Teacher Emotions, Identity, and Speakerhood Status in Narratives of Filipino JET Assistant Language Teachers (ALT)

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A B S T R A C T

Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme ALTs occupy a unique teaching context in language teacher education, functioning as both teachers and cultural representatives navigating the complexities of Japan's traditionally homogenous sociopolitical landscape. It is crucial to study JETs and their experiences to enrich current literature on the less apparent aspects of language teaching, such as shifts in speakerhood ideologies. This study explores the experiences of four (4) Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in the context of their teacher narratives, examining how their emotions, identities, and practices interconnect and contribute to our understanding of evolving perceptions of Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in Japan and the broader globalized educational landscape. Adopting a narrative approach, this paper investigates teacher emotions through a reflective stance in understanding the experiences of individual participants. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. We discovered that Filipino ALTs grapple with fluid and ever-changing identities as they navigate the emotional terrain associated with their roles as ALTs in Japan, highlighting the dynamic nature of speakerhood status. The study reveals a spectrum of emotions, including disappointment and frustration, are more often attributed to external influences rather than the speakerhood status of ALTs. In examining teacher emotions vis-à-vis their imagined ideal of the NES and the NNES, we see a pattern of acceptance of ALTs' perceived speakerhood status and a more empowered outlook as NNESTs. Overall, the study offers insights into current shifts in speakerhood ideologies of traditionally perceived NNESTs in the increasingly globalized field of language education

RESUME

Os ALTs do Programa de Intercâmbio e Ensino do Japão (JET) ocupam um contexto de ensino único na formação de professores de línguas, funcionando tanto como professores quanto como representantes culturais navegando nas complexidades da paisagem sociopolítica tradicionalmente homogênea do Japão. É crucial estudar os JETs e as suas experiências para enriquecer a literatura actual sobre os aspectos menos aparentes do ensino de línguas, tais como as mudanças nas ideologias dos falantes. Este estudo explora as experiências de quatro (4) professores assistentes de línguas (ALTs) filipinos no contexto das narrativas de seus professores, examinando como suas emoções, identidades e práticas se interconectam e contribuem para a nossa compreensão da evolução das percepções de professores não nativos que falam inglês (NNESTs) no Japão e no cenário educacional globalizado mais amplo. Adotando uma abordagem narrativa, este artigo investiga as emoções dos professores através de uma postura reflexiva na compreensão das experiências de participantes individuais. Os dados foram coletados por meio de questionário de pesquisa e entrevistas semiestruturadas. Descobrimos que os ALTs filipinos enfrentam identidades fluidas e em constante mudança à medida que navegam no terreno emocional associado aos seus papéis como ALTs no Japão, destacando a natureza dinâmica do status de falante. O estudo revela um espectro de emoções, incluindo decepção e frustração, que são mais frequentemente atribuídas a influências externas do que ao status de falante dos ALTs. Ao examinar as emoções dos professores face ao seu ideal imaginado do NES e do NNES, vemos um padrão de aceitação do estatuto de falante percebido dos ALTs e uma perspectiva mais empoderada como NNESTs. No geral, o estudo oferece insights sobre as mudanças atuais nas ideologias de locução dos NNESTs tradicionalmente percebidos no campo cada vez mais globalizado do ensino de línguas.

Introduction

With the current demand for English language skills in traditionally monolingual countries, such as Japan, its government has intensified its efforts to boost the language proficiency of its student population. The materialization of these efforts is observed in the growing popularity of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. Since 1987, the JET program has brought over 70,000 teachers worldwide to promote English language skills in schools and international exchange between Japan in other countries.

In its early years, participation in the program was exclusive to native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in four 'inner circle' countries: the US, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. However, it has since expanded its offering to nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in 'outer circle' countries. However, in 2022, the Philippine cohort overtook New Zealand regarding the number of participants for the first time, with the former having 215 and the latter having 190 participants. In comparison, in 2019, the Philippines sent out 136 participants, while New Zealand had 23 (JET Program USA – The Experience of a Lifetime, n.d.), making the Philippines the fifth largest provider of JETs in Japan. While it is difficult to pinpoint what underlying social, political, and economic factors may have caused this rise in statistics, these numbers are noteworthy for two reasons. Primarily, Filipino teachers are not traditionally considered as 'native' speakers of English, and secondly, because the term ALT is traditionally a label ascribed to NESTs in the JET program (Copland et al., 2016), marking perhaps, an indication of shifts in the valuing of language and the transformation of language ideologies (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

JET ALTs occupy a unique teaching context in language teacher education, as they function as both teachers and cultural representatives while navigating the complexities of being foreigners in Japan's traditionally homogenous sociopolitical landscape. Given this, it is crucial to study JETs and their experiences to help inform of the less apparent aspects of language teaching, such as shifts in speakerhood ideologies. Furthermore, growing scholarship has highlighted the importance of studying the interaction, interrelatedness, and impact of identity, teacher emotions, and teaching practices (Barcelos, 2015). While the widely cited ethnography of (Duff & Uchida, 1997) shed light on NEST and NNEST teacher identities and negotiated practices over time, and Nagashima and Lawrence (2021) explored gendered and racialized ALT experiences in Japan, scholarship on traditionally perceived NNESTs from 'outer circle' countries such as the Philippines remains scarce. While scholarship about speakerhood status is abundant in second language studies, there is a dearth of research about the experiences of NNEST teachers and the dynamics of their teaching contexts, especially in Japan.

