

USING AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES ON INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING COURSES TO TACKLE 'NATIVE SPEAKERISM'

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Introduction

Native Speakerism is a term coined by Holliday (2005, 2006) which refers to the belief that the Native English Speaker (NES) is the embodiment of the values and ideals of English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy and knowledge. It reflects what Phillipson (1992) famously dubbed "native speaker fallacy", namely, the view that any NES is both instructionally and linguistically superior to any Non-Native English Speaker (NNES), and thus makes a better teacher. Despite the fact that these beliefs had already been widely criticised by linguists (e.g. Paikeday 1985; Davies 1991) and despite the growing body of research into English as Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes (e.g. Kachru 1992, 1997; Jenkins 2000, 2007) as well as NNES scholarship (e.g. Braine 1999, 2010; Mahboob 2010; Llorca 2005b), which has shed doubt on the primacy of Inner Circle norms or NES superiority as teachers, native speakerism is still widespread in ELT and has led to a situation where approximately 75% of all ELT jobs in the private sector are advertised for NES only (e.g. Clark & Paran 2007; Selvi 2010; Reucker & Ives 2014). These figures refer to the private sector only and we do acknowledge that the situation in the public sector might be different from this.

While there is little doubt about the extent to which native speakerism has influenced ELT hiring policies, there is perhaps less awareness of how it has shaped ELT methodology and by extension initial teacher training courses (TTC), such as Cambridge CELTA and Trinity CertTESOL. This might be partly due to the fact that many would like to view ELT as a 'nice', egalitarian and liberal field (Kubota 2002), preferring to ignore any indications of inequity. Furthermore, it has been argued, not entirely convincingly, that ELT methods are neutral and apolitical, while in fact every pedagogy is always underpinned by a particular ideology (Prodromou 1988), which leads to a lack of awareness of the often political and hegemonic interests lurking behind ELT methods.

As a result, this article will first aim to discuss the presence of native speakerism in both ELT methods and TTCs. We then expand on the

fourth step from the framework suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2016) to argue that if ELT is to move beyond the confines of native speakerism and become the truly diverse and egalitarian field it purports to be, there needs to be a greater focus in TTCs on developing 'transformative' (Giroux 1988) and 'organic' (Gramsci 1971) intellectuals who will be prepared and committed to questioning the native speaker fallacy, which still imbues ELT. To this end, we outline several activities which can be utilised by teacher trainers during TTCs.

Literature review

Nativespeakerism in ELT

Gramsci (1971) theorized that the dominant power, be it political or linguistic, can exercise its dominance through invisible or indirect means. This can be seen throughout ELT through the Anglocentric and monolingual bias of teaching materials, many of which have been shown to focus exclusively on NES models of language and culture, ignoring for the most part ELF scholarship, and presenting NES as the sole 'owners' of the language (Matsuda 2012; Modiano 2005). This results in a situation where center-produced teaching materials are seen as culturally inappropriate, biased and insensitive to the needs of local teachers and students (Widin 2010; Swan 2015).

Likewise, teaching methods have presented NES as *a priori* superior teachers, which has led to a high number of expert positions being created and reserved solely for NES (Phillipson 1992: 254). This drive of course does not only come from the employers, but there is anecdotal evidence which shows that many NNES teachers prefer and demand NES conduct teacher training activities, for example. In addition, some NNES still view NES as better language models and instructors and accept them as the source of pedagogical and linguistic authority, often being excessively critical and dismissive of their fellow NNES professional skills (Trifonovitch 1981; Tsui & Bunton 2000; Cook 2005). As a result, the Western view of 'correct' teaching methods has been imposed on teaching cultures worldwide, with little consideration for cultural appropriacy

and the local context, leading to failures along the way (Pennycook 1994). Pennycook (1998) sees clear colonial overtones here, comparing this insistence on the promotion of center-produced methods to the civilising of Friday; that is to viewing NNES as culturally, linguistically and instructionally deficient and in need of being educated in the 'correct' Western approach to teaching, which is deemed superior. Kumaravadivelu (2016: 8) points out that "method is the most crucial and consequential area where hegemonic forces find it necessary and beneficial to exercise the greatest control, because method functions as an operating principle shaping all other aspects of language education: curriculum, materials, testing, and training" and through this control of method, centres have managed to dictate how English should be learnt and taught around the world.

