Salem State University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of English

Three Language Schools, Same Mission, One NNEST: Native-Speakerism in the Discourses of Three Private Language Schools

A Thesis in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

by

Omer Faruk SARICA
Copyright 2025, Omer Faruk SARICA

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching

August 2025

Abstract

This qualitative study examines how private language schools reproduce or resist native-speakerism through public-facing discourses of three language schools where I also worked: British Town (Turkey), Canadian College (Colombia), and Approach International Student Center (Boston). Using multimodal critical discourse analysis, I analyzed websites and job advertisements through an integrated framework: Selvi's job-ad coding of discriminatory language, Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, and Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar. Data consisted of public facing school discourses and screenshots of institutional pages and recruitment posts; analysis combined deductive codes (e.g., nativeness requirements, citizenship/passport filters, credential talk) with inductive themes in text-image pairings. The findings indicate that Turkey and Colombia explicitly and implicitly convey preference for native or foreign speakers by implementing British, US, and Canadian symbols; images of international (white) teachers; and different tiers of language course packages that indicate access to native or bicultural educators is superior and more valuable. By contrast, the Boston site centers qualifications, mentoring, and mission fit; job language avoids "native" requirements, and the staff page displays significant diversity. The patterns across cases hint at how market branding, rules, and school goals all work together. This research introduces a single, integrated coding model for websites and ads. Limitations include three cases and public texts only; future work should connect discourse to HR records and pay scales across sites and over time.

Key words: native-speakerism, NNESTs, private ELT schools, job ads, CDA, MCDA

Contents

Abstract ii
List of Figures iv
Glossary of Acronyms v
Introduction and Background to the Study 1
  Purpose and Significance of the Study 5
  Research Questions 6
Literature Review 7
  Native-speakerism and Linguistic Imperialism 7
  Who is a Native Speaker? 11
  Stakeholders' Perceptions 13
  Discrimination in Employer Discourses 19
  Impacts of Native Speakerism on NNESTs' Professional Identities 21
  Context of The Research 24
Methodology 27
Theoretical Framework 29
Data Analyzed in the Study 30
Data Collection and Analysis 32
Analysis and Findings 33
  Turkey 34
  Colombia 41
  The United States 45
Discussion 48
Conclusion 53
References 55

List of Figures

Figure 1 ______ *36*
Figure 1.1 ______ *37*
Figure 1.2 ______ *38*
Figure 1.3 ______ *40*
Figure 1.4 ______ *41*
Figure 2 ______ *44*
Figure 2.1 ______ *45*
Figure 2.2 ______ *46*
Figure 2.3 ______ *47*
Figure 3 ______ *48*
Figure 3.1 ______ *49*
Figure 3.2 ______ *50*

Glossary of Acronyms

CDA — Critical discourse analysis

CEFR — Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

EAP — English for academic purposes

EFL — English as a foreign language

ELL — English language learner

ELT — English language teaching

ESL — English as a second language

L1 / L2 — First language / Second language

MCDA — Multimodal critical discourse analysis

NEST(s) — Native English-speaking teacher(s)

NNEST(s) — Non-native English-speaking teacher(s)

TESOL — Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Introduction and Background to the Study

As a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) who has worked in different countries such as Turkey, Colombia, and the United States, I have experienced how hiring practices, perceptions of stakeholders, and perceptions of teaching experience change depending on the sociolinguistic context and diverse population of the student demographic. In Turkey, even though I was holding a Bachelor's degree in Translation Science, I was offered fewer hours and lower pay than a native expat co-worker from England with no teaching degree. In Colombia, I was offered a higher salary and more hours than a local teacher because of being "international," regardless of my non-native English speaker status–opposite my first teaching experience. In Boston–a city with a big international population and immigrant diversity–I found myself part of a much more equitable system, where my colleagues and I were valued solely based on our academic credentials and teaching experience (the majority of the teachers were international). Taking into account that these three places were profit-driven language schools with commercial priorities and I, a NNEST, was the same professional all along, these contrasting encounters raise important questions: Why was I perceived, valued, and treated so differently at these three private language schools? What is the interplay between the cultural background of an ESL teacher and perceptions of recruiters towards NNESTs in different countries? These are the questions which launched this study.

Scholars have been trying to answer questions related to inequities between native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) for decades. As Braine (2010) explains, native speakers are frequently viewed as superior teachers since English language Teaching (ELT) has been vastly shaped by the "native speaker fallacy" (pp. 13-15), a term first coined by Phillipson (1992) which expresses the belief that "the ideal

teacher is a native speaker" (p. 185). In the same way, by the same dichotomy, NNESTs may be perceived as "deficient communicators," according to Selvi (2011). By assuming the most effective English teacher is a native speaker of English, private language schools (and other teaching contexts) in the ELT field perpetuate hiring biases, imbalanced professional growth for NNESTs, and inequitable working conditions (Mahboob, 2010; Phillipson, 1992). Since 1992 to the present day, NNESTs too often are being judged by what they lack, native-like fluency, instead of being valued for what they offer: the ability to make explicit grammar explanations, their intercultural competence, and their ability to empathize with learners through their own language learning experiences (Medges, 1992).

That so-called "native speakerism" (Holiday, 2005) ultimately affects the self-perception of NNESTs and perceptions of stakeholders in TESOL. Native-speakerism is an ideology in ELT that places "native'' English speakers and their cultures on pedestals and positions them as inherently superior models for teaching and learning languages, an assumption that influences hiring, marketing, and classroom practices, and disadvantages non-native speaking teachers (British Council, n.d.; TESOL International Association, 2020; University of Texas at El Paso, n.d.) (British Council, 2023; Favela Camacho, 2023; Mohamed, 2023). When students and parents assume a "native" teacher is more authentic or effective, it pressures such schools to use the number of expatriate teachers as a marketing tool and give them better pay and salaries, causing NNESTs to work harder to prove their credibility to their managers and students (Selvi, Yazan & Mahboob, 2024). For example, in Turkey, some local private institutions have reported that they would hire any"foreign-looking teacher" (Keskin, 2022), which indicates that not only being native but *looking* like a native speaker can lead to preferences in hiring over qualified NNESTs. Despite the fact that recent estimates still indicate that about 80% of the world's ~15

million English teachers are non-native, NNESTs have been disregarded and passed over, regardless of their qualifications, which he sums up as “No NNS need apply” (Braine, 2010; Favela Camacho, 2023).

I use the field’s conventional labels “NEST” and “NNEST” in this study because they are widely accepted in English Language Teaching research and practice. which lets my analysis stay comparable with prior studies. At the same time, following the literature, I put these terms in quotation marks here, to draw attention to their essentializing nature and to critique the ideology they index, as others have done, to show that they are not neutral. Crucially, these labels are still used to record unfair hiring behavior, show different advantages, and support advocacy in the NNEST movement (Selvi, Yazan, & Mahboob, 2023).

Research shows that native-speakerism is reproduced through a chain of stakeholder pressures in private ELT. Recruiters and school directors frequently acknowledge that, although qualifications and experience matter, the “native speaker” label still carries market value, largely due to anticipated client (student/parent) reactions (Kiczkowiak, 2020; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Comparative stakeholder work also indicates a persistent idealization of native-speaker teachers that can boost learner/parent demand, even while many stakeholders simultaneously argue that training and teaching skills matter more than nativeness; NNESTs are repeatedly credited with empathy because they have learned the language themselves (Colmenero-Lasagabaster, 2023; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Together, these studies suggest that owners and recruiters are responsive to perceived market demand, which is shaped by student/parent imaginaries of the “ideal” teacher and then encoded in job ads and branding—a cycle documented across regions and over time (Kiczkowiak, 2020; Ruecker & Ives, 2015).

However, some studies also have shown that not all students prefer NESTs over NNESTs. Mahboob (2005) found that some students did not have a strong preference based on a teacher's native language, while some students might have changing preferences over time (Moussu, 2006; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). In a study conducted by Moussu (2010), the author observed that students had distinct preferences between NESTs and NNESTs, but this preference changed after spending time with NNESTs in classrooms; students appreciated their grammar instruction, language learning experiences, and classroom management abilities (Mousso, 2010). In fact, students may want both NEST and NNEST teachers at different times and for different purposes, according to their language proficiency levels and their needs (Tsou & Chen, 2017).

Many early scholars acknowledge these biases and differences between NESTs and NNEST, with George Braine even starting a "NNEST movement" in the late 1990s (Selvi, 2019) .The NNEST movement is a professional and research-driven effort in TESOL, begun in the late 1990s, that challenges discriminatory native-speakerism and advocates equitable recognition of non-native English-speaking teachers' qualifications, expertise, and leadership in the field (Braine, 2010; Mahboob, 2010). Many studies, advocacy projects, and movements have sought to overcome false assumptions shaping the perceptions of both groups, such as TESOL position statements in 1992, 2006, and 2024 which pushed ELT professionals to move beyond these biases and create collaboration between NESTs and NNESTs in the ELT field (Matsuda, 2001; Mahboob, 2010; TESOL, 2024). However, discriminatory biases still shape the professional lives of NNESTs, especially in a profit-driven and commercial context where students and managers have monolingual or Western-centric ideas (Selvi,Yazan, & Mahboob, 2024).

In my own experience, I had assumed that perceptions of native speaker supremacy was normal due to not experiencing an equitable professional environment until my experience in a

Boston private language school, a highly international and diverse context where professional competence is not measured by linguistic background as a primary criterion. On the other hand, in environments where linguistic and ethnic diversity were limited among the student population, my experience was the complete opposite. Three language schools, same mission, one NNEST.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate–through review of existing literature and a multimodal analysis of the discourses of three private language schools–to what extent explicit and implicit biases against NNESTs still exist. As a non-native English speaker who has taught in different countries, I have witnessed and experienced how the different shapes and forms of these biases can affect equitable job opportunities. In this specific context, profit-driven private language schools, I felt disadvantaged in Turkey, favored in Colombia for being "international," and evaluated solely on my qualifications in Boston, U.S.A. These contrasting experiences have led me to question and explore how marketing and teacher recruitment texts and images align with how private language schools perceive and treat NNESTs. By doing so, this qualitative study aims to build on previous studies, particularly Selvi's quantitative analysis (2010) of native speakerism in ELT recruitment, by looking in depth at how and to what extent the public facing discourses of three private language schools perpetuate or challenge native-speakerism.

The significance of this study extends well beyond my personal experiences. Since the early 1990s and up until the present, Medgyes, Braine, and many other scholars have widely critiqued and challenged the "native speaker-fallacy"--the belief that native speakers are inherently better English teachers (Braine, 1999, Medgyes, 1992; Phillipson, 1992). And yet, despite increasing academic attention to problems of equity and professionalism in ELT, non-

native English-speaking teachers continue to experience discrimination and marginalization in almost every dimension of their professional lives. Numerous studies have documented the ways in which NNESTs are excluded, devalued, and sometimes discriminated against through advertisements (Ruecker, 2011; Selvi, 2010) and recruiter biases (Kiczkowiak, 2020). Additionally, identity conflicts and reduced self-esteem are some of the psychological and professional toll that NNESTs have faced, internalizing discriminatory ideologies (Buckingham, 2014; Reis, 2011; Viafara, 2016). In settings where native-speakerism is explicitly and implicitly institutionalized, especially profit-driven private language schools, these tensions are acute (Mackenzie, 2021; Ruecker, 2011).

Even though many studies have called for a shift toward inclusivity and recognition of multilingual competencies (Mahboob, 2010; Selvi, Yazan, & Mahboob, 2024), clearly, elements of linguistic imperialism as articulated by Phillipson all the way back in 1992 are still affecting and shaping the perceptions of teacher qualifications by favoring native English-speaking teachers and their linguistic background over pedagogical skills, qualifications, and/or teaching experience, especially in the context of private language schools. Moreover, this research takes the position that these assumptions and beliefs in English language education are fundamentally rooted in global discourses around hiring practices and non-native English-speaking teachers. Thus, in this study, I seek to answer the following questions:

Research Questions

To what extent does native-speakerism still persist in the profit-driven, private language school sector?

How do the discourses of three private language schools in Turkey, Colombia, and Boston construct or resist native-speakerism in text and image?

Literature Review

Native-speakerism and Linguistic Imperialism

In order to investigate the persistence and/or transformation of native-speakerism in the discourses of private language schools, it is first necessary to thoroughly review research into native-speakerism and its impacts on NNESTs. As is clear from the introduction to this thesis, ideological constructs that favor English-speaking teachers (NESTs) over non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) have profoundly shaped the English Language Teaching (ELT) field and its history. This preference has been taken as a basis for hiring practices and has shaped the perceptions of all stakeholders, including non-native teachers.

