



Beyond Nativeness: Exploring Differences Between Native and Non-native English Teachers in ELT Research

Current Theories of SLA (HPEN7006)
Assignment 2

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1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and multilingual world, the dominance of English as an international language has transformed English language teaching (ELT) into a diverse and complex profession, populated by both native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Traditionally, the native speaker has been idealized as the “authentic” language model and the most legitimate language teacher, a construct often referred to as the “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson, 1992). However, this dichotomous division between NESTs and NNESTs has been increasingly problematized in contemporary research, particularly in the context of teacher identity, equity, and professional legitimacy (Selvi, Yazan and Mahboob, 2024).

Since the 2010s, there has been a noticeable shift toward questioning essentialist notions of “nativeness,” with scholars arguing for more fluid, intersectional, and context-sensitive understandings of what it means to be an English language teacher (Rudolph, Selvi and Yazan, 2015; Ellis, 2016). The once widely accepted binary of NEST versus NNEST is now seen as reductive and, in many cases, professionally harmful, especially for teachers who are denied employment or recognition based on their linguistic backgrounds rather than pedagogical competence (Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Jenkins, 2017). Furthermore, there is growing acknowledgement that NNESTs often bring valuable multilingual and cross-cultural experiences to the classroom, which can enhance learner engagement and empathy (Faez and Karas, 2019; Song, 2018).

The emergence of the “NNEST movement” has challenged discriminatory hiring practices and called for a redefinition of teacher expertise, moving beyond assumptions tied to birthplace or first language (Kamhi-Stein and Mahboob, 2018). Informed by poststructuralist and sociocultural perspectives, scholars have begun to reconceptualize language teacher identity as a dynamic, evolving process shaped by multiple factors including race, ethnicity, gender, and professional experience (Yazan and Rudolph, 2018; Lawrence and Nagashima, 2020). This shift has also been supported by the rise of the Global Englishes paradigm, which emphasizes the legitimacy of diverse Englishes and multilingual speakers in ELT (Rose and Galloway, 2019).

This paper explores the differences between native and non-native English-speaking teachers in light of recent literature. It aims to critically examine the construction and implications of this binary

in ELT, with a focus on teacher identity, professional advantages and challenges, discrimination in hiring practices, and evolving conceptual frameworks that challenge the relevance of “nativeness” as a meaningful professional criterion. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates about equity, legitimacy, and diversity in English language teaching.

2 Native vs. Non-native Speakers – Concepts and Historical Background

The dichotomy between native and non-native speakers of English has long been a central, yet controversial, construct in English language teaching (ELT). Historically rooted in linguistic idealism and colonial ideologies (Phillipson, 1992), the “native speaker” has been framed as the authoritative model of linguistic competence, while non-native speakers have often been portrayed as deficient or lacking legitimacy in both language use and pedagogy (Medgyes, 1994). This binary distinction has shaped teacher recruitment, training, and professional identity construction for decades, often to the disadvantage of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs).

2.1 Defining “Native Speaker” and “Non-native Speaker”

The notion of a “native speaker” is deceptively simple yet deeply problematic. Traditionally, it refers to someone who has acquired English from birth, typically in an inner-circle country such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia (Kachru, 1985). However, this definition fails to account for the vast diversity of English users worldwide and the increasing fluidity of linguistic identities in a globalized context. Rampton (1990) challenged this static view by proposing alternative categories such as “language expertise” and “language affiliation,” arguing that linguistic competence should not be reduced to chronological acquisition.

Similarly, the label “non-native speaker” has been criticized for defining individuals by what they are not, thereby reinforcing deficit discourses (Cook, 1999). The “non-” prefix inherently marginalizes, suggesting inferiority in comparison to the idealized native speaker. Contemporary scholars argue that such binary labels obscure more than they reveal, particularly in multilingual contexts where many teachers possess rich linguistic repertoires and deep metalinguistic awareness (Ellis, 2016; Song, 2018).

