"*Non-nativeness*" and Its Critical Implications on Non-Native English Speaking Teachers in an L1 Context

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Abstract: This research paper focuses on critical implications of the concept of 'non-nativeness' on NNESTs (Non-native English Speaking Teachers) in terms of hiring and employability, their identity as teachers, and perceptions surrounding their proficiency. This small-scale study presents findings and critical analyses on the basis of interviews conducted with a group of NNESTs in an L1 (English is spoken as the first language) situation and with a critical agenda to explore their perceptions about their employability, their identity as teachers, and their proficiency. The study suggests that NNESTs undergo a period of realization through fear of being a non-native, expectations of being accepted, conformation to commonly accepted standards, and measuring success by means of standardized modus operandi of performance evaluation and teaching methodology. The research concludes with presenting some tools and instruments to empower NNESTs teaching in an L1 situation in general and in the context under study, in particular.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nativeness Vs Non-nativeness in ELT

Nativeness and non-nativeness have not only been regarded as controversial terms but have also been deemed as debatable labels. They are the legacy of colonialism and language imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999) in order to carry forward "global spread of English as well as English monolingualism in English speaking countries" (Kubota & Lin 2006, p.15,). Kubota and Lin (2006) further see this issue in light of "whiteness" (p.25) which gives free passage to possession of cultural knowledge, domination, and "nativeness". Faez (2011), in a recent research, signifies unjustified use of the label to benchmark professional performance and language proficiency propelling employment discrimination based on linguistic discrimination, both of which do not qualify to be serious discriminations affecting human rights in any way. Harrison's (2012) point with regard to non-nativeness with reference to Clyne (2005) is that this "nomenclature accentuates what people are not, rather than what they can do, and downplays the value of

bilinguality" (p.193), while Medgyes (1992) hypothesizes that both native and non-native English speaking teachers can be "equally good in their own terms" (In Llurda, 2005). Medgyes (1992) sees "inherent ambiguities" (p.342) in the label '*non-native*'. He further draws our attention to the point that there are times, more than we think, when being a "native" trumps all other qualities of a good teacher, "motivation, aptitude, perseverance, experience, education" (p. 342), that a non-native English speaking teacher can possess.

According to Faez (2011), native and non-native English speaking teachers have been told apart on the basis of the "fixed and unitary constructs" (p.234) of physical and racial identity to support the ownership of "monolingual linguistic identity" (p. 234), granting the sole linguistic proprietary rights to a group of people belonging to certain parts of the world. Pennycook (2004) challenges this idea of fixed linguistic identity based on race, culture and location and highlights the need to cut this umbilical cord attached to the womb of colonialism. McNeill (2005) echoes similar idea about differences between an NEST and an NNEST where being native speaker of a language is more of societal belonging,

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identification to locale, and birth right than proficiency and competency. Medgyes (1992), after objectively examining different variables on the basis of which native and non-native speaking teachers are more commonly judged, came to the conclusion that NNESTs and NESTs can perform with equal professional competence as the only variable that is inherently advantageous for NESTs is natural competence of language, which Davies (1991 in Faez, 2011, p.233) defines as "the language learnt first,……the bio-developmental definition". Besides, there is less evidence that supports the idea that just being a native speaker of English qualifies someone to be effective in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to explore the issue of being a non-native English speaking teacher or as it is referred to, here in Canada, an 'immigrant teacher'. The issue does exist and has its implications for the NNESTs, but it is not discussed strenuously or overtly. I am going to focus on NNESTs' knowledge and awareness of the issues of race, ethnicity, first language or mother tongue, and culture identity. Kubota and Lin (2006) have, not very long ago, confirmed that despite the fact that TESOL is faced with the elephant of race, ethnicity, gender and first language in the room, we are not addressing it and are in a state of denial. On the other hand, in fields such as sociology and anthropology, the issue of race and the baggage it is carrying have been studied both "extensively and critically" (Kubota & Lin, 2006, p.472).

