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### Abstract

The current paper considers the invention, disinvention, and reconstitution of native speaker ideologies in terms of the perspectives and experiences of 22 TESOL master's students facilitating a practical English class housed at a university. Facilitators' reflections and experiences were collected using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The analysis suggests that novice teachers may conflate non-native positionality with linguistic and pedagogical expertise, particularly while processing the challenges they face in the classroom. In doing so, they devalue their own teaching while simultaneously misunderstanding and underestimating the challenges faced by their peers. This paper suggests that while native speaker constructs are not empirically substantiated, their ideologies continue to affect novice teachers' understanding of their own and others' teaching strengths, weaknesses, and development. In the conclusion, I offer possible strategies for preparing and empowering international TESOL students as teachers in English language classrooms in the United States.

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The current paper considers the invention, disinvention, and reconstitution of native speaker ideologies in terms of the perspectives and experiences of 22 TESOL master's students facilitating a practical English class housed at a university. Facilitators' reflections and experiences were collected using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The analysis suggests that novice teachers may conflate non-native positionality with linguistic and pedagogical expertise, particularly while processing the challenges they face in the classroom. In doing so, they devalue their own teaching while simultaneously misunderstanding and underestimating the challenges faced by their peers. This paper suggests that while native speaker constructs are not empirically substantiated, their ideologies continue to affect novice teachers' understanding of their own and others' teaching strengths, weaknesses, and development. In the conclusion, I offer possible strategies for preparing and empowering international TESOL students as teachers in English language classrooms in the United States.

## Introduction

Over a decade ago, the vast majority of English language teachers internationally did not speak English as a home language (Canagarajah, 1999). Since then, the enrollment of international students studying education in US programs has risen over 33% from 12,885 in 1999 to 17,200 in 2012 (Institute of International Education, 2011, 2012). While a growing field of inquiry has addressed and problematized issues surrounding the training and experiences of people to whom TESOL tradition refers as "Native" and "Non-native" English Speaking Teachers (*NESTs* and *NNESTs* respectively), this dichotomy remains ambiguous at best. Its manifestations continue to conflate native speaker ideologies with ideologies of race and racialization (Amin, 1997; Wu, 2005), accent (Braine, 1999; Butler 2007; Medgyes, 1999), language inheritance (Rampton, 1990), and other variables unrelated to linguistic or pedagogical ability.

The current paper examines the invention, disinvention, and reconstitution of native speaker ideologies by drawing from perspectives and experiences of 22 TESOL master's students who participated as class facilitators in a program designed to introduce first-semester students to pedagogical practice. Both the TESOL master's program and the practice-based teacher education program were

housed at a private research institution on the East coast of the United States in which the majority of the students do not speak English as a home language. This setting was selected primarily because a program hosted by a graduate school provided access to novice NNESTs who were participating in practice-based professional development as well as theory-focused coursework. Furthermore, even though there are well-established literatures focused on emerging teachers, NNESTs of content subjects, and experienced NNESTs of English, very few studies have unpacked the experiences of those at the nexus: emerging NNESTs of English. Understanding the identities and needs of people at this nexus is becoming increasingly important as the international student enrollment of US-based master's TESOL programs continues to rise.

### Methods

Ethnographic and interview data was collected over two semesters in an English language program run by the Graduate School of Education of a large, private university on the East coast. The program provides free communicative classes for daily, practical English to the adult family members of international students and faculty affiliated with the host university. At the time of data collection, there were two 2-hour classes per week, and each class was taught by one second-year lead facilitator (LF) with the assistance of six first-year group facilitators (GFs). This structured environment allowed first-year TESOL master's students with little classroom teaching experience to gain classroom experience as GFs as well as receive ongoing professional development and mentoring under the supervision of their more experienced LFs.

