

1 Introduction: Where It All Began

The words we first learn to speak are our initial threads that tie us to society. But just as much as our mother tongues act as gateways into human connection, they bind and limit us – in some ways – in political, academic, and social spheres. Oftentimes these limitations are so ingrained into our ways of thinking that they remain unnoticed, and we continue to live in this implicit acceptance of linguistic hegemony. One of the largest fields guilty of this is, ironically, the area of English language teaching (ELT), where its learners, instructors, and researchers operate under the ever-present social and cultural force of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006, 2018). Through a literature review and narrative inquiry study, this book has three main objectives: (a) exploring the lived experiences of non-native English-speaking (NNES) students, teachers, and researchers; (b) interrogating how these academic and professional lives are influenced by native-speakerism; and (c) examining what possibilities the novel framework of trans-speakerism can offer to those students, teachers, and researchers. Such a discussion broaches some important but nevertheless devastating aspects of studying and working within the current system that favors a particular type of individuals – the native English speaker (NES).

Before delving into the nitty-gritty of this unequivocally controversial topic, I wish to clarify what this book is *not*. This book is *not* a compendium of accusations, complaints, or (dissatisfied) musings from NNESs toward NESs (although it might appear this way from time to time). However, criticisms against NESs cannot be avoided since the issues and prejudices that stem from native-speakerism have continued unabated for so long and are thus integral to the shared experiences of NNESs. I aim to tackle this quagmire head-on in a way that has heretofore been rarely attempted in the field: This book was not written by a NES, but by an NNES, and developed not in English as a second language (ESL) context, but in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. There is no team of NES researchers, nor has this book emerged from an ESL context, which is often the case with empirical studies of significance published in the field of ELT. No – this book was created by an NNES/native Japanese researcher, borne out of the collaborative work undertaken with NNES students, teachers, and researchers in the Japanese EFL context. These three cohorts – NNES (graduate school) students, teachers, and researchers – are,

arguably, the least privileged professionals in the field due to their lack of any initial and inherent linguistic advantage as well as a lack of any regular opportunities to improve their linguistic competence through daily exposure and interaction with English.

Over the course of my career as a university professor, I have been acutely aware of the impact of native-speakerism on both my teaching and research activities. This awareness has been honed by two factors. First, I have been and still am personally subjected to the prejudicial ideologies of native-speakerism as an NNEs. Second, my previous empirical studies have been more or less skirting around or running into the concept of native-speakerism – be it my earlier work on language teacher education, language teacher identity, or language teacher research (e.g., Hiratsuka, 2013, 2014, 2022b; Hiratsuka & Barkhuizen, 2015; Hiratsuka & Nall, 2023). These factors are built, crucially, upon a fait accompli that all of the topics, findings, and implications produced within language education research affect, and are affected by, the notion of native-speakerism and its reification in our daily lives. In other words, native-speakerism is so omnipresent that it lies at the root of all of my research, which has consequently been inevitably imbued and shaped by it. This omnipresence needs to be better recognized and challenged within our field.

It is the fundamental premise that the *language* that teachers teach and researchers research is foundational to their identities (i.e., who they are) in so far as *language* education is concerned. I am cognizant that native-speakerism is nuanced, multidimensional, and intertwined within the complexity of our lives and identity make-up; I also realize that it is influenced by subjective idiosyncrasies as well as a whole entanglement of sociocultural factors. There is empirical research zeroing in on these factors – such as race (e.g., Tupas, 2022), ethnicity (e.g., Kiczkowski & Lowe, 2021), gender (e.g., Appleby, 2016), and sexuality (e.g., Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020) – in regard to native-speakerism. Nevertheless, it is my fervent contention that native-speakerism, as the name itself suggests, should be more thoroughly discussed and examined from the viewpoint of speakerhood – namely, the speakerhoods of NESs and NNEs. To date, the voices of the native-speakerism's most disadvantaged (NNEs in EFL contexts) have not been heard enough, nor advocated enough. In addition, the ramifications for this population have not been sufficiently disseminated, and effective countermeasures to the detrimental ideology have not been properly instigated. Critically, we must, as a field, acknowledge the reason why native-speakerism has not yet been fully understood, criticized, or overcome and why it has not yet been replaced by a more equitable alternative. The reason might lie in the very medium itself – English language. Non-native English speaker students, teachers, and researchers generally lack the linguistic skills and confidence necessary to counter the hegemony of native-speakerism, whether those countermeasures come in the form of

discussions, presentations, or publications. To say the least, this has been my own personal experience within this field, and I suspect for many others, too.

