

มิติความแตกต่างและประสิทธิภาพในการสอนภาษาอังกฤษของผู้สอนที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาและไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาในมหาวิทยาลัยไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ที่ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาสากลและเป็นเครื่องมือในการสื่อสารระหว่างกลุ่มคนที่มีความหลากหลายทางด้านภาษาและวัฒนธรรม ส่งผลให้ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษที่ไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษามีจำนวนมากกว่าผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอย่างหลีกเลี่ยงไม่ได้ และสภาพความเหลื่อมล้ำนี้มีแนวโน้มที่จะเพิ่มขึ้น ด้วยเหตุดังกล่าว งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจทัศนคติของนักศึกษาและอาจารย์มหาวิทยาลัยไทยที่มีต่อความแตกต่างระหว่างผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาและไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาโดยเก็บข้อมูลจากการสำรวจนักศึกษาจำนวน 200 คน และอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยจำนวน 20 คน จากมหาวิทยาลัย 4 มหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย และเก็บข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพโดยการสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้างกับนักศึกษาจำนวน 20 คน และอาจารย์ผู้สอนจำนวน 10 คน การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงเนื้อหาถูกนำมาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาและไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา มีความแตกต่างกัน 5 ประการคือ ความไวต่อวัฒนธรรม พื้นฐานทางภาษา เทคนิคการสอน คุณลักษณะของ

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บุคคล และการจ้างงาน นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังค้นพบอีกว่า การเป็นและไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษไม่ได้ส่งผลต่อประสิทธิภาพด้านการสอน ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษทั้งสองกลุ่มสามารถสอนภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพเท่าเทียมกัน อย่างไรก็ตาม สืบเนื่องจากความเชื่อเดิมของสังคมไทยและแรงกดดันจากภายนอกส่งผลให้การว่าจ้างอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทยยังคงให้ความสำคัญกับอาจารย์ผู้สอนที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่าอาจารย์ผู้สอนที่ไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการวิจัยนี้ สามารถนำไปใช้เป็นข้อมูลสนับสนุนให้สถาบันการศึกษาและองค์กรผู้ว่าจ้างไม่ควรเลือกปฏิบัติในการว่าจ้างอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษทั้งสองกลุ่มในประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ: อาจารย์ผู้สอนที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ อาจารย์ผู้สอนที่ไม่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ การสอนภาษาอังกฤษ

Distinctive Aspects of Native and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers and Their Performances in Thai Universities

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Abstract

In today's globalized world, English is used as an international language and a tool for communication among multilingual and multicultural speakers in diverse contexts and purposes. As a consequence, the outnumbering of Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) by Non-native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) is undeniable and the inequality is on the uptrend. In this light therefore, this paper aims to investigate the perception of Thai university students and lecturers on the prevailing divide between NESTs and NNESTs in Thailand. A questionnaire survey of 200 Thai students and 20 Thai English lecturers across four universities in Thailand were sampled. A semi-structured interview was employed for qualitative data collection from 20 students and

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10 lecturers across the selected universities. The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings showed that NESTs and NNESTs are constructed differently by the participants in five major aspects: Cultural sensitivity, Language background, Teaching capacity, Persona, and Employment preference. Key to this finding is the fact that being NESTs or NNESTs do not affect teaching performance. They are perceived by the participants as equally qualified English teachers. However, a discriminatory hiring practice, which favors NESTs, are still reported due to Thai traditional ideologies and external pressures from the Thai society. This has potential implications for how educational institutions and hiring agencies should not continue the discriminatory hiring practices for both groups of English teachers in Thailand.

Keywords: NESTs, NNESTs, English Language Teaching

Introduction

There are many areas of interest that are critically questioned when critically examining the approaches to TESOL. One of such critical concern is the construction of NEST and NNEST identities. The global number of NESTs is now greater than that of native speakers (Graddol, 2006). Similarly, for many years, the number of NNEST ESL and EFL teachers has been higher than that of NEST ESL and EFL teachers (Canagarajah, 2005; Crystal, 2003; Prodromou, 2003). The result is that educational scientists and researchers have carried out more and more research, especially in ELT, to examine how NESTs and NNESTs differ in their teaching methodologies, English language skills and other ways that affect their teaching behavior in their own contexts and in unfamiliar contexts. It is clear that the amount of research carried out on the concept of NESTs and NNESTs is still limited in Thailand in particular. This study therefore aims to examine the differences between NESTs and NNESTs from the perspective of Thai university students and lecturers in Thailand who are learning and teaching English.