Qualitative data was collected through two semesters (September to April). Field notes and audio recordings were taken during almost every class session, planning meeting, and post-session reflection in order to record the details of classroom interaction. Semi-structured interviews with GFs, LFs, and the program's faculty administrators were scheduled as possible based on convenience, and averaged two interviews per week starting in the fourth week of teaching. Generally, GFs have a one-semester tenure while LFs and administrators have a two-semester tenure. However, in the second semester, two GFs continued working, and one LF joined the team. Therefore, a total of 22 GFs, three LFs, and two faculty administrators participated in this study. Of these, 21 GFs and two LFs started learning English in elementary school or later.

The data collection process became complicated by my own positionality within classroom interactions. While my role with the program was explicitly observational, I found the lines blurring when students and facilitators asked me questions or directly involved me in conversations. As they did so, I found myself becoming a more active participant in classroom interactions, particularly in small group discussions, though I rarely felt as though I was directly assisting in instruction. My field notes address the manner, timing, and degree of my involvement, though such discussion is generally out of the scope of this paper.

As I collected data, I listened to the class recordings and read my field notes repeatedly in order to identify emergent categories. Initially, these included facilitators' self-efficacy, professional development, and classroom experiences.

From these initial categories established in my first four weeks of observational data, I outlined questions for the semi-structured interviews. Recorded interviews were transcribed immediately, and recurring themes were further questioned in subsequent interviews. When relevant, I also asked for clarification or reflection on particular interactions or events from the week's lesson. Throughout the semester, additional themes began to emerge, including the ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994), English proficiency (Medgyes, 1992, 1994), and the problematization and legitimization of native speaker constructs. From this analysis, it became apparent that while the facilitators were aware of the fallacious nature of such ideologies, they inevitably returned to them because of the continued impact they have on their classroom experiences. From this cognitive dissonance came this paper's organizational structure.

The discussion is organized into three sections, the titles of which were inspired by Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) edited volume *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*, in which the historico-political genesis of language is unpacked. The first section, "Inventing and Disinventing the Native Speaker," problematizes native speaker ideologies by tracing their roots to the rise of the homogeneous, monolingual nation-state and then offering an alternative, contextualized framework. The second section, "Resurrecting the Native Speaker," addresses the practical and pedagogical complications of disinventing the native speaker by considering the student-teachers' classroom experiences and subsequent reflections. The final section, "Reconstituting the Native Speaker," attempts to reconcile the two previous sections in a framework that informs facilitators' lived experiences with a critical understanding of native speaker ideologies, and offers suggestions for possible professional development initiatives.

### **Inventing and Disinventing the Native Speaker**

Despite its problematization, the term *native speaker* remains prominent in applied linguistics and TESOL literature and coursework. Decades of scholarship across multiple fields dichotomize native and nonnative positions without satisfactorily explaining their meaning or significance, often invoking nationality, ethnicity, accent, or other characteristics apart from expertise or fluency. Depending on context a "native speaker of English" may refer to someone who has spoken English and only English from infancy, who has a North American, British, or Australian (NABA) accent (Liu, 1998, 1999), who is highly educated, who is phenotypically Caucasian (Amin, 1997, 1999), who speaks English with very high proficiency, who began learning English before six years of age and communicates primarily in English, or any combination of these factors. The characteristics and combinations thereof are endless. However, even if, as French philosophers Pierre Bourdieu and René Coppieters suggest, social acceptance rather than grammatical competence contextually defines a native speaker (Bourdieu, 1991; Coppieters, 1987), the question of how this constructed notion of the native speaker and its infallibility came to pervade applied linguistics becomes all the more pressing.

