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'No one would give me that job in Australia': when professional identities intersect with how teachers look, speak, and where they come from

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates how non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) professional identities can be affected by their employment experiences in Australia. Hermeneutic phenomenological narrative analyses of the written narratives of lived experiences of a group of NNESTs demonstrate how their professional identities were negatively affected by hiring discrimination, which also had psycho-emotional impacts on their professional selves. Socio-cultural representations of race, language, and other cultural attributes convergingly contributed to their unemployment despite meeting country-specific eligibility criteria to be English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. The interplay between their professional identities and socio-cultural constructs took shape in modes of power relations enmeshed in the historic processes: economic, political, and cultural, which included discourses of native-speakerism, neo-racism, post-colonialism, neoliberalism, and multiculturalism. Despite these modalities, the NNESTs furthered their hybrid professional actions, recognising the value in the global community of multiple and diverse professional experiences.

KEYWORDS

NNEST; immigrant teachers; professional identity; employment; othering; native-speakerism; post-colonialism; multiculturalism; neoliberalism; teacher shortage

This paper includes the partial findings of the hermeneutic phenomenological narrative analyses of the accounts of lived experiences of non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs') contributing to their professional identity over time. Here, we explore the interplay between native speakerism and adjacent ideological discourses with NNESTs' lived experiences of professional identity construction and employment discrimination in Australia. We understand identity as a fluid process of 'becoming', always a site of relational negotiation, and as something which is 'performed and negotiated' rather than entirely claimed by oneself or entirely conferred by others as a fixed construct (Angouri, 2015). Furthermore, there is an interrelationship 'between the ways in which discourses position participants as 'subjects' in competing ways and the hybrid ways participants make their own and other people's actions socially determinate' (Baxter, 2016, p. 41). We are

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interested to highlight how, despite meeting all criteria in a highly multicultural country like Australia, NNESTs were 'othered' in their employment process by overlapping ideological discourses. We also capture how they navigated the binary discourses through the interplay of reflexivity, agency, and hybridity of their lived experiences over time.

Native speakerism, a term coined by (Holliday, 2006), is a pervasive ideology within English language learning and teaching across contexts. In distinguishing between and establishing hierarchical views of the practices of teachers who use English as a 'native' language, or native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), and those who do not – the NNESTs – native speakerism defines and perpetuates a binary which has attracted extensive criticism from both teachers and researchers. Resting on the notions of linguistic purity and cultural authenticity (Kramsch, 2016), which are themselves contestable, native speakerism perpetuates stereotypes to dichotomise and essentialise the knowledge and experiences of large, heterogeneous groups of language users, and positions them in favourable and unfavourable ways based on these stereotypes. As Holliday (2006) argues, native speakerism manifests in 'many aspects of professional life, from employment policy to the presentation of language' (p. 385).

Native speakerism manifests both overtly and covertly. As a recent PhD graduate, Canagarajah (1999) expressed consternation at reading 'advertisement after advertisement [stating] that only those who are 'native English speakers' or those with 'native English competence' should apply for the teaching position' (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 1). While this experience occurred over 30 years ago, recent research suggests that such practices persist in many parts of the world (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2019). In contexts where English is learned and used as a foreign language (EFL), NESTs may enjoy higher pay and better working conditions than local NNESTs (Canagarajah, 1999; Kiczowski, 2014; Mahboob & Golden, 2013). In private ESL (English as a second language) contexts like Canada, non-white NESTs and NNESTs were subject to the microaggressions of racism (Ramjattan, 2015). In Australian adult ESL (private, university and migrant) sectors, 'hiring managers' beliefs and assumptions may' still 'negatively influence perceptions of NNESTs' ability and validity as competent teachers of English' (Phillips, 2017, p. 3). Phillips (2017) found that 25.4% of 59 employers across private language schools, university English language centres and Australian migrant English programs 'rated the NES criterion moderately, or very important when hiring' (p. 12), while 46% deemed this criterion somewhat or moderately important (p. 14). These preferences are not hidden, but can be seen in online employment advertisements that emphasise the requirement of being a 'native English speaker' (SEEK, 2022, para. 3). A recent study on skilled transnational migrants in Australia's labour market reveals how they experienced translingual discrimination in terms of their names and use of English (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022). The migrants' job applications were rejected when they used their birth names and they experienced discrimination based on their English language ability, entailing the 'paradoxes of migration', inconsistencies between their projection and reality (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022, p. 365).

Native speakerism in employment practice is often related to *customer demand* for particular models of language use (Holliday, 2018, p. 2). Under profit-oriented institutional governance agendas, employers may mask discriminatory hiring practices under the guise of meeting students' expectations (Rajagopalan, 2006; Ramjattan, 2015). Like physical appearance such as colour of skin, traits such as accents can mark the Other (e.g.

