

Native vs. Non-Native English Speakers: Investigating Non-Native English Educators' Perceptions of their Professional Identity

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ABSTRACT: Nativeness and non-nativeness in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) have been regarded as debatable labels. In many contexts, there is a preference for Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) for many reasons; therefore, non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) struggle and feel less powerful than their NEST colleagues who are prioritized because they have a monolingual linguistic identity. This preference for NESTs has detrimental effects on the professional identity development of NNESTs. This study is conducted at a private university in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where studies of this kind did not tackle the issue of NNESTs' professional identity from a critical perspective. The theoretical framework of this research is based on the principles of Critical Applied Linguistics. The results convey that NNESTs have anxiety resulting from employability, job security, and sense of belonging. They also have to deal with the painful development of their professional identity. The study also highlights the unique strengths of NNESTs and details the tools needed for their empowerment. In order to bolster these instructors' professional identity, they need to be liberated from the influence of native speakerism. Once liberated from this ideology, they will be able to teach English with more confidence.

KEYWORDS : *Critical theory, Native-Speakerism, English teachers, Professional Identity.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Nativeness and non-nativeness in the field of ELT have been regarded as debatable labels and controversial terms [1]. According to some scholars, there is a preference for NESTs in the field of ELT because they are ideal to teach the language that they are born to speak [2][3]. Along the same lines, Wang adds that NESTs have perfect grammar skills and perfect pronunciation, and they have deep cultural knowledge and information that NNESTs do not possess [4]. Conversely, NNESTs are often positioned by many as deficient speakers of the language [5]. They further explain that beliefs around NNESTs are that they are not masters of grammar, do not have the perfect pronunciation, and do not have foreign culture knowledge like NESTs. However, this theory around NNESTs is denied by several researchers who have conducted research around this issue in different parts of the world such as Benke and Medgyes [6] and Lasagabaster and Sierra [7] in Europe, Mahboob [8] in the USA, Cheung and Braine [9] in Hong Kong, and Pacek [10] in the United Kingdom. Even though some of these theories about NNESTs have been denied, NNESTs still face issues when it comes to their professional identity because they feel less powerful than their NEST colleagues who are preferred and prioritized because they have their "monolingual linguistic identity" [11]. Pennycook believes that the idea of a fixed linguistic identity is based on culture, race, and location and stresses the need to cut the ties with colonialism [12]. This preference for instructors in the field of ELT who have a monolingual linguistic identity has major effects on the professional identity development of NNESTs.

The preference for native speakers of English in the UAE has political and economic reasons. The UAE witnessed a desire for modernization and economic expansion because of the oil wealth in the 1970s, and because of that, several multi-national companies were set up in the UAE [13]. For this reason, the English language, being the language of the economic powers USA and UK, had to become the most commonly used language as it became a necessity to know it [13]. More and more native speakers started being employed in the region, especially in the field of ELT. Native speakers of the English language are regarded as the perfect choice to teach it, even though this preference might be fallacious in ELT [14]. The English-medium university where this study takes place shows preference towards NESTs, placing them in higher positions with more benefits and better treatment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of NNESTs of their professional identity by employing the critical theory in the context of this English-medium university in Dubai, UAE. The study also aims to problematize the taken-for-granted assumption that NESTs are the better option to teach English as a second/foreign language in some universities in Dubai. This theory will examine to what extent and in what ways non-native English teachers' identities are affected by linguistic power, authority, and culture. These teachers might feel marginalized or of less value at the institutions that they work in, and this might result in low self-esteem and feeling less worthy, professionally, as English instructors. The discriminatory attitudes towards non-native English-speaking teachers might leave these instructors anxious about their linguistic competence, and they might feel insecure when communicating in English in the classroom and even with administrators or native English coordinators. They might even feel that native English-speaking colleagues are more powerful and more worthy than they are.

