Shifting from Native-Speakerism to Trans-Speakerism: A Trioethnography of Language Teachers in Japan

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Abstract

Native-speakerism is an ideology that endows those classified as native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) the owners of the English language, the ideal models of its use, and the pedagogical experts in language teaching. These endowments, in turn, intrinsically devalue those classified as non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) (Holliday, 2006, 2017). In this study, a trioethnographic approach was adopted to investigate native-speakerism as it related to the lived experiences of two NESTs (Matt and Joachim) and one NNEST (Takaaki) in an EFL context of Japan. Counterintuitively, this exploration found that, in our Japanese context, native-speakerism had adverse effects on the academic lives and professional trajectories not for the NNEST, but rather for the two NESTs, linguistically, culturally, and institutionally speaking. Based on the findings, we explain and compare what we term *classical*, *inversed*, and *nuanced* native-speakerism, and introduce a new empowering concept—*trans-speakerism*—an ideological stance committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion for all language teachers, irrespective of their first languages or cultures. The article ends with a call for research that encompasses a variety of contexts and approaches on trans-speakerism in language education.

Keywords: duoethnography, native-speakerism, trans-speakerism, trioethnography, language teacher education

Introduction

One implicit ideology that urgently warrants reconceptualization is *native-speakerism*. This pervasive ideology endows those classified as native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) with complete ownership of the English language. NESTs are thus viewed as ideal models regarding language use and as pedagogical experts in language teaching. Assuming these endowments devalues those classified as non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) (Holliday, 2006, 2017). Due to the pervasiveness of native-speakerism, NESTs have long been venerated, sought after, and hired to teach their mother tongue in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Japan (Hiratsuka, 2022, 2023). Native-speakerism is a manifestation of the polarizing politics of *othering*, creating an imaginary, yet distinct, boundary between NESTs and NNESTs. This dichotomy purports that the degree of proficiency in NESTs' and NNESTs' pedagogical competence is to be judged purely by their linguistic backgrounds. Notwithstanding, individuals, languages, cultures, and teaching approaches are multi-layered and dynamic and, thereby, this neat dichotomy needs to be replaced with a more nuanced perspective—one that recognizes and esteems diversity both within and between individuals. The field of language education should therefore provide safe platforms where the stories of teachers and students, with different language backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and values, can be recounted and received in an open manner so as to make sense of them appropriately.

Humans have always lived with stories, as "[p]eople shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). An American poet, Muriel Rukeyser, aptly puts it: "Say it. Say it. The universe is made of stories, not of atoms" (Rukeyser, 1992, p. 135). One such method for sharing stories is duoethnography. This research methodology is "both a research process and a research product" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 77). While autoethnography involves using the individual researcher's subjectivity, reflexivity, and personal experience within a particular context (Adams & Manning, 2015), duoethnography probes into autobiographical experiences between two or more researchers to foster new meaning of context. It is suitable for delving into how one understands the world and how individuals act in relation to others. Through dialogic storytelling, duoethnography enables us to deconstruct preconceived notions about ourselves and our circumstances in a participatory, reflective, and nonprescriptive manner. It also has the advantage of allowing us to present, generate, and reconceptualize our experiences, which in turn facilitates agency and authorship over our lives (Norris & Sawyer, 2016; Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

In the present study, utilizing a trioethnographic approach we explored the experiences of two NESTs, Matt and Joachim, and one NNEST, Takaaki, in various educational contexts in Japan. Rather than producing generalizable insights and recommendations, duoethnography (in our case, trioethnography) examines "multiple margins, articulating the roles each individual's unique life history plays in meaning making and behavior … giving space for multiple perspectives" (Norris & Sawyer, 2016, p. 18). Trioethnography reorients the researcher-participants inside their own communities of practice in a manner that could not be accomplished in isolation. It can offer "a new and destabilizing lens" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 3) for critically viewing dominant ideologies, functions, and practices. Freire (1973) called this *conscientization*, whereby individuals and communities develop a heightened awareness of their social reality and disrupt their culturally-embedded narratives through iterative reflection and action (Lather, 1986).

In our trioethnographic endeavor, we drew on dialogues in which we shared our beliefs, identities, experiences, and emotions as professional colleagues to examine the lived experiences of two NESTs and an NNEST in a Japanese EFL context. Through our juxtaposed personal accounts, we found that, in our context, the NESTs (Matt and Joachim), rather than the NNEST (Takaaki), had adverse experiences. Specifically, native-speakerism had some detrimental effects on the NESTs' academic and professional lives and trajectories in convoluted ways—linguistically, culturally, and institutionally. The article concludes with an argument to supersede and transcend the restrictive ideology of native-speakerism with a more nuanced and unfettered concept—*trans-speakerism*. Trans-speakerism is an ideological stance which acknowledges that all language teachers have a range of individual traits and professional statuses, as well as working within a plethora of different contexts (see Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming). Championing trans-speakerism means that we can accept diversity, promote equitable access, and value inclusion, irrespective of language teachers' first languages or cultures.

