

EIL Awareness Among Japanese Pre-service EFL Teachers and EFL Students: Who are their ideal role models?

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Abstract

According to the spread of the notion of English as an International Language (EIL), English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals are embracing wider varieties of English. However, Matsuda (2003) argues that a strong nativism still exists in Japan. This study investigates whether there are any differences in degree of beliefs regarding EIL awareness between two groups of different majors at a university in Japan. This study compares a group of pre-service EFL teachers enrolled in an English teaching certificate course ($N=25$), and a group of EFL students enrolled in a required general English course ($N=30$). Quantitative analysis of questionnaire revealed that the group of pre-service EFL teachers has significantly stronger beliefs in native speakerism than the group of EFL students ($t(53) = 4.45, p < .01$). This result suggests that further studies are needed to promote EIL awareness among both pre-service EFL teachers and EFL students.

KEY WORDS: EIL, World Englishes, ELT, EIL beliefs, EIL awareness

Background of this study

According to the spread of the notion of English as an International Language (EIL), English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals are embracing wider varieties of English. English has been the common language choice in a variety of fields such as business, medicine and political communication. In ASEAN countries, English has become a common language, and in Europe, the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) aims to teach target L2 languages separate from the norms of its L1 speakers. This is because the primary purpose of the acquisition of English is not to learn the culture of the countries where English is used as their first language but to facilitate communication among speakers who do not share the

first language. In short, English has become a fast and convenient communication tool in global society. However, Matsuda (2003) argues that a strong “native-speakerism” still exists in Japan. The word “native-speakerism” was coined by Holliday (2005), who defined it as “an established belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represents a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology (p.6).” According to Matsuda (2003), even though educators and policy makers are aware of the importance of introducing wide varieties of English to learners, she found few textbooks that utilized non-native speakers (NNS) of English in their textbooks.

One of the reasons for this is that EIL is not spread in educational contexts rooted in teachers’ beliefs about language and language teaching. Teacher beliefs are one of the critical factors that influence classroom practices (Richardson, 1996). For example, in Greece, Sifakis and Sougari (2005) studied the relation between teachers’ beliefs about pronunciation perspectives and their actual teaching practices. They asked 421 in-service EFL teachers (174 primary, 125 lower secondary, and 122 upper secondary teachers) to participate in a survey and found a paradox between teacher beliefs and teaching practices. Even though the participants admitted the need to introduce wide varieties of English in teaching practice, the participants had a strong belief that the native speaker (NS) model of pronunciation should be used in classrooms. Suzuki (2011) investigated how educational programs that try to promote EIL awareness can affect pre-service EFL teachers’ beliefs in native speakerism. She found that such educational awareness programs might be effective as preparation for EIL education, but a multidimensional approach is needed for student teachers to fully accept the diversity of English because they have “deeply ingrained beliefs that there is a single useful form of English for international communication, and this is standard English, i.e. American and British English (p.151).” The studies of Sifakis and Sougari (2005) and Suzuki (2011) showed that there is a paradox in EFL teachers’ beliefs and that a multidimensional approach is necessary for those beliefs to be updated to fully accept the diversity of English in classroom practice. Then, what are the structures of EFL teachers’ beliefs toward pronunciation? Do beliefs consist of just one facet or are they multifaceted? Understanding the structure of beliefs is useful for ELT professional trainers because it helps them create effective awareness-raising programs to promote acceptance of the diversity of English.

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Related to this issue, Nakayama (2015) developed a questionnaire called the EIL Feasibility Questionnaire (EILFQ) based on the past research findings of Jenkins (2005), and Golombek and Jordan (2005). The questionnaire was developed for the purpose of investigating internal factors of EFL learners' beliefs toward the diversity of English pronunciation. Nakayama (2015) found that there are three factors that consist of beliefs regarding ideal pronunciation models among Japanese EFL learners. These factors are EIL awareness (EIL) and Identity, and Native Speaker Myth (NSM). The questionnaire has nine items in total. Two items on EIL awareness relate to the acceptance of the diversity of English. Three items on Identity refer to the possibility of the development of a Japanese standard model for the preservation of Japanese identity. Four items on NSM ask about the degree of native-speakerism. The questionnaire was made in Japanese because it was specifically made for Japanese EFL learners. The items in the questionnaire are shown in Table 1. Even though this questionnaire was made for Japanese EFL learners, it can be used to compare the results between pre-service EFL teachers and EFL students to search for the differences in their belief structure.

Objective of this study: This study investigates whether there are any differences in beliefs regarding the diversity of English between pre-service EFL teachers and EFL learners at a university in Japan.

Table 1 *EIL Feasibility Questionnaire adapted from Nakayama (2015)*

EIL 1	授業では、様々な国の人によって録音された英語教材を使うべきだ。
EIL 2	リスニングテストでは、様々な国の人によって録音された英語教材を使うべきだ。
Identity 1	日本人らしい英語の発音ができる人を尊敬すべきだ。
Identity 2	日本の学校では、日本人らしい英語の発音を教えるべきだ。
Identity 3	リスニングテストでは、英語力のある日本人によって録音された英語教材を使うべきだ。
NSM 1	「君の英語の発音はネイティブ・スピーカーみたいだね」とネイティブ・スピーカーからほめられたらうれしい。
NSM 2	ネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の発音を身につけたい。
NSM 3	日本人はできるだけネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の発音に近づくように努力すべきだ。
NSM 4	授業では、ネイティブ・スピーカーによって録音された英語教材を使うべきだ。

Method

Durations: This study was conducted in September 2016

Participants: Two groups of university students (55 in total) participated in this study. One group consisted of 25 pre-service EFL teachers (15 sophomores, 8 juniors, and 2 seniors) who were enrolled in the author's English Language Teaching principle class. Every student who wants to be issued an English teaching license is required to take this course because it is a part of a teacher-training course designed by MEXT. The other group consisted of 30 art major freshmen students enrolled in a required general English course taught by the author.