Studies of this kind that were conducted in Dubai did not tackle the issue of NNESTs' professional identity from a critical perspective. Examples of previous researchers' focus are on the effect of native and non-native teachers on students' speaking skills [15] and on who makes the best ESOL teacher as natives or non-natives [16]. The present study aims to explore NNESTs' opinions about their professional identity and seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What challenges do NNESTs face in the ELT profession considering the dominance of the native speaker ideology in some higher education institutions in Dubai?
2. How do these challenges affect NNESTs' professional identities?
3. What tools for empowerment need to be provided for NNESTs for better development of their professional identities?

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the principles of Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx). Pennycook defines applied linguistics as "an area of work that deals with language use in professional settings, translation, speech pathology, literacy, and language education" [17]. The author defines critical applied linguistics as a "critical approach to applied linguistics" and believes that CALx involves ongoing skepticism and questioning of applied linguistics assumptions [17] and that CALx can create a possibility of change. There is a tendency to theorize in critical applied research, but there should be a distinction between theory and practice in critical applied linguistics, as stated by Pennycook [17]. CALx involves problematizing applied linguistics matters and "presents a way of doing applied linguistics that seeks to connect it to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse" [17]. According to Troudi, the term critical does not only refer to the cases of social injustice, inequality, class, or gender [18]. A critical framework for teacher education "would link issues of TESOL, such as methodology, syllabus design, materials selection and student assessment to broader social and political relations" [19]. A possibility of change is needed in the situation of this study because the assumption that NESTs are better candidates to teach English is causing inequality between NESTs and NNESTs who are very capable of being great English teachers. This inequality is affecting the development of NNESTs' professional identity; therefore, a skeptical eye is needed to be turned towards these assumptions and questioning them is a must.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term native speaker of English refers to someone who has learned English as a first language in a natural setting and during childhood [20]. Huang explains that the concept of native speakerism is attributed to Chomsky. Chomsky's notion "of the term 'native speaker' and 'competence' has strengthened the authority of native speakers" and given them more power [21]. Kramsch explains that a native speaker is not distinguished as such because of their place of birth or education, but he/she is given this name because the society differentiates between Native and Non-native speakers [22]. Along the same lines, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy argue that nativeness is a socially constructed concept rather than a linguistic identity [23]. Davies also asserts that native speakerism is a social concept [24]. This would mean that this dichotomy is driven by power and is political, not linguistic, as argued by scholars such as Canagarajah [25] and Phillipson [26]. Phillipson looks at the native speaker notion from an ideological point of view and believes that the idea of an ideal NEST in ELT is misleading [26]. The writer also states that the native speaker fallacy is to give dominance to countries whose native language is English such as the USA and the UK and make them have power over countries whose native language is not English [26]. Canagarajah agrees with Phillipson's views and believes that this native speaker fallacy helps NESTs have dominance in the ELT profession [25] [26]. Another pervasive ideology within the ELT profession is that a native English-speaking teacher (NEST) would be someone who can bring into the classroom the Western culture which represents the English language and the methodologies of English

language teaching [27]. This ideology reveals discrimination against NNESTs, and the latter often feel the need to compete with NESTs [28] [29]. These terms are underpinned by political ideologies and are used until this very day [26]. Braine believes that the term native speaker is biased and causes inequality, and he prefers to use the terms proficient speakers or competent speakers of the language [2].

