

Native-Speakerism Among Japanese Teacher Trainees: Ideology, Framing, and Counter-Framing

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Studies on native-speakerism in Japan have covered a variety of issues, and recent work has adopted a framing perspective to examine hidden strands of native-speakerist ideology within the profession which often go unrecognized. Defining a *frame* as an ideologically-constructed perceptual filter which influences how situations are interpreted, this research has attempted to break down the discourses of dominant or *master* frames to show the influence of native-speakerist ideology in particular contexts, and to investigate how *counter* frames have been constructed in resistance to this ideology. This paper will add to this work by focusing on the beliefs of teacher trainees. Through a qualitative study of a class based around critical issues in ELT, the complex web of framing and counter-framing on the part of trainee teachers is examined, and the pervasiveness of the ideology of native-speakerism is highlighted. Finally, some emergent possibilities for resistance are explored.

日本の母語話者中心主義に関する研究は様々な問題を扱ってきたが、最近の研究では、「フレーム理論」の視点を採用し、しばしば認識されることのない母語話者中心主義的イデオロギーの隠れた一面を検証している。本研究では、「フレーム」を、状況の解釈の仕方に影響を与えるイデオロギー的に構築された知覚のフィルターと定義した。また、特定の文脈における母語話者イデオロギーの影響を示すために、支配的または、「主要な(マスター)」フレームの言説を分解し、このイデオロギーに対する「逆の(カウンター)」フレームがいかに構築されてきたかを調査したものである。本論文は、教職課程を履修する学生の信念に注目することで、さらに研究を前進させることを目的としたものだ。ELTの重要な問題に焦点を当てた授業の質的研究を通して、教職課程の学生にあるフレームとカウンターフレームの複雑な関係性を検証し、母語話者中心主義のイデオロギーの広がりを示す。最後に、イデオロギーの影響への抵抗のためのいくつかの新しい可能性を探る。

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Native-speakerism is an ideology which privileges the institutions of the West in discussions around English language teaching (ELT), and by extension normalises the models of English, the teachers of English, and the pedagogical approaches which are most associated with those institutions (Holliday, 2005). This ideology manifests in numerous problematic practices which are endemic in ELT, including discrimination against teachers of English who do not fit the stereotypical image of the 'native speaker,' the promotion of Western models of 'standard' English, and the chauvinistic dismissal of the pedagogical expertise of so-called 'non-native speaker' teachers of English. This paper explores how subtle manifestations of this ideology can be identified through an analysis of qualitative data and the framing processes undertaken by participants within a research setting.

Readers will likely have noticed the strategic use of inverted commas in this entire Special Issue around terms such as 'native speaker,' 'non-native speaker,' and 'standard English.' This is intended to denote their socially constructed nature. Although often upheld as an objective criterion regarding language proficiency, the concept of the 'native speaker' of English is closely tied to notions of race, nationality, and class, to such an extent that the label itself is rendered deeply misleading (Amin, 1997; Dewaele et al., 2021; Javier, 2016; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Accordingly, when used in this paper, concepts such as 'native speaker' or 'standard English' should be understood not as objective classifications, but rather as ideologically constructed categories which reflect entrenched and historically constituted power relationships in the field. Even though this understanding has led some scholars to reject the use of labels such as 'native speaker' entirely, in this paper, following Dewaele et al. (2021), I choose to use them due to their ongoing power and influence in ELT, and in order to explain the concrete effects they have in the world, despite their illusory nature.

Native-Speakerism: Surface Manifestations and Hidden Depths

Native-speakerism emerged from the context of an imperialistic approach to ELT, in which educational policy and practice was decided primarily with reference to what would most benefit the interests of Western nations (Phillipson, 1992; Widin, 2010). Models of English, teachers of English, and pedagogical approaches which are seen to deviate from this Western-normative base are therefore likely to be marginalized in global ELT.

The most obvious consequence of native-speakerism is discrimination against those teachers classified as 'non-native speakers' of English. Studies

into job advertisements and recruitment practices have revealed a heavy bias towards teachers labelled as ‘native speakers’ (Kiczkowiak, 2020; Mah-boob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015), and even after employment, evidence shows that teachers are assigned different roles and duties according to how they are categorized (Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016; Selvi, 2014). This preference for ‘native speakers’ also manifests in other contexts, such as conferences in applied linguistics and ELT, which research has shown demonstrate a marked lack of diversity among their plenary speakers, both in terms of race and supposed speakerhood (Bhattacharya, Jiang, & Canagarajah 2019; Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2021). Although this discrimination most commonly targets those teachers and professionals characterized as ‘non-native speakers’, prejudicial practices can cut both ways, with ‘native speaker’ teachers often stuck in insecure, peripheral positions within institutions (Nagatomo, 2016), expected to act as clownish entertainers (Amundrud, 2008; Shimizu, 1995), and pushed into fundamentally limited and limiting roles (Rivers, 2013). Discrimination against teachers and other ELT professionals is thus a widespread result of native-speakerism in ELT.