Mahboob (2005) traces the mythologization of the native speaker to Chomsky's use of the "idealized native speaker-hearer," a theoretical abstraction upon which much second language acquisition (SLA) research has been based. This idealization

establishes the “native speaker” as an indisputable authority on judgments in grammar and use. Larry Selinker’s theories of *interlanguage* and *fossilization* (Selinker, 1972), the discourse of “target language norms” (e.g., Ellis, 1994), and “ideal language input” (Long, 1981), among others maintain and reinforce the idealization of the native speaker in SLA and applied linguistics, and ultimately in Educational Linguistics and TESOL. Peter Medgyes, who himself does not speak English as a home language, observes that non-native teachers constantly “struggle with their own *language deficiencies*” (1986, p. 112, emphasis added) and that “by definition they are not on par with NESTs in terms of language proficiency” (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 364). However, these deficit-mode descriptions do not acknowledge that many “nonnative” speakers use their additional languages in creative ways to create entirely new registers of communication (Grosjean, 2010; Liu, 1999; Lu, 1987; Rymes, 2008). Furthermore, speakers of “non-standard” Englishes or from outer circle countries like India (Kachru, 1985; Kramsch, 1997) might not be acknowledged in an academic setting in the same way as a speaker with a NABA accent, which suggests that one must look beyond age of acquisition or exposure in order to determine who constitutes a native speaker.

Bonfiglio (2010) contextualizes these linguistically and pedagogically oriented literatures within the broader historico-political discourses of nationalist language ideologies and formation of a national identity. He demonstrates that the existence of a “native language” is far from “self-evident” (Wu, 2010) and is instead the product of the rise of the nation state in 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Bonfiglio, 2013). At this point, the conceptualization of language as local, organic, and rooted in the homeland emerged. Thus, native language and nationality both were “configured by metaphorical extension from the physical environment” (Bonfiglio, 2013, p. 37). Because national identity often signifies a “folkloric notion of biological nationality” (Bonfiglio, 2010, p. 13) rather than citizenship, it is often realized as a racialized construction that grants a legitimate national and linguistic ownership to those who have particular phenotypic characteristics (Bonfiglio, 2013).

Cementing the ties between physical environment, biological nationality, and linguistic identity, Dasgupta (1998) and Canagarajah (2010) argue that the inquiry of the “typical European historical linguist of the eighteenth or nineteenth century” (Dasgupta, 1998, p. 184), particularly of languages spoken in areas occupied by European powers, created the object of its own inquiry. The impulse for empirical inquiry to an extent froze grammatical systems in time, thus removing their grounding in local language practice as well as idealizing and, to borrow Selinker’s (1972) term, *fossilizing* them to form standardized language varieties inherently tied to place. Even Rampton (2010), despite his advocacy for *expertise* rather than *nativeness* as a standard for evaluation of language proficiency, considered *language inheritance*—one’s historical right to a language—an aspect of a speaker’s legitimacy, at least insofar as legitimacy is a social positionality. In this vein, H.G. Widdowson’s rather sardonic response to his own question, “Who are these native speakers” was “the English” (Widdowson, 1994). This was not to say that other varieties of English did not exist around the world, both then and now, but that these were “not real or proper English, not the genuine article” (Widdowson, 1994, p. 378). Though the remainder of Widdowson’s article goes on to debunk this myth of language possession, the racialization of the native speaker can hardly be denied (Phillipson, 1992; Shuck, 2006).

These complications of native speaker status catalyzed a shift towards conceptualizing native speaker as an ideological construct. Shuck (2001) describes this *ideology of nativeness* as essentializing native-nonnative categories rooted in a monolingualist model, conflated with other sociopolitical hierarchies, like race and class, and inextricably tied to language use (see also Shuck, 2006). Such an ideology inevitably mandates that claims to a national identity must be legitimized by appropriate language use. Holliday (2006) also characterizes *native speakerism* as a pervasive, divisive ideology that “originates within certain educational cultures in the English-speaking West” (p. 385). McGroarty (2010) further develops this framework by pluralizing and reframing native speaker ideology as “abstract (and often implicit) belief systems related to language and linguistic behavior that affect speakers’ choices and interpretations of communicative interaction” (p. 3). As was unpacked previously, ideologies of native speakerism are entwined with ideologies of racism and racialization (Shuck, 2001; 2006), classism (Labov, 1969), nationalism (Canagarajah, 2005), and accent (Amin, 1997).