Little research has focused on the ways in which ideological and political influences of NEST play a role in affecting the emotions of NNESTs and how they are able to form their identities [30] amidst the pain and inequality. Anxiety, in particular, of NNESTs in many studies has not been addressed in relation to socio-political and socio-economic contexts [30]. In most cases, NNESTs' anxiety does not result from lack of teacher competence, but rather from the inequalities and unfairness that societies have placed on NNESTs when comparing them with NESTs [31]. According to some researchers such as Horwitz, the anxiety that many foreign language teachers face is related to not being able to master a foreign language, making them have self-doubt and experience feelings of inadequacy [30], and this negatively reflects on their professional identities. Burke explains that one of the reasons of anxiety of foreign language instructors is a result of the challenging proficiency test requirements in the target language; as a result, these tests make NNESTs develop feelings of self-doubt and make them feel insecure [32]. These insecurities as a result can play a negative role in NNESTs' classrooms because they will affect their teaching practices [33]. Song explains that most of the times, a NNEST's anxiety is not a result of knowledge deficiencies or teaching skills but is related to "cultural, ideological, and institutional contexts" [30]. The author refers to a study conducted in South Korea where Korean teachers of English felt anxious and insecure when they learned that some students had studied English abroad in an English-speaking country [30]. The teachers could not but feel anxious towards those students whose English competence was received as superior to instructors who studied in Korea. Song goes on to explain that out of the ten teacher participants, only three who had studied English abroad in an English-speaking country did not feel nervous when faced with such students who had returned from "superior" English speaking countries [30]. He further elaborates that the feelings of anxiety result from a feeling of inferiority and insecurity due to the "cultural inscription of a teacher as being all knowing and the ideological bias toward nativism in the growing emphasis on communicative competence in English Education in South Korea" [30].

According to Canh, professional identity can be viewed in three different ways [23]. It can be viewed as a teacher's images of self, it can be related to the roles of the teacher, and it can be related to what teachers find important in their jobs based on their experiences. Beijard et al. define professional identity as "the combinations of the ways teachers see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts" [34]. Beauchamp and Thomas add that professional identity is an ongoing process, and that a teacher's identity changes with the passing of time under the influence of internal and external factors [35]. The internal factors can be their emotions and attitudes, and external factors are their jobs and the experiences that they face within the context. The overall environment, colleagues, and administration can all shape or change a teacher's professional identity [35]. If teachers face negative experiences with students or teachers in the context that they are in, they will develop negative feelings and become de-motivated [36]. Hong also explains that forming and reforming the identity continuously happens through the internalization of oneself, the external world, and negotiating interactions [37]. Therefore, a teacher's relationship with others plays a very important role in shaping their professional identity. Duff and Uchida affirm this point of view by stating that it is important to refer back to the teacher's students and colleagues to understand the teacher's own identities and practices [36]. Reynolds explains that contextual factors are usually underestimated in shaping one's identity even though it plays a major role [38]. Reynolds adds that the surroundings of a person, what is expected from them by others, and what the person allows to have an impact on their will definitely affect their identity as a teacher [38]. A number of researchers have discussed the importance of the context, in specific, the professional context, in shaping and reshaping an instructor's identity and how it directly affects [39]. The context will either make instructors feel marginalized, or it will give them a sense of belonging, and this is also discussed by Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite who state that the interaction between the instructor and their context plays a major role in forming their professional identity [40]. NNESTs who are constantly compared to NESTs will feel marginalized and will feel that they do not belong. This will negatively reflect on the development of their professional identity.

NNESTs often complain of their marginalization and isolation within the ELT profession, and this affects their professional identity [2] [20]. Because of the NS and NNS dichotomy, some NNESTs found it difficult to affiliate themselves with either category, making them have feelings of anxiety and loneliness [20]. Because of this dichotomy, many NNESTs wanted to have an NS accent [41]. The power of NS plays a role in affecting NNESTs' thoughts and professional identities, and because of the NS power and authority, many ELT professionals face prejudice [20]. In the Korean context, Choe explored four Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about themselves, and the results showed that the ideology of the NS model was deeply embedded in the English Language Teaching profession, and because of that, NNESTs constructed negative images of themselves and faced problems with their professional identities [20].

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Approach

This case study adopts an exploratory approach with a critical agenda. Ideology critique was used to explore the perceptions of NNESTs about themselves, their professional identity, and their reflections on society's views on native speaker dominance in the field of ELT. According to Troudi, ideology critique can "certainly contribute to investigate issues of power and ideologies in language education" and it can be used to challenge some ideologies that have been taken for granted, such as TESOL teachers' job security, for example [42]. Troudi adds that some TESL teachers find difficulties in securing employment just because their first language is not English; such discriminatory practices have been legitimized by discourses of efficiency, competencies, and common good for the students" [42]. According to Pennycook, the most important element of critical work in TESOL is connecting the latter to the world in which it occurs, but this connection must focus on "questions of power, inequality, discrimination, resistance, and struggle [19]. The aim of this study is not to describe or only to explore, but it aims to raise awareness and emphasize change so that NNESTs have better views of themselves and their professional identities amidst the struggles, discrimination, and inequalities that they face in the field of ELT.

