The Discursive Construction of "Native" and "Non-Native" Speaker English Teacher Identities in Japan: A Linguistic Ethnographic Investigation

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Abstract

Recent poststructuralist theories of identity posit identities as being discursively constructed in interactions with society, institutions, and individuals. This study used a Linguistic Ethnographic framework to investigate the discursive identity construction of two English teachers, one 'non-native' English speaker, and one 'native' English speaker, teaching English in a tertiary institution in Japan. Using naturally occurring data taken from classroom observations as well as data from reflexive semi-structured interviews, a Membership Categorization Analysis approach was taken to analyze how the participating teachers are positioned and position themselves in relation to the institution itself as well as at the classroom level when interacting with students. The study found that a clear distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' speaker teachers was created at the institutional level, which the teachers had little control over. However, at the classroom level, the participants exercised greater agency, which was used by the teachers to resist straightforward identity ascriptions.

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1. Introduction

Teacher identity is a multifaceted area of research within applied linguistics that draws from many disciplines, including traditional sociology, psychology, and social anthropology, to investigate a complex and dynamic phenomenon. One aspect of teacher identity that of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' status has been especially prominent in recent years in the field of English language teaching (ELT) with the discriminatory effects of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005, 2006) now being widely recognized.

Recent research related to teacher identity has taken a poststructuralist approach which recognizes that identities are not fixed, but fluid and discursively produced in each specific context (Barkhuizen, 2017; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves & Trent, 2016). This recognition of the discursive construction of identity has prompted one of the pioneers of the native-speakerism movement, Adrian Holliday, to refuse to review any paper that does not recognize this fact in relation to 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teachers, stating that,

> You can critique the constructed, imagined concepts of native-non-native speaker labeling. You can research the nature of the construction of the native-non-native speaker labels. What you cannot do is research the characteristics of 'native' and 'non-native speakers' because these groups don't actually exist except as ideological constructions. (Holliday, 2018)

This paper aims to address this concern by focusing not on similarities or differences of character and experience of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teachers, but on the construction of identities in terms of self-identification, interactional construction in the course of everyday teaching, and institutional ascription based on perceptions of fixed or essentialized notions of identity.

In order to investigate this complex and nuanced subject, I adopt a broad linguistic ethnographic framework (Copland & Creese, 2015) incorporating elements of membership categorization analysis (MCA) (Fitzgerald &

Housley, 2015; Stokoe, 2012). These methodological tools facilitate a fine-grained analysis capable of capturing the multiplicity of identity markers and taking into consideration the wider societal context. Although previous studies have investigated the discursive construction of teacher identities (see Gray & Morton, 2018 for a range of studies), these have mostly been based on interviews and teacher narratives. By using the magpie approach of Linguistic Ethnography this study gathers data from various sources (ethnographic observation, classroom, and free conversation observation, field notes, institutional materials, interviews) in order to gain a more complete picture of identity construction. In addition, by differentiating clearly between institutional (meso) and student-teacher (micro) interaction and highlighting the contextual nature of the Japanese setting, this study offers new insights into identity construction as it pertains to 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' English teachers.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Teacher Identity

Norton's (2000, 2013) pioneering work on teacher and learner identity helped to establish a poststructuralist paradigm that allowed the identity of teachers to be recognized as fluid, shifting, and multi-dimensional based on context (Barkhuizen, 2017; Block, 2007; Peirce, 1995). In this approach, identities are seen to be not innate or genetically determined but socially produced in interaction (Weedon, 1997). From this viewpoint, aspects of teacher identity such as gender, sexuality, and 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' status can be seen only as a subjective reality formed by social processes. These social processes consist of interaction with others, which allows aspects of identities to be displayed and performed, or imposed on us by others. In this definition, identity is understood "in terms of *who people are to each other*, and how different kinds of identities are produced in spoken interaction and written texts" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 6).