Ideologies of native speakerism continue to influence membership in the community of native speakers, allowing some English learners to “pass as native” while others are considered nonnative speakers of the only language in which they are fluent. They also fail to recognize language teachers’ professional skills while simultaneously casting a deterministic shadow over those who are positioned as nonnative—because only “native speakers” can be legitimate teachers, developing language proficiency or professional skill sets is futile. Therefore, alternative frameworks are necessary to legitimize “nonnative” speakers’ language proficiency and communicative resources, and to encourage them to develop further. Two such alternative frameworks are *language expertise* and *communicative repertoires*.

Rampton (1990) contrasts *language expertise*, which is learned, fallible, and contextualized, with *native speaker status*, which is inherited, infallible, and absolute. Thus, expertise differs from both language inheritance and affiliation, which involve a historical relationship with the language rather than linguistic or communicative ability. Inheritance connotes a sense of permanency and heritage, while affiliation is personal identification with a social group without necessarily belonging to it. Therefore, one can be an English expert without either inheriting or affiliating with it, and one can both inherit and affiliate with English without necessarily being an expert. Such a model affords equal claim to language expertise regardless of positioned native speakerism or lack thereof. Davies (2013) offers the term *native users* to recognize highly proficient speakers who did not learn English in early childhood (p. 5).

A reframing focused on expertise has particularly strong implications for professional fields where discipline-specific skill sets must be developed in addition to linguistic proficiency. In TESOL and other fields related to English pedagogy, teachers must have a mastery of their discipline as an academic field as well as a practice-based profession. Relevant factors may include proficiency (Llurda, 2004), speed and appropriateness of classroom decision-making (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986), specialized domain knowledge and the recognition of patterns (Glaser & Chi, 1988), self-monitoring and regulation (Glaser & Chi, 1988; Eraut, 1994), and education level (Kramsch, 1997). Still others have framed expertise as a process rather than a state, in which experts constantly reflect on their practice in order to improve it (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). However, expert teachers

must also have the range of communicative resources necessary to develop and implement these skills and practices.

A *communicative repertoire* framework complicates and pluralizes the notion of expertise. It acknowledges that rather than speaking a single language on a one-dimensional scale of proficiency or language expertise, speakers combine a range of abilities and proficiencies in creative ways within a communicative context “to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate” (Rymes, 2010, p. 178). Such a framework distinguishes between the repertoires and expertises of English teachers of different ethnicities or accents in different parts of the world, while legitimizing each of them within their communicative and pedagogical context. It therefore denies individuals *native* or *inherited* claim to the professional title of *teacher*, unlike the term “native English speaking teacher,” which somehow suggests that the teacher is not only a native speaker of English but also is a native and therefore legitimate *teacher* as well. Finally, a repertoire framework embraces teachers’ multilingual communicative resources (Kramsch, 1997), including their possible sharing of their students’ mother tongue (Medgyes, 1992).

### Resurrecting the Native Speaker: Teachers’ Perspectives

While a framework based on teachers’ expertise seems like a viable theoretical alternative to native speaker constructs, facilitators seemed skeptical of the relevance of linguistic and pedagogical expertise because these concepts did not accurately reflect their own experiences in the classroom and on the job market. This section considers group facilitators’ reflections and reactions to native speakerism, expertise, and communicative repertoire frameworks first generally through semi-structured interviews, and then with a closer focus on three classroom interactions.

The excerpt below, from an interview with a group facilitator (GF), presents a facilitator’s response to a question concerning the validity of “expert English teacher” as an alternative to “native speaking English teacher.”

Interviewer: I’ve heard a lot of the facilitators talk about native speakers and nonnative speakers as teachers. Some researchers talk about “expert English teacher” as an alternative. What do you think about that?

GF:<sup>1</sup> Not everyone who is a native speaker can teach this language, but in the beginning, we can’t even ask this question because none of us are experts, so all of you [native speakers] are expert compared with us...