With a growing scholarship arguing to move beyond the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, this paper explores the accounts of four Filipino ALTs in their negotiations of their teacher identities as intertwined in their teacher emotions and practices to help in understanding modern changes in our understanding of the speakerhood status of traditionally perceived NNESTs in the globalized world.

The Native/Nonnative English-Speaking Teacher (NEST/NNEST)

NEST is a broad term traditionally used to pertain to teachers from 'inner circle' countries, such as the US, UK, and Australia, who have been educated in English from childhood (Copland et al., 2016). The idea of the native speaker as the ideal English teacher, called 'native speakerism' by Holliday (2005), has been widely criticized as a 'Western-oriented, pervasive ideology within English language teaching (ELT), tied to notions of the native/nonnative dichotomy (Braine, 2013) and 'the native speaker fallacy' (Leung et al., 1997). Similarly, the term NNEST also faces the same issue, especially with the use of the prefix 'non-,' which illicit negative connotations of deficit and deviance from the perceived norm and the implicit assumption of its speakers as one homogenous group (Copland et al., 2016). Due to these reasons, scholars have argued against the prevailing use of these terms regarding their accuracy and oversimplification (Faez, 2011; Rivers, 2016). Several attempts for less emotionally charged terms have since been offered, such as English teachers speaking other languages (Braine, 2013) or speakerhood status (Rivers, 2016). Despite these efforts, the original terms persist in common usage within the ELT community, possibly due to the slow uptake of the newer, less charged alternatives. This persistence highlights the challenge of shifting established industry vernacular.

Moreover, the notion of NNESTs as unsuitable and lacking in communicative competence despite having TESOL or TESL qualifications remain strong (Moussu, 2018) because of Anglonormative biases and its historical permeation in language education (De Costa et al., 2021). From exclusionary job postings (e.g., "native speaker only" and "nonnatives need not apply") to differing salary offers despite literally doing the same thing as NESTs. More recent studies argue that while their NEST status is beneficial for early career teachers, there are limits to these benefits as well. Among these perceived limits are perceptions of incompetence and being unqualified (Carless, 2006) compared to the highly qualified "nonnative speaker." Regardless, the preference for NESTs persists in daily life and professional settings.

However, the line between this divide is not always a clean cut. With the problematic dichotomy of the NEST/NNEST divide, scholars have also explored the experiences of people who do not fall within this binary categorization. Javier (2016) examined the narratives of Visible Ethnic-Minority Native-English-Speaking Teachers (VEM-NESTs) and the racialized

identities within the ELT industry. The participants, primarily of Asian descent in this study, reported experiencing struggling with being a perpetual foreigner in their teaching contexts and struggling to negotiate their identities to be accepted as NESTs, supporting Aneja's (2018) claim that nativeness and nonnativeness are fluid identity categories rather than discrete binary groups. This exploration into the complexities of teacher identity within the ELT industry underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the NEST/NNEST categorization, one that acknowledges the fluidity of identity and challenges the rigid structures that fail to accommodate the diverse experiences of educators around the world.

The Japanese and Philippine Educational Context

Unlike many of its Asian neighbors, Japan does not have a colonial heritage that involves English. Regardless, efforts by the state to support English in its educational system have increased since the 1990s primarily because of the demand for more globalized citizens and for the state to "reap the benefits of globalization" (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011, p. 16).

All levels of education are almost entirely taught in Japanese, with a few exceptions of specific colleges that offer English as a medium of instruction. Attempts to integrate English at the primary levels were made in the late 2000s to compete with Asian counterparts such as China and Korea. Despite widespread criticism, English became a compulsory subject for fifth and sixth graders in all Japanese public schools in 2011 (McCurry, 2011), and the promotion of educational schemes such as the JET program has increased significantly since its inception in 1987.

On the other hand, the integration of English as a medium of instruction in the Philippines' basic education system is primarily due to the legacy of the United States' colonialization of the country. Despite being a Spanish colony for over three centuries, Spanish was never formally introduced to the masses and was exclusive to the Filipino elite. However, when the US took over the country, they brought in a wave of pioneering English teachers in 1901 to train Filipino English teachers and introduce the American way of life (Bresnahan, 1979). Even after its independence from the US in 1946, English remained the medium of instruction from primary to higher education until the introduction of mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in 2012 from the first to third year of primary school. It remains one of the country's two official languages, alongside Filipino.

In the past few years, the number of teachers moving to countries like China, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, and recently, due to growing teacher shortages, the United States to teach. In the Philippines, people employed in the field of education earn an average of USD 4,100 annually (Average Annual Compensation per Employee for Education Establishments by Industry Group, Philippines, n.d.). In contrast, the JET program offers an annual salary of USD 24,000-28,400 to all program participants, regardless of nationality. Due to the allure of

higher wages, the number of Filipino migrant language teachers working abroad can be expected to increase in the coming years.