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical blueprint of this research is based on some established principles of critical applied linguistics (CALx). Pennycook (2001) suggests for Applied Linguistics to see beyond the "decontextualized contexts" of mere relationship between theory and practice, in terms of the social context, and to understand "a relation between concepts of society, ideology, global capitalism, colonialism, education, gender, racism, sexuality, class, and classroom utterances, translations, conversations, genres, second language acquisition, media texts"(p.5). Therefore, CALx demands to go beyond the apparent relationships of theory and practice and look at the issues of 'otherization' of race and minor languages, the role of governments in the ideology of language teaching, the level of responsibility and the voice authorized to teachers, and the understanding of views from a certain stereotypical point of view, etc. Among all these critical constructs of ELT, there is the issue of native vs non-native English speaking teacher waiting to be addressed.

Davies (1991, as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999), admitted that it is impossible for linguists to define the construct of the phenomenon of a native speaking English language teacher. Phillipson (1992, as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999) rejected the phenomenon, and called it "native speaker fallacy" (p.415), invalid and based on 'socio-political motives' created by those whose interests were being served by the prevalence of the notion. On a similar note, according to Nayar (1994, as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999), the identity of a native speaker is based on ethno-political roots. Similarly, Kachru (1997, cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999) calls it a "linguistic colonial construct" (p.416) which has created the discrimination between the colonizer and the colonized. Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, (1999) themselves shed light on the identity of a non-native English speaking teacher through the lens of the "socially constructed identity" (p.416) and assert that it is based on the original nationality of the teacher and the way one speaks.

Brutt-Griffler& Samimy (1999) develop the idea of two approaches: "the dominance approach and the difference approach" (p.416), in relation with native English speaking teachers versus non-native English speaking teachers which should ideally result in placing the two, NNESTs and NESTs, in opposing yet collaborating camps. Brutt-Griffler (1998) as well as Smith (1987 as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999) challenges the idea of the ownership or belonging to English language which defeats the very purpose of English being an international language. This notion of nativeness and non-nativeness gave birth to the unjustified "division of English teachers, not based on linguistic and pedagogical ability" (Braine, 1999 as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999, p. 417), but based on ethnicity, place or origin, first language, and belonging to the dominant cultures. These stereotypical ideas might have resulted in lower self-confidence and a constant feeling of being the disempowered (Medgyes, 1994 & Amin, 1997 as cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999) among the non-native English speaking teachers.

Brutt-Griffler& Samimy (1999) thought of a critical pedagogy that strives to emancipate the colonial concept of nativeness and non-nativeness where this critical pedagogy is based on the interconnection of Freire's (1993 in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999) idea of identifying "multiple constructions of power and authority" in otherwise hegemonic societies and how these constructs influence the idea of "socially innate subjectivity" presented by Weedon (1997 cited in Brutt-Griffler& Samimy, 1999). Brutt-Griffler & Samimy further reflected on the West's preconceived expectations about being "right" about ESL/EFL practices and trying to "domesticate" non-native/international teachers, disregarding the personal or background experiences of teachers which define them as who they really are. According to Cangarajah (1999), the assertiveness of L1, Linguistic Imperialism, is at the root of the constructs of

nativeness and non-nativeness. He puts it aptly by saying that this LI is autarchic, unaware of cultural diversity, incredulous and insensitive to other forms of discourses, and impervious to any type of "critical consciousness" (p.207).

The question arises if teacher education can help break some of these pre-determined stereotypes. Speaking of teacher education, regardless of the fact who a student teacher might be, the education offered is a *one-size-fits-all* format that appears to be, if not completely, to a great extent, producing or trying to produce converts and not teachers. Troudi (2005) refers to Johnson (2000) who echoes an earlier work (1998) of hers and Freeman's that the change we are witnessing in terms of fundamentals of teacher education is a 180^0 turn from the knowledge of "technical and methodological aspects of teaching" (p.2) to the knowledge of "sociocultural factors and local contexts in which teachers work"(p.2). Like Johnson and Freeman, Bailey (1998 as cited in Troudi, 2005) places higher value on teachers' reflective experience that comes from their teaching context more than the theoretical knowledge of how language should be taught. Nunan and Lamb (1996 as cited in Troudi, 2005), on the other hand, acknowledge that there is an important place for the knowledge of theoretical aspects of the second language acquisition in teacher education. Yates and Muchisky (2003 as cited in Troudi, 2005) go to the extent of alarming against diminishing the role of theoretical knowledge of language teaching. Maintaining a little distance form all this debate of *what* should be part of teacher education, Troudi (2005) puts it fittingly and proposes to look at "what should be the *core* in TESOL teacher education" (p.5) as it can affect teacher education programmes globally.