Gray and Morton (2018) expand on this by shifting the emphasis from what people *are* to what people *do*, which consists, in large part, of the discursive practices of interactional communication. This takes the concept of who

we are to each other as being not only interactional but also profoundly relational (Gray & Morton, 2018) based on our performed interactions with others. In their discussion of discursively produced identities, Gray and Morton (2018) also give reference to Zimmerman's (1998) three levels of identity: discourse, situated, and transportable, as important to understanding discursive constructions of identity. In this analysis, Zimmerman posits that the moment-to-moment (discourse) identities are observed in particular contexts (situated) and are seen against the backdrop of particular latent identities that "tag along" (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 90) as transportable identities. The result of this is a tension between the tag along 'visible' identities (for example, belonging to a particular ethnic or linguistic group) and the moment-to-moment "oriented-to" (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 91) identity being, or attempting to be, performed in that particular moment in a certain context. Thus, in the case of 'native' and 'non-native' teacher identity, an individual may be seen as either a 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker', without deliberately orienting to this particular category.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) offer a similar perspective on identity, arguing that identity is the product of linguistic and other semiotic practices, as opposed to being the source of it, which is always emergent. This sees identity as inherently flexible and capable of either accepting or resisting essentialist preconceptions of, for example, linguistic ownership. Like Zimmerman (1998), they also offer a three-level model of identity that encompasses "(a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 592). Each of these different levels may emerge at different points in discourse and point to a multifaceted, fluid view of identity. However, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) also acknowledge the tension between structure and agency in this identity emergence by arguing that identity is intersubjectively, rather than simply individually produced. In this model, agency is possible, but only within the constraints of a particular locally contextualized and historically produced discourse (McNamara, 2019).

2.2. Native-Speakerism

Building on Phillipson's (1992) influential analysis of linguistic imperialism, the term native-speakerism was first coined by Holliday (2005) to refer to "a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006, p. 385), with the logical result of preferential treatment for 'native speaker' teachers over their 'non-native speaker' counterparts as a result of this 'native-speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1992). This discrimination can come in the form of explicit exclusion, such as job advertisements that state that only 'native speakers' may apply (Mahboob & Golden, 2013), but is more often found in the habitus (Bourdieu 1990) that frames all of our everyday discourse and interactions based on who we perceive to be either a 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' (Lowe, in press).

As a counterpoint to Holliday, in recent years, this original definition of native-speakerism has been turned on its head and expanded by Houghton and Rivers (2013), who persuasively argue that it is not only 'non-native speaker' teachers that are adversely affected by native-speakerist concepts. They point out that although it may be true that 'native speaker' status is often a benefit at the beginning of a career, a glass ceiling exists for "native speakers" working in EFL contexts, notably Japan, where this study is situated, which prevents them from furthering their careers as teachers or having any direct influence on wider issues of curriculum and policy, rendering the 'native speaker' impotent and powerless. Aligned to this overarching view of "native speakers" in EFL contexts are issues of respect and value judgments on skills and abilities that posits the 'native speaker' as unqualified, incompetent and lacking awareness of local social and cultural norms, in contrast to the culturally expert and highly-qualified 'non-native speaker' local teachers (Boecher, 2005; Keaney, 2016).

Although socially constructed, which is evident from the varied perceptions that different contexts bring to the conceptualization of the phenomenon (see below for a detailed

examination of the Japanese context in which this study took place), perceptions of 'native speaker' and 'non-native' speakerness and the roles that they can and should occupy are seen as natural and taken-for-granted (Bourdieu, 1990), and are therefore often invisible and unquestioned (Lowe & Lawrence, 2018; McNamara, 2019). This 'transformation of history into nature, of cultural arbitrariness into the natural' (Bourdieu, 2001), and the subtle framings (Goffman, 1974) of the lived social experience have far-reaching implications for how teachers interact, and are interacted with, in their daily personal and professional lives.

2.3. The Japanese Context

As interest in native-speakerism as a field of study has increased exponentially in the 15 years since Holliday (2005) first coined the term, Japan has emerged as a native-speakerist model and subsequently one of the most fertile research sites into native-speakerist theory and practice (see Hooper, Oka & Yamazawa, 2020; Lowe & Lawrence, 2018). This has prompted Houghton and Rivers (2013) to identify Japan, and the social, political, and historical discourses of the Japanese context as unique in terms of its relationship to concepts of the 'native-speaker'. Holliday's original conception of native-speakerism derived from Philipson's (1992) writings on linguistic imperialism relied heavily on language and the legacy of colonialism. Subsequently, much of the literature that followed Philipson focused on colonial and post-colonial discourses (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1998) and positioned the role of English and 'native speaker' teachers within this paradigm. However, as Tsuneyoshi (2013, p. 120) points out, "being a colonizer, Japan has never been colonized by a foreign power, though it experienced a period of occupation by the United States and others after World War II; even then, English was never forced upon the public".