Like in many NEST schemes, assistant language teachers (ALTs) recruited for the JET program have primarily been 'white' nationals of countries such as the US and the UK. While the application process for the program is said to be competitive, the requirements for aspiring JETs are relatively basic. In essence, all an aspirant needs a bachelor's degree, excellent English language skills, and a keen interest in Japan to get a shot at the program. Applicants for the program do not need prior training or certification for English language teaching. While developing English language skills is the core aim of the program, it aims to be an avenue for Japanese students to improve their awareness of foreign cultures and their appreciation of the Japanese language and culture (Lawrence, 2016). Essentially, JET ALTs serve as models in class for students to emulate, assist Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs), and engage with their local community. While the native speaker model approach to language teaching has been criticized extensively in the literature (Paikeday, 1985), it remains alive and well within the Japanese language education system.

While the JET program has since expanded its offering to non-periphery countries, it has faced criticism for reinforcing Japanese nationalism and stereotypes (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011; Kubota, 1998) where people of color have reportedly experienced racial prejudice (Nagashima & Lawrence, 2021) and with many of its textbooks falling short of current pedagogical innovations in intercultural awareness in its acute focus on inner circle countries (Hanashiro, 2016; Hino, 1988; Schneer et al., 2007; Yamanaka, 2006).

While ideas of 'whiteness' and Western dominance within discourses of native speakerhood status remain widely held today (Holliday, 2005). Rivers' (2016) examination of ELT employment advertisements for higher education positions in Japan and the constitutions of its 'native speaker' criterion provides a nuanced problematization of the term in Japan's context. Their exploration of native speakerism as a social problem rather than an ideological construct supports the claim that the sociosemiotic associations of native speakerism as synonymous with non-Japanese nationality and hierarchical labor practices such as limited-term contract positions. Aside from this, gendered and racialized identities have also been explored through the lens of intersectionality within Japan's English language education system. Conflicts within NESTs and NNESTs and their teaching contexts also abound. In Lawrence's (2016) exploration of NEST teachers in Tokyo who taught alongside Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) in a team-teaching setup, he reported that although NEST experiences were mainly positive, some perceived that they were treated negatively by their JTEs because they were NESTs leading them to question their authority as teachers. Taking a duoethnographic approach, Lawrence & Nagashima (2020) explored the effects of the

intersection of native-speaker status, gender, sexuality, and race in their reflections on the trajectory of their professional identities.

Thus, within present literature in Japan, discourse on speakerhood status co-occurs within the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and class. Essentially, recent literature in the context of Japan shows that the speakerhood status of teachers remains a highly contested area of research.

The Intersection of Teacher Emotions, Identity, and the NEST/NNEST Divide

The scholarly turn toward affective aspects of language teaching only started in the 1990s, primarily due to the emotional revolution in psychology (de Dios Martínez Agudo, 2018). Previously, emotion research was ignored mainly due to subjectivity and irrationality (Benesch, 2013). Regardless, scholarly contributions to teacher emotions have taken off, especially in language education (De Costa et al., 2019). Social approaches to exploring emotions have argued that, as a social dimension, it is inextricably linked with identity, agency, and power.

Much of the current identity scholarship in SLA pays tribute to Norton (1997) and her earlier work in Peirce (1995) and articulates a comprehensive theorization of identity that considers both the learner and their language learner context in the concept of investment. De Costa & Norton (2017) takes this further by applying this conceptualization in the context of the language teacher contending with the growing neoliberal demands of the globalized world. Much of the current literature has moved beyond the previous ascriptions of structuralism for more nuanced, multi-layered, and complex explorations of the human condition as 'fragmented and contested in nature' (Block, 2007, p. 864). Arguing for the application of poststructuralism on emotions and teacher identity, Zembylas (2003) contends that teacher identity construction is largely affective and dependent on dimensions of power and agency and that highlighting the need to understand the teacher self leads to prospects for "the care and the self-knowledge of teachers and provides spaces for their transformation (p. 213). Overall, this growing scholarship within the poststructuralist perspective highlights its multiple, fluid, hybrid, and discursively constructed nature of identities within the language learning context (Kubota, 2023).

Recent scholarship has further explored the intersection of teacher emotions and identity by incorporating transdisciplinary concepts. Miller & Gkonou's (2022) adaption of feminist and queer studies in language learning contexts explores language teacher accounts of happiness in the US and the UK. They showed that, in general, teachers associated their experiences of happiness with the concept of teacher caring for their students and their relationships with them. However, their accounts of teacher caring also highlighted feelings of disappointment, frustration, and even anger when their expectations are not met, which may,

in turn, cause them to contend with anxiety and self-doubt about their capacities as teachers. On the other hand, in their investigation of the emotional dimension of an NNEST teacher-in-training, (Wolff & De Costa, 2017) showed the impact of emotions in the identity formation of a Bangladeshi MA TESOL student as she navigates through emotional challenges as a teacher-in-training. Through a narrative lens, the researchers found that some emotional challenges she encountered were inextricably linked to her NNEST status and connected concepts beyond the individual, such as national and international domains and access to resources.

