Native-speakerism and ‘hidden curricula’ in ELT training: a duoethnography

Robert J. Lowe and Luke Lawrence

Abstract

Issues surrounding native-speakerism in ELT have been investigated from a diverse range of research perspectives over the last decade. This study uses a duoethnographic approach in order to explore the concept of a 'hidden curriculum' that instils and perpetuates Western ‘native speaker’ norms and values in the formal and informal training of English language teachers. We found that, despite differences in our own individual training experiences, a form of 'hidden curriculum' was apparent that had a powerful effect on our initial beliefs and practices as teachers and continues to influence our day-to-day teaching.

KEYWORDS: native-speakerism; hidden curriculum; ELT training; duoethnography

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Introduction

Native-speakerism is an ideology in English language teaching (ELT) which manifests in beliefs and practices that serve to privilege the voices, institutions and pedagogical approaches of the Western ‘native speaker’. While much has been written on native-speakerism, relatively little empirical research has been conducted investigating the social reproduction of the ideology in ELT training and development. As two teachers who have undergone extensive training, we felt it would be instructive to compare our experiences, with the goal of highlighting similarities or differences which may point towards the ways in which native-speakerism forms part of a ‘hidden curriculum’ of training in ELT. We chose to explore this topic through a duoethnography, an emerging research methodology in which two or more researchers engage in dialogue to share experiences and opinions in order to reveal insights into a chosen topic. As a method that allows for the deep exploration of personal experiences through dialogue, duoethnography has recently been used to effectively investigate the experiences of teachers concerning native-speakerism (Lowe and Kiczkowiak 2016). As such, we felt that duoethnography would provide an opportunity to engage in an in-depth study of the ways native-speakerism formed an unspoken but influential part of our training.

Native-speakerism: definition and background

Native-speakerism is a term coined by Holliday (2005) to describe an ideology in English language teaching in which the voices of Western ELT institutions and their ‘native speaker’ representatives are privileged over others. Following Holliday (2005), we place the term ‘native speaker’ in inverted commas as a reminder that this term is a highly contested one. Research shows that ‘native speaker’ status can be assigned based on factors such as ethnic background (Kubota and Lin 2006) and nationality (Singh 1998), and we therefore consider it a socially constructed category that is not applied with reference exclusively to linguistic proficiency, but rather to a range of other political, social and cultural traits (see Davies 2003). We further feel that the use of the terms in ELT has often served to stereotype and marginalise teachers by assigning them fixed characteristics on the basis of their ‘native’ or ‘non-native speaker’ positioning, examples of which can be found in the work of Medgyes (1992). The uncritical use of these labels serves to uphold this stereotyping, and this is a further reason, in our view, to use these labels in such a way as to constantly remind the reader that they are not to be taken as objective or value-free.
Native-speakerism builds on work in critical applied linguistics such as Phillipson’s (1992) ‘Linguistic Imperialism’ thesis, which argues that institutions such as the British Council have been complicit in enacting a neo-colonial agenda to further the interests of Western countries through the teaching of English and the exporting of Western educational technology. However, native-speakerism goes beyond this somewhat deterministic model which, as Pennycook has argued, ‘reduce[s] human relations to a reflection of the political economy’ (1994:54), to include concepts such as orientalism and culturism. As Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016) write, native-speakerism ‘makes extensive use of an “us” and “them” dichotomy where “non-native speaker” teachers and students are seen as culturally inferior and in need of training in the “correct” Western methods of learning and teaching’ (2016:2–3). This leads to a situation in which Western methods of language education are seen as superior to local educational technology (see Canagarajah 2012 for an example of this).

Most visibly, native-speakerism manifests as discrimination against teachers considered to be ‘non-native speakers’. Writers such as Clark and Paran (2007) have shown that ‘non-native speaker’ teachers face discrimination in hiring, while contributors to Houghton and Rivers (2013) have demonstrated that the ideology can also affect ‘native speaker’ teachers by reducing them to tokens and commodities.

Native-speakerism may also influence perceptions of students, who are regularly depicted through cultural stereotypes in ELT materials and training courses (see Susser 1998). Holliday notes that terms such as “dependent”, “hierarchical”, “collectivist”, “reticent”, “indirect”, “passive”, “docile”, “lacking in self-esteem”, “reluctant to challenge authority”, “easily dominated”, “undemocratic”, or “traditional” (2006:385–6) are used to describe students from non-Western backgrounds, and Canagarajah argues that the behaviour of non-Western students and teachers is often ‘attributed to ancient ethno-religious practices’ (1999:108), all of which constitutes a clear form of orientalist ‘Othering’ (Said 1979) of non-Western students.

Less tangibly, native-speakerism influences perceptions of ‘correct’ forms of English, with research by Yamanaka (2006) showing that textbooks often make little or no reference to varieties of English from the ‘outer’ or ‘expanding’ circles of English use (Kachru 1992), and studies show that Western models of the language are generally considered positively by teachers and students (Matsuda 2012). Native-speakerism also influences the exporting of teaching methodologies to other contexts while ‘marginalising the commendable expertise and experience that host-country teachers bring to the projects’ (Kumaravadivelu 2012:23).
As can be seen from the preceding discussion, we take the position that native-speakerism serves to propagate Western hegemony in language teaching; however, it is important to recognise that this does not mean such criticism should be universally applied to all ELT professionals. Breckenridge and Erling (2011) argue that Holliday’s work on native-speakerism represents a form of Othering of ‘native speaker’ teachers, and Houghton and Rivers (2013) have shown how native-speakerism can actually serve to marginalise these teachers in some cases. Holliday (2005) himself makes it clear that not all Western English teachers are native-speakerist, and further agrees to an extent with Houghton and Rivers (2013), noting that ‘the Othering of any teachers in this manner, regardless of their backgrounds, is a matter of human rights’ (Holliday 2015:15). However, while there is certainly room for nuance in discussion of these issues, such nuance does not detract from the stronger general influence of native-speakerism in ELT, which we argue predominantly benefits the anglophone West and its representatives, and marginalises teachers and students from non-Western cultural and educational backgrounds.