About knowledge and proficiency of teachers, Moussu and Llurda (2008) refer to Rampton (1990), J. Liu (1999), and Brutt-Griffler & Samimy (2001) and bring forth the idea of "the existence of a continuum" (p. 318) rather than the fixed constructs based on race, gender and placement, as in Kachru's (2006) inner circle. They, along with Medgyes (1992) who mentioned Edge (1988) and Selinker (1972), insist that non-native speakers can be performing at any point along this continuum and hence cannot be just placed outside the circle because of the hyperbolic checklist created for linguistic domination to uphold the linguistic imperialism. However, regardless of their placement in these circles, speakers could come together in some way. Kachru (2006) refers to the advent of "cultural pluralism and linguistic heterogeneity and diversity" (p.244), yet not without obstacles of "codification, nativaization, teaching, and description" (p. 244) of competing varieties of language.

3   CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT PRACTICE

This research study was conducted in Halifax, the capital city of Nova Scotia, one of the most Eastern Atlantic Provinces in Canada. It is a small metropolis, with a small population of less than 400,000 souls, compared to other metropolises in Canada. Of this population, immigrants make up 6.9 per cent, mostly coming from non-English speaking language background and are in need of language support, which makes them one of the two major groups, immigrants and international students, using English language services in schools around the city. The enrolment of international students from diverse language backgrounds in three main universities in the city is increasing every year. There are very few well known private language schools, just a couple of government funded language schools, and three major universities: Dalhousie University, Mount St. Vincent University, and St. Mary's University where students from almost all over the world enroll. If we look at the ESL (English as a Second Language), or what it is currently referred to as EAL (English as an Additional Language), and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teaching scenarios, I would like to recall the local TESL Nova Scotia conference held in 2013, which was thought to be one of the most attended conferences in recent years. I have a few observations to share. (i) The ESL community is predominantly white, local, English speaking, female teachers. (ii) There are only a few Non-Native English speaking female teachers and there is only one male Non-native English speaking ESL teacher alongside just (iii) a handful of other male teachers who are NESTs. (iv) The interesting aspect in this equation is TESL student attendees. Most of them are non-native English speaking students who come mainly from Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Korea, and China in addition to some other countries around the world. Some of these student-teachers are Non-native English speaking Canadian residents aspiring to become working teachers in the community. Halifax, which is a part of the HRM (Halifax Regional Municipality) was the canvas of my study. Looking at the small number of non-native ELTs and even fewer teaching opportunities, one can imagine that this shortage is proving to be a deterrent for research in the field of ELT. This situation has also resulted in a quintessential absence of research in the critical areas related to the issues faced by NNESTs since the focus is mainly kept on research that supports classroom experience, teacher-student interaction, and teaching methodology as in an unpublished manuscript on "Becoming a critical researcher", Troudi (2014) confirms this thought that the main focus of research has been on "improving learner's language proficiency" (p.1).

The local context is faced with the critical domains of race, gender, and power with the underlying hegemonic concept of language owned by the native speaker. Besides these, the hubristic idea of nativeness and the downplayed concept of non-nativeness influence my research. These issues have posed hindrances and difficulties for non-native, non-white English language teachers in their classrooms. Amin (1997) refers to personal experiences of Banerjee (1991), Ng (1990), and Hoodfar (1992), in terms of how their authority and credibility is challenged in class, how they become " less effective", and how they "have to invest a great deal of energy in establishing themselves as authentic teachers in the eyes of both their students and their colleagues" (p. 581). Amin (1997) further suggests that this attitude of otherness versus nativeness cannot just be looked at inside the classroom as it is the representation of the dominant societal perception about the definition of being an authentic *American* or *Canadian* which "insinuates that a native speaker has more ownership of English" (p. 582).