In sum, recent scholarship has shown a more nuanced and multi-layered approach to the NEST/NNEST divide. With competing, and sometimes contradictory discourses about the politics of English, the exploration of teacher emotions can allow researchers to peer through the increasingly complex relationships of identity and speakerhood status for NNESTs in their teaching contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses the poststructuralist approach to explore the dynamics of teacher emotions, identity, and speakerhood status. To avoid legitimate concerns about the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, this paper adopts Rivers' (2016) use of the term *speakerhood status* to pertain to "assumptions, assessments, perceptions, and judgments made in relation to general language background, language proficiency, language competence or any other non-formally assessed positions taken" (p. 68) as to provide a more neutral terminology.

Furthermore, this paper uses Norton's (2013) conception of *identity* as multiple, shifting over time and space, and as a site of struggle. Moreover, it is also a struggle of how people make sense of their worlds and desires and create imagined identities shaped by their personal histories (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Lastly, this paper argues that because language teaching is highly affective, classroom practices affect and are affected by the emotional investments of teachers (de Dios Martínez Agudo, 2018) in relation to their speakerhood status. In this paper, the researcher treats the concept of *teacher emotions* in relation to their perceived speakerhood status as a dimension to understand their investments and reinvestments and, ultimately, how these impact their classroom practices and vice versa.

Purpose of the Study

This paper aims to engage with current discourses on speakerhood status and teacher identities within the context of narratives of expatriate Filipino ALTs in Japan by identifying teacher emotions from data from their narratives. Research Questions: 1. What   teacher emotions are present in the narratives of Filipino ALTs in relation to their speakerhood status?

What practices are associated with these emotions? Inversely, what is the impact of these emotions on their practices?

Methodology

Due to its highly interpretive nature, much of the research on teacher emotions and identity has been investigated mainly through narrative inquiry, with narratives as "stories of experience" that may be "lived in the past or imagined in the future" (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021, p. 3). The paper explored the research agenda through a narrative lens following previous explorations on the topic. Narrative inquiry requires "working with stories" (p. 3). As an approach, narrative inquiry is beneficial, especially in the context of language teacher education. It provides a reflective stance in understanding the experiences of individual participants through "constructing, sharing, analyzing and interpreting their teaching stories, teachers get the opportunity to reflect on their practice and to articulate their interpretations of this practice" (Barkhuizen, 2008, p. 232). The researcher used this approach to provide a nuanced investigation of the participant's narratives.

Data collection procedures

Prior to initiating data collection, comprehensive steps were undertaken to guarantee strict ethical compliance with all relevant regulations. This included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of data, and conducting a thorough review process to identify any potential conflicts of interest or ethical concerns. As the researcher was a visiting faculty at Michigan State University at the time of the paper's conceptualization, the researcher requested the approval of their host university's institutional review board (IRB) under the supervision of a senior faculty. The paper was then conferred an exempt status after a careful review of the research proposal and methodology to ensure alignment with the highest standards of research integrity.

Once the approval from the IRB was secured, the researcher reached out to potential participants. Those who agreed to participate were also thoroughly briefed on the full scope of their involvement in the study. After arranging a time and date for the participants for the interview, they were given an informed consent form to assist them in understanding the reasons why they might or might not want to participate in the research. The informed consent form provided details on the purpose of the study, procedures, and confidentiality measures to protect the identity of the participants.

After the participants have signed their informed consent form, the data was collected, spanning multiple sources across two distinct phases. The initial phase entailed disseminating an online questionnaire soliciting participant demographic information, experiences within the JET Program, perspectives on native speakerism, and teacher emotions (refer to Appendix

A for additional details). Concurrently, participant-provided artifacts such as application letters, social media contributions, YouTube content, and instructional materials were amassed. While these artifacts also offered narrative insights, their primary function was to augment data interpretation by providing a deeper understanding of individual participant narratives.

The subsequent phase involved participants engaging in one-on-one online semi-structured interviews, necessitated by logistical considerations (for more information, please refer to Appendix B). Drawing on participants' answers, the researcher prepared tailored interview questions to include key points mentioned in their questionnaire responses so that they could expound more on their experiences while maximizing our interview session. Cumulatively, audio recordings spanned 290 minutes across all four participants. Subsequent to the interviews, meticulous transcription was performed by the researcher.

Participant Profiles

The study's participants are four Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) engaged in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. In the study's planning phase, the researcher utilized social media to connect with them swiftly. Each participant boasts a significant online presence on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube, where they share insights from their JET experiences in Japan. Three of them, Sunny (25), Jacob (39), and Lisa (27), are stationed in the suburban areas of Kobe City in Hyogo Prefecture. In contrast, Marc (25) resides in a rural community within Gifu prefecture.