Additionally, deliberate government policy in the form of *kokusaika* (internationalization) drawing on the concept of *Nihonjinron* (theory of the Japanese people) sought to raise awareness of foreign countries while simultaneously strengthening the appreciation of Japanese language and culture. This has had the effect of dichotomizing Japanese (language,

culture, people) against anything that was seen as non-Japanese, perpetuating a myth of Japanese uniqueness and othering "foreign" languages, cultures, and people (Dale, 2011 [1986]). With Nihonjinron concepts embedded in the public consciousness, the roles of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teacher in the English classroom come loaded with clear expectations and demarcations that sets it apart from native-speakerist concepts experienced in other countries.

A separate issue, which may also be seen as pertinent to 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teachers in the Japanese context, is the gendered (Appleby, 2014) and racialized (Kubota, 2011) construction of the idealised 'native speaker' teacher as a Caucasian male. In a largely female-dominated industry, male teachers make up the large majority of English teachers in Japan (Appleby, 2014). The reasons cited for this anomaly (which can also be seen to slightly less extent in Korea) are complex and far-reaching, highlighting the importance of social and political context in the construction of identity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Linguistic Ethnography

Linguistic ethnography (LE) is seen as an emerging "theoretical and analytical framework which takes an epistemological position broadly aligned with social constructivist and post-structuralist approaches by critiquing essentialist accounts of social life" (Creese, 2010, p. 138). This is done by combining the situated context of ethnography and its fieldwork methods of observation, field notes, and interviews, with the attention to detail that linguistic analysis offers.

LE draws heavily on the cultural anthropology of Hymes' (1964) "ethnography of communication", which argued for the importance of analyzing linguistic practices from a perspective of context, so that "it is rather that it is not linguistics, but ethnography - not language, but communication - which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be described" (Hymes, 1964, p. 3). As well as Hymes, Copland, and Creese (2015) identify three other key thinkers whose ideas

have greatly influenced LE: John Gumperz, Erving Goffman, and Frederick Erickson. Gumperz's (1982, 1999) ideas around 'interactional sociolinguistics' focus on how people interpret the signs and signals of everyday conversation which uses the knowledge that goes beyond mere grammatical competence and decoding of isolated items to also include a view of the larger social picture. In this formulation, conversation analysis can be used to connect the interpretive processes of daily interaction with the history and background of the communicator. Goffman's contribution to LE is his focus on the social situation and the rituals, routines, and performances that these situations require (Copland & Creese, 2015). His attention to the concept of performance (Goffman, 1959) as it pertains to identity as well as his theories on the organization of experience (Goffman, 1974) have been especially influential. Finally, Erickson's 'microethnography' takes a similar starting point to Gumperz, but places a stronger emphasis on the link between the micro-interaction of everyday discourse and the macro influence of wider society. In this, he maintains that although local, moment-to-moment factors determine our social and linguistic interactions, these are influenced by factors outside of the immediate interaction (Erickson, 2004).

3.2. Membership Categorization Analysis

Often seen as a subset of conversation analysis (CA), membership categorisation analysis (MCA) differs from CA in that it allows researchers that have a specific interest in aspects of identity, such as gender, sexuality, or in this case 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' status, to study them as the members themselves see them, rather than as analysts may categorize them (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015; Stokoe, 2012). This results in an alternative analytical approach to CA that focuses much more on particular interactional settings and their categorizational aspects, rather than the sequential focus of CA.

Analysis in MCA often produces case studies that are analyzed through context (indexicality), inference and implications (as well as explicit referencing) using a membership categorization device (MCD), which refers to the interpretive apparatus that is used to understand which categories belong to a collective category (Stokoe, 2012). Indexical order (or indexicality) is described as "the concept necessary to showing us how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon" (Silverstein, 2003, p. 193) and is broadly concerned with how these larger 'macro-social' frames are oriented to (indexed) through social interaction (Gray & Morton, 2018). In the case of language teacher identity, the macro-level identity of 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' may at any moment be referred to or implied in interaction, which can have a profound effect on the identity we are then able to perform. Although this may take place in the here-and-now of interactive communication, it has wider implications for personal and professional practice (Gray & Morton, 2018) and for how we see ourselves and are seen by others.

3.3. Research Questions

Against this theoretical background, and due to the exploratory nature of linguistic ethnography, the research questions of the study were somewhat open-ended,

- How are 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' identities constructed in interactions with the institution of the university, and what are the consequences of these constructions on the professional lives of teachers?
- How are 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' identities constructed in interactions with students, and what are the consequences of these constructions on the professional lives of teachers?