A second concern revolves around the promotion of ‘standard’ Western forms of English. It is generally recognized (Crystal, 2003) that the English language is no longer the sole property of those nations placed in what Kachru (1985) refers to as the inner circle (North America, the UK, Australasia), but is instead used by people all over the world both intranationally (as in the case of local forms of English, such as Singlish or Indian English) and internationally (as in the case of English as a Lingua Franca, or ELF). Investigation into the language use of multilinguals has even started to cast doubt on the possibility of drawing clear lines between named languages, with concepts such as *code switching* being replaced by terms such as *translanguaging*, which more accurately reflect the ways in which people make use of a constantly expanding linguistic repertoire, rather than switching between distinct linguistic codes (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). However, this diversity and variety of language use is rarely reflected in teaching materials. Syrbe and Rose (2018), in an analysis of English textbooks used in Germany, found that “all three books clearly favoured a static variety of British English, which was always presented unmarked throughout the three textbooks, thus indicating its use as standard” (p. 7). This is surprising, given actual global use of English no longer consists only of these idealized ‘native speaker’ norms, and the authors stressed this did not match data on how German speakers of English actually use the language. Kiczkowiak (2021) analysed a series of coursebooks in order to see what features of pronunciation were being

emphasized. He also conducted interviews with the coursebook authors to investigate their decisions regarding pronunciation models. Kiczkowiak's study demonstrated that most coursebooks focused on 'native speaker' pronunciation features, including connected speech and weak forms, rather than linguistic features and communication skills which, from an ELF perspective, are more conducive to intelligibility. The textbook authors interviewed in the study suggested that these features were included partly for marketing purposes at the behest of their publishers and indicated that the pronunciation models chosen focused on "mostly young educated southern UK types" (p. 63). The use of standard 'native speaker' accents and models in textbooks is also an ongoing problem in Japan (Amundrud, 2021). Despite growing awareness of the diversity of English use, coursebooks generally retain a focus on inner circle 'native speaker' models.

A third, often overlooked, issue concerns what constitutes acceptable approaches to teaching and learning. There has long been criticism of the exporting of one-size-fits-all communicative methodologies from the West to other countries, on the basis that they are not necessarily suitable in all contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), and it has been claimed that the exporting of these methods represents the dissemination of Western cultural and educational values smuggled in under the seemingly neutral guise of 'effective' methods (Pennycook, 1989; see also Canagarajah, 1999).

Finally, native-speakerism often leads to the orientalist othering of students, who are dismissed as being, among other things, passive, reluctant to challenge authority, and unable to think critically (Holliday, 2005). Hollenback (2021) in a recent, systematic study of articles published in JALT's bi-monthly publication *The Language Teacher* found evidence of widespread discourses which negatively positioned Japanese students as being conformist, collectivist, communicatively deficient, and averse to risk.

In recent years, a growing resistance to this dominant ideology in ELT has emerged, with a proliferation of research, special interest groups, and advocacy aimed at challenging chauvinistic beliefs and discriminatory practices (Braine & Selvi, 2018; Kamhi-Stein, 2016). However, despite the success of this ongoing effort it may be too early to suggest that native-speakerism has lost its power in the field. Evidence of the continuing influence of the ideology can be seen most clearly in the narratives of teachers who still experience professional discrimination, both overt and covert (see Kyaw Oo, 2021 for a recent example), and research has demonstrated that native-speakerism is often internalised by 'non-native' users of the language, leading them to perpetuate an ideology through which they themselves are disadvantaged

(He, 2021). In addition, ethnographic work has shown how even strikingly progressive programs in ELT can be influenced by pervasive, concealed, native-speakerist discourses (Lowe, 2020), and it is these hidden manifestations of the ideology which must be investigated by researchers. If the influence of native-speakerism on the profession is to be challenged, research must focus not only on the readily apparent, surface-level symptoms of the ideology, but also the base assumptions through which it is propagated. This study is concerned with the excavation of these base assumptions.

A Model for Critical Research

In this paper, data from a critical qualitative classroom study show how an examination of the framing of the beliefs and practices of teacher trainees reveals hidden assumptions based on native-speakerist ideology, and how processes of counter-framing can help to problematize and challenge this ideology. Avowedly critical approaches to ELT research derive from a variety of philosophical and political perspectives including poststructuralism, and, more recently, critical realism (Block, 2022; Bouchard, 2022). As such, it is necessary here to explain the way in which I envision a critical project of ELT research before moving on.

