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## Thinking allowed

### Native-speakerism and non-native L2 teachers: a research agenda

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#### Abstract

A lot of attention has been devoted in the last 30 years to understanding nativeness and what has traditionally been called non-nativeness. While many studies have attempted to problematize the dichotomic division between so-called native speakers and non-native speakers, several others have specifically focussed on the language teaching profession in order to understand aspects related to identity and performance of teachers who align with either one of those two categories.

In this paper, we provide a brief overview of relevant literature published after Moussu & Llorda’s (2008) state-of-the-art article and set out a series of tasks that we deem important in order to expand the field of research and cover areas that have not yet been sufficiently investigated. Those tasks are grouped into 3 sections that cover the main aspects that we perceive to be in need of attention: (1) Debunking native-speakerism; (2) Differences between NESTs and NNESTs; and (3) Languages other than English.

## **Introduction**

The first attempts to question the construct that creates a division between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) appeared infrequently in the 80s (Paikeday 1985) and more often in the 90s (Rampton 1990; Davies 1991; Phillipson 1992), crystallizing in the construction and questioning of the notion of native-speakerism by Holliday (2005), which was further developed by Swan et al. (2015), Houghton & Rivers (2013) and Lowe (2020), among others.

In parallel, Medgyes (1994) and Braine (1999) sparked an interest in understanding the pros and cons, or one may more accurately say, the prototypical strengths and weaknesses of so-called non-native teachers (NNSTs, or also NNESTs, when referring exclusively to teachers of L2 English), as opposed to those who identify as native teachers (NSTs or NESTs for L2 English teachers). Since the very beginning, a tension has been present between these two lines of research. The first attempted to blur the divisive line between NSs and NNSs. The second one focussed on using the two dichotomist labels and emphasising the differences between NSTs and NNSTs in order to eventually contribute to making the invisible majority of teachers (i.e., NNSTs) more visible, more highly respected, and its contribution to language teaching ultimately acknowledged. This trend was consolidated by the close publication in time of two influential books that looked at NNSTs' experience (Kamhi-Stein 2004) and their perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession (Llurda 2005a), followed shortly by Moussu & Llurda's (2008) state-of-the-art article that anchored previous studies and think-pieces, and solidly established NNSTs as a rich and productive field of research. Two more books (Braine 2010 and Mahboob 2010) unquestionably confirmed the status of research on NNSTs as relevant and necessary in the wider field of language teaching and applied linguistics at large.

Moussu & Llurda (2008) provided a detailed account of previous research produced up to then, but more importantly they pointed to a set of gaps or areas in need of further attention that still remain largely unaddressed. One such gap was the observation of diversity within so-called NNSTs, as the authors point to the fact that "a concept that is so elusive to characterize, and which has been so loosely applied to all

speakers who would not meet the rather subjective and discriminatory criteria to belong to the ‘native speaker’ category, is prone to suffer from overgeneralization” (p. 337). Previous research has typically dealt with all NNSTs as though they were part of a single homogeneous group, but as claimed by Moussu & Llurda (2008: 338) “we cannot generalize, and there is a need to deepen our knowledge of language teaching and how different factors among individual teachers may affect their performance”. Among such factors, the authors briefly point to the language teaching context (second vs. foreign), place of origin and L1 spoken, level of instruction, time spent (and training obtained) in countries where the target language is the dominant language of most of the population (Inner circle countries, in the Kachruvian three-circle model of World Englishes), and differences in target-language proficiency.

Another gap in previous research identified by Moussu & Llurda (2008) was research on the views held by people responsible for training and hiring teachers in different institutions. The few studies that had been conducted at that time (e.g., Mahboob 2003; Moussu 2006) were exclusively centred on North-American universities, thus ignoring other types of institutions and other types of contexts. Since then, no significant improvements have been made, and there is a clamorous gap for research about people involved in the processes of hiring teachers in countries where the target language is not the dominant language (Outer and Expanding Circle, in Kachru’s model).

Finally, Moussu & Llurda (2008: 340) did already point to the need “to set an agenda that seeks to establish connections between what the teachers have reported about themselves and what they actually do in the classroom”. Unfortunately, very little research in the last decade has ventured into the classroom. Whether it is due to the complexity of obtaining data from actual classrooms, the difficulty in linking classroom performance of individuals to their NST or NNST status, or the hurdles in getting qualitative classroom observation studies published in prominent journals is unknown to us, but in this paper we insist on the need for this kind of research.

As is obvious from the title of this paper, our focus is twofold: we intend to argue for the need to keep on doing research on native-speakerism and countering the persistence and resilience of such ideology (Houghton & Bouchard 2020), as well as on describing and emphasising NNSTs’ strengths as a strategy for empowering them as language educators. Thus, we will deal with both lines of research to design a research agenda for the next 10-15 years. Even though some voices in the field have claimed that

native-speakerism can only be fought by denying the singularity and the categorisation of NNSTs (Holliday 2018), and that simply by using the acronym NNST we are actually promoting native-speakerism, our point of view is the opposite. We think that, by openly talking about NNSTs and attempting to describe their attitudes and their classroom performances, we are contributing to the destruction of the “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson 1992) and empowering NNSTs in their long struggle for full acceptance in the realm of language teaching.

