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Employment advertisements and native-speakerism in Japanese higher education

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As a White European male, I have undoubtedly been unfairly advantaged by my innate physical attributes when securing employment within Japanese tertiary education. However, while advantageous at the pre-recruitment stage, at the post-recruitment stage the same innate physical attributes have been instrumental in limiting the contributions I am seen to be able to make, and the scope of the roles I am expected to be able to perform. (Rivers, 2013a: 88)

Preamble

As a teacher-researcher with over 15 years' experience within the social context of Japan, I make the confessional statement above with the intention of alerting the reader to my own positioning in relation to the contents of this chapter. As someone defined by others as a native speaker of English, I have often been a reluctant beneficiary, at the pre-recruitment stage of employment, of institutional practices that assign professional value on the basis of speakerhood status¹ race, nationality and/or physical appearance. However, I have also been an equally reluctant victim, at the post-recruitment stage of employment, of institutional practices that draw from the very same criteria as a means of restricting institutional involvement, imposing conditional language policies, limiting status and denying professional development opportunities.

Drawing from research interests shaped by such contextualised experiences, this chapter examines 292 English Language Teaching (ELT) employment advertisements recruiting within the context of Japanese higher education to document the prevalence and various uses of the native-speaker criterion when listed as a qualification for employment. Based upon the data collected, this chapter then asks readers to consider whether the observed patterns of native-speaker criterion use constitute 'native-speakerism' and, if so, how and when the observed practices disadvantage potential applicants on the basis of their speakerhood status.

1 I have specifically referenced the term 'speakerhood status' to refer to assumptions, assessments, perceptions and/or judgements made in relation to general language background, language proficiency, language competence or any other non-formally assessed positions taken. This non-specific term is intended to avoid forced ascription to any particular ideological and/or political position as might be indicated through use of other terminology.

The resilience of the native-speaker criterion

In *A Festschrift for native speaker*, Coulmas (1981: 1) identifies the native speaker as a ‘common reference point for all branches of linguistics’, further asserting how ‘linguists of every conceivable theoretical orientation agree that the concept of the native speaker is of fundamental importance’ (ibid.). Since this time, and undoubtedly for many years prior, the native-speaker criterion has persisted as a central feature of discourse within language education and applied linguistics.

From a linguistic perspective, the longevity of the native-speaker criterion appears quite remarkable given that it has been dissected on multiple occasions in relation to its numerous theoretical shortcomings (Davies, 2013). In *The native speaker is dead!*, Paikeday (1985a: 8–10) describes the idea of the native speaker as ‘a rather delicate matter and a cardinal tenet of our linguistic faith’, adding how the term ‘in its linguistic sense represents an ideal, a convenient fiction, or a shibboleth rather than a reality’ (ibid.). During the same year, Paikeday also published an article in *TESOL Quarterly* entitled ‘May I kill the native speaker?’, in which, from the position of a descriptive lexicographer, he argues against the use of ‘native speakers as performance models’ (Paikeday, 1985b: 395).

Over a decade later, Rajagopalan (1997: 226) moves to remind us how the notion of nativity persists as ‘one of the founding myths of Modern Linguistics ... not interrogated from within the disciplinary boundaries’, while Pillar (2001: 121) adds further weight to calls to move away from the notion of nativity declaring that from a linguistic perspective, ‘the native speaker concept is useless and should therefore be discarded.’ More recently, and affirming the extent to which the native-speaker criterion continues to reside within the minds of the masses, Pederson (2012: 9) exclaims that ‘the NS has no basis in reality other than as a mental representation that exists in the minds of those who believe in it or operate within social structures that rely on it’.

‘Qualifying sociosemiotic associations’ of the native speaker

The previous section indicates the extent to which the native-speaker criterion has resisted academic criticism and has often been excluded from the need for empirical evidence to rationalise its continued use. Today, despite definitional parameters drawing more from a supposed ‘commonsensical’ understanding than from empirical evidence, the native-speaker criterion remains a central component of discussions about practice, pedagogy and policy within the global linguistic marketplace of ELT (Sung-Yul Park and Wee, 2012).

Evidence suggests that, across various contexts, the native speaker has been actively commoditised through what can be termed as a plethora of ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’. This term is intended to denote the real or imagined characteristics of an individual believed, in certain contexts and at certain times, to ‘qualify’ them as a legitimate or authentic native speaker of a particular language. As native-speaker status is often ascribed on the basis of criteria unconnected to actual language use (e.g. country of origin or physical appearance), such ascriptions are drawn from a particular configuration of mental representations and/or social signs (i.e. sociosemiotics) embedded within a particular context. Associations of this nature have been discussed as ‘the

complex baggage of “nativeness” as it is constructed in the field of English language teaching’ (Stanley, 2012: 25). Furthermore, they are often deployed to further a variety of interests as they function to furnish the imaginations of eager students and other stakeholders with an idealised or prototypical image of how the native speaker should be configured (Rivers, 2011).