One of the earliest milestone examinations of the native speaker fallacy concluded that the historical roots of this phenomenon are embedded in colonial and imperialist legacies that positioned English as a cultural benchmark (Phillipson, 1992). Those roots have shaped the perception that a native-speaking teacher of English is superior to and has greater pedagogical competence than a NNEST, which has led to unfair hiring practices and discriminatory biases in ELT field. Phillipson discusses the concept of native-speakerism within the broad framework of linguistic imperialism (1992). It was the first main study which identified how and why NESTs were getting favored in ELT settings. Phillipson explains these systematically favoring biases by primarily focusing on key concepts such as “English dominance” and “colonialism.” He also emphasized that along with the ELT field favoring native English-speaking teachers, non-native English speaking teachers were discriminated against in ELT settings. He raised his concerns about this bias and explained where and how it might have been rooted. Phillipson investigated broadly historical colonial dominance where English-speaking countries promoted their language

as culturally superior and economically beneficial. Therefore, the ideal language instructors were formed by these colonial and colonized countries. This systematic favoritism towards native English-speaking teachers created (and still creates) undeniable imbalances in the ELT field, including an environment of linguistic superiority and the marginalization of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs).

Braine (1999) and Medgyes (1992) examined the roles and capabilities of NNESTs and set the groundwork for re-examination of this fallacy. Medgyes, comparing NESTs and NNESTs, emphasized the professional benefits learners can get when we value difference rather than rank it, emphasizing a collaborative model where each group's strengths balance the other. As he put it, "The ideal school is one where native and non-native teachers work in harmony, complementing each other's strengths" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 354). The need to consider NNESTs' experience while learning the language and their multilingual competencies were further acknowledged and lauded by Braine (1999), who concluded that NNESTs' challenges throughout their language learning experiences can serve as effective models for language learners. Braine (1999; 2010) and Medgyes (1992) were pivotal in shifting the conversation from a deficit view of NNESTs to one that recognizes strengths of both groups. Braine argued that NNESTs' own experience as successful L2 learners and their ability to draw on students' first language and local cultures can be pedagogical assets, not liabilities (Braine, 2010).

Alptekin (2002) both backs up and builds on these discussions by discussing a mindset shift towards intercultural communicative competence, highlighting that NNESTs have a lot to offer such as unique advantages in terms of cultural relevance and multilingual teacher strategies, as well as their ability to apply the knowledge they gained while they were learning the language into their own teaching strategies. Alptekin argues that considering only native-speaker models

would underestimate the complexities and realities of global English usage, especially in multilingual contexts. He advocates for a shift towards intercultural communicative competence as a part of teacher competencies. He is explicit that the native-speaker model is “utopian, unrealistic, and constraining” for English as an international language and urges “a new notion of communicative competence … that would … take as pedagogic models successful bilinguals with intercultural insights and knowledge” (Alptekin, 2002, p. 57).

Cook (2002) enriches the research conversation by using the concept of “L2 user” for the first time. He redefines the traditional language learner concept by discussing the functional use of second language beyond only acquisition. As effective L2 users, NNESTs are considered very proficient in using multiple languages and utilizing intercultural communication, which, Cook states, challenges the general idealization of monolingualism. Building his arguments, he highlights how multilingual competencies of L2 users enrich their teaching contexts, and he calls for a comprehensive recognition of NNESTs’ linguistic capabilities. Llurda (2005) adds more to this discussion with his empirical research and theoretical discussion addressing the strengths and challenges that NNESTs face. Llurda demonstrates how native-speaker biases continue to exist but he also shows how NNESTs contribute to ELT uniquely with their awareness of learner difficulties along with a level of sensitivity to language learning processes. This vital role NNESTs play in language learning reinforces the important need to change a native-speaker superiority mindset.

Importantly, Mahboob (2009) discusses racial discrimination towards NNESTs and the racial dimensions of native-speakerism, especially in hiring practices in ELT. He criticizes how preference for native-speaker instructors reinforces implicit biases and favors white Western educators. He believes the field of ELT needs to reassess discriminatory hiring practices and turn

towards hiring policies prioritizing pedagogical skills and language competence over nativeness and ethnicity. He brings early and significant understanding of biased institutional hiring practices and the challenges that NNESTs face because of it, due to the colonial and imperial legacy of the ELT field (Braine, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), and he shows how the discriminatory practices and biases that NNESTs face in recruitment and employment have persisted over the years.

As additional evidence and especially important to this study, Ruecker (2011) and Selvi (2010) both conducted job advertisement analyses and concluded that many employers exclude NNESTs and favor NESTs, implicitly and explicitly, through language in advertisements or requirements such as "native speaker only." Selvi (2014) goes on to discuss myths and misconceptions about NNESTs, challenging assumptions towards NESTs as pedagogical superiors in ELT context. Selvi provides extensive evidence about how teaching effectiveness is not related to nativism but rather aligns with pedagogical and linguistic competence. By rejecting these myths and assumptions, Selvi makes significant contributions to recognizing NNESTs' important roles and as a conclusion, he calls for equitable professional standards within the field of TESOL, stating that "Despite these institutionalized initiatives and responses, discriminatory hiring and workplace practices continue to exist across the world" (Selvi, 2014, p. 581). Nevertheless, a more recent study showed that many recruiters and hiring decision-makers still consider nativeness as a primary qualification, even though pedagogical and other competencies of NNESTs have been demonstrated in the ELT sector many times (Kiczkowiak, 2020).

Together, these perspectives play an important role in supporting the argument against the persistence of native-speakerism in ELT. These and many other scholars advocate for inclusive and multilingual approaches to hiring practices which recognize the value of NNESTs'

competencies. The work of Selvi (2010) proves particularly important to this thesis, as his analysis identifies specific words and phrases in job ads which discursively indicate native speakerism, words and phrases which will guide my own analysis of the discourses of three private language schools.

Who is a Native Speaker?

Before proceeding further into the review of literature, I must define "native speaker" as used in this study, situating it within Kachru's (1985) concentric circles to show how the term is socially, not just linguistically, constructed. The idea of a native speaker isn't as clear as it seems. Many in English language teaching assume it means someone from an English-speaking country, but academics have questioned this assumption.

Kachru's (1985) model is a well-known way to think about this term. He divides English speakers into three groups: the Inner Circle (like the USA, UK, Canada), the Outer Circle (like India, Nigeria), and the Expanding Circle (like Turkey, Japan). Native speakers are usually thought to be from the Inner Circle. Even then, it's hard to decide who counts as a native speaker. Many people in the Outer Circle learn English from birth and use it as their main language, but they aren't seen as native speakers because of political or racial reasons (Kachru, 1985). Kachru aims to illustrate the diverse historical and functional biases for English use, not to rank speakers. Countries such as Turkey and Japan, which belong to the Expanding Circle, depend on English mainly as a foreign language learned in schools with norms typically taken from Inner- or Outer Circle rather than locally codified ones. The Outer Circle (India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Hong Kong), on the other hand, has varieties that are institutionalized and localized which are employed in many areas within the country. As Kachru states, most

interactions in that circle are between non-native speakers, not with Inner-Circle speakers. In this view, a native speaker is a social label related to the circle that provides the norms, not just a linguistic fact.

Holliday (2017) argues that the idea of a native speaker is a cultural idea. He says that native-speakerism is the belief that people from Western, English-speaking countries are the best teachers and owners of the English language. This idea often links language ability to race, nationality, and culture, constructs which don't relate to how well someone can teach (Holliday, 2017). He also mentions that the difference between native and non-native speakers isn't about language skills. It's a Western-focused view of English and its culture. Native speakers are often seen as more skilled because of stereotypes and marketing, not because they are better teachers (Holliday, 2005, 2017). Relatedly, research by Chahkandi (2024) shows that employers often want people from Inner Circle countries or those who got their degrees from such countries. This reinforces a biased view of what it means to be a native speaker, instead of focusing on teaching skills (Chakandi, 2024).

Selvi, Yazan, and Mahboob (2022) provide an overview of how native and non-native teachers have been described in research. They say that most definitions of native speakers depend on things like where someone was born or what language they spoke first, not on their language skills or teaching abilities. They argue for moving past these simple categories and accepting all English teachers, no matter their background (Selvi, Yazan, Mahboob, 2022). In short, the term “native speaker” in TESOL is a social idea, not just a linguistic description. It shows how power differences are tied to inequalities in English language teaching around the world.

Stakeholders' Perceptions

Students' Perceptions

Also relevant to understanding native speakerism, especially in the context of profit-driven private language schools, are the perceptions of various stakeholders. Students' perceptions towards native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers have been examined and studied broadly over the years. While some studies show similar patterns of attitudes towards both, other studies show signs of perspectives changing over time.

An early broad study conducted by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) explored university level Spanish students' perceptions of teachers. Ultimately, a clear preference for NNESTs' grammar instruction and authentic teaching styles was identified, whereas NESTs were preferred for their pronunciation and cultural identity. Students had solid and distinct preferences based on very specific teaching attributes of NESTs and NNESTs. On the other hand, Moussu's (2006) mixed-method study provided extensive data on Intensive English programs (IEPs) across the United States which showed shifting student perceptions, contrary to the distinct attitudes of students in Spain (Lagabaster and Sierra, 2005). At first look, students typically preferred NESTs due to their higher language proficiency and culture. However, in time, students' appreciation of NNESTs significantly increased. They recognized the pedagogical competence of NNESTs, especially in grammar teaching and structured language instructions based on their teachers' learning experiences. Moussu's data also revealed that the contact time and exposure to NNESTs changed the perception of students in a positive way, reducing their biases from the beginning of their experiences (Moussu, 2006).

Another contribution which adds to this discussion comes from Moussu and Llurda (2008) after extensively reviewing literature on university level adult students' perceptions. The

outcomes proved the prior findings of Moussu (2006) and reinforced the pattern that students often initially preferred NESTs but later, gradually, they started appreciating the attributes of NNESTs in terms of linguistic empathy, structured pedagogy, and effective grammar instruction. The results of their study brought the extensive effects of cultural biases into consideration and how they can change over time. A more balanced instructional approach which can leverage both groups' strengths was highlighted (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). To examine further evidence of NNEST contact time and its effects, Moussu (2010) conducted another study in Intensive English Programs which bolstered earlier findings by demonstrating how increased exposure to NNESTs correlates with high appreciation of NNESTs' competencies and also reduced reliance on native-speaker stereotypes (Moussu, 2010). Her study showed that extended interaction strengthened student appreciation of NNESTs' teaching methods through grammar explanation and their understanding of learning difficulties. She eventually concluded that continuous engagement and familiarity play a crucial role in positively reshaping students' perceptions (Moussu, 2010).

Major studies in Western countries have shown that students might have distinct preferences toward native and non-native speaking teachers, and their perceptions and preferences usually change over time. Scholars have also conducted extensive studies in Eastern countries which experienced historical colonization by English-speaking countries, where English was promoted as culturally superior (Phillipson, 1992). A study by Tsou and Chen (2017) showed that Taiwanese students enrolled in EFL programs had dualistic perceptions of teacher strengths, an outcome reinforcing the prior findings, such as preferring NNESTs for explicit grammar teaching, classroom management, and their ability to relate language learning experiences; and favoring NESTs for their conversation and pronunciation skills along with their

"authenticity." The interesting part of the study was that the opinions of students were not static: they mostly varied by factors such as proficiency levels, other exposures to previous teachers, and language backgrounds (Tsou & Chen, 2017).

Perceiving both advantages and disadvantages of both teacher groups is also seen in students in Vietnam and Japan who were enrolled in academic level English courses (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). As expected, the students appreciated NESTs for their native pronunciation and authenticity and favored NNESTs for their ability to explain grammar explicitly. An explicit student acknowledgement of how combined teaching involving both NESTs and NNESTs can be most effective and beneficial was one of the important findings of this study. Later on, Deng, Zhang, and Mohamed (2023) conducted another study reinforcing the previous studies results. This post-pandemic study showed that Chinese students majoring in English also valued NNESTs for their linguistic knowledge and pedagogical expertise, while NESTs were preferred for their affective and relational teaching qualities (Deng et al., 2023).