In this paper, we organize our agenda of future research around the two aforementioned themes, and we end by adding a third strand that invite prospective researchers to go beyond the particularity of English language teaching, which has monopolized most research on this topic, to encompass and obtain evidence in other target languages. The tasks we propose are envisioned to include all languages and so they are not restricted to English language teaching (henceforth, ELT). For that reason, we will predominantly use the acronyms NST and NNST. However, when a specific mention is made to teachers of English, we will use the alternative acronyms NEST and NNEST. We are aware of the criticism to the use of terms that imply a dichotomic division between native and non-native speakers, but we think it is necessary to use those terms for the sake of moving beyond native speakerist discourses and educational decisions. We are also very much aware of the very specific nature of English in the world of L2 teaching. English is by far the most frequently taught language, and its role as the uncontested global lingua franca makes it stand out from the rest of languages and calls for questioning native models and preference for native teachers in ELT (Llurda 2018b; Rose & Galloway 2019; Seidlhofer 2011). Therefore, in this paper we will generally refer to L2 teaching contexts and situations, but we will also make specific claims related to English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth, ELF) with regard to ELT.

### **Debunking native-speakerism**

Despite the difficulty in calculating the number of native and non-native teachers in the world, it is widely acknowledged in the literature (Canagarajah, 2005) that a majority of practitioners would identify as so-called non-native speakers. Yet, NNSTs are still often treated as second-class citizens in the realm of language teaching. It has been well-established by now the existence of a predominant ideology that idealizes the native

speaker as the ultimate model and source of information about a language, and therefore as the ideal teacher. Studies documenting employers' preferences for native speakers (Clark & Paran, 2007; Kiczkowiak, 2020; Mahboob, 2004; Selvi, 2010), or those establishing the existence and persistence of a native speakerist ideology (Derivry-Plard, 2016; Holliday, 2005; Houghton & Bouchard, 2020; Lowe, 2020; Swan et al., 2015) conclude that native speakerism is a dangerous ideology that corrupts and destabilizes the language teaching ecosystem. Therefore, there is a need for studies that account for ways of uncovering and overcoming such ideology. Native-speakerism was originally defined by Holliday (2005: 6) as "an established belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the language and of English language teaching methodology". This concept has proved very useful to uncover discriminatory ideologies and practices based on the separation of humans by place of origin. Holliday emphasized the supremacist view of the West embedded in native-speakerism. Later on, Houghton & Rivers (2013) sought to expand the notion by claiming that Holliday's original one implied that non-native speakers were the victims and native speakers the perpetrators. They sought to take a broader view that allows for considering both groups as potential victims, and includes non-Western and non-English speaking contexts as places in which native-speakerism may also thrive. Thus, they placed the emphasis on the actual division between so-called native speakers and non-native speakers, and how such division does in effect create a situation of discriminatory practices that may affect both constituencies.

Our main issue with Holliday's definition is his inclusion of all Western cultures as agents of native-speakerist potential discrimination. As fully-trained teachers of English as an additional language, and as members of a community of speakers geographically placed in the European West (though Southern Europe does have some specific elements that differentiate it from Northern Europe and from the anglo-Western world), we clearly identify ourselves as NNESTs, and perceive native-speakerism as an ideology that not only goes from Western to non-Western cultures, but as one that imposes native speaker idealization on non-native speakers. In other words, we embrace a definition that is not so strongly based on culturalism, or influenced by Said's (1978) orientalism, but one that stays within the boundaries of language and language discrimination. This is not in any way invalidating or denying the existence of a culturist ideology of Western predominance. Yet, to us, native-speakerism is better defined as an

ideology that presents native speakers as the ultimate models of language use and the ideal teachers of a language, thus invalidating, discriminating, and/or underestimating non-native speakers.

In this section, we attempt to offer a set of research tasks that should further contribute to existing research on uncovering and debunking native-speakerism as described above.

### **RESEARCH TASK 1 – Analyse the impact of NNST low self-confidence on classroom performance.**

The native speaker has long been regarded ‘as the ultimate state at which first and second language learners may arrive and as the ultimate goal in language pedagogy’ (Van der Geest 1981:317). Such a view poses some threats to the majority of language teaching professionals worldwide, ignores the fact that the L2 speakers may not need become pseudo-native speakers and aim instead at becoming effective L2 users (Cook, 2005), and, in the specific case of English, most interactions will involve multilingual speakers in ELF settings. Viewing native speakers as the true custodians and the only reliable models of the language relegates the NNSTs to the condition of defective communicators, “often portrayed as perpetually incompetent, imitating, or less-than-native or near-native” (Selvi 2014:595). There are many factors that may contribute to lowering NNSTs self-confidence, among which level of language proficiency, teaching assignment, unsupportive educational institutions, unrealistic expectations, with all the previous factors subject to context-related variations. With regard to the role of language proficiency in language teaching, several contributions to a special issue in RELC Journal on this topic conclude that teacher language proficiency is an important factor in teaching efficacy and teacher self-confidence (Canh & Renandya, 2017; Faez & Karas, 2017; Tsang, 2017). However, it is also made clear that it is not the only relevant factor, as shown in Faez et al. (2021), and as previously indicated by Derwing & Munro (2005: 185), “both NSs and NNSs can be able teachers, but only if they have sufficient language proficiency and metalinguistic knowledge along with strong pedagogical skills”. And, according to Karas & Faez (2021), so-called NNSTs may display higher self-efficacy than NSTs, especially when these are monolingual.

