Parallel Native-Speakerisms? *Eikaiwa* Learner Perceptions of Teachers of Japanese

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This paper presents the final part of the results of a study into native-speakerism at a branch of a large *eikaiwa gakkou* chain in central Tokyo. Having used Holliday's (2006) model to identify native-speakerist attitudes of Japanese learners towards English language teachers (Cater, 2017), I then used an alternative framework (Houghton & Rivers, 2013) to allow for the existence of a parallel L1 native-speakerism to be explored. Data revealed that the participants believed nonnative-speaker teachers of Japanese would be less likely to be effective teachers of productive and receptive skills and also less able to understand why learners made mistakes with pronunciation, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar. Findings also indicated that the native-speakerism identified may be stronger in the learners' L1 than L2. The author concludes that more research into L1 native-speakerism is needed and states the Houghton and Rivers framework is currently the best vehicle for such research.

本稿は東京の大手チェーン英会話学校で実施されたネイティブスピーカー主義に関する研究結果の最終報告である。Holliday（2006）のモデルを利用して、日本人学習者の英会話講師に対するネイティブスピーカーの態度（Carter, 2017）を識別し、Houghton & Rivers（2013）の代替えフレームワークを使用することで、並行的なL1ネイティブスピーカー主義の存在を明らかにする。データによるとノンネイティブの日本語講師が（聞く、読むなどの）受動的なスキル及び（話す、書くなどの）能動的なスキルにおいてはあまり効果的な教師でないと思われており、また、学習者が発音、スピーキング、リスニング、リーディング、ライティング、文法でなぜ間違えるのかを理解する能力が劣っていると思われていることも判った。またネイティブスピーカー主義は学習者のL2よりもL1の方がより強くなるという事を示した結果となった。著者は、L1ネイティブスピーカー主義に関するより多くの研究が必要であり、今日では Houghton & Riversが提供するフレームワークがそのような研究の最善の手段であると感じている。

The issue of native-speakerism has received increasing attention in the ELT community over the past few years. This is certainly true of JALT: Forums on the topic have been held at the JALT national conferences in 2016 and 2017. As the theme of the JALT2018 conference is diversity and inclusion, we can expect further research to be forthcoming in this important area. Initially described by Holliday (2006) as "a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (p. 385), English language teachers worldwide continue to see the effects of native-speakerism in discriminatory job recruitment postings, unequal salaries, and split division of labour in institutions (Cater, 2017). To further complicate matters, no one can agree on a definition of what a native speaker is (Holliday, 2013), yet all stakeholders in ELT continue to use the term.

Native-Speakerism: What Is the Cause?

If one agrees that discrimination against English teachers based on speakerhood is wrong, then how did the current situation come about and persist so stubbornly despite repeated calls against it from many voices including the TESOL foundation (1992, 2006) and native and nonnative English speaking teachers and researchers? Holliday based his theory on the *native-speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992), which traced the origins of the belief in the superiority of native-speaker teachers to a conference held in Africa in the 1960s. The U.K. government-funded British Council exerted significant influence at the gathering, where native-speaker teachers were apparently promoted as the ideal in order to further Anglo-American hegemony (Phillipson, 1992). Holliday's position follows that of Phillipson in that his native-speakerism is deeply rooted in exploitative geopolitics, into which he has more recently incorporated *cultural disbelief*, a term referring to a general lack of confidence in the contributions that nonnative English-speaker teachers may be able to make to the field (Holliday, 2013, 2015). Employers have been accused of allowing the problem to fester not only in their hiring policies, but

also in their advertising, which typically feature Caucasians performing teaching roles in visual images in print and online media (Bailey, 2006; Kubota, 2011). Kiczkowiak's activist website *TEFL Equity Advocates and Academy* (http://teflequityadvocates.com/) features multiple images of a marionette accompanied by the tagline "The industry is pulling our strings." Business owners counter that when native speakers are promoted, it is in response to the demands of the market. Multiple studies conducted in a number of different countries have found that learners sometimes express preferences for English teachers based on speakerhood (see Chun, 2014; Javid, 2016; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009). When considering all of the above, it is difficult to conclude other than that an unfortunate *us versus them* shadow is cast across the field.