In this paper, I work with a model of critical theory related to the early writing of Max Horkheimer. For Horkheimer, drawing on the young, humanistic Marx (see Fromm, 1961), the goal of a critical theory is to move towards a rationally organized society which serves to meet human needs, rather than to generate an increasing rate of profit or to satisfy the desires of dominant, powerful groups (Owen, 2002). This is accomplished by 1) an ongoing immanent critique of existing society (i.e., examining whether society is working towards its own professed standards), and 2) the critique of ideology (Horkheimer 1937/1972). Ideology, as understood by Horkheimer (1930/1993), is the collection of necessary social beliefs which serve to make existing social systems appear neutral and commonsensical, and thus uphold relations of domination in society. For Horkheimer, the task of the social theorist is to “articulate and help develop latent class consciousness” (Held, 1980, p. 25), by investigating and uncovering ideology, thus allowing people to move rationally towards a society which satisfies their needs. This research program entailed interdisciplinary empirical social research, complemented with social philosophy (Horkheimer, 1931/1972).

By describing native-speakerism as an *ideology*, I am defining it as a set of commonly held beliefs which serve to uphold relations of domination in the

structure of global ELT. These are beliefs regarding which language models should be taught and learned, who should be entrusted with teaching the language, what pedagogy is contextually appropriate, and whose voices are to be considered in decision making. By critiquing this ideology, I aim to open a space for discussion of more rational ways of organizing the field, and more awareness of (and resistance to) the political, economic, and social forces which have influenced its current form.

Naturally, by adopting a politically oriented research model, I belie my own positionality as a researcher. I believe that the goal of social research should be to lead to progressive social and political change, and that in ELT this should manifest in a move away from linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism, and attitudes of Western chauvinism. My political commitments doubtless influence how I interpret my data. However, I believe this is unavoidable, and that it is better to state this up front so that the reader can bear it in mind, rather than smuggling in my political views under an assumed guise of false neutrality.

Methodology: Critical Qualitative Research and Frame Analysis

The data for this study were drawn from a critical qualitative classroom study conducted over the course of 14 weeks at a Japanese university. The class, titled *Methods for Teaching English as an International Language*, was designed for students studying for an MA in English Language Teaching. The objective of the course was to familiarize the students with current literature and theory regarding English in the world today, and the first semester, from which the data were drawn, focused on units which covered the topics of 'native speakers' and native-speakerism, world Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, and, briefly, intercultural communication (see Appendix for a list of topics covered).

The class was organized around a series of readings and discussions. Before each class the students were required to read one or two academic papers on the topic in question. The classes themselves took the form of short lectures on the topic, punctuated by extensive discussions in which students were expected to bring a critical perspective to the topic based on their homework reading and personal experiences. Towards the end of the semester the students were required to prepare short presentations based on their homework reading, which acted as spurs to further discussion.

After approval was granted by my institutional review board, I provided the students with written descriptions of the study and asked if they would

be willing to participate. All students enrolled in the class agreed to take part in the study, and signed consent forms were collected prior to the start of the project. Four students were registered for the class:

Akie – Akie joined the graduate program directly after completing her BA. Akie was a highly motivated student with a strong interest in becoming a teacher. She had previously taken courses with the researcher as an undergraduate and was thus familiar with some of the ideas under discussion before the start of the course. In addition to her studies, she was working part-time teaching English to children.

Yurika – Yurika had also joined the program immediately following the completion of her BA and was motivated in her studies to become a teacher. Unlike Akie, Yurika had a strong preference towards generative grammar, due to her close work with a Chomskyan professor.

Sachiko – Similarly to Akie and Yurika, Sachiko was a ‘straight Master’ student, meaning she joined directly following her BA in the department’s undergraduate program. Sachiko was a hardworking student, but perhaps due to being the youngest student in the group, was occasionally a little quiet in class.

Ms. Tachikawa – Ms. Tachikawa was the only member of the class who had extensive experience as a teacher, having worked in elementary education for many years, and even having published several articles in professional publications. She was returning to complete her MA degree mid-career in order to deepen her understanding of educational theory and practice.

Data were collected first through a research journal. Notes were taken informally during the lessons, and as soon as class finished, they were written up into more narrative journal entries which ranged from short pieces of only a couple of hundred words, to longer entries that exceeded a thousand. These journal entries contained notes of general happenings in class, and of critical incidents or events which seemed to be of particular significance. Secondly, short interviews were conducted with each participant via email

at the end of the course. This was done so that the participants could take part in the interviews both a) at a distance—important given the spread of COVID-19—and b) at their leisure, which was necessary particularly for participants working full-time. Students were free to answer in either English or Japanese. In the latter case, translations were carried out by the researcher. All data have been anonymized, and details changed or omitted to avoid identification of the participants.

