Constructing ideological opposition to the native-speaker English teacher

Damian Rivers
Future University Hakodate, Japan

Mohan and Kinloch (2000: 13) describe how "ideologists presume their assumptions are facts, and accept only the evidence that ratifies the conclusions of their ideological assumptions". Drawing from a variety of data sources and with an intentional slant toward entertaining the distinctly unfashionable, this presentation stands against sectarian interest through a critique of the ideological conceptualization of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005). It is argued that the ideological conceptualization of native-speakerism permits only those identifying as ‘non-native speakers’ access to the status of victim of language-related prejudice and its accompanying discourse of moral righteousness. It is demonstrated how the sanctuary of victimhood allows self-identifying ’non-native speakers’ to engage in a particular brand of counter-violence which mainstream ELT accepts as being ”morally distinct from ‘originary’ violence and therefore defensible” (Enns, 2012: 44) (e.g., through the TESOL Inc., sponsored Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Interest Section (NNEST-IS)). This presentation presents evidence of the rather paradoxical intersectionality of two ‘isms of oppression’ (Rivers and Zotzmann, 2016) whereby the ideology of native-speakerism, conceived to describe and diagnose a plethora of language-related prejudices, repeatedly fails, and in doing so, reveals itself as an example of linguicism, defined as ”ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988: 13). Various implications are discussed in relation to achieving the end-of-ideology within ELT with particular attention given to the division of teaching professionals on the basis of their supposed speakerhood status.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Native Speaker, Ideology.