Definitions of Native and Non-native speaker overview

In recent decades, language teachers and linguists have tried to deal with the apparently difficult operationalization of nativity and arbitrariness. In the early 20th century, Bloomfield (1933: 43) studied the language achievement of American Indians. He noted that "the first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is native speaker of this language". In this statement, the mother tongue was defined as the specific language that an individual learned in childhood from his / her mother. This implies that only the language an individual was exposed to in childhood would be considered as his/her native language. Every human is a native speaker of one language,

however, not any other language learned at a later stage in life. For Chomsky (1965), a native speaker is an ideal speaker-listener with a perfect understanding of the language and an intuitive knowledge of what is grammatically correct in a language. This definition is consistent with the definition provided by Crystal (2003: 308) in his Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Crystal gives a fairly simple definition of the native speaker:

"A term used in linguistics to refer to someone for whom a particular language is a first language or mother tongue. The implication is that this native language, having been acquired naturally during childhood, is the one about which a speaker will have the most reliable intuitions, and whose judgments about the way the language is used can therefore be trusted".

In line with these definitions, however, Coppieters (1987) and Kramsch (1995) argue that intuition of grammar and linguistic acceptability or the ability to communicate fluently is not sufficient. The relevant speech community must also recognize one as a native speaker. They state that the fact that different people from different communities speak differently should be taken into a consideration when considering whether someone is a native speaker of that particular language or not. In addition, regarding the definitions above, if a person was born and has lived in a country and has acquired a language during his/her childhood but he/she does not have a perfect language skill due to his/her learning ability, the question is: is he/she still a native speaker of the language? If not, what language is his/her native language? How is it possible to provide a clear definition of a native speaker for this person? What criteria can be used to evaluate this? These are some of the pertinent questions to ask.

Regarding ELT, although academics and linguists generally take a neutral position on the pros and cons of a native and non-native teachers of English, the society still considers NESTs as superior to NNESTs. They feel that NESTs

can provide a "better" model of English (Watson-Todd, 2006). Clearly, discrimination between NESTs and NNESTs has been found in several areas within ESL and EFL contexts. To replace the binary distinction of "native" and "non-native" and to solve this problem, some new terms have been suggested by linguists. Such terms include 'competent user' (Holliday, 2008), 'more or less accomplished users of English' (Edge, 1988), 'proficient/competent user of English' (Paikeday, 1985), 'expert user' (Rampton, 1990), 'English-using speech fellowship (Educated English speaker)', (Kachru 1992), and 'multicompetent speaker' (Cook, 1999). Still, the native/non-native labels remain strongly embedded in ELT ideology (Cook, 1999; Moussu & Llorca, 2008), where it provides advantages for one group and excludes the other (Canagarajah, 1999). Moreover, whether any of these alternative terms are adopted or not, there is still no clear consensus and it seems that we are a long way from reaching a conclusion about this particular issue.

From an academic standpoint, it is quite complex to decide who a native speaker and a nonnative speaker is. Sometimes the definition seems to only apply to monolinguals because it does not provide information about how to classify someone who has learnt two or more languages from birth. Davies (2003: 2) mentions that the "native speaker concept is rich in ambiguity". To provide a clear-cut definition regarding who a native speaker of English is and is not, is still problematic since many different factors need to be taken into account, such as (i) country of birth, nationality, and/or domicile (i.e. in an English-speaking country) (Medgyes, 1994; Kachru, 1992); (ii) whether English is the first language acquired, and a persons' L1 (ibid); (iii) whether the speaker has a native-like command of the language, thus displaying phonological and linguistic competence (ibid); and (iv) whether the person displays communicative competence, and can produce fluent, spontaneous discourse

(ibid). Pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1997), moreover, might also be taken as another criteria for defining the native speaker.