Miller, 2012; Shuck, 2006), and, in this case, can result in marginalisation and difficulties accessing employment (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022; Fotovatian, 2015). This not only results in the exclusion of NNESTs from roles for which they are qualified, but can also result in the employment of underqualified and/or underexperienced NESTs on the basis of their language background alone (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Wibawa & Xiao, 2018). Unlike teachers of other subject areas, the ideal English language teacher is expected to be *born into* the subject matter (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2019).

Discrimination against NNESTs generates extensive negative consequences for individuals (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Miller, 2007; Tang, 1997). It may contribute to the ‘I-am-not-a-native-speaker’ (Suárez, 2000, para. 10) or ‘imposter’ syndromes (Ahn & Delesclefs, 2020). NNESTs may experience prejudice, low levels of confidence, self-perceived challenges to their professional competence, and a lack of voice and visibility in the profession (Kamhi-Stein, 2000, p. 10). In large scale studies in international, US and Hong Kong contexts by Medgyes (2001), Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), Reves and Medgyes (1994), and Tang (1997), NNESTs perceived themselves to be inferior and/or disadvantaged when compared with NESTs. For example, NESTs were seen as being ‘usually preoccupied with accuracy’ rather than fluency and ‘the formal features of English’ rather than ‘colloquial expressions’ (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 360). Some of the respondents in Tang’s (1997, p. 578) study even reported that learners could only acquire ‘accurate’, ‘correct’ and ‘natural’ English from NESTs, as they alone were thought to model authentic language (p. 578). However, unlike the findings in Reves and Medgyes (1994), the participants in Brutt-Griffler and Samimy’s study (1999) did not think they were disadvantaged in EFL contexts due to their non-native status, although in ESL contexts, they were significantly affected by power relations. Dovchin (2020) believes linguistic racism imposes serious psychological damage on NNESTs (non-native English speakers). International students in Dovchin’s study in Australia experienced linguistic racism which instigated ‘inferiority complexes leading to social withdrawal, sense of non-belonging, low self-esteem, fear, and anxiety over speaking English’, and hence ‘severe depressive symptoms of mental health such as suicidal ideations’ (p. 804). Repeated experiences of ‘othering’ can result in mental, emotional, and physical exertions, diffidence and fraud-like symptoms, that may last even after teachers gain recognition (Ahn & Delesclefs, 2020; Udah & Singh, 2019).

Employment discrimination experienced by NNESTs has long been addressed by the TESOL International Association (TESOL, 1992, 2006) and its local affiliates, such as CATESOL and WATTESOL (Selvi, 2016), yet the goal to create a non-discriminatory professional environment for *all* TESOL International members has not yet been accomplished. More recently, advocacy-orientated professional groups have emerged online and in social media (Selvi, 2016, p. 52), suggesting that there is a continued and pressing need to address these matters.

Specific to superdiverse contexts like Australia, ironically the teaching workforce is greatly non-diverse despite critical teacher shortage across sectors. Professional standards and the curricula (ELE and general) are still premised on standard Australian English (ASE), and NESTs dominate English language education (ELE) and the profession (AITSL, n.d.; Green & Erixon, 2020; Lo Bianco, 2022; Nigar & Kostogriz, 2019). Amid the unprecedented teacher shortage impending in Australia (Department of Education, 2022), overseas born teachers and aspirant teachers both onshore and offshore are not supported and still

barred from accessing the migration, education and employment systems (Black, 2022, 24 December; Nigar, Kostogriz, & Wilson, 2022, 28 November). Even the national action plan to address teacher shortage ignores the issues and conflates the immigrant NNESTs and NNESTs (Department of Education, 2022) when the criteria for both immigration and registration for them are disparate (e.g. AITSL, 2021; VIT, 2022). In the employment process, their overseas credentials are still treated as deficient compared to those of NESTs. A clear lack of understanding of and attitude to value the advantage of the professional diversity the NNESTs bring has not yet gained the attention of the employers and policy makers.

On that account, we argue that the critical reflection of the education industry regarding discriminatory employment practices is one way to address the profound issue of teacher shortages in Australia. The findings of this study suggest that critical reflections by the education industry should be in terms of recognising and utilising the NNESTs' diverse credentials and abilities. The policies and practices should recognise 'hybrid professional becoming', which is assumed by a certain Australian curriculum (ACARA, n.d.) as intercultural and ethical capabilities (ACARA, n.d.). The implications of the recognition of NNESTs' diversity is linked to ensuring decolonised and culturally responsive education and workplaces, as well as an Australian nation inclusive of diversity of linguistic, cultural and moral values (Green & Erixon, 2020; Stratton, 2020).

The data presented in this article were generated in a large study that examined how NNESTs' professional identity in Australia was spatio-temporally constituted within the lived experiences and imagination of professional becoming, beyond the NEST and NNEST binary. NNESTs' employment access in Australia appeared as one of the key themes in response to one of the research questions about how NNESTs' reconstituted their professional identities in Australia.