Through entertaining a rather superficial version of the native speaker as ‘the poster child of expensive advertising campaigns’ (Rajagopalan, 2015: 125) and as a central component within ‘glossy university advertisements or language school brochures’ (Toh, 2013: 187), the global linguistic marketplace of ELT has actively participated in the commoditisation of the native speaker via a cyclical process of mutual exchange and reinforcement. As students and other stakeholders consume the idealised or prototypical image of the native speaker – one designed to appeal to dreams, aspirations and a world of limitless possibilities – the more entrenched this ideal becomes, thus further stimulating demand and consumption (see Rivers and Ross, 2013).

In order to demonstrate some of the ways in which the native speaker is commoditised within certain contexts, outlined below are three examples of the dominant ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’ of the native speaker of English commonly referenced within Japan. These ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’ can be readily found within the literature and are often the product of various processes including, and looking beyond, financial motivations, the politics of nation-state affiliation (Bonfiglio, 2010) and sociohistorical constructions of ‘linguistic identity and political membership by the way of the nation’ (Hackert, 2009: 306). While some of these associations may hold universal applicability (i.e. race, colour and/or ethnicity may be contributing factors in ‘qualifying’ an individual as a native speaker of English within other national contexts), here the focus and supporting research evidence is framed specifically within the boundaries of the Japanese ELT context.

1 Potential point of division and disadvantage: race, colour and/or ethnicity

Qualifying sociosemiotic association: legitimate native-speaker English teachers are White. For recent evidence, see Appleby, (2014); Hayes, (2013); Heimlich, (2013); Kubota and Fujimoto, (2013); Kubota and McKay, (2009); Rivers, (2011, 2013a); Rivers and Ross, (op cit).

2 Potential point of division and disadvantage: country of origin and/or nationality

Qualifying sociosemiotic association: legitimate native-speaker English teachers originate from a select number of specific countries (e.g. Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, the United States of America and occasionally South Africa). For recent evidence, see Hashimoto, (2011); Houghton, (2013); Rivers, (2011, 2013a); Rivers and Ross, (op cit); Seargeant, (2009).

3 Potential point of division and disadvantage: proficiency and/or teaching ability

Qualifying sociosemiotic association: legitimate native-speaker English teachers possess an innate mastery of the language and are therefore the

most appropriate teachers (although often only of spoken or conversational English). For recent evidence, see Breckenridge and Erling, (2011); Rivers and Ross, (op cit); Toh, (op cit); Tsuneyoshi, (2013).

In allowing the definitional parameters of the native-speaker criterion to be shaped by such ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’, the current situation is one whereby the native speaker remains open to almost endless speculation, interpretation and manipulation – facets well suited to the market-oriented processes of commodification and consumption. Rutherford (1990: 11) touches upon these dynamics in explaining how through the ‘commodification of language and culture, objects and images are torn free of their original referents and their meanings become a spectacle open to almost infinite translation’. The consequences within the domain of ELT can often be seen as a particular brand of language education which appears subservient ‘to a boutique or catwalk mentality in its readiness to be part of an inner-textual network that feeds and fetes the narratives of marketization and commercial retail’ (Toh, op cit: 187).

Institutional communication: the employment advertisement genre

Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize. They fix processes that are essentially dynamic, they hide their influence, and they rouse our emotions to a standardized pitch on standardized issues. (Douglas, 1986: 92)

As the above observations indicate, institutions, such as schools and universities, perform a multitude of societal roles, including the transmission and reinforcement of social categories, norms, values, attitudes and ethics. The employment advertisement, ‘a genre of organizational communication’ (Rafaeli and Oliver, 1998: 342), has been identified as a prominent channel through which institutions are able to transmit an array of information to a public audience. Owen (2004: 153) draws attention to how ‘anyone who has studied higher education recruitment advertisements over recent years will have noticed how they reflect social trends’. Indeed, referencing how the discursive practices of higher education have been increasingly fashioned by market forces, Fairclough (1993: 143) discusses the way that institutions have ‘come to increasingly operate (under government pressure) as if they were ordinary businesses competing to sell their products to consumers’. Similarly, Bhatia (1999: 149) warns how genre-mixing has resulted in ‘several instances in which increasing use of promotional strategies are used in genres that are traditionally considered non-promotional in intent’ (i.e. employment advertisements).

Until the early 1990s employment advertisements represented a distinct genre of institutional communication. Employment advertisements prior to this period were often print-based, impersonal, conservative and consistent in terms of linguistic content, visual format and organisational structure. Contemporary employment advertisements, in contrast, have shifted toward a promotional inter-discursive genre of institutional communication (Fairclough, 1993). Within the context of Chinese higher education, Xiong (2012: 331) details evidence of an

alliance between market forces and bureaucratic elements, manifested through employment advertisements based upon ‘an intertextual mix of bureaucratic/authorless discourse and promotional discourse’. Such research points toward an uncomfortable realisation that ‘we have reached a time where universities start to operate as if they were ordinary businesses’ (Askehave, 2007: 725).

ELT employment advertisements and the native-speaker criterion²

Holliday (2005: 385) notes how the terms ‘native’ and ‘non-native’, despite their linguistic flaws, ‘have very real currency within the popular discourse of ELT’. It is therefore somewhat curious to discover that published research examining the native-speaker criterion within ELT employment advertisements has been relatively sparse, often restricted to special interest publications on the margins of the mainstream. Although limited, the few studies that have been published have shown remarkable consistency in their findings across numerous local and national contexts.