Does a Parallel L1 Native-Speakerism Exist?

At JALT2016, I presented the results of the first part of this study into native-speakerism, which I was able to conduct at a branch of one of the largest Japan-based English language school chains, known as *eikaiwa gakkou* (Cater, 2017). It is incredibly difficult for outsiders to gain access to learners from these corporations (Kubota, 2011), which is one reason why the sector is severely underresearched (Nagatomo, 2013). As *eikaiwa gakkou* are well-known for their promotion of native-speaker teachers, I had expected to find evidence of native-speakerism towards English teachers in the attitudes of learners there, and the results supported this hypothesis. In general, a higher percentage of learners felt that native English-speaker teachers were more competent at teaching speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar than nonnative-speaker teachers. Additionally, native-speaker teachers were generally viewed more positively regarding the ability to understand why learners made mistakes in each of these areas, despite arguments in the literature about nonnative-speaker teacher strengths in this regard (Mishima, 2009).

I was curious, however, to discover how the learners felt about the possibility of foreigners being able to effectively teach Japanese, the learners' own L1. I wanted to know whether there might be a related native-speakerism, running parallel to the type described by Holliday, that expressed features particular to the L1 context, as this could either cause or exacerbate native-speakerism in ELT. I therefore included questions on the same survey designed to explore the potential existence of such attitudes. I was unable to find any English-language academic research on this topic.

Part of my rationale for suspecting an L1 native-speakerism in Japanese learners was the presence of essentialist *nihonjinron* discourses in Japanese society (Lie, 2004). A popular *nihonjinron* theory argues that the Japanese language is uniquely vague, and that non-Japanese people, even those who attain perfect fluency, will always be ignorant of the underlying thought patterns behind it (Morimoto, 1985). This viewpoint is similar to the type of linguistic relativism that has become known as the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Hill & Mannheim, 1992). One writer in the *nihonjinron* genre notoriously claimed that Japanese people have unique brains that process vowels differently than do the brains of westerners, postulating differences in the way vowel sounds are processed in the hemispheres (Tsunoda, 1978). Remarkably, this pseudoscience was used in a 2005 *eikaiwa gakkou* advertisement for NOVA corporation that claimed that Japanese and English exist on "different wave lengths" and that "a normal Japanese person's brain cannot distinguish English . . . from noise." The solution offered was "to listen repeatedly to and speak with native speakers" (Seargeant, 2009, p. 97). As *nihonjinron* theories such as these are widely accepted amongst contemporary Japanese people (Lie, 2004) and have been used in the promotion of language schools, this may affect Japanese learners' perceptions of ideal foreign language teachers.

When considering the broader implications of the possibility of parallel native-speakerism, it is worth noting that linguistic nationalism is not peculiar to the Japanese. In 1994, France instituted law 94-665 (The French Government), more widely known as the Toubon law, as an attempt to protect the supposed purity of the French language from the influence of English. More recent examples include the Chinese government banning the use of English words in state media in 2010 (BBC News), a 2016 campaign by Spain's RAE language academy against the increasing use of English loanwords (Badcock, 2016), and a book to be released in 2019 aimed at the general reader that will argue that British English is set to be fully absorbed by the American variety by 2120 (Hughes, 2017). Such populist viewpoints may result in a buttressing of the native-speakerism ideology.

Houghton and Rivers: An Alternative Model

In order to explore the above hypothesis, I needed to look beyond Holliday's (2006) model, which exclusively links native-speakerism with ELT. Holliday has not appeared to shift his position significantly over time, recently stating that "the 'nonnative speaker' label may have more neutral connotations with other [non-English] languages" (Holliday, 2015, p. 11). For the purposes of this study, I was able to adopt an alternative definition proposed by Houghton and Rivers (2013), which explicitly decouples native-speakerism from English teaching:

> Native-speakerism is 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, which can form part

> of a larger complex of interconnected prejudices including ethnocentrism, racism and sexism. Its endorsement positions individuals from certain language groups as being innately superior to individuals from other language groups. Therefore native-speakerist policies and practices represent a breach of one's basic human rights. (p. 13)

This much broader definition not only enabled me to investigate whether parallel native-speakerism may exist, but also opens up the possibility for researchers to investigate the phenomenon in a diverse range of contexts.