The feelings of underachievement, poor self-image, and sense of inferiority deriving from a reductionist native-speakerist dichotomy have been labelled in multiple ways, with a profusion of terms, such as ‘comparative fallacy’ (Mahboob 2005), ‘impostor syndrome’ (Bernat 2008), and ‘Stockholm syndrome’ (Llurda 2009). Yet, they all refer to the idea that, ‘in a world that still values native speakers as the norm providers and the natural choice in language teacher selection’ (Llurda 2005: 2) and in which the concept of authenticity still lies in the hands of the ‘native speaker’ (Lowe & Pinner 2016), NNSTs often find themselves in a permanent position of inferiority striving for an unattainable ideal.

Further research should explore how native-speakerism, and particularly how the teachers’ self-image, influences the professional lives of language teachers in the classroom. To this end, Lowe & Kiczkowiak (2016) illustrate the extent to which the perceived category of the teacher as ‘native’ or ‘non-native’ affects the teachers’ self-confidence as well as their professional standing and authority in the classroom. More research along these lines is needed in order to further understand the effect of social constructions of the native speaker as the ideal speaker and teacher, and whether they may negatively affect NNSTs’ performance in the classroom. Additionally, we encourage researchers to pursue studies in which these claims are triangulated with classroom observations in order to explore the extent to which self-perceived anxieties and insecurities reflect actual pedagogical behaviour. Thus, the interplay between perceived language competence and pedagogic practices may also be brought to the fore.

In particular, we invite researchers to focus their attention on the following task: Identify aspects in language teaching that are affected by NNSTs low self-esteem, thus seeking confirmation or rejection of Medgyes’ (1994) initial claim (based on an international and widely heterogenous survey) that teachers suffering from low self-confidence avoid classroom situations in which spontaneous communication is promoted, and by the same token, strict control of the class by the teacher is preferred over learner-centred approaches. That may be accomplished by looking at indicators of different degrees of professional self-esteem or self-confidence and placing them alongside observation of teachers’ classroom practices. Since no literature exists so far presenting tools that help determine teachers’ self-confidence, we invite researchers to delve into literature on self-confidence (i.e., Quigley 2016, Savin-Williams & Jaquish 1981) and bring the main tenets into an observational grid that help them classify teachers as

possessing low, medium and high level of self-confidence. Once this classification is made they will be able to establish potential links between self-confidence and aspects of classroom performance, such as management of interaction, providing explanations, giving corrective feedback, and so on.

## **RESEARCH TASK 2 – Describe pedagogical experiences of L2 student empowerment in which teachers can create a space for students to subvert the native/non-native dichotomy**

Although some studies have already been devoted to how teacher training programs can debunk native-speakerism (see Kiczkowiak et al. 2016; Lopriore & Vettorel 2019; Sifakis & Bayyurt 2018), few of them have focused on how this is actually translated into pedagogical choices within the actual language classroom. More specifically, there is a shortage of studies exploring how L2 teachers can create a classroom environment in which students have opportunities to challenge assumptions about native and non-native speaker ideologies.

In essence, further research needs to be undertaken in order to fill this void in the literature. We need studies exploring how teachers may encourage students to resist the native/non-native dichotomy, and in the particular case of ELT, how they can provide opportunities for students to reflect upon the role of English as a lingua franca (ELF) of global communication. Such studies will provide models for the necessary shift towards embracing a more encompassing discourse in which all speakers are included and legitimized, rather than a divisive discourse of either/or, in which people are marked and classified according to their origin, race, accent, etc.

In order to do so, we first need to select examples of successful teaching that contributes to student empowering as L2 users (Cook, 2005). One possible way to find such successful teaching examples would be to contact teachers who had graduated in programmes with a specific language awareness or ELF awareness component, and who would logically be likely to include such component in their teaching. The idea would be to select a group of teachers who have moved beyond the native speaker model and, in the case of ELT teachers, who are sensitive to the notion of ELF, and then observe to what extent their practices are a trigger for student transformation.

Along this line, Schreiber (2019) explores how a NEST and a NNEST provide classroom opportunities for students to challenge native speaker ideologies by means of an online intercultural learning activity in which MA TESL students in Sri Lanka communicate with undergraduates in New York. Both groups of students introduced themselves and their language background through brief videos, and since the interaction was between students from the Inner Circle (i.e., US) and the Outer Circle (i.e., Sri Lanka), they read about the varieties of English used in their respective settings and shared reactions and questions through an online discussion forum. The researchers analysed the postings and interviewed some of the students. The findings suggest that the activity helped students demystify ideologies that were deeply rooted in their minds and ultimately constrained their own learning potential. Similar studies addressing a variety of pedagogical practices would produce an array of empirical evidence on how to address and fight native speakerism in the classroom. We encourage researchers to design their own teaching plan and put it to the test with regard to its impact on students' views towards language ownership, and the whole native/non-native issue. It would certainly be of added benefit if such studies could also contemplate the implementation of measures of observation before and after the actual pedagogical practice, either with the use of pre and post tests or with observational grids that documented the evolution of attitudes and views expressed by students.

In a similar way, Hall (2012) used semi-structured interviews to explore practical strategies that NSTs employed to help students overcome native speakerism in Malaysia. Such strategies included presenting themselves (e.g. NSs) as engaged in ongoing learning, using selective bilingualism, and turning to humour to establish rapport with students and help them avoid NS idealization.