Clark and Paran (2007: 407) examined ELT employability within the UK. Recruitment data collected from 90 private language schools, further education colleges and universities revealed that 41 of the 90 institutions considered the native-speaker criterion to be ‘very important’ when making recruitment decisions. They suggest that ‘non-native-speaker teachers of English are often perceived as having a lower status than their native-speaking counterparts, and have been shown to face discriminatory attitudes when applying for teaching jobs’ and conclude that a ‘lack of native speaker status will be viewed as an important consideration at over 70% of the institutions in this survey’ (ibid: 423–424).

In a study exploring a wide range of potentially discriminatory criteria in ELT employment advertisements, Selvi (2010: 158) highlights how ‘despite the fact that there have been a number of institutionalized efforts to overcome discriminatory practices, hiring practices in English language teaching still follow a business model where stakeholders play the “native speaker card”’. Following on from Selvi (ibid.), Mahboob and Golden (2013: 72) more recently contend that ‘the discriminatory practices that the field has been trying to eliminate are still visible’ and that ‘more work needs to be carried out to make TESOL an equitable profession’. Through an analysis of 77 ELT employment advertisements recruiting in the Middle East and Asia, the authors observed that ‘79% of all advertisements specifically used the term native speaker’ (ibid.: 76), while there was a general ‘preference for native speakerness over teaching or educational qualifications’ (ibid.: 78).

2 Prompted by an intervention from the author, on 12 November 2012 the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL) drafted a formal policy prohibiting use of the term ‘native speaker’ in its online employment advertisements. This move was rationalised at the time on the basis that ‘use of the term “native speaker” can be seen as discriminating against expert teachers of English for whom English is a second or other language’ (BAAL draft policy dated 19 November 2012, cited in Rivers, 2013b: 37). It is interesting to note how this discourse does not offer protection to those teachers who are categorised as native speakers of English. In other words, only one group of ‘teachers’ are believed to be in need of protection.

Most recently, Ruecker and Ives (in press) dissect a sample of 59 ELT employment advertisements taken from a selection of teacher recruitment websites, TEFL certification websites and cultural exchange websites in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. With specific reference to a recruitment website located in Korea, the authors note how ‘the ideal candidate is overwhelmingly depicted as a young, White, enthusiastic native speaker of English from a stable list of Inner Circle countries’ (ibid.). The authors further state that the overall message of the website is one which imposes the idea that non-native-English-speaking teachers ‘from countries outside of the approved list, regardless of qualifications, need not apply’ (ibid.). The data reported in the study showed that the native-speaker criterion was used within 81 per cent of employment advertisements.

Summary

Previous sections have drawn attention to a number of issues relevant to the current study. First, it has been shown that the idea of the native speaker, as linguistic benchmark, has been critically questioned for at least the past 40 years. Despite various objections being voiced concerning the linguistic reliability of the native speaker, it remains a common point of reference within language education discourse and is called upon to serve various interests. Second, the native speaker has been actively commoditised through certain ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’. Such associations have been revealed in Japan as inclusive of elements such as race, colour and/or ethnicity, country of origin and/or nationality and additional beliefs about language proficiency and teaching ability. Third, the role of institutional communication in facilitating the establishment of categories, norms, values, attitudes and ethics within wider society has been discussed. The genre of the employment advertisement has been highlighted, with particular attention given to its evolution as a hybrid genre, often interwoven with promotional discourse intended to service the market economy. Finally, evidence has been presented from various local and national contexts showing how, within ELT employment advertisements, there exists a clear preference in the hiring of teachers based predominantly on their supposed native-speaker status.

The current study

For the current study, 292 ELT employment advertisements recruiting for full-time positions within the context of Japanese higher education covering an 18-month period (between October 2012 and April 2014) were collected. The aim was to document the prevalence and various uses of the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment. The employment advertisements, all written in English, were downloaded from the ‘Humanities-linguistics’ subsection of the Japan Research Career Information Network (JREC-IN) website.³

3 The JREC-IN website is operated by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST). Although the JST is an independent administrative institution, it is supported by government subsidies (93.6 per cent of their fiscal 2013 budget) and aims to promote policy objectives set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The discursive practices of those institutions using the JREC-IN service are not censored or regulated through an explicit anti-discrimination policy. The website only informs potential posters that JREC-IN ‘shall not bear any responsibility for any of the information’ (Japan Science and Technology Agency, 2014). Institutions using the JREC-IN service are requested to provide text-based information (in Japanese and/or English) using a standardised template. The template uses a selection of headers including content of work (e.g. primary duties and teaching requirements), rank (e.g. the level of the advertised position), qualifications (e.g. the explicit requirements demanded by the institution), treatments (e.g. employment terms, salary and benefits) and application materials (e.g. what potential applicants are requested to supply).