Native-Speakerism

There has been an insatiable demand for 'native speakers' of English due to the perceived benefits they can bring to educational environments (Hiratsuka, 2022, 2023). The preference for native speakers of English necessarily discriminates against 'non-native speakers' of English, as the latter are judged solely by *not* being native speakers of English. There is an enduring myth which fuels this preference and to which both individuals (e.g., teachers, students, and parents) (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2020) and institutions (Ng, 2018) ascribe. This myth is enabled by a powerful ideology known as native-speakerism, which postulates that "'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006, p. 385) (see also Phillipson, 1992, 2009). Native-speakerism is harmful because it yields unfounded biases: NNESTs can be perceived as second-rate teachers of the target language, resulting in negative consequences for their identity and/or professional opportunities. Additionally, NESTs can come to believe themselves to be inadequate, as they recognize the duplicity inherent within their employment status, which, again, can be based exclusively on their linguistic background and not their actual abilities. Native-speakerism also limits NESTs' opportunities for professional development (see Hiratsuka, 2022, 2023), as their linguistic and pedagogical abilities are seen as innate, rather than needing development. It is therefore an urgent task that our professional community shows leadership in debunking native-speakerism in order to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in language education.

In recent years, there have been many investigations into native-speakerism and N/NESTs. Stanley (2013) undertook a three-year critical ethnography of 'Western backpacker teachers' from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada who were university teachers in China. This study suggested that the participants benefitted from native-speakerism because they could work as language teachers even though they "would not necessarily be considered teachers elsewhere" (p. 2). Similarly, Hiratsuka's (2022) narrative inquiry reported on government-sponsored foreign assistant language teachers (ALTs) working in Japanese elementary and secondary schools. The study revealed that, due to their native-speaker status, ALTs were afforded a myriad of favorable advantages including undisputed privileges such as generous salaries and benefits, as well as extreme idolization, and unwavering appreciation. Hiratsuka asserted that the identity work of native speakers of English who live and work in

EFL contexts is quite intricate and multifaceted. Their professional and personal lives were influenced by an array of internal (e.g., their maturity and experiences) and external (e.g., their colleagues) factors.

However, Ellis's (2016) study critiqued the linguistic definitions that underpin native-speakerism by challenging the binary division of teachers' linguistic identities being ascribed as either native or non-native speakers. Ellis called for recognition of the plurilingual competences of all English language teachers (both NNESTs *and* NESTs). Similarly, Copland et al. (2020) highlighted the disconnect between academic literature on NESTs and what their data revealed. Despite the findings in much of the academic literature, which tends to perceive NESTs as unqualified and privileged, the researchers discovered that the participants in their study were often bilingual, experienced, and qualified educators.

Lowe (2020) drew upon data collected through ethnographic research in the intercultural communication department at a Japanese university and introduced the concept of the native-speaker frame, through which the ideology of native-speakerism is enabled. This frame is a perceptual filter within ELT whereby the linguistic and cultural norms, as well as the educational technology of the Anglophone West, are viewed by practitioners to be normative, while the norms and practices of non-Western countries are viewed to be deficient. In conclusion, Lowe called for research that provides compelling evidence of native-speakerism, "both showing that the ideology exists, and detailing where and how it operates" (Lowe, 2020, p. 181). Native speakerism thus reflects the historic global domination by Anglophone societies in the last 400 years—this underlying issue no doubt relates to power relations (Mahboob, 2011). We acknowledge that the phenomenon of native-speakerism is a significant consequence of history. There are particularities of the context in Japan, and the histories involved and specifically the historical power relations between Japan and the West have configured the identities of NESTs in the Japanese context in particular ways.

Houghton and Rivers' (2013) edited book includes numerous examples of discourses that exposed chauvinism within Japanese society. These discourses drew culturally palatable boundaries around who NESTs could be (according to their race, nationality, and gender), what they could become professionally, and what roles they could play in language education. These discourses whitewashed over the complexity of NEST identity. The volume added to the literature on native-speakerism by accentuating how in any specific context, not only NNESTs, but also NESTs, can be disadvantaged in their communities due to native-speakerist stereotyping. For example, Appleby (2016) researched the cultural discourses that venerated the physicality of white male NESTs in Japan. She reported on the ways in which the identities of male NESTs working within commercial English language schools were formulated vis-à-vis the expectations and discourses of white male embodiment and of sexualized desire.

With regard to duoethnographic studies in language education to date, the following four studies are of relevance to the current inquiry due to their focus on native-speakerism and their shared context of Japan. Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016) inquired into the effects of native-speakerism on the professional lives of a British-born NEST and a Polish-born NNEST. They noted that the impact of native-speakerism can be varied and complex, "depending not only on context and geography, but also on such factors as personal disposition and unpredictable events" (p. 12). Hooper et al. (2020) undertook a trioethnography, zeroing in on the idiosyncratic identity work of the three researcher-participants within the study. As former or

current private English conversation schoolteachers (one British and two Japanese), the researchers challenged the common portrayal of private English conversation schools in Japan as sites that fulfill their clients' desires for cross-cultural exchange rather than as sites of learning. They presented a counter-narrative that affirms that English conversation schools are highly individualized contexts with variance in their stances and policies towards native-speakerism, pedagogic rigor, and recognition of individual professional identities. One of the main focuses of Lawrence and Nagashima's (2020) duoethnography was on the concepts of native-speakerism and N/NESTs and how they were operationalized in their professional lives. Their findings indicated how their NEST and NNEST statuses influenced their feelings of professional legitimacy. Despite his experience and qualifications, Lawrence was not treated as a professional language teacher by his students due to implicit biases they held about his NEST status and nationality (the United States). Nagashima's case obscured the native/non-native speaker distinction because of her lengthy experience living in the United States (over eight years) and brought to surface "the discursive, context-bound, and co-constructed nature of nationality and 'native-speaker' status" (p. 53). Employing a joint autoethnographic methodology, Adamson and Muller (2018) interrogated their own experiences as two NESTs, one from the United Stated and the other from the United Kingdom, while they worked in Japanese universities. Although they were positioned as linguistic and ethnic minorities, they used autoethnography and its reflective accounts as a vehicle for empowerment that allowed for their voices to be heard, explored, and shared within the larger academic community.

