RESEARCH BRIEF

Native and Non-Native Identity Preferences in ELT Hiring Practices amid Global Englishes: The Case of Online Job Advertisements

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Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is now largely recognized to facilitate intercultural communication among people whose first language (L1) is not English (Seidlhofer, 2011). Against the backdrop of globalization, the English language teaching (ELT) industry is booming, and the ELT community has gradually realized the significance of quality language teachers. As English is a major language of the globalized world, policies in Asia on language education frequently revolve around it. However, it is important to remember that ELF is embedded with sociocultural and political influences that significantly shape ELT (Baker, 2016).

As language teachers based in Asia (Thailand and China) and with educational backgrounds in the UK, we have much exchange with colleagues, students, and parents of students regarding how quality English teachers will have an impact on students' ELT journeys, especially with regard to hiring discrimination and unfairness against applicants without native-English backgrounds. It would seem that discriminatory ideologies such as native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) remain popular among ELT practitioners as these concepts are reflected in professional recruitment. More specifically, many educational institutions prefer to employ English teachers if they are native English speakers (NESs) or have appearances that resemble stereotypes of NESs. This irrational segregation can be straightforward and harsh, as many employers will typically overlook or even neglect qualifications related to actual performance.

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of an English language instructor is not necessarily determined by characteristics such as one's looks, ethnicity, nationality, or L1. Instead, professional factors such as one's educational background, proficiency, and teaching experience should be the key indicators for such a decision. Despite this, Asian ELT communities still show a preference for "authentically native" language classrooms, especially from the so-called inner-circle English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1992). Hence, most employment processes in their ELT industries mostly remain Anglophone centered. As this unfair treatment continues, the demands for inner-circle teachers or native-English-speaking teachers (NESTs) become stronger, whereas non-native-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) are less in demand (Kubota & Lin, 2009).

This expanding gap in inequality does not only occur in Asia but also in many countries around the world. The phenomenon occurs because as Holliday (2006) suggested, prestige and image play roles in people's minds regardless of geography. Congruently, Jindapitak (2019) asserted that hiring inequality and discrimination is a global dilemma as employers will always find excuses to hire native speakers by claiming that it is a justified business decision to follow the preferences of the student's parents. This dichotomy of native versus non-native and the associated double standards are real in professional employment (Jindapitak, 2019; Ulla, 2018). Many teacher candidates are left out and excluded for being a non-native English speaker (NNES). NESTs are often automatically perceived as superior, and NNESTs are forced to deal with career insecurity and deteriorating self-esteem regardless of their true potential. Against the backdrop of English globalization and the challenge of the ownership of the language (Widdowson, 1994), privilege and marginalization regarding NEST hiring practices are still salient in the ELT community. Through this undesirable status quo, many NNESTs are often overwhelmed with unnecessary questions, discriminatory obstacles, premature exclusion, and prejudice in ELT recruitment (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Hence, this research brief draws on specific examples of online job advertisements in presenting the binary of the NEST and NNEST. We argue that there is a need to bring Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT; Rose & Galloway, 2019) to fore to raise people's awareness in both the hiring practices of English teachers and related issues in ELT today.

Global Englishes Versus Global Englishes Language Teaching

With the background of ELF and a growing need for English learning, it is true that the number of non-native English speakers (NNESs) has significantly surpassed that of native English speakers (NESs) (Graddol, 2006). It is thus natural that more English conversations are taking place in settings where NESs as interlocutors are the minority. Henceforth, the concept of Global Englishes (GE) was established to describe the new dynamic of English. This sociolinguistic paradigm emphasizes the diversity and fluidity of English and seeks to detach the language from exclusivity that was once tied to specific nations or cultures (Fang, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019). To reflect this new status, English should no longer be owned by NESs or regarded as primarily used within the context of national boundaries. The pluricentric nature of English leads to the complexity and dynamism of English across boundaries and links to various ideological debates related to the cultural politics of English (Pennycook, 2017).

Consequently, GE challenges traditional ideologies and norms that many ELT practitioners have, which idealize NESs (Cogo, 2012). Furthermore, the GE concept has shed new light to questions on whether it remains legitimate to refer to native English varieties as standards in today's ELT when English itself has become an inclusive language employed by several groups of users and its varieties are reflections of unique sociolinguistic identities of users with diverse cultural backgrounds. In response to the phenomenon, Galloway (2011) introduced GELT as an alternative ELT framework to raise learners' awareness of rapidly evolving English diversity and challenge conventional native English pedagogies. Furthermore, through GELT, those who employ English are perceived as both owners of the language and target interlocutors. Hence, learners from the GELT perspective are exposed to more flexible English learning experiences and take linguistic fluidity and communicative competence as the core in ELT. As Rose and Galloway (2019) elaborated, GELT was designed to position English users as English owners and urge learners to recognize that many of their interlocutors might not be NESs.