Sunny, Jacob, and Marc share comparable educational and professional backgrounds. They all pursued education in their undergraduate studies and have prior experience teaching English in Philippine schools, where it is a secondary language. The trio cited the JET program's competitive salary and their fascination with Japanese culture as their primary reasons for application. They also highlighted inadequate salaries and excessive workloads at their previous schools in the Philippines as significant departure factors. On the other hand, Lisa's background diverges as she comes from a corporate setting. Holding a bachelor's degree in communication, she left her corporate role due to its lack of fulfillment. Although Lisa had no formal teaching employment before her JET tenure, she had volunteered as a teacher for a non-profit organization in a rural Philippine town. Given that English is an official language of the Philippines, all participants received their education in English from elementary through tertiary levels.

Data analysis procedures

After the data transcription process, the researcher had an initial reading-through of the data and wrote memos for data segments that stood out. Afterward, they used inductive

coding to look for patterns in the data. Then, they identified emotion words (e.g., disappointed, happy, frustrated) and identity categories (e.g., carer, assistant) present within the data, mapped these out with their perceptions of their NEST/NNEST status, and analyzed them with a constant comparative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). With this approach, and within multiple readings of the coded data, they grouped conceptually similar terms to form themes. Afterward, they triangulated the findings through a reflexive re-reading of the primary data from each participant and then comparing them with supplementary materials. Then, they selected segments from their data to represent the themes found. Since the participants and the researcher share a native language, Filipino, they often code-switched during the interview. Code-switching in selected segments was translated into English.

Results and Discussions

In the questionnaire survey, participants answered varying depictions of what they imagine native and nonnative speakers. Three key comparison themes can be derived from their initial answers: *cultural*, *linguistic*, and *physical*. They answered that NS are upfront and direct, while NNS are more appreciative and adaptable but less expressive. On the other hand, they also reported seeing NES as error-free and fluent and NNES as having non-standard accents. Similarly, they see NES skills as intrinsic, while NNES skills as learned in school and, thus, are more particular to rules and structures. Lastly, Jacob and Marc say that they see NS as mostly of Western physical characteristics. However, the interview data provide some contradictory depictions of NESs and NNES related to the participants' teacher emotions and speakerhood status.

Teacher Emotions and Speakerhood Status

In the data, the respondents perceive that Filipino ALTs typically do well in the program and are growing in number because of their adaptability, having a 'neutral' accent, and similar cultural values with Japanese people. While all four participants in the study repeatedly mentioned feelings of disappointment and frustration, these were primarily due to their dislike of what they perceive as restrictive traditional classroom practices, their inability to 'discipline' students, and their lack of control in the goings on in their classrooms rather than their speakerhood status. Marc, specifically, is cognizant of the extent of the emotional labor of teaching. Regarding this, he says:

> Excerpt 1: On teaching as an emotive practice
>
> *Teaching, even if you try your best to be professional, or try to distance yourself, not to show your personal emotions in class, it still shows. I mean, we teachers are also just human, even if sometimes feeling discouraged is wrong. I remember when I was in college, one of my professors told me, 'You have to be strong because*

students nowadays are very difficult to manage.' So, yes, I know I have to be strong. But you know, sometimes I also have really bad experiences that make me like want to cry. (Marc)

Marc and Lisa answered in the initial questionnaire that they do not see themselves as native speakers. In contrast, Sunny and Jacob responded that they never really thought about their speakerhood status at all. However, three recall experiences of being called native speakers by their Japanese supervisors and other people in their community. Nevertheless, one points out instances where he perceived that his students are more receptive when they speak with NES. For example, in the interview, Jacob mentions that he notices that sometimes he notices students who seem to 'light up' and 'brighten' when they see NES from English native countries and that they say that their conversations with NESs feel 'more like a real English conversation.' Instead, Sunny, Lisa, and Marc point out that while they have never experienced discrimination based on their speakerhood status, they know of other ALTs who experienced discriminative treatment based on their race. To illustrate this, Marc recalls a story told to him by a fellow FLTA.

Excerpt 2: On getting treated differently as a NNEST

So, there is this one ALT I know. ALTs are expected to join the cleaning time towards the end of the school or the school day. So, we have cleaning time here in Japan and don't have janitors or people who clean the school. It's the students and the teachers who clean afterward. But there's this one ALT. He is this tall Australian guy with blond hair. There are two ALTs in his school, him and a Filipina. They asked her to clean, but not him. Of course, she [the Filipina ALT] told us jokingly that they did not ask him to clean because he was a foreigner, an Australian, and had striking features. So that's the only story I have... But I'm pretty confident, and I think it's safe to say this is the same for everyone else. People ALTs don't get treated differently based on their being native or nonnative English speakers, Filipino, Canadian, or American. (Marc)

With this, two primary teacher emotions emerge from their narratives in relation to their speakerhood status: a sense of inferiority and sentiments of happiness. The feeling of inferiority typically stems from comparisons with peers or perceived expectations from the educational community, leading to self-doubt and questioning of one's capabilities. Conversely, happiness arises from successful communication experiences, recognition of efforts by peers or students, and personal satisfaction with teaching achievements. Both emotions are integral to the teacher's experience and can influence their approach to teaching and interactions with students.