The Study

The current paper presents the second part of the findings of an investigation conducted at a branch of a large *eikaiwa gakkou* chain in central Tokyo. A sample of 32 adult Japanese learners participated in the study from a total of around 150 then enrolled at the school, all of whom were being taught by native English-speaker teachers other than myself. The convenience sample used is identical to that outlined in the first part of the study (Cater, 2017) as the data was collected at the same time in the same instrument. A breakdown of the participants by gender, age, and level can be found in Appendix A.

To establish the potential existence and nature of an L1 native-speakerism, learners were asked to complete a survey to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about the perceived ability of native Japanese speaker teachers of Japanese and nonnative Japanese speaker teachers of Japanese to teach Japanese pronunciation, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar. I also asked to what extent they agreed that each teacher type was effective at understanding why their learners made mistakes. Examples of the wording of these questions translated into English are included below:

- [Teacher type] are good at teaching [skill area].
- [Teacher type] understand why their students make mistakes with [skill area].

These questions followed the same wording as those regarding English language teachers (Cater, 2017). This was to allow me to explore whether an L1 native-speakerism could exist in parallel to that in the L2. For the purposes of the study, I defined a native speaker of Japanese as someone who had grown up in Japan, been educated in Japanese-medium schools, and had gone on to attain teaching Japanese as a foreign language credentials. A nonnative Japanese teacher was defined as a person who had been raised outside of Japan in non-Japanese medium schools but had attained the same foreign language teaching credentials as a certified native Japanese speaker teacher. Learners marked their responses on a 5-point scale, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A *don't know* option was included. The questions, which were in Japanese, are included in Appendix B.

I had no direct contact with any of the participants. Receptionists working at the school asked learners if they would be willing to participate anonymously, offering questionnaires in stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Of 35 questionnaires distributed, 32 were returned.

Results and Discussion

Learner Beliefs About Teacher Competency Regarding Productive Skills

First, I will discuss the data on learner beliefs regarding teaching of the productive skills in Table 1.

Table 1. Learner Beliefs About Teacher Competency Regarding Productive Skills (Percentages; *N* = 32)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
NJTs are good at teaching pronunciation.	32	45	10	13	
NNJTs are good at teaching pronunciation.		6	37	54	3
NJTs understand why students make pronunciation mistakes.	6	53	22	19	
NNJTs understand why students make pronunciation mistakes.		38	34	28	
NJTs are good at teaching speaking.	13	56	18	13	
NNJTs are good at teaching speaking.		13	45	42	
NJTs understand why students make speaking mistakes.	17	42	10	31	

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
NNJTs understand why students make speaking mistakes.		50	34	16	
NJTs are good at teaching writing.	19	72	6	3	
NNJTs are good at teaching writing.		6	50	41	3
NJTs understand why students make writing mistakes.	17	50	20	13	
NNJTs understand why students make writing mistakes.		41	34	22	13

Note. NJT = native-speaker teacher of Japanese; NNJT = nonnative-speaker teacher of Japanese.

The data clearly indicate a strong belief in the ability of native-speaker Japanese teachers to effectively teach all the productive skills, while there is a striking lack of confidence in the nonnative group. Looking at specific figures, the contrast between data on the two teacher types was most marked in the pronunciation and writing categories. Only 6% of the participants agreed that nonnative speakers would be good at teaching pronunciation, compared with 32% who strongly agreed (and 45% who agreed) about native Japanese speakers; over half the participants believed that nonnative-speaker teachers would be ineffective. For writing, just 6% thought that nonnative teachers would be competent instructors, compared with 19% who strongly agreed (and 72% who agreed) that native speakers of Japanese would be good. Results for teaching speaking were similar: Only 13% of the participants agreed that nonnative teachers would be effective, compared with 42% who disagreed. About native-speaker teachers, 13% strongly agreed that they would be effective teachers and 56% agreed. As participants had been told both sets of teachers would hold foreign language teaching credentials, these findings imply that native-speaker status was seen as a more important "qualification" than a teaching certificate in terms of teacher competence.