Research to date has been lacking when confronting native-speakerism and its detrimental effects. After a lengthy review of the literature published heretofore on the topic of native-speakerism and the dearth of NNES voices in its corpus, I can only come to one conclusion – our field has let itself and its practitioners down. How is it that much of the theorization and more than half of the empirical research surrounding native-speakerism thus far have been carried out by NESs themselves or NNESs who are based in ESL contexts (see Chapter 2), especially without adequately representing presumably the greatest victims of native-speakerism: NNES students, teachers, and researchers in EFL contexts? It is hypocritical of us to perpetuate this power imbalance without an alternative and justifiable discourse to native-speakerism that appropriately reflects the authentic voices and realities of NNES students, teachers, and researchers. (At least, no alternative has yet to have been formulated, disseminated, or nurtured enough to gain traction, despite many false starts up to this point.) Having an alternative discourse to native-speakerism would greatly assist in the recognition of the skills and competencies of all students, teachers, and researchers, irrespective of their native-speakerhoods.

And so, this volume offers two things primarily – a novel, in-depth look into the perspectives and lived experiences of NNES teachers, graduate students, and researchers as they negotiate their professional and/or academic identities at the grassroots level within the disabling and restrictive dominion of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006, 2018); and a new, liberating framework of discourse for inspecting the balances of linguistic power: *trans-speakerism* (Hiratsuka et al., 2023a, 2023b) (Chapter 3). Instead of the limiting and disempowering tenants of native-speakerism that have been highlighted time after time in many previous research endeavors (see Holliday, 2006, 2018), this volume (and the concept of trans-speakerism) is inclusive, equitable, and freeing in a refreshing way for the following three reasons. First, I introduce and analyze NNES teachers', graduate students', and researchers' personal narratives in an EFL context, which has been markedly underrepresented in the literature. Second, as a former NNES teacher in Japanese high schools, a former NNES graduate student in a Japanese graduate program, and a current NNES researcher at an EFL university, I was able to leverage both insider (*emic*) and outsider (*etic*) perspectives of EFL when conducting and compiling the present study. My dual *emic* and *etic* perspectives – a position rarely seen in this field – facilitated collaboration with NNES teachers, graduate students, and researchers, tied by our common Japanese EFL context. Third, I reconceptualize, discuss, and supply evidence for key issues concerning native-speakerism and trans-speakerism via the aforementioned *emic* and *etic* lenses. Through this, I deeply hope that I will be able to raise awareness of

research shortcomings and current academic understanding of native-speakerism, and I wish to assist in the supplanting of native-speakerism with trans-speakerism in order to make the unheard heard and the voiceless voiced, regardless of their native tongues. Although it may seem ironic, I have decided to write this volume in English and publish it through a major international publisher in the UK. I chose to do this because the NNEST stories contained within here need to be read by as many people as possible – be they readers who are NESs or NNESTs, in ESL or in EFL countries. As long as English remains the lingua franca, we are forced to abide by the latent (English) native-speakerism built into every academic field in order to have any significant global impact.

I have organized this book into seven chapters. In the remainder of this opening chapter, I provide an introduction to the volume by presenting my personal narrative. From this I am confident that you will be able to glean my motivations, aims, and the significance of my research into native-speakerism and trans-speakerism within the field of ELT. Chapter 2 discusses previous research on native-speakerism and critically addresses its shortcomings. Based on this discussion, I present two research questions that highlight the focal points of this book. Chapter 3 introduces the notion of trans-speakerism and outlines the participants and the contexts of this inquiry. It also offers a methodological framework, including an explanation of the data collection and analysis methods used within the present endeavor. In Chapter 4, I describe and interpret the perceptions and experiences of my study's participating secondary school teachers about native-speakerism and trans-speakerism. Chapter 5 deals with the personal perspectives and stories of the graduate school students who partook in my study regarding native-speakerism and trans-speakerism, whereas Chapter 6 is concerned with those of the university professors. The structure of these three findings chapters, Chapters 4–6, is intentionally written and organized so that each chapter can be read independent of one another. This arrangement allows readers to delve selectively and directly into the insights and experiences most relevant to their interests (if they choose to do so). However, this naturally results in a certain degree of information repetition when multiple chapters are read. Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarize my findings, proffer some empirical recommendations for the further study of native-speakerism and the advancement of trans-speakerism, and offer concluding personal narratives.