Scholars have spoken out about and cast doubt on this Anglocentric dominance, but it has often fallen on deaf ears. Through the promotion of this Western pedagogy a hidden agenda of stigmatising NNES culture and pedagogy arises causing what has been termed as "I-am-not-a-native-speaker syndrome" (Suarez 2000), where the NNES feels inferior to their NES counterparts due to not being able to achieve the elusive NES norm. This can result in NNESTs "dismissing their own expertise and indigenous knowledge, engaging in the practice of self-marginalisation" (Widin 2010: 60). On the other hand, Cook (2001) believes that the appropriacy of particular teaching methods should be decided by those who have first hand knowledge of the local educational culture and tradition, since there is evidence that different cultures have different conceptions of what constitutes good teaching (Cortazzi and Jin 1996). However, Llorca (2015) claims these criticisms have done little to change people's minds and many of the different approaches to teaching English that have emerged in recent years have implicitly positioned the NES teacher as the linguistic and pedagogical model, a process resulting in the emergence of a 'self-selected' elite of NES (Widdowson 2003). For example, both communicative and structural approaches to teaching English require the learner to effectively imitate either the communicative or structural norms used by NES. As far as proficiency assessment is concerned, the learner is then only deemed successful as far as they adhere to NES language model. This is evident in CEFR descriptors, which frequently refer to 'native-like' competency, or the ability to understand and be understood by NES.

The assumption that there is a 'right method' to teach English with the NES at the centre directly impacts on TTCs, which "is where people begin to develop their perspectives on teaching and learning as well as their identities as teachers" (Barratt 2010: 1). As a result, it is evident that TTCs play a crucial role in whether teachers will challenge or accept, and thus work within, the dominant ELT discourse of native speakerism. Currently, many teacher training programs are dependent on a monolingual and monocultural vision of English (Phillipson 1992; Llorca 2015). This bias is reflected in "policies and practices for granting admission, selecting teaching assistants, negotiating internships, as well as grading and giving career advice" (Barratt 2010: 1). To counter this, a multicultural and multilingual approach to both teaching and learning English has been advocated (Cook 2001; Mahboob 2010). For example, Dogancay-Aktuna (2006) called for an introduction into TESOL training courses of transcultural materials which would better reflect the diversity and richness of World Englishes.

Furthermore, since there are five times as many NNES, we can safely assume that NNESTs also outnumber NESTs (Graddol 2006). Consequently, they need to be provided with tools to develop a critical discourse which will allow them to question the NES superiority which still seems to dominate ELT; and these tools will "require a type of thinking that promotes new relationships" (Holliday 2006: 2). For example, there is little doubt in the literature that NNESTs can be equally effective as NESTs (Medgyes 1992; Widdowson 1994; Llorca 2005a). In fact, their numerous strengths as teachers, such as high language awareness or empathy, have been well-documented and researched (Medgyes 1992; Árvá & Medgyes 2000; Faez 2012; Nemtchinova 2005). Nevertheless, NNEST continue to be viewed as inferior to NESTs by many recruiters (Mahboob et al. 2004; Clark & Paran 2007) and some students (Pacek 2005; Chun 2014) or colleagues (Amin 1997; Liu 1999). Most importantly, though, NNESTs themselves tend to accept NESTs' dominance, authority and superiority, and have been observed to have excessively low self-esteem and self-confidence (Árvá & Medgyes 2000; Bernat 2008; Llorca 2009).

It is clear then that while there is ample evidence that NNESTs can also be successful teachers, a part of the ELT community and the NNESTs themselves seem to doubt this. Hence, to break the abovementioned pattern of NES dominance, more proactive research might be needed. Indeed, Mignolo (2010) argues that not

only the language of the hegemonic discourse (e.g. NES and NNES dichotomy), but also its content need to be rethought and remoulded. Indeed, according to Green (2002: 7), “hegemony is protected by coercion and coercion is protected by hegemony, and they both protect the dominant group’s political and economic positions”. Consequently, if NNES are to redress the power balance, TTCs will need to start cultivating ‘transformative’ (Giroux 1988) and ‘organic’ (Gramsci 1971) intellectuals; that is individuals whose practices are rooted in ethical and moral discourse, and who endeavour to transform and inspire dominated communities. It therefore seems that to counter the current trend of native speakerism, TTCs need to prepare future teachers to be the agents of change.

Nativespeakerism in pre-service teacher training

In the UK, the most popular route into teaching English as a foreign language is through intensive initial teacher training programmes, often referred to as “the British context” (Roberts 1998) rather than more extensive undergraduate degrees. The two most widely known and accepted courses are the CELTA (administered by Cambridge ESOL and formerly CTEFLA) and Trinity College’s Cert TESOL. Both of these courses are popular intensive training courses, around 10,000 being taken annually (Green 2005, cited in Hobbs 2013), often by people interested in traveling and teaching around the world. Both are designed for participants with little to no previous teaching experience and, during the course, offer at least one hundred and twenty hours of instruction, one hundred and thirty in the case of Trinity CertTESOL, and six hours of supervised teaching practice. Applicants are required to have English competence equalling or exceeding CEFR level C1 (IELTS level 7.5).