4.2 Participants

Five NNESTs were the participants of this study; they all identify themselves as non-native speakers of the English language. The five participants, whose pseudonyms are Dayana, Nancy, Shereen, Glades, and Sally, were born in countries in the Middle East. All five participants are highly educated, and they all hold Master's Degrees in either TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or ELT from English-medium universities from different countries in the Middle East. They have all been teaching ESL/EFL for at least five years in universities in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. They all teach at the English-medium private university where this study takes place

4.3 Data Collection Method and Procedure

Semi-structured interviews are used as the only data-collection method in this study. Punch states that the interview is one of the most convenient data collection tools used for accessing perceptions and opinions of others and it helps us understand others [43]. Taking into account the critical theoretical framework of this study which views knowledge as subjective and reality as intertwined with power and shaped by political, social, and economic factors [44], the semi-structured interviews will not only be used to describe, but they will be used to challenge and change certain ideologies. They will be used to explore the critical nature of NS dominance, the discrimination of NNESTs, and the effects of discrimination and marginalization on their professional identities as a result of the existence the ideology of nativeness. The interview questions were conducted face to face with the five participants. After recording and transcribing the interviews, they were coded into main themes that emerged from the interviews and were then analyzed with respect to the research questions.

Prior to retrieving consent from the participants, approval from the University of Exeter was obtained and an ethics form was sent for approval. After assuring anonymity and confidentiality, the five participants signed the consent forms. They were worried that their identities would be revealed, but the researcher assured them that pseudonyms would be used in order to conceal their identities and that their nationalities would not be revealed. The researcher also did not provide details about the background of instructors or whether they teach full-time or part-time in order to secure their anonymity. In order to further assure the participants of the anonymity of their identities, the researcher assured them that the university's name would not be mentioned. The participants were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, namely (1) Employability Anxiety, Job Security, and Sense of Belonging; (2) Painful Development of NNESTs' Professional Identity; (3) Strengths of NNESTs; and (4) Tools for NNESTs Empowerment.

5.1 Employability Anxiety, Job Security, and Sense of Belonging

A common and depressing perception that resulted from interviewing the five participants is that it is very difficult and challenging to be hired as an English instructor in a well-know, prestigious, and English-medium university in the UAE if you are an NNEST. They all believe that native-speaking instructors have the benefit of securing a job with a higher salary and even a higher position. The participants all explained that they went through a hard time trying to gain the job at that institution and other institutions as well.

Shereen states, "When I was applying for a job here at this university, and I saw the position on a job search website, "Bayt.com", the description specifically stated back then that native speakers of English were to be given a priority for the job! I applied anyway, and they called me end of August and I got the job. However,

after I got close with some teachers, I learned that the job was offered to a native speaker before me, but she refused the offer last-minute. My own explanation of this is that they needed someone urgently and I was one of the applicants, and they needed someone badly.” She also adds that she still has her job, but she does not know when she might lose it.

The five participants expressed their fear of losing their jobs if not enough classes were offered because the institution would prefer “to keep the native speaker”, as Dayana expressed. She also adds, “The situation in the Gulf region is not very healthy. People are losing jobs and going back home. Our institution is greatly affected by that, and if God forbid classes were to be closed, Arabs would lose their positions before native speakers. Native speakers are the face of the university”. Dayana believes that no one would take away the positions of NESTs because they hold much more power than teachers from other countries.