Material: Nakayama's (2015) EILFQ was applied to this research. EILFQ consists of three factors of nine items in total (two items pertain to EIL awareness, three items to identity, and four to native speaker myths) and utilizes a six-point Likert scale. Students were asked to choose a number between one and six, where one indicated total disagreement, and six indicated total agreement.

Task: Participants were asked to answer the questionnaire at the end of each class.

Procedure: The questionnaire was printed on A4 sized paper with a face sheet attached. The author read aloud instructions on the coversheet and explained the purpose of the questionnaire and its instructions. Students were afforded an opportunity to participate in the survey or opt out because participation in the survey did not affect their grades in any way. Students were given ample time to read and answer the questionnaire. Because each group had a different class schedule, the survey was conducted twice in different periods on the same day.

Results

The author analyzed the results by putting the data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Then, to investigate the differences in scores of the three factors within groups and between groups, a two-way ANOVA was conducted, with group (the pre-service teachers' group and the student group) as a between-subject variable and three factors (EIL, Identity, and NSM) as within-subjects variables. Table 2 presents the mean scores of the three factors between groups. There was no significant difference between groups, ($F(1, 53) = 0.75, p > .05$). However, there was a significant difference among the three factors ($F(2, 164) = 81.10, p < .01$). The interaction between groups and three factors was also significant ($F(2, 164) = 4.39, p < .05$). The simple main effect of the three factors was significant when the data were restricted to NSM only ($F(1, 158) = 6.58, p < .05$). According to Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test, the NSM in the pre-service teachers' group ($M = 5.36, SD = .87$) was significantly higher than that in the student group ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.14$) ($t(53) = 4.45, p < .01$). The simple main effects of the three factors were also significant for both the pre-service teachers' group ($F(2, 106) = 56.33, p < .01$) and the student group ($F(2, 106) = 26.44, p < .01$). Regarding the pre-service teachers' group, according to the HSD test, the NSM ($M = 5.36, SD = .87$) was significantly higher than both EIL ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.28$) ($t(24) = 8.74, p < .01$) and Identity ($M = 2.16, SD = .87$) ($t(24) = 15.71, p < .01$). Additionally, EIL ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.28$) was significantly higher than Identity ($M = 2.16, SD = .87$) ($t(24) = 6.97, p < .01$). These results suggest that NSM was the highest, EIL was second highest, and Identity was the lowest among the factors. Similar results were observed in the student group. According to HSD tests, the NSM ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.14$) was significantly higher than both EIL ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.10$) ($t(29) = 5.97, p < .01$) and Identity ($M = 2.64, SD = .95$) ($t(29) = 9.77, p < .01$). Additionally, EIL ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.10$) was significantly higher than Identity ($M = 2.64, SD = .95$) ($t(29) = 3.79, p < .01$). These results in EFL students' group also suggest that NSM was the highest, EIL was second highest, and Identity was the lowest among the factors.

Table 2 Results of EILFQ

Factor		Pre-service teachers	Students	α
	<i>N</i>	25	30	
EIL	<i>Mean</i>	3.58	3.42	.91
	<i>SD</i>	1.28	1.10	
	<i>N</i>	25	30	
Identity	<i>Mean</i>	2.16	2.64	.77
	<i>SD</i>	.87	.95	
	<i>N</i>	25	30	
NSM	<i>Mean</i>	5.36	4.63	.93
	<i>SD</i>	.87	1.14	

Conclusion

This study investigated whether there is any difference in beliefs regarding the diversity of English between pre-service EFL teachers and EFL learners at a university in Japan. The analysis of the EILFQ questionnaire revealed that although there were no significant differences between the groups in EIL Awareness and Identity, pre-service EFL teachers had a stronger belief in native-speakerism than EFL students. These results partly correspond to the study of Sifakis and Sougari (2005). There exists a paradox in pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs regarding pronunciation models. Even though pre-service teachers agreed about the necessity of the acceptance of the diversity of English and that of the development of a Japanese standard model for the preservation of Japanese identity, pre-service teachers have stronger beliefs in native-speakerism.

A new insight of this study was that both pre-service EFL teachers and EFL students have a similar belief structure regarding the diversity of English. Both groups still have strong beliefs in native speakerism despite their awareness of the diversity of English and learners' identity. The findings of this study suggest that when considering new multidimensional conscious awareness programs to promote the acceptance of the diversity of English by following the recommendations of Suzuki (2011), programs to promote not only the acceptance of the diversity of English but also learners' identity are needed.

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion. First, ELT professional teacher trainers should encourage pre-service teachers to use the target language in the classroom in order for them to gain confidence in their English oral proficiency. This will lead to pre-service teachers becoming a role model for EFL learners. As Suzuki (2011) argues, pre-service teachers' deeply ingrained beliefs were formed through past experiences in classrooms. In other words, if NNS ELT professionals can become role models of EFL students, those students might be able to form new beliefs that accept the diversity of English.

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