Current trend of beliefs and hiring practices towards NESTs in Thailand

In Thailand, when looking for English language teachers, a basic consideration that Thai people will take into an account is whether the teacher is a NEST or a NNEST. Even though the literature and educational principles advocates for the equal treatment of NESTs and NNESTs, many educational institutions in Thailand still show a clear preference for NESTs and there is also a broad social acceptance of this on a commercial scale (Baker, 2012). This view is probably supported by the widely held notion of students and their parents that NESTs are superior to NNESTs. This is corroborated by Watson-Todd (2006) who states that in Thailand NESTs are seen as being somehow better than NNESTs, especially in the working environment. Some evidence to support this notion can be found in articles and letters in the Bangkok Post newspaper and in contributions to Internet discussion boards, as mentioned by Watson-Todd (2006) and Watson Todd and Pojanapunya (2009):

"Native speakers are the best teachers of their own language."

"Some people seem to believe that if you can speak a language, you can teach it."

"Almost all parents would prefer their children be taught English by a native English speaker."

"I wouldn't have my child learn English from a non-native speaker."

In the tertiary level, specifically, the numbers of native speakers of those foreign languages (particularly English) are still in a great demand (Hodal, 2012). After reviewing job advertisements both in official documents launched

by several educational institutions and on Thailand's leading ELT websites, namely, esemployment.com (2019) and Ajarn.com (2019), it seems that most of the major requirements or qualifications for new native English teachers at university levels in Thailand are focused on NESTs. Some jobs advertisements even provide more specific information about specific kinds of NESTs, as shown in the following examples:

"We are seeking native English speakers".

"Now! ... require Native Speaker teaching English"

"Nativ English Speaker Wanted"

"Wanted: 20 Native English teachers"

"Native English speaker only (UK, USA, AUS, NZ, CAN) "

"Native English teacher from UK, USA, CAN, NZ"

"English teacher American/British only wanted"

"Native speakers of English are preferred".

Patil (2006) proposes that two main important qualifications are always stated in ELT job advertisements. First, that the prospective candidate should be a native speaker of English. Second, that the applicant should hold a diploma or degree from Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. This indicates that several Asian employers still evaluate their ELT using British or American English as a standard. At the same time, they perceive their own English as impure, imperfect, substandard, deficient, and inferior. Watson Todd (2006), additionally, mentions that, if possible, educational institutions state within their advertisements that white-skinned and blond-haired applicants are preferred. The result is that, some educational institutions do not pay much attention to teaching qualifications as long as the external appearances of the teacher fit with their ideas of native speakers (e.g. white

skin, blue eyes, and brown hair as previously mentioned). It can be clearly seen that being a native speaker of English equips a teacher with privileges in relation to hiring practices. Rampton (1996) and Canagarajah (1999) state that some NESTs without teaching qualifications are still more likely to be hired as English language teachers than qualified and experienced NNESTs, particularly outside the Inner Circle countries.

Research methodology

A questionnaire survey of 200 Thai students and 20 Thai English lecturers across four universities in Thailand were sampled. The universities considered as appropriate sites for data collection were Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, Thammasat University, Chiang Mai University, and Khon Kaen University. The choice of these universities is that they represent one of the most prestigious universities in Thailand, located in different parts of the country. Another outstanding feature of these universities is that most of their programs are international programs where English is employed as the medium of instruction, thereby attracting many Thai and foreign students/lecturers alike. To address the aims of the study, a semi-structured interview was employed for qualitative data collection from 20 students. 10 lecturers across the selected universities also participated in the study. The data was analyzed and interpreted using a qualitative content analysis. Within this study, a mixed method of "top-down coding or deductive approach" where coding is imposed on preconceived codes regarding the focus of the research and research questions, and "bottom-up coding or inductive approach" where coding emerges from the data, were adopted. As soon as the coding was done, the emerging themes were edited, reorganized, and grouped together for consistency in different sets of categories to demonstrate how they were

interrelated to one another. As a result, some themes were organized into sub-theme categories and those that were irrelevant for the current study were discarded.

Findings and discussion

This section discusses the different emerging themes from the analyzed data.

Perceived Distinctions of NESTs and NNESTs

This section discusses how distinctively the participants perceive NESTs and NNESTs in English language teaching in five primary elements: (i) cultural sensitivity, (ii) language proficiency, (iii) teaching capacity, (iv) persona, and (v) employment preference. The aim of this discussion is not to demonstrate positivity nor negativity towards any group. Hence, the discussed perceptions should be viewed as distinct.