3.4. A Note about Labels

One key epistemological conundrum that the research premise, as described above throws up is the problem of pre-categorization of the participants into 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' identities. If the aim of the study is to explore and deconstruct these identities as the socially constructed categories they are purported to be, then pre-categorizing participants in this matter may negate the overall aim of the research. In order to circumvent this issue it is important to reject the essentialist group description 'native English teachers in Japan' (or 'non-native English teachers in Japan') and instead seek to

understand how 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' circulates as a representation in Japanese discourse, "how it settles on particular humans, how it comes to channel and constrain their position and activity" (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016, p. 35). By viewing identities as "semiotic potential" brought about by practical self-identification (Blommaert, 2005) through interaction, I have tried to avoid the reductionist essentializing that is often demanded by constructivist-based academia (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), whilst retaining the 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' labels, albeit within inverted commas as a constant reminder of their contested status.

3.5. Participants

The participants in this study were two teachers working as English teachers in the same department of a public university in Japan. They were selected largely due to availability, but also because I already had a strong personal and professional relationship with both participants and believed that they would be comfortable with me observing classes (Holliday, 2016).

Yusuke (a pseudonym) is a Japanese male that spent three years in an international environment as a child, attending international schools in Europe. He subsequently studied at university in the United States, spending several years there before returning to Japan aged 26 to work in a Japanese company. After working in sales and consulting for a short period in a '100% Japanese environment' in which he had to 'act Japanese' and felt he could not express himself, he decided to become an English teacher. After teaching in various contexts such as Business English, he has been working at the same university for over five years.

Daniel (a pseudonym) is a white American male that has been living and working in Japan for almost 15 years. After initially working as an assistant language teacher (ALT) in Japan for three years, he returned to the US to undertake graduate studies. Once completing his studies, he returned to Japan to take up a position in a university department, where he has worked ever since.

3.6. Data Collection

The data for this study was collected over a three-week period in July 2018 and consisted of a mixture of classroom observations (which were either audio or video recorded), conversation lounge 'office hour' observations (again, either video or audio recorded), face to face interviews (audio-recorded), photos and fieldnotes. Classroom observations amounted to six hours of recordings, conversation lounge observations came to just over 3 hours of data, and the interviews lasted for just over 40 minutes with Yusuke and just under 1 hour 20 minutes in Daniel's case.

Fieldnotes were taken in all observations and in one of the interviews. This was done by making handwritten 'jottings' in real-time during the observations and writing these up more fully on a computer either immediately after, or later the same day. The amount of jottings taken was dependent on a number of factors, including lesson content, amount of teacher/student interaction, and the degree of my participation.

4. Findings

4.1. Data

The data presented below is taken from different elements of the data that an ethnographic study of this kind demands and is divided into student and institutional interaction. In the first section, institutional interactions, the data is taken from photos taken at the research site, as well as from the interviews with the participants. In the second section, interaction with students, episodes of naturally occurring data taken from classroom and office observations were used as well as interviews. Transcripts are presented in 'semi-clean' versions, with false starts, extraneous fillers, and inconsequential pauses eliminated from the transcript. However, longer pauses and pertinent fillers have been retained in order to convey the overall flow of the conversation. This is to provide ease of comprehension for readers that may be unaccustomed to technical transcripts.

4.2. Section 1 – Identity Construction in Relation to Institutional Interaction

4.2.1. Photos

The first data set presented below consists of two photos of maps. These show maps that were created by the Japanese administrator working in the office of the English department where this study took place. The maps showed an outline of the country where each instructor was from with the hometown marked by a cross with the teacher's name attached to it. These maps were displayed on a notice board in the common room of the department that served as a library for graded readers as well as a site for conversation sessions. This area was open to students and teachers and was designed as an interactive space for students to meet and practice English. Laminated copies of the same maps were also left on the table that formed the center of the conversation lounge area. Figure 1 shows the map of the United Kingdom with one hometown highlighted and the name of one instructor. This indicates that only one instructor from the UK worked in the department. Figure 2 is a map of Japan and shows that there are three teachers in the department with hometowns in Japan.