The current trioethnographic exploration contributes to the field by reporting on the complex experiences we have had as two NESTs and an NNEST in Japan. This exploration can offer original examples of how native-speakerism is perceived, experienced, and operationalized in a particular context. The following research question guided our inquiry.

- As two NESTs and as an NNEST in Japan, what are some implications of native-speakerism in our academic and professional experiences?

Methodology

Research Approach

In duoethnography, researchers "articulate their emergent thinking and changes in perception to their readers in the form of dialogic storytelling" and problematize their (and their readers') "alignment with implicit metanarratives" concerning themes or events relevant to them (Norris & Sawyer, 2016, p. 10).

There are four key tenets of duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2016). First, duoethnography provides a method for participants—in tandem—to explore, understand, and adjust the meanings that the participants hold about their respective life curricula. Pinar (1975) called this liberating process *currere*. This shared meaning-making produces a better understanding of the self and of others, rather than the discovery of objective truths for positivistic research's sake. Second, duoethnography is polyvocal and dialogic, making the unique opinions of each duoethnographer explicit through co-construction of meaning. Dialogues within duoethnography serve as a platform for researchers to share their voices within a trusting environment. It assists them in advancing towards higher states of awareness. Third, duoethnography challenges and disrupts the metanarratives of self and society by questioning

pre-conceived notions, thus promoting change. Fourth, duoethnography is approachable and accessible to a broad range of the population beyond the ivory towers of academia.

Duoethnography can inform lived experience and practice in a variety of contexts by linking lived experience, practice, and theory. Together, these tenets advance a commitment towards scrutinizing grand narratives in specific contexts in practical ways. Thus, duoethnography can shed a much-needed light on some pressing issues in the field of language education (Lawrence & Lowe, 2020). Although still rare, trioethnography explicates the tenets and benefits of duoethnography and extends its cohort to include three researcher-participants. It is a methodology in which three researchers' voices are made evenly explicit and given equal value, prompting the researcher-participants to positively affect each other (e.g., Gagné et al., 2018). With the potential for a deeper understanding of our own context and our places in it, we decided to employ trioethnography to gain more insights about the critical issues involving N/NESTs' academic and professional experiences concerning native-speakerism in Japan.

Participants

The three participant-researchers in this study are connected by their university in Japan. Takaaki is a supervisor of a PhD program in applied linguistics where Matt is a first-year student, and Joachim is in his second year. Matt and Takaaki met at an academic conference where Takaaki made a presentation pertaining to language teacher identity. Through personal conversation at the conference, Matt decided to begin his doctoral studies under the mentorship of Takaaki. Likewise, Joachim reached out to Takaaki after reading his publications regarding practitioner research and narrative inquiry.

Takaaki is a professor of applied linguistics at a private university in Japan. Raised in rural Japan, he had little exposure to foreign languages or cultures in his youth. As a young adult he developed an interest in English and committed himself to overcoming the challenges of the language learner. He graduated from a national university and began teaching English in public high schools. He worked diligently there for 10 years, during which time he got a master's degree from a local university. This accomplishment led him to a PhD program in applied linguistics in New Zealand. After completion of his doctoral studies, he returned to Japan to teach in universities.

Matt was born in a rural area of the western United States, and like Takaaki, he had little exposure to foreign languages or cultures growing up but developed a passion for language learning as a university student. He traveled to Japan for the first time after graduation and as a result of that experience joined an MATESOL program in the United States with the goal of becoming an English teacher in Japan. Matt has now been living in Japan for over 10 years. At first, he worked for five years as an ALT, and since then he has been working in universities.

Joachim is of Southeast Asian immigrant descent and grew up on the east coast of the United States. In his youth, he became interested in Japanese culture through a karate dojo. He has been fascinated with Japanese language and culture ever since. After getting his undergraduate degree, Joachim began his teaching career as an ALT in Japan, which led him to later getting an MATESOL upon his return to New York. He has been working in higher education in Japan since 2009.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The first author, Takaaki, gained approval for this study from the ethics committee at his institution. As the research evolved over time, the ethics review was completed twice—first in 2021 and one more time in 2022. The committee was satisfied with the stated purposes and procedures of the study, including ethical issues that could arise from the project such as the power relationship among the participants and how they could be resolved. To address this challenge, we endeavored to ensure voluntary participation, establish reciprocity, and maintain honesty throughout the research process (see also Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming).

Supervising Matt and Joachim in their doctoral studies was a first experience for Takaaki. As such, he wanted to conduct research on this experience, which began in April 2021. Individual interviews (about 100 minutes) were carried out with Matt and Joachim, which took place in 2021 during Matt and Joachim's first semesters in the program (Joachim's in April and Matt's in September). Professional themes concerning native-speakerism emerged from the data, and Takaaki thought it would be fruitful to invite Matt and Joachim to participate in a trioethnographic study. Over the course of two weeks in February 2022, we conducted five 90-minute group discussions on Zoom (450 minutes in total). During the discussions we focused our attention on salient themes from the initial individual interviews, especially with respect to our individual traits (e.g., linguistic abilities), professional statuses (e.g., supervisor/supervisee), and contextual and environmental factors. These themes made up the foundation of this trioethnography and were therefore central to our discussions, which were recorded and transcribed in full. Supplementary data in the study included field notes and artifacts such as email threads. Raw data underwent content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016), from which emerged themes linked to Matt and Joachim's experiences with linguistic, cultural, and institutional discomfort or difficulties in Japan. As a result, we were able to sculpt the raw data into the three semi-fictional dialogues for the reader which maintain the integrity of the contents of the original data. These dialogues are made up of samples of our discussions, including pertinent background information, contextual clues, and reference to previous studies.