According to the previous findings, it is an undeniable fact that both NESTs and NNESTs are valuable in varied contexts in ELT. As one more example, the majority of students enrolled in minority language education in Basque explicitly preferred NESTs at advanced levels and NNESTs' for beginning and intermediate levels (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2023). This pedagogical flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs is important for successful language instructions, involving both groups of NES teachers and NNES teachers with their complementary strengths. In short, reshaping students' perceptions in a positive way towards both groups is possible and is advancing every day.

Perceptions of Employers

In the context of private language schools, the perceptions of administrators towards NNESTs and NESTs are highly complex and mostly based on native-speaker superiority ideologies, reflecting different levels of implicit and explicit biases. Many studies have been conducted to reveal these biases, even as there has been a consistent growth of professional acknowledgement of the unique capabilities of both NNESTs and NESTs. Despite that, some studies show that practical hiring practices often still show some level of discrimination that favor NESTs.

A main reason behind these biased perceptions is rooted in the belief that NESTs have better language skills and cultural insights (Selvi, 2010). For example, a well-extended, comprehensive content analysis by Selvi (2010) of online job advertisements around the world in ELT showed a widespread existence of discriminatory ad language favoring NESTs. Selvi returns to the term “native speaker fallacy” to underscore the idea of how employers blindly presume native speakers are superior language teachers. Undeniably, this persisting fallacy perpetuates professional explicit and implicit biases, unfair employment practices, and unprofessional favoritism based on nationality and ethnicity (Selvi, 2010).

A systematic bias and discrimination study by Jeon and Lee (2006) explored public schools, universities, and private language institutions in East Asian countries, mainly in Japan, South Korea, and China. While the authors discuss unfairly balanced salary differentials for native- and non-native speaking English teachers, as well as a very low level of professional and pedagogical qualifications requirements for NESTs, the authors also reveal how some countries like China. NNEST applicants mostly faced discriminatory practices explicitly and implicitly

without consideration of their pedagogical and professional competencies. These country-wide biases and lack of fair and equitable hiring policies reinforced the marginalization of NNESTs and favored native-speakerism (Jeon & Lee, 2006). Employers prioritizing native speakers were not only limited to Asia: Clark and Paran (2007) revealed that in the U.K., 72% of the nationwide recruiters from private language institutions and universities considered native speaker criterion either “moderately important” or “very important” in their hiring decisions. Employers intuitively equating linguistic nativeness with pedagogical and professional competence were systematically excluding qualified NNESTs from fair hiring practices (Clark & Paran, 2007).

A shift in employers’ perception towards NNEST in private K-12 schools and some other language institutions in Turkey was revealed by Tatar (2019). Tatar examined some private school administrators’ perspectives and noted similar patterns from prior research, but with some distinctions. Native-speakerness criteria was explicitly ranked low compared to professional qualifications. However, administrators still acknowledged how having expatriate teachers in their school is considered as a prestige factor, while simultaneously appreciating NNESTs for their pedagogical methodologies and culturally sensitive teaching practices. This suggests the existence of implicit biases despite acknowledgement and appreciation of NNESTs (Tatar, 2019). Conversely, some recruiters in some public universities in Thailand challenged this dichotomy and favored multilingual teachers and pedagogical competence over nativeness in a mixed-method study conducted by Thararuedee and Musigrungsi (2024). Still, the vast majority of recruiters expressed their preference for NESTs because of previously stated reasons such as pronunciation accuracy, even though they recognized the importance of pedagogical skills, academic qualifications, and teaching experience (Thararuedee & Musigrungsi, 2024).

Kiczkowiak (2020) further reinforced these observations through a large-scale international survey exploring recruiters' attitudes toward hiring NESTs versus NNESTs. The study demonstrated a persistent prioritization of native speaker status among recruiters, despite widespread recognition of NNESTs' capabilities and effective teaching performance. Approximately half of the surveyed recruiters still considered native speaker status essential, influenced by unfounded concerns regarding NNESTs' proficiency levels and perceived customer (student) expectations. This bias persists despite evidence of high satisfaction with NNESTs among students, clearly indicating a disconnect between actual teacher effectiveness and biased recruitment practices (Kiczkowiak, 2020).

Overall, as highlighted by the studies reviewed, the complex interplay of explicit and implicit biases towards NNESTs plays a crucial role in facilitating fair hiring practices. Even though a significant amount of employers acknowledged the NNESTs’ strengths, the majority of them still preferred NESTs for their perceived qualities such as fluency, accent, and authenticity. This contradiction shows broad systematic biases rooted in ELT hiring practices. Conscious efforts to emphasize teaching competencies over ethnicity is considered a needed move toward fair hiring practices (Clark & Paran, 2007; Selvi, 2010; Tatar, 2019; Thara“uedee & Musigrungsi, 2024).

Most of the studies that my research for this section is based on investigate the perceptions of employers (administrators and recruiters). One that stands out was conducted by Tatar (2019), who provides a detailed account of Turkish private school administrators’ perceptions, highlighting their recognition of NNESTs’ pedagogical strengths yet their continued preference for hiring NESTs for reasons of institutional prestige and marketability. Findings of another study conducted in the U.S was led by Moussu (2006). That study also revealed that

managerial biases favored NESTs while simultaneously acknowledging NNESTs' competencies. This preference for native speakers was often linked to institutional branding and market perceptions.

Discrimination in Employer Discourses

Hiring practices in the English Language Teaching field have been a major topic of discussion due to significant biases that systematically favor native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) over non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Studies have shown that these biases are demonstrated explicitly and implicitly through job advertisements, institutions' preferences, and recruitment practices, all public-facing discourses. The next studies reviewed are of critical importance, as they have inspired the methodology of this thesis.

An extensive analysis of job advertisements within ELT conducted by Selvi (2010)--the study which most informs this thesis–shows how nativeness criteria systematically exclude qualified NNESTs explicitly, by having native-speaker demands, or implicitly, through language implying a preference for teachers from English-speaking countries (Selvi, 2010). These job postings from various international recruitment institutions such as language schools and universities often don't prioritize qualifications or professional competencies but rather emphasize nationality, accent, and ethnic background as a hiring criterion. Such language is not only limited to English language job advertisements. According to Thomson and Asanov (2024), discriminatory language use within online recruitment ads is also used frequently for other world language related job postings (Thompson & Asanov, 2024). Exclusionary phrases like "native" or " native-like" proficiency used for English and other world language teaching job adverts reinforce discriminatory standards and normalize nativeness as a crucial criterion (Thompson & Asanov, 2024). Visual and textual cues from recruitment websites also showed prioritized

characteristic traits such as young, white and native English speakers (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). A study conducted by Ruecker and Ives (2015) confirmed that discriminatory practices were evident on recruitment websites across South Asia.

In a more local context, Mackenzie (2021) examined similar biases in Colombian ELT job advertisements involving private language schools and education centers. The job postings mandated applicants to originate from some English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada, or the UK (Mackenzie, 2021). It is an undeniable fact that these biases are not only discriminating against NNESTs and excluding highly qualified candidates, but they are perpetuating nativeness superiority stereotypes (Mackenzie, 2021). Not only is it hard for a NNEST to get hired in a biased and non-equitable recruitment environment, it is harder still for a NNEST to be treated fairly without discrimination. A multimodal discourse analysis of interview transcripts, social media, and websites conducted by Montoya and Correa (2024) revealed institutional discrimination within Colombian language centers. Their analysis showed that favoritism of managers and institutions towards NESTs provide prioritized hiring conditions and higher salaries across the country (Montoya & Correa, 2024). These systemic professional disadvantages NNESTs experience also affect their career and professional stability (Montoya & Correa, 2024).

Overall, despite the evidence of empirical data discussed in the “perceptions of employers" section demonstrating NNEST effectiveness, a deeply-rooted bias in recruitment practices persists, a bias built upon misconceptions about language proficiency, cultural authenticity, and commercial marketability. That bias exists in employer language and discourses which routinely equate nativeness with excellence and desirability, obscuring NNESTs’ professional competencies and sustaining a pattern of their exclusion.

Impacts of Native Speakerism on NNESTs' Professional Identities

At this point, it is important to consider research into how the ideology of native speakerism impacts the professional identities of NNESTs. Put simply, what do these beliefs about "native" mean for NNESTs' professional selves? Several factors including lived experiences, pedagogical and professional environments, and linguistic competence are some of the main factors involved in developing and evolving the identities of NNESTs in the ELT field. NNEST identities are formed by the influence of mainly two factors: their own linguistic competence and the persistence of native-speaker normativity that shapes hiring practices and perceptions (Selvi,Yazan, & Mahboob, 2023). The authors redefine the term NNEST by indicating that the term "NNEST" and NNESTs themselves shouldn't be considered as static and binary since they are not only teachers but also individuals who embody linguistic legitimacy and experiential knowledge. Internalized feelings of inferiority due to ideologies favoring NESTs exists within NNESTs and shapes their identities because of the deficit mindset of colonial legitimacy throughout the years until the late 1990s and early 2000s–when a NNEST movement gained momentum (Selvi, Yazan & Mahboob, 2023).

Savva (2015) agrees, noting how NNESTs' dynamic identities are shaped by external expectations and internal motivations rather than being static. Savva's study, conducted to analyze the professional characteristics of NNESTs, demonstrates high intercultural awareness and teacher resilience. However, these qualities are not necessarily valued in institutional contexts with diverse teaching settings (Savva, 2015). In another study in the U.S., the author Reis (2011) concludes that teachers working in higher education commonly construct hybrid professional identities. Five NNESTs participated in this study and they actively redefined their worth by their competencies (Reis, 2011). Hybrid identity means NNESTs do not have only one

fixed teacher identity, but instead blend different roles and redefine their professional selves on an ongoing basis. For example, a participant simultaneously claimed being “a quiet proficient user of L2” and a native speaker of Russian, while redefining her idea of legitimacy from birthplace/accent to “ professionalism and experience”-- a bilingual professional identity that challenges native-speaker myths. By self-reflecting, she learned to “rethink, reorganize and rename” her experience, which is how she rebuilt a confident teacher identity. Another participant, Lee, resisted the simple “non-native” box by negotiating labels and roles. He didn’t want to emphasize that he was a non-native speaker in class and liked to call himself a second language user, while worrying that his accent and grammar marked him as less legitimate—positioning NNS status as a professional liability (Reis, 2011). But, through his professional growth throughout the study, he began to see himself in positive ways, such as multicompetent. He intentionally used his knowledge in the classroom to base his authority on his teaching skills instead of whether he was a native speaker. Taken together, this is a hybrid identity: publicly constrained by native-speakerist norms yet agentively reauthored through alternative labels and concrete classroom practices—neither purely “non-native” nor simply “native,” but a negotiated professional self that draws on multilingual expertise and critical reflection.

NNESTs are not only having these internalized feelings and marginalizations due to not being a native speaker of English but also not being a native to another language. In a study conducted in Turkey by Altaai and Kurt(2023), expat NNESTs felt marginalized among other teachers due to institutional, language and cultural barriers. However, they found their way to get their sense of self as global educators by seeking help through social networks (Altaai and Kurt 2023).

Low self-confidence of some NNESTs was observed in another local context by Viafara (2016). The author in this study discusses teachers internalizing native-speakerism and feeling low self-esteem in university level EFL classes. But some teachers who were proud of their bilingual identities and embraced their effective contribution professionally had higher confidence (Viafara, 2016). In another qualitative study, Perry (2021) observed the self-perceptions of seven NNESTs in Japan and Philippines. During the interviews, participants expressed their feelings of being undervalued compared to their NEST colleagues due to circumstances such as being assigned to a support role in the classroom instead of leading their own (Perry, 2021). However, there were still some signs of resistance to native speakerism with some participants. They expressed their valuable identity by leveraging their multilingual experiences and pedagogical education.

As is evident, multiple studies share that the identities of NNESTs are not static but rather, are evolving constructs. Identities may be strongly shaped by systemic inequalities but also by individual resilience (Savva, 2015). A NNEST movement is helping NNESTs to challenge monolingual ideologies and embrace their professional legitimacy through multilingualism, intercultural/ professional competence, and reflective practices.