This was a critical qualitative study, meaning that it not only aimed to describe what was happening in the classroom, but also to problematize the expressed views and practices present in the setting (Stanley, 2013), with the goal of uncovering hidden strains of ideological thought underlying these views and practices. For this project, data underwent *frame analysis*. This is a form of data analysis which draws on and adapts concepts from the work of Feagin (2013) on racial framing and counter-framing, and from the framing perspective in social movement research (see Johnston & Noakes, 2005). *Frames* are understood here as perceptual filters through which people process and present their experiences and thoughts based on their ideological beliefs. *Framing* can thus be thought of as a process in which people make use of their ideological resources to construct meaning in the world around them (Lowe, 2020). With an understanding that ideology refers to the necessary set of beliefs that upholds the social order, an analysis of how people frame experiences and thoughts can be used to examine the origins of such framing. By starting with the framing participants are employing, it is possible for a researcher to distil this framing into discourses, which can then be traced back to their ideological roots (see Lowe, 2021 for a detailed description of this method). For this project I was interested in analysing both *master frames* and *counter frames*. Adapting terminology from social movement researchers such as Snow (2004), I define master frames as the dominant frames within a particular context, the identification of which thus reveals the most influential strains of ideological thought present in the setting. Counter frames, on the other hand, are defined here as those which begin to emerge as participants embark on rethinking their beliefs and constructing alternative interpretations of their situation, in response to conflicts or crises between their experiences and the dominant framing. Counter frames are thus a starting point for resistance to dominant ideology.

Frame analysis is considered a feature of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; Bloor & Bloor, 2007), however, the form of frame analysis employed in this study is intended as a supplement to critical qualitative research. As such, this approach goes beyond text *alone*, and includes more ethnographic

forms of data such as situated behaviours, expressions, and gestures. It can thus be placed within the scope of Critical Discourse Studies (Block, 2018), which aims to incorporate perspectives from both CDA and ethnography. My analysis of the data here will therefore be more focused on ethnographic description than on textual analysis.

Although I have adopted an explicitly critical approach in terms of my theoretical framework and mode of analysis, it should not be assumed or inferred that the course itself was aimed at producing any specific change in views among the students. As with any course of study, the goal was to help them understand a set of ideas. However, it was made clear that the students were free to disagree with any of the perspectives raised in class, and lessons often featured discussion of the criticisms that have been made of the ideas under consideration. I was also open in the first lessons about my personal views and made it clear disagreement was both acceptable and welcomed. Although it is possible the students may have said what they thought their teacher wanted to hear, great effort was made to invite opposing viewpoints through the encouragement of disagreement, the playing of devil's advocate, and the praising and valuing of alternative perspectives when they arose. This does not guarantee that students were sharing their true feelings, but the large amounts of disagreement and discussion that took place within each class provides some evidence that the students did not feel overly restrained (see the section on 'the persistence of the master frame' at the end of this paper for some examples).

Results

Master Frame

In this section, I will present what I consider to have been the master frame of the students in the course. This will be broken down into three dominant discourses which were evident in the framing employed by the students.

Discourse 1: The 'Native Speaker' as Embodiment of Western Language and Culture

The first topic discussed in the course was how to define the 'native speaker'. In the first week, it was very clear that a discourse centred on a bio-developmental definition was dominant, and that most students were unaware that there was any controversy around the concept of the 'native speaker' at all. This appeared to be primarily influenced by their experience

with other classes which focused on first and second language acquisition. As I recorded in my journal:

Yurika and Sachiko began with a bio-developmental definition of the ['native-speaker'] (...) They did this with reference to their previous classes on Chomsky and FLA, and on SLA. They generally expressed the belief that a ['native speaker'] was born, not made, and that it was impossible to become a ['native speaker'] as an adult due to the critical period hypothesis. They also made reference to experimental work in SLA which supposedly distinguished a native from a ['non-native speaker']. In other words, they expressed opinions which followed the idea of the 'native speaker' as being naturally distinct from the 'non-native speaker'. During the class, I brought up edge cases (Conrad, Nabokov, etc.) to test the strength of their beliefs. This did not seem to strongly impact their views, as they still attempted to impose objective psycholinguistic definitions onto the speakers (balanced bilingual, ['native'] of both, ['native'] of neither, etc.). Ms. Tachikawa held similar opinions and stuck closely to biological definitions. (Journal entry 16/04/2021)

As this extract makes clear, the students began with a view that the categories of 'native' and 'non-native speaker' were essentially determined by biology and childhood development and were persistent in framing this discussion as a question of psycholinguistics. Yurika, who was being supervised by a Chomskyan scholar at the time, was particularly adamant on this point. When I attempted to introduce an alternative, sociolinguistic way of framing this question, there was much resistance, and the psycholinguistic framing continued to dominate. This framing was pervasive particularly at the beginning of the course, and often hindered student engagement with the literature under discussion, precisely because this literature came from a sociolinguistic perspective.