Glades expresses her anger when she tells her story of employment. She explains that the world is full of connections and knowing important people, and she got her job because of these connections. She says, “The person who helped me said that they preferred native speakers, but that person got me the job because that person can. I cannot say more. If I were a native speaker, I would have gotten the job like everyone else without having to refer to anyone for help.”

Unfortunately, this is the reality of NNESTs in the field of ELT in some parts of the world and in the context of this study. NNESTs are always anxious of applying to jobs in high-level institutions or well-known and prestigious universities because the society and institutions themselves make them feel less worthy than NESTs. NESTs are thought to bring in authentic language and world experiences into the classroom; an ideology that existed and still exists. Holliday asserts this ideology by explaining that there is a belief that “native-speaker teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and ELT methodology” [27]. NNESTs are afraid of losing their jobs, and they do not feel that they belong. All of these factors affect an NNEST’s self-perception, self-esteem, and professional identity. This is a form of injustice that exists in the field of ELT, and this injustice results from the native speaker ideology [27]. NNESTs should not have to go through this pain. Awan quoted Kachru’s (1996) term “paradigm myopia” fits into this context because “this short-sightedness, exhibited by the employers, is termed as ‘there are not enough jobs’ as opposed to the fact that ‘there are not enough spaces for bilingual/multilingual, visibly different’ or ‘internationally educated teachers’[1].

5.2 Painful Development of NNESTs’ Professional Identity

All five participants sadly have problems with their professional identity to some extent. They seem to compare themselves to their NES colleagues one way or another. Some compare themselves to their colleague NESTs in terms of position and power at the institution, which plays a negative role when it comes to their professional identity. The instructors have somewhat lost faith in themselves because they believe that they are not as good as NESTs or are not valuable assets as their colleagues are. The example responses below explain the situation. Nancy explains, “Being treated as inferior to my native-English speaking colleagues makes me feel unworthy, and yes I feel that I have no professional identity. In this institution, non-native English speakers are in lower positions than native speakers. I have been working for this institution for five years and I still teach basic English classes. I only teach advanced writing classes during the summer because that when our native colleagues travel to their home countries”. Because of this situation, Nancy feels that she has identity issues. She feels less confident and unworthy because of the way she is treated.

Dayana narrates a story of how her coordinator picked on her use of an Arabic term during a classroom observation but did not comment on her teaching methods. She says, “Well, sometimes I believe that being an NNEST has affected my professional identity. Maybe it’s not me; umm, maybe it’s my coordinator. I don’t know. After observing one of my sessions, the coordinator back then did not comment at all on my teaching methods. He had no positive comments about my lesson. His comment was, ‘you use the word yalla’ all the time. He asked me not to use it. I gave an hour and a half of pure English grammar, and his comment was for me not use that word. Don’t I deserve to hear positive feedback?” Dayana fears that her coordinator’s problem with her that that she is not a native English instructor like he is. The word “yalla” means “come on” in English and is often used as a word to encourage students to start working on something or to have something done. This unfair treatment happened because of the power of the native speaker ideology. According to Awan, knowing more than one language should be considered an advantage or an asset, but unfortunately, during evaluating NNESTs’ performance, near native or native-like English has become a standard against which teachers are evaluated[1].

This unfair treatment of NNESTs and undermining of their abilities has negative implications of their professional identity. These NNEST instructors are being mistreated, marginalized, and even emotionally abused. The context needs to play a vital role in developing positive atmospheres for professional growth and positive professional identities, but this is not the case in an atmosphere where NESTs are given power and authority. NNESTs’ identities are constructed through interaction, and the instructors need to feel that they belong to the institution, are accepted by it, and are being treated fairly by it [45]. These NNESTs need social

recognition within their context in order to develop positive identities [45]; instead, NNESTs are inappropriately treated, and that should not be the case. The professional contexts in which NNESTs teach English is fundamental in contributing to their identity development [46]. This emphasizes the importance of context in developing professional identities of instructors.