A comprehensive qualitative discussion of NNESTs' professional identities in the U.S. context by Reis (2011) showed important recurring emotional identity situations where NNESTs were asked about their "nativeness," accent, or country of birth on the first day in class, along with subtle comments from co-workers positioning them as less competent, and negotiations that participants engaged in showcasing credentials or teaching results. These moves were forms of emotional and professional labor that NNESTs claimed as legitimacy requirements in institutions where native-speaker norms were the default benchmark. Later on, Tajedding and Adeh (2014)

explored Iranian NNESTs' insecurities which they believe were internalized. Their findings also support the discussion of Reis (2011). An advocacy call by Perry (2023) for NNESTs expanded this discourse by offering self-branding strategies and adaptive responses against biases.

Context of The Research

The last section of this literature review turns to the context of my research: profit-driven private language schools. Private language schools, also known as language centers or institutes, are places intending to help people learn languages outside the traditional school system. These places stand out from normal public schools because they aim to make money, they run for profit, and they gear their teaching methods to closely fit what students need (AlKadi & Ali, 2022; Topacio, 2015). Topacio (2015) states that these centers often have flexible class plans, curriculum structures, diagnostic procedures, check-up steps, and customized ways to manage classes, all to serve a wide mix of students, from children to adults, who want better language skills for work or to study in other countries. The mission of these schools is key in making clear what they want to achieve: for example, top-quality language teaching, helping the community, and/or encouraging global connections (Bali & Higgins, 2023; Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024).

These private schools put a lot of focus on clear and strong mission statements. These statements lay the base for planning, setting goals, and sharing their main values both inside and outside the school (Gurley et al., 2015). Bali and Higgins (2023) point out that these mission statements usually touch on big educational goals like doing well in school, helping social and civic growth, and making sure the learning space is safe and open for all. But if these statements are compromised in everyday school life, they might not match up with stated objectives and actual teaching practices, which could hurt how people see the school and its results (Ransom & Vlachopoulos, 2021). Gurley et al. (2015) and Ransom and Vlachopoulos (2021) stress the need

for these schools to keep their teachers and leaders in check to make sure they really do what their missions say, avoiding any rift that could spoil the school's good name and its work and negatively impact institutional credibility and effectiveness.

Even with strong and seemingly forward-looking mission statements, private language schools can still show bias, especially in prioritizing native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) over teachers whose first language isn't English (NNESTs). AlKadi and Ali (2022) and Topacio (2015) argue that favoring NESTs can greatly change who gets hired, based on how marketable native speakers are in ads and marketing. This choice pushes wrong ideas about language skills, pushing aside NNESTs who are just as good but might not be seen as "real" language teachers because of where they are from (AlKadi & Ali, 2022; Topacio, 2015). This often leads to unfair hiring practices and fewer equitable opportunities for NNESTs, which shows why these schools need to bring in policies and actions that truly honor teaching skills and language knowledge, no matter the teacher's native language (Bali & Higgins, 2023; Gurley et al., 2014). Private language schools, despite introducing themselves as open spaces for global learners, frequently engage in hiring discrimination against teachers who are non-native English speakers (NNESTs). These schools often state missions of diversity and community, but their hiring choices often show biases that favor native English speakers (NESTs), mainly those who appear white and Western (Montoya & Correa, 2024).

These businesses run on student demand, not solely on good teaching. Aleixo (2020) argues that many schools hire native speakers because they assume that is what parents want, believing that families are more likely to sign up if they see white native speakers as teachers (Aleixo, 2020). This idea makes schools focus on supposed market preferences instead of fair hiring based on skills. Montoya and Correa's (2024) study of Colombian language centers

supports this idea. In addition, they studied hiring materials and interviews and found that NESTs often got better pay and had fewer work requirements than NNESTs, even when their qualifications were the same in private language contexts. The researchers tie this to the native speaker fallacy described by Phillipson (1992), which is the thought that native speakers are automatically better teachers, no matter their training or education.

This discrimination appears not only locally but also worldwide. Another blog website called LearnJam (2023) points out that NNESTs are often excluded from job openings if they do not have a passport from an English-speaking country. Chahkandi (2024) found that many international TEFL internship ads asked for native speakers or a degree from an English-speaking country, sometimes advertising some particularly appealing activities tied to its countries such as "ski trips" to attract Western applicants. These ads show that some schools care more about the image of their teachers than how well they teach. This discrimination is unfair and devalues the careers of NNESTs and their prospects. Teachers who speak multiple languages and are well-trained, like many NNESTs, often bring better grammar teaching, understanding of learners, and intercultural skills to the classroom (Selvi, Yazan, & Mahboob, 2023). However, private schools often value look and accent over skill, so these benefits are not prioritized.

The problem is greater than individual attitudes. Selvi et al. (2023) argue that native-speakerism in English Language Teaching (ELT) is systemic and linked to global ideas of linguistic superiority based on race and passport. In private schools, where business meets education, this perpetuation of native-speakerism can be very damaging to teachers whose first language isn't English. NNESTs face higher chances of being excluded from jobs, or having their careers stall, or burning out from an unfair workload.

Though some groups have attempted to advocate for NNESTs, like TEFL Equity Advocates, private language schools are mostly beyond the control of laws to prevent discrimination in most countries. Tzanni (2022, via STEL) says that NNESTs face not only discriminatory hiring problems, but also a lack of professional support and chances to grow in their careers. Teachers are hired for short-term marketing goals, not for long-term career growth.

In conclusion, private language schools still show the inequalities in the ELT world. While they claim to offer “quality education,” their hiring and treatment of NNESTs suggest otherwise. As long as native-speakerism is an accepted selling point, skilled NNESTs will be at a disadvantage in a system that values appearance over skill.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative research–specifically, multimodal content analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Selvi, 2010)--to explore the extent to which native-speakerism persists in teacher recruitment (job ads) and other public-facing discourses from three private language schools I know well. As discussed in my introduction, I have decided to investigate this topic specifically due to my own teaching experiences as a non-native English-speaking teacher who has taught and been treated quite differently in private language schools in Turkey, Colombia, and the USA. My decision to investigate three schools I had worked at previously was guided by both access and relevance: having worked within these institutions, I have an insider’s understanding of their pedagogical practices, organizational structures, and student populations. At the same time, their publicly available materials—such as websites, job ads, and images—provide an extensive and accessible data set of material for analysis. Although my familiarity with the institutions informed the choice of sites, the research itself is grounded exclusively in analysis of their public-facing discourses. This approach

balances access and relevance with methodological transparency, allowing for a close examination of the extent to which the schools' public-facing discourses perpetuate–or challenge–the ideology of native-speakerism. My own experiences have made me want to look more closely at how hiring practices, job ads, and institutional rules and attitudes present in discourses can favor some teachers over others.

The qualitative research design is preferred because it allows for a detailed, in-depth, contextualized understanding of these issues rather than a focus on numerical trends. As Elo and Kyngäs (2008) describe, qualitative content analysis provides "a flexible method for making valid inferences from data in order to provide new insight . . . and develop an understanding of the meaning of communications with a concern for intentions, consequences, and context," such as, in this study, a concern for language which excludes or includes, implicitly and explicitly. While large-scale, quantitative studies can identify broad patterns across institutions, they usually do not include in-depth discussion and contextual nuance. Discourse analysis, as scholars such as Fairclough (1992, 1995) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have emphasized, depends on close, in-depth examination rather than breadth of coverage. By focusing on the discourses of three private language schools, this study examines the multimodal discourse practices through which these institutions perpetuate native-speakerism and the native speaker fallacy–or inclusivity of NNESTs– or both. At the same time, analyzing three schools rather than a single case provides a comparative dimension that highlights both commonalities and differences across institutions. This approach follows and is informed especially by the work of Selvi (2010) in his study "All Teachers Are Equal, but Some Are More Equal than Others": that studying native-speakerism, discrimination, and inclusivity require going beyond surface-level categories to uncover implicit ideologies. Other studies investigating job ads such as "'Nonnative? Next!'

Native-Speakerism in World Language Job Advertisements" by Thomson and Asanov (2024) and their methodology of language and content analysis to reveal implicit or explicit biases also shaped my decision to choose this method.

The data this analysis focuses on includes publicly available job postings, institutional websites, and related materials from selected schools. Inspired by Selvi's (2010) study, I examine how explicit and implicit criteria in hiring language and other public-facing discourses reflects or resists native-speakerist ideology. As an international, non-native English-speaking teacher myself, my point of view and my experiences in these schools will help me understand the data in conjunction with knowledge presented by other scholars from the time of Phillipson (1992) until the present day.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study is informed by the frameworks of several related and integrated studies, starting with Holliday's (2017) critical framework of his concept "native-speakerism," which he defines as an ideology that privileges so-called "native speakers" and associates them with a superior cultural identity, often tied to "Whiteness." This lens helps me focus on various forms of explicit and implicit biases in job ad listings and institutional discourse.

I also drew from three other helpful frameworks for my own analysis: Selvi's (2010) framework from his study "All Teachers Are Equal, but Some Are More Equal than Others," Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA) approach for examining visual, textual, and layout-based meaning-making, and Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. Integrating these frameworks help to uncover implicit and explicit biases in job advertisements and promotional content and to

classify the types of discursive strategies that reproduce inequality, such as direct exclusion ("native speakers only"), indirect exclusion through preferred passports, visuals that are framing "Western looks" as better teachers, the ways that those visuals and texts are presented, and/or exclusion/bias masked by unequal expectations. Holliday's and Selvi's perspectives are complemented by the NEST/NNEST lens, not as a solid binary but as a way to trace how professional identities are constructed in institutional contexts. This way it lets the categories avoid falling into the "separate but equal problem" and instead ask why these groups still exist at the very first place.

My framework, which combines these ideas, also considers the possibility that some institutions may not show explicit bias, but may still reflect subtle hierarchies in the way they describe roles, qualifications, or desired teacher qualities. Additionally, language which "includes" or equitably addresses NNESTs' many important competencies, language which may suggest evolving understandings of the true value NNESTs bring to any teaching contex, will also be taken into consideration, coded, and analyzed.

Data Analyzed in the Study

This study focuses on the discourses of three private language schools where I previously worked as an instructor. The data set I examined for this study includes job postings and institutional descriptions from three specific private language schools in three countries I've worked in: Turkey, Colombia, and the United States. While the number of institutions under analysis is necessarily limited, I use multimodal discourse analysis to engage in-depth with texts rather than trying to achieve breadth of coverage, making a smaller sample both appropriate and methodologically sound. The selection of these three schools is strategic: while two of the three schools are located in Kachru's (1985) "Expanding Circle" countries, they are on different

continents with very different geopolitical and sociolinguistic contexts. The third school is located within an "Inner Circle" country, the United States. These choices thus allow for both within-case analysis and cross-case comparison. Moreover, my familiarity with these institutions, which will be addressed and compared with findings of this study, enables a more nuanced reading of their public-facing discourses, while the study itself remains firmly focused on textual, not experiential, data. By examining these cases in detail, this study seeks not to generalize statistically but to generate theoretically informed insights into how private language schools reflect native-speakerism and/or greater inclusion of NNESTs, or both. In short, the schools were selected because of their engagement with international hiring, the availability of data on the internet, and the author's past relationship with these schools.

Data analyzed comes from the following schools:

1) In Turkey (branch in the town of Sakarya), the official website of "British Town" and its job listings on Indeed.com;
2) In Colombia (Bogota), the official website of "Canadian College" along with job postings and ads from Computrabajo.com;
3) In the USA (Boston) – Approach International Student Center's official website and job postings from LinkedIn.com.

These three schools and their discourses were chosen to compare and see if there is any difference in results, similar to the author's different experiences at these schools. This data will also allow a comparison between schools in countries where English is not the main language – Kachru's "Expanding Circle" countries such as Turkey and Colombia–and a school in an English-dominant nation (one of Kachru's "Inner Circle" countries). This comparison lets us see

to what extent native-speakerism functions in different market situations and if patterns vary by location.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for analysis was collected from publicly available online sources, beginning with websites and links listed on the schools' home pages and including a search of job sites where these schools recruit teachers. All data was saved as screenshots on the hard drive and online cloud of the author.

Following Selvi's (2010) procedure and coding, each document was read and analyzed multiple times and coded for the following of Selvi's codes: "nativeness as a job requirement, educational background, teaching experience, other skills, and any further relevant wording that puts emphasis on the applicants' nativeness (e.g. "attention ALL native speakers", "we hire only native speakers", etc.)." Any explicit references to "native speaker" status, passport or nationality requirements, accent, or less direct markers such as "from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa" were noted. Additionally, more subtle cues such as adjectives describing an "ideal teacher," visuals of ideal teachers who look stereotypically "Western"/white (Hollliday, 2017; Montoya & Correa, 2024), and descriptions of international culture which center Western norms were also carefully considered.