However, there appeared to be some contradictory behaviour on display. The students made numerous references to the 'native speaker' not only as an embodiment of language, but also a repository of cultural knowledge. At many points, the students brought up the concept of the Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). ALTs are normal in Japanese secondary education and are usually (though not always) young 'native speaker' teachers who team-teach with a Japanese teacher. For the students, one prime role played by

the 'native speaker' ALT was to transmit cultural knowledge of the West. The belief in a bio-developmental model of the 'native speaker' does not itself necessarily indicate native-speakerism. In fact, if such a distinction were used consistently, it would imply that any speakers of English as a first language would be 'native speakers.' However, the framing of the ALT as an expert in Western culture seemed to belie the fact that, for the students, a 'native speaker' was only a person from a Western nation who spoke English as their first language.

An examination of the framing provided by the students revealed a primary discourse; that for them, the 'native speaker' was defined as someone who comes from a Western country and speaks English as their first language. Although this would seem to contradict the bio-developmental model of the 'native speaker' to which they also subscribed, because not all first-language English speaking communities are situated in Western countries, it appears this served the function of legitimizing and essentializing the 'native speaker' as an expert on Western language and culture. This understanding of the 'native speaker' was foundational to the next two discourses that were identifiable in the students' framing.

Discourse 2: The Superiority of Western Models of English

A second strong discourse was related to the superiority of Western models of English. This framing was present from the very beginning of the course, and throughout my research journal I refer to students describing Western forms of English as "pure", "perfect", "correct", and "beautiful." This seemed to be related to the bio-developmental definition of the 'native speaker' outlined in the previous section. In their interviews, the students were quite direct about their beliefs at the beginning of the course regarding "correct English":

Sachiko: [At the start of this course] I thought British English and American English were the correct English. I thought that grammar and vocabulary that were not in these two English words were "mistakes." For example, I heard that "very hot" is said "hot hot" in Singapore English, but before taking this course I thought this was a mistake.

Ms. Tachikawa: I thought that the English spoken / used by the British people was correct English.

These beliefs, expressed explicitly here, also emerged in a more unconscious form through the ways in which the students framed their beliefs about correct and incorrect language use. To illustrate this, I provide the following example recorded in my journal from the second week of the course:

Akie from the beginning said the [']native speaker['] was “made” [rather than born], but this did not seem to be a strongly held conviction. References were repeatedly made to “purity” and “perfection” in speakers. She also mentioned that such speakers “never made mistakes” and could “speak with confidence and without hesitation.” (Journal entry 16/04/2021)

Here, Akie hinted at a more sociolinguistic framing of the question, potentially informed by her undergraduate experience of studying similar topics. However, it is notable that even when using this more sociolinguistic definition, in which it is understood that varieties of English exist around the world besides those from the West, she continued to describe the English use of ‘native speakers’ in terms such as “purity”, “perfection”, and even going so far as to claim they “never made mistakes.” As an understanding of world Englishes requires an acceptance that the standards of Western models of the language should not necessarily be taken as normative, Akie’s highly value-laden framing of Western models of the language as embodying “purity” and “perfection” betrayed a perhaps unconscious acceptance of the normativity and superiority of these forms of the language. This is one example of many that occurred in the class, but it is one which is significant in that it reveals an unconscious framing which is in contradiction even to the expressed values of the student.

All of this points to a second strong discourse influencing the framing the students employed in describing their experiences and beliefs: the notion that Western models of English, particularly British and American, were superior to other models, and that these varieties should be taken as normative. The framing here reveals the students drawing on a discourse, which reveals in turn an ideological belief, in the superiority of Western models of English. This is the second major discourse which comprised the master frame of the course.

Discourse 3: The Fundamental Role of the ‘Native Speaker’ Teacher

The superiority of Western models of English strongly influenced the third and final discourse identifiable in the framing employed by the students; the necessity of the ‘native speaker’ teacher in English classes. As

Western models of English were considered normative by the students, and the 'native speaker' was defined as someone who embodied these models, it seemed to naturally follow that 'native speakers' were inherently necessary in the language classroom. This was clearly stated by Ms. Tachikawa in our interview, when discussing her initial views regarding the role of 'native speaker' teachers:

Ms. Tachikawa: I thought it was the role of [']native speakers['] to teach grammatically correct English. Of course, it also motivates me to speak in English, including the cultural background of the English language, and to expand my world through English. I thought that was the role of ['] native speakers['] in English language teaching.

The relationship between language and culture is also evident here, as Ms. Tachikawa clearly connected the concept of the "cultural background of the English language" to the "grammatically correct" English spoken by 'native speakers.' This notion of superiority, based on supposedly innate cultural and linguistic knowledge, was one that many of the participants admitted to holding in their interviews. This can be seen in the following interview extracts, in which Sachiko and Akie responded to the same question regarding their views on the role of 'native speakers' in ELT:

Sachiko: I thought ['] native speakers['] English was necessary for students to be able to hear and speak 'correct English.'