Although I am a researcher and educator, I am also an NNEST, and my story belongs among those I have collected and studied for this book. American author John Green (2017) noted: “You’re both the fire and the water that extinguishes it. You’re the narrator, the protagonist, and the sidekick. You’re the storyteller and the story told. You are somebody’s something, but you are also your you” (p. 257). Although I cannot provide the full narratives of every

person I interviewed, I am including my own tale here in order to show both NESs' and other NNESs' examples of native-speakerism encounters that they may have not realized occurring in their own lives. You will also be able to discern where I come from as an NNES in an EFL context, discover my motivations for pursuing this research, and more clearly understand my personal investment in the research you are about to consume. With this knowledge, my desire is that you can find this volume's research more palatable, and maybe even come to comprehend some of the pungency that is embedded within it. My personal account is presented to you as a human story, and thus written in prose; you can examine this raw data with your own analysis framework.

As the clock struck 5 on a cold December evening in Kyoto in 2022, the Dean of Faculty at my university rushed into my office to deliver the news – I would be promoted to full professor the following spring. I stood there, barely managing to squeeze out words of gratitude before the dean hurried away as quickly as he had arrived. This was by far the most anticipated moment in my professional career. So why did I feel . . . deflated? Why did I not scream, jump up and down, and run down the corridor out of excitement? Although still baffled by my own reaction (or rather lack of one), my feet led me outside and wandered down unfamiliar streets until they came upon a café. The cozy, vintage-looking interior furnishings offered a warm respite from the harsh outdoors and the chilly emptiness inside my head. Soon I was settled in the embrace of a long sofa and a cup of warm coffee, and unbidden memories of my past began to float past my slowly closing eyes . . .

I was born in 1977 in one of the most rural parts of Japan. As such, I had no exposure to English until I went to a Japanese national university (and, as a matter of fact, I was the first in my family to attend university). Borrowing money from my parents, grandparents, and relatives, I went to Canada to study English for six months in my senior year. It was there that I used English day in and day out, eventually elevating my English from virtually nonexistent to a conversational level. To my and everybody's surprise, this experience subsequently led me to become a teacher – again, the first in my family to do so. I became a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) at a public high school in my home prefecture in the northern part of Japan. As a JTE, my days were filled with commitments, duties, and responsibilities – not so much in the capacity of an English language teacher, but as a homeroom teacher, soccer coach, and member on numerous administrative committees. I felt pulled in lots of directions constantly, merely pecking away at various tasks rather than being able to immerse myself in any one of them satisfactorily. Among the school's neighbors, my high school was infamously known as “the sleepless castle,” as many

of us worked late into the night every single day. I remember that in my third year as a teacher I took only two days off in the entire year due largely to obligations involving my soccer team – including practices, practice games, and tournaments, as well as meetings with students, their parents, and other coaches. Such a life is not uncommon in schools; there is a reason why teaching in Japan has a reputation of being one of the most grueling and strenuous occupations.

It is against this backdrop, then, that I would like to paint some of my first observances of the marked social and institutional biases in favor of NESs, exemplified in the form of the foreign assistant language teacher (ALT). One of the most salient characteristics of EFL education in Japan is the continuous investment in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program for a period spanning over thirty-five years (CLAIR, 2023). The program spends a substantial amount of taxpayer money – totaling approximately 40 billion yen each year – to invite NESs from all over the world to work as ALTs in public schools (and recently, some private ones) in order to provide language instruction and enhance cross-cultural communication (Hiratsuka, 2022a, 2023b). Although ALT applicants with teaching experience or qualifications are preferred, the only requirement to be an ALT is a bachelor's degree in any field (CLAIR, 2023). In practice, the duties of ALTs are to team teach classes with JTEs without any further obligations such as being in charge of a homeroom or coaching extracurricular activities. As such, they can leave at 4 pm every day. In spite of this light workload, they receive handsome salaries (sometimes more than JTEs), generous benefits, and special treatment from several related agencies and government officials (Hiratsuka, 2022a, 2023b). If this is not the epitome of native-speakerism in which NESTs are automatically assumed to be the ideal English language teachers (Holliday, 2006, 2018), then I do not know what is.

