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## 1. INTRODUCTION

‘Native speakerism’ is a term coined by Holliday (2005, 2006) by which he referred to the belief that the ideals of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology and practice originate in Western culture, which in turn is embodied by a ‘native speaker’ of English, who is deemed the ideal teacher. Houghton and Rivers (2013, p. 14) reconceptualise this definition to show that both ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’ can be negatively impacted by native-speakerism, which is now understood as:

a prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination, typically by or against foreign language teachers, on the basis of either being or not being perceived and categorized as a native speaker of a particular language. (...) Its endorsement positions individuals from certain language groups as being innately superior to individuals of other language groups.

Native speakerism is an ideology that is supported within ELT through various powerful discourses, or regimes of truth (Selvi, 2014), which make it seem normal, rational and sensible. While scholars now acknowledge that ideologies can also be positive, in this paper the term ideology refers to a negative force which allows for maintaining the privilege of those in power (Eagleton, 2007). Discourse, on the other hand, refers to the structure of knowledge and of social practice (Fairclough, 1992). In the case of native speakerism, what maintains it in power as an ideology are various discourses in ELT and SLA which through knowledge and social practice make it appear justifiable. While it is impossible to review all of them here, this article will focus on four:

1. the ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ dichotomy;
2. the ‘native speaker’ fallacy (Phillipson, 1992), or the view that a ‘native speaker’ is *a priori* better suited for teaching English than a ‘non-native speaker’;
3. the comparative fallacy (Moussu & Llorca, 2008), or the view that ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers are characterised by a set of fixed strengths and weaknesses;
4. ELT recruitment policies.

The analysis of these discourses will be followed by a proposal to debate and discuss them with students in class in order to raise their awareness of native speakerism in ELT. The suggestion is based on Kumaravdivelu’s (2016) recent action-oriented framework (see 3.2) which he argues could contribute to tackling the ideology. In it he suggests a more pro-active approach to research on native speakerism which would offer practical solutions

rather than identify more problems, and also proposes a focus on creating new instructional practices. With this in mind, this article argues that debating the different discourses which maintain and normalise native speakerism with students through awareness-raising activities could help disrupt them and contribute to more fairness in ELT.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW – DISCOURSES SUPPORTING NATIVE SPEAKERISM**

### **2.1 THE ‘NATIVE’ AND ‘NON-NATIVE SPEAKER’ DICHOTOMY**

The discourse which lies at the very heart of native speakerism is that of the ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ dichotomy. Since Chomsky (1965) established the concept of the ideal speaker-listener, it has been associated with the ‘native speaker’, and extensively used in SLA research. However, as Han (2004) points out, this was done without any attempt at problematising the concept. As a result, in SLA research, and soon in ELT, the ‘native speaker’ came to be seen as the ultimate judge of grammaticality, omniscient and infallible, and the ultimate goal against which every language learner’s interlanguage should be compared (Kachru, 1994; Rajagopalan, 2005). Consequently, the ‘non-native speaker’ quickly started to be seen as linguistically deficient, despite the fact that some scholars argue that ultimate language attainment is also possible for ‘non-native speakers’ (Birdsong, 1992, 2004, Davies, 2001, 2013).

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that being considered a ‘native speaker’ has little to do with language proficiency, but much more “with the ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ image of people who come from the English-speaking West” (Holliday, 2009, p. 25). Consequently, in some contexts, in order to be considered a ‘native speaker’, one needs to be White, Western-looking and come from the 7 Inner Circle countries, such as the US or the UK (Amin, 1997; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Kubota & Lin, 2006). To complicate the matters further, SLA and ELT professionals often assume that the two labels are fixed, objective, value-free and well-defined. However, research shows that the two terms are in fact ideologically charged, ambiguous, problematic, subjective and frequently used as a tool for marginalising and stereotyping teachers and learners (Holliday, 2013, 2015). For example, apart from the aforementioned problem of race, the two terms have also been shown to be too simplistic and misrepresentative of the self-identity of many speakers, who find it difficult to subscribe to only one or the other category (Faez, 2011; Piller, 2002). Furthermore, the labelling falls into the trap of essentialist and culturist discourse that stereotypes English users into ‘superior’ and ‘unproblematic’ ‘us’, and ‘inferior’, ‘problematic’ ‘them’ (Holliday, 2005, 2013), which lies at the core of native speakerism.

