers, who are forced to give out in writing, threats to teachers in the form of dismissal threats.

May I remind you that we are not staff. If you want to hand out this kind of warning to staff, you are most welcome to. But we are not staff. In fact, we are your clients. You may wish to consider us foreign cheap labour for financial or other reasons. But we are not. We work WITH you, not FOR you, thus it is on your interest to treat us with more respect than we are currently offered.

If a teacher, ( or as you say 'instructors') makes a 'mistake ' that is such a problem to the client or your company, all you have to do, is 'cancel the contract ' or speak to the teacher.

' Honest mistakes ' otherwise, may warrant a verbal request for us to be more careful and a reminder of some sort.

We don't need '*written verbal warnings*', ( what is that ?) '*written warnings*' constantly bring given as a threat to our well-being, it's improves our relationship with your company, not ....one ...wit.

Try to rise above pettiness. Set your standards alongside other schools who have good relations with their teachers.

I have been working for four other schools, over the last 17 years and have never r once been handed such insulting abuse. This kind of harassment gets around and creates a climate of distrust, and anger. Good teachers leave.

Try to remember, we are not staff, we are also your client - teachers. Behave



accordingly.

Ps; try a ' Thank you letter ' sometimes. It's amazing how this works. It's an important word to Japanese and to your clients (us) also.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Remember -what goes around - comes around

Frank Smith

Retired CEO, CCE Japan

## Appendix vii. Consent Form for Interviews

### **Consent Form for Interviews**

This form grants permission for the researcher to conduct a series of interviews with you, at dates and times convenient for you, which you will be asked to further consent to.

The interviews will concern your own experiences, thoughts and feelings, though you are free to ask the researcher questions too during the interview.

All interviews will be audio recorded. The original copy will be backed up onto an external drive, and both copies will be stored in a password protected file, access to which will only be granted to the researcher. No third party will be given any access to the audio recordings.

Your anonymity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym for yourself, and any others who you name during the interview (names of co-workers, students, friends etc.), as well as the names of any companies you have previously, or currently work for. Any information from the interview which may endanger your anonymity will either be paraphrased in more vague terms (for example: "I grew up in Harwich" might be changed to "I grew up in a small town in South England"), or not used in the data.

In the case of any issues of illegality which you bring up in the interview, by giving your consent below, you recognise that the researcher will not in any way instigate any course of legal action.

As part of this research, the researcher may also be visiting *eikaiwa* to conduct observations. The researcher will not visit your own current or previous place of work, or otherwise knowingly make himself known to any of those in your current or previous professional networks.

Data collected here may also be used by the researcher for further research, where identical measures will be taken to ensure the anonymity of all participants. By giving your consent, you give consent for the data collected to be used in future research conducted by the researcher.

You will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without the need to give any kind of reason or justification. Withdrawal from the research can be given at any time to the researcher orally or by e-mail: [willsimpson1985@hotmail.com](mailto:willsimpson1985@hotmail.com)

By signing below, you consent that you have understood all of the above, and that you consent to participate in the interview-based research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_