Identity in binary relations and beyond

We conceptualise NNESTs' professional identity as influenced by the binary logic of self and Other, identifying who they are by separating them from what they are not (Butler, 1986; Hegel, 1977). The Other here is dissociated from the in-group, viewed as deficit and excluded by the dominant group and their socio-political ideological categories. 'Othering' is epistemologically interlaced with the 'Other', which translates difference into otherness to draw lines between groups, such as the coloniser and the colonised (Spivak, 1985). In the nexus of self and the Other wrestle the forces of power (Foucault, 1986) to exclude and include the Other, to essentialise and homogenise the Other. For example, Fotovatian (2015) reported that language and accent were used as othering mechanisms in four experienced NNESTs' (doctoral candidates') everyday communications and employment in Australia.

Within the invisible power of ideologies of the socio-political apparatuses, subjectivities may be caught in false consciousness, as Marx conceptualised the process (Heywood, 1994). Through this process of cultural hegemony, dominant norms, values and so called non-standards are formed into a culture where the mechanisms of dominance seem beneficial to the dominated (Gramsci, 1971). For example, immigrants may engage in dehumanising accent reduction programs to be employed in the new context (Guo, 2009; Ramjattan, 2022). As Foucault (1980) theorises, and as in the

context of this paper, institutional and individual discourses produced by power laden ideologies, such as native-speakerism, neo-racism, post-colonialism, neoliberalism, and multiculturalism, impact NNESTs' professional identity. The overarching relational categories that manifest and may be convergingly misrecognised within professional contexts are race, class, language, and culture. In the case of the participants, this categorical interplay of professional misrepresentation and the socio-cultural constructs took shape 'as modalities of power implicated in the historically specific processes – economic, political, and cultural' (Brah, 2014, p. 110).

Amongst the interlaced ideologies negatively impacting NNESTs' professional identity and employment are native-speakerism, neo-racism, post-colonialism, neoliberalism, and multiculturalism. As described, the ideology of native-speakerism is typified by the belief and practice of English language and English teaching methodology represented by native-speaker teachers and their so called western cultures (Holliday, 2013). Post-colonialism denotes the socio-cultural and political effects of colonial representations in terms of the culture and language of colonisation, such that despite the multicultural and globalised reality of a country, only one native language (e.g. ASE) and its values, culture and knowledge system dominate in educational practices (Green & Erixon, 2020). Neo-liberalism denotes here the commodification of English, its speakers, and teachers, and the values attached to those as per the market demand. Colonial languages like English can carry colonial legacies and can sustain imperialistic and neoliberal pursuits (Meighan, 2022; Pennycook, 1998). The brand of native Englishes and their speakers, in the name of 'native-speakerism', is commodified and marketised as a vested interest in the ELT industry (Fang, 2020; Holliday, 2018). Holliday (2018) claims that native-speakerism is neo-racist because 'race is implicit in the cultural Othering of 'non-native speaker' teachers' since any assumption of cultural attributes related to people's behaviour is racist (p. 2). It is also because in this construct native-speakers' whiteness is desired, capitalised and marketised in the ELT business, and this contributes to the discriminatory employment practices beyond the –

English-speaking West, ... where all types of language teaching institutions and their 'customers' commonly show ... a mistaken preference for 'native speaker' teachers. (Holliday, 2018, p. 2)

The inequality grounded on the binary logic of NEST and NNEST is discursively situated within the historical and socio-cultural practices of post-colonialism, native speaker ideology, and its imperial and later neo-liberal versions exercised across the globe (Pennycook, 2007).

We also employ the notion of 'imposter syndrome' to understand the NNESTs' perceptions of their self-worth and their confusion. Although 'imposter syndrome' (IS) (Clance & Imes, 1978) is a psychological concept, we conceptualise this as a socio-culturally affected psychological syndrome. For example, NNESTs may constantly feel they are not on par with NESTs: 'I'm not a native speaker'. It is an internal experience of a belief infiltrating via the socio-cultural experiences of reductive identity: that is, NNESTs are made to feel they do not deserve to hold a professional position despite their knowledge, competence, and experience in the relevant area. Both a NNEST and a NEST can suffer from this syndrome, the former for non-nativeness and the latter for nativeness. For example, Hye-jeong struggled with her non-nativeness whereas Davina felt like a fraud because she

felt she enjoyed her privilege by chance, because of her whiteness and her native English (Ahn & Delesclefs, 2020).

Nevertheless, beyond the categories of binary, the Other can be viewed wholistically as having a rich repertoire of resources (Meighan, 2022), constantly hybridising and becoming in relational fluidity within and beyond professional contexts of their lived experiences. In this sense, NNESTs can recognise, resist the discourses of power, as power always entails agency (Foucault, 1986). They can be creative and hybridise the repertoire of their lived experiences (Bhabha, 1994; Ilieva, Li, & Li, 2015) while accumulating and imagining their becoming anew (Ricoeur, 1975; Welply, 2015).