Teachers who have problematized the idealization of the native speaker and have developed a critical view to native-speakerism may take up the role of researchers of their own practice and observe and describe the effect of implementing classroom activities that bring them to a higher level of awareness. Such activities may range from the realization of a project involving students experiencing their role as users in real-life situations in which communicative effectiveness matters more than formal grammar accuracy, to classroom tasks in which students evaluate their peers' level of intelligibility and communicative effectiveness, disregarding the compliance (or lack of) to established standard language conventions. One example of the former could be the organisation of

a short mobility exchange with a group of students from another country. Such exchange could be planned and developed by students themselves so that they manage to formalise the travel plan and by doing so experience their role as users of the L2. The latter type of activity could involve the development of a peer assessment system which would include the creation by students of a rubric that could be used to assess their communicative effectiveness.

### **RESEARCH TASK 3 - Further explore the roles of non-native teachers as custodians vs. facilitators (as described in Llurda 2016 and 2018b)**

Llurda (2016 and 2018b) described two prototypical groups of teachers, namely one essentialist group that could be referred to as “custodians”, made up of teachers who regard English as the exclusive property of the native speakers and assume the role of protecting and promoting the “true” (i.e. native speaker) model. These teachers tend to regard themselves as permanent learners that strive for the idealized native condition. The second group of teachers are those that may be defined as “facilitators”, who regard themselves as confident users of the language and help learners achieve such goal. Their job is that of helping learners develop the necessary strategies that will allow them to become competent users in a wide range of contexts. We are not suggesting here that all teachers fall into these extreme categories, but we think these are useful labels that help us visualise the extreme ends of a continuum: one leaning towards a native speakerist ideology and the other more highly aware of the plurilithic nature of language. We call for studies further exploring both roles from two different perspectives: one that focuses on teachers’ identities and ideological alignment with one of the above-mentioned categories (i.e., custodians vs. facilitators), and another that obtains empirical evidence of the teachers’ pedagogical practices in teaching and assessing students’ productions.

The first perspective involves interviewing language teachers with the aim of unravelling how they define themselves and what factors play a role in making them align with the parameters of one category or the other. More specifically, the interviews could revolve around their perceptions on their competence in the language, the issues surrounding the choice of a standard model and the importance of formal correction, the ownership of the language, and the use of translanguaging in the classroom, among others.

The latter perspective involves exploring how the practices of the teachers are consequential to teachers' self-constructed identities as either custodians of the language or learning facilitators. To this end, researchers should contact language teachers from any given context (e.g., primary, secondary, and higher education). After explaining the aims of the project and obtaining their consent, as well as the consent of their students (or their parents' consent in the case of minors) to participate in the project, they should be asked to let somebody videotape (or to videotape themselves) the classes they deemed relevant for the project. Secondly, the researchers should gain knowledge on the materials used in class, the students' productions, and their assessment. Finally, the study could involve having access to actual students' production, as well as the feedback given by the teacher. As indicated above, the required consents and ethical considerations should be carefully borne in mind. Similarly, although the materials and the students' productions will be easily accessible online in the former context, primary and secondary settings might involve more field work from the research group in that such materials might not be available online and collecting them would require visiting the schools and obtaining hard copies of them. Such a study could explore how the instructor gives instructions to the students, the learning materials, as well as the feedback given in exams, submitted written productions and oral presentations, which would unveil how their teaching profiles are made visible in their actual pedagogical practices.

Both lines of research would bring to the fore how teachers perceive themselves and the way in which this may be reflected in their classroom practices. In essence, such studies would hopefully emphasize the potential benefits of adopting the role of "facilitators" and, therefore, helping learners become competent and confident users of a L2 by focusing on realistic and achievable context-dependent goals.

#### **RESEARCH TASK 4 – Conduct a survey of pre-service teachers' views and ideological stance towards the native speaker ideal in L2 learning.**

Both students' and teachers' perspectives of the native speaker have been extensively studied through a variety of data collection tools such as narratives (Lowe & Kiczowskiak 2016), interviews (Lowe 2020), classroom observation (Matsumoto, 2018), and questionnaires (Llurda & Huguet, 2001; Dewey & Pineda, 2020). Yet, there is a shortage of studies looking at the pre-service teachers' ideological stance on the matter. In this line, Dewey & Pineda (2020) conducted an online survey involving 81 pre- and in-service

teachers from Spain and the UK to explore their perceptions towards language. It may be worth conducting further research following this lead.

We call for studies investigating the perceptions and ideologies that pre-service teachers have about NSs and NNSs. Additionally, given the abundance of teacher training programmes specifically addressed to ELT, we specifically call for studies on the perceptions and attitudes to the role of ELF in ELT, by using an online questionnaire addressed to students in English-related university BA and MA degrees in different contexts. Such questionnaires would shed light on how certain factors such as being exposed to ELF-aware education, study-abroad experience, or training for primary or secondary education come into play in the construction of the pre-service teachers' ideological stance towards the idea of the native speaker.

To this end, researchers should elaborate a pool of questions, which could be both quantitative and qualitative in nature to get a better insight of the participants' ideological stance, and pilot them before releasing them to the target audience (Dörnyei, 2010). Quantitative data could best be provided through the use of Likert-scale items to which respondents should express the magnitude of their agreement or disagreement by selecting a number from a given scale (from 1 to 5, for instance). Such questions will help to identify different profiles among students as well as how the aforementioned factors affect students' responses. On the other hand, open-ended questions will unveil nuances and will unearth the reasoning behind Likert-scale results, thus providing a deeper understanding of the rationale behind their responses.