Furthermore, the GELT paradigm does not perceive English users as eternal learners or flawed English speakers but views them as successful English users for whom mutual intelligibility is prioritized rather than a fixed native norm (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The learners' L1s are recognized as a resource rather than a hindrance for language use, and for these learners, translanguaging is also a common practice for communication (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018). This also emphasizes the speakers' multimodality and trans-semiotic practices from the multilingual paradigm (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018; Li & Lin, 2019). Moreover, GE places great importance on context-based language diversity (Fang, 2020; Sifakis, 2019). From the GE paradigm, a priority is placed on communication skills, which have been proven useful in multilingual situations across cultures.

On top of that, GELT has challenged native-speakerism ideology including the belief that NESTs are the ideals for ELT and ELT methodology (Holliday, 2006). However, native-English-oriented ELT pedagogies and models, which view NESTs as gold standards to follow, still continue to dominate ELT communities (Fang, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). In many expanding circle contexts, ELT service providers idealize NESTs for being more reliable models. In hiring practices, many educational institutions at any level in Asia, including Thailand and China, reportedly selected and rejected ELT candidates based on whether they were NESTs or NNESTs (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021; Fang, 2018). Although evidence suggested that there were literature and educational principles to theoretically encourage equal treatment of NESTs and NNESTs, many institutions, including those in these two countries, continued to openly express preferences and approval of NESTs even at the commercial scale (Baker, 2012). Moreover, NESTs are more likely to receive more special treatments than NNESTs, especially in professional settings (Fang, 2018; Waelateh, Boonsuk, Ambele, & Wasoh, 2019. In this sense, NNESTs are believed to be inferior and are marginalized to a second-class status in the ELT job markets with corresponding poorer treatment (Boonsuk, Wasoh, & Waelateh, 2023; Fang, 2018. However, integrating and implementing GELT could empower language learners to "develop their linguistic skills and their metalinguistic awareness" (Galloway, 2017, p. 12). Nonetheless, before GELT could feasibly and effectively produce significant developments, more in-depth studies are required, especially to suggest how GE can be implemented in ELT policies, curriculum, and assessments in various contexts (Fang & Widodo, 2019).

Native and Non-Native English Teacher Identity

As mentioned above, native-speakerism includes an omnipresent ideology that has been reflected in many ELT domains including professional selection, recruitment policies, learning styles and methodologies, teaching approaches, and mainstream assessment (Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Under its inevitable influence, NNESTs are pressured with job insecurity and may lose self-esteem and confidence. Native-speakerism accepts NESTs as the best in terms of benchmarks and standards in ELT. By contrast, NNESTs are seen as being inferior in English language skills and teaching (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). This leads to what Kamhi-Stein (2000) described as NNESTs' "low confidence and self-perceived challenges to professional competence…[and their] self-perceived prejudice based on ethnicity or non-native status" (p. 10).

Romney (2010) also illustrated that people perceived to have a white racial phenotype are often regarded as the owners of English in the ELT industry; however, such an assumption is unfair to others (e.g., NESs who are perceived as non-white, and NNESs) who also share English ownership from the GE paradigm (Kubota & Lin, 2009). The reasons behind this discriminatory marginalization are economic and political biases that cause non-white teachers to be marginalized (Ruecker & Ives, 2015), especially when they are applying for ELT teaching jobs. When many education institutions in Asia recruit English teachers, one commonly announced criterion includes a requirement of native English backgrounds, meaning that NESTs would receive a hiring priority, even in cases when they do not enjoy the same education qualifications or are not trained in language teaching methodology. To attract learners and parents and to maximize institutional revenues, NESTs, especially those with white Anglo-American appearances, are privileged in ELT businesses (Fang, 2018). The justification is that looks are prioritized to meet the attitudinal and ideological needs of educational investors, such as learners, teachers, parents, and even policy makers. These characteristics have proven to be beneficial in language learning in the sense that these investors believe that teachers with these traits can model ELT with the highest standards. This notion is consistent with Kirkpatrick (2006), who described contributing factors as to why educational stakeholders in ESL and EFL countries still favor NESTs over NNESTs but neglected the fact that some NESTs could be unqualified for ELT.

As stated by Kirkpatrick (2006), NESTs are privileged through the following status quo: 1) public endorsement from ELT institutions and publishers; 2) ideologies that hold native English varieties as standard; 3) representation of influences as promoted by media, publications, and language training; and 4) the state of being original and historical descendants.