The study

Sixteen participants in this study were NNESTs who migrated to and were working in Australia at the time of data collection. The data were drawn from a larger study of a hermeneutic phenomenological method (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 1990) which explored how the NNESTs constituted their professional identity via their lived experiences over time. The participants' demographic information, including country of origin and employment sector, is provided in Table 1. Several of them were registered schoolteachers in Australia; they moved to other sectors either due to non-employment or to achieve roles other than merely casual relief teaching (CRT).

The combined method of hermeneutic phenomenological narrative enquiry (Nigar, 2019) was adopted following the philosophical underpinning and principles of the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990). No rigid measures were applied, so the phenomenon could emerge in its essential form (van Manen, 1990). Through dialogic and sensitive attunement with the phenomenon and recursive interpretations of contexts and wider discourses (van Manen, 1990), the combined method sought to unfurl the meaning of NNEST's professional identity involving their lived experiences

Table 1. Participant profiles.

Pseudonyms	Cities taught	Country-of-origin	Areas of training; Australia	Sectors mostly taught; Australia
Becca	Sydney	Slovakia	TESOL	Elicos (English language intensive courses for overseas students)
Carlos	Sydney	Brazil	TESOL	ELICOS
Frida	Adelaide	Philippines	TESOL	ESL (migrant programs)
Hien	Canberra	Vietnam	TESOL	ESL (migrant programs)
Janaki	Melbourne	India	Secondary (EAL; English)	ESL (migrant programs)
Jasha	Sydney	USSR	TESOL	ESL (migrant programs)
Jigna	Melbourne	India	Secondary (EAL; English)	EAL (migrant programs); EAP (English for Academic Purposes)
Laura	Melbourne	Philippines	Secondary (EAL; English); TESOL	ESL (migrant programs)
Ling-Ling	Melbourne	China	Secondary (EAL; Japanese, Chinese)	Independent High School
Mahati	Melbourne	India	Secondary (EAL; English)	ESL (migrant programs)
Mandy	Melbourne	Philippines	TESOL	ELICOS
Natalie	Melbourne	Bangladesh	TESOL	ELICOS, EAL (migrant programs)
Oksana	Sydney	Russia	TESOL; Secondary (EAL; English)	ELICOS
Quang	Sydney	Vietnam	(EAL; English)	Govt. High School
Raphael	Melbourne	Israel/Kibbutz	Secondary (EAL; Music)	EAL (migrant programs)
Thi	Melbourne	Vietnam	TESOL	ELICOS

since early childhood. Narrative enquiry sought the narratives of their unique professional identity and hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry enabled access to the commonalities of the unique narratives. The specific findings of this study emerged out of the process of my long-term orientation with the phenomenon and the dialogic data gathering process over the research period. The full data generation occurred from July 2019 to March 2020, through participants' reflective writing on Google Docs and concurrent interactions with them, followed by several spoken interviews. Narrative prompts were provided, and participants were asked to reflect, write, followed by 'pause and reflect', for at least 30 min each week. The time varied for the participants to complete the writing. The prompts specific to the findings reported in this article concerned their professional experiences from pre-migration to settlement and professional practice in Australia, such as, 'write about your employment experience in Australia, such as your job application experience, interview experience, first job landing experience, etc.' The reflective writing at their own time, pace and space enabled the participants to engage deeply with their embodied memories and to express their 'secret' stories. The first author's 'playful' interactions with them on Google Doc and other means made them interested and write more in depth. Several participants took part in subsequent interviews and numerous follow ups with the first author to elaborate on the data shared through the written narratives – the spoken narratives were transcribed later. A holistic reading and highlighting approach (van Manen, 1990), and narrative sequencing along with contextual analysis (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Polkinghorne, 1995) were applied to the individual written and spoken accounts, along with hermeneutic phenomenological interpretations of the holistic data. In the recursive interpretations of the narratives emerged the binary categories and the related broader discourses.

While we choose to highlight the NNESTs' experiences of employment discrimination related to native speakerism and adjacent discourses in this article, we acknowledge that these were not the totality of their experiences; the wholistic hermeneutic phenomenological analyses of the original study revealed the core structure of NNESTs' professional becoming over time, as hybrid professional practices, of which 'othering' and its effect' were only one of the constituents, and reflexivity, imagination and agency were others.