As for the participants and the context of the study, the questionnaire should aim at the maximum number of participants in either a local or an international context. Aiming at a local context (e.g., students in a single country) clearly defines the population of the study and increases the likelihood that the sample employed in the study is representative of the whole population. Aiming at an international context dramatically brings the total population up. The bright side of that is the possibility of comparing different countries. The down side, however, is the practical impossibility of attempting to have a representative sample of the whole population under study. In any case, a reasonably good and easy way to proceed would be asking for colleagues' collaboration in distributing the questionnaire in their respective contexts, and distributing the link to the online

questionnaire through all kinds of networks that may ultimately reach the intended participants.

Studies such as these would provide valuable information on the impact that certain factors such as ELF-aware education, study-abroad experience or training for primary or secondary teaching degrees have on the pre-service teachers' construction of the native speaker notion. In turn, these studies will unearth how the interplay between these factors make pre-service teachers reconsider established practices and ideas such as the preponderance of native speakers, the issue of ownership of the language, and the exclusive focus on the 'standard' variety in most materials. The results could ultimately become a springboard for questioning the supremacy of the native speaker and including a plurilithic perspective in BA and MA language programmes, and an ELF perspective in English-related programmes, thus fostering a more realistic sociolinguistic representation of languages/English in such degrees.

#### **RESEARCH TASK 5 – Conduct a set of interviews with language school owners and/or managers about the hiring of native and non-native speakers in their schools.**

Both learners' (e.g. Benke & Medges 2005; Derivry-Plard 2016; Lasagabaster & Sierra 2005) and teachers' (e.g. Inbar-Lourie 2005; Llurda 2005b; Lowe & Kickowiak 2016; Reves & Medgyes 1992) perceptions on the native and non-native teacher debate have been extensively studied over the last decades. Yet, despite their prominent role in the professional environment, there is a paucity of research on the recruiters' perspectives as concerns their hiring practices.

Mahboob et al. (2004) explored the weight that program administrators in the US give to different hiring criteria and concluded that most program administrators consider the native status an important criterion in the hiring process. Similarly, Clark & Paran (2007), who examined the employability of NESTs in the UK, found that over 70% of English language teaching programs continue to consider the native status to be either moderately or very important in the hiring process. Moussu (2010) however, reported that Intensive English Programme administrators tended to value teachers' experience over their L1. Finally, Kiczkowiak (2020) carried out an international survey with 150 recruiters from 40 different countries with the result that there was an overall high level of satisfaction

with NNSTs, but nearly half of the recruiters considered NS status to be important in the recruitment process.

Consequently, we envision a study of language school owners and managers' perspectives on the native/non-native teacher debate through the use of semi-structured interviews, which should provide insights on recruiters' views and hiring practices.

The interviews should include a short questionnaire in order to obtain practical specific data on the person interviewed and their position in the institution, their responsibility concerning the recruitment of instructors, and details on the number of instructors employed by the institution. The interview itself would typically proceed by enquiring about the interviewee's biographical details so that the participant's perceptions on the subject matter could be interpreted in the light of their personal life experiences, including their country of origin, educational background, and teaching trajectory.

Some questions could be inspired by Clark & Paran (2007) and Mahboob et al. (2004) in order to bring to the fore the biographical and professional criteria that the language school owners or managers take into consideration when recruiting language teachers. We suggest a combination of questioning traditions, so in addition to standard semi-guided interview procedures, we suggest that participants respond to some Likert-scale items and then are invited to expand and justify their responses. More specifically, interviewees could be asked about the extent to which different criteria (such as accent, age, gender, nationality, nativeness, ethnicity, educational background, performance in the interview, recommendation, teaching experience, teaching demonstration and teaching qualifications) are considered in their hiring practices. They could be asked to provide a numerical answer, ranging from not applicable (0) to very important (5). This may lead to an open discussion aimed at unveiling the discourse that shapes the mindset of the participants on the topic. The idea behind this kind of study is to provide thoughtful insights on the recruiters' ideological stance on the notions revolving around native and non-native language educators, while exploring whether employers' hiring decisions may be driven by native-speakerism, which would lead to professional discrimination (Llurda 2014) and ultimately undervalue the skills, experience and qualifications of local NNESTs.

## **Differences between NSTS and NNSTs**

Research on NNSTs has been characterised by a desire on the part of most authors to value the role and contributions of NNSTs to the language teaching profession. But in spite of Moussu & Llurda's (2008) call for a greater diversity of research approaches, we still find similar gaps in the published literature.

As referred in Llurda (2018a), questionnaires to teachers and students have been the most frequently used method of research, but narratives and interviews have also been used to some extent. We may highlight Zacharias' (2010) exploration of the construction of the identities of 12 NNSTs pursuing TESOL graduate programmes in the US over a period of two years, and Trent's (2012) in-depth interviews of 8 NNSTs in Hong Kong aimed at understanding the teachers' positioning and the image they thought they projected onto others.

Personal journal entries in the form of weblogs of graduate teaching assistants were the focus of analysis in Ates & Eslami (2012). A long-term ethnographic approach to two NNSTs was the means chosen by Zhang & Zhang (2014) to better understand their identity, experiences and pedagogical stance. Similarly, Wolff & De Costa (2017) used interviews, teaching observations, journal entries and verbal and written reports to investigate how a NNST from Bangladesh confronts numerous emotional challenges in a MATESOL program in the US. And we may also single out Lowe and Kiczkowiak's (2016) duoethnographic self-report on the two authors' experiences and reflections on native-speakerism from their differing perspectives as NST and NNST.