I recall one particular incident where I had spent the morning at 7:30 am soccer practice followed by a teacher's meeting before the start of school. When the meeting finished, the ALT strolled into the teachers' room, nonchalantly holding a sandwich and water bottle in her hand. Among the hustle and bustle right before the first lesson, I went up to my ALT to plan our two team-taught lessons – she had just the two lessons while I had five in total for the day. After I explained my lesson ideas, I waited patiently for her to finish her breakfast. She looked up and said, "I cannot make it to the team-taught lessons because I have to go to the dentist near my house." I was a little taken aback and asked, "So, if you are going all the way back to where you live, are you not coming back to school afterwards?" She grinned and said, "[t]hat's the beauty of it, Taka."

To be honest, I could not quite rationalize the purpose or value of my team teaching with the ALT in the classroom in the first place. Japanese teachers of

English are keenly aware that they themselves are legitimate, qualified, and experienced educators in their own right (meaning that they had passed a competitive teacher exam, received a teaching certificate from the local board of education, and taught previously in Japanese schools as a practice teacher and/or full-time teacher) (see MEXT, 2021b). I was a self-assured fully-fledged teacher with a good understanding about the English language and foreign cultures. Assistant language teachers usually have none of the above skills or experience; they are qualified merely because of their mother tongue. They also could be quite unprofessional, such as taking vacation days and sick leave with little notice and no regard for ongoing lessons and projects during which their presence had been anticipated. It is no surprise, then, that there have been a large number of JTEs who have become indifferent to, struggle with, or even reject team teaching with their ALTs. These JTEs do not consider ALTs as effective teaching partners, but rather extra burdens to be dealt with on top of their already hectic lives (Hiratsuka, 2016, 2023a). I did not have any trust in my ALT as an educator for my students. While I am certain that there have been ALTs within the JET program who have been competent language teachers (e.g., bilingual, experienced, qualified, and respectful), they are the exception rather than the rule when proportioned against the total population of ALTs (see Hiratsuka, 2022a, 2023b; Yokoyama, 2018).

Interestingly, Copland et al. (2020) reported findings at odds with the common discourse – that NESs in EFL contexts are not optimal English instructors – and instead found that NES teachers in these contexts are *often* qualified, experienced, and bilingual teaching professionals (or they become so after gaining experience). As important as their interviews with sixteen NES teachers in various EFL contexts (including Japan) might be, I assert that their focus, discussion, and associated research findings (e.g., some NES teachers are, or develop into being, capable professionals) contribute adversely to the normalization and perpetuation of the principal tenet of native-speakerism – that is, NES teachers are fundamentally different from NNES teachers and therefore can be afforded a teaching position in EFL contexts *irrespective of* their personal traits or educational qualifications/experiences when they are initially hired (Hiratsuka, 2022a, 2023b). This is quite nonsensical because we would never allow anybody from Brazil to be a soccer coach in Japanese public schools with generous compensation packages just because they were Brazilian, thinking and hoping that they might have coached a soccer team in their own countries or that they might turn into a good soccer coach for Japanese students after living in Japan for a few years. Against this kind of tenet, it is vital to be critical of this ALT issue, which is underscored by the idea of a NES as being inherently singular and privileged in their initial employment. It is then imperative to shine a spotlight on NNES teachers (especially in Japanese secondary schools), who must undergo much more rigorous

qualifications and workloads, and examine them with ALTs through the lenses of native-speakerism and trans-speakerism (see Hiratsuka, 2023a; Hiratsuka et al., 2023a, 2023b).