Findings and discussion

In this section, we highlight two key themes – 'No one would give me that job!', and 'Why am I self-conscious?' – to capture how NNESTs' professional identities were discursively and ideologically shaped within the power enforced discourses of linguistic, cultural, and racial 'othering' in Australia. While discussing the theme, we also show some examples how the teachers actively navigated these discourses. In the first theme, 'No one will give me that job!', native speakerism, postcolonial and other discourses, interwoven with power disjunctions related to visible and audible markers of difference, are explored. These include race, linguistic heritage and accent, nationality, education (qualifications), and language learning and teaching experience. As the participants' data demonstrate, these markers of difference manifested in many ways as barriers for the participants to work within already established professional trajectories. The second theme, 'Why am I self-conscious?', explores how these discourses engendered self-doubt and self-marginalisation for experienced professionals, and how these self-conceptions became

embodied in their lives, behaviours, and identities. This situation results in impoverished experiences for the teachers, in turn impoverishing a TESOL teaching sector that fails to address mechanisms of denigration activated through policy and practices in the workplace. Nevertheless, the participants' rich repertoire of experience across borders guided them to be reflexive, agentive and to hybridise their practices and imagination.

No one would give me that job!

After undergoing the difficult, in many cases discriminatory, journey of meeting the requirements for academic qualifications and English language proficiency both for immigration and teacher registration, finding employment in the Australian TESOL sector was a monumental hurdle for the NNESTs (similar findings in Clark & Paran, 2007; Colic-Peisker, 2005; Fotovatian, 2010; Mahboob & Golden, 2013).

For most participants, it took months or years to secure an English teaching job. The teachers reported a range of factors they saw as contributing to the delay in employment, despite their clear professional preparedness: amongst those are accent, linguistic background, race, and overseas qualifications and experience. As in Dovchin's (2020) study, the factors cumulatively resulted in the NNESTs being "heard", 'seen', or 'imagined' to be speaking 'bad' or 'low proficient' English irrespective of their actual high-level in English' (Dovchin, 2020, p. 804).

Linguistic difference and perceived expertise or teaching ability appeared to converge in the teachers' experiences of employment discrimination. Jasha, who had worked in school leadership as a deputy principal in the USSR, said that when she arrived in Australia many years ago, she was –

actively looking for any job but was quite unsuccessful [...] I did see people 'cringe' when I was applying for relief work at language schools when they saw my resume or realised that I have an accent.

Another recent experience appeared to corroborate the importance of her linguistic and professional background in her search for work. Jasha recalled an interview she had attended for a position as a TESOL instructor to work with international students: 'after just a couple of minutes came 'unfortunately, the position has been filled''. However, Jasha capitalised on her life experiences with English and teaching, and pursued various settlement and employment training programs, higher education, and other relevant jobs over the years to access the profession, albeit in the vocational sector, which is similar to the findings of Phillips's (2017) study. Even recently, Jasha reflected, she had been rejected in an interview as soon as her accented English was heard.

Unlike most others, Ling Ling, Becca, and Raphael, who completed their initial teacher education in Australia, found it comparatively easier to find teaching jobs across high school, ELICOS and vocational or community sectors. They started their jobs on a casual basis and continued mostly teaching either casually or contractually. Oksana, an experienced teacher from Russia, secured a casual high school teaching job after completing an Australian high school teaching qualification; however, she later moved to a permanent role in the ELICOS (high school) sector. Becca and Raphael are white, or 'European looking', and Ling Ling is a teacher of Japanese and Chinese. Ling Ling found employment as a teacher of ESL and languages in an independent high school, and Raphael, despite

being fully qualified as a high school teacher of ESL and music, found employment only in the adult ESL sector. White or non-white, the teachers who reported that finding a job was not too difficult were employed to teach only NNES students.

Binary relations essentialising the 'self and the Other' (Pennycook, 2007) are reproduced in practices in which Australian credentials are considered legitimate and valid over others, and where only holders of those qualify as teachers of English language. Despite years of experience as an educator in Russia, Jasha was employed in Australia only after she completed an Australian qualification. Jasha's professional identity was negotiated at the intersection of her linguistic background, accent, and employment experience. Her name, experience, qualification, accent, and non-native status were symbolically linked to cultural differences in English, reinscribing connections between 'language, national origin, and race' (Shuck, 2006, p. 260) and casting Jasha as alien. Similar experiences were shared by other participants in the group. For instance, Quang and Natalie had their qualifications approved by NEAS, a regulatory body in English language teaching, as being appropriate for a centre manager position (NEAS, 2022), but were not called for entry level job interviews until they completed an Australian degree. Mandy also believed that her unemployment, despite meeting criteria, was due to a lack of Australian 'experience' and 'references'. The issue resides in the 'colonialinguualism', the 'epistemological error' (Meighan, 2022, p. 144), that conceives and practises supremacy of native English with a repertoire characterised by the overlapping discourses of post-colonialism, neo-racism, neo-liberalism, and multiculturalism.