Akie: I naturally thought that the role of a [']native speaker['] was being a good model of English pronunciations [sic] or showing students some cultural differences between their home countries and a county where they teach English.

As is evident in these two quotes, the students framed the 'native speaker' as primarily a vessel of "correct" English and of cultural knowledge, whose job was to provide a model for their students to imitate. Evident here is a discourse in which 'correctness' was seen to be inherent in Western models of English, which the 'native speaker' was considered to embody. The further connection of language to culture reinforced the extent to which only Western forms were considered correct.

In addition to these obvious statements, there were more subtle hints during the study which showed how deeply this supposed necessity of

'native speaker' teacher was internalized. For example, at several points in our lessons we discussed how the students might be able to make these ideas practical or relevant to their teaching. On numerous occasions, the students described activities in which, halfway through, the ALT took over for a communicative exercise. When I asked the students to explain why an ALT had to appear at that point in the lesson, they were unable to give a clear justification, usually referring to the need for students to hear "correct" or "beautiful" English. The necessity (and availability) of the ALT was simply assumed, on the basis that such a person could provide "correct" grammar, pronunciation models, and cultural information.

The students framed the existence of the ALT, and thus of the 'native speaker' in English lessons as natural and unquestionable. This appears to be because of the strong relationship in their minds between 'correct' models of Western English, and the 'native speakers' who are seen as embodying that English. This was further evident in their assertion that the 'native speaker' is the arbiter of grammar, and thus the source of information on the language.

A Master Frame of Native-Speakerism

To summarise the three previous sections, an examination of the framing employed by the students in explaining their experiences and beliefs, particularly at the beginning of the course, revealed three key underlying discourses. The first of these was one in which the 'native speaker' is a repository of Western language and culture. When tied to a bio-developmental understanding of the 'native speaker,' these speakers were essentialized as linguistic and cultural experts. Although much controversy around the definition of the 'native speaker' continues, the students appeared particularly wedded to the idea that the 'native speaker' is someone who learns a (Western) form of the English language as a child, and is thus a linguistic expert to whom 'non-native speakers' must defer. A second key discourse was the superiority of Western models of English, which the students described as "beautiful," and "correct." Despite the global spread and diversity of English, the development of world Englishes, and the use of English as a global lingua franca, the students seemed most strongly drawn to the use of Western, inner-circle Englishes, particularly British and American. Finally, the students considered the 'native speaker' to have an intrinsically superior linguistic and cultural understanding of English which made them indispensable in the classroom; their existence taken as almost natural.

Putting these three discourses together, it is easy to see they are built on an ideological foundation of native-speakerist ideology. By according English an intrinsic association with Western cultures, it was possible for them to construct Western Englishes as inherently superior to other varieties, and thus to consider 'native speakers' of English (i.e., the human embodiment of those varieties) as a natural and necessary part of English language lessons. At the beginning of the course, this ideology was particularly strong, but as the course went on, there were some hints of the students reconsidering these points, and this was evident in the examples of counter-framing they began to produce.

Counter-framing

Over the duration of the course, the students began to reframe their ideas in a way which was counter to the master framing identified above. I will lay out three major elements of this reframing, which demonstrate how the students expressed ideas in which the potential for resistance to the native-speakerist master frame were evident. I call these *elements* rather than *discourses*, as they appear to be produced by the students themselves, rather than based on wider narratives absorbed from their environment. The discourses which comprise the master frame are widespread and shared by many, if not most, in the profession, forming a recognizable frame. These elements on the other hand, are not part of a wider frame, but rather were generated by the students as they encountered crises and contradictions in their beliefs.

Element 1: A More Sociolinguistic View of the 'Native Speaker'

The first example of counter-framing which I would like to focus on emerged only a few weeks into the course and involved the students re-thinking their definition of the 'native speaker'. As mentioned earlier, the students had been averse to sociolinguistic definitions of this term, but gradually began to reconsider this. This could be partly a result of the regular introduction of examples of edge cases, or cases in which intuitive decisions about who is or is not a 'native speaker' are difficult. This became something of a game after the first few weeks, with the students interrogating each other's use of the term by asking questions such as "what do you mean by 'native speaker'?" This was light-hearted, but became part of the culture of the class.

This growing uncertainty manifested in interesting behaviours. For example, when saying the words 'native speaker', both Akie and Yurika began

using their fingers to indicate scare quotes around the terms, much as I am doing in writing this paper. This was an interesting reframing of the term from a biological certainty to something more questionable and unstable. In her interview, Akie vocalized this feeling directly:

Akie: Although I thought I got some definitions of a [']native speaker['] in my mind, for example, they are capable of using and handling their mother tongue properly according to each context, as I tried to picture a person owning those traits which I thought (or maybe expected?) they would have, I found myself being confused with some ideas or images that I myself created in my mind because there were always contradictions, such as “what about when they use a specific language which is not their first language but other people do not notice that they speak the language as their second language because they handle it like people who speak the language as their mother tongue? If the definition of [']native speaker['] that I referred above is appropriate, would I say they are [']native speaker['] of the language even that is their second language?” I guess I would not.