Figure 1
*Map Showing the Hometown of One
UK Teacher Displayed in the
Language Center*
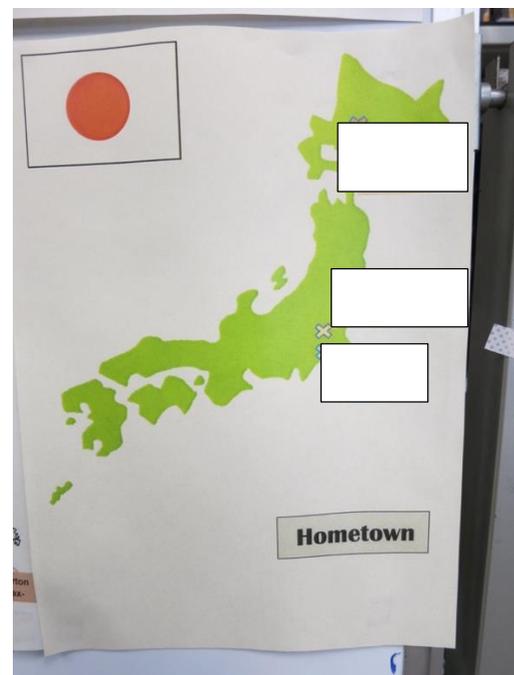
Figure 2
*Map Showing the Hometown of
Three Japanese Teachers. Added to
the Language Center Later*

Initially, these maps only featured the countries, home towns, and names of the 'native speaker' teachers in the department. When it was pointed out (by the researcher) to the administrator that there was no map of Japan, she initially looked puzzled, seeing it as natural that there would not be, she then became embarrassed about this oversight and promised to rectify it as soon as she could. A few weeks after this, a map of Japan with the three Japanese teachers' hometowns highlighted appeared in the office (Figure 2).

4.2.2. Discussion

The maps of teachers' hometowns that were initially displayed showing the information of 'native' speaker teachers only points to a deliberate construction of difference between 'native' and 'non-native' teachers in the department. Using MCA, this was not an

implied category distinction emerging from the discourse, but an explicit, deliberate categorization of teachers into separate boxes that was done without consultation or consent from teachers. It was clear from the actions and initial reaction of the administrator that a distinction had been made between the 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teachers in the department. It was assumed that the students would be interested to know private information about the 'native speaker' teachers and, by extension, that this information, rather than being superfluous or incidental, was seen to be of some importance. The implication of this was that the private lives of the 'non-native speaker' teachers were of little interest to the students and of no consequence to their identities as teachers within the department. An indexical micro/macro-social reading of this implies that although the creation and display of the maps was the individual decision of the administrator, this individual administrator was acting as a representative of an institution (the university), which as a public university in Japan, can be seen as a representative of the local government, which is situated within the wider milieu of Japanese society at a certain point in historical time.

4.3. Interviews

In the interviews I asked the participants directly how they felt they were perceived by the institution they were working at in terms of the institution's perception of their 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' status (not necessarily their perception or self-identification of their own identity). The perception of the teachers' own identity relationships to the institution revealed by the interviews largely reaffirm this division.

I = Interviewer/researcher
D = Daniel

4.3.1. Daniel

In the interview extract below I asked Daniel to give his thoughts on how he believed he is perceived by the institution of the univeristy and whether he believes that his dealings with the institution are related to concepts of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teachers.

Table 1
Daniel Interview Extract

I: OK, last question of the general ones. Do you think the institution, do they see you…how do you think their treatment of you is related to any kind of concepts of 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' or monolingualism and stuff like that?
D: (9 sec. pause) In direct treatment by staff, I mean, when I say staff I mean like in personnel or like the research division or whenever I've had to go talk to someone about something…no-one's ever tried to speak English with me. So, we, I, start out in Japanese, they reply in Japanese and we proceed in Japanese. So, I've never gotten the sense that…unlike other places where I've gone into a business, or I've made an order with a company or something where I get the panic "oh my god I'm talking to a foreigner, what am I going to do?"
I: Yeah
D: The staff here seem completely nonplussed by it and just…the only time I've…every so often I haven't been able to explain clearly what I need and someone will be called over who is in the office that speaks pretty good English and we work it out with them. So, I don't…but in the initial transactions with staff on a normal basis I don't feel like I'm treated any different than anyone else. Um, in terms of our job title and how we're treated as an English Centre, that's, that's a little bit different
I: How so?
D: Well, I mean we're kept…we're not a real university department, we're the Centre that's kind of adjunct to the university, um, part of that is practical…for the purposes of money…
I: How about among the teachers? Do you think the Japanese teachers here are treated differently or used differently…used is a horrible word, but do you know what I mean?
D: Yeah (laughs) I know what you mean. Well, they're often taken and held up as models for visiting teachers of 'Here we have Japanese teachers teaching English in English' and you know when high school teachers come by they are invariably going to go observe (Japanese English teacher) XX's class or (Japanese English teacher) YY's class, so they are used in that regard differently. Um, they've, by virtue of being more approachable, I feel like some of the teachers like XX or YY, I've seen them talking with other professors that I have not spoke with, nor have I seen any of the other…white guys (laughs)… speaking with, so that sort of cross-pollination with other departments seems to be easier for the Japanese members of our Centre.

