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Abstract

There is a common, but mistaken, assumption that language teaching should be placed in the hands of native speakers. Although the misperception of the superiority of native speaker teachers has been challenged in the professional ELT literature, many continue to hold fast on this misguided belief, often resulting in discriminatory practices towards non-native speaking teachers. The purpose of this paper is to raise greater awareness among stakeholders about this issue, so that they can make more informed decisions about hiring and pedagogical practices. We first look closely at current practices that wittingly or unwittingly support and exacerbate the ideology of native speakerism and then offer some suggestions on how ELT professionals can promote non-native speaker teachers' professional credibility. We also propose a set of qualities that all teachers, regardless of their language or geographical backgrounds, should have.

Keywords

ELT, native speaker teacher, non-native speaker teacher, native speakerism

Introduction

The increasing growth of learners of English, which is closely linked to the global spread of English and the growing recognition of English as an international language, creates an increasing demand for English teachers. Recent data shows that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) are estimated to outnumber their native English-speaking counterparts. 80% of the 15 million English teachers worldwide (or around 9.2 million) are NNESTs (Freeman et.al., 2015). Nevertheless, NNESTs are often perceived to have a lower status than native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) (Mahboob, 2010).

Native speakerism - a term coined by Holliday (2005) refers to an ideology that upholds the idea that so-called native speakers (NSs) are the best models and teachers of English because they come from a Western culture from which the ideals of ELT methodology and practices originate from. The idea that native speakers are better language teachers have been seriously challenged by TESOL scholars, chief among these is Phillipson (1992) who strongly argued against the unfounded perception that NESTs were by nature of their birth place better ELT instructors. He coined a now familiar term "native speaker fallacy" and claimed that the perceived native speaker superiority was based on weak and unsound reasoning. The consensus