Cultural Sensitivity

This notion deals with the ability to recognize and understand students' learning preferences and social barriers. As elaborated in Excerpt 1, most participants favor NNESTs over NESTs when it comes to cultural sensitivity for being raised under common influences, background, beliefs.

This preference is based on, in most cases, the shared cultures of the students and NNEST's culture. Teacher's understanding of the language of the students is likely to make the teachers more empathetic as they could use translation.

Excerpt 1

It does not take long for them to know what Thai students need and what they consider too difficult or easy. When realized things are getting too complicated for the students, they would know it through gestures and try to give a simplified explanation. For instance, when a class full of Asian students gets really quiet, it might not necessarily mean a comprehension failure. It could just be when they are really concentrated. Teachers should elaborate more or try various teaching approaches.

The awareness of students' cultural backgrounds plays a vital role in how successful pedagogical efforts are (Medgyes, 1994). It is a prime factor that puts NNESTs at an advantageous position over NESTs. As the excerpt show, NESTs might, conversely, lack common cultural experience and awareness with their students which are disadvantageous. Similarly, Phillipson (1996) also agrees that, whether consciously or unconsciously, NESTs may not be sensitive to the cultures of students and this unfamiliarity may promote some teaching difficulties. Consistently, Zhang and Elder (2011) discovered that, in general, NESTs' cultural and pedagogical capacities appear limited when it comes to local knowledge as most are employed on short-term basis. As McKay (2000) has pointed out, NNESTs can quickly identify which pedagogies and materials are effective or ineffective for students and with such knowledge, awkward cultural encounters, e.g., assigning students to culturally offensive tasks can be avoided. In short, NNESTs are advantageous over NESTs for sharing similar cultural backgrounds with students.

After a careful and objective assessment, cultural backgrounds might not be the vital determinant factor of teaching efficiency when comparing NNESTs against NESTs. The reason given for this is that not every NNEST understands or

knows every fundamental of their cultural phenomena. As a result, it would be unfair to put a strict judgment on NESTs over their knowledge of local cultures. Furthermore, many NESTs might have taken residence in specific local areas for a period so that they can be quite familiar with that specific culture and local learning styles. Considering these influencing factors, some NESTs could be on an equal footing with some NNESTs in this regard.

Moreover, cultural sensitivity poses another significant problem, i.e., the social barrier between NNESTs and students. Excerpt 2 portrays a participant's notion on this:

Excerpt 2

I feel like there is some social bubbles or distances between the students and teachers. The students do not usually approach their lecturers unless the problems are severe. Otherwise, they would usually avoid the confrontation. I think it could be the seniority system in Thai society because the Thai's social hierarchy always put teachers a rank higher than the students.

This barrier of social statuses is what O'Sullivan & Tajaroensak (1997: 31) termes as "higher/lower statuses" or "senior/junior" relationships." Furthermore, Foley (2005) gave a clear elaboration on this: Thais regard the elderly and authorities with higher social statuses. Since educating is deemed as a crucial quest, teachers are highly valued and respected. Consequently, they are socially superior to students. Similarly, Methitham (2009) elaborates that in classrooms with passive learning, students are expected to follow the teachers. For that students become reluctant to deny, debate, or doubt the taught strategies or materials. This status quo has closely associated with the Thai's *Krengjai* which is a widely-known form of a social reaction for hesitations.

To understand what *Krengjai* is, Komin (1991: 164) defines *Krengjai* as being considerate or reluctant to cause others any trouble, discomfort, or inconvenience and being mindful of others' feelings. Adamson (2005) and Foley (2005), all opine that since *Krengjai* is a social manner, those with lower statuses who ask or challenge teachers could be viewed as aggressive, impolite, and inappropriate. Such outrageous actions are, therefore, disapproved in Thailand. On the other hand, the participants felt that they had a more productive relationship with NESTs since the social barrier, *Krengjai*, is smaller than the relationship they had with NNESTs. As shown in Excerpt 2, it reflects that the participants preferred discussing problems and asking for clarifications from NESTs.