2.2 Theoretical Underpinnings: Native Speakerism and Linguistic Imperialism

One of the most influential critiques of the native/non-native binary comes from Phillipson's (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism, which exposes the power dynamics underlying English language spread. According to Phillipson, the elevation of native English speakers as the ideal teachers is not a neutral pedagogical choice but a manifestation of broader neo-colonial structures. This ideology, termed "native speakerism" by Holliday (2005), describes the widespread belief that native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) inherently possess superior teaching skills, cultural knowledge, and language intuition.

Recent research confirms that native speakerism persists in ELT hiring practices, job advertisements, and student preferences, often privileging teachers from white, Western, monolingual backgrounds (Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2019). Such systemic bias perpetuates inequities in the profession and undermines efforts toward inclusivity and diversity.

2.3 The Emergence of Critical Perspectives

The early 2000s witnessed the beginning of a critical shift in ELT scholarship, with scholars and practitioners calling for a reevaluation of entrenched norms. The "NNEST movement", pioneered by researchers such as Braine (2010) and Kamhi-Stein (2016), sought to empower non-native teachers by highlighting their unique strengths, such as empathy with language learners, bilingual identity, and awareness of language learning strategies.

More recent work has moved beyond merely validating NNESTs to interrogating the very foundations of the native/non-native distinction. Poststructuralist perspectives, for example, emphasize the fluid, negotiated, and contextual nature of identity, rejecting fixed categories in favour of nuanced understandings (Yazan and Rudolph, 2018; Rudolph, Selvi and Yazan, 2015). These approaches underscore that language teacher identity cannot be fully understood without considering intersections of race, gender, class, and migratory history (Lawrence and Nagashima, 2020).

2.4 Global Englishes and the Multilingual Turn

In parallel, the rise of Global Englishes has further challenged the idealization of native speaker norms. As English is now used by more non-native than native speakers worldwide, scholars argue that legitimacy in ELT should be based on intelligibility, context-appropriateness, and communicative

competence, rather than nativeness per se (Rose and Galloway, 2019; Jenkins, 2017). This paradigm shift calls for teaching models and curricula that reflect the realities of English as a global lingua franca.

Moreover, the multilingual turn in applied linguistics foregrounds the importance of teachers' diverse linguistic resources, advocating for terms such as plurilingual, translingual, or multicompetent users of English (Cook, 2016; Ellis, 2016). These concepts offer more inclusive and empowering alternatives to the restrictive binary of native/non-native.

2.5 Summary

In sum, the native/non-native speaker distinction has deep historical and ideological roots, but contemporary scholarship increasingly views it as an outdated and harmful binary. Emerging theoretical perspectives and global linguistic realities call for a redefinition of language teacher identity based on competence, experience, and sociolinguistic awareness rather than birthright. This reconceptualization sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the pedagogical, professional, and sociopolitical implications of the native/non-native divide, which the following chapters will address.

3 Teaching Competence and Comparative Strengths – Revisiting the Native–Non-native Divide

While the native/non-native dichotomy has long influenced how English teachers are evaluated and categorized, a growing body of research urges a move beyond simplistic binaries towards a nuanced understanding of teaching competence. Teaching ability is not inherently determined by one's nativeness, but rather shaped by a constellation of factors including linguistic awareness, pedagogical training, intercultural experience, and empathy with learners (Medgyes, 1994; Ellis, 2016). Despite this, many hiring practices and classroom expectations remain tied to essentialist beliefs that native speakers are more effective teachers, particularly in terms of pronunciation, fluency, and cultural authenticity (Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Faez and Karas, 2019).

3.1 Perceived Strengths of Native English-speaking Teachers (NESTs)

Research consistently shows that NESTs are often perceived to possess certain advantages in English teaching, particularly in teaching oral skills such as pronunciation, fluency, and intonation (Walkinshaw and Oanh, 2014). Their intuitive command of idiomatic language, natural use of

colloquialisms, and exposure to “authentic” English cultural norms are frequently cited as pedagogical strengths (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Chun, 2014).