Linguistic, cultural and racial ideologies interplayed to perpetuate binaries and sustain the predominant position in the social hierarchy of Australian-ness, native speakerism, or whiteness (e.g. Shuck, 2006) in the highly multicultural context. Skin colour also continues to determine 'the degree of one's acceptance in Australian state' (Stratton, 2020, p. 1). NNEST participants from Asian and South Asian backgrounds in this study narrated how it was taxing and humiliating for them to obtain an English teaching job in Australia. Most of them said the apparent reasons were native speaker preference (implicit or explicit) (see also Colic-Peisker, 2005), and the lack of local qualifications and teaching experience. Hien reminisces:

There are even fewer schools that employ non-native teachers. I applied for ... without hearing back from them, and went to interview ... but lost that job to a young inexperienced just fresh out of Master's native colleague.

Thi narrated 'I explored hundreds of job websites with hope that I could possibly find even just tutoring jobs in order to gain the so-called local experience which every job description requires'. Natalie was even given feedback by employers that she would not be suited to teach the academic English programs for students from native and non-native backgrounds, but only for adult migrants in the vocational sector. Their non-English-speaking ethnic, cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds became a basis of difference and exclusion (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Dovchin & Dryden, 2022), preventing them from accessing the professional field in Australia. This also resonates with findings by Leigh, Booth, and Varganova (2009), who found that ethnic minority candidates would need to apply for more jobs to receive the same number of interviews as their Anglo-Celtic counterparts – Asian and Middle Eastern background applicants were amongst the most racially discriminated. Through migration, paradoxically, the status of highly respected teachers who

had taught overseas appeared to plummet from 'hero to zero' (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022, p. 365).

Largely due to unemployment, even though several teachers were qualified and experienced schoolteachers, most decided to teach EAL and ELICOS because they could not secure any job in the school sector. An exception was Quang, who teaches EAL on 'temporary contracts' in high schools for predominantly NNES students. This may be akin to the experiences of the early career teachers of native English-speaking backgrounds; however, despite being a qualified teacher, he did not find a job in the ELICOS sector either. Besides, Quang had to sit for English language tests several times to meet the discriminatory requirement (AITSL (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership), 2021). The reason for this was he did not have a bachelor's degree from Australia though he had three post-graduate degrees, including practicums in initial teacher education (one from Vietnam and two from Australia). Even so, Quang's lived experiences of English and teaching since early childhood did not let him sink but prompted him to be agentive and create pathways, such as volunteer teaching and teaching migrants. However, Jigna, who was a qualified teacher of ELICOS and experienced in EFL contexts, had a different experience while she was pursuing her post-graduate study in initial teacher education in Melbourne. Although she was invited to various job interviews in a row, she was never employed as a high school teacher:

I started briefly as a casual Relief Teacher ... I got an interview for a teaching position at a public school in [suburb]. I was unsuccessful on the grounds of lack of experience. Then again, I was interviewed telephonically by [company], but could not be successful on the grounds of lack of Australian experience. I took up employment ... for an after-school Program (OSHC) ... It utilised my VIT licence and it got me into a school. However, it was far from a teaching career.

Jigna's experiences suggest a mix of binary categories were at play in impeding her employment in schools, leading her to network, learn about other sectors, gain sector specific qualifications, and get employed in the migrant ESL sector. Accent may have acted as another category intersecting with the lack of local experience and her ethnic/cultural background because she was asked for many interviews but rejected on the ground of lack of experience, even though she was experienced as a CRT and a teacher of adult VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education). These forms of linguistic discrimination (Dovchin, 2019), sedimented in broader ideologies and discourses, are counter-intuitive in the condition of migration, mobility, and the globalised world today.

Some teachers in this study believe that employers, whether jobs are advertised or not, prefer mostly NESTs, though recently changes in job advertisements looking explicitly for NESTs has been noticed. They all had experienced – and continued to do so – repeated nonresponses after job applications, unfair interviews, and unfair employment criteria. Employed or seeking employment, some teachers felt they were the second or back-up choice to the NESTs. In reference to the ELICOS and TAFE sectors, Hein conceded that when she first arrived in Canberra, 'No one would give [her] the job as an English teacher as [she] came from Vietnam where English is a foreign language'. Hien's discontent is explicit when she says, 'As a NNEST, I sometimes feel gutted that language providers have recruited native teachers only to deliver the language courses'. Hein added –

I applied for teaching at language courses [at two universities]. There was no reply from [the first university]. As for [the second university], they gave me quite a humiliating interview where they kept asking me about my IELTS score and if I had ever been an IELTS Examiner. If your IELTS score is not 9, you cannot be an IELTS Examiner. It is quite impossible for me to get a 9.

Even though the validity of English language tests is criticised because of the tests' asocial and inauthentic content, and disempowering commercial objectives (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008), IELTS test scores act as a gatekeeper which may hamper NNESTs' employment even after they have met the English language requirements for student visas, higher study, and teacher registration. The implicit and explicit discrimination is complicitly related to the global politics of English and English language education (Meighan, 2022; Pennycook, 2008), and Western teacher education courses like CELTA, as these are coveted commodities (Holliday, 2018). In the private English language teaching context in Canada, a recent study by Ramjattan (2015) reveals how non-white and/or non-native teachers experienced microaggressions by the employers through practices like 'being confused about their names, questioning their language backgrounds, and citing customer preferences' (p. 692). In that study, the teachers' narratives of employment discrimination followed discursive patterns of blaming the teachers for having 'personal failings', and 'transferring racial discrimination over to clients or the market' (Ramjattan, 2015, p. 692).