As the findings of this research and the analysis reveal, it can be further seen that current practices around the issue of NNESTs are not as clear as they are claimed to be. There is a subtle discrimination which has found its way to justify itself based on *the need for greater good*. "Such discriminatory practices have been legitimised by discourses of efficiency, competencies, and common good for the students. As a result, many competent bilingual and multilingual teachers could not compete for jobs and continue to be excluded" (Troudi, 2014, p.7). In this regard, a very well stated personal account is Lin's (2006) while she was teaching at a university in Hong Kong where she was passed up by a native speaker for a higher position "for the good of the program" (p.471). Such politically, diplomatically, and commercially motivated appointments can be seen in different scenarios including Halifax.

4. THE STUDY

This study aims at looking into an issue that has not yet been explored in the context under study. TESL/TESOL scenario in Halifax (Nova Scotia) has been quite "conservative" as Troudi (2005, p.6) calls it, and hesitant to "embrace" or even discuss critical issues in ELT. This research topic, once brought up in discussions, seemed to be of interest to the local ELT community. In addition, participants in the research called it "*interesting*" and "*exciting*" and gave comments like "*it's on to something*", "*and I was glad when you said you are doing research on this issue*". In addition, a participant (Christina) commented, "*But you just triggered kind of a*

thinking why we do things… about things that you never thought of".

4.1 Methodology

This is a small scale study, and it was carried out in the first quarter of 2014. The study was theoretically based on exploring one of the aspects of TESOL practices in Halifax, Nova Scotia: non-native English speaking teachers and the critical implications of their identity, based on critical pedagogy. The study adopted an exploratory, narrative approach with a critical agenda. Ideology critique was used about the perceptions of Non-native English speaking teachers about themselves and their reflections on reactions of the society and students in the class, in general, and management of the institutions they are teaching at, in particular. The objective of the study was to raise awareness and identify tools for emancipation, with an obvious emphasis "on action, change and empowerment" (Troudi, 2014, p. 4). The pre-study aim was to challenge the ideology around the issue of Non-native English Speaking Teachers that could most probably be stemming from the standards laid out by the organizations.

The research aims at bringing to the surface Non-native English Speaking Teachers' knowledge and consciousness with regard to their own identities and their perceptions related to non-nativeness at the classroom, institutional, and societal level. I also aim at developing "a richer awareness of language and social life" (Canagarajah, 1999, p.207) for these teachers as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.26) echo Habermas, Adorno, Marcuse, Horkheimer and Fromm that the research agenda of a critical-theoretical research is "deliberately political – the emancipation of individuals and groups in an egalitarian society"

4.2 Participants

For this study, non-nativeness of the participants was characterized on the basis of traits such as they were not born in Canada, were not born in an Anglophone country, had studied a degree program to become an English language teacher, and came to Canada as an adult and have chosen English Language Teaching as a profession. In terms of finding an appropriate sample of NNESTs, I had to face some hardships as there are not a lot of NNESTs employed in the field of ELT in Halifax. It was also hard to get a positive response from the teachers in the community to participate in a critical project like this as a prospective participant mentioned, "Halifax is a very small ELT community and I don't want to draw attention." Or, "I don't identify myself as a non-native." I contacted teachers via emails, asking for their consent if

they would like to participate. Participants in the study are five female non-native English speaking teachers who identify themselves as either a non-native speaker or a speaker of English as a second or additional language. For the integrity of the study and to maintain the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used here. The five participants, Natasha, Amal, Ju-Won, Christina, and Elizabeth, are originally from different countries around the world, where English is not spoken as the first language. Their residency in Canada ranges from 5-15 years. They all work, part time or full time, at local private or government funded language schools. All of the participants have job responsibilities of teaching adults at different language proficiency levels. All the participants are highly educated and have completed an English language degree at some point besides additional teacher training certificates and diplomas. All the participants had had ELT experience before coming to Canada.