Language Proficiency

Most participants responded that NNESTs are better at simplifying and explaining English grammar and structures to students because the knowledge set is known to be the area of NNESTs expertise. The notion is reflected through Excerpt 3. In line with Jindapitak & Teo (2013) and Jindapitak (2014), NNESTs are, in general, highly competent at grammar, elaboration of language structure, and giving explanations on language use. Moreover, this knowledge is usually utilized in ELT and pre-semester contexts when assigning teaching responsibilities across NESTs and NNESTs. The findings revealed that the participants prefer NNESTs to take on grammar, translations, and reading comprehension, and NESTs for conversation classes.

Excerpt 3

I think they are better at explaining grammar. Native speakers often don't know the rules behind speeches. Many native speakers can only explain if something

sounds natural or not. My personal experience is that when I was in English classes as a student, I spent much time studying grammar, agreements, and parts of speech. Grammar focus helps Thai teachers a lot with knowledge of rules and gives them the ability to better explain to their students.

Additionally, the participants felt that the biggest gain for hiring a NEST is the ability to speak English naturally (Excerpt 4). The findings are in line with other studies scoped in Thailand, e.g., Jindapitak & Teo (2013) and Jindapitak (2014). The samples of these studies favor NESTs for their speaking and pronunciation skills since they can produce the native tones. NESTs were perceived to use English more efficiently and spontaneously than NNESTs in different situations and contexts, whereas NNESTs usually possess poorer English competency because it did not come naturally to them and they had to study harder to master it.

Excerpt 4

They were born with English, and the language comes naturally to them. It is why they do not correct everything the students says and become too strict like Thai teachers. I feel like Thai teachers keep correcting everything and it scares the students. Native teachers use the language very naturally and aim at communication rather than correction.

To clarify, the language ideology in Excerpt 4 has a significant influence over Thais, especially in the area of their English pronunciation and accents. Those who speak English with a local accent, or Thai English accent in this case, tend to be perceived as being incorrect, incompetent, and unprofessional. Furthermore, some even brand them as inferior to the native English users such

as the British and American. This notion corroborates with previous studies in Thailand including Buripakdee (2008), Jindapitak & Teo (2013), and Jindapitak (2014). These findings elaborate that the population prefer those from the Inner Circle countries for speaking English with natural accents to Thais with a Thai English accent. Since employing mainstream English accents is being symbolized as possessing a high language proficiency, the phenomenon could be a key influencing factor of the educational stakeholders' (e.g., learners, parents, and educational institutions) decisions to heavily invest in hiring native speakers for their institutional ELT quests.

Teaching Capacity

In this section, the term, teaching capacity, will be discussed in close connections with teaching approaches and students' L1—first languages. The findings suggest that most NESTs used communicative teaching in their pedagogies (Excerpt 5) in which the teachers were viewed as facilitators who guide students and not simply as those who transmit knowledge. The focus of this strategy is to give the students opportunities to interact with each other and share ideas. As shown in Excerpt 6, contrarily, NNESTs employ more traditional teaching strategies where the teachers are seen as being knowledge sources and transmitters (Phungphol, 2005). Through this pedagogical approach, teachers dominate and talk throughout the learning process and the students generally take a passive role to show obedience. The students' personal views and ideas are not substantially brought up and discussed in this type of class since they are expected to sit down and listen to the lectures prepared by the teachers. Previous studies also corroborate these findings indicating that NNESTs are usually seen as traditional teachers with conventional classroom-management strategies (Lin, 2005; Roh, 2006).

Excerpt 5

Native English teachers emphasize communicative learning because they believe that students should be given more exposure to communicative encounters. Through this method, students get to share ideas and engage in profound discussions. On the other hand, Thai teachers would stick with simple activities.

Excerpt 6

I think Thai teachers like to have their students sit back and follow the flow of the class. They can listen and jot down notes, but they are not much encouraged to ask questions. Grammatical rules are the emphasis here. The teachers would try to explain and introduce more natural ways for the students to memorize them so that they can get good scores in the tests and quizzes. Thai teachers often stare at the textbooks while teaching in a sitting posture. It is not a very interactive kind of class.