Hidden curriculum

One way that biases are dispersed throughout society is through what has been termed the hidden curriculum. The concept of the hidden curriculum was first put forward by Jackson ([1968] 1990) to account for the minutiae of everyday conformities that schoolchildren are expected to master in order to be successful students. This entails not only adherence to the official rules and regulations of a particular institution, but also an uncritical compliance with the dominant ideology of the society, within which knowledge is presented as an unquestioned truth (Apple 1976). This is taken up by Bourdieu and Passeron, who posit that ‘All pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power’ (1977:5). This ‘invisible pedagogy’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:18) is seen to perpetuate the interests and values of the dominant power in a society.

The majority of research and writing on the hidden curriculum has focused on the American public school system (Jackson [1968] 1990; Krammer and Mangiardi 2012; McLaren 1989) and explicit references to a hidden curriculum in ELT have focused almost exclusively on textbook materials and lesson content (see Clark 2016 for an examination of a hidden curriculum of gender bias in Japanese school textbooks). However, a more powerful hidden curriculum can also be seen throughout the ELT industry as a whole, in the transfer of Western pedagogical practices around the
world through training, textbooks, academic journals and conferences. In particular, training bodies such as Cambridge ESOL and Trinity College London TESOL, as well as various universities offering MATESOL courses in the United States and United Kingdom have been criticised for exporting a singular view of language teaching methodology that undermines the value of non-Western approaches and fails to meet the needs of ‘non-native speaker’ teachers and others working in an EFL context (Anderson 2016; Liu 1998; McBeath 2017).

In initial training courses such as the Cambridge CELTA and Trinity CertTESOL, Liu highlights a methodological dogmatism that ‘fervently promotes “new” NABA methodologies, particularly those titled “communicative”, while condemning tried and tested “traditional” methods still popular in many other parts of the world’ (1998:4). Despite the fact that many ‘non-native speaker’ participants on initial training courses already have Qualified Teacher Status in their home country and often possess extensive teaching experience (Anderson 2016), the prestige afforded to these institutions leads many teachers to seek this additional training. This is regardless of the fact that courses are largely designed for the needs of ESL (rather than EFL)-based, monolingual, novice teachers (Anderson 2016; Liu 1998; McBeath 2017).

The hidden curriculum implicit in these programmes can be seen to suppress alternative methodologies and viewpoints by disregarding the knowledge, experience and qualifications of ‘non-native speaker’ students in favour of a standardised one-size-fits-all PPP (Presentation, Production, Practice) approach that has remained unchanged for 20 years (McBeath 2017). As McBeath attests: ‘[the CELTA] offers a primarily BANA, if not Eurocentric, view of what constitutes “good teaching” and ... it appears to devalue the experience and expertise of non-native English speakers’ (2017:249). This dogmatism has the combined effect of simultaneously undermining any challenge to this narrow approach, and perpetuating a specific, Westernised agenda around the globe. The authority of these bodies allows these concepts and methodologies to proliferate.

This hidden bias is also carried forwards into Masters degree courses in TESOL and Applied Linguistics. In a study of how effectively US MATESOL programmes prepared students to teach abroad, Govardhan, Nayar and Sheorey (1999) found that the modules available rarely included practical guidance for teaching ‘non-native speaker’ students and presented a skewed view of methodology that did not adequately evaluate their validity and applicability in various contexts. As well as this covert exclusion of pedagogy relevant to ‘non-native speaker’ teachers and EFL contexts in general, a study by Moussu (2006, cited in Moussu and Llurda
2008) found evidence that several US-based MATESOL courses actively denied ‘non-native speaker’ students the experience of practical teaching, as they feared that they may impede the learning of their ESL students. Language teachers, ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ alike, that do not readily accept the one-size-fits-all, Western-dominated ideology that the hidden curriculum represents, may become marginalised without the social-certification that CELTA and MA courses provide.

While we have been critical of training programmes, the preceding discussion should not be taken as an assertion that there is no mention of, or engagement with, critical issues such as native-speakerism, linguistic imperialism, or the changing nature and roles of English in the world today in MA or certificate courses. Indeed, a recent edited volume by Matsuda (2017) includes several instances of these issues being included in MA programmes, and Dewey and Patsko (2018) describe efforts to include discussions of English as a lingua franca in certificate-level courses. We acknowledge that such efforts are ongoing, and indeed our own postgraduate studies led us to some of the views expressed in this paper. However, we believe that the research points towards a general trend of Western-centric discourses playing out, often unacknowledged, in ELT training programmes.