Consequently, the terms ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ are used in this article in inverted commas to denote that they are ‘so called’, and have not been properly defined despite numerous attempts at it (Davies, 2003, 2012, 2013). While it would be ideal not to use the terms at all, or use one of the alternative terms proposed by various scholars (Cook, 2001; Jenkins, 2015; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990), this is not possible since the labels have become very deeply ingrained in the minds of ELT professionals and students. Thus, rather than avoid them, to disrupt their supposed objectivity, what seems to be nec-

essay is to question the assumptions behind these terms and to critique them. And as suggested in section 4.1, this can be done in class with students.

## 2.2 THE 'NATIVE SPEAKER' FALLACY

Using the idealised 'native speaker' as the ultimate goal of language learning in SLA research, has led to creating the 'native speaker' fallacy, or the belief that any 'native speaker' is *a priori* a better teacher of the language than a 'non-native speaker' (Phillipson, 1992). According to Kachru (1992), this fallacy is based on four other myths. First, the 'interlocutor myth' assumes that all students learn English to communicate with and be understood by 'native speakers'; however, researchers point out that most learners will communicate with other 'non-native speakers' in what is known as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 1997). Second, while it is still commonly believed that students learn English to understand British or American culture, an understanding which supposedly only a 'native speaker' can provide, it is both problematic to define what is meant by British and American culture (Seargeant, 2013), and how knowledge thereof would contribute to students interacting more successfully in English, especially in international and multicultural contexts. Furthermore, the 'native speaker' fallacy presupposes that the 'native speaker' model of language is the only model to be taught and learnt. Nevertheless, there is neither any evidence that using the language like a 'native speaker' leads to greater intelligibility in international settings (Graddol, 2006; Smith & Nelson, 2006), nor that it is a more appropriate one from the point of view of teaching and learning (Buckingham, 2015). Finally, there is no empirical evidence that 'native speaker' teachers are more effective than 'non-native speaker' ones. For example, a recent study on teaching pronunciation did not find any differences in improvement of students who were taught by a 'native speaker' or a 'non-native speaker' (Levis, Sonsaat, Link, & Barriuso, 2016).

However, some learners have been found to idealise 'native speaker' teachers and associate them with better teaching skills (Hu & Lindemann, 2009; McKenzie, 2008; Reis, 2011; Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard, & Wu, 2006). Many are also either not aware of ELF, or still view 'native speaker' models as the only correct norm (Jin, 2005; Timmis, 2002). Consequently, they might believe that English is best taught monolingually by 'native speakers', or that an L1 accent is a stigma and causes problems with intelligibility. These views are quite deeply entrenched in ELT in general and have for many years been the unquestioned truth in SLA research (Kachru, 1994), leading to a view of 'non-native speakers' as linguistically deficient, or failed copies of 'native speakers' (Valdés, 1998). However, researchers have argued that L2 language users should be viewed and studied for what they actually are; namely, bi- or multilingual individuals (Cook, 2005; Jenkins, 2015). This can not only have a positive effect on their motivation and self-confidence, but also help debunk the 'native speaker' fallacy. As a result, it is suggested that beliefs about second language acquisition are discussed with students in class (see 4.4).

## 2.3 THE COMPARATIVE FALLACY

One of the first attempts to question the ‘native speaker’ fallacy on a practical and empirical level came in the early 1990s. In his seminal paper, Medgyes (1992) argued that ‘non-native speakers’, despite their limited proficiency, can be equally good English teachers because they have unique strengths as teachers, such as higher language awareness, knowledge of students’ L1, higher empathy, which ‘native speakers’ do not have. These strengths were then confirmed by many other researchers (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Cheung & Braine, 2007; Chun, 2014; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). This approach was certainly quite successful in disrupting the discourse of the ‘native speaker’ fallacy, showing that ‘non-native speakers’ also had a lot to offer to ELT. It also gave ‘non-native speakers’, many of whom have been found to suffer from low self-confidence and self-esteem as teachers (Bernat, 2008; Medgyes, 1983; Suárez, 2000), a feeling of professional value. The findings from this research can, as a result, be used to raise students’ awareness of the strengths ‘non-native speakers’ have as ELT professionals (see 4.2), and help question the ‘native speaker’ fallacy.