Findings

Dialogue 1: Adverse Effects of Native-Speakerism Regarding NEST's Linguistic Abilities

Ever since Holliday addressed native-speakerism at the beginning of the century, it has continued to serve as a prevalent dogma in the minds of many who endorse the idea that native speakers are preferrable models and teachers of English than non-native speakers (Holliday, 2006, 2017). Our first dialogue, however, contradicts this notion. It begins with Matt's admission that he sometimes felt less valuable than the local Japanese teachers of English with whom he worked. This confession stems from the fact that many Japanese people put undue pressure on NESTs' linguistic expertise. Matt's admission enabled Takaaki to deepen his understanding about the nuanced situation in which NESTs were positioned by the social discourses of Japan and, as such, he began to empathize more with those NESTs. Afterward, both Matt and Joachim provided more examples of how native-speakerism can harm NESTs in the Japanese context, leaving them in relatively powerless positions both in their academic and professional lives (see Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming).

Matt: Takaaki, you said that when you were a high school teacher, you felt inferior to ALTs, but as an ALT I had similar feelings, especially regarding grammar explanations. I am a native speaker, but I don't consciously know all the rules of English. Teachers and students in Japan often expect too much from native speakers' linguistic knowledge, especially regarding on-the-spot grammar explanations.

Takaaki: I did not know you guys struggled like that. Native-speakerism is the concept whereby NESTs are readily legitimized and NNESTs are discredited. However, the reverse can totally occur, can't it? Depending on contexts, professional/social positions, and individual traits, NESTs can be disadvantaged *because of* their native-speaker status.

Matt: Also, I feel it is unfair to foreigners in Japan in academia that we are often expected to be fluent in Japanese. My friend, who received a PhD in Japan, told me that I needed to pass the hardest level (N1) of the JLPT (Japanese-Language Proficiency Test) before I start doctoral studies because Japanese advisors do not, or cannot speak English, and everything is communicated through Japanese.

Takaaki: It's nonsensical to require a non-Japanese student to have JLPT N1 when the graduate degree is in English language education and the dissertation is written all in English. Japanese universities should be more accommodating to non-Japanese students; otherwise, they will be excluding a lot of potential students.

Joachim: I remember times when I had to put together research presentations in Japanese for job interviews or for promotions. I had a very difficult time explaining my research in Japanese. I have a conversational level of Japanese and can take care of administrative stuff, but I wonder if the requirement for the ability to explain my research in Japanese is really necessary.

Matt: I've had similar experiences. It's really tough.

A common assumption promoted by researchers into native-speakerism is that NESTs are advantaged over NNESTs (Hiratsuka, 2022; Stanley, 2013). Nevertheless, Matt and Joachim shared their feelings of self-doubt and incompetence which resulted from negative experiences related to their linguistic backgrounds and competencies. Matt's feelings emanated from his perceptions that his Japanese colleagues placed blind trust in NESTs' linguistic knowledge. Although native speakers can effortlessly apply English grammar, they can lack meta-knowledge of English and the ability to explicitly explain grammar rules. For Matt, his former competence being conflated for the latter led to feelings of inadequacy. A second site of adversity occurred when Matt questioned the need for NESTs to master Japanese language as a prerequisite for getting accepted to some of the TESOL graduate programs in Japan. Joachim added to this by saying that NESTs are required by their NNEST colleagues to give academic presentations in Japanese for their employment and job promotion interviews. Considering that students and professors in the ELT field are likely to be involved with research activities in English, it is quite an irrational demand for NESTs to be highly skilled at Japanese—let alone academic Japanese.

Dialogue 2: Adverse Effects of Native-Speakerism Regarding NESTs' Socio-Cultural Status

By and large, Japan is a monocultural and monoethnic country, and the lack of cross-cultural experience and cross-cultural understanding within the society is evidenced in the disparaging experiences reported in previous studies (e.g., Appleby, 2016; Hiratsuka, 2022; Balgoa, 2019; Stewart, 2020). At the outset of our second dialogue, Matt confessed that despite his lengthy stay in Japan, he was not well adapted to Japanese interpersonal relationships or communication styles, especially in professional work environments. Matt regarded this as the reason for relying on Takaaki's guidance as he navigated his academic and professional journey. With Takaaki's prompt, Joachim started to disclose his negative experiences related to his ethnicity. On several occasions, Joachim encountered stereotyping and prejudice—due largely to the narrow-mindedness and limited awareness of Japanese people concerning different cultures and racial backgrounds. The discrimination Joachim faced ranged from a relatively insignificant incident during interpersonal interactions (e.g., puzzled looks) to inexcusably offensive behavior at work (e.g., racial whitewashing).

Matt: Takaaki has sometimes guided me in the cultural world of Japan. I didn't quite understand my role in the *senpai* (senior) and *kohai* (junior) relationship in Japanese organizations, schools, and associations.