Research method: a duoethnography

In order to investigate how the ideology of native-speakerism could be found within the hidden curriculum of our own teacher training, we chose to engage in a duoethnographic study as a form of narrative inquiry. Duoethnography is a relatively recent form of qualitative research first proposed by Norris and Sawyer (2004), in which ‘two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world’ (Norris and Sawyer 2012:9). In a duoethnography, the life histories of the researchers are the site of the research being undertaken, and through critical and dialogic engagement duoethnographers attempt to uncover different understandings of the world based on their divergent sociocultural and experiential backgrounds (Sawyer and Norris 2013). There are several tenets of duoethnography, including a focus on ‘currere’ or life history as curriculum (see Pinar 1975), the discussion of difference between the participants, and the polyvocal and dialogic nature of the approach (Norris and Sawyer 2012:11–23). Duoethnographers engage in multiple recorded discussions of their life histories in relation to a topic in order to expose the similarities and differences between their experiences. The researchers then review and code the data by theme, and from these data dialogues between the two researchers are constructed, both to
highlight the key data points and also to increase the accessibility of the data for the audience (Norris and Sawyer 2012:20). In ELT, duoethnography has been employed recently as a way of investigating the influence of native-speakerism on the professional lives of language teachers (Lowe and Kiczkowiak 2016) and the implementation of English as an international language pedagogy (Rose and Montakantiwong 2018).

Duoethnography has also been used to explore the idea of the hidden curriculum in schooling. Krammer and Mangiardi (2012) in their own duoethnography note that ‘hidden curricula perform ideological work: they present and naturalize a social order in which those with power persuade those without to accept and sustain their own subjugation’ (2012:66). As a deeply embedded ideology in ELT, it is important for us to understand how native-speakerism is perpetuated by hidden curricula in the training of language teachers.

Managing our biases

Qualitative research in general, and types of narrative enquiry such as duoethnography in particular, are always under pressure to prove their validity and justify their conclusions robustly (Atkinson and Delamont 2006; Dörnyei 2007). Although we reject the notion that qualitative research should be judged according to the same principles as quantitative research, which in effect argues that ‘the problem with qualitative research is that it is not quantitative enough’ (Dörnyei 2007:55), throughout the present study we were keen to increase the rigour of the duoethnographic method by maximising the reliability of our recollections and minimising personal bias.

Although images have previously been included in duoethnographies as a purely illustrative tool to add richness to the discussion (see Shelton and McDermott 2012, for example), in order to increase the reliability of our claims we decided to use images to support and validate our recollections. This involved reviewing training evaluations and coursework feedback. We also contacted past colleagues and former course participants and presented them with our accounts to refute or corroborate, which can be seen as a form of respondent validation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Participants’ backgrounds and beliefs

The topic of native-speakerism is one which is intimately connected to the identities of teachers and students. Privilege and oppression in ELT are tied to intersecting discourses of nationality, assigned speakerhood, racial categorisation, gender, and class (Block 2007), and as such, it is important for
us to state clearly our backgrounds and note how these may have affected our experiences, both as researchers and research subjects. With this in mind we will give brief biographical sketches of ourselves.

Rob is a white British ‘native speaker’ who completed his CELTA in the United Kingdom after graduating from a UK university in 2008. Immediately after this he moved to Japan, where he has been resident for over ten years. After moving to Japan he engaged in further study, completing a DipTESOL, an MA (by distance learning from a UK university) and eventually a PhD in applied linguistics, also from a UK university. Through his studies he developed an orientation towards critical approaches to applied linguistics. His employment trajectory has been very privileged, even more so than others from a similar background. Rob began his career working in a chain of private English conversation schools in Japan, which focused exclusively on the teaching of British English, and advocated a PPP approach to the teaching of language. This was enforced through a week-long training session upon joining the company, and occasional workshops thereafter. Roughly eighteen months later, he began adjunct work in universities, and also taught part-time at the British Council. In all of these jobs, he was strongly encouraged to follow an ‘English-only’ policy in the classroom and to use communicative PPP-derived approaches, which eventually became part of his implicit teaching beliefs, a fact only recently acknowledged and challenged. Since transitioning to a full-time university position, Rob has engaged in extensive academic study, and has moved away somewhat from his highly Western-centric, monolingual teaching practices, although aspects of these still remain as he teaches monolingually using communicative approaches, and generally encourages students to use English only in the classroom.

Luke is also a white, male, ‘native speaker’ from the United Kingdom. After receiving his CELTA in 2001 in the United Kingdom, he moved to Japan in 2002 and has worked in a variety of English teaching contexts in Japan since then. He did not pursue postgraduate study until nearly ten years into his career, completing his MA in TESOL and applied linguistics by distance learning from a UK university in 2014 and beginning his doctorate in applied linguistics in 2017. Luke’s teaching experience has included English conversation schools (eikaiwa), business English, team-teaching in a secondary school alongside a Japanese English teacher, and English for academic purposes to university undergraduates. In all contexts his training (both formal and informal) reinforced the PPP-led CLT approach of his CELTA training. As an eikaiwa teacher this also included a strong focus on perceived ‘native speaker’ norms, exemplified by a fixed lesson element that focused on teaching students what was explicitly marketed as
‘native’ pronunciation. As a team-teacher, communicative-based lessons were taught in order to provide support and context to the grammar points of the students’ primary textbook, which was taught exclusively by the Japanese teacher. In his current position as a university teacher of undergraduate academic English communication courses, Luke has a great deal of autonomy in how to teach. However, he is required to teach textbook-based English-only classes and to provide CLT-style practical, communicative lessons at all times.

Over the last few years, as we have become more aware of the ideology of native-speakerism and other critical issues in ELT, we have both come to reject the implicit superiority of the English-only CLT approach in favour of a locally contextual view of language teaching that respects and acknowledges the traditions and knowledge of local teachers and the individuality and autonomy of learners.