5.3 Strengths of NNESTs

The participants of this study believe that they are as capable and competent as NESTs because they believe that successful teaching does not depend on being a native speaker of the language. Some participants even stated that they are more suitable and more competent in many cases than native speakers. Identifying these strengths gave the NNESTs power and increased their positivity towards their professional identity because NNESTs are valuable assets in the field of ELT even though they are not native speakers of the language.

Shereen states, "Teaching in the Gulf, we come across many Arab students just like ourselves. It is very important that we, as NNESTs, are able to understand what they need and how to get our point across to them. Sometimes, we can take advantage of speaking the same mother tongue as the students to make things clearer for them. This is the case in intensive English classes. Sometimes, I use Arabic to explain something to my students that they can't understand in English. A native speaker of English would never be able to do that."

Dayana sheds light on the importance of knowing students' grammar in their native language and how she is able to show them the differences in languages and conveying their mistakes.

She explains, "Sometimes my Arab students translate from Arabic to English. If my native language were not Arabic, I wouldn't have been able to help them. When they translate, I show them their mistakes. A native speaker would not be able to do that, right?" Dayana strongly believes that by understanding her students' native language, she is able to set their confusions straight by telling them what is right and what is wrong, what to do and what not to do.

Glades states that NNESTs have a tool that differentiates them from NESTs. She confidently explains, "To our benefit, NNESTs study grammar and every aspect of it. To be honest, sometimes I know how to explain grammar rules more than NES colleagues, with all respect to them. NESTs know that this sentence should be said this way because they were born to speak the language. If asked why, natives probably have to think to give an answer. However, I have the ability to explain a grammar rule by knowing exactly what my students need. That is my strength."

According to Ma, there are several unique strengths of NNESTs such as their awareness of multiple cultures, bilingualism, and their rich experience with L2 learning [47]. Moussuas cited in Ma adds that NNESTs strengths lie in their understanding of their students' situations and linguistic needs [47]. NNESTs also have in-depth knowledge of "grammar and meta-cognitive language awareness", which is suggested as strength [47]. Therefore, even though NNESTs have weaknesses such as lack of self-confidence sometimes, they have unique strengths that distinguish them from native speakers.

5.4 Tools for NNESTs Empowerment

The participants were asked to suggest tools that can empower them. Shereen's response was, "Hiring policies should be made that involve removing giving NNESTs a chance to get jobs easier and get into higher positions rather than thinking that English is only associated with native speakers." Sally also adds, "Empowering NNESTs would happen if only administrators stop comparing us to NESTs. Because of this comparison at our institution, we feel that NNESTs are not being given their full rights to teach more advanced classes or even become program coordinators. Change needs to happen."

A considerable body of the literature on this topic has shown the inappropriateness of using a 'dichotomy approach' that places NSs and NNSs at the two opposite ends of the spectrum [45]. This is why empowering these NNESTs is a must. The anger, pain, discrimination, and frustration must stop. Yazan explains that creating an identity requires for NNESTs to be aware of and change fixed concepts by native speaker standards [46]. NNESTs must also be asked about what bothers them. Without critically asking about their experiences, "NNESTs cannot develop a frame of reference that is stripped of the misconceptions rooted in native-speaker ideology" and build their professional identity based on competence [46]. NNESTs need to express what has been troubling them about native-speaker ideologies and their dominance; they need to be able to freely express what this dominance has made them feel and how it has affected their professional identities. Yazan suggests the use of narratives as an empowerment tool for NNESTs. He believes that through narratives NNESTs are able to narrate what bothers them and what they have on their minds. The author further explains that "narratives provide NNESTs with a dialogic space in which they can negotiate meanings and engage in the theorization of their own instruction, as it emerges from their own experiences" [46]. Teacher education courses and professional development sessions should adopt the use of narratives as a tool to support NNESTs' identity development.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at taking a closer and critical look into how the native speaker dominance in the field of ELT is affecting NNESTs and their professional identity. Ignoring this issue is unfair because NNESTs should not be treated differently than NESTs. NNESTs are equally proficient to native speakers and should have the right to occupy high positions and have the same salary; they have the right to be treated equally to NESTs. Administrators and policy makers should be made aware of this issue because they are allowing the native speaker ideology to have power over non-natives, causing NNESTs self-confidence issues and identity problems because they are stained with this ideology and live their professional life wondering if they are good enough to be in higher positions. Institutions should be made aware that students' identities as English language learners are greatly affected by their instructors. If instructors view their non-native status as an issue, then that would act against them and make them feel professionally less effective than their native colleagues, and as a result, they will never be able to claim ownership over the English language and as teachers of the language. This issue is not only limited to instructors but to students as well. In order to make these instructors have a powerful professional identity, they need to be liberated from the influence of native speakerism. When they liberate themselves from this ideology, they will be able to teach English with confidence and as owners of the English language, even though it is not their native language, and they will be able to pass over the confidence to their students.