Hence, these privileges foster the perception that NESTs inherit superior and authentic English conventions and are viewed as better ELT models. Consequently, these ideologies unnecessarily force stereotypical prejudice upon NNESTs by devaluing them and ignorantly praising white Anglo-Americans as de facto better English professionals. Hence, it is of no surprise that NNESTs often have trouble finding the careers, compensation, and welfare they deserve when compared to white Anglo-American NESTs, and often, their competence is doubted. Nonetheless, due to the changing landscape and the overarching spread of linguistic and cultural diversity of GE, it becomes imperative for educational stakeholders in ELT to reconceptualize their teaching personas, roles, and methodologies to address the new contexts and requirements (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Although the dichotomy of NEST and NNEST is deeply rooted, empowering NNESTs through the GE paradigm remains the way to go since the effort would allow them to see their non-nativeness as a benefit, to build up teaching confidence, and to gain a sense of job security (Seidlhofer, 2011). NNESTs can equally and suitably establish professional teaching identities (Houghton & Rivers, 2013) when they can perceivably be constructed with extrinsic, dynamic, and contextual factors (Norton, 2013). Simply put, NNESTs are capable of adjustments and adaptations when they design ELT learning activities, media, and content. Their choices can be more flexible in considering the learners' best interests as they are less attached to traditional teaching styles, familiar media, and native-based teaching materials (He & Miller, 2011). NNESTs are more flexible and empathetic when they incorporate ELT materials to better suit the various but emergent specific contexts so that the learners can maximize their potentials; this effort may in turn simultaneously boost NNESTs' competitive advantages against NESTs in the ELT industry (Boonsuk et al., 2023; Ulla, 2018).

In fact, discourses such as "NESTs are better than NNESTs" and "standard English is better than non-standard English" contribute unnecessary and unfair privilege to NESTs. Such discourses repeatedly create the unequal power of NESTs through formal ELT processes. Anyone appearing to have a white phenotype is automatically considered ideal, professional, trustworthy, and suitable for ELT. The problem is the abundance of NNESTs with decent teaching qualities are unjustly marginalized as their rights are taken away. If this status quo is left unreformed, qualified NNESTs would be hard to gain a place in ELT societies although the world would have benefited tremendously from their possibly groundbreaking social, cultural, and linguistic contributions on policy decisions, development designs, real-world ELT practices, and locally utilizable English resources and textbooks (Jindapitak, 2019). Hence, when it comes to GE, NNESTs have backgrounds that offer the potential for more versatility in the classroom. The hiring negligence that marginalizes NNESTs could be a critical factor that fails ELT in some social, linguistic, and cultural contexts as NEST-dominant ELT is not adequately fine-tuned for the domain (Foley, 2005). EFL pedagogies that favor NESTs over NNESTs and position NESTs as a sole benchmark, measurement of correctness, and gold standard are no longer the only viable option for quality ELT.

Methodology

This research brief reported a qualitative study conducted in two expanding circle nations (Kachru, 1992), Thailand and China. English is employed as a lingua franca between diverse language users with different cultures and mother tongues in these locations. Based on these two countries, evidence suggested that more foreign teachers from expanding- and inner-circle countries were recruited every year for local ELT courses. The data collection process began in early 2021, and the data were obtained from famous and popular websites related to the recruitment of English teachers based in Thailand and China. Generally, several websites, in both Thailand and China, were identified to contain job vacancy announcements for ELT positions that welcome domestic and overseas candidates from all ranges of educational requirements. However, only four of the websites were selected to discuss in this brief report because they appeared to be the primary platforms of choice for most educational institutions for job hunting in Thailand and for international teacher recruitment in China. More specifically, the said websites in Thailand included https://www.ajarn.com and https://www.eslemployment.com, which were well-known among Thai and non-Thai candidates applying for ELT positions in elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions.

Similarly, the two websites based in China were https://www.englishfirst.com/teach-kids-in-china and https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/teachers, and they were also popular among Chinese and foreign applicants in China's ELT industry.

The data were analyzed with documentary analysis (DA), a research approach to explore and assess printed and electronic documents to extract meanings, develop understanding, and establish empirical findings (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, the researchers employed DA to qualitatively obtain data from documents to find evidence and expand knowledge related to this research brief. The primary coding scheme lies in the description of English teacher requirement or qualifications on the website. The content of the four websites were read carefully by the researchers with all the relevant information categorized and interpreted for data analysis. To enhance data validity and reliability, the extracts were sent to both research assistants in Thailand and China to ensure the accuracy of coding processes. Through this approach, online platforms and recruitment documents were thoroughly studied and analyzed to acquire relevant data. Furthermore, the extracted data were reread, sorted into categories, and interpreted for overall meanings (Bowen, 2009).