Not only are the socio-culturally produced binary categories and professional criteria drawn on to hierarchically devalue the culture, knowledge, and experience of NNESTs, but the complot of native-speakerism, neo-racism, neo-liberalism and post-colonialism form an unwavering base for the current status quo of self and the Other. The discourses of non-native English, racial and cultural attributes and characteristics act as the power laden 'truth' or 'objectivity', the regime of truth managing multiculturalism, all due to the power imbalance between what is deemed as Australian and what is not. These are 'colonialingual' practices that are subtractive and jeopardising since they are pernicious to the multilingual and multicultural 'becoming' not only of the minoritised communities but others too (Meighan, 2022).

Why am I self-conscious?

NNESTs' professional identities shaped in 'sprawling' discourses are dynamic, contestable, embodied, and conflicting. In this sense, the perennial practices of post/colonialism and native-speaker ideologies worldwide have detrimental emotional and psychological impacts on NNESTs (Dovchin, 2020).

In this study, the feelings of 'self-conscious-ness' and 'intimidated-ness' intersubjectively and cumulatively impacted the participating teachers' self-worth. These feelings were intricately related to the local-global discourses of 'non-whiteness', 'non-native-speakerness', 'non-Australianness', and the like. Affected by the imposter syndrome, the teachers self-othered, and they appeared to suffer from hidden guilt, fear and anxiety of not being as good as a native English-speaking teacher. Carlos initially thought, he 'could be too pretentious to teach English in a country where the official language is English, and I was not even born here'. Although English is not an official language in Australia and different varieties of English are used, in social interactions and the education

system, only whiteness and native Australian English, and the ‘monomoral’ values associated with them are imagined to be Australian (Stratton, 1998, 2020). Other Englishes, cultures, and races are ‘othered’, and expected to be assimilated into those of the single consciousness of white native English-speaking values and consciousness (Stratton, 1998, 2020).

Nevertheless, participants actively navigated these discursive conditions via reflexivity, agency, and hybridity, as Quang overcame his disbelief by hybridising his lifelong lived experiences with and desire for English language and culture and English language teaching, and ‘professional learning, experience, and collegiality’ in Australia.

Despite hybrid professional practices and becoming, discursive practices of native-speakerism, postcolonialism and neo-liberalism can intersubjectively impact a NNEST’s professional identity at local and global levels, as we can see from Quang’s account of how he perceived himself when he came to Australia first –

I was very conscious about the fact that I’m not a native speaker, and constantly apologised for various shortcomings I attributed to that status ... I ... would make it a point to introduce myself as such to others as a way to cover for any possible mistakes I may make.

Here, Quang shows that initially a strong embodied sense of inferiority was aggravated vis-a-vis the native speaker in Australia, as he doubted his abilities being on par with NESs’ and felt like a charlatan (Gatwiri, 2021). This may also be the by-product of repeated rejections of employment. Dovchin (2020) argues that linguistic racism, which involves stereotyping NNESTs’ use of English based on their linguistic, cultural and racial backgrounds, imposes serious psychological damage.

Frida was not only self-conscious of her English but also of her physical features, skin colour, and personality. As she recounted –

I’m not a prominent-looking person, nor am I super-outgoing and bubbly. I am on the short side at only 155 cm. I also look very Asian ... I was being judged on my looks. How could I, an Asian person, teach ... Australian English?

Similarly, Dovchin’s (2020) study showed that linguistic racism experienced by international students resulted in the students suffering from self-abnegation, fear and anxiety leading to social isolation and severe mental health issues (Dovchin, 2020, p. 804). Frida, however, engaged in ‘ongoing negotiation from a variety of sources, from what has happened and what is happening to [her] now’. For example, Frida’s overseas qualifications were ‘not looked upon favourably’, Frida worked in unskilled sectors. While volunteering her ‘spare time tutoring international students’, Frida ‘found out about ELICOS and that TESOL and CELTA courses are available for those who wish to teach English’, which she pursued later.

Another teacher, Laura, from the Philippines, was even more self-conscious about her non-nativeness and ‘small’-ness, and she believed the ‘fear’ to be part of her because she is ‘not local, not a native English speaker’, nor a NEST. Laura could not feel her self-worth if she was not validated by others. She noted that she lost her ‘confidence’ when she ‘stepped in Australia’. She felt ‘so small not only just in height’ but she also deemed ‘everybody’ to be ‘a lot better’ than herself. Laura ambivalently saw herself as a cosmopolitan-NNEST, but also like Ahn and Delesclefs’ (2020) participants as one who is ‘always going to be deficient in one way or another’ (Ahn & Delesclefs, 2020, p. 95).