Akie does not come to a conclusion here, but obviously her image of the ‘native speaker’ had become somewhat unmoored, and this appeared to be common in the class. This was the first example of counter-framing that was observed, but it presaged, and perhaps incited, the next two examples.

Element 2: Greater Recognition of the Validity of World Englishes

Over the duration of the course, the students’ attitudes towards world Englishes also began to soften considerably. The first hints of this came in the 8th week of the course, while we were discussing world Englishes, and is captured in the following journal extract:

Ms. Tachikawa expressed concern over the idea of world Englishes in the classroom, and said that what should be taught to students is “the word that everyone understands”. To illustrate this, she bought up an example of a new teacher from her school who is from Aomori prefecture, and sometimes uses the Aomori dialect. She said this is a problem because the students don’t understand, so this is not the correct language to tell the students. She suggested world Englishes might be incorrect for the same reason. Yurika suggested that this could actually

be an opportunity. If the teacher used some Aomori slang, Ms. Tachikawa could model communication strategies such as checking understanding for the students, and thereby teach a new skill. (Journal entry 04/06/2021)

Here, the initial framing of world Englishes in the classroom was as a problem. Ms. Tachikawa suggested that the students should be provided only with language which everyone could understand. Yurika then reframed this scenario, positing that it could be a good opportunity for the teaching of communication strategies, and for students to thus learn an important communication skill. Although this does not validate world Englishes directly, it does show how the students were thinking about English less as a standard model that all students can learn, and more in terms of a communication tool, something that Sachiko and Akie also mentioned in their interviews. Akie noted her belief that “the role of English in the world is a tool for everyone to communicate”, and Sachiko reiterated this and explained that “I thought that there were many mistakes in English spoken by people from countries that do not use English as their official language, such as Japan. However, as people from different countries use English, I learned that English is changing and diverse. I thought the difference was bad, but I found that I could communicate even if there was a difference.”

Another example of this re-evaluation of world Englishes occurred about a month later, and emerged during a discussion about classroom code meshing:

The students decided that the difference between this kind of creativity and simple mistakes was basically intentionality – if the student was aware of the language they were using, and if they were consciously changing it to express a new meaning unavailable to them in standard English, then that was a legitimate example of a new use of language. (Journal entry 02/07/2021)

Here, we see a much more direct change in attitude, as the students reframed their ideas about world Englishes. Rather than an absolutist ‘correct vs. incorrect’ mindset, the students instead emphasized the role of intentionality. and conscious creativity of the speaker when evaluating English use.

Element 3: Rethinking the ‘Native Speaker’ Teacher

The final, and perhaps most important example of reframing concerned the role of the ‘native speaker’ teacher. Early on, the students had empha-

sized the need for Western ‘native speaker’ teachers who could act as a linguistic model of British or American English, and as a cultural informant for the students. This began to change over time, and the students began to place a stronger emphasis on language awareness and pedagogical skills as the mark of a good teacher. This is illustrated by the following two journal extracts:

Ms Tachikawa said she had experiences with ALTs in her city, and that one of the ALTs, a young man from Kenya, had been able to share his language learning strategies with the students and was the most successful of the ALTs. (Journal entry 07/05/2021)

At the end of class, Ms. Tachikawa asked me (out of the blue) to explain the difference between “will” and “be going to”. I gave a garbled explanation based on scraps that I recalled from my *eikaiwa* days, and afterwards Yurika gave me a much clearer explanation based on her pragmatics lectures (so much for my superior [‘]native speaker[‘] intuition!). Akie then said, interestingly, “we [‘]non-native speakers[‘] can give better grammar explanations” and Yurika replied “yes, because we learned the rules explicitly”. (Journal entry 28/05/2021)

In the first of these extracts, the students provided an alternative framing of the role of the ALT. Rather than being only a source of linguistic and cultural intuition, the ALT in question was able to provide useful language learning strategies, and thus act as a pedagogical guide for the students. This suggests a much more positive framing which removes the linguistic privilege held by Western ‘native speakers’, and thus opens a space for other teachers to be included.

The second extract highlights the students’ growing confidence in their own linguistic knowledge, perhaps enhanced by the fact they were able to show it off in the process of ‘besting’ their ‘native speaker’ teacher. Once again, we see here an interesting framing in which a previously held negative (the lack of ‘native speaker’ intuition) was reframed as a positive (the ability to explain language confidently because of intensive academic study). In both examples the framing of the positive qualities of teachers moved away from simple ‘native speaker’ intuition, and towards levels of language awareness and pedagogical skill.