Nevertheless, this approach to studying ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’ was later dubbed the comparative fallacy, and criticised by scholars for creating essentialised and stereotypical images of ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Selvi, 2014). For example, according to Holliday (2013) the comparative fallacy has inadvertently contributed to a domestication and routinisation of the ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ labels as part and parcel of ELT discourse, further endowing them with lists of fixed qualities and skills. In other words, it has become somewhat an article of faith that all ‘non-native speakers’ have high language awareness, while all ‘native speakers’ are better at teaching spoken English, which Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016) show to be false. In addition, from the very beginning, the argument has been based on an unproblematised notion of who a ‘native speaker’ is (see 2.1), assuming that the labels can indeed be useful and objective once properly defined; however, they have acquired a prejudiced life of their own, far removed from the original meaning of somebody who speaks a language as their mother tongue, which in itself is not unproblematic either. As Aboshisha (2015, p. 43) observes, the ‘native speaker’ has acquired a “mythological status”, which is not constituted by facts, but “a litany of opinions, practices and prejudices”.

Finally, all differences in teaching behaviour between the two groups observed by scholars are immediately attributed to their L1, rather than for example, to their pedagogical preparedness, education or experience. Since all language teachers need to undergo pedagogical training and acquire necessary knowledge and skills to be able to teach it successfully (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2016), Medgyes’ (1992) original question – who’s worth more: a ‘native’ or a ‘non-native speaker’? – becomes irrelevant. Instead, what is relevant is what constitutes effective teaching in a particular context (Farrell, 2015). Hence, while defining effectiveness in teaching is certainly problematic (Richards, 2010), numerous studies show that it is not being a ‘native speaker’ but qualities such as knowledge of and about English, pedagogical skills, understanding of learners’ culture and L1, or being a reflective practitioner which make an English teacher effective (Farrell, 2013; Lamb & Wedell, 2013; Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2013). Furthermore,

since what is seen as effective teaching can vary depending on the local socio-cultural and educational traditions (Lamb & Wedell, 2013; Mullock, 2010), it is worth discussing this subject with students to find out what they think makes English teachers effective (see 4.3). This can inform teachers' practice, and help debunk both the comparative and the 'native speaker' fallacies.

## **2.4 ELT RECRUITMENT POLICIES**

Native speakerism, the 'native speaker' and the comparative fallacies have become normalised and routinised and given credence through ELT recruitment policies. Various studies show that about three quarters of all ELT job advertisements published on the Internet are for 'native speakers' only (Kiczkowiak, 2015; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010). Being a 'native speaker' is in ELT recruitment usually tantamount to being from one of the 7 predominantly white and monolingual English-speaking countries, often referred to as the Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1992). Indeed, many job ads explicitly or implicitly suggest that the ideal candidate is young, white and Western-looking (Hayes, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). This means that non-white teachers, regardless of their L1, face further discrimination (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). These policies are institutionalised in countries such as China or Japan through visa regulations (Ruecker & Ives, 2015).

As a result, English teachers are often hired solely for their L1, and might lack teaching experience and relevant qualifications (Pablo, 2015; Rao, 2010). This undermines the value of pedagogical training, teaching skills and professionalism in ELT (Reis, 2011; Ruecker, 2011), leading to a situation where more suitable candidates are turned down based on their speakerhood or on a racist notion of what a 'native speaker' should look like. Consequently, students might not actually be taught by the best teachers available, but those chosen from a small group that fits a racialised image of a 'native speaker'. There is evidence, however, that students would like all their teachers to be selected through a rigorous and fair recruitment process (Rao, 2010). According to Ali (2009), many would in fact appreciate if they were consulted by the school about how teachers are recruited. Bearing this in mind, discussing discriminatory ELT recruitment policies with students can help raise their awareness of the problem (see 4.5).

## **3. HOW CAN NATIVE SPEAKERISM BE TACKLED?**

### **3.1 FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE RESEARCH**

Over the years, there have been numerous responses to and attempts to question the primacy of 'native speakers' in ELT. Critical applied linguists questioned the view that the 'native speaker' should be the ultimate goal of SLA and that a 'non-native speaker' was forever limited by their interlanguage (Birdsong, 2004; Davies, 2003; Kachru, 1994; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990). Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) showed and criticised the spread and promotion of the 'native speaker' fallacy within ELT, while Holiday (2005) described the influence of native speakerism. ELF and World Englishes re-

search further undermined the privileged position of ‘native speaker’ language models, illustrating the spread of English worldwide and giving legitimacy to all its users, regardless of their L1 (Jenkins, 2007, 2015; Kachru, 1992; Seidlhofer, 2011). Finally, a ‘Non-Native English Speaking Teachers’ (NNEST) movement emerged in the US and led to a creation of a Caucus, and then an Interest Section within TESOL International Association (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2016; Selvi, 2014).