Job advertisements and web pages were analyzed in two phases. First, I deductively coded lexical items using categories adapted from Selvi (e.g., nativeness requirements, educational requirements, citizenship restrictions). These categories come directly from published job-ad analyses and keep my coding anchored in prior research. Next, following Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, I examined how those wordings functioned at the textual level, how the ads circulate and are interpreted, and what

wider beliefs they reproduce. Since the data are multimodal, I also applied Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar to images (salience, composition, gaze, color, and modality).

After this deductive pass, I conducted an inductive/abductive comparison across cases to let themes emerge that best captured recurring patterns in text-image pairings within a native-speakerism lens (i.e., the ideological branding of the "native speaker" and the positioning of teachers in separate, unequal roles) (Holliday, 2006). The resulting higher-order themes are thus researcher-constructed, but they are grounded in Selvi's established categories, CDA/MMDA readings of the same ads, and an ideological account of how native-speakerism operates in ELT marketing. Higher order themes identified include the following:

- Explicit native-speaker preference
- Implicit preference via nationality or cultural associations
- Equal but separate framing
- Neutral/Inclusive framing

The coding was done manually, and my own positionality as an NNEST was acknowledged throughout the process to avoid misinterpretation while also being aware of potential biases in how I read these materials. For example, since I have experienced "native speaker" preference in hiring in Turkey and Colombia, I noticed a tendency in my coding to consider subtle cues as discriminatory even when the evidence is ambiguous. Therefore, I reconsidered any inference that might be connected to or shaped by my prior personal experience.

Analysis and Findings

This analysis is inspired by Selvi's (2010) classification of discriminatory practices against NNESTs in ELT, his tripartite model of native-speakerism (structural, attitudinal, and

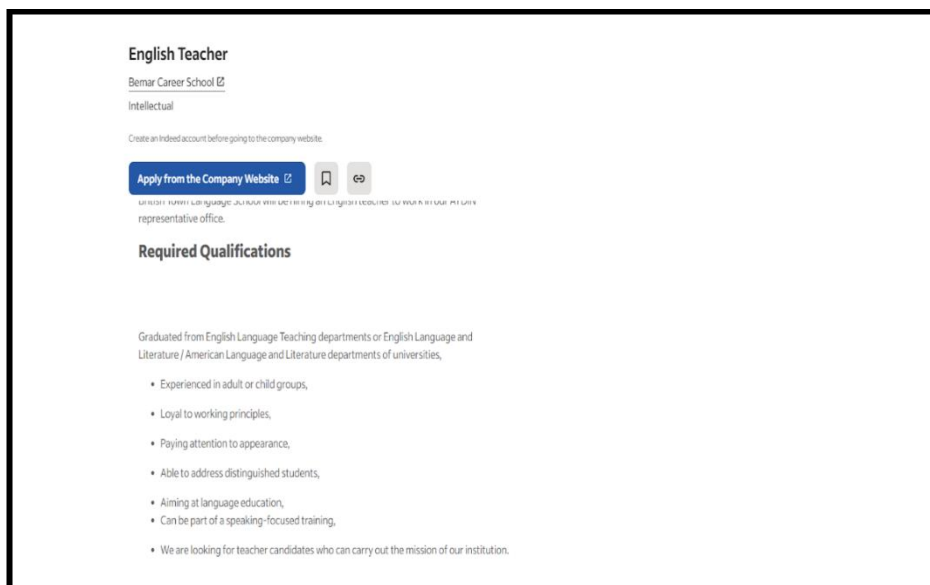
professional dimensions), Holliday's (2006) native-speakerism ideology, Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA) approach for examining visual and textual meaning-making, and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to investigate implicit and explicit biases in job advertisements and institutional official webpages.

Turkey

In data collected from the Turkish private school "British Town," the Sakarya branch website (Fig 1.1), job descriptions from Indeed.com (Fig 1.) did not specify native speakers or citizenship. Instead, they focused on factors like degrees in English Language Teaching or Applied Linguistics as well as general interpersonal abilities (Fig 1.)

Figure 1.

English teacher job advertisement: British Town Language School. ("English Teacher," 2025).



Despite the lack of explicit reference to native speakers in this job ad, throughout the school's website and in their logo, the school often uses both UK and US flags in their visual brandings.

Here (Figure 1.1) is the school's logo, featuring the British flag superimposed over an outline of the British Isles, with the color of the lettering in the school's name, British Town, the same as the color of the flag:

Figure 1.1

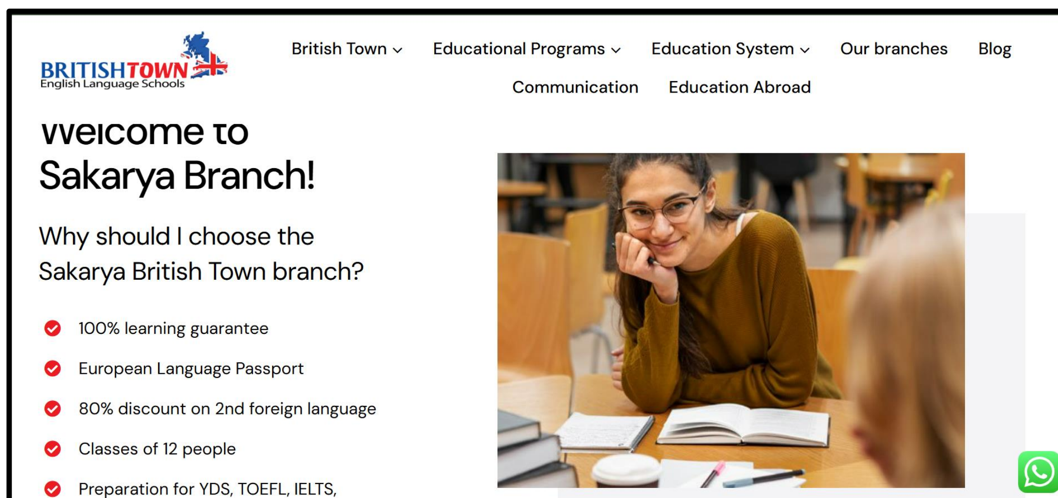
British Town English Language Schools logo. ("British Town," 2025).

The website also draws attention to their foreign staff and UK-based expertise. Under the "Our Staff" section of the main page, the website clearly references "Our *foreign* teaching staff" (emphasis added). The website also states, "Each year, at predetermined times, expert staff from the U.K., guided by Macmillan Publishing, visit our institutions and contribute to the development of our instructors through workshops" (Fig 1.2). This discourse suggests that native-linked perceptions ("foreign," "expert staff from the UK") are the standard for quality. Applying Selvi's (2010) categories reveals no clear and explicit exclusion of NNESTs, and no statement falling into "Native-speaker preferred" or " No non-native" codes were observed. However, there is an implied preference for native speakers in visual branding and discursive representation.

In the next image, Figure 1.2, we learn more about the geopolitical and sociolinguistic context of British Town:

Figure 1.2

British Town English Language Schools logo (homepage).



On the home page (English version), the school's language includes a "100% learning guarantee" and strongly suggests that students who enroll in British Town will receive a "European Language Passport." Selvi's (2010) text codes based on CDA themes suggest that the ad uses quality proxies and branding (the guarantee and the European passport) to signal school status indirectly, without specifying either non-native or native English speaker status as part of the teaching staff delivering on these "guarantees." In addition, the multimodal interplay between image and text features a smiling student with a neutral ethnicity but also the British flag in the logo at the top of the page. On the image on the center of the page, a blonde, light-haired figure is placed in the front-right foreground but kept blurred, slightly above the student's eye line. The visual implies a "western-looking" teacher presence that plays a big role in the composition,

while the focused, smiling student in the mid-ground shows signs of receptivity and progress. The presentation of this teacher along with the “European Language Passport” function as subtle visual and textual cues of imported and/or European authority, which suggests expertise is being imported from foreign teachers to local Turkish-speaking learners. Relatedly, the school’s name “British Town” as well as its logo of the "British flag” sells Britishness as the product, equating “real English” with national identity. This semiotic choice primes stakeholders to expect “native” teachers and a UK accent, reinforcing native-speakerism and inviting tiered offerings based on nativeness rather than teaching expertise (Holliday, 2006). Explicitly, the text focuses on selling outcomes rather than explicit native speaker status.

Significantly, the web page discursively links English language learning to “European-ness” through its promise of a European Language Passport. Turkey is not an EU member; it has been an EU candidate since 1999, and while it has a Customs Union with the EU (since 1995), accession talks have been frozen in recent years (European Commission, n.d.; EUR-Lex, 1995; European Parliament, 2025). Geographically, Turkey is transcontinental—mostly in Asia with a smaller region in Europe—so the key distinction for mobility/status is EU membership, not “Europe” as a continent (Britannica, n.d.). In this context, European symbols (the Union Jack/British flag, “British Town”) carry connotations of prestige and mobility. They index easier access to Europe/Schengen, “standard” English, and Western cultural capital. That symbolic value is visible in policy news too (e.g., Schengen visa policy updates for Turkish citizens), which keeps European credentials salient in everyday life (“EU Eases Schengen Visa,” 2025). Private language schools such as “British Town” can leverage this and use it for marketing purposes by branding “British/European” to signal quality and upward mobility—a move that reinforces native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) and the job-ad gatekeeping patterns documented

in ELT (Selvi, 2010). In practice, the British flag or "British Town" name functions as an indicator of status. It reassures parents/students that the education aligns with European standards and "native" authenticity—even when pedagogy isn't discussed (Holliday, 2006; Selvi, 2010). As it is suggested elsewhere on this site, Euro-Anglo standards are at the center as the default for good English.

Figure 1.3

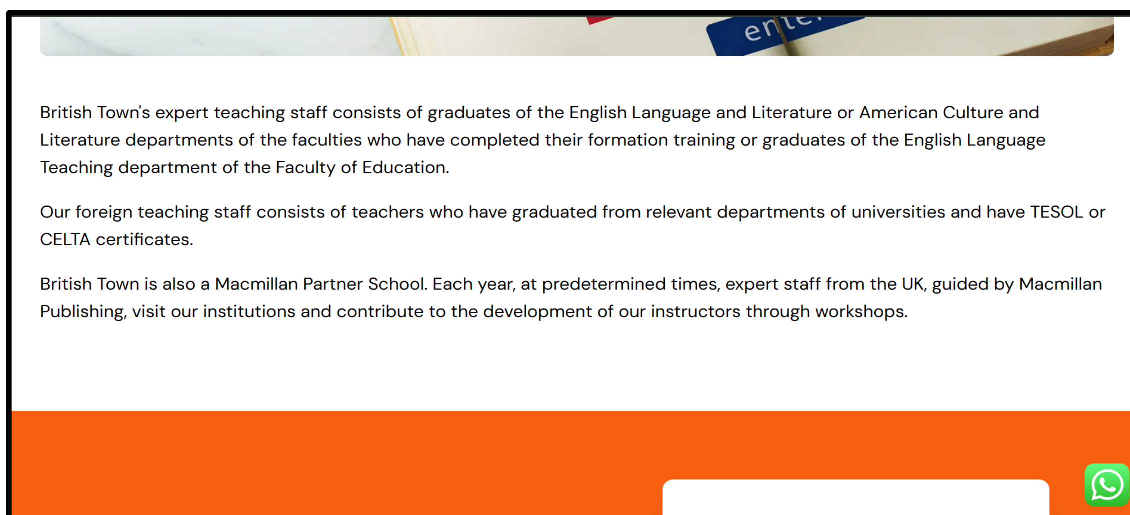
British Town website — "Education staff" [American flag] page.

Under the link "Education Staff" can be found this page: "Expert English Teaching Staff," visible in Figure 1.4. On this page, it is now the US flag acting as a clear visual signifier of the school's invitation to learn "Inner Circle" English, now American English along with British English ("British Town"). The image's size and central location send a clear message: American English along with British English is a standard to strive for. According to Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis, the size and centrality of this imagery strongly promotes the idea that inner-circle English is the ideal, reinforcing the common belief of native-

speaker superiority and aligning with Selvi's (2010) codes: "Implicit preference via nationality or cultural associations." For non-native English speaking teachers looking for a job or working at this school, this branding creates an unspoken bias, influencing perceptions even if the explicit message is neutral.

Figure 1.4

British Town website — "Education staff" page.