It is certainly arguable that dividing up teachers on the basis of 'native' and 'non-native' and attributing different strengths and weaknesses to those groups is still displaying native-speakerism. I would agree. However, the point here is not to demonstrate that the students became fully-fledged critical applied linguists during the study, but only that over the length of the course they began reframing their beliefs in ways which indicated a drift from the ideologically-informed native-speakerist discourses they were relying on at the beginning. This counter-framing around the definition of the 'native speaker,' the validity of world Englishes, and the qualities of language teachers, suggests a move in a more progressive direction, in which they may eventually come to recognize the linguistic strength and creativity of all users of the language, themselves included.

The Persistence of the Master Frame

Despite these positive examples of counter-framing, it should not be inferred that the master frame no longer had any influence. This frame is based on a strong, pervasive ideology which the students will have encountered throughout their lives as both language learners and trainee teachers, and which may have been reinforced by exposure to more domestic forms of essentialism such as *nihonjinron*, as suggested by Bouchard (2017). As such, it is unsurprising that elements of this framing persisted, despite the hopeful glimmers offered by the examples of counter framing which were outlined in the previous sections. So as not to overemphasize the effect of the counter-framing, I offer the following two extracts from my journal from relatively late in the course, both of which strikingly illustrate the persistence of the master frame, and the ideology of native-speakerism:

At the end of the lesson, Yurika said "if I am in this class, I will say world Englishes are valid, but outside this class if I am talking to someone, of course course I will say that British English and Nigerian English are not equal, because we use British English as a model" (Journal entry 28/05/2021)

Yurika and Akie were quite emphatic about [the validity of world Englishes], and seemed to find the whole idea much more concrete than in our previous lessons. Ms. Tachikawa, on the other hand, deferred to the opinion of the ['native speaker'], saying that she needed to have the permission of the 'native speaker' to know if a word was correct or not. For her example of a native speaker, she said "you." (Journal entry 02/07/2021)

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented an analysis of data gathered from a critical qualitative study of a class based on teacher notes and interviews, analysed through a frame analysis perspective. The framing employed by the participants demonstrated that their perceptions were strongly influenced by the ideology of native-speakerism in terms of who counted as a 'native speaker' of English, which varieties of English were considered valid, and what qualities were considered valuable for teachers in the classroom. Despite the clear influence of this ideology, examples of counter-framing were observed, in which the students began to frame their ideas in ways which suggested movement away from this ideological base. Despite the fact that these examples of counter-framing were small, and although the master frame persisted, they did indicate potentially liberatory routes for the students to pursue. This study has thus illuminated not only some of the subtle manifestations of the ideology of native-speakerism among trainee teachers but has also indicated possible avenues of resistance which can be encouraged. For critical educators, these may indicate the beginnings of paths to be pursued; all the more likely to be successful because the students have taken the first steps themselves. No critical project should seek to didactically force students to change their position, as to do so treats the students only as objects to be acted upon, rather than as equal subjects engaged in their learning and development. However, following Freire (1974/2005), I suggest that teachers can help their students adopt an attitude of constant re-evaluation, and to "perceive themselves in a dialectical relationship with their social reality" (p. 30). By confronting tensions, contradictions, and crises between their beliefs and their experiences, it is likely that they will begin, autonomously, to present counter-framings which in turn represent ideological ruptures.

Although this study revealed complex and suggestive insights, certain limitations ought to be acknowledged. Firstly, this was a small-scale study, and the data was drawn mainly from student interviews, and fieldnotes in the form of a research journal. Future research could be made more robust through a more solidly ethnographic approach, including more overt triangulation between different sources of data. Secondly, a greater variety of data sources would help add to the legitimacy of these findings, and this is another avenue that could be explored in future work. Despite these limitations, this study has yielded data which resonates strongly with critical research in the field, has highlighted the strength and influence of native-speakerism in this context, and has also cast some light on ways this may be challenged in the future.

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Appendix

Semester Plan

- Lesson 1: Historical perspectives on the 'native speaker'
- Lesson 2: Theoretical perspectives on the 'native speaker'
- Lesson 3: Native-speakerism 1: Historical perspectives
- Lesson 4: Native-speakerism 2: Recent research
- Lesson 5: Native-speakerism 3: Language models and target cultures
- Lesson 6: World Englishes: Historical development
- Lesson 7: World Englishes: Models and shifts
- Lesson 8: Teaching world Englishes and ELF: Introducing varieties in the class
- Lesson 9: Teaching world Englishes and ELF: Introducing varieties in the class (cont.)
- Lesson 10: Student presentations 1
- Lesson 11: Student presentations 2
- Lesson 12: Teaching world Englishes and ELF: Linguistic innovations and creativity
- Lesson 13: Student presentations 3
- Lesson 14: Student presentations 4