Despite my frustrations with ALTs, the many early mornings, and late nights, I continued to teach for eight years. But it was during 2008 in this eighth year of teaching that I came to a major juncture in my life. In the middle of the tennis practice with my students after school (yes, I coached a tennis club as well), I was called into the principal's office out of the blue. My principal told me that the local board of education had offered me an opportunity to begin a master's program in ELT at a local university while still working as a full-time teacher. This meant that I would work at my high school during weekdays and take master's courses as a student during weekends. By all accounts, I knew that it would be an incredibly arduous journey – linguistically, academically, professionally, and personally. Nevertheless, I was determined and committed, curious to see if the knowledge and experience I had accrued over the years as a classroom teacher could be instrumental in theory building within the academic world. At the same time, I was eager to discover how and to what extent theories and insights from empirical research could benefit my daily teaching practices. For the next two years, I enjoyed my dual life as a teacher and a student immensely. The master's courses were intellectually challenging and utterly captivating. This was primarily due to the fact that (a) they were carried out in English by foreign (American) professors, and (b) they introduced me to Western educational theories and practices. Looking back, it is obvious that I was totally entrenched in native-speakerism, lacking in any critical point of view or voice of my own as an NNES. Nevertheless – or perhaps by virtue of this – I was largely satisfied with the courses and professors overall. On occasions, however, there were moments that rubbed me the wrong way, and those “critical incidents” have stuck with me as the alarms that alerted me to the unfavorable aspects of native-speakerism.

“The best way to acquire a second language is through dictation. You should write down exactly what I say in the next two minutes,” one of the NES professors demanded, not once but on a regular basis. So ran one such “critical incident.” First, I wondered how this professor could be so sure of what constitutes a valuable activity for second language acquisition when he did not speak any second language fluently himself (despite having lived in Japan for so many years). Second, I wondered if he would have incorporated this dictation task if there were any NES students in the course. Third, I wondered if it was necessary to set up the activity in the way he did, as it accentuated the power imbalance between the NES teacher and NNES students.

“Japanese teachers of English should use both Japanese and English as the mediums of instruction when teaching English,” another NES professor proclaimed. In this critical incident, I internally questioned, *Why don't you use both*

Japanese and English, then? Do you know how difficult it is to create and maintain an English-speaking environment as a JTE once we have allowed our students and ourselves to use Japanese in the classroom? Do you know how incredibly scarce the opportunity to use English is for Japanese students outside the classroom unless they are incredibly intentional and devoted? This professor had never experienced instruction as a JTE in any capacity, and yet he felt entitled to give advice about how to run a classroom as a JTE for Japanese students. His authority was never questioned – even by me who had been a JTE for so many years!

My graduate school experience was littered with moments like these. I recall a NES professor emphasizing the importance of a student-centered approach, but it was ironically delivered via a lengthy lecture using USA-based materials without giving us Japanese students any chance to provide comments or ask questions. However, my most poignant critical incident was when I asked a NES professor why his evaluation on my essay assignment was so low. He replied bluntly, “Because your essay was not as good as that of an American master’s student in the USA.” I could not help but scream in my head: *But I am Japanese, and this is a Japanese university!* The professor seems to have not only bought in to the “comparative fallacy” (Bley-Vroman, 1983; Cook, 1999) where NNES learners, teachers, and researchers are constantly compared against NES norms but he also embodied the discriminatory notion of native-speakerism as a NES professor in relation to his NNES student. Although the perceptions, practices, and identities of NNESTs in master’s programs in ESL contexts have been investigated to some extent (e.g., Aneja, 2016; Faez & Karas, 2019; Hsieh et al., 2022), those in EFL contexts have been conspicuously under-explored and therefore warrant much scrutiny. I was convinced that further research could unearth many more critical incidents that could serve to inform educators and researchers in this context.

Though these critical incidents marred my time in the graduate program, I had done well, and there was now a breadth of academic interests under my belt and an insatiable intellectual curiosity bubbling inside my mind. I had no choice but to pursue a PhD. At the dinner table during winter in 2010, I told my parents that I would quit being a high school teacher and go to New Zealand to get a PhD in the following spring. They were astounded that I wanted to quit the honored teaching profession. They then asked me what a PhD is.