4.3.2. Discussion

Although Daniel felt he was not treated any differently according to his linguistic status as compared to his experience outside of the institution, he felt that his identity in the category of 'foreigner' might contribute to difficulties in forming relationships with professors outside of the English department. He saw his Japanese colleagues as inhabiting a role that more easily navigated the institution as a whole and was able to form relationships with professors outside of the department. This implies a self-perception that differs from the clear distinction that the maps above indicated, but also a recognition of the limitations that his status as a 'native speaker' teacher imposes on him.

4.3.3. Yusuke

After initially saying that he felt he was not treated any differently by the institution on account of their perception of him in terms of 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' labeling, I was reminded of an anecdote that Yusuke had told me months earlier during an informal conversation that came out of a separate incident which I had witnessed and made a fieldnote about.

In the first incident, I was sitting in the English Centre during an open campus day when volunteer students showed prospective students around the Centre and explained the conversation lounge and the teachers that taught there. My very brief fieldnotes stated:

One tour guide said "外国人の先生"
("Foreign teachers")
One said "Native speaker teachers"
One said just "X Centre Instructors"

In the interview, I asked Yusuke to relate the story again.

I = Interviewer/researcher
Y = Yusuke

Table 2

Yusuke Interview Extract 1

I: What was that story you told me a while ago about when they came around in the office hour and they were saying something about…
Y: Yeah…
I: Can you…I've forgotten the main details…
Y: Oh, right, yeah!
I: Can you remind me?
Y: Sure.
I: So, this is like open campus day, is it?
Y: Yeah…and volunteer…one of the XXU (name of the institution) students
I: Yeah…
Y: He was explaining about the XX (the common room area described above where the maps were displayed)…
I: To a group of potential students…
Y: Right…
I: OK, OK, I've seen that kind of thing
Y: Yeah
I: Yeah
Y: And he goes "well, normally a native speaker sits here during this hour…"
I: (laughing) yeah…
Y: "…but today we're sorry, we don't have…we can't show you that". I was clearly there in the office hour!
I: Yeah, yeah…
Y: What (inaudible)!
I: Did you say anything?
Y: No (laughing)
I: And how did you feel?
Y: Erm, I'm used to it though
I: Oh OK, but how do you feel?
Y: I felt like crap, though..
I: Mmm why do you think that kind of attitude exists?

Y: Well, it's sales right?
I: Yeah
Y: So, I understand…

4.3.4. Discussion

Although Yusuke felt that he was not treated any differently, his striking anecdote wherein the volunteer apologized for the fact that there was not a 'native speaker' present shows that the perception by the institution sees English education in the university from a deeply native-speakerist perspective that divides teachers into clear categories. This attitude was confirmed by my fieldnotes as not a one-off incident, but a recurring event that not only undermined the 'non-native speaker' teachers in the department but by categorizing him as not a 'native speaker' in effect erased Yusuke's very existence in the minds of the institution.

4.4. Section 2 – Identity Construction in Relation to Student-Teacher Interaction

4.4.1. Daniel

In the extract below Daniel is talking to a group of students in a conversation lounge office hour about life in Yamanashi; an area of Japan to the West of Tokyo where Daniel lived when he first came to Japan as an ALT and still has strong connections to through his wife's family.

S = Student
D = Daniel

Table 3

Daniel Conversation Lounge Observation

S1: Yamanashi the air is good and the water is good, but the noisy, in night, at night..
S2: Why?
S1: Bike…noisy bikes.
All S: (Laughing)
D: (Laughs)
S1: You, know, you know?
D: The bike gangs?
S1: Yeah, yeah
S3: Where in Yamanashi?
S1: Almost the Route 20
D: Ah…yeah, through Kofu?
S1: Yeah
D: Yeah
S1: *Koushukaido*
D: (Makes motorbike brrrm brrrm noise, all students join in and laugh)
S1: Almost 50 bikes are there
S2: 50?
S1: Behind them there is the police
D: Yeah, they can't do anything
S1: Yeah, yeah
S2: They still (inaudible)
S1: Yokohama is very quiet in, at night, so I like Yokohama's night
D: It depends though, I used to live in Zushi and…ah…just on the main road that goes, eventually goes by Zushi beach, Kamakura and Oshima, that's Highway 1 (rising intonation) maybe
S?: Mm…mm
D: So, I always think this is the perfect example of Japan and how, how, ho…what's the right word…ah, I'll just tell this story. Saturday night. Every Saturday night I would hear the bike, the bike gangs coming. Brrrm brrrm brrrm…and I'll be like, oh it must be 11 o'clock.
All S: (Loud laughter)
D: Like, even the bike gangs are on time in Japan, just like the trains, it's the same, they're on time.
All S: (more laughter)
D: Very, you know they're very strict about timing the bike gangs, every Saturday, exactly 11PM, like just that's…I was like that's really Japanese, on time bike gangs.
All S: (Laughter)