As both teachers and researchers, our backgrounds will undoubtedly influence the ways in which we interpret the data gathered, particularly in terms of our critical orientation towards the material. This should be kept in mind as the data are presented and interpreted below.

Data collection

In order to investigate the idea of a hidden curriculum in ELT training, we engaged in several discussions over a three-week period between January and February 2017, using an online messaging service. We collected a large store of data consisting of 13,842 words, which we reviewed and coded by theme as the data emerged. These data were then reconstructed into fictionalised dialogues and bookended with introductory and concluding paragraphs. This allowed us to present conversations that were often jumbled, overlapping, and which stretched over several days, as is the nature of online messaging, in a clear, concise and linear fashion (Sawyer and Norris 2013). Some of the text of the dialogues is taken verbatim from our discussions, while much of it is a fictional, but accurate representation of the major themes which arose from our interaction.

Research questions

Our initial premise when beginning the project was simply to investigate, through duoethnography, how our language teaching beliefs and practices relating to native-speakerism were influenced by our training. As the project progressed, a number of themes emerged that led us to formulate more specific research questions. The ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss 2009) approach we took was to begin by gathering information on
general background and experience in the first data collection sessions. These data were then reviewed and coded by themes as they had emerged in the natural course of the discussion sessions. These themes were then used to inform subsequent sessions, which were in turn reviewed and coded by theme. This resulted in the emergence of three related concepts, summarised in the following research questions.

1. How were our beliefs regarding notions of ‘correct’ English, and our perceptions of the abilities of ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers, influenced by our training?

2. What role did our training play in establishing native-speakerist cultural stereotypes of non-Western students, and how did further training and experience refute or reinforce these views?

3. How were our beliefs and practices regarding the appropriate methodology for teaching English influenced by our training, do these beliefs and practices show evidence of native-speakerist attitudes, and how have these beliefs and practices changed over time?

As mentioned in the preceding literature review, native-speakerism is considered to represent a Western-centric orientation to language teaching, which involves not only discrimination against and Othering of ‘non-native speaker’ teachers, and against ‘non-standard’ Englishes, but also includes cultural chauvinism, particularly regarding the depiction of non-Western educational systems as being deficient and in need of correction using Western communicative approaches (Holliday 2005). To give a recent example, Jenks (2017) describes ‘White saviourism’ in Korea, in which Western ELT professionals depict themselves as being the only instructors who can rescue their students from the perceived flaws in the Korean education system (2017:105–18). This chauvinistic attitude positions non-Western approaches to language education as inherently inferior to Western communicative approaches and also contains cultural stereotyping of non-Western students in ways that portray them as deficient and problematic.

These questions are addressed in turn by each of the dialogues that follow.
Dialogues

Dialogue A: perceptions and treatment of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers

In relation to our first research question, this dialogue presents a discussion of how our perceptions of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers were influenced by our training, highlighting both the similarities and differences in the ways our initial qualifications fostered our beliefs and understandings about the skills and capabilities of teachers from different linguistic backgrounds.

Rob: The assumption of the ‘native speaker’ as the ideal model of a language teacher is something that I now understand to be a social construct. It’s something reflected and reinforced in nearly every aspect of language education, and so it’s not surprising that it was several years before I began to question it myself as I read into the critical ELT literature. In preparation for this discussion, I began to think back through my career and see if I could trace the development of this mindset to its earliest stages. Interestingly, I don’t think it was there from the very beginning. I remember as a secondary school student being assigned a French national to teach my French classes, and being very disappointed. I preferred my old teacher, who was a French L2 speaker, as I felt that she was better at explaining things and at controlling the class. I don’t think the ‘native-speakerist’ way of thinking became fully established until I began my teacher training.

Luke: How do you think your training influenced your perceptions?

Rob: Perhaps initially just in subtle ways. I joined a CELTA course in 2008, and I remember that on our course there were no ‘non-native speaker’ trainees or tutors. Most of the candidates were British, and one was American. That perhaps doesn’t mean a lot on its own, but I can recall several incidents that seemed to indicate to me that I was in ‘native speaker’-only territory. For example, at the end of the course we had a session discussing how to use the CELTA to apply for jobs, and one of the tutors explained that we were in a very good position at that point because there was a shortage of ‘native speakers’ around the world, so it would be easy to find positions. In other words, the make-up of the participants and the assumptions that the course seemed to operate on implied the ‘native speaker’ standard. Although I remember tutors on the course making some positive comments about previous ‘non-native speaker’ trainees, this seemed to be an exception, rather than a rule. Was your experience similar?

Luke: Not really. When I did my CELTA, I found it to be inclusive and open to ‘non-native speaker’ teachers. Although there were no ‘non-native speakers’ in my training group, I remember that there was due to
be a Russian trainee in the group, but she was refused entry on the course at the last moment because her proficiency was deemed to be insufficient. However, I got the impression that she was treated fairly. Also, one of the trainers on the course was a ‘non-native speaker’ teacher from France. At the time, I felt that this was normal and that anyone could be an English teacher. Did your perceptions change after you started working and received further training?