The facilitator observes that when measuring teaching expertise in terms of both linguistic proficiency and pedagogical expertise, the more proficient of two entirely untrained teachers will be more expert, and the more proficient person will generally have been raised speaking English. This comment may also be influenced by the perfect conflation of teaching experience with first language in this program during its first semester; all twelve GFs, who are necessarily

<sup>1</sup> All transcriptions are as close to the actual utterances as possible. Grammatical errors have been retained and are transcribed as accurately as possible.



novice teachers with little or no classroom teaching experience, were international TESOL graduate students, and learned English in school, while all members of the leadership team had at least two full years of teaching experience, were raised and educated in the U.S., and began learning English from infancy. In the second semester, this conflation would be reduced, but facilitators still turned to the one “native speaker” GF even though she had roughly the same amount of teaching experience as they did.

Another facilitator suggested a relationship between a teacher’s language inheritance or affiliation and perceived language expertise (Rampton, 1990), saying:

Expertise is not one thing only, like a good TOEFL score makes you expert, but many things depend whether students think you are expert, like I have an accent and you don’t, so I think students will think you more expert than me.

This statement links expertise to accent, implying that those who inherited a privileged NABA English may be perceived as “more expert” than those who affiliate with the language. This also suggests that the supposedly objective measure of expertise may be as ideologically grounded as native speaker constructs themselves.

Based on the possible effect of accent on perceived expertise, in a later interview I began asking GFs if they thought their multilingual communicative repertoires and international experiences were valued in the classroom:

Interviewer: Do you think your ability to speak Chinese and English and your cultural experiences are valued in the classroom?

GF: Of course. You don’t really have to speak amazing English to teach. Teaching and speaking English are different, many native speakers don’t know how to be teachers. But because I speak Chinese I can teach low beginners who only speak Chinese but I think [laughter] you would find that very difficult.

Thus, she acknowledged the different communicative repertoires necessary for successfully communicating in different contexts or with different students. However, when asked the same question, another facilitator recognized that she could embrace her various communicative styles in the class, but qualified her statements:

I know Chinese is good and I did learn English very well, but I can think that way because I’m not a student. I mean, student will have exceptions for their teachers no matter where they come from or what language you speak. You are a teacher, so you are supposed to be, like, super fluent in this language... yeah... I guess you can’t expect a student to understand that you are from a different country.

This GF also claimed that she was not “super fluent” and attributed her lack of super fluency to intonation and speed:

Not just the accent, but the way I express myself. The speed and pace. How to pause naturally. I pause because I don't know how to proceed with the rest of the sentence, so I pause... the biggest difference between native speaker and nonnative speaker is what your speed to speak this language.

While this GF's concern is justified, the speech rate differential between native and nonnative speakers to which she referred could be attributed to expertise rather than native speaker status. Some monolingual English speakers deliberately train themselves to accurately and succinctly express their ideas, while others frequently pause to consider their thoughts before proceeding. On the other hand, many English learners speak quickly without unnecessary pauses, suggesting that speech rate may not accurately predict native speaker positionality.

Later in the interview, this GF also expressed difficulty with content knowledge in English. She said, "They [her students] will ask me their homework about science and biology, but is also new to me! I didn't learn this in English!" However, while this facilitator attributed her gap in knowledge to not having completed grade school in English, even monolingual English speakers with strong academic backgrounds may blanch when asked to explain photosynthesis to a middle school student.

The facilitators acknowledge that teaching requires skills, experiences, repertoires, and talents beyond native speaker status, and that speaking a language, even a privileged variety, from birth is neither necessary nor sufficient to be a successful teacher. However, they also seem to maintain that achieving such standards is more difficult for those who had to learn English than those who were raised speaking it.