Much like my master’s program, my PhD journey was not an entirely smooth ride. I must admit that the choice of the program in New Zealand had a lot to do with the country (i.e., an ESL environment); I was still very insecure about my English skills, and I felt that I needed to live in an English-speaking country and be supervised by a native-speaker of English in the program in order to earn a degree of validity to my studies. Linguistically and culturally, I was not in the least prepared for the reality I encountered. When I joined the program, I could

not help doubting every aspect of my aptitude, skills, and experience as a PhD student because I felt as if I was the least qualified and least competent student there. Out of forty other PhD candidates, I was the only person from Japan. My colleagues came from all four corners of the earth, and it seemed to me that they were the smartest people in their countries of origin. They were both highly proficient in English and talented in researching and writing. Not only did I struggle with academics but I also faced difficulty outside of campus, like when completing daily tasks such as buying groceries, riding a bus, and making friends. Even though I was a PhD student in ELT at a prestigious university in New Zealand, I could not even order food properly in a restaurant. Imposter syndrome took a heavy toll on my mental health at that time. *How had everyone around me figured everything out? If only I were a native-speaker of English!*

I felt I just *had* to make up for my insufficiencies. Over the next three years, I dedicated myself to my studies. Through my university resources, I read extra articles and books in the field of language education – more than anybody else. I was almost always the first to arrive to the PhD student office and the last to leave. Additionally, I went out often to try and talk with other people and take in the idiosyncrasies of English. At the end of my second year, I managed to become the representative of the PhD program. One of my PhD colleagues who came back from data collection in his country told me, “Taka, you were a shy Japanese guy just last year. And now you are a confident PhD representative. What happened to you!?” What had happened was I had spent two years living in an ESL context. Of course, I had to thank my strong work ethic as well, but that same drive had only taken me so far within the confines of an EFL country. Doing my PhD program in New Zealand had brought me the privilege that people in ESL environments enjoy either knowingly or unknowingly, which afforded me endless opportunities to improve my English, gain access to academic resources, and find professional opportunities in our field.

Although there were such advantages presented to me, I was still plagued with more of those “critical incidences” during my time in New Zealand. One unremarkable Thursday afternoon, I was hosting my usual weekly PhD meeting which was attended by many of my PhD colleagues and some professors. Without being prompted, one of the NES professors said to us in a loud, aggressive voice: “None of the NNES PhD students in the room can use articles (a/an/the) accurately!” I was bewildered. I did not know what his intentions were, nor did I have a clue as to the relevancy of his comments to the research project we were discussing. He made me feel belittled as a researcher merely because I was an NNES. *Do you have any inkling of what it is like to study and research in the highest academic degree program in your second language?* Then I thought: *Of course not. You do not speak a second language even at the conversational level.* Later that day, I taught Japanese language lessons as a tutor for undergraduate students. I was on a team of four bilingual instructors,

all of whom held at least a master's degree in language education and had a minimum of five years of teaching experience, irrespective of their nationality or their first language (L1) speakerhoods. Recalling both the outburst of my professor earlier and the ALTs I had worked with in the past, I realized that there is *very* little chance that a monolingual Japanese person would be hired as a Japanese language teacher in a JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) setting, and certainly not for similar levels of remuneration and benefits as their other coworkers (see Hiratsuka, 2022a, 2023b). That is, the position held by ALTs and some foreign professors in Japan could not be reversed in other countries, and bilingual speakers would not be paid any more than their monolingual counterparts despite having more skills. These experiences reconfirmed for me that NES teachers, graduate students, and researchers are extraordinarily advantaged and favored. We all should recognize, critique, and challenge the imbalance of power and the disparity of influence and status between speakers of the English language and those of other languages wherever it occurs throughout the world.

This favoritism is continued in other ways that NESs may never even consider. Part of my PhD thesis requirement was translating all interview scripts from Japanese to English after my data collection. A one-hour interview, for example, took me six hours to transcribe and another six hours to translate. In contrast, most of my NES counterparts conducted interviews in English and were thus exempted from such laborious translation work. As far as I am aware, this discrepancy between the linguistic workloads of NESs and NNESs has neither been acknowledged nor taken into consideration in our field. The criteria for the rigor and the quality of any given research are usually based upon the number of participants rather than the speakerhoods of those participants or the researchers who interviewed them. In my view, this discrepancy handicaps NNESs because they always have to take on substantially more tasks than NESs. It is yet one more proverbial straw on an NNES's back, and as any PhD candidate knows, writing a thesis is already an incredibly onerous undertaking.