Moreover, NESTs are often seen as symbols of linguistic authority, reinforcing the idea that being born into a language naturally equips one to teach it. Students and parents may idealize NESTs as role models, particularly in societies where English is tied to economic mobility or global prestige (Sung, 2011; Alseweed, 2012). However, such assumptions ignore the fact that many NESTs lack formal pedagogical training or awareness of language learning processes, particularly when teaching English as a foreign or second language (Mullock, 2010).

Another point of critique is that the concept of “authenticity” often used to justify preference for NESTs is highly problematic and context-dependent. Authenticity in language use can manifest in multiple forms across global Englishes, not just those associated with inner-circle varieties (Rose and Galloway, 2019). Thus, privileging NESTs based on perceived authenticity risks reinforcing linguistic hegemony and marginalizing valuable local or global varieties of English.

3.2 Comparative Strengths of Non-native English-speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

Contrary to deficit-based assumptions, NNESTs bring a set of unique and often underappreciated strengths to the ELT profession. Having undergone the process of learning English themselves, NNESTs are often more attuned to learners’ struggles and better equipped to explain grammar, vocabulary acquisition strategies, and test preparation techniques (Ma, 2012; Walkinshaw and Oanh, 2014). Their metalinguistic awareness and ability to draw contrasts between the first language (L1) and English can be particularly valuable in settings where learners share a common L1.

Moreover, NNESTs often serve as powerful role models of successful language learners, demonstrating that English proficiency is attainable and not the exclusive domain of native-born speakers (Braine, 2010; Tatar and Yildiz, 2010). This can foster greater motivation and rapport among students, especially when teachers share a cultural or linguistic background with them.

Empirical studies also suggest that NNESTs may be more methodical in their teaching, often relying on well-structured lesson plans, textbooks, and explicit instruction in grammar and form (Árva and Medgyes, 2000). While sometimes criticized as being “less communicative,” such approaches can be highly effective for learners at lower proficiency levels or those preparing for formal exams.

Importantly, recent scholarship highlights the intercultural and translingual competencies of many NNESTs. Rather than being limited by their non-nativeness, these teachers often embody plurilingual and transcultural identities, navigating multiple linguistic and cultural frameworks in their personal and professional lives (Ellis, 2016; Lee and Canagarajah, 2019). Such flexibility can be a major asset in globalized classrooms, where learners themselves often bring hybrid identities and multilingual repertoires. Table 1 is comparative characteristics of nests and nneests.

Table 1. Comparative Characteristics of NESTs and NNESTs

Aspect	Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs)	Non-native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)
Linguistic Intuition	Strong intuitive command of idiomatic expressions and colloquial speech	Rely more on explicit knowledge of grammar and rules
Pronunciation/Fluency	Typically exhibit native-like pronunciation and natural rhythm	Often have noticeable accents; prioritize intelligibility
Teaching Strengths	Emphasize communication, fluency, and real-life usage	Strong in grammar explanation, test preparation, and metalinguistic awareness
Learning Experience	May lack personal experience in learning English as a foreign language	Understand learners' challenges through shared L2 learning journey
Cultural Knowledge	Provide exposure to inner-circle English cultures	Often integrate local and intercultural perspectives
Role Model Function	Viewed as idealized models of English use	Seen as attainable role models for L2 learners
Lesson Planning	More flexible or spontaneous in classroom delivery	More structured and methodical in planning and instruction
Learner Rapport	May be more distant due to cultural gaps	Higher empathy and connection, especially with learners of similar backgrounds

Adapted from Selvi et al. (2024)

3.3 Pedagogical Complementarity: Moving Toward Collaboration

Rather than viewing NESTs and NNESTs as fundamentally different or hierarchically ranked, scholars increasingly emphasize the complementarity of their skills. Medgyes (1994) famously described NESTs and NNESTs as “two different species” of teachers, each with unique strengths that, when combined, can enhance language learning outcomes.