Also relevant from this image: again, the faculty page opens with the heading "Our Expert English Teaching Staff." This page title assigns the same "expert'' label to all teachers, local (and presumably NNESTs), foreign (NESTs), and the "expert" expert staff from Macmillan. It is notable that the discourse here constructs all staff as experts, including local teachers, but then separates them from each other based on how expertise is evidenced. Three separate paragraphs describe three different levels of expert teachers. In the first paragraph, "graduates of the English Language and Literature or American Culture" describes the local Turkish instructors without the emphasis of institutional provenance and requirement of external

certification beyond “graduates.” By contrast, the second paragraph reframes “foreign teaching staff” as those “who graduated from relevant departments of universities and have TESOL or CELTA certificates.” The addition of named, internationally branded credentials marks the foreign group wih a surplus of recognizable capital, implying higher or more portable forms of expertise, even though both groups are labeled as “ expert.’’ The last paragraph stratifies the label further through explaining how, “Each year, at predetermined times, expert staff from the U.K., guided by Macmillan Publishing, visit our institutions and contribute to the development of our instructors through workshops” (Fig 1.2). The text continues with “British is also a Macmillan Partner School.” Therefore, guided by Macmillan Publishing (now a global, but originally, a British publishing house) is positioning the “foreign experts” from the UK as providers of professional development for everyone, creating a one-way flow of authority from the U.K. to Turkey. These different levels of expertise of teaching staff produces an equal but also not unequal hierarchy–a hierarchy of experts. The page doesn’t explicitly claim that foreign/UK-based teachers are superior but the sequencing and credentialing elevates them, keeping the local teachers as “basic.” While the text might sound inclusive, local staff are at the bottom of that hierarchy, and following theory in Fairclough’s CDA, the text on this page indexes a preference for internationally certified, UK-connected expertise (Fig.1.4). Even without explicitly mentioning native speakers, this approach suggests that instructors from the UK are better experts than local teachers, which is in line with the native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) belief. A perceived hierarchy of “experts” is created, where local, non-native English-speaking teachers along with foreign teachers still need development from “expert staff from the UK.”

Colombia

Moving from a country straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey, the research next turns to the continent of South America and the private language school “Canadian College.” In this case, analysis of the data shows that the idea of favoring native English speakers both explicitly and implicitly is strong in institutional discourse and recruitment practices. To start, the name emphasizes “Canadian” + “College” to suggest Inner-Circle status, higher-education authority, and quality assurance, even though this is a private language school (Selvi, 2010). The name “Canada” as the guarantor of “real English” is an ideological cue. In Figure 2, the white maple leaf in a maroon badge acts as a visual credential (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), working as proof that suggests “Canadian” equals an ideal “English.” The logo and the name promotes learners/parents to expect “native’’ teachers and Canadian standards without any demonstration of pedagogy. In Fairclough’s CDA terms, this branding helps make a market order seem natural where “Canadian/native” is most desirable. This ideal fits the site’s own ranking system in selling course packages and its native instructor ads. The result is that being a native speaker is sold as a more valuable thing, while the knowledge of non-native English-speaking teachers is subtly downplayed (Fig 2.).

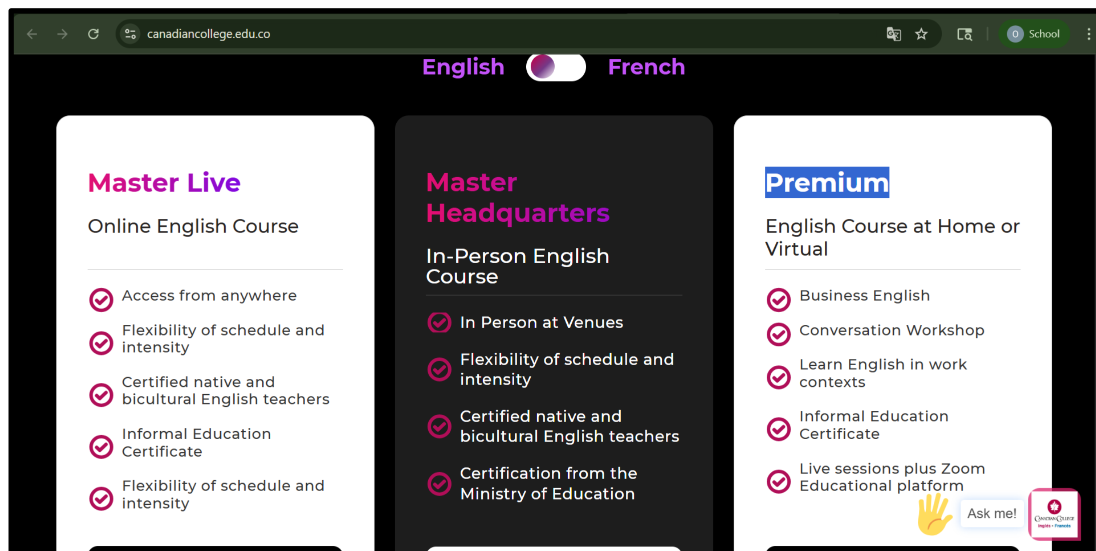
Figure 2

Canadian College homepage (logo).

More evidence can be found in Figure 2.1. on the Canadian College website. A package of course descriptions repeatedly foregrounds "certified native and bicultural teachers" as a selling point, particularly for the school's "Master" and international test preparation programs. The website uses labels ("like Master Live" and "Master Headquarters") to sell nativeness as a high-quality, more valuable educational product (see Fig.2). The one package that does not mention "certified native and bicultural teachers" is described as "premium." Similar to "British Town's" hierarchy of "experts" in Turkey, "premium" is still a positive marketing tool, suggesting the value of local NNESTs. Ultimately, however, local teachers are still marketed as less valuable and therefore as a less attractive choice. This supports the idea that native speakers are seen as superior, as Phillipson's (1992) discussions of linguistic imperialism foregrounds. It suggests that someone's teaching skills are based on their language and cultural backgrounds, not their teaching abilities.

Figure 2.1

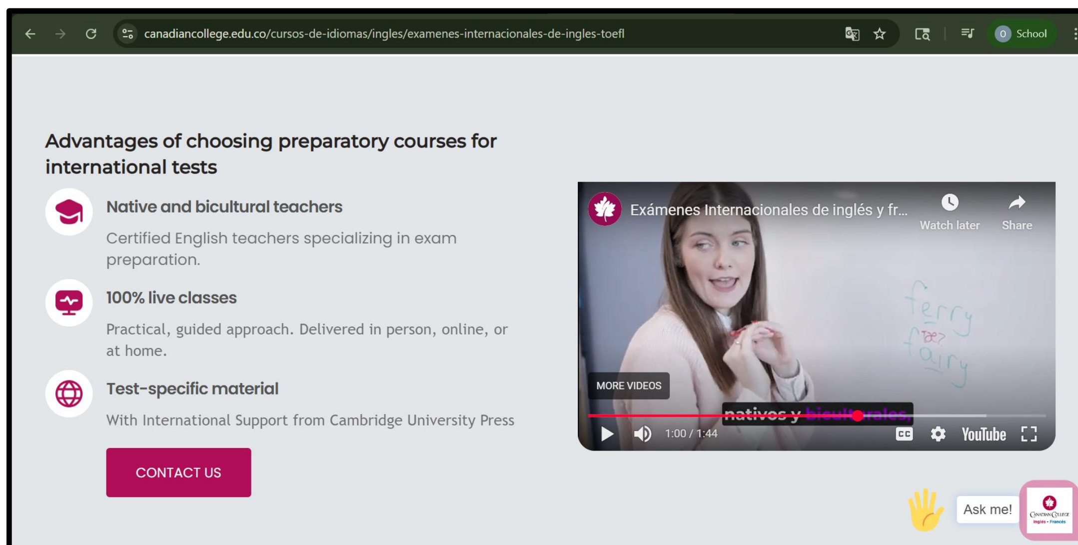
Canadian College homepage (programs section).



The school uses images to strengthen this idea as well. Similar to British Town, promotional videos (see Fig. 2.2) shows a white, fair-skinned teacher as representative of international test preparation courses, which suggests that linguistic authority is associated with whiteness (Montoya & Correa, 2024). This lines up with Krass & van Leeuwen's (2006) idea of how visuals can reinforce ideologies without directly stating them, making certain ideas seem normal and excluding others. Moreover, the interplay again between image and text is significant: again we see the first "advantage" of the test preparatory course is listed as "native and bicultural teachers" who are "certified," along with "International support from Cambridge University Press." The reference to "international support from Cambridge University Press," a publishing house which is part of the elite Cambridge University in the UK, further indicates again a one-way flow of "international" authority and expertise from the U.K. to Colombia, similar to "British Town" and its "expert" staff from the UK and connected to Macmillan.

Figure 2.2

Canadian College — TOEFL preparation page (advantages section).



Another cue falling into the code “Explicit preference for native speakers” is job ads. Job postings also reveal clear biases. Recruitment ads (Fig.2.3) specifically request people who are native English instructors, even when they are also hiring local English/French teachers. In that job ad, the ideal candidate profile emphasizes native English speaker status as the most important thing, as the first “requirement” listed is “native English speaker,” while teaching experience and familiarity with methods are listed after “native English speakers” and considered less important. Looking at these textual and visual messages, it’s clear that policies (job ads), actions (program structures), and representations (videos, course descriptions) all work together to favor native English-speaking teachers over non-native English-speaking teachers. The message to students is simple: the most valuable access to English at “Canadian College” means access to whiteness, international certification, and native teachers. Local teachers, on the other hand, are presented as a more affordable, “premium,” but still less prestigious alternative. This not only weakens the

credibility of non-native English-speaking teachers, but it also continues what Selvi (2010) calls linguistic racism, which puts structural inequalities into English education in Colombia.

Figure 2.3

Computrabajo: "Native English instructors" (Canadian College) — job advertisement.

The United States

The Boston data set analyzed was quite different from those of Turkey and Colombia. The data reflects postings from private language schools in the U.S., a market shaped by both a high concentration of international students and a competitive hiring environment. Almost no explicit or even subtle bias against non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the job postings was found.

Figure 3.

LinkedIn: "English Teacher" (Approach International Student Center, Inc.) — job ad.

English Teacher
Approach International Student Center, Inc. · Boston, MA (On-site)

confidentiality, safety, and professional conduct.

WHAT YOU'LL BRING - THE PERSON

- Bachelor's degree plus one year of teaching experience, or a
- Bachelor's degree plus certification to teach the related content containing a practicum component.
- Strong communication skills and ability to work effectively with diverse student populations.
- Proactivity, flexibility, adaptability and caring professionalism.
- Organizational skills and excellent attention to detail.
- Analytical thinking, Interpersonal and leadership skills and a positive growth mindset.
- Understanding of the unique cultural and communicative needs of an international student audience.
- Technology skills: Google Workspace (Gmail, Chat, Meet, Calendar, Drive for storage; Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Keep for notes, Sites for collaboration), Canva.

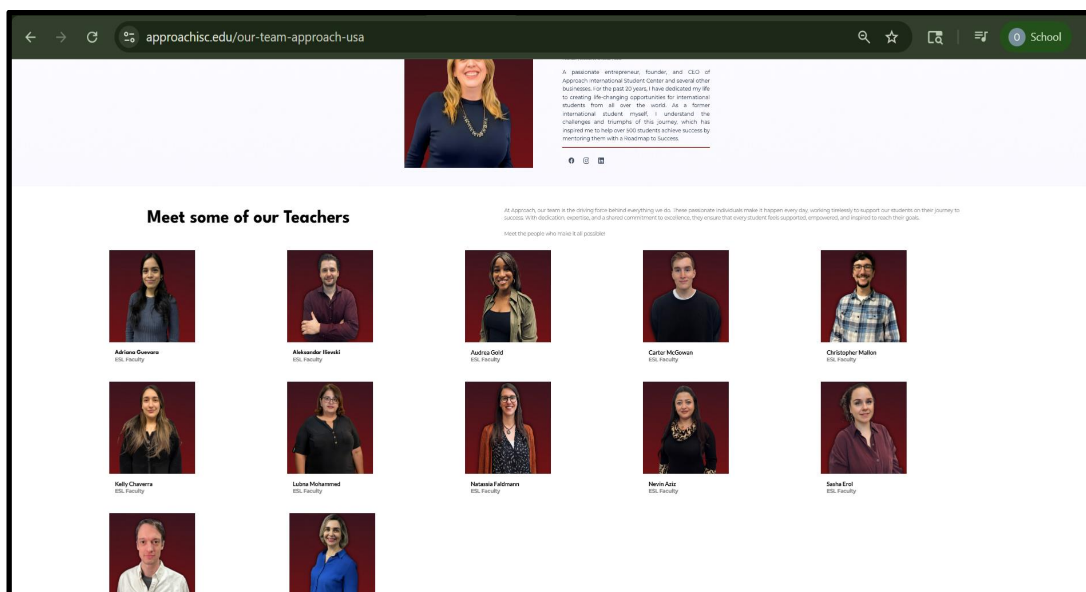
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU - THE BENEFITS

- Medical Insurance (FT)
- Health Spending Account (HSA) (FT)
- Mental Health Reimbursement (FT)
- Paid Volunteer Time (FT)
- 401k with 100% match up to 4% (FT)
- Tuition Reimbursement and tuition discount (FT)
- Pet adoption reimbursement fee (FT)
- Company Outings
- Plenty of growth opportunities
- A fridge full of healthy snacks
- Discretionary Bonuses
- Amazing Company Culture!