We now provide four tasks that aim at furthering our knowledge on non-native teachers.

### **RESEARCH TASK 6 – Conduct situated classroom-based observation studies.**

Studies reporting on differences between NSTs and NNSTs typically rely on self and perceived accounts by means of surveys, narratives, or interviews. However, teachers' classroom actual performance is still under researched. In effect, in spite of Moussu & Llurda's (2008) call for classroom-based studies, there still is a shortage of such studies. Árva & Medgyes (2000) had compared five native and five non-native teachers teaching English in Hungarian secondary schools. However, the NSTs were mostly teaching conversation classes whereas the NNSTs were in charge of the teaching of grammar.

Thus, the comparison was not between equivalent teachers. Future studies should consider a larger (and balanced) sample in different teaching contexts, by looking at the performance of both NSTs and NNSTs, and by minimising as much as possible all circumstantial differences between the NSTs and NNSTs under investigation.

More recently, Ma (2016) examined the teaching behaviour of three pairs of NESTs and NNESTs co-teaching in three secondary schools in Hong Kong through classroom observation. On the whole, findings suggest that differences in teaching behaviour of both groups are not clear cut and that not enough research has been provided to support widely established claims regarding teaching differences between NSTs and NNSTs (Medgyes 1994). We believe that more studies similar to Ma's (2016) are needed, with special attention devoted to diversity of contexts and potential variation within the group of so-called NNSTs.

Another example of a classroom-based study is Matsumoto (2018), who explores whether a NNEST identity plays a role in ELF classroom interactions. More especially, it closely examines sequences in which the teacher encounters miscommunication with students in a multilingual writing classroom of a public university in the US. The classroom observation is complemented with individual interview sessions with the students and the instructors involved in miscommunication sequences. The study illustrates how the teacher made an effort to collaboratively construct mutual understanding with multilingual students as a successful user of ELF and therefore, serving as a model of a successful user of ELF for the students. On the whole, Matsumoto (2018) seems to conclude that the 'native' and 'non-native' labels are neither interactionally relevant nor treated as important by the multilingual students in this intercultural classroom context.

Consequently, we propose an "approximate replication" (Porte 2014) of Árva & Medgyes (2000), increasing the number of participants in the original study and using NSTs and NNSTs that are comparable in their job responsibilities, as well as in variables that can be more or less controlled, such as gender, age, years of experience, school type and teacher training background. One limitation in Arva & Medgyes's study was that the two groups of teachers had clearly different pedagogical chores assigned by their institutions: NNESTs were in charge of "regular" (grammar) teaching, whereas NESTs were asked to promote a dynamic environment with abundance of oral communication and a lack of pressure to cover grammar contents in their classes. Additionally, we

perceive the need to take some of the claims made by Reves & Medgyes (1994) and by Árvai & Medgyes (2000) and put them to test in the actual classroom by designing specific observation grids that focus on aspects said to be dealt with differently by NSTs and NNSTs, such as for instance the teaching of grammar, the use of spontaneous oral speech, or the reliance on the textbook as the main source of activities and language used in the class. Thus, we would get a more accurate view on how much truth there is in the widely assumed claims of teaching differences between NSTs and NNSTs.

### **RESEARCH TASK 7 - Investigate the attitudes of young students' parents towards NNSTs**

Some of the education stakeholders and school administrators justify their preference for NSTs by arguing that parents hold a preference for native teachers and so they simply meet the demands of 'their clients' (Calvet-Terré 2018; Sung, 2011). However, and despite the key role that parents play in the education of their children, little research has been undertaken on exploring the parents' beliefs and attitudes regarding native and non-native language educators. Colmenero & Lasabagaster (2020) is one of the few studies that have involved parents, in addition to teachers and students.

We propose further exploring parents' views and their impact on actual hiring policies. Empirical studies focusing on parents' perspectives should be undertaken through quantitative research methods such as questionnaires, and qualitative ones such as interviews and focus group discussions with the aim of unearthing their perceptions on the subject matter and the extent to which nativeness is an important criterion in the L2 education of their children. Questionnaires should be designed and implemented following standard procedures of piloting a preliminary version and then distributing them to a sample that could be considered representative of the target population (see Dörnyei 2003 for a detailed account of how to create and implement questionnaires). Individual and group interviews should be planned and carried out in such a way that interviewees did not just rely on matter-of-fact statements. Instead, the triggering questions should open paths for parents to dwell on their inner beliefs and expose to what extent the attributed native/non-native distinction is a key element in the L2 educational choices they make for their children.

In essence, studies as such would not only bring to the fore a standpoint that has remained ignored until the moment despite parents' prominent role in choosing the school

and extra-curricular academic activities for their children, but would also contribute to dismantling the views of a group that is key for paving the way for equity in the language teaching profession.

### **RESEARCH TASK 8 – Establish potential differences between NSTs and NNSTs in empathy with students and error correction harshness**

The literature has often claimed that NNSTs have more empathy with students than NSTs. The rationale for such claim is the fact that NNSTs have undergone the same process of learning the language as their students (e.g. Çakir & Demir 2013; Faez 2012; Mahboob 2004). However, at the same time, several studies show that NNSTs are harsher than their native counterparts when it comes to correcting students' mistakes (e.g. Porte 1999; Cheng & Zhang 2021; Hyland & Anan 2006; Lee 2009; Marefat & Heydani 2016; Rao & Li 2017). Therefore, even though literature brings to the fore the empathy that NNSTs allegedly have, there is ample evidence suggesting that such a quality does not seem to be translated into assessment practices.