The colonial values and practices of hierarchies, classification, and categories around NESs and NESTs in the Philippines, was reported by Mandy too, and repeated attempts and failures in IELTS tests to apply for immigration exacerbated Laura's sense of being an inferior self, compared with the towering image of NESs and NESTs. Here the NNESTs' professional selves are realised through repeated socialisations and performances (Butler, 2011; De Beauvoir, 2010) within post-colonial relations of race and language. The all-pervading 'fear' and the resultant bodily reflexes were formed as 'body memories' developed in the process of teachers' socio-historical interactions in post-colonial and 'native-speakerist' contexts. The self-portrayal of their inferiority, insignificance and diminutiveness shows how colonisation dehumanises and torments an individual mentally and how it affects the whole nation (Fanon, 2004) – in this case how it also travels across the globe through immigration and globalisation.

NNESTs' socio-historical experiences of embodied 'otherness' affected their consciousness, which made them apprehensive about their physical features, accents and use of English language in professional contexts. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argued that our embodied consciousness inseparably consists of our body and mind – our habits, the intentionality, and its meaning. As pointed out by Ahn and Delesclefs (2020) and Suárez (2000), the embodied effects of linguistic imperialism and native speakerism were aggravated in professional dealings of NNESTs in Australia. Their features of difference obtruded and spiralled in the new professional setting situated in white dominated native English-speaking Australianness. Since language, subjectivity and reality are interrelated (Fanon, 2008), the discourses of differences such as those of the affected are solidified as a 'false consciousness' over historical periods of coercion and oppression such that they sometimes lose the capacity to reflect on their very existence.

Conclusion

In this study, NNESTs' professional becoming, and their endeavour to reconstitute their professional selves in Australia, were hindered by their non-access to the profession over years and its consequences. In the (post-) national and (post-) monolingual conditions of superdiverse Australia (Green & Erixon, 2020) affected by critical teacher shortages, NNESTs still experience employment discrimination before and/or after meeting all criteria. Due to the 'coloniallingual' privilege of the dominant language, its culture, knowledge and values (Meighan, 2022), the NNESTs are still marginalised throughout migration processes, the labour market and in the profession (Colic-Peisker, 2002; Dovchin & Dryden, 2022; Kostogriz & Peeler, 2007b). Despite their practice and awareness of *hybrid professional becoming*, and imagination of themselves as cosmopolitan teachers even amid Covid-19, NNESTs' professional identity is subjected to the identity politics of native speakerism and adjoining discourses. *Vis-a-vis* the realities of diffused differences locally and globally today (Appadurai, 1990, 2010), NNESTs' professional mobility is denied in favour of the monolingual, monocultural and monomoral consciousness, a situation which needs critical reflection by the education industry.

To address the anticipated teacher shortage and the demand of the linguistic and cultural diversity today, the NNESTs must be viewed beyond the binary, as hybrid professionals, who are continually becoming locally-globally (Luke, 2013). Past the discriminatory and oppressive politics of NNEST employment and its ramifications, the

NNESTs' employment must not be retarded or restrained by the colluding forces of native-speakerism, post-colonialism and neo-liberalism. The problem calls attention first to the need to recognise the epistemological error and transformative constraints of colonialism (Meighan, 2022), the epistemological supremacy of whiteness and native-speakerism. Second, it involves acknowledging how detrimental it is for multicultural and multilingual becoming (Meighan, 2022) in the superdiverse globalised environment we inhabit today. Third, there is urgent need for the epistemic un-learning (Meighan, 2022) of the practices of native speakerism and associated discourses that perpetuate the binary professional identity of NNESTs. Finally, employers and policymakers must recognise and value language teachers' *hybrid professional becoming* informed by the lived experiences of their lifespan (Dovchin, 2021), and their fluid professional practices of teaching English as a language produced in global communications (Luke, 2013; Pennycook, 2003).

To recognise and promote the *hybrid professional becoming*, expeditious critical reflections should be made by the policy makers and employers. Specific policy changes can be made by replacing the narrow requirement of knowing and teaching SAE with the broader requirement of knowing and teaching English as a language of global communication; replacing discriminatory English language requirements by in depth interviews of the teachers; recognising the teachers' overseas experiences and qualifications as equal to those of Australians; and providing support for their transnational professional transition. When interpreting the CVs and interviewing, the employers should not expect the teachers to have local 'accent', 'qualifications' and 'experiences'. The employers should rather view and imagine the teachers holistically, in terms of *hybrid professional becoming* considering their lifelong relationship with English and their diverse capabilities and credentials. Such actions immediately undertaken by the stakeholders promise not only the partial solution to the critical problem of teacher shortages, but social justice too. By these critically reflective actions it is possible to initiate the shift of professional practices and education from monolingual and monocultural to transcultural and cosmopolitan.

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