My own thesis was an ever-looming, slow, unfathomable beast. At times, I felt I was getting along fine with the beast; other times, it disappeared from sight and I could make no connection with it. Again, I had a more difficult time than many others in my program (or so I felt), due to my nature of being an NNES. As much as I lack any idea about how much easier it would have been to create and research my thesis in Japan, at least I would have not had to constantly question myself in a second language. My fellow NESs around me did not – could not – understand the labor and agony of having to render complex thoughts and advanced vocabulary in a foreign language, and then have their future hinging upon how well they could wield them in a convincing manner. Professor Ken Hyland (2016) once declared that “academic English is

no one's first language" (p. 61). While this is true in a sense (since one must learn how to write in academically accepted prose), he took pains to downplay the trials of NNESSs, declaring that self-reports of NNESS writers claiming greater difficulty compared to their NES counterparts are "largely speculative" (p. 61). I have to entirely disagree with this sentiment. His own positioning and reporting on this issue are not just "largely speculative" – they are *completely* speculative. As a NES working in an English environment, he has never had to operate outside of his English bubble. *How would he know the difficulties of writing and publishing in a foreign language?* Academic English might not be anyone's first language, but there is absolutely no question that academic English is significantly more accessible to NESs than NNESSs. Certainly, it is easier to run if you know how to walk first. *Native English speakers have it so easy*, I thought to myself time and again while writing and editing my thesis. I have to wonder how it is that the ELT field has not given adequate attention to NNESS graduate students' distinctive accounts, particularly in EFL contexts, since these would be rife with material for inspecting native-speakerism and its alternative discourses.

Eventually the beast was tamed, and I finally completed my thesis and was awarded a PhD in 2014. With three of my articles published in international peer-reviewed journals, I immediately started working as an assistant professor at a national university in the southern part of Japan. Three years later, in 2017, I found myself back in the northern part of Japan, this time working as an associate professor at another Japanese national university. By that time, I was used to working in my capacity as a university professor – teaching English language lessons, giving academic presentations, publishing research papers, and taking on committee work within the university and community service outside of it. Nevertheless, despite reaching a status of competent professional, I still found (and continue to find) and encounter "critical instances" of native-speakerism leveraged against me in my career.

One day I was scheduled to give an academic presentation on second language acquisition at a professional development event. There were approximately twenty attendees already seated in the mid-sized classroom when I reached the venue, with more filling in. With mixed feelings of enthusiasm and nervousness, I started my one-hour presentation in English for which I had prepared and practiced for more than thirty hours. During my presentation, I critiqued and dispelled the widespread belief regarding second language acquisition, which posits "the earlier, the better." I made my critique by introducing relevant discussions and empirical research (e.g., Doughty & Long, 2003; Ortega, 2009). At the end of my presentation, two NES professors in the audience expressed their disagreement by saying simply: "It is always better to begin learning a second language early in order to be a successful bilingual." I was intrigued and asked them how they could be so sure and what

kind of proof they had. One of the two professors merely stated: “My daughter is proof.” The other professor remained silent. I was left a bit dumbstruck; the two of them felt confident that their uninformed NES opinions based on their anecdotes were superior enough to trump numerous research findings in the field presented by an NNES. It was a reminder of the differences between our professional lives. I had been aware for quite a while that many of my NES counterparts at Japanese universities had not been able to publish research papers in English with the same rigor, quality, or quantity that I was achieving in my academic output – even though it was in my second language. I therefore found it quite unfair that I held the same academic position as those NESs. Additionally, despite receiving similar remuneration, those NESs are often excused from some committee work, entrance examination responsibilities, and community service due to their lack of competence in the Japanese language. I find it hard to imagine this situation in reverse if one were an NNES looking to take up a position as a university professor in an ESL context.