Findings and discussion

Through an initial analysis of the 292 ELT employment advertisements, a number of general observations were recorded. The mean number of qualifications requested by the recruiting institutions was 4.28 (SD=1.69) with 81 per cent ($n=236$) of the employment advertisements requesting that potential applicants satisfy between three and six individual requirements. Within the sample of 292 employment advertisements, 81 per cent ($n=236$) offered a limited-term contract position, while 19 per cent ($n=56$) offered a de facto tenured position with no term limit.

In terms of formal qualification requirements, 98 per cent ($n=230$) of the 236 limited-term contract positions required potential applicants to hold an MA-level qualification, while two per cent ($n=5$) required potential applicants to hold a PhD. This pattern was reversed for the 56 employment advertisements offering potential applicants a de facto tenured position with no term limit. Here, 20 per cent ($n=11$) of the de facto tenured positions required potential applicants to hold an MA-level qualification, while 80 per cent ($n=45$) required potential applicants to hold a Ph.D. This suggests that a higher level of educational achievement increases the opportunity for securing tenured employment.⁴

With reference to the primary qualification (i.e. the qualification positioned first on the list of institutional requirements), in 43.5 per cent ($n=127$) of all employment advertisements a formal qualification was positioned first. The most frequently desired formal qualifications were an MA in TESOL or a related area (18 per cent or $n=55$) and a PhD or other doctorate (17 per cent or $n=50$). The native-speaker criterion was listed in the primary position in 39.4 per cent ($n=115$) of all employment advertisements. Furthermore, 13.4 per cent ($n=39$) of all employment advertisements required potential applicants to hold a specified level of professional achievement, level of experience, personality characteristic or demographic status, while 3.7 per cent ($n=11$) of all employment advertisements demanded potential applicants to agree to some form of university mission statement, institutional belief or statement of purpose.

Looking more closely at the discursive presentation of the native-speaker criterion, the data indicate that it was specified as a qualification for employment in 63 per cent ($n=184$) of all employment advertisements. In 34 per cent ($n=102$) of the advertisements 'native speaker' was specified as the discursive header, in 15.4 per cent ($n=45$) of the advertisements 'native or' was specified as the discursive header, in 8.9 per cent ($n=26$) of the advertisements 'native' was specified as the discursive header, while in 3.8 per cent ($n=11$) of the advertisements the native-speaker criterion was discursively presented in some other guise. Documented below are the precise discursive forms through which the native-speaker criterion was presented within the 184 employment advertisements.

4 The maximum length of contracted employment offered was five years (see Rivers, 2013c, for the legal framework related to this term limit). In short, changes made to the Employment Contract Act (Act No. 128 of 5 December 2007) on 23 March 2012 through the Bill for Partial Amendment of Labour Contract Act 'allows fixed-term contract employees with contract periods of over 5 years in total to convert their employment contract to an employment contract without a definite period by requesting to their employers' (Anderson Mōri and Tomotsune, 2012: 1).

Table 1: Discursive forms through which the native-speaker criterion was presented within the employment advertisements

Discursive form		<i>n</i>
1 Native speaker _____		
1.1	of English of the English Language	58
1.2	of English or a person with the same competence or equivalent (level) or a person with equivalent English ability or a speaker of English with a level of proficiency equivalent to native speakers or an equivalent command of English to native speakers (TOEFL iBT 100 or above, TOEIC 950 or above, or IELTS 7.0 or above) or non-native speaker of English with native-speaker level English proficiency or one with comparable linguistic competence in English or have native-speaker English ability	13
1.3	of English irrespective of nationality regardless of nationality of any nationality who is a national of an English-speaking country	10
1.4	of English with sufficient working knowledge of Japanese with evidence to support a working knowledge of Japanese language able to work in the Japanese language for administration with a command of Japanese sufficient to fulfil administrative activities with sufficient proficiency in Japanese to deal with administrative staff without assistance with an ability to understand Japanese or a native speaker of Japanese with ability to conduct classes in English	8
1.5	of English or non-native English speakers with proficiency in English or near-native speaker ability (for non-native speakers preference will be given to those who present us with a TOEFL score report of 600 or its equivalent)	5
1.6	of Japanese who can teach courses in English	4
1.7	competence in English	3
1.8	of EU official languages	1

2 Native or _____		
2.1	near-native English ability (all nationalities welcome) near-native English-language ability equivalent ability in English equivalent speaker of English those who have the equivalent abilities possess native level fluency have native-speaking ability	13
2.2	near-native speaker competence in English is required and fluency in Japanese preferable near-native competence in Japanese and English near-native fluency in English and Japanese native-like proficiency in English with sufficient Japanese to handle administrative functions and duties or near-native speaker to conduct classes both in English and Japanese	11
2.3	near-native fluency in English	8
2.4	near-native English speaker / or near-native speaker of English	5
2.5	near-native speaker of English of any nationality	3
2.6	native-like proficiency in English	2
2.7	near-native competency in English	1
2.8	near-native command of English	1
2.9	non-native English speaker who has experience teaching overseas	1
3 Native _____		
3.1	-level English proficiency -like proficiency in English proficiency in English English proficiency	10
3.2	English speakers require proficiency in Japanese adequate for daily administrative duties English speaker with a good command of Japanese in listening, speaking and reading but not necessarily in writing	9
3.3	facility in English or Japanese	3
3.4	competency in English	2
3.5	English speaker	2