While all the aforementioned research has helped raise the understanding and awareness of the complex discrimination ‘non-native speakers’ face in ELT, it has offered few practical solutions to the problem. For example, many teachers, while conceptually in favour of ELF, are still at a loss when it comes to how it could inform their teaching (Buckingham, 2015; Murray, 2003). This research has also failed to bring about a more level playing field; hence ‘non-native speakers’ still face discrimination not only in recruitment (see 2.4), but also from colleagues, students and their parents (Kiczkowiak & Wu, in press). However, the orientation of research on native speakerism in ELT from a reactive to a more pro-active one has recently started to take place. For example, Kiczkowiak, Baines and Krummenacher (2016) suggest implementing awareness-raising activities on initial teacher training programmes, while other researchers propose ELF-oriented teacher training frameworks (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Dewey, 2012). Kumaravadivelu’s (2016) framework described below is a continuation of this new orientation.

### **3.2 KUMARAVDIVELU’S FRAMEWORK**

In a recent article, Kumaravadivelu (2016, p. 17) points out that “seldom in the annals of an academic discipline have so many people toiled so hard, for so long, and achieved so little in their avowed attempt at disrupting the insidious structure of inequality in their chosen profession”. Likewise, Kamhi-Stein (2016) highlights that despite over 350 publications about ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’ in ELT, and despite a growing understanding of native speakerism and its impact on ELT, the so called ‘non-native speaker’ movement has failed to bring about more equality between the two groups. As a result, Kumaravadivelu (2016) suggests five strategies which he argues can help tackle the ideology of native speakerism:

1. discontinuing research focused on whether ‘non-native speaker’ teachers can teach equally well;
2. designing instructional strategies;
3. and EFL materials that will be more sensitive to the local educational context and tradition;
4. redesigning current teacher training programmes;
5. taking a more proactive approach to research.

This article aims to expand on the second step in the framework by presenting activities which teachers could use in class with students to raise their awareness of native speakerism and of ELF. This approach is rooted in critical pedagogy which sees education as a vehicle of social change. For example, Giroux (1988) emphasises the importance of ethics in education, pointing out that education should not only concern itself with the im-

parting of knowledge, but also with the issues of equality, justice and morality. This is vital because “education plays an important role in the construction of student subjectivities and that in order to change society, we need a vision of how students, as future adult citizens, might act in different social, cultural and political ways” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 298).

### **3.3 ADDRESSING NATIVE SPEAKERISM WITH STUDENTS**

There is evidence that suggests recruiters favour ‘native speaking’ teachers because of a perceived market demand from students and their parents (Holliday, 2008). While it is not true to say that the majority of students prefer any ‘native speaker’ teacher to any ‘non-native speaker’ teacher regardless of everything else, there is certainly enough evidence to claim that certain students under certain conditions do exhibit a preference for ‘native speaker’ teachers. This might be due to students’ relative lack of knowledge of how languages are learnt and taught, as well as of their unawareness of World Englishes, ELF and the issues of native speakerism, which can lead to an idealisation of the ‘native speaker’ as the best possible teacher (Jin, 2005; Reis, 2011).

Consequently, educating students about native speakerism can allow them to start making informed choices about where and who by they would like to be taught, which might further aid the creation of an ELT hiring system which instead of a teacher’s L1, emphasises how well a teacher can actually teach. This is in line with Reucker and Ives (2015), who observe that native speakerism only survives because it is reinforced through discourses that make it seem normal and sensible, some of which were presented in section 2. However, as teachers, we certainly have the possibility to disrupt these discourses, by debating and discussing them with students, thus bringing about positive change. For example, both Dufva (2003) and Barcelos (2003) show that students’ beliefs about learning languages are influenced by and often reflect those held by their teachers. In ELT this is evident, for example in a correlation between the negative perceptions of ELF and of ‘non-native speakers’ that many teachers and their students show (Kaur & Raman, 2014; Sung, 2014; Timmis, 2002).