Takaaki: It is hard to tell what is acceptable and expected here in Japan when compared to your home country, right?

Matt: I am still learning when I can raise my hand or say exactly what's on my mind. What I can say and do in America often doesn't align with the Japanese paradigm. The standards and procedures surrounding job hunting and PhD application have been tricky for me, too. I feel like there is a hidden backdoor that is only accessible to Japanese people. I am often kept in the dark. These are the things that I really appreciate being able to talk to Takaaki about.

Takaaki: What about you, Joachim?

Joachim: So, I don't look like the stereotypical image of an American, right? There would be microaggressions like getting puzzled looks from Japanese people when I say I am from the States.

Takaaki: That's very unfortunate.

Joachim: I never knew that there was this negative perception of Filipinos in Japan until I was here. I didn't realize that there's even a hierarchy of Asians viewed by typical Japanese, and I didn't know that Filipinos are often looked down upon here.

Takaaki: It is a shame that there is social stigma and discriminatory behavior against people of certain ethnic backgrounds in Japan.

Joachim: That kind of overt discrimination in Japan really upsets me. For the past 10 years I've been the only non-white male in my department. I remember that during the English exam committee meetings I was never asked questions about English grammar. Those questions were always directed towards my colleagues who are white males, you know? At another former workplace I remember there was a photo shoot for the university advertisements, and

I was physically removed from some of the photos and replaced with a colleague of mine who was a super-photogenic white male.

Takaaki: Are you serious? That's unacceptable!

Joachim: I am not saying all of the Japanese people are racist, but I do think my experience is echoed by other minorities. When you are in a minority and face these types of situations, you have to wonder, "Am I being treated this way because of my skin color?"

No matter where we are and who we are, settling into a foreign country can be an intimidating life event. Matt's story illustrates how arduous it is to fit into a new culture. As a Japanese culture novice (Hiratsuka, 2022), he had difficulty understanding the unique interpersonal relationships and unfamiliar communication styles in which Japanese people engage. This incomplete understanding about Japanese culture often affected his work and personal domains, including job hunting and graduate school experiences. More specifically, Joachim's recounts unveil how he may have suffered from unfair discrimination owing to his ethnicity (see also Balgoa, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Because of their ignorance, some Japanese people were subtly, yet acutely, discriminatory by giving Joachim a confused look when they heard he was from the United States. Other Japanese people practiced outright discrimination against Joachim in favor of white counterparts, by brazenly disregarding his authority as an English language expert and by intentionally excluding him from the university brochures due to his physical appearance. Joachim perceived this to be the university staff wanting to promote an attractive 'white other,' rather than honor diversity. This seems to be an example of what Lowe (2020) calls "the white racial frame" (p. 57) which is analogous with the facets of the ideology of native-speakerism (see also Bailey, 2006).

Dialogue 3: Adverse Effects of Native-Speakerism in the Workplace

Ng's (2018) autoethnographic study ascertained that native-speakerism, as it is enabled at the institutional level, could position NNESTs as less-able professionals than their NEST counterparts, thus undermining NNESTs' professional opportunities. However, this present study concludes that the converse is also true. Matt and Joachim started Dialogue 3 with their experience as ALTs in Japanese secondary schools, where they felt excluded from meaningful educational practices because of their assistant status. Considering that they were later hired by Japanese universities, presumably with the same status as their Japanese counterparts, the fact that they were previously pigeon-holed in their linguistic support roles despite their capabilities makes their experiences even more difficult to accept (see Wadden & Hale, 2019). At times, it appears that Matt and Joachim had to endure a level of discomfort due to their native-speaker status, which denigrates NESTs' contributions to their workplaces to be minimal or as mere linguistic resources.

Matt: As an ALT, I felt like an outsider because I was not included in the English teacher meetings, and I was sometimes excluded from extracurricular activities. My desk wasn't even in the staff room. I was alone in a different room. I missed out on a lot of important information about school business.

Joachim: There's no career advancement opportunity for ALTs. The government should have them get a teacher license or make them full-time teachers if they are willing and show high performance.

Takaaki: I understand that, but you cannot expect ALTs to be treated in the same way as Japanese teachers, when ALTs are hired as assistants and not required to have any qualifications or prior teaching experience, right?

Matt: Right. But another time, after being hired, I immediately felt a little mistreated because again they didn't put me in the main staff area. I was far away, in a room that didn't even have Wi-Fi at first. I often wondered if they would have made more of an effort to make space for me in the main staff area if I had been someone else. In any case, I was just glad to have a job, so I didn't complain.

Takaaki: That's something you would have to wonder about, right?

Joachim: Takaaki, I want to share an anecdote about a colleague of mine who was pressured by one of the Japanese professors to "native-check" his students' graduate theses (20-30 pages)—not just to provide grammatical feedback, but to basically rewrite everything. The professor insisted it was my colleague's job. And the same professor was on the annual contract review committee for him! It was a clear example of power harassment where the professor was exploiting the foreign faculty member. Unfortunately, I was also asked by some Japanese professors before to give "native-check" several times, but I learned how to say no, especially to such academic dishonesty.

Matt: I was approached by a colleague once, who I didn't really even know, and he asked me to translate a page of Japanese text into English for one of his projects. I was upset by that. Maybe I'll touch it up or fix it, right? But where is your effort in this, you know? I'm not a pro bono translator. I wanted to treat him like I would any of my students. Show me the effort first, and then maybe I'll help you.