Collaborative models such as team-teaching have been employed in countries like Japan (JET Programme), South Korea (EPIK), and Hong Kong (NET Scheme) to harness the complementary skills of NESTs and NNESTs (Copland et al., 2020). In these models, NNESTs may take the lead in

structuring lessons and grammar instruction, while NESTs focus on conversational practice and cultural exposure. However, research also cautions that such collaborations can reinforce rather than dismantle power imbalances unless both groups are given equal professional status and opportunities (Mahboob, 2010; Sung, 2014).

A more equitable and effective approach involves mutual professional recognition, cross-training, and inclusive teacher development programs that integrate perspectives from both groups. When viewed through a poststructuralist lens, the identities of NESTs and NNESTs are not fixed categories but socially constructed, negotiated, and performed in context (Rudolph, Selvi and Yazan, 2015). Thus, teacher collaboration should move beyond surface-level role divisions and engage deeply with identity, ideology, and classroom power dynamics.

3.4 Learner Outcomes and the Competence Debate

One of the most important insights from recent empirical research is that learners' achievement and satisfaction are not determined by their teacher's nativeness, but by factors such as teaching methodology, engagement, clarity, empathy, and cultural responsiveness (Pae, 2017; Schenck, 2018). Studies by Chun (2014) and Inbar-Lourie and Donitsa-Schmidt (2020) found no significant differences in student outcomes based on whether they were taught by NESTs or NNESTs. Instead, teacher training, reflective practice, and classroom experience emerged as stronger predictors of success.

This supports the call for a paradigm shift in ELT – from evaluating teachers based on static identity categories to focusing on professional competence across linguistic and pedagogical dimensions. As Faez and Karas (2019) argue, a teacher's effectiveness should be assessed through observable classroom practice, not presumed based on their language biography.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has shown that the perceived differences between NESTs and NNESTs often reflect ideological assumptions rather than pedagogical realities. While both groups may bring different strengths to the classroom, neither group holds a monopoly on teaching excellence. In fact, a teacher's competence, adaptability, training, and rapport with learners are far more reliable indicators of effectiveness than nativeness alone. As the next chapter will demonstrate, however, these distinctions

continue to shape hiring practices and workplace experiences in inequitable and sometimes discriminatory ways.

4 Discrimination and Marginalization of NNESTs in Hiring and Workplace Contexts

Despite the increasing recognition of the strengths and contributions of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), systemic discrimination and marginalization continue to shape their professional experiences worldwide. Recruitment practices, workplace dynamics, and discursive ideologies often privilege native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), reinforcing inequities that have deep historical and ideological roots (Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Selvi, Yazan and Mahboob, 2024). This chapter explores how NNESTs are disadvantaged in the ELT profession, not only through overt exclusion but also via subtle forms of bias, stereotyping, and linguistic gatekeeping.

4.1 Discriminatory Hiring Practices

Perhaps the most visible manifestation of NNEST marginalization is found in ELT job advertisements that explicitly or implicitly require applicants to be native speakers. Despite numerous anti-discrimination statements issued by professional bodies such as TESOL (1992; 2006), CATESOL (2013), and AAAL (2011), native speaker status remains a *de facto* requirement in many international contexts, particularly in East Asia and the Middle East (Selvi, 2019).

Ruecker and Ives (2015), in their comprehensive analysis of 59 online TEFL job ads, found that the overwhelming majority explicitly preferred or required native speakers, and many linked nativeness with national origin—namely, passport holders from the “Big 6” countries (USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland). Such criteria systematically exclude qualified and experienced NNESTs, regardless of their linguistic competence or pedagogical skill.

This practice, often justified by reference to “student expectations” or “market demand,” is more accurately interpreted as a form of linguistic and racialized gatekeeping. Jenkins (2017) terms this phenomenon “the elephant in the room” of ELT: an unspoken but powerful mechanism for reinforcing Whiteness, Westernness, and monolingual ideology within global English teaching markets.