Rob: I think my perceptions were backed up by later training. Moving ahead a bit chronologically, after three years in Japan I enrolled on a DipTESOL course. By this point, I think I had developed a rather ‘native-speakerist’ mindset, particularly having spent time working in the highly ‘native speaker’-centred world of Japanese eikaiwa (English conversation) schools (Kubota 2011; Seargeant 2009), and in a university department where my ‘native speaker’ status was considered my only notable attribute. One of the trainees on the DipTESOL course was Chinese, but had excellent English. I remember that he skipped articles occasionally, or made other small grammatical ‘errors’. The tutor told him ‘you really need to work on your grammar if you want to pass the course’, which in retrospect seems to suggest a set of assumptions about standard registers and varieties of English that I didn’t pick up on at the time. I felt this trainee was expected to produce ‘standard’ British or American English, with the assumption that these Englishes are superior to other varieties. I wonder if similar assumptions about standard models and registers were in play when the Russian trainee was excluded from your CELTA course. Engaging in further training should really have been a chance to expand my critical awareness of ELT, but instead I think it pushed me in an even more native-speakerist direction, both in terms of my attitude to speakers and teachers of the language, and in terms of teaching methodology.

Luke: That’s interesting. I had the opposite experience, but I think the outcome was the same in that it pushed me into a similarly native-speakerist outlook. On my MA course we were given sample essays of past students’ work to help us write our own essays. There was one example essay by a ‘non-native speaker’ student that was absolutely riddled with grammar mistakes, but the feedback from the professor largely ignored them, brushing them aside as ‘one or two surface errors’ (see Figure 1) and gave the paper a higher score than I think it deserved. At the same time, I was being lambasted for the tiniest misplaced apostrophe – one comment from the tutor towards a grammar mistake simply said ‘ugh!’ (Figure 2). I saw this as unfair and a clear example of double standards being employed. I didn’t realise it at the time, but I think this was the start of my empathising with fellow ‘native-speaker’ teachers from the standpoint of being a victim.
Overall Comment
There were one or two surface errors and the referencing was rather idiosyncratic. This was a satisfactory look at the Lexical Approach in a Taiwanese context and it merits a passing grade.

Figure 1

The development of speaking skills is often cited as the main aim of the vast majority of EFL/ESL learners and since the late 1970s (ugh!), the development of these skills within a communicative framework has been the predominant focus of applied Linguistics research and teaching methodology

Figure 2

Rob: The idea of being a ‘victim’ is interesting to me, and seems to fit with Houghton and Rivers’ (2013) work on native-speakerism. In what ways did you consider yourself a victim at the time, and have your views changed since then?

Luke: I just felt I was being held to a higher standard because I was a ‘native speaker’ and that ‘non-native speakers’ were getting an easy ride on the course. My views have definitely changed since then. Looking back, I think I was evaluating the ‘non-native speaker’s’ essay not on grammatical accuracy (as I thought I was doing at the time), but on the fact that it didn’t quite conform to the standard (British) academic English that I had been taught. Nowadays, I am more aware of ‘non-standard’ varieties of English, but at that time I just saw it as ‘incorrect’ English.

This dialogue shows an interesting divergence in how our beliefs regarding standard norms of English and the abilities of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speaker teachers were influenced by our training, and goes some way towards answering our first research question. For Rob, the initial experience of certificate-level training seems to have inspired or reinforced the notion that ELT was ‘native speaker-only territory’ due to the exclusively ‘native-speaker’ make-up of the course and the ‘native’-normative discourses that dominated it (Liu 1998). Luke’s initial training experiences took a more inclusive form, with one of his CELTA trainers being a ‘non-native speaker’. However, both of our experiences indicate assumptions about standard norms and varieties of English that hint at native-speakerist thinking. In Rob’s case this came from the tutors on his programme, who
corrected the non-standard English of a Chinese trainee, and in Luke's case the assumption came from within, as he felt the work produced by students on his MA course was marked leniently in light of what he saw as grammatical errors. This also led him to feel targeted as a 'native speaker', held to different standards (Houghton and Rivers 2013). This dialogue highlights the fact that despite the divergence in our initial training experiences, the hidden curricula of our subsequent training led us to adopt a similarly native-speakerist outlook that manifested itself in feelings of superiority and victimhood, respectively. This indicates that native-speakerist ideologies are multifaceted and may appear in a variety of training situations.

Dialogue B: the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes in training

In this dialogue, with reference to our second research question, we discuss issues around cultural stereotyping in our training programmes and the effect that this had on the approach we subsequently took with our students.

Rob: One thing that I think was a big part of my professional training was cultural stereotyping. This is something that played a part in both my initial and later training. Early in CELTA, one of the tutors told our group that if we went to Eastern Europe students would really challenge us on our grammar knowledge because students in that part of the world are assertive and confident, but if we went to East Asia we would have to really mess up to lose control of a class because the people there have such respect for their teachers. That advice really stuck with me, not least because I went to Japan and immediately lost control of several classes! In the 'learner and class profile' section of my DipTESOL lesson plan I often wrote very stereotypical descriptions of the needs of Japanese learners (see Figure 3), which I now see as very patronising, and even offensive.

Luke: I had a similar experience. During my CELTA training, most of my students in the practice classes I taught were from South America and young, but there was one older Chinese student. I was advised that I may need to keep an eye on him as Chinese students are shy, intimidated by other students and reluctant to speak out. Actually, he was fine in terms of speaking out, but his English was a bit lower than the others which I think inhibited him somewhat. This cultural priming definitely led me to stereotype Chinese (and all Asian) students in a certain way and treat him differently to the others, which I carried through to my MA studies too (Figure 4).

Rob: During my training, I think a lot of cultural stereotyping was actually coded as 'cultural sensitivity'. Early in my CELTA course I was marked
The obstacles facing Japanese learners when attempting to acquire oral communication skills are manifold; social norms, personality factors and negative L1 interference have all been noted. For the purposes of this paper however I will only concentrate on one major aspect: the educational system.