Feelings of Inferiority and Happiness as Teacher Emotions

Feelings of inferiority show more dominantly in the narratives of the male participants. Jacob recalls his feelings of realizing that he is an NNEST. Regarding this, he says:

Excerpt 3: realizing feelings of inferiority

I noticed that when I was still in the Philippines, I never really thought of whether I was a native or nonnative speaker. But when I joined the program, I began observing because I have this inferiority complex. I felt like my English skills are not enough. I mean, they are not good to be considered on par with those of native speakers. I felt slightly insecure about my English.

When my JTEs say, 'Okay, we're lucky! Let's listen to a native speaker.' I say, 'Wait, I'm not a native speaker.' I would say, 'No, I'm just a second language speaker. An ESL.' Like that. I could not embrace [being an NES]. It still hasn't sunk into me that I'm actually considered a native speaker. (Jacob)

In the realm of language acquisition and pedagogy, the distinction between an NES and an English as a Second Language (ESL) speaker often carries significant implications, particularly in the context of self-perception and professional identity. Jacob's reluctance to embrace the label of 'native speaker' underscores a common dilemma faced by many ESL educators; the internalized belief that their linguistic capabilities may not measure up to those of a NES. This self-assessment is further compounded by the term 'just' preceding 'an ESL speaker,' which subtly conveys a sense of inadequacy and undervalues their expertise. Similarly, Marc's experiences echo this sentiment of inferiority, which is magnified during professional gatherings with fellow ALTs. The pervasive comparison with NES counterparts during skills and development training sessions can exacerbate feelings of self-doubt. With this, he says:

Excerpt 4: English as something that does not come 'naturally'

The American, the British, the Canadian ALTs, they're much, much taller. Their English sounds like the English that we see in the movies, you know? And to be honest, in terms of speaking, for me speaking English is still a conscious act. It doesn't feel as natural to me as speaking Tagalog or Kapampangan, my first languages. So I got the idea that Americans, Caucasians, and Westerners are native speakers of English. When we are gathered together, I think, 'This is the English that I have heard in the movies since I was younger. This is the English that I wish I sound like. (Marc)

The sense of inadequacy permeates his interactions with his students, as he not only covets the NES for its representation of his aspirations but also harbors concerns about how his racial identity shapes their perceptions of him, as evidenced by this excerpt:

Excerpt 5: Racialized identities in teaching

Sometimes I find myself thinking, how do the students feel, especially when we first meet each other? How do they feel when they discover that their ALT has this skin color comes from the Philippines? – isn't white, doesn't come from the US or the UK. That crosses my mind sometimes. But I think the degree to which my work is affected by me being a native or non-native speaker is only until that point. (Marc)

The passage reflects Marc's pondering the impact of racial and national identity on these interactions. He contemplates his students' reactions upon realizing that their teacher does not fit the stereotypical image of a native English speaker from Western countries like the US or the UK. This introspection highlights the entrenched biases within the ELT industry, which often favors certain nationalities and equates whiteness with linguistic authority. With this, we see Marc grappling with feelings of inadequacy linked to his physical attributes and national background, despite excelling in his teaching role, earning consistent accolades from both his superiors and the wider community. In his perspective, he sees that such differences are superficial and that his speakerhood status has little direct implication in real life. Identifying as a nonnative speaker, he contends that the challenges he faces are universal to educators, irrespective of their speakerhood status.

While Jacob and Marc experienced feelings of inadequacy regarding their speakerhood status, Sunny and Lisa expressed more positive emotions towards theirs. Sunny reminisces about instances during her lessons when her JTE would invite her to conduct vocabulary presentations with the students. During these sessions, her JTEs would introduce her as a native English speaker to the class. When inquired about her thoughts on being labeled as a NES, she states:

Excerpt 6: Being called an NES

I feel happy. I feel happy because when they call me a native speaker, it means they trust me – that I have a good command of the language. But I also tell them that this is our second language in the Philippines, and our first language is Tagalog. But I think it makes me happy that I feel like they trust me. (Sunny)

In the discourse of language education, the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers often carries significant weight, influencing both self-perception and pedagogical approaches. Sunny's association of being labeled a 'native speaker' with trustworthiness underscores the complex emotions tied to this identity within educational settings. It suggests

a validation of linguistic ability that goes beyond mere fluency, touching on deeper issues of credibility and authenticity in the eyes of others. Yet, her insistence on clarifying her non-native status reveals an internal conflict, reflecting the pervasive influence of native speakerism that privileges native English speaker (NES) norms and often marginalizes or undermines non-native voices.

Lisa's narrative offers a contrasting perspective, embracing her identity as a non-native speaker with pride. In her view, this sense of pride does not stem from a desire to conform to NES standards but rather from a recognition of her unique strengths as an educator who has navigated the journey of language acquisition firsthand. Recalling an experience of feeling proud, Jennie says:

Excerpt 7: Experience as a pedagogical tool

[I feel] relatable, because I feel like since there's something I'm really proud of being a nonnative speaker. I just know how I like how to teach. I feel like I know how to teach English better because I have the experience of being a learner just like them. I'm an experiential learner and an experiential teacher. It's easier for me to learn how to provide an effective way of teaching because I know how to learn English as a second language as well. I think I'm relatable. (Lisa)

In this excerpt, Jennie's self-described relatability is not merely a personal trait but a pedagogical tool. She sees her experiences as a learner as a key influence in her teaching methods, allowing her to connect with her students on a personal level. By positioning herself as both an experiential learner and teacher, Jennie challenges the traditional hierarchy that places NES at the apex, advocating instead for a more inclusive approach that values diverse linguistic backgrounds as assets rather than deficits.