4.3 Research method and instrument

This research was conducted between February and May, 2014, in Halifax. The instrument that was used to support the research methodology is semi-structured interviews that were conducted one-on-one at venues of the participants' choice. These interviews were meant to explore the critical nature and power of the ideology of nativeness and non-nativeness from the NNESTs' perspective. The choice of the instrument was based on the idea that "the power of ideologies", as described by Burbules, represents "a version of the world that helps people make sense of their world" (1995, p. 7 in Troudi, 2014) and that "ideologies emanate from powerful groups in society" (p.7). Participants were informed of the study before the interviews and the certificate of ethical research approval was shared. Questions (Appendix I) asked can be grouped under four categories: employability (professional background and experience of employment (hiring/job search) as a non-native English speaking teacher, student-teacher relationship (experiences in the classroom and with students), identity (accentedness, nonnativenss and proficiency), and critical awareness (suggestions for any tools to cope with these issues). Some questions were asked as a result of the progression as to where the prior discussion would lead. Throughout the reporting section, there is a shade of Habermas' (1972) model of "systematic ideology critique" (in Troudi, 2014, p. 7), i-e, from describing the current practices to evaluating through investigating and challenging the situation in order to find solutions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Due to the critical nature of the interviews, the length varies in all interviews from less than an hour to an hour and a half, and I transcribed them individually where each interview is generally more than 3,000 words. Analysis, in order for

me to determine some emerging thematic features, was done through extensive reading of the transcripts. Some "critical open-endedness" (Cangarajah, 1996, p. 329) were noticed through the interviews and later during the transcribing process. However, I have striven to strike the right balance among the pre-study aims, participants' accounts, and my own voice.

4.4 Findings and analysis

As the research adopted an exploratory critical approach, at the analysis stage, it facilitated a meaning to the participants' experiences and reflections in terms of how they saw the phenomenon of non-nativeness through the lenses of being an NNEST, a sound professional, and part of a diversified workforce. According to Healy and Lonne (2010, In Harrison, 2012, p.193), "Having a workforce that reflects the diversity of its clientele is seen to be a positive development that will promote more responsive service delivery". However, this practice appears to have become more of a false pretense than an honest, deliberate effort to recruit on the basis of just proficiency. On a job advertisement, posted on a commonly known and frequently visited local Halifax job search website, careerbeacon.com, this statement appended to almost every job posting is noticed "Our goal is to be a diverse workforce that is representative, at all job levels, of the citizens we serve". Besides, it encourages the job applicants to identify themselves if they are racially visible. Diversifying hiring process is one of the common themes that emerged from these semi-structured interviews, and I would try to analyze these themes one by one.

4.4.1 Hiring and employability

A common perception that arose from talking to these participants was that hiring non-native English speaking teachers has a multi layered iceberg presence. There is less that can be seen and there is more under the surface. Most, if not all the time, a diverse workforce is created to promote 'equity' and 'inclusiveness' and to 'benefit the workplace with diverse and rich knowledge' these non-native English speaking teachers can bring. In addition, as Harrison (2012) mentioned, there is not much attention given to how these employees, once hired, deal with the issue of having a "minority status" (p.193). This status is connected not only with the workplace itself, but also with the society outside the workplace, in general. In terms of employability and hiring, the participants seem to be quite aware of the fact that it is not easy for an NNEST to get a job in the area of ELT. Natasha and Ju-Won used discourse such as "*I feel frustrated*", "*it was kinda hard*", and "*it was tough*". Additionally, it is demonstrated in the comment made by one of the participants how she feared about not being able to get a

job because she was an NNEST. She was apprehensive of being compared to NESTs, and she said, *"And my thinking was, definitely, I'm not gonna practice in Canada. That's what I thought at the beginning."*

Not being able to secure a job is a totally different feeling from getting psychologically affected by the phenomenon out of the fact that you have a different visible identity which NESTs have to face. I am going to borrow Kachru's (1996, p. 242) term "Paradigm myopia" where this short-sightedness, exhibited by the employers, is termed as '*there are not enough jobs*' as opposed to the fact that '*there are not enough spaces for bilingual/multilingual, visibly different*' or as what Ju-Won identifies '*Internationally educated teachers*'.