We propose problematising this paradox with two main aims in mind. First, there is a need for gaining a better understanding of how empathy is materialised in language teaching. To this end, in-depth interviews should be conducted taking into consideration the parameters in which empathy has been described in social psychology (Davis 1996). This framework needs to be applied to the realm of L2 teaching and help understand the ways in which non-native educators apply the empathy they are described to have towards L2 learners, when it comes to their assessment practices. The second objective is that of giving a plausible explanation to the above-mentioned paradox. With the aim of delving into it, in-depth interviews should again be considered, in order to look into the interplay between the NNSTs' empathy and assessment practices, with special attention paid to how standard language ideology may intervene and actually prevent such empathy from being enacted.

One possible explanation might be that NNSTs have more external pressure to prove their knowledge of standard language rules and to conform to them than their native counterparts, which leads to a lack of self-confidence that is projected in the extra authority they give to formal aspects of the language. Placing so much emphasis on formal aspects could trigger a more normativist and stricter standpoint when it comes to assessment. However, more research needs to be undertaken to bring this unresolved issue to light, and deeper attention must be placed to the role of context as well as the many different factors that may contribute to maximizing interpersonal differences.

## **RESEARCH TASK 9 – Develop and assess strategies of NNST empowerment applicable in teacher education programmes.**

Although studies have brought to the fore the set of strengths that NNSTs can bring into the profession, there is still a shortage of research that investigates strategies that effectively empower NNSTs and place them on an equal footing with their native counterparts to achieve professional success. Park (2012) provides a valuable account of how a NNEST taking part of a TESOL program validated her sense of identity while gaining confidence as a NNEST by means of a supportive and encouraging mentor and thus underlining, again, the determining role that teacher education plays in the NNESTs' self-esteem. We therefore propose studies that investigate how this can be accomplished and the impact that such proposals have on NNSTs' empowerment as legitimate and competent professionals of a global language.

To achieve this goal, researchers should obtain the cooperation of the faculty and students in a teacher education programme. They should then design and implement a set of activities aimed at increasing teacher trainees' self-confidence and subsequently measure the impact that such strategy has on their self-perceptions. More specifically, this could be done by means of interviews, the analysis of which would look for traces of empowerment such as changes in how they represent themselves (self-image), verbalizations of their anxieties, expression of willingness and confidence in their adaption skills, overt or covert manifestations of the impostor syndrome, their perceived legitimacy as speakers, subjective assessment of their own pronunciation, expressions of their ideal-self as language educators, among others. All changes, big and small, that could be observed in those interviews would provide evidence of change, thus confirming the impact that such teacher training activities bring into the NNSTs' self-perception. Some ideas may be found in Bayyurt & Sifakis (2017), Kemaloglu-Er & Bayyurt (2019), Llurda & Mocanu (2019), and Sougari (2019), all of them providing examples of tasks geared towards the development of ELF-awareness among ELT teachers.

The idea is that researchers apply strategies aimed at empowering a group of non-native teaching trainees and then document any changes that may qualify as empowerment and enhancement of their professional identity and self-image as NNSTs. The interviews could be carried out before the teachers are exposed to such proposals to unveil the perceptions that they have about themselves before applying the given activity

and in the end of the course to unearth the extent to which they have reflected upon and absorbed it as well as the extent to which it has triggered a change in their self-perceptions.

A study in the line of Park's (2012) documenting how some teachers' identities were transformed would serve well the purposes of this goal. Such a study would do well in taking inspiration from Bayyurt & Sifakis 2015 and Sifakis & Bayyurt 2018, who showed how teachers could be accompanied along a transformational journey towards an ELF-aware pedagogy. In the case of languages other than English, the goal is to promote awareness of the plurilithic nature of language and of the internal diversity of all languages beyond the limiting constraints of standard language ideology. This would shed light on how supporting NNSTs' path towards self-discovery and language awareness has an impact on the actual performance of teachers, with the likely outcome of finding highly aware teachers more prone to taking a learner-centred orientation and increasing the amount of spontaneous communication in the classroom.

Exposing student teachers to the large body of research revealing the strengths of non-native educators is a necessary move for assuring the professional self-confidence they need and deserve. However, internal feelings of disempowerment and low professional self-confidence for not being able to reach the idealised native standard may be rather difficult to eradicate. To this end, reflective practice and ongoing professional development should be embraced by all teachers (Faez, 2018) in order to overcome the self-limiting effect of NNSTs' 'impostor syndrome' (Bernat 2008), a syndrome that is characterized by feelings of inadequacy, personal inauthenticity or fraudulence, self-doubt, low self-efficacy beliefs, and sometimes generalized anxiety (Yates and Chandler 1998).

. In this line, we need to develop situated strategies applicable in teacher education programmes that contribute to the empowerment of local NNSTs, and research should be undertaken to explore the way such strategies bring change to their professional self-esteem.