Apart from the moral obligation that we as teachers might have to educate our students, there is also the practical one. As many scholars have argued, there is a profound mismatch between how English is currently being used and what English is taught in the classroom (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2003). On the one hand, the majority of students will most probably use English to communicate with other ‘non-native speakers’ in international and multicultural settings. If ‘native speakers’ will be present at all, they will be in a minority. On the other hand, both teaching methods and EFL/ESL materials have promoted an Anglocentric model of English, often with Standard British and American English as the only acceptable norms (Matsuda, 2002, 2012; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013; Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013). In contrast, as McKay (2002, p. 1) observes, “the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second or foreign language”. For example, Smith and Nelson (2006) show that not exposing students to the variety of English they will encounter outside the class, which is unlikely to be Standard

English, can negatively impact their ability to communicate successfully. Hence, ‘native speaker’ norms cannot be *a priori* thought of as the only appropriate teaching models and learning goals, for as Widdowson (1994) observes, if English is to remain an international language, it cannot be owned by the English, nor the Americans or the Australians – it must belong to all of its users, whether ‘native’ or ‘non-native’.

In addition, the insistence on conformity with idealised ‘native speaker’ norms stalls the development of what Widdowson (2003) refers to as the communicative capability, that is, the capability to make use of the inherent linguistic potential of the English language. So, rather than evaluate the learner in terms of what they can do in English, students are assessed based on their (non-)conformity with ‘native speaker’ structural and communicative norms. It creates a paradox, whereby ‘non-native speakers’ are constantly encouraged by teachers to imitate the ‘native speaker’ as closely as possible, while at the same time most SLA researchers maintain that it is an impossible goal (Rajagopalan, 2005). This can have a negative influence on the self-confidence and motivation of ‘non-native speakers’ who might see themselves as forever linguistically deficient (Bernat, 2008; Llurda, 2015; Medgyes, 1983). Such an approach also positions ‘non-native speaker’ professionals and learners as ‘problematic’ others, whose ‘deficient’ behaviour must be corrected (Holliday, 2005). Finally, insisting on conformity with ‘native speaker’ norms as far as pronunciation is concerned, for example, does not lead to more, but actually less improvement in terms of students’ intelligibility in comparison to using an ELF-based pronunciation syllabus (Rahimi & Ruzrokh, 2016; Zoghbor, 2011).

### 3.6 LIMITATIONS

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged here that only raising students’ awareness, not combined with other affirmative actions from Kumaravdivelu’s framework, is unlikely to diminish the influence of native speakerism on ELT as there are other very powerful interests and factors at play. For example, most teacher training programmes fail to educate teacher candidates about the current socio-linguistic reality of English as a global lingua franca, or about the impact of native speakerism on various aspects of ELT (Llurda, 2004; Matsuda, 2009). As Kumaravdivelu suggests in step 4, current teacher training programmes need to be rethought to better reflect the new global reality of the English language and its speakers. This approach has recently been suggested by Dewey (2012) and Kiczkowiak, et al. (2016). An ELF-oriented teacher training programme has also been put into practice with quite promising results by Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015).

Furthermore, the numerous ELT methods and approaches, which have come and gone over the years, have been developed in the ‘native-speaking’ West, by ‘native speakers’ and for ‘native speaker’ teachers (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). Instead of attempting “to capitalize on the cultural richness and experience which [‘non-native speaker’] teachers and students bring with them” (Holliday, 2013, pp. 21–22), ELT methods are often directed at correcting how ‘non-native speakers’ behave in class (Holliday, 2005). In other words, ‘non-native speakers’ and their behaviour are seen as problematic and in need of correction to fit the ‘superior’ Western methodology. Consequently, there needs to be a



change in teaching methodology towards a less Anglocentric approach, perhaps adopting a more ELF-oriented perspective. Such shift would also need to be imparted through teacher training programmes.

What is also needed is a profound change in how EFL/ESL course books present English and its speakers. Matsuda (2012) observes that teaching materials play a very important role in shaping students' beliefs about the target language. Currently, EFL and ESL course books propagate the discourse of native speakerism by presenting 'native speakers' as the only models of correctness and appropriateness (Jenkins, 2012), by focusing almost exclusively on British and American culture (Modiano, 2005; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013) and by misrepresenting L2 English users (Cook, 2001; Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013). While a radical change in course books in this respect is still to take place, teachers themselves might be able to adapt the materials to make them more ELF-oriented and better suited for their learners (Seidlhofer, 2015). For this to happen, however, teacher training courses need to emphasise an ELF-oriented approach more (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Dewey, 2012), and new instructional strategies need to be developed.