Findings

As the authors are based in Thailand and China, we will showcase some examples reflecting native-speakerism from hiring practices and job advertisements to raise people's awareness regarding the unequal practices in the ELT community (Tupas, 2015). In other words, this research brief examined and discussed native-speakerism ideology that is embedded in job advertisements for English-teaching positions by various educational institutions such as schools, universities, and language-tutoring institutions in Thailand and China. More specifically, it can be clearly seen that many education institutions in these two countries used either their official websites or career websites (e.g., ajarn.com and eslemployment.com in Thailand and englishfirst.com/teach-kids-in-china and vipkid.com.cn/web/teachers in China) to publicly advertise vacancies for ELT positions. Nevertheless, these advertisements precisely required that applicants be foreign teachers from the inner circle.

After reviewing job advertisements both in official documents launched by several educational institutions and on Thailand's leading ELT websites (https://www.ajarn.com and https://www.eslemployment.com), it seems that most of the major requirements or qualifications for English teachers at both school and university levels were focused on NESTs. Some advertisements did not specifically mention nationalities:

We are seeking native English speakers;
Now! ... require Native Speaker teaching English;
Native English Speaker Wanted;
Native speakers of English are preferred; and
Wanted: 20 Native English teachers.

However, others clearly indicated them:

Be a native English speaker from Canada;
the US, the UK, Ireland, Australia or New Zealand;
Being a native speaker of English (UK, USA, CAN, AUS, NZL; and
Native English teacher from UK, USA, CAN, NZ.

From the criteria for recruiting English language teachers as announced on the websites above, it had been taken for granted that NEST equaled people from the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. In particular, some only wanted to recruit people from the UK and US, which is as elaborated below:

English teacher American/British only wanted; and
Native English Speaker only from the UK and USA

One of the well-known ELT companies in China is English First (EF). Although it uses the slogan "World Leader in International Education," it was looking for native speakers to teach English in China. This was clearly indicated as one of the job requirements, which stated that "Applicants must be citizens from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa to meet China's visa regulations" (https://www.englishfirst.com/teach-kids-in-china) although they require a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate and offer to help applicants to complete the course. Another popular online teaching platform, VIP Kid,

also claims to hire only teachers from North America. Although the website in Chinese did not mention nationality specifically (https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/teachers), it indicated "with teachers all over the U.S. and Canada" in the English website FAQ (https://www.vipkid.com/mkt/faq/about-vipkid). In the Chinese version of the website, it was claimed that teachers from North America speak with "pure" accents and represent various cultures to bring global insight. It was interesting to find that the concept of native-speakerism was reinforced in these job requirements and that language and culture was viewed from a monolithic perspective, regardless of the development of GELT.

From the findings presented above, it was found that the two main qualifications stated in the ELT job advertisements we examined were *the prospective candidate needed to be an NES* and needed to *hold a diploma or degree from an Anglophone country*. A whiteness preference, although not always explicitly stated in job advertisements, was often reflected in posters and websites. Many private tutorial schools attached photos of white Caucasians to advertisements to increase their so-called credibility and to fit with the beliefs, attitudes, and perceived needs of students and their caretakers. Based on these notions, it was clear that this was a priority in many institutions in Asia that considered NESs a significant recruitment factor in their policies.

Discussion

The findings in the previous section were congruent with some previous studies (Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Hodal, 2012; Watson Todd, 2006; Watson Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009), which suggested that institutions in Asia tended to prefer English teaching prospects to be NESs, especially from the UK and the USA, as they expressed the intent so clearly in their job advertisements for ELT positions. Based on these notions, it can be said that this was a priority in many institutions in Asia that considered NESs a significant recruitment factor in their policies. Evidently, the notion is reflected in many governmental-level educational policies in Asia; what these policies essentially do is that they encourage the employment of NESTs into their ELT systems from the primary to tertiary levels (Carless, 2006), and the primary goal is to recruit inner-circle English teachers. Many organizations in Asia were sending a clear message that their policies were designed to include some NESTs from specific areas or regions for their local English language education at every level from elementary to higher education (Carless, 2006) with undoubtedly the intention to exclude others, especially NNESTs. The problematic hiring practices and governmental policies reflect the influence of "linguistic imperialism" that dominates the region (Phillipson, 1992).