4 Other		
4.1	English at native or near-native proficiency (a non-Japanese applicant must have an intermediate or above proficiency in Japanese)	2
4.2	must have (near-)native/fluent competence in both Japanese and English	1
4.3	possess native or near-native proficiency in English	1
4.4	have a very high-level (native-like) proficiency in English	1
4.5	if not a native Japanese speaker, sufficient command of Japanese is required	1
4.6	if a native speaker of English, applicants must also have a level of Japanese language ability that will allow him/her to partake fully in any assigned administrative duties	1
4.7	non-Japanese applicants should have native speaker fluency of Japanese	1
4.8	Japanese native fluent English speaker able to conduct lessons in Japanese	1
4.9	fluency in English (native speaker level)	1
4.10	applicant's native language should be English	1

As the data presented in section 1.1 of Table 1 show, on 58 individual occasions the native-speaker criterion was discursively presented in its most simplified form. This particular pattern of discursive reference impacts upon potential applicants, and indeed the wider readership, in a variety of ways. First, this simplified discursive reference implies that the native-speaker criterion requires no additional description, definition or clarification, thus working to further domesticate a profoundly illegitimate point of linguistic reference. The absence of descriptive information defining the term reflects the position that ‘the more that an item of behavior is predictable, the less information it carries’ (Douglas, op cit: 47). A practical consequence of this dynamic is that many institutions are ‘unable or unwilling to define the parameters of the “native-speaker” label despite making it a central criterion for employment’ (Rivers, 2013a: 89), such is its assumed predictability.

The disclosure of such limited information, despite the native-speaker criterion’s central position in teacher recruitment, also functions to protect the institution from potential negative feedback, appraisal or interrogation. Relevant here are Gee’s (2008) observations concerning the features of discourse and discursive practice, namely that ‘discourses are resistant to internal criticism and self-scrutiny, since uttering viewpoints that seriously undermine them defines one as being outside them’ (ibid.: 161–162). In practical terms, this might equate to the following: if a potential applicant does not know or understand without further definition what a native speaker is, and consequently whether or not they can be classified as one, then such applicants need not apply, as they are deemed as external to the shared understanding required.

Second, the simplified discursive reference rather brutally divides all speakers of English into those who possess and those who do not possess an unstated set of

preferential attributes. This essentialist approach to speakerhood status ‘falls short in capturing the multifaceted nature of individuals’ diverse linguistic identities’ (Faez, 2011: 231) and, somewhat ironically, condemns all language learners within the recruiting institution to an inferior and inescapable category of speakerhood (i.e. the non-native-English-speaking students will always be non-native speakers and therefore never awarded equal status, or opportunity for employment, as the so-called native speakers of English, regardless of the level of proficiency attained during their lifetime). Through use of the native-speaker criterion in such a reduced form, potential applicants – in addition to many others, e.g. students – are informed ‘at the very least about who is an insider and who isn’t, often who is “normal” and who isn’t, and often, too, many other things as well’ (Gee, op cit: 161).

Beyond Section 1.1 of Table 1, it is possible to uncover discursive evidence of ‘many other things as well’ in the form of the previously discussed ‘qualifying sociosemiotic associations’ in the Japanese context. As documented within Section 1.2, on 13 individual occasions the native-speaker criterion was used as a benchmark for potential applicants to comparatively appraise their own English language competence, level, ability, command and/or proficiency. With the exception of one employment advertisement, though, potential applicants were not informed about the actual standards of English language competence, level, ability, command and/or proficiency they were expected to satisfy. This lack of detail further reflects and enforces the commonsensical belief that legitimate native-speaker English teachers, as a generic collective of linguistic equals, possess an innate mastery of the language and are therefore the most appropriate teachers. Recent discussions have revealed the absurdity of this assumption:

Native speakers, after all, differ in terms of their proficiency; some are good speakers, some not; some good writers, some not, and so on. And if we include the whole range of native speaker, from very early childhood, then we would probably agree that the gamut runs from first learning to fully proficient performance, just as it does with second-language learners. (Davies, op cit: 27)

Slight variations upon the same theme were observable on 13 other occasions (see Section 2.1), where potential applicants were required to possess ‘native or near-native’ English ability, speaking equivalence and/or level of fluency. Moreover, on ten further occasions (see Section 3.1), potential applicants were required to possess ‘native-level or native-like’ English proficiency. While certain aspects of this discourse may appear to be moving toward more equitable recruitment practices in that potential applicants are offered scope, albeit limited, for slight variations from assumed native-speaker norms, the fact that native-speaker language ability is used as a benchmark without evidence suggests that the discursive practices of such employment advertisements are far from being equitable.

A dominant trend observed within the data was the discursive uses of the native-speaker criterion alongside requests for potential applicants to have Japanese language knowledge, command, proficiency and/or ability (34 individual references as recorded in Sections 1.4, 2.2, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7).

While the need for Japanese language proficiency may, in many cases, present as quite a sensible request given the context (i.e. confirming how the relationship between national context and language are accepted as symbiotic), it is interesting to note how the majority of such requests state that the Japanese language is needed for undertaking administrative work rather than for teaching.