Takaaki: Yeah, I hear you.

Matt: As a non-Japanese teacher, I have often felt like the last kid to be chosen for the basketball team in elementary school. You know, like nobody wants you on their team. In my previous career I learned a lot about leadership and teamwork, but for a long time as a teacher, I was not asked to be a member of any committees, and you can't just volunteer. I didn't feel like a full-fledged team member. This slowly changed over time, but committee membership is one of the considerations for promotions and in the annual employee evaluations. Every year I got just an average score. For a long time, I believed that getting anything above average was impossible.

Joachim: It's interesting because depending on how you view native-speakerism, you can view it as a position of privilege and power for native speakers of English, but we should be aware that people might sometimes take advantage of it or misperceive what the roles of native speakers are at their workplaces.

From this dialogue, we can see that ALTs (NESTs) in Japan, acquire and embody complex identities due to their assistant status. It is not uncommon that they frequently felt sidelined or neglected at their workplace (see Hiratsuka, 2022, 2023). It is possible to argue that Matt and Joachim may have experienced inadvertent, passive-aggressive, or even unabashed biases or discrimination due to their NEST statuses—although they both are bilingual, experienced, and qualified educators (see Copland et al., 2020). Matt had been physically separated from his colleagues and put in what he perceived to be inferior office space. Matt, Joachim, and their NEST colleagues were sometimes compelled by their Japanese bosses and colleagues to provide editing or translation services. They felt pressured to adhere to performing this practice, known as the "native-check" (see Toh, 2014), because they were usually in lower-tiered

positions compared to those who did the asking. These senior Japanese colleagues might also be responsible for assessing their job performance for promotion, which makes the request subject to scrutiny as possible power harassment (the "native-check" is extraneous to typical work duties expected of NESTs in this context). In practice, this meant that those NESTs were forced to sacrifice their time and energy to fulfill these tasks over and above their normal work duties simply because they are NESTs. This practice positions NESTs as convenient English language support personnel for their NNEST colleagues.

Discussion

The three dialogues in our trioethnographic exploration generated important counternarratives to the widely accepted discourses of native-speakerism. This section begins by addressing these counternarratives, which recount Matt and Joachim's academic and professional experiences connected to linguistic, cultural, and institutional forms of discomfort, or even discrimination of varying degrees. The counternarratives are oxymoronic in regard to the discourses of native-speakerism in that they signify how NESTs can be both advantaged and disadvantaged. First, our findings suggest that, linguistically, NESTs may fall short of their adopted professional communities' (groundless) expectations in two ways. One is that teachers and students in EFL contexts may conflate NESTs' grammatical perfection with their meta-knowledge of English linguistics. This conflation presumes them to be effective educators of English language even when those NESTs might not be so deserving (e.g., ALTs in the JET program; Hirastuka, 2022), thereby unfavorably affecting NESTs' confidence and self-esteem as language teachers.

The other finding is that NESTs' academic and career trajectories are often contingent upon their proficiency in the local language. How NNESTs are discriminated against due to their perceived deficiencies in English when contrasted to NESTs has been well documented in studies related to language teacher linguistic identity thus far (see Moussu & Llurda, 2008); whereas the reverse (i.e., the linguistic struggles of *NESTs* in EFL contexts) has been underrepresented. This imbalance needs to be addressed, namely, as far as the employment and promotion of academic researchers and tertiary educators are concerned, accreditation and competency in research and pedagogical activities should be the main criteria rather than their linguistic backgrounds—be they NESTs or NNESTs (see Copland et al., 2020; Ellis, 2016; May, 2014).

Second, Matt and Joachim's narratives suggest that Japanese socio-cultural environments can be restrictive or even dismissive of NESTs, resulting in ambivalence in their beliefs about their professional identities and competencies. Matt and Joachim were uncertain about Japanese social practices in which Japanese people defer to their seniors, as these practices were oftentimes at odds with what they were used to in their home country of the United States. Although previous studies noted that NNESTs feel professionally obligated to value Western cultures with which they are not familiar due to native-speakerism (see Moussu & Llurda, 2008), the reverse is also true for NESTs in EFL contexts who feel obligated to adhere to local cultures in which they may not be well versed (see also Hiratsuka, 2022; Hooper et al., 2020; Stanley, 2013). Native-speakerism therefore has repercussions for both NNESTs and NESTs. It places NESTs and NNESTs on either side of a coin that can be readily valued or devalued. An example of this devaluing is Joachim's narratives about socio-cultural discrimination against NESTs, which can take place due to racial or ethnic othering. These practices can be implicit everyday biases (e.g., Japanese people often identify Americans as white people) or

explicit consequential biases within institutions (e.g., Japanese universities tend to hire white foreigners over minorities) (see also Appleby, 2016; Hiratsuka, 2022; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). As a result of these biases, NESTs need to expend significant cognitive labor on their socio-cultural and linguistic tasks compared to their NNEST colleagues. As mentioned above, these tasks can make NESTs develop feelings of impostorism, especially when the tasks are greater than their level of competency. This extra labor can be detrimental to their primary tasks (e.g., research and teaching). In the case of non-white NESTs, the aforementioned preference for Japanese institutions to hire white NESTs may even preclude them from getting in front of students at all. Since teaching cannot be reduced to techniques and what we teach reflects who we are (Palmer, 1999), it is critical for all language teachers to be afforded opportunities by their professional communities to construct and nurture healthy language teacher identities—regardless of their linguistic/cultural histories or ethnicities.