As Lortie (1975) calls it: “apprenticeship of observation,” one reason that may have caused NNESTs to employ the above teaching technique could be their personal experiences once they took English language courses. Because many English classroom in Thailand use grammar translation or audio-lingual pedagogies (Saengboon, 2006), many NNESTs including Thai English teachers must have assumed that these are the most familiar and working strategies for English classes. This finding is in line with Borg (2003) and Numrich (1996) who examined the pedagogical beliefs and practices among English teachers. The studies reported that the way the teachers learned a language affect their teaching beliefs; help formulate the basic EFL-teaching concepts; and influence the way they teach the language throughout their professional lives. Based on

the studies, the accumulated learning experiences of the L2—second language can influence their pedagogical decisions, classroom management, teaching strategies, and selection of learning materials. Furthermore, the negative or positive experiences that they acquired during the learning can affect the choices of instructional strategies. Even though there have been new teaching methods (e.g., communicative teaching) available and proposed by different ELT scholars in Thailand, these NNESTs, who are more accustomed to past experiences and conventional pedagogies might feel that the new strategies are too complicated, and will, therefore, keep practicing the same old methods and feel reluctant to change.

Also, the participants thought that the primary distinguishing factor between NESTs and NNESTs is the knowledge of students' L1 (Excerpt 7). This concurs with Cheung & Braine (2007) and Ma (2009) study. In general, most NNESTs in Thailand run English classes using the Thai language. Congruently, Mahimuang (1996) and Mountford (1986) indicate that the phenomenon is due to a set of belief that Thai English teacher's share which is using mother tongue language in teaching comfortably in order to enhance the understanding of grammatical points and reading comprehension. Learning foreign sentences can become hectic without Thai facilitation, and the idea appeared significantly appealing to the students at low English-proficiency levels. Backing the claim, Mattioli (2004) also indicated that the poorer the L2 proficiency, the higher the demand for L1 to facilitate learning English. Also, using L1 has proven to be a useful, motivating, less time-consuming, and less stressful English learning experience.

Excerpt 7

The thing is Thai teachers know Thai, and if the students do not know things in English, they can always switch to Thai for better comprehension. It helps them grasp the ideas very quickly.

Persona

The participants indicated, as in Excerpt 8, that NESTs and NNESTs are characteristically different when they notice students' mistakes. Usually, NNESTs tend not to tolerate classroom mistakes. This finding is consistent with Medgyes (2001) and Wang (2009) studies on the teaching behaviors of NESTs and NNESTs. NESTs seem more flexible than NNESTs in tolerating students' linguistic errors. NESTs are more understanding and patient, while NNESTs would not hesitate to interrupt the learning to correct mistakes. Simply put, NESTs seem to know well what is critical and what is not. On the other hand, NNESTs view students' mistakes as English incompetency, a result of a poor effort which could not go unpunished. As a result, NNESTs are likely to go an extra mile with the students to deal with their imperfections.

Excerpt 8

I believe making errors are okay. Everyone occasionally makes mistakes. In Thailand, losing face is a big embarrassment so making a mistake in class, especially before peers and Thai teachers, could be catastrophic. Everyone prefers not to express ideas because a mistake is like a crime. While Thai teachers would make the students lose faces, native teachers would not. They would not mind mistakes and would try to ask for more information or assist the students. With native speakers, mistakes are no big deal. That is why the students are more comfortable with them than with the Thais.

Since English is valued as the most important foreign language to be taught in Thailand, many NNESTs believe that their students should improve all English skills equally: speaking, listening, reading, writing and others. As most NNESTs in Thailand were previously students of their older NNESTs, many conservative perspectives are transferred through generations, and the beliefs continue to influence NNESTs' choices of pedagogies. Hence, it is not surprised why NNESTs tend to have zero tolerance for students' errors. Moving on to punctuality, some participants felt that NESTs pay more attention to time. Excerpt 9 suggests that NNESTs perceive time as something negotiable.

Excerpt 9

Native teachers are very strict with time. If the class begins at 10 o'clock, it must be 10 o'clock and not a minute later. For Thais, most of them don't care about it. They can be on time but being on time is not compulsory. If the class begins at 10 o'clock, 10:15 is still acceptable.

Excerpts 10 and 11 presents a converse perspective. The excerpts below show that both NESTs and NNESTs equally value time. They have seen the examples of both being punctual. Eventually, Excerpt 11 suggests that it depends individually. Hence, punctuality appears to be an inclusive or indistinctive characteristic for both types of English teachers.

Excerpt 10

My impression is that both Thai and native English teachers go to class quite equally on time because they need to be the role models for their students.

Excerpt 11

I believe that it does not depend on their origins. I think it is up to their personal habits and values as professionals.