Despite their popularity, these courses are not without criticism, particularly considering the above arguments regarding the Anglocentric bias in both teaching materials and methodology. Brandt (2006), Hobbs (2013), Borg (2005) and Ferguson and Donno (2001) all acknowledge that the duration of the course and the focus on language and teaching skills leaves little time for teachers to address more critical matters and consider other teaching contexts; nevertheless, this prepares teachers to “work within the confines of the institutions of the existing hegemonic order” (Kumaravdivelu 2015: 12). Ferguson and Donno (2001: 29) also highlight that these courses privilege the NEST, assuming that, despite a limited focus on language awareness and

pedagogical issues, a one-month course is adequate for certification due to the native English proficiency they possess. Thus it is clear that there is a need for change and these issues must be addressed.

Most trainees enter initial training with well formed beliefs and ideas about teaching despite the fact that these ideas may not fit a clear theoretical framework (Borg 2005) and there is some debate over whether initial training can affect and change these beliefs (Floris 2013). Peacock (2001) discovered that over a 3-year BA TESL programme in Hong Kong, trainee teachers’ detrimental beliefs about language learning and teaching changed very little, which is consistent with Urmston’s (2003) findings that pre-service teacher’s experiences within the education system had a much greater impact upon their beliefs. Mattheoudakis (2007) and Floris (2013), however, did notice considerable change in pre-service teacher beliefs over a three-year and semester long period respectively. Although the time frame of these studies is considerably longer than the four-week TTCs discussed here, training can still affect beliefs and beliefs can affect practice. Floris (2013), in particular, shows that before training on world Englishes all trainees believed that being a native speaker was an important teacher quality. By the end of the semester every participant had changed their view. Thus, it is the claim of this paper that not only is the lack of awareness raising of prejudicial employment practices on initial training courses worrying, but that introducing this element to teacher training courses through a number of different activities could begin to change teacher beliefs about NEST/NNEST, leading to the creation of professionals who can affect real change within the industry.

Activities

First, it should be pointed out that the three activities presented below have not yet been tested empirically to see whether and how much they can influence trainees’ beliefs about native speakerism. Nevertheless, informal implementation on CertTESOL courses has yielded some promising results (see Discussion). In addition, the authors plan to empirically test the activities in a subsequent study as briefly outlined in Discussion. These activities also have a sound theoretical base as they were designed based on a literature review, informal research into teacher perception of native speakerism and our experience as teachers and teacher trainers. The research carried out, which is currently being prepared for publication, involved a series of job advertisements with an

accompanying questionnaire for participants to comment on how discriminatory the language was. Over 500 teachers, trainee teachers and teacher trainers completed the questionnaire online. Despite the research being informal and carried out online, making it difficult to swear by the validity of the answers, the responses suggested that despite many teachers seeing the NS/NNS distinction as something discriminatory, trainee teachers were much more likely than other members of the profession to accept it as normal or entirely justifiable. The abovementioned survey also asked for teachers' ideas on how they would define the term 'native speaker'. It became apparent that both experienced teachers and trainee teachers struggled to agree on exactly what a native speaker was, an idea reinforced by the extensive literature review we undertook. For example, the literature review led us to a conclusion that while the terms NS and NNS are and have been used extensively in professional SLA and ELT discourses, their definitions remain contentious, subjective and ideological. Consequently, in the minds of many students and ELT professionals the NS has started to be ascribed a near "mythological status" (Aboshisha 2015: 43) in terms of their linguistic and instructional skills, and is frequently associated with white, monolingual NS from the Inner Circle (Kubota 2002).

Having worked on four-week initial teacher training courses in the Czech Republic for the last seven years, including CertTESOL, it seemed to us that, within this immediate context, the issues of native speakerism are addressed only very rarely, if ever, during TTCs. The majority of trainees are completely new to the profession and have very little, if any, knowledge of the industry and potential issues within it. Hence, it is possible that some trainees can complete the course lacking in awareness of the ideological bias towards NS within ELT, particularly if they have no contact with NNEST during the four-week programme. This can lead to them unwittingly propagating and maintaining this ideology.