Several assumptions concerning the link between language proficiency and the nationality of the potential applicant were observed within the data. For example, one advertisement read:

If you are a non-Japanese person, certification of your Japanese ability. If you are a non-Japanese applicant; we may ask you to write a short essay in Japanese at the interview. (#D113051384)

Another wrote:

there is no restriction on nationality but successful applicants must have a high proficiency in both English and Japanese (non-native Japanese applicants must be able to perform administrative duties and tasks in Japanese. (#D113101094)

In positioning Japanese language proficiency as a qualification for employment, although only expressed in explicit terms to non-Japanese nationals (the assumption being that all Japanese nationals will speak Japanese better than any non-Japanese nationals), employment roles, responsibilities, contracted terms and expectations are covertly drawn on the basis of the dominant 'host' language rather than the actual language being taught. This heightens the potential for Japanese linguistic imperialism to impact upon recruitment policy and institutional practice.

The idea that 'host' language proficiency, in this case Japanese, is able to function as the fulcrum for discriminatory practices in ELT recruitment related to the native-speaker criterion is rarely discussed. Usui (2000: 280) warns against the perils of sponsoring the rise of 'petit nationalism as it operates across English language education and communication studies in Japan', often under the identity-bolstering shroud of anti-English linguistic imperialism discourse. More recently, with direct reference to the Japanese context, Rudolph et al. (2015) detail how:

the idealized NS of English is glocally constructed concomitantly with the idealized NS of Japanese. The construction of linguistic and cultural ownership extends beyond English, both within a given society and the ELT situated therein. In addition, the construction of 'us' in relation to context, may serve to both privilege and marginalize local members of a society. As borders of 'inside' and 'outside' are constructed and patrolled in terms of the idealized NS of English, so too are those of being or becoming 'Japanese'. (Rudolph et al., 2015: 39)

In such situations, one can often witness how languages and their respective histories, as well as their supposed native speakers, are positioned as being in direct conflict with each other upon a battleground for professional identity, institutional membership, ideological control and status superiority. For example,

in certain employment situations within Japan, those teachers who are perceived not to be fluent in all four skills of the Japanese language (i.e. non-Japanese nationals) are contractually obliged to teach additional classes as compensation. Among the many problems associated with this practice is that assessments of Japanese language fluency are often made on the basis of nationality as implied by extracts (#D113051384) and (#D113101094).

Houghton (op cit) documents a case at a Japanese university in which a Korean national, highly fluent in all four skills of the Japanese language, was categorised by the institution alongside other non-Japanese nationals who possessed a significantly lower level of Japanese language proficiency for the purpose of allocating additional teaching duties. With links to the confessional statement presented at the start of this chapter, Houghton (ibid.) further illustrates how language requirements and regulations enforced within the workplace at the post-employment stage have the capacity to discriminate against one particular group. With reference to her own workplace, she discusses how ‘the head of the English section ... personally banned the use of the English language in the English section’ (ibid.: 67) and how ‘official documents submitted in Japanese were in principle not accepted when accompanied by short email memos written in English, and the expression of opinions and ideas in English by email was ignored’ (ibid: 68). A consequence of such language-based decision-making was ‘the systematic and almost complete silencing’ (ibid: 68) of those employed within a category exclusively occupied by non-Japanese nationals.

As language assessments are therefore commonly linked to nationality, a final observation in the data gathered concerns the specification of or reference to the nationality of potential applicants. On ten individual occasions (see Section 1.3), potential applicants were required to be a ‘native speaker of English’ of any nationality and/or who is a national of an English-speaking country. Such descriptions should be approached with caution, as their practical function is intended to indicate that the advertised positions are for non-Japanese nationals only. Hashimoto (2013: 159) documents how the common view that a native speaker of English ‘is a foreigner has played a crucial role in the Japanese education system, and has contributed to restrictions on the functions of NSEs within the system’. Similarly, Heimlich (op cit: 174) asserts that ‘there are in Japan no Japanese workers assigned roles as native speakers of foreign languages, because the categories are mutually exclusive’ (although see Yanase, this volume, for a different view).

The data in the current study support the position that the native-speaker criterion often functions as a synonym for non-Japanese nationality, and this in turn identifies potential applicants, in the majority of cases, as little more than temporary ‘guest’ workers. With reference to similar recruitment processes within Italian higher education, Petrie (2013) declares how:

[d]escriptors such as ‘mother tongue’ and ‘native speaker’ are to be avoided in recruitment procedures for access to employment; these terms cannot reasonably be added to a curriculum vitae as a ‘qualification’. Legislation or norms using these terms have more potential to fall foul of prohibitions on

discrimination based on nationality, since they are more likely to attract applicants who are not citizens of the host state, and indeed may even be reserved for guest workers. (Petrie, 2013: 41)

In the current study, 81 per cent ($n=236$) of the employment advertisements offered potential applicants a limited-term contract position, thus showing how institutional 'policies aim to keep cycling in new batches of foreign workers' for the purpose of maintaining 'a rite of social purification of the workplace' (Heimlich, op cit: 178). The consequences of limited-term employment in those instances where the actual position is continual (i.e. in instances where one acts as a 'guest' worker) can impact upon relationships beyond the institution.