While this may be true, it does not entail that native speakers should be unconditionally preferred over nonnative speakers, particularly if their training and experience are not equivalent. If every person with the English language expertise necessary and sufficient for the pursuit of graduate-level coursework were capable of teaching English, then TESOL programs would be unnecessary. This expertise is contextualized (Rampton, 1990), and so it is both plausible and expected that someone who is positioned as a nonnative English speaker is also an expert teacher, while a native speaker is not, particularly in a given context. The concern that a nonnative speaking teacher might lack the appropriate language to manage a class and deliver a lesson is justified, but "native speakers" could also lack these communication skills, which is why classroom management seminars exist. Thus, the shortcomings of a person who is a poor teacher should be attributed to not having developed the skill sets necessary to be an expert English teacher, not to positionality as a nonnative speaker.

Facilitators may have found it difficult to understand the effect of experience on expertise because of the almost perfect conflation of expertise, native speaker status, and familiarity with communicative pedagogies. No facilitator had more than one semester of classroom teaching experience before the start of the program, while every lead facilitator and administrator had at least two years of experience. Furthermore, of the 22 facilitators, 16 said that they had never experienced communicative approaches to language teaching, and that their language courses primarily emphasized listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, every lead facilitator had previously taught communicative classes.

An ongoing question is the extent to which facilitators' teaching difficulties may be attributed to their further development of English language expertise rather than pedagogical expertise. One facilitator mentioned that "real world communication" and "very native language," such as slang, idioms, and colloquialisms,<sup>2</sup> were particularly challenging for Chinese master's students. If communicative approaches bring the "real world" closer to a classroom context, then it may "inevitably grant privileged status to native-speaker teachers ... with respect to competence in the language but also in respect to competence in language teaching" (Widdowson, 1994, p. 387).

Consider the following events that were observed in the classroom:

Event 1: In Week 2, the lesson objective was for students to describe their families by using terms of relation for each family member. While facilitating this lesson, it became immediately obvious that the facilitators themselves were not familiar or comfortable with the terminology for family members, even though they were expected to teach it.

Event 2: In Week 5, facilitators started to use PowerPoint slides to project useful conversational phrases during tasks in order to scaffold students' discussions. However, the projected slide contained several grammatical errors, which the students were copying into their notes. The lead facilitator tried to take the GF who prepared the slide aside and correct the slide subtly while students were completing the activity, but the GF announced the mistakes to the class in a self-deprecating manner.

Event 3: In Week 10, in a discussion on recipes from around the world, one facilitator described a step of making dumplings as "open an egg into a bowl." When a student used the same phrase for the first step in making an omelet, I recast it by asking, "you cracked an egg?" The facilitator noticed my correction, and told me in a later conversation that she felt embarrassed of her English proficiency.

The first two events reveal a gap in knowledge of the content that facilitators were expected to teach. These errors are analogous to a math teacher not being familiar with cross-multiplying in order to teach an algebra lesson, and they likely could have been prevented by more careful lesson preparation and planning, particularly since in both cases facilitators were given time to prepare the topics they would be presenting before class. In other words, these incidents may indicate a learning curve in facilitators' mastery of teaching skill and expectations rather than solely a need to develop their English language skills. While in these two particular situations it may be unlikely that someone who was raised in the US would have made these particular mistakes, monolingual novice teachers often have difficulty offering clear explanations of specific grammatical constructions, a shortcoming which is equally egregious. While teachers should be very familiar with the content and language skills they are teaching, novice teachers may need time to gauge the relevance of given constructions or topics to a particular lesson.

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<sup>2</sup> Such colloquialisms could be considered cultural knowledge rather than linguistic, as they differ among individuals, regions, and dialects. However, because the GF considered them "very native language," I do the same in my discussion.