As a result, we decided to design activities that would address the issue of responsibility in tackling native speakerism, how this could be done, the discriminatory language in job advertisements, and the question of who a NS really is. The hope was that by raising these issues during initial training courses, it would be possible to positively affect trainees' attitudes to discrimination, create activists and real agents of change with the final goal being this positive influence trickling down to other areas of the

industry. So far only informal testing of the activities has been carried out, but it does seem, however, that they can have a positive impact on trainees, raising their awareness of native speakerism, and giving them the tools and understanding to act against it. Admittedly, finding time for extra-curricular tasks in one month TTCs could be a challenge, but we feel that these activities may be just as effectively done as part of the pre-course task often used by these courses or as online training activities. This would therefore leave time in the course schedule to address compulsory curricular issues such as language awareness and teaching methodology.

Whose Responsibility?

Aim:

To encourage trainee teachers to think about the issue of responsibility and to devise strategies to combat native speakers within the industry.

Rationale:

The activity should allow trainees, through discussion, to think about how they can affect subaltern communities, whether through standing up themselves to the unequal distribution of power faced by them, or from the position of privilege they enjoy as NS.

Procedure:

- Trainees are divided into groups and assigned one (or more depending on class size) of the following major players in the TEFL industry: students, recruiters/academic directors, teacher trainers, NESTs, NNESTs writers and publishers, teaching associations, examination boards and accrediting bodies.
- Trainees discuss how their assigned person/organisation can actively address the issues of non-native speaker prejudice.
- Groups present their ideas to the whole class.
- Groups prepare posters based on input from their peers to outline strategies to combat prejudice.

Job Adverts

Aim:

To raise awareness of native speakerism as a form of discrimination.

Rationale:

Many teachers may be unaware of requiring teachers to be native speakers of English as a true form of discrimination, but if teachers are to challenge the distribution of power and privilege

this is vital. Critical analysis of discrimination may help to highlight the relevant issues and the fact that approximately three-quarters of all ELT job ads discriminate against NNESTs (e.g. Selvi 2010).

Procedure:

- Trainees are provided with a list of job advertisements (see Appendix 1) and asked to identify the jobs they would be eligible to apply for.
- Trainees discuss if it is fair that some jobs are not open to them.
- Trainees then look at the qualities in bold and discuss which are legitimate skills/qualities for employers to seek and which seem discriminatory.
- Final discussion focuses on the use of the term native speaker and why they feel employers request this, leading into a discussion on possible alternative terms that could be used.

Extension activity:

- Trainees discuss what they think students of English want from the perfect teacher and where they think native speaker fits into this ideal.
- Trainer shows the results of a classroom survey of a class of C1 learners to highlight the possible similarities or differences.

Who is a NS?

Aim:

To problematise the concept of Native and Non-Native Speaker and to raise awareness of the inadequacy of the two terms.

Rationale:

The terms NS and NNS are quite firmly entrenched in both SLA and ELT jargon despite numerous criticisms and suggestions for alternative, more inclusive terms. The way language is used can undoubtedly serve the needs of the power-holders and serve as a tool for marginalisation. Hence, it is crucial that we critically analyse the two terms and the native speakeristic ideology behind them.

Procedure:

- Trainees are presented with a number of statements (see below) and in groups decide how far they agree/disagree with each (1 - completely disagree; 4 completely agree). They should give reasons for their choices:

1. If you were raised speaking a particular language and your parents and relatives speak it, you are a NS.
 2. You cannot be a NS of more than on language.
 3. There are no NS of English in Zimbabwe.
 4. A NS knows their language perfectly.
 5. Somebody who is at C2 level (e.g. IELTS 9) is a NS.
 6. All Brits/Canadians/US/etc. are NS of English.
 7. A NNS can never reach NS proficiency.
- When the trainees are finished, get feedback and decide on what the problems with the NS/NNS labels are. This can lead to a discussion of the (dis)advantages of the alternative labels which have been proposed in the literature: proficient speaker, monolingual vs multilingual English speaker, expert user.

Extension:

- Trainees are given a selection of statements (examples below) and asked to identify which were made by native speakers and which by non-native speakers.
 - Afterwards, trainees are informed that the sentences were all produced by native speakers, just from different areas of the US/UK.
 - Trainees discuss how this fits into their view of what proper English is.
1. I were going to call you when I got home. (Lancashire)
 2. I might could see you tomorrow. (Southern US)
 3. My hair needs washed. (Glasgow)
 4. I would have went if I'd had the money. (Belfast)
 5. I didn't go nowhere. (AAVE)

Discussion

As stated earlier, the extent of native-speakerism within the EFL industry has become so widespread that it has written itself into it so much as to have become almost gospel. There are many directions from which to attack this discrimination, but for any kind of disruption of the current hegemony to be successful, numbers must be strong. It is the strongly held belief of the

writers that by introducing the ideas above on initial training courses, teachers can not only become empowered to affect change within the industry from the position of teachers, but also in a wider perspective as their influence trickles down to the students and upwards as they gradually move into positions of power within the EFL world.