When asked about teachers' understanding why learners made mistakes in the productive skills, native speakers were also well regarded, although the percentages in agreement were typically slightly lower in each category than for teaching ability. This contrasted with nonnative speakers, who were viewed more positively in understanding why learners made mistakes. However, as with teaching, native speakers were viewed as more competent overall. The closest results were in the speaking category, where the only instance of nonnative-speaker data being more positive than that of native speakers was recorded: 31% of participants disagreed that native-speaker Japanese teachers understood why their learners made mistakes, compared with 16% for nonnative speakers. In terms of agreement with the same statement, results were also close: 50% agreed that nonnative speakers understood why their learners made speaking mistakes, compared with 17% (strongly agreed) and 42% (agreed) for native speakers. Data for pronunciation and writing were also much closer than corresponding teaching skill data; none of the participants strongly agreed that nonnative-speaker teachers would be good at understanding why learners made mistakes in any of the skill areas, compared with figures for native-speaker teachers of 6% for pronunciation, 17% for speaking, and 17% for writing. It appears the participants did not recognise the skills that nonnative-speaker teachers may learn through the process of acquiring the target language before teaching it, or they did not feel them significant enough to offset perceived advantages offered by a native-speaker teacher. Participants were also more confident expressing opinions about native-speaker Japanese teachers than nonnative-speaker teachers. This is an interesting finding, as none of the participants would have been taught Japanese as a foreign language.

Learner Beliefs About Teacher Competency Regarding Receptive Skills

Data in Table 2 show that beliefs about the two teacher types on receptive skills were in line with their perceptions of productive skills: Overall, more of the participants thought that native-speaker Japanese teachers were better at teaching and understanding why learners made mistakes in each area. While still generally negative, a higher proportion of the participants evaluated nonnative-speaker teachers as good at teaching receptive skills and understanding why learners made mistakes in these areas than in the productive skill areas.

Table 2. Learner Beliefs About Teacher Competency Regarding Receptive Skills (Percentages; *N* = 32)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
NJTs are good at teaching listening.	6	60	22	12	
NNJTs are good at teaching listening.		19	62	19	
NJTs understand why students make listening mistakes.	16	32	20	32	
NNJTs understand why students make listening mistakes.		41	31	28	
NJTs are good at teaching reading.	20	54	19	7	
NNJTs are good at teaching reading.		25	47	28	
NJTs understand why students make reading mistakes.	9	53	19	19	
NNJTs understand why students make reading mistakes.		44	28	28	
NJTs are good at teaching grammar.	6	82	6	6	
NNJTs are good at teaching grammar.		53	34	13	
NJTs understand why students make grammar mistakes.	6	50	30	14	
NNJTs understand why students make grammar mistakes.		39	35	23	3

Note. NJT = native-speaker teacher of Japanese; NNJT = nonnative-speaker teacher of Japanese.

Both sets of teachers were viewed most positively related to the teaching of grammar: 6% of the participants strongly agreed that native speakers, were good at teaching it, 82% agreed, and only 6% disagreed; about nonnative teachers, 53% agreed and 13% disagreed. The greatest degree of uncertainty in the participants related to the perceived effectiveness of nonnative speakers in teaching listening: 62% responded that they didn't know, and the remaining 38% were evenly split between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement. A similar split was observed in teaching reading: 47% responded that they didn't know if nonnative teachers were good at teaching the skill, 25% agreed, and 28% disagreed. Participants were more definite in their positive evaluation of native-speaker teachers: 6% strongly agreed (60% agreed) that they were good at teaching listening; these results were also high for teaching reading: 20% strongly agreed and 54% agreed.

Turning to perceived abilities of the teachers to understand why learners made mistakes, results for the three skills were similar for both teacher types, with the native speaker consistently evaluated more positively, and a higher proportion of *don't know* responses about nonnative speakers. About nonnative speakers, 44% agreed that they understood why mistakes were made in reading, 41% with listening, and 39% with grammar. About native speakers, 9% strongly agreed and 53% agreed that they understood why mistakes were made in reading, 16% strongly agreed and 32% agreed for listening, and 6% strongly agreed and 50% agreed for writing.