Third, our findings showcase that professional contexts and institutions can crucially influence the lived experiences of NESTs depending on the national context (see also Lowe, 2020). As ALTs in secondary schools in Japan, Matt and Joachim suggested that NESTs can feel undervalued and disenfranchised, corroborating the findings of Hiratsuka (2022): "The ALTs were placed on the periphery and left voiceless in terms of the day-to-day functions and decision making that took place in their schools" (p. 127). On this point, Hashimoto (2013) alleged that the Japanese government views NESTs not as teachers, but rather as resources to be utilized by local NNESTs.

As instructors in Japan, Matt and Joachim's experiences suggest that NESTs can be mistreated or exploited. For instance, Matt felt discomfort when he was an ALT from being physically, psychologically, and professionally separated from others, as he longed for more inclusive team-membership. This could have been due to the preconceived biases that colleagues had about NESTs (see Copland et al., 2020; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020). Moreover, NESTs working in universities in Japan may be regarded as convenient language resources for colleagues, who take advantage of them to "native-check" their English or to work as personal translators. Oftentimes, they avail themselves of this without compensating for the time and effort their NEST colleagues must undertake. NESTs may have to comply with these requests because they are, by and large, in less powerful positions than their colleagues, including those who may be evaluating the job performance of the NESTs. Broadly speaking, institutional biases and/or discrimination against NESTs can therefore be systematic and deep-rooted (see also Adamson & Muller, 2018).

Native-speakerism and its effects on language education has hitherto been often over-simplified in the field. Essentially, native-speakerism has subjugated or restricted NNESTs from participating in the field of language education on an equal footing with NESTs (Holliday, 2006, 2017). This is what we term *classical* native-speakerism, which ignores a diversity of perspectives and conceptualizations and thus lacks in nuance and complexity. Nevertheless, some scholars contest the tenets of classical native-speakerism and have sought to demonstrate that, in fact, the inverse phenomenon also occurs, whereby NESTs are less privileged than their NNEST counterparts (e.g., Adamson & Muller, 2018; Appleby 2016; Copland et al., 2020; Ellis, 2016; Houghton & Rivers, 2013). This is what we term *inversed* native-speakerism. In our trioethnographic exploration, it was brought to light that it was Matt and Joachim, not Takaaki, who may have been disadvantaged and/or been subjected to varying levels of bias or discrimination—linguistically, culturally, and institutionally. In other words, it is possible that

NESTs can be disadvantaged in EFL contexts because (a) they cannot fulfill their colleagues' and students' unreasonable expectations about their language skills, (b) they are positioned as cultural outsiders, and (c) they are marginalized or illegitimated as professionals, or exploited as convenient linguistic resources. Classical and inversed native-speakerism are therefore both composed of "prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination, typically by or against foreign language teachers, on the basis of either being, or not being, perceived and categorized as a native speaker of a particular language" (Houghton & Rivers, 2013, p. 14). In our case of Japan, our data show that the privilege of NESTs may also be mitigated by powerful discourses of Japanese nativism, and a historical tradition of xenophobia and even racism as is evidenced by Joachim.

Other scholars describe the dynamic, contextualized, and embedded nature of native-speakerism by taking into account issues connected to linguistic statuses, cultural backgrounds, race, nationality, and class (e.g., Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming; Hooper et al., 2020; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Lowe, 2020; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). This is what we call *nuanced* native-speakerism in which *both* NESTs and NNESTs are subjected to biases and/or discrimination involving issues stated above. Nuanced native-speakerism can hence draw upon and be "part of a larger complex of inter-connected prejudices including ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism" whilst positioning "individuals from certain language groups as being innately superior to individuals from other language groups" (Houghton & Rivers, 2013, p. 14). It is important to mention here that what Lowe (2020) termed *overt* native-speakerism differs from the classical, inversed, or nuanced native-speakerism, in that it refers to discrimination against NNESTs and non-whites. In other words, overt native-speakerism refers to the ideological privileging white NESTs enjoy at the cost of NNESTs and non-white NESTs, which is a combination of classical native-speakerism and partial nuanced native-speakerism (see Table 1 below). In this trioethnography, one NEST (Joachim), but not the other NEST (Matt), suffered discrimination that involved unfair and differential treatment due to his membership in a certain ethnic group (i.e., Filipino). The discrimination occurred sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly, embedded within complex systems of unique socio-cultural relations and mores in Japan.

Lowe (2020) contended that we need to overcome the ideology of native-speakerism through awareness-raising in teacher education and continuing professional development. This is an admirable and worthwhile approach, and our additions to categories within the taxonomy of native-speakerism that are defined above assist in this effort. However, we would like to take this academic discussion a step further and provide an *alternative* to native-speakerism. In another trioethnographic study (Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming), we disputed that our academic lives and relationships were not affected by our linguistic experiences or circumstances but by our shared understandings of Global Englishes, intercultural awareness, and professionalism. Therefore, we proposed an alternative ideology based on an inclusive rather than divisive paradigm. Adopting this new ideology can enable the field to dispel classical, inversed, and nuanced native-speakerism and to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion for all language teachers. This superseding ideology is what we term *trans-speakerism*. We define trans-speakerism as:

> an empowering ideological stance committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion for all language speakers irrespective of their first languages/cultures or their speakerhood statuses. It is a personalized and contextualized approach that dynamically

champions who language teachers are and what they do currently, as well as who they can be and what they can do in the future, by prioritizing their respective strengths, interests, and uniqueness—academically, professionally, socio-culturally, and emotionally. (Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming)

We further suggest that, in the spirit of trans-speakerism, English language speakers and teachers be *global speakers/teachers of English (GSEs/GTEs)* and be addressed by their individual names (see Hiratuska et al., forthcoming). The previous attempts to challenge and interrogate native-speakerism, including our own efforts in this article, are not adequate because they still operate within that ideology's system of belief—a comparative deficiency model whereby one cohort of language teachers are judged vis-à-vis another cohort based on their linguistic and cultural upbringings. Whereas trans-speakerism is a fresh, emancipatory framework that can provide all language teachers and researchers with productive and meaningful perspectives and experiences without alienating a particular cohort.

It is worth noting here the distinction between *post* native-speakerism (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018) and trans-speakerism. Post native-speakerism is the critical academic study of the linguistic, cultural, and political legacy of native-speakerism. It is an accumulated representation about how native-speakerism has created discrimination against language teachers not only on the basis of English language speakerhood but also of individual differences, including linguistic or cultural background, race, nationality, and class. Trans-speakerism is, again, an improved *alternative* to all types of native-speakerism and its related studies, having the aim of superseding them. It focuses attention on individual and collective characteristics and resources in an additive and positive manner, rather than in a detractive and negative way (see Table 1). Trans-speakerism is therefore an approach that values a stance of generosity over a stance of scarcity and as such can enrich the professional lives of ourselves as well as others (see Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming). It has enormous potential to unlock a number of pedagogical and empirical possibilities, and in doing so moves the field of language education forward—towards a more ethical consideration of its practitioners and beneficiaries.

Table 1. A Summary of Types of Ideologies and their Focuses

Type of ideology	Focus of the ideology
Classical native-speakerism	Bias or discrimination against NNESTs
Inversed native-speakerism	Bias or discrimination against NESTs
Nuanced native-speakerism	Bias or discrimination against NNESTs and NESTs based on their various individual differences such as linguistic status, cultural background, race, nationality, and class
Overt native-speakerism (Lowe, 2020)	Bias or discrimination against NNESTs and non-whites
Post native-speakerism (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018)	Critical representation of how native-speakerism affects a wide variety of issues, including both English and Japanese language speakerhoods, cultural background, race, nationality, and class
Trans-speakerism (Hiratuska et al., forthcoming)	Diversity, equity, and inclusion of all language teachers

Conclusion

This trioethnography wove together the narratives of three professionals in the field of ELT, resulting in meaning-making that led to more sophisticated understandings about ourselves, others, and issues of interest (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). In a true polyvocal fashion, we reflected on, critiqued, unpacked, and repacked the notion of native-speakerism. We did this while contemplating the impact of the troubling stories which Matt and Joachim, as NESTs, shared about their experiences in Japan. Disadvantage, discomfort, bias, and/or discrimination may have occurred due to their insufficient local linguistic knowledge, cultural and ethnic differences, and foreigner and native-speaker statuses. All three of us in this research were in agreement that the ELT field in Japan needs to move above and beyond native-speakerism, in order to accept and interact with NESTs as fully-fledged educators, key members of our society, and as equals. These interactions must be more nuanced and empowering, rather than belittling (e.g., being positioned as mere English language support devices).

In view of the findings of this study as well as those of other relevant studies (e.g., Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018; Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Lowe, 2020), we called for the need to supersede the dysfunctional ideologies of classical, inverted, and nuanced native-speakerism with trans-speakerism, in order to enable all language teachers to engage more professionally and meaningfully (see also Hiratsuka et al., forthcoming). Moving forward, our focus should be on how each of us can be better language teachers rather than measuring ourselves and others against the other side of the native-speakerism coin—however valuable we might think that other side is. Embracing a new ideology—trans-speakerism—will likely achieve greater prosperity in the field by enhancing authenticity through the inclusion of diverse populations and contexts as well as by engendering harmonious inter-relations within those contexts. Our desire is that individuals and the field overall will raise awareness about the limitations of any type of native-speakerism and its ensuing discussion (see Lowe, 2020) and will also become cognizant of the benefits associated with the adoption of trans-speakerism, so that all language teachers can be encouraged to build personal and professional value and self-worth.

This article addressed uncomfortable issues that two NESTs encountered and delved into the concepts of classical, inversed, and nuanced native-speakerism. We also proposed superseding native-speakerism with trans-speakerism. Nevertheless, we recognize several limitations within the present inquiry. Foremost among these limitations is the fact that our inquiry is based solely on the autobiographical stories provided by just three participants from their subjective points of view in a singular context—namely, Japan. Notwithstanding, as a case study within one national context, the insights gained from this inquiry can offer reference points for others to contrast and compare their own experiences in their respective contexts. Another limitation is that this type of collaborative autobiographical study requires elevated levels of trust and transparency among the researchers, and yet this can be hampered by power relations—Takaaki was a PhD supervisor of Matt and Joachim in this inquiry. Future research in this area could therefore be carried out with both a larger number of participants and/or participants with different roles (e.g., high school students and policy makers) situated in various contexts (e.g., India and Portugal) investigated using dissimilar research methods (e.g., surveys and observations). It is hoped that this further research can add weight to the proposition made here—that in order to devalue native-speakerism, we should embrace the liberating ideology of trans-speakerism.

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