Employment Preference

Not only NESTs differ from NNESTs in language competencies, cultural backgrounds, teaching capacities, and personas, the way they are being recruited into businesses is also different. The participants felt that NESTs are being remunerated more generously than NNESTs regardless of qualifications (Excerpt 12). In line with Phothongsunan & Suwanarak (2008), one of the keys to better remuneration is related to being native (Excerpt 13).

Excerpt 12

I think native English teachers receive a higher pay despite poorer academic qualifications. I don't have a Ph.D. like other Thai lecturers at this university, but I am hired and paid substantially. I don't understand why the Thai lecturers with enough qualifications are not paid as much. Worse than that, they are already assigned with many tedious responsibilities. I, personally, find the situation quite unfair.

Excerpt 13

I think the native ones are paid more handsomely.... Well, it's one of the perks for being native... Yeah, having a native background is a privilege.

There is a social constraint for NESTs and against NNESTs in employment. This hiring practice is based on the belief that it is best to learn English from a NEST. British and American Englishes have long been regarded as standard

versions of English, and for that, they should be the primary pedagogies for English language teaching (Adamson 2005; Bolton 2003). According to Brains (2010) and Kirkpatrick (2010), NESTs are preferred in East and Southeast of Asia as they can produce more accurate linguistic articulations. The produced linguistic examples from NESTs are regarded as sound enunciations and grammatical standards (cf. Wang, 2012). Furthermore, NESTs, themselves, are valuable as learning resources for authentic cultures. On the contrary, NNESTs are viewed as flawed language speakers with limited knowledge of both how the language is used and how it is tied with cultures (Mahboob et al., 2004).

As seen in Excerpts 14 and 15, native English speakers are not required to present a master's degree or an ELT certification to work for a university. Nonetheless, the recruitment process becomes stricter when the applicants are NNESTs. In general, a minimum requirement of a master's degree in a relevant field is required for a NNEST candidate to work in a university (Phothongsunan & Suwannarak, 2008).

Excerpt 14

A Thai applicant needs at least master's degree. It is required. In contrast, it is acceptable for native who have no master degree certificate. It is negotiable. They don't need to complete any English teaching course before working. It is not necessary. As long as they are native English speakers, educational backgrounds do not matter much. A bachelor's degree in any field is more than enough.

Excerpt 15

Studying with native English speakers can be fruitful, but if they are not qualified to teach, it can be problematic. For instance, a native English backpacker

without a degree in ELT, EFL, or ESL might be able to teach simple English but will not be able to teach things in sequence or be aware of the students' learning barriers.

The discussed “employment favor” has led to more negotiable qualifying criteria for NESTs while creating double hiring standards against NNESTs across Thailand and some part of Asia. This phenomenon indicates that when it comes to NESTs, qualifications are not necessarily the influencing factor. Furthermore, Excerpt 15 raises some alarming notion that educational institutions are willing to employ unqualified, but native, backpackers as English teachers. These institutions believe that any native English speakers that look Caucasian can satisfy their educational quests of English teaching. As a result, many unqualified NESTs are phenomenally recruited into Asian educational institutions to run English courses. For instance, 90% of the candidates teaching in JET—Japan Exchange and Teaching Program—are uncertified (Carless, 2004), inexperienced, and ELT incapable (Ohtani, 2010). Consistently with the case of EPIK—English Program in Korea, as low as 26% of the participants were certified (Ahn et al., 1998). While Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Schemes in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam aim to only accept certified teachers, their standards were forcefully reduced due to the lack of qualified NESTs.

Regarding the aforementioned information, it can be clearly seen that there are some serious misconceptions about NESTs and NNESTs, and that this causes discriminatory hiring practices in the Thai society. Although the academic literature and educational principles observe that NESTs and NNESTs should be treated equally, many educational institutions in Thailand still show a clear preference for NESTs. There is also a broad social acceptance of this as the commercial preference (Baker, 2012; Methitham, 2009). This view is probably

supported by the widely held notion of students and their parents that NESTs are superior to NNESTs. To support this notion, similarly, Kirkpatrick (2006) identified four main factors which he believes influences the hiring of the large number of NESTs in Asian countries, including Thailand despite the fact that some of them being perceived as unqualified English teachers from the perspective of TESOL: 1) They benefit from the commercial promotion provided by the publishers and international ELT institutions alike; 2) They are look upon as standard varieties of English through their codification; 3) They represent power, and this power works in more than one way whether it would be media, publishing and/or language teaching; and 4) They have, more or less, historical authority. This, together with their codification, allow people to argue for their inherent superiority as models over more recently developed nativised varieties.