Comparison With Data From the First Part of the Study

Findings outlined above can be compared with data on English language teachers already published in the first part of the study (Cater, 2017). Although there was a general belief in the superior ability of native English-speaker teachers, the same participants generally believed even more strongly that native-speaker teachers of Japanese would be more competent than nonnative-speaker teachers. This suggests that not only is it possible for native-speakerism to be present in the L1, but also that it may be stronger there. Speaking and pronunciation teaching were the areas where nonnative-speaker teachers were widely believed to be most deficient when teaching both English and Japanese languages. The greatest differences between results in both parts of the study were found in perceptions of writing teaching ability: Only 6% of participants believed nonnative teachers of Japanese would be good at teaching the skill. Although native English-speaker teachers were believed to be more competent than nonnative-speaker English teachers for teaching this, evaluations were much closer. This suggests a qualitative difference in the nature of the native-speakerism detected in each language.

Limitations

The findings are accompanied by the following important caveats. Most significantly, the study was conducted with a very small convenience sample of 32 learners studying at a single branch of a language school chain. Were it to be repeated across a district, with a larger sample size or using an alternative sampling method, different patterns could emerge. Due to the current lack of research into the sector, we do not know how typical these results are of the domain. It would be helpful if other researchers conducted similar studies to generate data either corroborating or contesting my findings. As *eikaiwa gakkou* are resistant to outside researchers, teachers working in them are the most likely to be able to gain the necessary consent to undertake such projects.

Beyond *eikaiwa*, it would also be helpful to determine whether parallel native-speakerism exists in other Japanese sectors. Indeed, I am currently conducting a study with Japanese learners studying English in Japanese tertiary education (Cater, forthcoming). Studies exploring the existence of the phenomenon beyond Japan in EFL and ESL settings would also be welcome.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the findings of the second part of a two-part study into native-speakerism. After previously using the original model of Holliday (2006) to establish that native-speakerism was evident in a sample of learners at a school in a large *eikaiwa gakkou* chain (Cater, 2017), a revised framework (Houghton & Rivers, 2013) was used to explore whether the same participants also held native-speakerist attitudes towards teachers of the Japanese language. The results of this investigation suggest not only that such a native-speakerism existed in the participants but that it was different from the former, particularly regarding beliefs about writing teaching ability, and also in its overall strength, as native-speakerism appeared to be stronger in the L1 than the L2. Furthermore, the findings may give us reason to examine Holliday's (2015) assertion that the "nonnative" label is more neutral outside ELT, at least in the context of Japanese language teaching. While this research project was very limited in scope, these findings suggest that it would be valuable to continue to explore the possible existence and nature of parallel native-speakerism in Japan and beyond, as learner L1 linguistic nationalism may be a factor perpetuating the ideology now widely reported in ELT. As Holliday's (2006) model does not allow for this type of research to be conducted, I feel that the framework provided by Houghton and Rivers (2013) is more appropriate for use by academics, as it is broad enough to accommodate important concepts such as cultural disbelief whilst allowing researchers to explore other avenues beyond the confines of English language teaching.

Bio Data

Based in Japan, **Martin A. Cater** has been teaching English since 2004. His research interests include learner development, language teaching methodology, and native-speakerism. <m.a.cater@outlook.com>

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Appendix A
Participants

Category	Subcategory	Number
Gender	Male	10
	Female	22
Age	16 – 24	3
	25 – 34	7
	35 – 44	11
	45 – 54	1
	55 – 64	6
	65 +	4

Appendix B
Survey Questions in Japanese

- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語の発音を教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語の発音を教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語のスピーキングを教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語のスピーキングを教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語のリスニングを教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語のリスニングを教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語のリーディングを教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語のリーディングを教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語のライティングを教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語のライティングを教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師は日本語の文法を教えるのが上手い。
- 日本人の日本語講師は日本語の文法を教えるのが上手い。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語の発音を間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語の発音を間違えるのかを理解している。

- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のスピーキングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のスピーキングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のリスニングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のリスニングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のリーディングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のリーディングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のライティングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語のライティングを間違えるのかを理解している。
- ノンネイティブスピーカーの日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語の文法を間違えるのかを理解している。
- 日本人の日本語講師はなぜ生徒が日本語の文法を間違えるのかを理解している。