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## Native-speakerism: Taking the Concept Forward and Achieving Cultural Belief

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This chapter maintains that native-speakerism damages the entire ELT profession as well as popular perceptions of English and culture. It represents a widespread *cultural disbelief* – a disbelief in the cultural contribution of teachers who have been labelled ‘non-native speakers’. This label not only describes a relationship with English but also implies a cultural deficiency derived from non-Western stereotypes. Native-speakerism also demeans ‘native speaker’ teachers who themselves become commodities to serve an industry which is hungry for the ‘native speaker’ ideal. While the ‘non-native speaker’ label may have more neutral connotations with other languages, with respect to English it relates to a global politics which gives it neo-racist meaning. Although the native-non-native speaker division is well-established as a problem, as an ideology, native-speakerism has almost disappeared between the lines of our everyday professional lives. This is particularly damaging because issues may appear to have been solved when in fact they have not. Kumaravadivelu (in press) therefore argues that native-speakerism represents an unresponsive ‘native speaker’ hegemony, against which the ‘non-native speaker’ subaltern must take action.

I cannot in any way speak for the ‘non-native speaker’ subaltern. My aim is to make sense of the circumstances which create native-speakerism and the unfortunate hegemony within our profession which thrusts the majority of its members into the subaltern position on a daily basis. I can do this from an insider position because I have lived the ‘native speaker’ persona throughout my career and understand much of the detail of how the ideology operates (Holliday 2005: 6). On this basis I argue that *cultural belief* – a belief in the cultural contribution of all teachers regardless of their background is the only way to remove the prejudice which positions ‘non-native speakers’ as the subaltern. It is