Finally, apart from students, other stake holders should also be educated about the negative impact native speakerism is having on ELT. Seidlhofer (2011) points out that ELF scholarship has not yet entered public's consciousness. Hence, even when learners do not feel the need to imitate the 'native speaker' norm, or to study with a 'native speaker' teacher, the expectations of their parents and other relatives might be completely different (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). This can lead to a situation when teachers might feel pressured to avoid ELF-oriented materials (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015). Many recruiters have also been found to consider being a 'native speaker' an important recruitment criterion (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004; Moussu, 2006), possibly because they believe that this is what the majority of their students want (Holliday, 2009).

All in all, then, there is no doubt that educating the students alone cannot solve native speakerism. However, it can certainly contribute to bringing about some change. It is also in line with three of the five steps proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2016), namely, it first breaks with the tradition of research which focused on proving that 'non-native speakers' can be good English teachers by identifying their strengths as teachers. Second, the activities presented here can contribute to designing new instructional strategies. Finally, the approach taken in this article aims to offer solutions to the problem of native speakerism, rather than merely identify more problems, which is in line with Kumaravadivelu's fifth point.

#### **4. AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES**

Below, four activities are presented. They are appropriate for levels Intermediate and higher, but could be potentially adapted to suit lower level students. For example, the language can be simplified. In activity 1, instead of the statements, the teacher could use visuals to elicit answers and start a discussion. There is also no reason why some of the activities should not be carried out in part in students L1. For example, the students could discuss the qualities of their ideal teacher (see Activity 3) in their L1, but share the results of their

discussion in English. Many of the activities could also be extended or adapted. For example, the list of beliefs about learning English could be first generated by students, then changed into questions which students could use to conduct a class survey.

#### 4.1 ACTIVITY 1: WHO IS A 'NATIVE SPEAKER'?

**Rationale:** As discussed in 2.1, numerous scholars have criticised the simplicity of the binary division into 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' (Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2015; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990). It has also been shown that the two labels are subjective, ideological and value-laden (Aboshiha, 2015; Holliday, 2013, 2015), and that being a 'native speaker' is at times associated with being white and Western-looking (Amin, 2004; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). Students tend to have an idealised and less diverse view of the native speaker (Reis, 2011).

**Activity:** Complete this statement using your own words. Then, compare your answer with your partner. Were your answers similar? Why (not)? *A 'native speaker' is somebody who...*

How far do you agree with the following statements? (1 - completely disagree; 2 - disagree, 3 - agree; 4 - completely agree):

1. A 'native speaker' is somebody who was born only in the UK, the US, Ireland or Australia.
2. A 'native speaker' did their tertiary education in English.
3. A person who has IELTS 9 or CPE is a 'native speaker'.
4. A 'native speaker' speaks English perfectly and never makes mistakes.
5. All 'native speakers' are white.
6. There are no 'native speaker' in Kenya or India.
7. Only the English spoken by a 'native speaker' is the real and correct English.
8. A person born to English-speaking parents who has lived abroad most of their life is not a 'native speaker'.

Compare your answers with other students and try to justify your choices. Which statements do you most disagree about? Why?

Read the following statement. Discuss with your partner. Do you agree? Why (not)?

Some scholars have suggested that the labels 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' are artificial and have little relevance in the modern world where most people are at least bilingual. These labels have also been reported to create an antagonistic view of the English-speaking community, contributing to the view that 'non-native speaker' are worse English teachers.

## 5.2 ACTIVITY 2: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ‘NATIVE’ AND ‘NON-NATIVE SPEAKER’ TEACHERS

**Rationale:** It is true that the constant comparisons between ‘native speaker’ teachers and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers only further perpetuate stereotypes (see 2.3). They can also be “polarizing and self-defeating and contribut[ing] to the perception that there is a division in status and teaching effectiveness” (Farrell, 2015, p. 3). However, it is important that students realise that both groups have strengths and weaknesses, a fact well-documented by research, and that neither is intrinsically superior to the other (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Chun, 2014; Moussu, 2006). In addition, if this activity is done together with the following (see Activity 3) or the preceding (see Activity 1) one, students might in fact reach a conclusion that being a ‘native speaker’ has no relevance to how successful a teacher one is. They might also come to realise that the binary classification into ‘native speaker’ teachers and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers is questionable.

**Activity:** Divide students into two groups. One group should imagine a really good ‘native speaker’ teacher, while the other a really good ‘non-native speaker’ teacher they have been taught by. What qualities made them a good teacher? Did they have any weaknesses? As a group agree on a list of strengths and weaknesses.