However, no reasonable level of preparation or planning could have prevented the idiomatic error of the facilitator who said “open an egg” rather than “crack an egg.” To expect that someone new to the U.S. has mastered every idiomatic nuance of American English seems unreasonable, especially since “open an egg” is a fairly common phrase in World Englishes. Cullen (1994) adds that the communicative approach requires teachers to be able to adjust their difficulty levels from class to class, respond “naturally and spontaneously” to students’ unpredictable class contributions, and “be prepared for any linguistic emergency” (1994, p. 165). It is therefore possible that this approach values communicative repertoires that could be framed as “very native language” not commonly taught in formal classroom environments, and it may implicitly favor those who have localized language exposure outside structured classrooms. This facilitator’s error may not have been marked if the conversation had been taking place in a different environment, particularly since she achieved her communicative goal. While “open an egg” is not idiomatically acceptable in most varieties of American English, if this event had occurred elsewhere, the phrase “open an egg” may have been appropriate. Thus, communicative approaches to TESOL may contribute to the contextualization of expertise and privilege users of contextually-appropriate communicative repertoires rather than “native speakers” in particular.

For this reason, some theorists suggested that having multiple repertoires for self-expression in a language is more valuable than grammaticality or ‘correctness’ (Grosjean, 2010; Kramsch, 1997; Rymes, 2010). This repertoire approach eliminates the advantage of native speaker status entirely and instead frames teachers’ communication as different but not necessarily unequal. For instance, later in the “open an egg” interaction, students demonstrated preference not for the facilitators with the most sophisticated English proficiency or “native-like” accent, but for whomever was most likely to provide communicative resources relevant to the immediate context. A Chinese student looked to a Chinese facilitator for confirmation of a term for a lantern for Chinese New Year, while the Brazilian and Italian students who leaned on their home languages often turned to me because of my experience studying several Romance languages.

The ability to speak students’ first language and identify closely with their home culture is one of six benefits of hiring NNESTs rather than NESTs, according to Medgyes (1992). The other five are that NNESTs are more effective learning strategy teachers, more able to provide information about the English language, more able to anticipate language difficulties, more empathetic to their learners’ needs, and serve as models of successful language learners. However, despite these benefits, an academic understanding of “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson, 1996), TESOL Inc.’s Statement of NNEST Hiring Practices (1991), and Medgyes’ (1996) finding that a teacher’s native speaker status or lack thereof does not significantly affect students’ English achievements, English fluency remains the primary predictor of a teacher’s employability after graduating from a TESOL program (Govardhan, Nayar, & Sheorey, 1999; Shin, 2010). In fact, over 70% of English language teaching programs continue to consider a “native English speaker criterion” to be moderately or very important in hiring (Clark & Paran, 2007). Some of these programs, both within the US and internationally even go so far as to explicitly racialize native speakers as Caucasian (Bonfiglio, 2010; Canagarajah, 1999; Romney, 2010), or politicize them as holding citizenship to a country in the “inner circle” (Kachru, 1985; Mahboob, 2004;

Selvi, 2010). This institutional discrimination coupled with uncounted workplace microaggressions from students, other teachers, and policy makers, socially and professionally disempowers English experts who did not grow up speaking the language (e.g., Amin, 1997; Llorca, 2004). For novice teachers, these experiences can be highly discouraging and stunt the development of expertise, because such teachers can never reach the mythical native speaker standard. Anxiety and intimidation can cause a lack of confidence and self-efficacy, which in turn can create pedagogical difficulties that may not otherwise be an issue (Bernat, 2008).

Several facilitators independently mentioned that their skepticism with expertise was rooted in its idealism. One facilitator said:

Of course in perfect world everyone would be judged with their skills, but this is not what I see when one TESOL student with eight or nine years teaching in China cannot get a teaching job for her Fieldwork class, but native speakers can easily get it without any problem even without any teaching before. I like your criticism and I think it is good, but it is not real. People do not hire for expertise. People hire native speakers.

In other words, regardless of the degree to which nativeness has been problematized, native speakerism (Holliday, 2006) affords those who are perceived as native speakers a higher market value than those which are not (Selvi, 2010). This differential manifests in NNESTs' decreased employability (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob, 2004; Selvi, 2010), questioned self-worth (Braine, 2004; Kamhi-Stein, et al., 2004; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), and decreased credibility in the work place (Maum, 2002), among others. As a result, participants almost unanimously stated that learning prestigious or "native" varieties of English is most beneficial for English language students, and that teachers must master such varieties in order to teach them.