Figure 3

The class is mostly female with just a few men, and covers a wide range of ages and jobs. There are some housewives, but also university students and office workers.

The class are happy to communicate with each other. The small amount of younger students forces them in interact with the older members of the group, rather than staying in a small, exclusive group.

___, ___ and ___ are good models, and should be used when giving examples.

___ and ___ are good organisers

___ is quite an intrapersonal learner, but will work in groups if needed.

The men do not particularly like writing, but will do it if required.

The students are Japanese (except for possibly one or two), and they are likely not to ask questions about instructions and language. Concept and information checking will be required for this reason.

Figure 4

down in a practice lesson for putting a Muslim man and woman into a pair together. The instructors said that that could be seen as offensive to their religion. The students actually had no problem together, but I was cautioned for ‘cultural insensitivity’. That was something that came up in my Diploma course as well, where in the ‘cultural considerations’ section of the lesson plan we had to write how we would adapt our lesson to suit different cultural sensibilities, which I think encouraged us to ‘Other’ the students by making broad generalisations (see Figures 5, 6 and 7). In the CELTA too, my final course report included the criteria ‘teaching a class with an awareness of learning styles and cultural factors that may affect learning’ (Figure 8).

Luke: Yeah, ‘cultural sensitivity’ was a big part of my course too. Actually, we were so worried about offending cultural sensitivities that we thought everything was culturally related. I remember one incident during a
In some cultures, discussing the students' families might be taboo, but this does not seem to be a problem in Japan, particularly if they are using positive images.

**Cultural Considerations:**
As mentioned earlier, cultural reference points will come into play in this kind of lesson, and as such, careful monitoring will be needed to check the students are making appropriate similes.
If I were to teach this lesson in another culture, it would be very important to make sure that similes given as examples were not offensive to the students’ sensibilities, and to be aware of the kinds of comparisons which could cause offense.

**CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**
In some cultures, the conception of adjectives might be different, and due to this, students may find themselves producing forms which sound strange to native speakers, and do not accurately convey their ideas. For example, in certain Arabic-speaking countries learners consider the intensifiers “too” and “very” to be synonymous, leading them to produce sentences such as “you visit me too often”, to mean “you visit me very often”. The first sentence would contain an unintentionally negative undertone.

**Teaching and Learning Context:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching a class with an awareness of the needs and interests of the learner group</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching a class with an awareness of learning styles and cultural factors that may affect learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging, when necessary, learners' backgrounds and previous learning experiences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing good rapport with learners and ensuring they are fully involved in learning activities</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
training session when the trainer sat on someone’s desk as she was explaining something and when she realised she said something like ‘Oh, you probably shouldn’t sit on the students’ desks’. One trainee asked in what part of the world it would be offensive to do so. She said ‘I don’t think any cultures like your arse in their face!’ It was funny, but it showed how we had all been primed to treat everything as a cultural difference, when more often than not it’s not there.

Rob: The stereotyping was sometimes contradictory. One of the students who attended the CELTA lessons was a middle-aged Korean man, and we were warned about having to control him. The tutors told us he was very proud of his English, and tended to dominate classes by speaking a lot and answering every whole-class question. So, on the one hand we were told that Asian students were shy and needed to be encouraged to speak, and on the other hand we were told that one particular Asian student was the most dominant and in need of control! However, we were then advised to be very careful in how we controlled him, because it might make him ‘lose face’, which we were told is very important in Korean culture. Although looking back I see this stereotyping as being obviously contradictory, I didn’t question it at the time.

Luke: I can’t stand the phrase ‘lose face’, it’s only ever applied to Asian people. Although, going back over my MA essays, I found that I used ‘fear of losing face’ as an explanation for why Japanese students fail to acquire English (see Figure 9). Again, I think that I just unquestioningly accepted these stereotypes that started in the CELTA training and were reinforced even by the academic study of a Master’s programme.

This dialogue addresses our second research question regarding the ways in which cultural stereotypes were instilled through our training. There were numerous similarities in our experiences with regard to cultural stereotyping, which was often disguised as training in ‘cultural sensitivity’. We feel this implies the presence of a hidden curriculum that actively taught us to ‘Other’ our students using some of the stereotypical terms identified
by Holliday (2006). In Luke's case, he was primed to be aware of cultural differences to such an extent that every interaction was seen as culturally significant. His training experience with a Chinese student led him to see all Asian students as shy and unwilling to speak out, something that he carried with him into his teaching career in Japan and his MA studies. Rob's experience of being marked down for failing to comply with cultural stereotyping gives an indication of the degree to which cultural stereotyping forms a large part of the training programme. However, the conflicting messages Rob received in advice pertaining to one Korean student point to a lack of awareness on the part of the trainers, despite the reality of the classroom situation. Again, both of these examples point to the existence of an 'invisible pedagogy' in the training experiences of both Rob and Luke that introduced and perpetuated cultural stereotypes and led to the 'Othering' of students based on fixed ideas of cultural characteristics. This points to a systemised but hidden native-speakerism that is inherent in the training of ELT teachers and which rewards adherence to essentialised notions of cultural 'others' and punishes those that refute or resist these cultural stereotypes.