The nomadic lifestyle that limited-term contracts tend to promote often inhibits the formation of sustainable collegial relationships, restricts workplace involvement in long-term initiatives, denies emotional attachment to a specific place (i.e. developing a sense of home or belonging) and undermines sincere dedication to one's institution, such are the demands of an almost obsessive-like quest to continually search for improved working conditions. (Rivers, 2013b: 68)

In terms of racial preference, data from the current study do not directly reveal a preference for potential applicants to be of a particular race or ethnicity, which is to be expected. It would certainly not be in the best interests of the institution to be making public proclamations, in English to an international audience, favouring one race or ethnicity over another. Discourses of racial preference and race-based discrimination are often deemed incompatible with the 'masquerade of smiley faces and perpetual pleasantness decorating the veneer of "native-speaker" English teaching' (ibid.: 75).

However, the evidence that ELT recruitment in Japan shows racial preference is compelling. Kubota and McKay (op cit: 612) suggest that 'teaching English in Japan is a raced practice with preference for White native speakers', while more recently, Kubota and Fujimoto discuss the 'complex manifestations of racial exclusion and othering' (op cit: 204) within the Japanese context. Moreover, in an empirical study investigating the teacher preferences of Japanese English students, Rivers and Ross (op cit: 334) discover a 'statistically significant preference for the White race teachers'. In terms of the current study, and although mere speculation in the absence of conclusive evidence, a more covert channel of making assessments on the basis of race and ethnicity is actually provided, as 50 per cent ($n=146$) of the 292 employment advertisements required potential applicants to submit a recent photograph.

Evidence of native-speakerism?

As outlined at the start of this chapter, the motive for the current investigation was to document the prevalence and uses of the native-speaker criterion when listed as a qualification for employment. From the data presented and discussed in previous sections, readers are now asked to consider whether the observed patterns of native-speaker criterion use constitute native-speakerism and, if so, how and when the observed practices disadvantage potential applicants on the

basis of their speakerhood status. In order to answer these questions it is necessary to revisit the two primary definitions of native-speakerism current in the academic literature.

An early definition of native-speakerism was provided by Holliday (op cit: 6), who identifies it as ‘an established belief that “native-speaker” teachers represent a “Western culture” from which spring the ideals of both the English language and of English language teaching methodology’. Holliday (2006: 385) later added that native-speakerism stands as ‘a pervasive ideology within ELT’. For Holliday, native-speakerism is therefore cast primarily as an ideological construct influenced by political, cultural, neo-racial and imperialistic forces.

The data within the current study have shown a widespread preference for potential applicants applying for ELT positions within Japanese higher education to satisfy the native-speaker criterion. To recap, the native-speaker criterion was used, in various discursive forms, within 63 per cent ($n=184$) of all employment advertisements as a qualification for employment. While such discursive uses might tempt the reader into concluding that these institutions have subscribed to ‘an established belief that “native-speaker” teachers represent a “Western culture” from which spring the ideals of both the English language and of English language teaching methodology’ (Holliday, 2005: 6), and are therefore native-speakerist, there is no conclusive evidence that this is the case.

To expand, within the data in the current study there is insufficient information available to explain exactly why 184 employment advertisements referenced the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment. Given this lack of information concerning institutional motive, and indeed the lack of background information found generally within the employment advertisement genre of discourse, the definition of native-speakerism proposed by Holliday (2005) does not allow us to determine whether the observed uses are indeed examples of native-speakerism. The reason for this shortcoming is that native-speakerism cannot be accurately accounted for when primarily defined as an ideological construct. While it might well be reasonable to speculate that the widespread use of the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment is the product of native-speakerist ideology, speculation does not provide stable ground for challenging practices, pedagogies and policies that potentially discriminate against certain individuals on the basis of their speakerhood status, a point I have made elsewhere.

While Holliday’s (2005) definition has been useful in providing a foundation for new theoretical direction through which to forward explorations of issues concerning the dimensions of native-speakerism in foreign language education, we now see this definition as being limited in its ability to capture the multitude of intricate ways that native-speakerism, embedded within the fabric of the TESOL industry, is reflected through daily pedagogical practice, institutional and national policy, as well as legal frameworks which centre around issues of prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination (Houghton & Rivers, 2013: 7).

In their work on native-speakerism in Japan, Houghton and Rivers (ibid.) attempt to facilitate a shift away from ideological influence by moving the definition of

native-speakerism toward configuration as a contemporary social problem. While certainly not seeking to deny or underestimate the influence of various ideologies, the definition of native-speakerism proposed below is intended to bring greater attention to the ways in which a wider range of practices, including many of those documented within the current study, essentially share a common foundation in stereotyping and in-group/out-group classification dynamics.