Evident from Figure 3, the school values professional qualifications — frequently asking for advanced degrees, recognized TESOL certifications, and proven experience with adult learners. However, as in Turkey and Colombia, these requirements were not presented alongside explicit or implicit "nativeness" criteria, suggesting that professional merit alone may outweigh identity-based preferences. The requirements emphasize degrees such as TESOL/TEFL certification, experience with English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and being able to work with different student groups (see Fig. 3.).

Figure 3.1

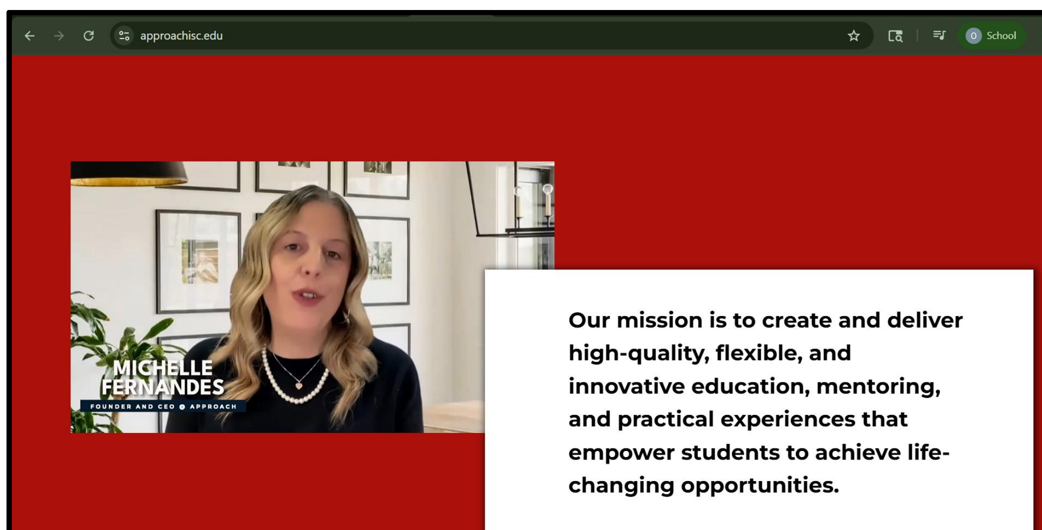
Approach International Student Center website — "Our team" page (faculty grid)



Through the lens of Fairclough (1995) and Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the official school website and job listing on"Indeed" (at the discourse level of CDA, considered as professional recruitment channels) often uses corporate-style visuals, clean fonts, and extremely diverse student and staff imagery presented in consistent, professional photos , including the founder CEO who is also non-native English speaker with culturally different background(see Fig 3.1, 3.2). The photo gallery of "some of our teachers" was particularly heterogeneous; names represent broadly diverse cultures, from Hispanic/LatinX, to Russian/Slavic, to Arabic. The school postings placed qualification requirements in prominent positions, often bullet-pointed without any reference to nativeness. The CDA lens indicates a discourse of inclusivity and diversity, positioning NNESTs as part of the mainstream professional teaching community.

Figure 3.2

Approach International Student Center homepage (mission & CEO section).



On a sociocultural level, Boston is a city which prides itself on diversity (The Boston Foundation, 2024) and not having any evidence of "native-speaker" favoritism is both striking and suggests important questions for future research: what is the interplay between the demographics of a school's location and the perceptions of stakeholders in TESOL related to NNESTs? The question is important but is beyond the scope of this study.

Discussion

My analysis, viewed through both a native-speakerism lens and a critical multimodal perspective, suggests a unified trend. Public discourse of these schools in Turkey and Colombia, British Town and Canadian College, tends to reproduce hierarchies associated with native speakers, using both language and images. In contrast, the Approach International Student Center in Boston emphasizes professional skills and inclusivity over "nativeness." My text analysis draws on Fairclough's three-dimensional approach (linking text, discursive practice, and

social practice), while image analysis is based on Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar (representation, interaction, composition) along with framework criteria of Selvi (2010). This integrated framework allows me to show how specific choices in communication not only help me see what is said/shown, but how those choices normalize certain teacher identities and marginalize others (Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Considering Holliday's concept of native-speakerism—the idea that those perceived as "native" are superior in language, culture, and teaching, the patterns I observed were not unexpected. The split between "native" and "non-native" is a social construct, not a linguistic fact, and it keeps appearing in hiring and marketing (Holliday, 2006).

In Turkey, marketing materials clearly emphasize native-speaker status in their text and design. Indicators like flags, references to "British/American" culture, and specific accents are placed where they are most noticeable, associating them with promises of quality. My personal story as a Turkish non-native English speaker matches with this mixed message. While my degree allowed me to apply for and obtain employment at British Town, the visual cues still informed parents/students that British or American English equals authentic English. Even though I was thrilled to start at first, my starting salary was quite low. I understood that some local colleagues with more experience earned higher salaries. What felt unjust was that several foreign hires (from the UK, Ukraine, Morocco) with little or no ELT degree were paid at or above my rate because they held TESOL/CELTA certificates (not university degrees in English) and, crucially, because they were marketed as "foreign teachers." While my academic background and teaching performance were factors, being foreign plus having a certificate seemed to be what really mattered.

In Colombia, this hierarchy is often stated directly. Job postings ask for "native" speakers, tiered language program packages offer "master" access to "native/bicultural" teachers, and promotional videos feature teachers who are white and light-eyed. Using Fairclough's framework, the language used (such as requirements for native speakers, citizenship, or certain accents), the way ads, price lists, and videos are circulated and repeated, and the social level (a fee-driven ELT market) reinforces the marginalizing of NNESTs. In terms of Kress & van Leeuwen's ideas, composition (placement, what stands out), interaction (gaze, social distance), and representation (who is shown as "the teacher") work together to make "premium = native" seem like a natural equation, even without evidence of higher teaching quality of NESTs (Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Holliday, 2006). However, my personal experience in Colombia was both similar and different to the findings of this study. When I arrived in Bogotá, I found a job in two days without even applying online. Instead, I went to a language school with my CV. As soon as the manager realized I wasn't local, she called me in, barely skimmed my résumé, and offered me the job on the spot—with a salary clearly above what many Colombian teachers were earning. What surprised me most was that my "non-nativeness" didn't matter; what mattered was that I was foreign. The school wanted a non-local teacher to present to students and parents. This fits what NNEST literature describes as the commodification of "nativeness/foreignness." Schools treat a teacher's passport and cultural background as market value. This is often more important than teaching ability or local experience (Holliday, 2006; Selvi, 2010; Mahboob, 2010). This is not an indictment of individual administrators, who were genuinely kind and supportive; it is about how the market teaches schools what to value. In a competitive private sector, "foreign teacher" becomes shorthand for authenticity and advantage, even when the foreign teacher is not a NEST.

Consequently, I have found that being a foreigner resulted in rapid hiring and increased earnings in Colombia. Local coworkers who knew as much or more than I did were often paid less. The Colombian case therefore extends the Turkey pattern: different context, same market ideology–even though their language for "premium" courses says "native," what had an impact was only being a "foreigner."

These two settings are in line with Selvi's (2010) research on job ads in English language teaching. Recruitment often uses language related to "native/near-native" status, citizenship, or specific English varieties to create barriers. Over time, such patterns become "normal" features of the job-ad genre itself, which echoes decades of scholarship that has tracked how "native-speakerism" shapes hiring and reputation in ELT (Holliday, 2005/2006; Selvi, 2010; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Holliday named native-speakerism as an ideology that privileges Western, "Anglo" norms and "native" credentials; that lens helps explain why a "master" course with a "native" teacher is marketed as superior while basic or lower-priced options–while still described as "premium"--are tied to local teachers (Holliday, 2005/2006). The data from Turkey and Colombia appear to be specific examples of this wider trend. They also line up with recent research by Kiczkowiak (2020) regarding recruiters in ELT, as many administrators say they feel market pressure to employ "native speakers," and marketing strategies can trap schools into hiring based on this expectation. In other words, once a school advertises "native" teachers, it feels required to recruit "native" to meet what clients expect, even if skills and experience would be better ways to choose staff.

On the other hand, the private language school in Boston differs considerably, as well as, my experience was the opposite of Turkey and Colombia. The data analyzed from Approach ISC did not include language that favored "native speakers." During my interview, the hiring

conversation stayed on my classroom experience, degrees, and teaching philosophy—not my passport or first language. I was asked about working with adult learners, curriculum design, and assessment, and I felt genuinely included. After I joined, I also learned that my pay scale matched colleagues with similar roles and loads, regardless of where they were from. In fact, NNESTs were the majority of the faculty I met; the few NESTs were a minority in my day-to-day team. In the same way the findings of this study show, the staff page displays profound diversity, and public job text focuses on student impact, and institutional fit. Through a NNEST Lens (Mahboob, 2010), it is expected that managers and recruiters will evaluate teachers by professional knowledge, teaching skills, and local fit—not by birthplace or accent. This represents a different choice of discourse in how the school presents itself. It markets student support and results as what makes it "premium," rather than "nativeness," which directly supports the claim that the "premium native" label is ideological branding, not a pedagogical truth (Medgyes, 1992/1994). In the case of the Approach International Student Center, qualifications, experience, and interviews rank higher than "native speaker" status (Kiczkowiak, 2020). Simply put, Boston illustrates that a private language school can be competitive without using native-speakerism in its ads or branding.

Why the difference? My data and existing studies suggest several interacting factors rather than a single cause. Schools that have historically advertised and branded themselves around "native speaker" status create a cycle of demand they must maintain. Schools that focus on support, results, and varied expertise avoid this issue (Kiczkowiak, 2020). That valuing of "nativeness" has been placed in the fundamentals of many nations' understanding of English language education through the concept of " linguistic imperialism," which is still affecting and shaping the perceptions of teacher qualifications by favoring native English-speaking teachers

and their linguistic background over pedagogical skills, qualifications, and/or teaching experience (Phillipson, 1992). Findings from schools in Turkey and Colombia reveal that native-speakerism pattern continues in many hiring markets, especially where visa, image, and parent demand intertwine. On the other hand, the Approach ISC in Boston looks more like a realization of advocacy for NNESTs—a place where NNESTs challenge monolingual ideologies and embrace their professional legitimacy through multilingualism, intercultural/ professional competence, and reflective practices.

Schools that serve international students and value multilingualism tend to show teacher diversity as a strength. Their credibility is tied to mentoring and measurable outcomes, not passports. On the other hand, when the public-facing discourses of school websites repeatedly center white or Inner-Circle individuals as "the teacher," viewers quickly learn what "quality" is supposed to look like. If the images and layout change, ideas about what is normal can also change (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Conclusion

Discrimination persists–sometimes explicitly, sometimes subtly. But it is not inevitable. Across three cases in the private language education sector, my findings and personal experience are consistent. Discrimination against non-native English speakers continues, sometimes subtly through language and images, sometimes directly through requirements for "native" speakers or "master" services linked to "native" teachers. Following Holliday's native-speakerism, this discrimination is not about linguistic truth but about ideology. According to the lenses of Fairclough (1995) and Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), it is about how texts and images, repeated through institutional practices, make that ideology seem natural in a market (Holliday, 2006; Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The advertising logic that Selvi (2010) reported

appears in my two non-U.S. sites. The focus on competence seen in Boston is similar to recent recruiter reports that value qualifications and experience and indicate high satisfaction with non-native English speaker hires (Selvi, 2010; Kiczkowiak, 2020).