Dialogue C: cultural chauvinism and the CELTA global standard mindset

In the final dialogue we inquire, as indicated by our third research question, into the notion of cultural and pedagogical chauvinism in our ELT training, and also examine how this extended into less formal 'on-the-job' training during our working lives. Our experiences highlight how assumptions about 'correct' and 'incorrect' teaching methods and pedagogical approaches that were instilled during our initial training later surfaced during our working lives as culturally chauvinistic 'othering' of local education systems and the teachers with whom we were working.

Rob: Phillipson says that native-speakerism 'means a blind faith in the superiority of one language, one culture, and one pedagogy' (2016:43). The question of pedagogy is one that we haven't yet explored, but I certainly feel that my initial teacher training and my later 'on-the-job' training was characterised by an assumed superiority of Western teaching approaches. What pedagogical approaches did your initial training focus on?

Luke: When I did my CELTA course back in 2000, we were taught a rigid PPP methodology, that didn't allow for any deviation from or questioning of that pattern. It was all practical, with very little theoretical rationalisation for what we were being taught. I think that this embedded in me that PPP was the way to teach a lesson and that
any method that deviated from it was in some way flawed or inferior. Even now, although I don't believe it works at all, I still follow the traditional pattern in some of my lessons. I think the PPP paradigm is so instilled in me that it is difficult to change. Did you find the same thing?

Rob: Yes, absolutely. I took a lot from the CELTA and DipTESOL into my teaching practices and assumptions, and it's only really now, eight years later, that I've started to question and challenge some of that. I feel like the CELTA pushed the PPP way of teaching and presented it as the only 'correct' way. Some other elements of CLT were also presented as being a kind of unquestioned gold standard in teaching. For example, in the extract in Figure 10, taken from a DipTESOL lesson reflection, I comment that my teaching approach is too 'teacher-centred,' and this was also something I was evaluated for on the CELTA. On my final CELTA course report, one of the comments stated that 'despite being a quiet member of the group, he established a strong rapport and a tendency towards student-centredness' (Figure 11), and some of the other criteria included 'ensuring balance, variety, and a communicative focus in materials, tasks, and activities' (Figure 12). In other words, certain pedagogical values were clearly stressed. Of course, a method such as PPP or even CLT more generally cannot be inherently native-speakerist. It is only when it is tied to some sense of cultural superiority or cultural chauvinism that it becomes a serious issue.

Luke: I think this idea of cultural chauvinism is worth going into more deeply. When I was working for the British Council (BC), I didn't realise it at the time, but the training I was getting and giving was definitely pushing a 'Western' worldview that was akin to 'civilising the natives.' To give an example, I was working on a project that entailed 'native speaker' BC teachers team-teaching with Japanese English teachers in public secondary schools. Every year, the BC offered a week-long training workshop to the Japanese teachers, which was supposed to improve team-teaching and ensure everyone was on the same page. However, the training was written and delivered by BC teachers, basically telling the Japanese teachers the 'best' way to teach. There was no input sought from the Japanese teachers when creating sessions and no attempt to find out what knowledge or skills they may have been able to pass on to the BC teachers. It was totally one-sided.

Rob: I think this points to a hidden curriculum being present beyond formal training, and continuing even into 'on-the-job' forms of training. I think my belief in the superiority of CELTA-style methodology over everything else led to similar situations in my
I used a lot of group elicitation, however I feel this lesson was somewhat teacher-centred, and could have been more effectively taught with more student input. While the target language required a pre-planned structure for the students to follow in their writing, this also could have been loosened up and the chance given for the students to provide more original ideas.

Figure 10

Robert was a committed and hard-working course participant, who made a lot of progress as the course unfolded. A good group member, he was always ready to help his peers at TP feedback and preparation sessions alike. Despite being a quiet member of the group, he established a strong rapport and a tendency towards student-centredness. His lessons contained good ideas, although maximising his materials is something he still needs to work on. With some support and guidance, he will become an effective teacher of English. We wish him well.

Signed: (Course tutors)

Figure 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning and Resources:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and stating appropriate aims/outcomes for individual lessons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering activities so that they achieve lesson aims</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting, adapting or designing materials, activities, resources and technical aids appropriate for the lesson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting the materials for classroom use with a professional appearance, and with regard to copyright requirements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing the procedure of the lesson in sufficient detail</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including interaction patterns appropriate for the materials and activities used in the lesson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring balance, variety and a communicative focus in materials, tasks and activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocating appropriate timing for different stages in the lessons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing language with attention to form, meaning and phonology and using correct terminology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipating potential difficulties with language, materials and learners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting solutions to anticipated problems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using terminology that relates to language skills and sub-skills correctly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working constructively with colleagues in the planning of teaching practice sessions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on and evaluating their plans in the light of the learning process and suggesting improvements for future plans</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Figure 12
professional life. I remember (embarrassingly) trying to explain to a Japanese professor of TESOL what the problems were in Japanese ELT, and boiling it down to the lack of a CELTA-style methodology, and the lack of English-only policies. That was arrogance on my part, of course, but it’s an attitude that I think was fuelled by cultural chauvinism in my training experiences.

Luke: I think arrogance is a big part of it. When I was given my initial training for the team-teaching project, we were told by a senior teacher to go along with the Japanese teachers’ requests, even if it was pedagogically unsound – meaning that it didn’t fit with the Western, CELTA-approved approach. I’m a little embarrassed to say that I willingly went along with this way of thinking too and patronisingly agreed to ‘indulge’ the Japanese teachers, even though I ‘knew’ that what they were doing was the ‘wrong’ way to teach. In fact, there was one teacher who completely refused to do a translation activity because he said he was pedagogically opposed to it (see Lawrence 2016).