In a linguistically and culturally diverse teaching context, such as Canada, when preferred language teachers are native speakers of English language, it is hard to estimate what the policy is about the importance of the possession of diverse cultural knowledge of the teachers practicing with heterogeneous group of students from all over the world. The situation is that in order to check this point off their checklist from the policy matters, employers like to hire a teacher, an NEST preferably, who has had some kind of international teaching experience. There is a common perception that these '*internationally experienced*' teachers have, at some point, taught in some L2 situations, for example, Korea, Japan, China, Eastern Europe, Middle East, etc. Most of these returnees are *tourist teachers*. They have been in this situation because their first objective was '*to experience a foreign culture*' which transformed into '*being a teacher*' because that was the only way they could stay there. No doubt, this experience might have taught them some aspects of cultural diversity, linguistics characteristics, and needs of an L2 learner. Nevertheless, they need much more than what they have come to know as a tourist teacher. Troudi (2005, pp.125-126) emphasizes different aspects of critical cultural knowledge and language needs of international students. He (pp.125-126) outlines that teachers need to know behavioural and educational values of the students, "political complexities", and their attitudes towards English language, and the "sociocultural" norms and beliefs they hold about the West as just having the "cultural sensitivity" is not enough. Having this set of knowledge will help teachers "understand their students and their educational and language needs" (p. 125). In order to be fair to these teachers, it is not very easy to "invest in this type of cultural knowledge" (p.125) because of professional commitments and syllabus. However, there is somebody who is more equipped with this kind of knowledge, an NNEST more likely, but is usually not thought to be competent enough to be hired or is never the first choice.

Amal raised this point in her interview that sometimes native teachers are hired with less professional qualifications, just on the basis of their experience abroad, and they are preferred over an NNEST solely for this reason. She said that she was not aware of what the policy was around this particular point, but there is a feeling that NESTs are asked no other questions about the critical cultural knowledge, and having worked in an '*international situation*' is thought to be sufficient. Natasha seemed to be frustrated on the mention that "So, there is this teacher here in Halifax for seven weeks (sort of on vacation) and he got hours, while I got the part time". This dichotomy of *who is better, NEST or NNEST* has had its ups and downs and discussions around it, yet there are some clear ideas regarding the issue of professional knowledge. Based on straw polls at two conference presentations in Europe, Medgyes (1992) finds out that apparently a qualified NNEST is preferred over an unqualified NEST. However, the situation is that these hiring decisions are made based on multiple factors and not just qualification, and for some language schools, business is one of these compelling factors. Ju-Won said, "*I am just curious and want to know,….. do you have staff or internationally educated, and NNESTs? It was kind of hard to get a direct answer; they'd say, for example, we had in the past, our doors are open, and such, but I wanted to know, now how many do you have…out of just curiosity…..I kinda find this interesting.*"

4.4.2 Identity and experience as an NNEST

Overall, identity as a non-native English speaking teacher is the vanguard of the perceptions of the management and students alike. For example, Natasha talks of a post-class observation experience with her manager who starts pointing out how she uses the words "OK" and "right!" quite often in her speech. In a frustrated yet firm tone she says, *"I was expecting he would tell me something on my teaching methods; instead, he started these conversations on what kind of mistakes I make in my speech."* In terms of linguistic identity, Canada can be defined as a predominantly Anglophone country; however, French, being the second official language, has equal, rather in some cases higher, status in the society. Having recognized two languages, Canadians apparently seem to be welcoming to the idea of being able to know or speak more than one language. Let's say, at the face of it, knowing more than one language is thought to be an asset, but when it comes to evaluating the performance, near native or native-like English language proficiency is used as the only parameter. This ideology has very much become part of the identity. For example, there was a sense of pride that I felt in Natasha when she said that she was proficient in both French and English. However, in

instances where English was learnt as a second language, it doesn't matter how efficient the speaker is, bilingual speakers are often found to be deficient when they are evaluated in accordance with monolingual norms (Kachru 1996, Clyne, 2005 In Harrison, 2012, p.194).