This study also raises key questions that I plan to consider in the future. What combination of marketing history, policy context, leadership communication, and client expectations explains the contrast seen in Boston? How quickly can expectations shift when schools actively change their marketing away from "native speaker" status and toward "teacher expertise and student outcomes"? How does the diversity of a place shape the perceptions of stakeholders? Answering these questions will take long-term work across different locations, combining content analysis of ads and websites with interviews (recruiters, administrators, students, and parents) and tracking results when schools change their brand. This is the direction I will take in my PhD, building on this thesis: a comparative, multimodal, critical discourse analysis of ELT recruitment and branding that explores if, when, and how native-speakerism loses its market value –and explores what replaces it, while keeping schools competitive and students well-served.

References

Aleixo, C. C. (2020, September 30). Native speakerism: Discriminatory practice or response to market demands? BridgeUniverse. https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/native-speakerism-discriminatory-practice-or-response-to-market-demands/

AlKadi, A. M., & Ali, J. K. M. (2022). English teaching in private language institutes: An analysis of teachers' experiences, challenges, and needs. *MEXTESOL Journal, 46*(3).

Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 56(1), 57–64. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.1.57

Approach International Student Center, Inc. (n.d.). *English Teacher* [Job advertisement]. LinkedIn. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/4265209155/

Approach International Student Center. (n.d.). *Mission & CEO – Approach International Student Center*. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://approachisc.edu/

Approach International Student Center. (n.d.). *Our team – Approach USA*. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://approachisc.edu/our-team-approach-usa

Atamturk, N., Atamturk, H., & Dimililer, C. (2018). Native speaker dichotomy: Stakeholders' preferences and perceptions of native and non-native speaking English language teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(1), Article 1384. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n1a1384

Bali, V. A., & Higgins, D. (2023). More than meets the eye? Using text analytic techniques to unpack school mission statements. *SAGE Open, 13*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231218495

Barrantes-Montero, L. G. (2018). Phillipson's linguistic imperialism revisited at the light of Latin American decoloniality approach. *Revista Electrónica Educare*, 22(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.22-1.1

Braine, G. (Ed.). (1999). *Non-Native educators in English language teaching*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Braine, G. (2010). *Nonnative speaker English teachers: Research, pedagogy, and professional growth.* Routledge.

British Town English Language Schools. (n.d.). *Eğitim kadrosu* [Education staff]. Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://britishtown.com.tr/egitim-kadrosu/

British Town English Language Schools. (n.d.). *British Town English Language Schools* [Homepage]. Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://britishtown.com.tr/

British Town English Language Schools. (n.d.). *British Town English Language Schools*[Logo]. Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://britishtown.com.tr/

British Town Language School. (n.d.). *English teacher* [Job advertisement]. Indeed. Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://tr.indeed.com/cmp/Bemar-Kariyer Okulu/jobs?jk=dffc8497c55867f8&start=0&clearPrefilter=1

Buckingham, L. (2014). Attitudes to English teachers' accents in the Arabian Gulf. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 36–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12058

Canadian College. (n.d.). *Native English instructors* [Job advertisement]. Computrabajo. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://co.computrabajo.com/ofertas-de-trabajo/oferta-de-trabajo-de-instructores-nativos-de-ingles-en-bogota-dc-F14100C6880928A361373E

Canadian College. (n.d.). *Canadian College*[Logo]. Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://www.canadiancollege.edu.co/

Canadian College. (n.d.). *Canadian College*[Programs section]. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://www.canadiancollege.edu.co/

Canadian College. (n.d.). *Exámenes internacionales de inglés – TOEFL*. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://www.canadiancollege.edu.co/cursos-de-idiomas/ingles/examenes-internacionales-de-ingles-toefl

Chahkandi, F. (2024). Discrimination against non-native English speakers in the English language teaching profession: Evidence from internship advertisements. *MEXTESOL Journal, 48*(3), 1–15. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1446570.pdf

Clark, E., & Paran, A. (2007). The employability of non-native-speaker teachers of EFL: A UK survey. *System*, 35(4), 407–430. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.05.002

Colmenero Perez, K. (2022). Stakeholders' perceptions about language teachers in a multilingual school system. In E. Charamba (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching in multicultural and multilingual contexts* (pp. 62-84). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-5034-5.ch005

Colmenero, K., & Lasagabaster, D. (2024). Native and non-native teachers in a minority language: An analysis of stakeholders' opinions. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 28(2), 188–203. https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069221149671

Cook, V. (Ed.). (2002). *Portraits of the L2 user*. Multilingual Matters.

Deng, L., Zhang, L. J., & Mohamed, N. (2023). Exploring native and non-native English speaker teachers' perceptions of English teacher qualities and their students' responses. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1175379. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1175379

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. SAGE Open, 4(1), 2158244014522633.

EU eases Schengen visa rules for Turks; Envoy urges further moves. (2025, July 18). *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/eu-eases-schengen-visa-rules-turks-envoy-urges-further-moves-2025-07-18/

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Favela Camacho, G. H. (2023). Non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) identities and ideologies on the U.S.–Mexico border: A case study [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at El Paso]. ScholarWorks@UTEP. https://scholarworks.utep.edu/open_etd/3972

Gurley, D. K., Peters, G. B., Collins, L., & Fifolt, M. (2015). Mission, vision, values, and goals: An exploration of key organizational statements and daily practice in schools. *Journal of Educational Change, 16*(2), 217–242. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-014-9229-x

Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385–387. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030

Jeon, M., & Lee, J. (2006). Hiring native-speaking English teachers in East Asian countries. *English Today*, 22(4), 53–58. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078406004093

Kachru, B. B. (1991). World Englishes and applied linguistics. In M. L. Tickoo (Ed.), *Languages & standards: Issues, attitudes, case studies*. ERIC ED347805.

Keskin, M. (2022). Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in the minority: How do three NESTs at a university in Türkiye perceive their professional identities? *Language Teaching and Educational Research* (LATER), 5(2), 92–108. https://doi.org/10.35207/later.1125201

Kiczkowiak, M. (2014, August 19). Equal rights for NNESTs, *LearnJam*. https://learnjam.com/equal-rights-for-nnests/

Kiczkowiak, M., & Wu, A. (2018). Discrimination and discriminatory practices against NNESTs. In J. I. Liontas & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0014

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (2005). What do students think about the pros and cons of having a native speaker teacher? In E. Llurda (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-24565-0_12

Liu, J. (2021). Disinventing native speakerism in English language teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 14(11), 97–104. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n11p97

Llurda, E. (Ed.). (2005). *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession.* Springer.

Llurda, E. (n.d.). Non-native teachers and advocacy. In M. Bigelow & J. Ennser-Kananen (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of educational linguistics* (pp. 105–116). Routledge.

Mackenzie, L. (2021). Discriminatory job advertisements for English language teachers in Colombia: An analysis of recruitment biases. *TESOL Journal*, 12(1), e535. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.535

Mahboob, A. (2009). Racism in the ELT industry. In A. Mahboob & C. Lipovsky (Eds.), *Studies in applied linguistics and language learning*. Cambridge Scholars Press.

Mahboob, A. (Ed.). (2010). *The NNEST lens: Non Native English speakers in TESOL*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Mahboob, A., & Golden, R. (2013). Looking for native speakers of English: Discrimination in English language teaching job advertisements. *Voices in Asia Journal*, 1(1), 72–81.

Martínez Agudo, J. (Ed.). (2017). *Native and non-native teachers in English language classrooms: Professional challenges and teacher education*. De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501504143

Martínez Cristancho, Y. F. (2018). The native speaker fallacy in English teachers' recruitment practices: Voices of resistance within a social network (Master's thesis, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas).

Matsuda, A. (2012). The NNEST lens: Non Native English speakers in TESOL [Book review]. *World Englishes*, 31(4), 554–556.

Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: Who's worth more? *ELT Journal*, 46(4), 340–349. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/46.4.340

Medgyes, P. (2001). When the teacher is a non-native speaker. *Teaching pronunciation*, 429–442.

Mohamed, N. (2023, January 10). Tackling native speakerism: What can you do to address discriminatory ideologies? *TESOL International Association*. https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/tackling-native-speakerism-what-can-you-do-to-address-discriminatory-ideologies/

Montoya, A., & Correa, D. (2024). Discriminatory practices against non-native English speaker teachers in Colombia's language centers: A multimodal study. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 26(1), 117–131. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v26n1.105427

Murtada, A. Y., & Alsuhaibani, Y. A. (2020). The validity of hiring native and non-native English-speaking instructors: Professional observers', learners', and programme administrators' perceptions. *International Journal of Progressive Education,* 16(1), 279–295. https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2020.241.20

Ransom, B., & Vlachopoulos, D. (2021). The meaning of mission statements to school practice and professional development: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Educar, 57*(1), 49–63. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1126

Perry, S. (2023). Non-native English-speaking teachers and self-appreciation: How non-native English-speaking teachers can gain equity by learning to appreciate themselves. *Merits,* 3(4), 654–667. https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3040039

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Reis, D. S. (2011). Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and professional legitimacy: A sociocultural theoretical perspective on identity transformation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 208, 139–160. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2011.016

Ruecker, T., & Ives, L. (2015). White native English speakers needed: The rhetorical construction of privilege in online teacher recruitment spaces. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(4), 733–756. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.195

Savva, M. (2015). Characteristics of the international educator and the strategic role of critical incidents. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(1), 16–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240915570548

Selvi, A. F. (2010). All teachers are equal, but some teachers are more equal than others: Trend analysis of job advertisements in English language teaching. *WATESOL NNEST Caucus Annual Review*, 1, 155–181.

Selvi, A. F. (2011). The non-native speaker teacher. *ELT Journal*, 65(2), 187–189. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq092

Selvi, A. F. (2014). Myths and misconceptions about nonnative English speakers in the TESOL (NNEST) movement. T*ESOL Journal*, 5(3), 573–611. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.158

Selvi, A. F. (n.d.). NNEST Interest Section. *NNEST Interest Section*. Retrieved August 25, 2025, from https://nnest.moussu.net/

Selvi, A. F., Yazan, B., & Mahboob, A. (2024). Research on “native” and “non-native” English-speaking teachers: Past developments, current status, and future directions. *Language Teaching*, 57, 1–41. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000137

Tatar, S. (2019). Employment of English language teachers in an EFL context: Perspectives from school administrators. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 21(2), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v21n2.72648

Taylor, N. (2018). The influence of accent on perceptions of credibility [Master's thesis, University of Canterbury]. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18316.56961

Toikka, T., & Tarnanen, M. (2024). A shared vision for a school: Developing a learning community. *Educational Research, 66*(3), 295–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2024.2361412

TESOL International Association. (2024). Position statement on terminology: An asset-based approach. https://www.tesol.org/media/aemfcp1u/2024-terminology-position-statement-final.pdf

The Boston Foundation. (2024, February 14). *New report explores the diversity and economic impact of Greater Boston's diverse immigrant community* [nd]. The Boston Foundation. https://www.tbf.org/news-and-insights/press-releases/2024/february/global-greater-boston-press-release

Thompson, A. S., & Asanov, E. (2024). "Nonnative? Next!" Native-speakerism in world language job advertisements. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(1), 49–74. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.42371

Topacio, K. N. M. (2015). Understanding the dynamics of language centers in non-school setting. *International Journal of English Language Education, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v3i1.7090

Tsou, S. Y., & Chen, Y. L. (2017). EFL college students' perceptions toward native and non-native English-speaking teachers. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 5(12), 1182–1190. https://doi.org/10.12691/education-5-12-2

Tzanni, P. (2022). Discrimination and native-speakerism in English for academic purposes (EAP). *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 2(3), 385–397. https://doi.org/10.21428/8c225f6e.755eca93

Viafara González, J. J. (2016). Self-perceived non-nativeness in prospective English teachers' self-images: "In"/"out"-siderness in an Italian EFL practicum. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada, 16*(3), 461–491. https://doi.org/10.1590/1984-639820169760

Veitch, A., Weston, E., & Riaz, H. (2023, June 29). Native speakerism – what is it and why does it matter? *British Council – Voices Magazine*. https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/native-speakerism-%E2%80%93-what-it-and-why-does-it-matter

Walkinshaw, I., & Oanh, D. H. (2014). Native and non-native English language teachers: Student perceptions in Vietnam and Japan. *SAGE Open*, 4(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014534451