The emotions of happiness associated with these identities, whether rooted in acceptance or defiance, play a crucial role in shaping the classroom dynamic. They can reinforce or disrupt prevailing ideologies, such as the privileging of NES ideologies, depending on how they are interpreted and acted upon. This shows that it is essential to problematize these emotions within the context of language education to foster an environment where all speakers, regardless of their native status, are afforded equal respect and opportunities for growth.

Teacher emotions and classroom practices

The analysis of the data indicates that individuals' emotions regarding their perception of speakerhood are influenced by certain practices. Namely, these involve a process of acceptance towards being a native speaker and a shift towards a more empowered view of nonnativeness.

Processes of acceptance

Jacob's narrative reveals his internal conflict as he navigates the complex continuum of language identity, particularly the dichotomy between native and non-native speakerhood. He perceives himself in a transitional phase, inching closer to the native speaker end of the spectrum, yet not entirely embracing the label.

Excerpt 8: Speakerhood as a spectrum

I'm not from America in the US, UK, or Australia. But when I read the guidelines of the JET program, they say they are looking for native speakers, and then the Philippines is included in the list. So, it's like I am leaning towards believing that I am now also a native speaker. But not fully. Maybe I'm still in the process of accepting it. I think I'm still in the acceptance period. (Jacob)

This ambivalence is further complicated by the JET program's recognition of the Philippines as a native English-speaking country, which both validates and confounds his self-perception. Jacob's journey underscores the fluidity of language identity and challenges the traditional notion that native speaker status is an innate attribute determined solely by one's birthplace. Instead, it suggests that speakerhood can evolve and is influenced by external validation, such as inclusion in a prestigious international program. This evolution of self-perception from a state of 'becoming' to 'being' a native speaker illustrates the dynamic nature of language acquisition and identity formation. It also raises questions about the criteria used to define native speakerhood and how these definitions impact individual language learners' self-concept and the broader linguistic community. Jacob's case exemplifies the ongoing debate within the field of linguistics regarding the legitimacy of the native speaker construct and its implications for language teaching, learning, and policymaking.

The process of acceptance reveals Jacob's internal struggle with the pressure to excel and fulfill his own expectations of a native speaker. This pressure is juxtaposed with his journey toward self-assurance, which is bolstered by his interactions with other NESTs. Jacob observes that these NESTs, despite their native status, are not infallible; they too make errors in their teaching practices. This realization becomes a turning point for Jacob, as he notes:

Excerpt 9: Feeling confident about himself

So, and then I began to notice now when native speakers talk about their experiences as an ALT when they talk when we discuss about certain topics or certain teaching points, they don't seem to be doing any better than I am. They also make mistakes... I started feeling confident when I noticed that they make mistakes even as native speakers. (Jacob)

His newfound confidence does not stem from a comparison with that of NESTs' flaws but rather from an understanding that expertise in teaching comes from experience, reflection,

and a willingness to learn from mistakes. This paradigm shift from self-doubt to self-assurance is pivotal, not only for Jacob's professional growth but also for the broader discourse on the value of diverse teaching perspectives in enriching the educational landscape.

Empowered nonnativeness

Sunny and Lisa posit that non-native status may actually serve as a beneficial attribute, while prior experience offers a distinct advantage. They argue that the majority of NNEST ALTs bring a wealth of seasoned expertise, backed by extensive teaching experience and academic preparation. This perspective is further reinforced by their personal journeys as ESL learners, which they believe equips them with unique insights into the learning process. Lisa, for instance, reflects on her upbringing as an ESL student herself, suggesting that this background fosters a deeper understanding of the students' experiences. With this, she expounds:

Excerpt: 10: ESL experience as an advantage

Well, for me, I guess we're not as native as [NS] because our mother tongue is Tagalog. We learned English as a second language… so I think this is also an advantage. I feel like we know more how to teach these kids better because they're learning English similar to how we did. (Lisa)

She articulates that, although they may not be native speakers, with their mother tongue being Tagalog, their English language acquisition education parallels that of their students. This shared linguistic trajectory, Lisa contends, endows them with a more intuitive grasp of how to effectively impart English education to learners who are navigating a similar path. Thus, their non-native experience is not seen as a deficit but rather as an asset that enhances their pedagogical approach.