If you look hard enough, you can find instances of native-speakerism in daily life as well. One morning, I was taking a subway to my university – in fact, it was the morning of the professional development event already mentioned – and by sheer chance, I encountered a podcast episode on how NNESs can deliver an effective academic presentation in English. *How timely!* I quickly started listening to it; however, after the first minute, my heart sank: the podcast host, who was a NES professor, and the guest, who was also a NES professor, were jointly offering advice and recommendations to NNESs on how to become confident in giving academic presentations in English. The biggest takeaway from the episode was “seek opportunities to use English as much as you can.” My first thought was: *Why are you two the experts on NNESs’ experiences rather than NNESs themselves?* My second thought was: *How useful is your advice for those in EFL contexts like myself!?* In examples like these, it is incredibly easy to draw parallels of the “(white) savior” coming to enlighten the ignorant and uneducated “other” with little consideration of context or lived experiences.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, two of my American PhD students and I decided to collaborate on a research project. It aimed to critique native-speakerism by exploring and delineating our individual and interactional experiences as an NNES supervisor and NES supervisees at a Japanese university (see Hiratsuka et al., 2023a, 2023b). It is disappointing to note that this kind of academic collaboration between NES supervisees and NNES supervisors is few and far between in Japan. I suspect that the rarity of this professional grouping in EFL contexts is not limited to my country because there have been extremely few studies, if any, that have delved deeply into it. In particular, there have been no studies which have interrogated the academic and linguistic experiences of members within this type of professional grouping in EFL

contexts (at least to my knowledge). Our own unprecedented collaborative research was therefore breaking new ground and, in doing so, we discovered something that was sprouting below, sight unseen. Our study led us to take a step toward supplanting native-speakerism with a new ideology – fresher, more fertile soil in which we could sow our ideas. We called this new ideology *trans-speakerism*. This research endeavor with my American students was immensely gratifying and inspiring mainly for four reasons. First, I felt like I had finally obtained the right and authority to supervise and conduct research with NESs on an equal footing despite being an NNES. Second, I was (and still am) convinced that we could provide a compelling alternative ideology to native-speakerism through the study – one that could supersede existing biases and empower NNESs in effective and practical ways within both their daily professional lives and throughout their careers. Third, I envisage that the innovative concept of trans-speakerism will steer the discussion of NNES linguistic identities in a better direction and (re)invigorate future empirical studies, thereby benefiting NNESs themselves. Finally, I envision that trans-speakerism will allow NNESs' voices to be better heard and recognized within the field. The name itself is indicative of this favorable, comprehensive shift: *trans-speakerism* is inclusive of all speakerhoods in its focus, as opposed to *native-speakerism*, which merely positions NNESs as items of comparison rather than as entities in their own right. Under the umbrella of trans-speakerism, I visualize students, teachers, researchers, and all those within our community equally and equitably sharing their personal stories, exchanging opinions, and reading and conducting research. In this scenario, all parties – global speakers of English (GSEs), global teachers of English (GTEs), and Global Englishes researchers (GERs) – are free from using demeaning terminologies to refer to each other such as NESs and NNESs.

... “Excuse me, we are closing.” A waitress stood next to me with a concerned look. I must have dozed off. I did not know how long she was trying in vain to wake me up. I pulled myself together and saw that the coffee in front of me had turned cold, untouched. The waitress repeated, “[e]xcuse me, we are closing.” It was just past 8 pm. I got up, apologized, paid the bill, and left the café. It was pitch-dark outside. *Was Kyoto always this cold in winter?* I took a deep breath of the sharp, crisp air and started walking. The moon's gentle glow reflected on the river a few feet away, mingling with the soothing burble of the water and the rhythmic clang of a railroad crossing in the distance. It was a peaceful night. My thoughts, initially muddled from the news of my promotion blending with recollections of the past, calmed with the surrounding tranquility. I had always presumed that the most important goal as an academic is to become a full professor. Yet, as the saying goes, it is not the destination that holds significance, but rather the journey itself – a notion recognized as “arrival fallacy”

(Ben-Shahar, 2014). So, my arrival at my own destination felt rather anticlimactic. I realized that was because I wasn't supposed to stop – there is so much more that I want to accomplish. As I walked in that chilly air, I thought that maybe there are no actual destinations – only signposts and railroad crossings flashing and clanging in the distance to guide the journey ahead. Maybe we are just explorers. The joy and meaning of (an academic) life can be found not in completing an activity or reaching a target, but in continuously engaging in new subjects for investigation.

On that day, I installed a new signpost. The next leg of my journey is to walk alongside other NNES teachers, graduate students, and researchers like me, both present and past. I want to help and support them and, more importantly, vigorously advocate for them. To do this, I believe it is crucial to rescind native-speakerism and replace it with trans-speakerism, beginning with this book. I look forward to sharing this particular journey with you.