Pair students with a person from the other group. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses your group listed. Does your new partner agree? Why (not)? Are there any strengths and weaknesses that both ‘native speaker’ teachers and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers share?

Some food for thought: Will all ‘native speaker’ teachers and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers share the strengths and weaknesses you listed? Can ‘non-native speaker’ teachers acquire any of the strengths ‘native speaker’ teachers have? And vice versa? Why (not)? Does being a ‘native speaker’ make you a better teacher?

## 5.3 ACTIVITY 3: MY IDEAL ENGLISH TEACHER

**Rationale:** As pointed out in 2.3, constant comparisons between ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’ teachers can perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions about the two groups. As a result, “it is now time that we as a profession began to talk about critical competencies of *effective teachers* and *effective teaching*, regardless of that teacher’s background” (Farrell, 2015, p. 3). While defining effective teaching is problematic (see 2.3), it is evident that all English teachers, irrespective of their first language, must complete pedagogical training and acquire knowledge of and about the language they are going to teach if they are to be successful teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2016).

**Activity:** With a partner remember the best English teacher you have ever had. As a pair list maximum 10 qualities that made that teacher great. Compare your list with that of another pair and agree as a four on a combined list of maximum 10 qualities. Give reasons for your choices. Depending on the number of students in class, continue the pyramid discussion until the whole class gets together to agree on the 10 qualities.

Depending whether students included or not being a ‘native speaker’ on the list, ask: Why is being a ‘native speaker’ (not) on the list? Is it an important trait? Why (not)? How important is it in comparison with the other traits you listed?

Below is a list of characteristics various scholars consider fundamental in effective language teachers (Lamb & Wedell, 2013; Richards, 2010, 2014). Compare them to your list. Do you agree with them? Would you add any to your list?

- **Proficiency** in the language
- **language awareness**, or knowledge about the language
- **high pedagogical knowledge**, i.e. knows different teaching methods and how and when to use them
- **reflects critically** on their own teaching
- **able to motivate learners through** showing empathy and encouragement
- **understanding of learners’ culture, needs and difficulties**

Are any of these traits exclusive to ‘native speaker’ or ‘non-native speaker’? In other words, is effective English teaching influenced by the teacher’s mother tongue?

#### 5.4 ACTIVITY 4: MY BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

**Rationale:** It is often the case that learners start a course with a certain set of misconceptions about how languages are learnt or should be taught. For example, they might think that preparing long lists of individual words translated to L1 is the best way to learn vocabulary. Likewise, some students might be prejudiced towards ‘non-native speaker’ teachers, because of their previous experience, for example, or believe that the ‘native speaker’ norm is the only valid one they should aspire to. Consequently, it is important that educators do not shy away from discussing such misconceptions with learners, since they are the root cause of the ‘native speaker’ fallacy (see 2.2).

**Activity:** Individually decide how far you agree with the following statements (1 - completely disagree; 2 - disagree; 3 - agree; 4 - completely agree). Next to each statement write a reason briefly explaining your opinion:

1. Only a ‘native speaker’ can teach me real and correct English.
2. I need a ‘native speaker’ to learn important things about the culture of English speaking countries.
3. There are only 7 countries where English is the official language: Ireland, the UK, the

US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

4. There are only 7 countries where English is the official language: Ireland, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.
5. I might learn incorrect pronunciation from a 'non-native speaker'.
6. I would like to speak with a 'native speaker' accent.
7. English is mostly used by 'native speakers'.
8. 'Non-native speakers' are worse teachers.
9. 'Native speakers' are not good at teaching grammar.
10. I don't want to sound like a 'native speaker'.
11. I like having a teacher that can speak my first language. It can be helpful in class.

Compare your answers with a partner and discuss any differences and similarities.

Possible follow up questions:

- Do you think it's important to sound like a 'native speaker'? Why (not)?
- What are the pros and cons of using students' first language in the classroom?
- Do 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' teach differently? Why (not)?
- Some people think a 'native speaker' speaks the language perfectly, while a 'non-native speaker' always makes mistakes. Do you agree? Is it possible to speak a language with no mistakes? Why (not)?
- Is it important to learn about the culture of English speaking countries and people? Since there are over 50 countries where English is an official language, is it possible to talk about the culture of English speaking countries?

## 5.5 ACTIVITY 5: CHOOSING A LANGUAGE SCHOOL

**Rationale:** As discussed in 2.4, 'non-native speakers' and non-white 'native speakers' are frequently discriminated in ELT recruitment. It is suggested here that as customers the students should be made aware of this, so that they can make informed decisions in the future about which course and language school to choose.