Furthermore, Kubota and Fujimoto (2013) indicated that some institutions even wanted teachers with white skin and blond hair. This evidence reflected that the said institutions did not value teaching qualifications and were willing to accept anyone who looked like a native (e.g., with white skin, blue eyes, and brown hair). Those who physically appear to resemble an NES stand a higher chance of being hired with special perks in such institutions. Rampton (1996) and Canagarajah (1999) revealed that NESTs without qualifications or teaching degrees were more likely to be recruited in the ELT industry than NNESTs with quantifications and experiences, especially in inner-circle countries.

The job requirements in many advertisements and slogans to attract lay people to learn English from NESTs with so-called pure English accents are obviously direct discrimination against any NNESTs who could also be impeccably competent and fluent in English with the necessary teaching knowledge. In fact, the quality of an English teacher cannot be determined by geographic origin. The binary of NEST/NNEST is therefore blurred and should thus be challenged when English is used as a global language. For instance, the TESOL International Association has already been working tirelessly to eradicate this prejudice across ELT communities, but the hegemony of Western TESOL (Holliday, 2006; Rose & Galloway, 2019) is still the case in many contexts. The proposal of GELT, as argued, can and should be incorporated into teacher education (Rose & Galloway, 2019). However, more importantly, we also argue that such a concept should be brought to policy makers and administrators with regard to their recruitment practices. In sum, ELT service providers should conduct their marketing campaigns without ethnic discrimination and avoid judging English teachers based on their ethnicities, mother tongues, and physical appearances for a decolonizing and anti-racist pedagogy in the ELT industry (De Costa, 2020; Kubota, 2021). Instead,

teaching performance, ELT experiences, educational qualifications, training, professional development, and other relevant and nondiscriminatory matrices should be incorporated. In the final section, we propose some implications of challenging native-speakerism ideology in ELT. It is hoped that fairer and nondiscriminatory hiring practices will be implemented in the future.

Conclusion and Implications

It is undeniable that English users' psychological attachments to native English norms have now been tremendously shaken by the emerging role of GE, global English ownership, diverse English varieties, more pluricentric usage patterns, and ELF. Nonetheless, professional ELT markets remain dominated by ideologies that portray NES as the ultimate teaching models and standards that most instructors, learners, and English language users prefer to follow. The majority of educational stakeholders such as learners, instructors, policy makers, curriculum designers, institutional administrators, and ELT methodologies still perceive that white-appearing or Caucasian English teachers from the inner circle, especially the UK and the US, have the highest ELT standards. However, non-inner-circle nationals or those whose appearance is off from the stated characteristics (e.g., they do not appear white or are non-Caucasian) are not preferred as these characteristics run counter to the stereotypes and hence are perceived as undesirable. Consequently, they are often marginalized, discriminated, or given lower priority in ELT hiring.

This phenomenon in ELT demonstrates that native-speakerism remains highly influential in controlling the minds, the beliefs, the attitudes, and the decisions of people in the sector of English language education today. ELT practices and pedagogies across educational institutions largely remain significantly native oriented. In an era when the world is enriched with a wide variety of English users with diverse cultural roots, native-oriented pedagogies ignorantly force them into achieving native-like competencies, and hence, ineffective approaches should be reconsidered. Language learning should be less attached to NESs, mainstream rules, native idealization, and standard English. When ELF users "skillfully negotiate and co-construct English for their own purposes, treating the language as a shared communicative resource within

which they innovate" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 297), they should rightfully be given freedom to employ the language to the best of their abilities in a way that they see as appropriate. If the world can perceive NESTs (given that they are qualified and well trained) as competent at ELT from the GE paradigm, it "opens up entirely new options for the way the world's majority of English teachers can perceive and define themselves" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 152).

Based on GELT, learners should be prepared to master their English with a goal towards applicability and an awareness of the fluidity and the diversity of English use. GELT focuses on real-life language exposure, multilingualism, and multiculturalism in ELT and emphasizes respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. It also calls for a change in hiring practices for ELT teachers (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Despite ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences, neither NESs nor NNESs deserve unjust discrimination or prejudiced treatment in organizations. This means that when they are initially engaged in a hiring process for ELT, fair recruitment criteria and indicators should be introduced, including a reasonable evaluation of educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and English proficiency. Through the support of GELT, learners should be open to realistic implementations of English, embrace its diversity, and become more versatile intercultural communicators and should be made aware that valuable messages can be conveyed through "imperfect" English (Boonsuk & Fang, 2022). On the bright side, GELT offers an equally level playing field for NEST–NNEST competitions in ELT markets; helps establish fairer, wiser, and more compassionate selection processes in recruitment; and minimizes unnecessary misunderstandings and perceptual biases.

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