4.4.2. Discussion

An MCA which takes into consideration context and explicit and non-explicit inference and implications indicates that in terms of categorizational positionality, Daniel positioned himself as a knowledgeable outsider or as simultaneously an insider and an outsider. This was displayed through regular use of conversation content that showed a deep knowledge of local Japanese geography and culture and a willingness to counter the students' versions of Japanese cultural knowledge. However, this local knowledge was used side by side with knowledge of his home culture through comparing and contrasting and offering an outsider's perspective on Japanese norms and culture.

This suggests a high degree of agency in terms of identity positioning in Daniel's interactions with students. It may be speculated that this ability and freedom to be both an insider and an outsider is a result of the power and privilege that being a white, male, American 'native speaker' allows. In this interpretation, the usual barriers to being accepted as an insider within Japanese culture and language can be overcome due to the deference shown to 'native speaker' teachers and the authority imbued as an older male interacting with young, (mostly) female university students. However, it is also likely that as a respected teacher and long-term resident of the area that his views and knowledge were seen by the students as natural and simply part of his professional identity.

4.4.3. Yusuke

One aspect of Yusuke's teaching persona that I identified in my observations was a focus on culture. This was prominently displayed in conversation between students in one of the lessons I observed regarding the activity that they had been asked to do by Yusuke. The following data is from my own fieldnotes taken as jottings during a class observation and written up later that same day. Due to the placement of audio recorders in the room, the exchange that I wanted to focus on was not picked up by the microphones. Fortunately, I had made detailed notes at the time and I believe that the following fieldnotes are an accurate reflection of what happened, although the notes include my own interpretation of the events. both as they happened and as I was reflecting on the event when writing it up.

There was some evidence of Y. pushing a Western-style communication agenda. This was illustrated by an activity in which he asked st. to write out a dialogue of giving opinions using some phrases he had given them on a bilingual sheet. At first, he asked the students to read it out as role-play. Then he told them to go away and practice to make it more 'natural'. I overheard one of the students explain to another student what they had been asked to do by saying "gaikokujin mitai ni shaberu" ("we are supposed to speak like foreigners"). This indicated that the students perceived that they were being asked to perform a role as a foreigner. Watching the results of the final role plays, this does appear to be exactly what happened. Students were using exaggerated intonation and gestures that would have definitely been out of place if they were speaking Japanese and were also over-the-top for ....anyone! This begs the question as to what Y. perceives as 'natural' and how conscious he is of promoting this Western persona in his students as a desirable way to present their identities in English.

In the interview I reminded him of the activity and asked for his own interpretation of how the students interpreted it.

Table 4

Yusuke Interview Extract 2

I: How much do you think that is you encouraging the students to adopt their own kind of Western-style way of communicating or Western-style persona…
Y: Right
I:…and your own, also projecting your own..?
Y: Ohh…I think er…that activity had a clear message, it's to be able to shift your communication style onto someone's communication style to form a better…to understand each other better. My goal was not to imitate the Western style, but to understand there are other communication styles in this world other than your communication style.
I: How do you think the students perceived it?