If graduate students and future professionals resurrect the native speaker concept even after understanding the logic of its invention and disinvention, the question becomes, as Canagarajah (2010) aptly observed, "Where do we go from here?" (p. 233).

### **Reconstituting the Native Speaker**

While ideologies of native speakerism delegitimize the facilitators' professional skill sets, *expertise* and *communicative repertoire* frameworks may have been too far removed from participants' lived experiences to serve as viable alternatives. Participants were acutely aware of native speaker ideologies in the classroom and on the job market, as well as the impact such ideologies could have on their own teaching and career trajectories. This awareness sometimes made them doubt their legitimacy or competence as English teachers, decreasing their self-efficacy. For instance, some facilitators used *expertise* and *communicative repertoire* frameworks as foils for native speaker. Because native speakers were considered expert teachers by definition, even if a native and nonnative teacher received the same professional training and had the same pedagogical expertise, the native speaker's language proficiency would be higher, making her the more expert teacher. Furthermore, as a facilitator stated, "People do not hire for expertise. People hire native speakers."

A long-term theory of change must empower and support the professional development of “NNESTs” in TESOL master’s programs while also recognizing their lived experiences. This can be achieved by identifying and developing teachers’ professional strengths and weaknesses, as well as by increasing critical awareness of NNEST issues.

TESOL and teacher education programs should establish a means to assess students’ strengths and weaknesses independently of their native speaker status. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) suggest using a framework based on two foundational questions: “What should teachers know?” and “What should teachers be able to do?” They define the first issue as one of *declarative knowledge*, articulable knowledge of a subject, and the second as *procedural knowledge*, the ability to do things using skills (p. 157). They then specify three domains of knowledge relevant to language teachers, each of which should be developed both declaratively and procedurally: knowing about and how to use the target language, knowing about and how to teach in culturally appropriate ways, and knowing about and how to behave appropriately in the target culture. A needs assessment that identifies teachers’ strengths and weaknesses in this manner rather than in terms of native speaker status allows teachers to reaffirm their own strengths while also targeting specific weaknesses. Course offerings and professional development can then be tailored to the needs of specific students. For instance, students who learned English in school may have more developed declarative linguistic knowledge than those who acquired it from early childhood, and so may not require additional grammar courses. On the other hand, students who are unfamiliar with certain pragmatic aspects of language use or local colloquialisms may require a course with that focus (see Murdoch, 1994; Nemtchinova, Mahboob, Eslami, & Dogancay-Aktuna, 2010).

However, in order to be effective, such development opportunities must be implemented through a critical lens (Tatar & Yildiz, 2010). Otherwise, programs risk recreating the very power differentials they sought to deconstruct. One facilitator enrolled in a Language for Specific Purposes course designed to support international students’ procedural knowledge of writing in US higher educational contexts said the course made her feel marginalized, since she felt she “was in a low level and restrict in the nonnative speaker community” and that she was starting to “lose motivation and stop invest learning the target language,” because she would “never be so perfect like a native speaker.” One of her peers also mentioned that this course should be open to all students, not only international students, since many domestic students also have difficulty producing graduate-level writing. A third facilitator suggested having a NNEST teach the course, if possible, since positive models of NNEST professionals who were able to rise to a position of authority in English teaching fields are inspiring. Additional considerations in critical teacher education have been addressed by Barratt (2010), Brady and Gulikers (2004), Medgyes (1999), Phillipson (1992), and others.

While the native speaker concept may not be grounded in an objective standard, that its ideologies, however problematic, do have a real impact in interactions is beyond debate. Providing practical but critical teacher education and professional development allows students to focus on fostering relevant skills and fluencies rather than being discouraged by an arbitrary distinction that is out of their control. All professional English teachers are capable of becoming experts

in the target language, target culture, and culturally appropriate pedagogy, and should be given the opportunities to do so.

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