However, it should be mentioned that the strategies stated above have yet to be tested reliably, and remain a theoretical construct. Despite our belief that these activities will promote empathy and awareness raising, it is possible that they may also highlight a problem with the industry that can be exploited by lesser qualified NESTs looking for work. Yet despite the fact that many trainee teachers will not stay in the industry for more than a couple of years and therefore may not feel the motivation tackle the industry's ills, if even a small number of teachers leave their courses seeking change, due to the content of their training, then it must be considered a success.

A single informal implementation of these activities in the third week of a recent face-to-face Trinity CertTESOL course (a 4 week initial teacher training course, often referred to as "TEFL course") was met with generally positive results, with many trainees stating that they had no idea this inequality existed. For example, many NS did not realise the extent to which ELT hiring policies were biased in their favour. Several of them expressed their support for their NNS colleagues and proactively stated particular strengths they recognised in them, most commonly, a superior language awareness. In addition, the discussion on responsibility led to some trainees stating that they themselves should act against 'native speakerism', encouraging professionalism and tackling misconceptions about NS and NNS. Finally, both NS and NNS were prompted to rethink the bipolar labelling. Many trainees agreed that the two labels might cause discrimination and do not represent the linguistic identity of some speakers of English leading to lively discussion on how these labels could be rethought.

Consequently, it is recommended that the effects of these and similar activities on trainees' initial beliefs about 'native speakerism' be studied in more formal and structured ways. This could help ascertain whether they bring any significant changes to trainees' beliefs, as well as allowing the creation of a 'toolkit' of tested awareness raising activities, which could then be implemented on a regular basis on initial teacher training courses.

Subsequently, plans have been made to test the effects of these activities over the next six months in a more formal and structured way through online training modules, the online mode of training being chosen as it can overcome the problem of 'lack of time', which face-to-face 4 week courses tend to suffer from. Trainees will read a number of statements about native speaker issues and rate them on a ten-point likert scale indicating their agreement. After undergoing online training using the activities described in this paper, participants will retake the pre-training questionnaire and describe to the researchers any significant changes in their beliefs and whether they feel that the training, or other factors including exposure to NNEST, played an important role in changing their beliefs. Over the course of several intensive training courses in two countries we hope to find evidence that the activities described above have been in some way responsible for changing beliefs and preparing teachers to educate their learners and their employers and therefore preparing them to oppose the ideology in their future careers as teachers. If successful, the online training aspect will also mean that the activities and research could be replicated at centres throughout the world. Despite this paper focusing on activities to investigate and change the beliefs of teachers, it is also important to investigate the beliefs of other parties (i.e. students, recruiters, parents) responsible for propagating the idea that the NEST is a better option in the classroom. However, investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of the current article, but must remain a goal for the future.

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Appendix - Job adverts¹

"Seeking FEMALE ESL teachers for 13 women's colleges in Saudi Arabia.
(August start and December start are available)
The schools are managed by a US company so you will work for a US company
Students aged 18-24 years old"

"Seeking YOUNG (aged 21-30) and ENTHUSIASTIC teachers for a summer camp.
(July to September)
The role will involve a combination of teaching and organising extra-curricular activities for groups of up to 18 young learners (aged 8-15)."

"ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHERS NEEDED - PRAGUE
No experience necessary
Become a part of our team if you are:
TEFL/CELTA certified
EU Citizen or non-EU with trade license / long-term working visa holder; we also offer professional visa assistance (fees on request)
interested in either full-time or part-time schedule
flexible and willing to teach at different places within Prague"

"CAUCASIAN English tutors needed
Beijing, China
Work Hours:
5 day working week
Guaranteed 2 days off per week
No more than 27 teaching hours per week"

"TEACHERS FOR JAPAN
Japan (Private language schools):
University Degree - BA or higher
TEFL Certificate (CELTA/Trinity Cert TESOL or equivalent)
Native English speaker (born and brought up in a native English speaking country)
Clean bill of health
Teachers with visible tattoos will not be considered"

"University Lecturers Required for Turkish University
All applicants should possess the following:
A BA/MA in a related discipline
An initial teaching qualification (CELTA/Trinity Cert TESOL or equivalent)
English proficiency of at least C1
A minimum of 5 years experience"

"One to One Tutor Needed for a Small Polish Town
All applicants should:
be flexible in their approach
hold an EU passport
have either CELTA or Trinity Cert TESOL"

¹ Job adverts adapted from www.tefl.com (accessed on 25/10/2015)