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 categorised as a native speaker of a particular language ... 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 fundamental breach of one's basic human rights. (Houghton and Rivers, op cit: 14)

In choosing to approach native-speakerism primarily as a contemporary social problem rather than as an ideological construct, Houghton and Rivers (ibid.: 2) contend that interpreting native-speakerism 'primarily in terms of imperialism or colonialism, and thus ideology' places significant limits upon 'the analysis in ways that obscure the complexity of native-speakerism as a global, and very contemporary, social phenomenon' (ibid.). One such limit is the view that native speakers, as static ideological aggressors, are often the exclusive beneficiaries of native-speakerist practices and are therefore not in need of protection from potentially discriminatory practice. As the confessional statement at the beginning of this chapter reveals, the lines of aggression and victimhood cannot be so easily drawn. The definition of native-speakerism above thus attempts to counter the dominant unidirectional conceptualisation of perpetrator–victim discourse, as insisted upon by ideological appraisals of power and status in language education, in order to offer protection to all potential victims of questionable in-group/out-group classification dynamics.

With implications for moving the discussion forward, the definition of native-speakerism proposed by Houghton and Rivers (ibid.) further refrains from imposing ideological responsibility, shame and/or guilt (see Bueno and Caesar, 2003) upon contemporary teaching professionals of all backgrounds. As they argue:

When using pre-determined terminology to discuss different kinds of prejudices, the perpetrators and the victims may or may not be implied by the terms themselves, with the obvious danger being that the mere use of any given term (especially terms such as orientalism, sexism, male chauvinism and feminism) may accuse a certain group by automatically suggesting in the minds of people who are the perpetrators (in need of challenge) and who are the victims (in need of protection). And the same can be said of native-speakerism, a term which, within its present (albeit rather recently coined definition) primarily casts 'native speakers' from the English-speaking West as the perpetrators of native-speakerism (the subjects of the verb) and 'non-native speakers' from the English-speaking West as the victims (the objects of the verb). (Houghton and Rivers, op cit: 3)

Given the definition of native-speakerism proposed by Houghton and Rivers (op cit), an evidence-based appraisal of the data in the current study allows the reader to conclude that the uses of the native-speaker criterion shown in the 184 employment advertisements constitute a clear-cut example of native-speakerism. In drawing this conclusion, it is not necessary to uncover the motives underpinning the institutional decision-making. The crucial points of focus are the institutional actions and the consequences of such actions. Simply put, once the recruiting institution chooses to reference the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment, they are engaging in native-speakerist practice. This conclusion is directly informed by the fact that potential applicants wishing to apply for one of the 184 positions referencing the native-speaker criterion in the current study are deemed to be qualified 'on the basis of either being or not being perceived and categorized as a native speaker of a particular language' (Houghton and Rivers, op cit: 14). Institutional decisions such as these are discriminatory against potential applicants who are not defined by the recruiting institution, or who choose not to define themselves, as native speakers of a particular language.

Future research

False dichotomies such as the native/non-native speaker have impacted upon language education practices, pedagogies and policies in various ways for an extended period of time. The depth of their entrenchment within contemporary ELT discourse remains such that there exists significant scope for future research initiatives aimed toward further revealing their inadequacy when assessed in relation to the complexity and fluidity of the individual.

Demand is growing for multidisciplinary research that advances many of the 'compelling arguments for re-evaluating the validity of the construct of the native speaker' (Sayer, 2012: 152). In terms of how native speakers – and also non-native speakers – of different languages are commoditised through mental representation, symbols and other imagery, it would be interesting to explore how their respective 'qualifying sociosemiotic associations' change across context and between languages. This kind of research, which would also be inclusive of explorations of professional identity, could take as its point of departure Toh's (op cit: 183–184) call to 'distinguish between native speaker as the socio-discursive and socio-semiotic construct that it is, and native speakers as the unique individuals (and indeed professionals) encountered in daily life and/or the workplace'.

In addition to various potential research initiatives, individual teacher-researchers may wish to engage in professional activism within and against the institution in an attempt to counter its authoritative role in the transmission and reinforcement of social categories, norms, values, attitudes and ethics. The data from the current study suggest that recruiting institutions should be challenged more frequently to define exactly what is being referenced through the native-speaker criterion. Douglas (op cit: 91) cautions that 'when the institutions make classifications for us, we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had. This thought is one that we have ever reason, as individuals, to resist'. It is therefore not unreasonable for potential applicants or serving employees to ask institutional authorities for evidence showing how the native-speaker criterion

qualifies potential applicants for certain positions. Other teacher-researchers seeking employment within Japanese higher education may alternatively choose not to apply to those institutions that cite the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment.

From my own subjective experience researching the topics discussed within this chapter, I sincerely believe that a positive change is on the horizon. As other teacher-researchers begin to speak more openly about their employment experiences, publish their research efforts and engage, without fear, in various forms of professional activism and/or resistance (see Rivers, 2015, and contributions to this collection), institutions, administrators, colleagues and other stakeholders are facing increased demands for accountability when using the native-speaker criterion as a conditional variable within the workplace. This chapter is therefore optimistic that, in the near future, institutions within the Japanese context will demonstrate greater sensitivity or restraint when contemplating using the native-speaker criterion as a qualification for employment. This shift, when it arrives, can only lead to an increase in the kind of equitable practices for which the global domain of ELT continues to search.

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