Table 2. Common Recruitment Requirements in ELT Job Ads

Requirement Type	Percentage of Job Ads (n = 59)
Explicit mention of 'native speaker'	71%
Passport from 'Inner Circle' countries	54%
Focus on appearance ('Western look')	22%
No mention of qualifications or experience	18%

Data based on Ruecker & Ives (2015)

4.2 Workplace Marginalization and Professional Insecurity

Even when hired, NNESTs frequently encounter microaggressions, professional devaluation, and limited advancement opportunities in the workplace. These experiences often arise from implicit assumptions that NNESTs are less competent, less fluent, or less “authentic” than their native-speaking colleagues (Aneja, 2016; Mahboob, 2010).

Many NNESTs report being assigned to “grammar” or “test-prep” roles, while NESTs are favoured for speaking classes and cultural instruction (Selvi, 2014). This division of labour reproduces essentialist stereotypes: the NNEST as “technical and rule-bound,” the NEST as “natural and communicative.” Such assumptions not only impact workload distribution but also affect self-perception and professional identity. For instance, studies document how NNESTs often experience “impostor syndrome” (Bernat, 2008) and internalized inferiority, especially in institutions where English is equated with inner-circle varieties.

Emotional toll is another important, yet often overlooked, dimension. Song (2016) and Reis (2014) have explored the affective burden of navigating constant self-monitoring, classroom anxiety, and institutional judgment. The persistent need to “prove oneself” in comparison to native-speaking colleagues can erode confidence, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the profession.

4.3 The Role of Race, Nationality, and Physical Appearance

While the native/non-native binary is framed in linguistic terms, it is deeply intertwined with racial, ethnic, and national identities. As Ramjattan (2019) and Charles (2019) demonstrate, non-White NESTs can also face discrimination if their physical appearance or accent does not match stereotypical expectations of “nativeness.” Conversely, White NNESTs may sometimes benefit from perceived

proximity to “nativeness,” despite lacking linguistic or pedagogical qualifications (Jenks and Lee, 2020).

This dynamic illustrates the intersectional nature of marginalization in ELT: perceptions of teacher legitimacy are shaped not only by actual linguistic competence, but also by visible markers of identity—skin colour, name, accent, or passport. As Rudolph, Selvi and Yazan (2015) argue, the ideology of native speakerism operates as a racialized system of privilege, in which Whiteness is frequently conflated with linguistic authority.

Tezgiden Cakcak (2019) introduces the term “pseudo-native speakerism” to describe institutional practices that pressure NNESTs to hide their linguistic identities, adopt native-like accents, or even misrepresent their national origin to fit hiring preferences. Such experiences raise ethical concerns and reinforce the structural inequalities underpinning global ELT.

4.4 Resistance, Advocacy, and Institutional Change

In response to these inequities, the NNEST movement and broader advocacy efforts have sought to challenge discriminatory norms, raise awareness, and promote structural change. Organizations such as TEFL Equity Advocates, alongside academic and grassroots initiatives, have played key roles in debunking native speaker myths, promoting inclusive hiring, and reframing teaching excellence in terms of competence rather than nativeness (Copland et al., 2020; Kamhi-Stein and Mahboob, 2018).

Teacher education programs are also beginning to integrate critical awareness of native speakerism into their curricula, helping both pre-service and in-service teachers develop more reflexive and inclusive professional identities (Yazan, 2019). However, institutional change has been slow and uneven. As Galloway (2021) observes, the deep-rooted nature of linguistic hierarchies, compounded by neoliberal market forces, continues to make transformation a complex and contested process.

4.5 A Call for Structural Redefinition of “Expertise” in ELT

To meaningfully address marginalization, it is not enough to celebrate diversity or recognize NNEST strengths. What is required is a systemic redefinition of legitimacy and expertise in ELT. This includes:

- Rewriting job criteria to focus on professional qualifications, not linguistic biography;

- Valuing plurilingual competencies and intercultural experience in teacher assessment;
- Promoting inclusive language ideologies in teacher training and ELT publishing;
- Encouraging collaborative professionalism between NESTs and NNESTs based on mutual respect and shared expertise.