Y: Er……normally I explain more when I do this if it's my XX class, but the XX-year students…I'm sure my explanation wasn't enough.
I: Er…I overheard one of the students coming back and telling the other group and the other group said "oh, what do you have to do?" and they said "gaikokujin mitai ni shabe…"
Y: Hahahahaha…
I: They interpreted that you had told them they need to speak more like a foreigner
Y: That's possible…
I: What do you think about that?
Y: Yeah, explanation wasn't enough, actually
I: So, how did they misinterpret it?
Y: Erm….well, normally I explain what communication style is and how…I go on the style of that of Japan…typical Japanese, typical er..American, that dialogue was between American and Japanese and tell them like you have er…wardrobe, and you wear the wardrobe depending on the situation
I: Mm Mm Mm Mm
Y: If you have only one wardrobe you can't go dancing, you can't go to the formal restaurant. Likewise, if you have couple of different styles you can use properly depending on the situation. That's my message, so..
I: Hmmm… why do you think that's the case?
Y: Why do you think that's the case?
I: Yeah
Y: What do you mean?
I: Why do you think people should adopt a different style depending on the situation?
Y: Well, we do, we all do though. When we talk to kids, like a child, 5 years old, when we talk to, for example, a senior, a professor…we do have to adapt. We change words…wording, and we change our attitude
I: Mm Mm
Y: When it comes to communicating with foreign people, sometimes they don't really…they're not aware of the fact that that his style and her style is different..so…
I: Mm Mm, but do you think it's…do they have to adapt to that style?
Y: N..Not necessarily adapt, but it helps…it helps if you know the styles are different, so that you wouldn't (unclear) someone just because each other's style's different
I: You wouldn't…?
Y: Judge
I: Judge someone…
Y: Or criticize
I: yeah…
Y: That's my er… core message I want to er…convey. For that activity, clearly that piece of information was not enough…

4.4.4. Discussion

Observation of Yusuke performing a teacher role in the classroom painted a more nuanced and complex picture than the 'native'/'non-native' speaker dichotomy implied earlier. In my observations, again using MCA as an analytical framework, I interpreted certain gestures (fist bump) and choice of activities as presenting a 'Western' or at least 'non-Japanese' persona to students. This observation appeared to be backed up by a classroom activity in which students perceived that they were being asked to speak and act like a "foreigner".

My interpretation of this activity as projecting both a 'Western' persona for Yusuke and presenting English communication itself as something culturally different from Japanese communication was both accepted and rejected in the follow-up interview. Yusuke explained that the goal of the activity was not to imitate 'Western' communication styles per se but to help the students understand that there are 'other' styles of communication in this world, which may be seen as contradictory. On the one hand, the participant denies urging students to adopt a Western communication style, while simultaneously labeling them as 'other' and essentializing perceived communication styles of Japanese and Americans. However, it also showed that the students willingly accepted this persona and were keen to display the kind of 'foreign' style communication that was asked of them, despite the fact that the activity was directed by a 'non-native speaker' teacher. As with Daniel, this suggests flexibility and agency in identity construction when interacting with students in the classroom and resistance to the ascribed category of 'non-native speaker'.

5. Concluding Remarks

The linguistic ethnographic investigation presented in this paper is part of a wider research project and only represents the experiences of two instructors in one institution in Japan; however the insights it provides points to a nuanced picture in terms of identity construction as it relates to aspects of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' status.

In terms of how identities are constructed through institutional interactions, there appears to be a more traditional divide than that of interaction directly with students which may point to an entrenched view of fixed identities of teachers on the part of the institution. MCA shows clear and explicit categorical orientations to 'native' and 'non-native' identities by the administrators and promoters of the university. This limited opportunities for the 'native speaker' teacher to form relationships outside of the confines of the English department and for the 'non-native speaker' teacher, strong categorization by the institution, led to direct discrimination and a certain amount of erasure in terms of this role in the department.

In contrast, the analysis of student interaction showed a reversal of the expected positioning with the 'non-native' speaker teacher at times being treated as a 'native speaker', and the 'native speaker' teacher's insider/outsider stance being accepted. As these brief examples indicate, it appears that the traditional binary dichotomy of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' is complex and nuanced in terms of teacher/student interactions.

Identity construction as a result of interaction with university students through classroom teaching and conversation lounge communication showed that identities in this respect are relatively fluid with teachers able to retain a high degree of agency over their own projected identity. The 'native speaker' teacher in this study, as a long-term resident of Japan was able to successfully present an insider/outsider status that made him an authority not only on aspects of American culture, but also that of Japanese geography, history, language, and culture. This authority was readily accepted by students, although his status as an older white, male teacher may have helped to develop this deference and acceptance. Similarly, for the 'non-native speaker' teacher a large amount of agency was in evidence as his chosen teacher persona was picked up, interpreted, and accepted by students in the classroom.

Although very limited in scope, and only taking into consideration select experiences of two individual teachers, these results point to a need for greater awareness in institutions in Japan towards their categorization of teachers based on perceived identity differences. It also suggests that at the individual interactional level there is more scope for English teachers to perform their own identities without regard to pre-conceived notions of 'native' or 'non-native' speaker. By using an ethnographic approach, rather than relying completely on teachers' own self-reported perceptions, this study has been able to pick apart the false 'native/non-native speaker' dichotomy and demonstrate that although agency to construct a desired identity is possible on an individual level, it is still constrained by institutional perceptions and practices.

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