### **What about languages other than English?**

## **RESEARCH TASK 10 – Extend research on NNESTs to include teachers of other languages.**

Most of the studies questioning native-speakerism and the privileged position of native teachers have been conducted in relation to ELT research. The fact that English is the current global lingua franca and that ‘no-native’ speakers of this language by far surpass the number of ‘native speakers’ has undoubtedly contributed to critically re-examining long established assumptions that placed the native speaker as the ultimate ideal speaker and model. This has heightened the need for deconstructing the myth that the so-called ‘native speakers’ are linguistically and pedagogically superior to their ‘non-native’ counterparts. Hence, it is not surprising that a great deal of research has been devoted to problematizing the ‘NS/NNS’ dichotomy in relation to the English language. However, there is a need to check if similar results are found when other languages -with less international status in the global market of languages- are the object of study, if we want to establish to what extent the claims and results obtained with regard to L2 English are applicable to all other L2s, which would indicate that the findings obtained in L2 English are not restricted to this language by virtue of its global lingua franca status, and are found across languages. To this end, the proposed research tasks in this section should be applied to other languages, ranging from rather established and internationally recognized ones (e.g. German, Chinese, Arabic...) to more minoritarian and with a far less international presence (e.g. Catalan, Guaraní, Cantonese...). The rationale for this is to see if teachers of languages with a less prominent international status than English behave and are perceived similar or different than English teachers. Therefore, we propose conducting a series of studies that look at L2s other than English, thus extending the scope of research to a wider range of languages, all with different linguistic and sociolinguistic characteristics. One of such studies that could be extended to other L2s is Dewaele et al. (2021), who explored the extent to which the labels ‘NS/NNS’ may trigger covert biases among pre-service teachers in Austria and Germany. With this aim, a bilingual language teacher was recorded in the classroom. After showing the same video to different groups of students, some being told that the teacher was a ‘NS’ and others being informed that s/he was a ‘NNS’, the students were asked to evaluate their first impressions of the teacher’s competences through a Likert scale regarding the teacher’s language, teaching, assessment, and communication, and whether they would like or not to have this person as a teacher.

Another study worth extending to other language contexts is Selvi (2010), in which content analysis was used to explore the extent to which native-speakerism appears in two websites advertising TESOL jobs. The advertisements were for a diverse range of settings (EFL and ESL), levels (from pre-K to IEP), and job specifications (e.g., English language teaching, research, lecturing in TESOL programs, and directing programs). We propose replicating this study by looking at advertisements targeted at teachers of languages other than English to see to what extent the recruiters consider the applicants' nativeness as much an important criterion in their hiring practices in other contexts as they do in ELT.

As for the teachers' viewpoint, apart from conducting a series of interviews to native and non-native teachers of the target language to see how they perceive themselves, classroom observation is needed to see the extent to which there is a match or mismatch between self-perceived qualities and classroom performance. To this end, Ma (2016) used classroom observation to look into the teaching behaviour of three pairs of NESTs and NNESTs co-teaching in three secondary schools in Hong Kong. After being observed and video-recorded, post-lesson interviews were conducted focusing on points of interest that emerged during the lessons as well as some questions that helped the researcher understand teachers' viewpoints and the rationale behind their teaching practice. We propose to do a similar study with different target languages in order to shed light on how teachers' self-perceptions are translated into their classroom practices and whether observed differences in teaching behaviour between English native and non-native teachers emerge when the target language is not English

After analysing the subject matter from the perspective of the students and teachers, we propose looking at how the target language is represented in teaching materials in different settings. To this end, we propose extending Si's (2019) analysis of business English coursebooks published and used in the Chinese context from an ELF perspective by taking into consideration language ownership, language exposure, language activities, and cultural representations. This would bring to the fore issues revolving around who are assumed to be the owners of the language in question and who and how the ideal language models for learners are depicted, whether they would assume the process of learning the language as a process of approximating to native usage, and whether the cultures of native countries of that given language are exclusively promoted, among

others. Although Si's study centres on Business English, we suggest widening the scope to general language teaching in other languages.

Studies as such would bring to light the impact of the pervasive NS/NNS dichotomy in contexts other than English, opening new ground to investigate the complex issues associated to the maintenance of the native speaker construct, and the potentially negative effects of native speakerism in language teaching.

### **Final remarks**

As it has been repeatedly pointed out in this paper, a great deal of research has been done on native-speakerism and non-native teachers in the last 30 years. Yet, there still lies a long path ahead before understanding and accepting non-native teachers as fully legitimised actors in the language teaching profession, and before reaching the fundamental goal of erasing overt and covert native-speakerism in society.

The above tasks show aspects that we deem important to delve into in the next 10-15 years, but the list is by no means exhaustive. We encourage young researchers to persist in the task of debunking native-speakerism and thus contribute to the creation of a fairer language teaching environment, and move away from a native speakerist view that reduces diversity by creating the illusion of a homogeneous compact group of NNESTs.

The study of language teaching and language teacher education under a NNST lens will bring a more accurate knowledge of the complexity and the multi-layered nature of language and language education. One of the essential qualities in research is the capacity to think out of the box and apply a new gaze to old processes, so that such processes can be illuminated under a new light that will reveal new patterns and shapes. Looking at L2 classrooms with a NNST lens will open new insights into the language teaching art by getting rid of old parameters that have persistently perpetuated a pre-eminence of a restricted group of teachers over the rest of professionals.

Finally, even though we often refer to teachers of English due to the very specific nature of English and the teaching of English as the global lingua franca, we have made it clear in this paper that there is an urgent need to cross the border and look at teachers, classrooms and language education environments beyond the English language. There

are undoubtedly many circumstances that singularise the case of English, but we are convinced that major insights will be obtained by looking at other languages. Such insights will no doubt be relevant to the particular contexts of use and teaching of those languages, but also to language teaching research and applied linguistics in general.

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