Crucially, this also means disrupting the linguistic and racialized ideologies that underpin current hiring and evaluation practices. As Ellis (2016) asserts, the future of ELT must embrace teachers as “language beings” with diverse histories, not static categories of native or non-native.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that NNESTs continue to face systemic discrimination in hiring and workplace environments, rooted in ideologies of native speakerism, linguistic essentialism, and racialized assumptions. While resistance movements and advocacy efforts have made significant progress, structural inequities remain deeply entrenched. Moving forward, redefining expertise in ELT requires a shift from identity-based evaluation to pedagogically grounded, critically informed, and inclusive professional frameworks.

5 Post-native Speakerism and New Theoretical Directions in ELT Identity Research

In response to the growing critique of the native/non-native dichotomy, recent scholarship in English language teaching (ELT) has begun to reconceptualize teacher identity through post-native speakerist frameworks, moving beyond essentialist categories and binary ideologies. This shift reflects broader intellectual developments in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, especially the rise of poststructuralist, intersectional, and translingual perspectives (Yazan and Rudolph, 2018; Lee and Canagarajah, 2019). Rather than simply validating the legitimacy of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), these approaches interrogate the very assumptions that underlie the notion of “nativeness” itself and advocate for more fluid, context-sensitive understandings of language teacher identity.

5.1 Poststructuralist Perspectives: Identity as Fluid and Negotiated

Traditional approaches to teacher identity have often treated nativeness as a static, inherited trait, tied to birthplace, first language acquisition, and national origin. In contrast, poststructuralist theories conceptualize identity as socially constructed, discursively produced, and constantly negotiated across time and space (Norton, 2013; Rudolph, Selvi and Yazan, 2015). This view allows for a more nuanced understanding of how teachers inhabit multiple and shifting subjectivities—professional, linguistic, racial, gendered—depending on context.

Rudolph (2019) argues that native speakerism functions as a discursive regime that constrains how teachers are recognized and valued, and that resisting such regimes requires acknowledging identity as performance, not essence. For example, teachers may emphasize or downplay aspects of their linguistic biography depending on institutional expectations, student attitudes, or hiring norms. This discursive negotiation is especially salient for multilingual and transnational educators whose professional lives span multiple linguistic and cultural communities (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Lawrence and Nagashima, 2020).

5.2 Translingual and Plurilingual Teacher Identities

A key development in post-native speakerist scholarship is the emphasis on translingualism—a perspective that views language use as fluid, hybrid, and shaped by the dynamic interplay of multiple linguistic resources (Canagarajah, 2013; Lee and Canagarajah, 2019). Within this framework, teachers are no longer evaluated based on their proximity to an imagined native norm, but rather on their ability to navigate diverse linguistic contexts, adapt to learners’ needs, and draw on their full linguistic repertoires.

Ellis (2016) proposes the term “multicompetent plurilinguals” to describe teachers whose identities and pedagogical strategies are informed by their lived experiences across multiple languages. Rather than privileging monolingualism or “native-like” proficiency, this view positions linguistic diversity as an asset that enriches teaching and learning. Similarly, Ishihara and Menard-Warwick (2018) advocate for translingual teacher development, which empowers educators to reflect on their own language histories and challenge dominant ideologies of correctness and authenticity.

This perspective also resonates with the multilingual turn in applied linguistics (Conteh and Meier, 2014; May, 2014), which seeks to reorient language education around inclusion, equity, and linguistic

justice. For ELT, this means moving away from native-speaker norms and towards plurilingual pedagogies that reflect the real-world communicative practices of both teachers and learners.

5.3 New Terminologies: Rethinking Labels and Nomenclature

One of the most persistent critiques of the NEST/NNEST binary is its terminological violence: the way it defines teachers by what they are not (Cook, 1999), reinforcing deficit discourses and undermining professional legitimacy. In response, scholars have proposed a range of alternative labels that aim to better capture the complexity of teacher identity while resisting native-speakerist ideology.