Catalytic validity ensures that the research will lead to action with an agenda that aims to help the participants understand their situations and transform them. Because of catalytic validity, the five participants were empowered through this study. The participant instructors are more aware of their strengths as non-native speakers of the English language, and they are more aware of how beneficial it is to use these strengths in the English classroom. For example, the participants have the advantage of using their mother tongue with basic English learners to explain some difficult and challenging concepts to them. They are also more aware of the fact that they might be more experienced in grammar rules and explaining them than native speakers are. This gives them confidence and power. The participants are also more aware of the "native speaker fallacy", and they understand that this issue exists in different parts of the world and that they should not feel inferior to NES colleagues because of this fallacy. They will try to liberate themselves from native speakerism. The participants also suggested discussion sessions to be held at their institution that discuss the native speaker fallacy. By discussing issues related to NNESTs, colleagues and administrators would be made aware of the issues that are connected to the preference of NESTs. Through these sessions and seminars, the participants would also be able to discuss the strengths of NNESTs, which in turn increases their self-confidence and gives them power.

After conducting such a critical study, there are many recommendations that can be made to improve the status of NNESTs. To start with, the participants made it clear that they would like to have seminars or discussion groups with faculty and administrators in which they can discuss the strengths of NNESTs and also touch on the problems that NNESTs face because of the native speaker fallacy. The researcher believes that such "sessions" would benefit both administrators and NNESTs. Administrators would be able to see that NNESTs are in fact very talented and worthy, and NNESTs would be increasing their self-confidence and adding more positivity to their professional identity instead of being anxious and lonely in their workplace. According to the literature, marginalized NNESTs develop anxiety problems and often feel lonely, which negatively affects their self-esteem and professional identity [20]. The researcher also believes that NNESTs should be given higher positions; they should be granted the chance to become coordinators or even heads of departments. The fact that they are not native speakers of the language does not mean that they are less competent than native speakers, and they should be able to fill higher positions than they are currently given. The literature states that the idea of an ideal and perfect NEST in ELT is nothing but a native speaker fallacy [26], so the term non-native should be questioned. It should be linked to issues of power and inequality. The power that NESTs have because of their nativity should not marginalize NNESTs and make them have lower positions. Moreover, the researcher believes that critical pedagogy should be taught in teacher training programs in the UAE and countries with similar "native speaker ideology" situations. NNESTs should be trained to be aware of the issues that they might face, and they should know that these issues should not affect their self-esteem. They should be inspired to make a change and to empower each other. The researcher also believes that an ideal teacher should be judged based on how he/she acts and performs in the classroom and should not be judged based on an idea that an English teacher should be a perfect native speaker. Native speakerism is a social concept [24] that should not affect the way NNESTs are viewed and treated.

It is highly recommended that future researchers conduct similar studies on a larger scale in different institutions in Dubai, UAE. Future researchers might also be able to study a similar case at universities where English is not the medium of instruction but is still taught as a language. Future researchers can also conduct a similar study on people who were born in native English speaking countries but whose native language is not really English. It would be interesting to study the case of English instructors whose native language is not English but hold passports of native English-speaking countries and work in the UAE.

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