Implications

In English language teaching, the participants concurred that NESTs and NNESTs are different in five elements: (i) cultural sensitivity, (ii) language proficiency, (iii) teaching capacity, (iv) persona, and (v) employment preference. The findings revealed no indication of the advantages or disadvantages of the first four elements. Hence, to obtain optimal pedagogic solutions, a curriculum should look to employ a fair proportion of both NESTs and NNESTs so that they are encouraged to interact. As Medgyes (1992: 349) suggests “given a favorable mix [of NESTs and non-NESTs], various forms of collaboration are possible both in and outside the classroom. Using each other as language consultants, for example, or teaching in tandem” implies collaborative efforts can mutually strengthen their work effectiveness and mitigate possible damages caused by the inevitable weaknesses (Mahboob, 2003).

Regarding employment preference, despite the bias in the number of NNEST professionals, career markets seem to avoid accepting them. Many recruitment advertisements even state clear discrimination against them. Hence, it is justified why more studies (such as this one) should be conducted to raise awareness among policymakers and convey the idea that discriminations, segregations, biases, and inequalities in the employment of NESTs and NNESTs should be reduced. As suggested in the findings of this study, institutions may gain more fruitful results out of recruiting both. Specifically, English teachers should not be appointed based on whether one is a native speaker, speaks English as the L1, or comes from an inner circle nation. Furthermore, they should be remunerated on fair quality criteria, e.g., efficiency, professionalism, and experiences. The state of being native or non-native should not separate them apart as closer and more thorough determination should be given. To address the problems, promote a better understanding, reduce biases, and provide a better conceptualization of NESTs and NNESTs, this study was, therefore, conducted.

Finally, the findings appear to have provided a significant contribution to ELT. Educators, policymakers, students, parents, and educational stakeholders can study the knowledge and discoveries to make informed decisions, fine-tune curriculums, and enhance professional development, and improve the quality of the ELT industry. Also, the findings can further be used extensively in ELT research to raise professional awareness, promote a healthier ELT work environment, and stimulate an ELT paradigm shift.

Conclusion

This study offers empirical data and in-depth insights into the differences between NESTs and NNESTs. It also illustrates the perspectives of Thai students and NNESTs towards NESTs and NNESTs. It is obvious in Thailand that being a native speaker of English is a key criterion that influences parents and learners choices of an English teacher. However, the demand for teaching English in Thailand therefore exceeds the supply of NESTs (Weawong and Singhasiri, 2009). Again, if we consider English language teachers, Todd (2006) argues that one fundamental consideration is whether they are native speakers or non-native speakers and points out that native speaker educators are considered to be somewhat "better," but the predominance of non-native speakers-non-native speakers use of English in Thailand implies that the objective of studying English should be English as an international language rather than any non-native speaker English norms. If English as a lingua franca (ELF) is a language of contact used by individuals who do not share a first language and are frequently understood to mean a second (or later) language of their speakers (Jenkins, 2007), English in Thailand is presently being used as a lingua franca between English NNSs rather than between or between NSs and NNS speakers (Weawong and Singhasiri, 2009). The findings revealed that the NESTs-NNESTs phenomenon is relatively new and challenging. No uninformed opinions were identified whether NESTs or NNESTs are more effective at teaching English or not. Simply put, it involves many variations, both individually and contextually, to provide such a verdict. As Kramsch (1997: 363) puts it, a language teacher, native or non-native, is generally accepted by "the group that created the distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers." Widdowson (2003) also indicates that TESOL opposes any form of discrimination against NNESTs and has made that opposition public. This organization usually rejects

any form of discrimination against any English teacher, whether on education qualification, religion, age, sex, mother tongue language, or intelligence. To conclude, NESTs and NNESTs are equally vital to English teaching. No one is or should stereotypically be viewed better than the other. It all depends on the teaching situation and the teacher as an individual. In fact, it is more useful to balance the proportion of NESTs and NNESTs in an ELT environment for effective and collaborative teaching.

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