In the ongoing discourse on native speaker (NS) status, Lisa characterizes it as a continuum rather than a binary state. Conversely, Sunny downplays the significance of nativeness in educational settings, advocating for language proficiency as the pivotal criterion. She articulates this stance, stating:

Excerpt 11: Competence over status

We're here for them to know how to speak the language. There is no specific standard. It's not important if you're a native or nonnative, as long as you have you can speak the language because, at the end of the day, that's what is important. (Lisa)

The consensus among all four educators is that NESTs are not without their shortcomings. They also believe their own experiences as ESL learners afford them skills in classroom management, rapport-building with students, and explaining grammatical concepts. Moreover, the data reveals a contradiction between their preconceived notions of the idealized, fluent Western NEST and their personal observations of NESTs' performance in the

classroom, juxtaposed with the perceived less fluent NNEST. Lisa and Sunny's accounts particularly portray nonnativeness as a beneficial attribute and a competitive advantage in teaching. Jacob and Marc's experiences, however, are marked by a struggle to reconcile their internalized perceptions of the NS ideal with the reality of their roles as ALTs within their communities. In contrast to Jacob and Marc's challenges, Sunny and Lisa's narratives reflect a sense of empowerment and lesser preoccupation with these conflicting identities.

Teacher identity as shifting and in flux

Emotions are essential in empowerment and understanding changes in ideologies in both micro-level and macro-level discourses. While research has generally shown NNESTs as struggling with feelings of inferiority due to biases within the teaching profession (De Costa et al., 2019), Filipino ALT narratives show that their anxieties are related more to others' labeling of them as native speakers and the expectations of having to live up to ideals of the NES.

Guided by our research questions, we learned that Filipino ALTs' identities as shifting and in flux as they navigate their emotions about their speakerhood status as ALTs in Japan. The study shows that their emotions and speakerhood status affect their investments and reinvestments in their teaching practice. With their feelings of happiness, and despite negative feelings of inferiority in terms of their speakerhood status, it shows that Filipino ALTs' meso-level interactions in their communities (e.g., with JTEs, other NNESTs and NESs), macro-level policies (e.g., JET legitimation of Filipinos as NESs) and their shifting teacher identities, show and lead their desire to invest and reinvest in their teaching practice.

In a broader context, a shift in the understanding of teaching ideologies among educators may herald a change in the existing power dynamics within the English as a Foreign Language EFL industry. This shift challenges the 'linguistic imperialism' (Canagarajah, 2013) inherent in the longstanding assumptions associated with NES ideologies, particularly within the Japanese educational landscape. The personal accounts of Filipino ALTs underscore a critical insight: being an NES does not inherently qualify one as an exemplary language teacher, a notion supported by De Costa & Norton (2017). This realization marks a significant stride towards redefining the attributes of effective language instruction and the qualities that constitute a competent language educator.

In conclusion, the enhancement of teacher support through affirmative action and empowerment initiatives within the JET program and the broader ESL/EFL sector is paramount. Similarly, the JET program and the Japanese government should also heed the call of both teacher practitioners and researchers to move towards more modern and progressive classroom practices. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to adopt more innovative strategies that leverage the cultural, linguistic, and emotional assets of ALTs to augment the efficacy of language education in Japan. By doing so, the JET program can

significantly contribute to the evolution of language instruction, ensuring it is both dynamic and culturally responsive, thereby enriching the learning experience for students.

Conclusion

This study delves into the complex interplay between the identities, emotions, and practices of Filipino ALTs and their perceived status as non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) within Japan's evolving educational context. It examines how these educators reconcile their professional roles with their personal feelings of competence and self-worth, particularly in relation to the conventional dichotomy of native (NES) and non-native (NNES) English speakers. Through their narratives, it becomes evident that Filipino ALTs navigate a spectrum of emotions, from fulfillment to inadequacy, as they confront and gradually embrace their unique linguistic identities, thereby fostering a sense of empowerment as NNESTs.

Acknowledging the inherent limitations of this research, it is important to note a potential bias stemming from the uneven representation of narratives, with some experiences being more prominently featured than others. Additionally, the intrinsic characteristics of the teachers may have influenced their willingness to divulge personal experiences. To mitigate these limitations and enrich future research, it is recommended that scholars establish deeper, more personal connections with participants to elicit richer, more detailed accounts.

Furthermore, future studies would benefit from exploring teacher emotions towards speakerhood status through the lens of race, gender and labor practices within different communities to better understand the nuances of classroom dynamics, specifically in how they navigate feelings of happiness and inferiority within their classroom context. While outside the scope of this paper, the interviews conducted suggest that the teachers' sense of autonomy in their classrooms significantly influences their satisfaction with the educational program. Thus, it may also be helpful to extend the current scholarship on speakerhood status to emotions that co-occur with narratives of teacher agency as it intersects with growing neoliberal demands and labor practices in the ELT industry.

Moreover, the collection of longitudinal data over an extended period, such as the five-year duration of teacher involvement in the program, would provide valuable insights into the evolution of teacher emotions. Additionally, future research should consider the dynamics between JET participants and their JTE counterparts. Given the crucial role JTEs play in the program and their impact on the emotional well-being of JET participants, a deeper exploration of the mutual perceptions between these two groups could significantly contribute to the enhancement of the JET program's efficacy. Understanding these relationships is essential for fostering a collaborative environment that benefits both teachers and students alike.

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