This dialogue demonstrates the ways in which our training influenced our views on superior and inferior practices in ELT, particularly the assumption that communicative approaches were inherently superior to the practices of the educational system in which we found ourselves working. This can be seen both by the patronising way in which Luke was asked to ‘indulge’ the ‘unsound’ practices of the Japanese teachers he was working with, and also in the way Rob felt able to critique the practices of an education system despite having little understanding of the local situation or the students. This relates closely to our final research question, showing that our beliefs regarding appropriate educational technology were strongly influenced by our training. Another interesting discovery was the power that this initial mindset still held over both of us. Rob’s statement that it is only now, eight years after his initial training and having undertaken the intensive critical study that a PhD demands, that he is beginning to question the values that he was taught, indicates the deep influence of his early training. Similarly, Luke’s admission that although he no longer believes in PPP methodology and English-only classes and despite the autonomy and freedom that his current position as a university teacher allows, he still largely teaches in this way, shows that methodologies and values that are inculcated through an unstated hidden curriculum can become deeply embedded and difficult to change. This suggests that the ‘hidden curriculum’ that instils native-speakerist ideas regarding the superiority of Western methods may be so subtle as to make teachers unaware of the fact that they are carrying and propagating these ideals. However, it also indicates that engaging in forms
of academic discourse, such as duoethnography, may go some way towards overcoming this through reflection and self-realisation.

Conclusion

From these recollections of our individual lived experiences we can see clear evidence of a ‘hidden curriculum’ in ELT that ingrains and perpetuates a native-speakerist ideology. In particular, this was manifested in a culturally determined, ‘native’-normative discourse that was apparent from initial training (McBeath 2017) through to postgraduate education (Liu 1998) and even informal on-the-job training.

Although our experiences only represent two individual, non-generalisable perspectives, the fact that they occurred over a decade apart in different contexts indicates that although the process may be nuanced and complex, there are dominant discourses within the profession that influence the ways in which teachers are trained and socialised into the field.

Our first research question was addressed in dialogue A, in which it was revealed that the dominant ‘native’-normative discourses in our training experiences led us towards native-speakerist beliefs regarding the appropriate norms of English, and the lesser abilities of teachers we regarded as being ‘non-native speakers’. This was shown through the ways in which we viewed non-standard Englishes as being ‘inferior’, or users of non-standard Englishes as getting an ‘easy ride’ in comparison to ourselves.

With reference to the second research question into the role of training on the establishment of cultural stereotypes, it was found that the presentation and subsequent perpetuation of cultural stereotypes was a prominent feature of both of our training and working experiences. This influenced our perceptions of students to such an extent that they became accepted parts of our professional knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). It was only much later that we both came to question this accepted wisdom that had been passed down to us through training and interactions with other teachers.

In terms of the third research question regarding the influence of our training on perceptions of appropriate teaching methodologies, we both found a native-speakerist cultural chauvinism that informed our initial training in the United Kingdom and which was carried forward into localised training (Rob’s DipTESOL experience in Japan) and continued back into our UK-based higher education courses (Luke’s distance-learning MA experience) and on into informal in-house training within our local context in Japan (Luke’s experience with the British Council).
of us, elements of these beliefs still remain in our largely communicative, monolingual and English-only approaches to teaching.

In sum, we found that the effect of this hidden curriculum was very powerful, tenacious and wide ranging. In our cases, it influenced not only our general perceptions of methodology and of students, but also our day-to-day teaching. It is apparent that these prejudices and assumptions have become so deeply embedded in our consciousness that they are difficult to discard, despite our growing awareness of native-speakerist concepts and intellectual opposition to Western-centric models of language education. As the data indicated, although our beliefs about the norms of English, the abilities of non-Western colleagues, the cultural stereotyping of students and the appropriate technology for teaching English have changed in recent years, our practices are yet to fully catch up with our stated beliefs.

**Future directions**

While there has been much research on native-speakerism in ELT, particularly in our shared professional context in Japan, little has been done to investigate the ways in which this ideology is reproduced through the training and professional socialisation of language teachers around the world. This study, while not generalisable, provides some suggestive paths for further investigation into the hidden curricula which propagate native-speakerist attitudes, and points towards a need for critical awareness among training programme designers, coordinators, administrators and tutors, so they may adopt a more inclusive global perspective that benefits teachers and students regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. This requires less reliance on fixed cultural stereotypes and greater acceptance of non-Western educational technology.

Duoethnography is a newly emerging research method in ELT. Using this method has allowed us to explore our own experiences in a revealing manner that is relatable to other teachers and researchers, and that may help others to reflect on how their formative training experiences have moulded their current beliefs and practices. Further use of duoethnography in native-speakerism and other ELT-related fields may help to uncover hidden ideologies and challenge accepted norms and values, a process that could be made even more valuable by the inclusion of the voices of non-Western academics, and researchers from a variety of national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We also hope that our attempts to minimise our biases and add validity to our recollections strengthen the method and make it more acceptable and accessible to the general academic community.
About the authors

Robert J. Lowe is a lecturer in the Department of English Communication, Tokyo Kasei University. He holds a PhD in applied linguistics, and his research focuses on critical issues in English language teaching.

Luke Lawrence has been teaching English in Japan since 2002. As well as teaching full time at Yokohama City University he is also currently a PhD candidate at the University of Stirling. His research interests revolve around teacher identity and social issues in ELT, especially ideas around native-speakerism.

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