Examining the "Invisible Wall" of Native-Speakerism in Japanese ELT: A Duoethnography of Teacher Experience

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Native-speakerism is a prevalent ideology in ELT based on the notion that "native speakers" of English are its ideal teachers (Holliday, 2006). One type of research that aims to disrupt dominant narratives such as native-speakerism is duoethnography, which explores juxtaposed perspectives through reflexive dialogue (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). This duoethnographic study focuses on how experiences of native-speakerism have shaped the careers of one "native speaker" English teacher and one "non-native" English teacher in Japan. The researchers recorded conversations about their varying experiences of native-speakerism in the public school and private conversation school systems in Japan and collaboratively analyzed this data using interpretive thematic coding. In this study, we describe how our discussions on the topic of native-speakerism transformed our views on our respective positions in language teaching and encouraged us to examine our standing as professionals. We discovered that while native-speakerism had significantly shaped our teacher identity and beliefs, we had also both used our agency to exploit the ideology in order to make our professional lives easier. Furthermore, despite claiming to oppose the ideology, we eventually came to question the extent to which native-speakerist elements had in fact infiltrated our beliefs and even the construction of the duoethnography itself.