Some examples include:

- Multicompetent users of English (Cook, 2016)
- Bilingual or plurilingual educators (Ellis, 2016; Faez, 2011)
- Translingual professionals (Motha et al., 2012; Lee and Canagarajah, 2019)
- Global English teachers (Rose and Galloway, 2019)
- Languaged beings (Ellis, 2016)

While no single term is universally accepted, the move towards affirmative, identity-centered descriptors marks an important epistemological shift. These labels emphasize teachers' agency, linguistic repertoires, and educational capital, rather than inherited traits or national affiliations. However, as Houghton and Rivers (2013) caution, new terms must avoid replicating old hierarchies or creating new exclusions—for example, assuming all native speakers are monolingual or culturally homogeneous.

5.4 Implications for Teacher Education and Policy

The shift towards post-native speakerist frameworks has significant implications for language teacher education, curriculum design, and hiring policy. Yazan (2019) emphasizes the need to embed critical language awareness in teacher training programs, helping both NESTs and NNESTs interrogate native speaker ideologies and reflect on their own positionalities. This includes examining how race, gender, class, and migratory histories intersect with linguistic identity and classroom dynamics.

In practical terms, post-native speakerist thinking calls for rethinking teacher recruitment, moving from identity-based hiring to competence-based evaluation. This involves decentering “nativeness” as

a selection criterion and valuing diverse experiences, multilingual backgrounds, and pedagogical reflection. As Prabjandee (2020) notes, institutional change is possible but requires systemic efforts at the levels of policy, training, and professional discourse.

Rose and Galloway (2019) propose Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) as a model for integrating these ideas into the classroom. GELT encourages teachers to incorporate multiple English varieties, critically discuss language ideologies, and model inclusive, multilingual communication. When applied in teacher education, such approaches can help shift the paradigm from normativity to linguistic pluralism.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has explored emerging theoretical directions that move beyond the binary of native and non-native English speakers. Through poststructuralist, translingual, and multilingual lenses, scholars have offered more dynamic, inclusive, and critical understandings of what it means to be an English teacher in the 21st century. These approaches reject static categories in favour of fluid identities shaped by discourse, experience, and social positioning. As ELT continues to globalize, embracing these perspectives is essential for dismantling native speakerism and building a more equitable professional landscape.

6 Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the distinctions between native and non-native English-speaking teachers within the broader landscape of English language teaching (ELT), arguing that the native/non-native dichotomy is both theoretically flawed and professionally damaging. While native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) may bring different strengths to the classroom, the idealization of nativeness continues to shape hiring practices, pedagogical expectations, and teacher identity in inequitable ways (Ruecker and Ives, 2015; Selvi, Yazan and Mahboob, 2024).

Chapter 1 traced the historical and ideological foundations of the native speaker construct, rooted in linguistic imperialism and native speakerism (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2005). Chapter 2 compared the pedagogical strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs, showing that effective teaching

depends more on experience, linguistic awareness, and intercultural competence than on nativeness. Chapter 3 highlighted systemic discrimination faced by NNESTs in hiring and workplace settings, often exacerbated by racial, national, and linguistic biases. Chapter 4 presented emerging theoretical alternatives—such as post-native speakerism, translingualism, and plurilingualism—that reconceptualize teacher identity in more fluid and inclusive terms (Rudolph, 2019; Ellis, 2016).

Collectively, the literature suggests that the profession must move away from binary categorization and towards frameworks that prioritize pedagogical competence, linguistic diversity, and critical reflexivity. Teacher education programs should challenge native speaker ideologies and foster identity-affirming practices for all teachers, regardless of linguistic background (Yazan, 2019). Employers and policymakers must also revise hiring criteria to reflect the complex sociolinguistic realities of English today and to ensure equitable access and advancement for NNESTs.

Ultimately, rethinking “nativeness” in ELT is not only an academic imperative but a moral and professional one. It requires acknowledging the full humanity and expertise of all teachers and envisioning a more just and inclusive future for global English language education.

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