**Activity:** Discuss with your partner why you decided to choose this language school. What are the main factors that you take into account before you decide which school to choose?

Look at the list below and decide how important are these factors when choosing a language school (1 - completely irrelevant; 2 - unimportant; 3 - important; 4 - very important). Then, compare answers with your partner:

1. The school employs only 'native speaker'.
2. The school has a very good reputation.
3. The courses are cheaper than in other schools.
4. All teachers are qualified and experienced.
5. The schedule suits me.
6. I can prepare for an exam (e.g. IELTS).
7. The school employs both 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' based on qualifica-

tions and experience.

8. My friends recommended the school to me.

Now imagine you were responsible for hiring language teachers for your school. Which factors would you take into account? What questions would you ask the candidate? Are there any factors you think should not appear on job ads (e.g. gender)?

Look at an example of a real job ad. Decide with a partner what you think of the selection criteria. Are they appropriate? Why (not)? Would you go to this language school? Why (not)?

English Teachers in Aragon, Spain,  
Well-established, growing EFL academy.

Aragon, Spain – 3 x full-time positions starting immediately for TEFL trained teachers.

Well-established, growing EFL language academy.

Must be native speakers of English and UK / EU passport.

**Applications accepted individually or as a couple. NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY.**

For academic year 2016 – 2017. Some Spanish an advantage, but not necessary. Help given with finding accommodation.

Please forward an up-to-date C.V. by email stating **exact** availability and the position(s) you are applying for.

[adapted from: <http://www.tefl.org.uk/job/english-teachers-aragon-spain/>]

Having read the ad, has your opinion about the statements 1 - 8 you discussed above changed in any way? Why (not)? Discuss with a partner.

Read this short text below:

Research shows that around 70% of all advertised positions for English language teachers are for 'native speaker' only. Often, no teaching qualifications or experience are required. This means that many highly qualified, competent and experienced 'non-native speakers' are not even considered for the position. It also means that very little value is placed on teaching skills, experience and qualifications.

Discuss with a partner:

- Do you think it's OK to advertise exclusively for 'native speakers'? Why (not)?
- Would you complain to the school director if you had classes with a 'non-native speaker'? Why (not)?
- What in your opinion makes a really good English teacher?

## 6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This article started by outlining four discourses that support the ideology of native speakerism. It then argued, following Kumaravdivelu (2016), that in order to really face and tackle native speakerism, a more pro-active approach to the problem is needed. It has then suggested that since there is evidence that recruiters hire ‘native speaker’ teachers only based on a perceived demand from students, and since such policies can only be maintained if students remain relatively unaware of their discriminatory nature, discussing issues surrounding native speakerism in the classroom might prove helpful. Hence, it has been proposed that teachers should discuss issues concerning native speakerism and discrimination of ‘non-native speaker’ with their students as only then can the learners become fully informed clients rather than blissfully unaware consumers of an often discriminatory product served by many a language school. To this end, five awareness-raising activities which can be used with EFL and ESL students have been suggested. Each of these activities is directed at one of the discourses supporting native speakerism.

While the activities proposed above have not been formally tested, informal research indicates that they might not only raise students’ awareness of native speakerism, but also serve as an excellent topic for classroom discussion. All the activities were carried out with a group of eight Spanish students during 2016 Innovate ELT conference in Barcelona. The students approached the tasks with considerable enthusiasm and were able to offer quite insightful contributions. While at the beginning many associated the image of a ‘native speaker’ with someone from Britain, after Activity 1, some offered more nuanced answers. It was also interesting to see how they challenged each other and argued whether ‘native speakers’ make better teachers or not. Students’ reactions to the job ad in Activity 5 were also very telling, since most could simply not believe that teachers are recruited in such an unprofessional way. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the activities proposed here, or of similar ones, for raising students’ awareness of native speakerism and ELF needs to be further empirically tested. This can be combined with designing and carrying out more ELF-oriented teacher training and development programmes for in-service and pre-service teachers, as suggested by many researchers (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Bozzo, 2015; Dewey, 2012; Kiczkowiak, Baines, & Krummenacher, 2016; Kiczkowiak & Wu, in press; Pedrazzini, 2015). All in all, this article proposes that future research focuses on offering ELT professionals practical solutions for addressing the problem of native speakerism.

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