Another point that is important to note is that the participants seemed to be comparing themselves with native speakers in terms of linguistic identity as well as these invisible yet acceptable standards they needed to meet as NNESTs. Here are a few quotes by some of the participants: (i) "*I compared myself with what other people did, and I feel that if I do the same that means I'm doing my work well*". (ii) "*Yeah, at the beginning, there was that fear, you know, to compare myself and how the students would accept me.*" (iii) "*I guess I don't really give away much, my identity, right away. I don't have a very obvious foreign accent. So, a lot of people think I was born and grew up here.*" This seems to be very closely linked to the philosophic idea of "*performativity*" that Pennycook (2009) mentioned with reference to Austin and then Butler. In this critical notion, a performative creates an identity within the given framework of "pre-scribed" and deemed acceptable by the societal norms (p. 8). It is worth noticing here that by no means this act of performativity is an independent decision of the performative. Rather it takes place in a "highly rigid regulatory frame" (Pennycook, 2009, p.8).

4.4.3 Accent vs. competence

Skutnabb-Kangas (2001, p. 37) refers to Robert Phillipson's fallacies of ELT, of which I saw, through these participants, the "native speaker fallacy" as the most effective since a lot of critical implications obviously seem to be stemming from this misconstruction. One of the participants mentioned how she was targeted on her accent, time and again. She said that "*I didn't know how to react to what my interviewer said, "I* **understand** *you.*" "*I felt hurt, and thought, does it really matter? Is it important to tell me that?*" Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) totally rejects the idea of the need of having a near native accent and asserts that sometimes NNESTs' evaluations are based on "prejudiced attitudes of the evaluators than the competence of the SL/FL speaker" (p.39). Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) further summarizes that being a native speaker of English gives you a naturally higher proficiency "in idiomatic pronunciation and some semantic nuances" (p.38), but it's needless to say that this is not only what is needed to be an ESL/EFL teacher. Ju-Won shares an observation from her job search experience that at the public school level, in the HRM, there is a need for ESL teachers because of the influx of immigrants and international students; however, the

teachers of ESL are not trained for the purpose and this is what surprised her the most. She is trained to teach, but the job market is not welcoming enough, so she is pushed to "further her qualifications". She said, "*I thought there is a kind of need for it and I started looking into TESL programs and advanced degree programs to further my education.*" Another participant, on a similar note, yet metaphorically speaking, using a different key, expressed that despite having required or even higher qualifications and proven skills, you don't get the job. Talking about her academic and professional qualifications, Amal says, "*So it didn't mean, I think, anything to them, and I know, …… the person in charge would mention that he thought that some of his teachers are not qualified enough, kind of, and they lacked a lot of skills. Yeah, so it's interesting to see that although in some part they admit, there is also a fear of giving non-native speakers more responsibilities.*"

Another interesting point that was felt is "perpetuating the distorted practices and discourses that contribute to their own marginalisation" (Troudi, 2014, p. 7). One of the participants said that in the beginning she was marginalised for having a strong accent, which she said "I was shocked to hear ------ No, I wasn't shocked. I was disappointed that this is a place where students come from different backgrounds and teachers can be from any accent. So, who cared about that? But at that time I didn't know better. Now, I know how to answer to that question". However, later in her interview, she says, "I'd like to have somebody who can be a good example of local dialect", or "I'd like to hear and copy exactly the language somebody else is producing in front of me". I asked her, if she had this perception already, or it developed after living in Canada, and the response was, "Oh, no! It's more so that I developed it here".

4.4.4 Experience with students

I heard the phrase '*fear of rejection*" from the participants using different synonymous expressions, but quite pleasantly the journey of experience with the students seems to be ending at a high note; however, I am not sure if the NNESTs come out of this experience unscathed. Elizabeth said, "It's tough, students think that "What are you doing here? You are younger than me. You are not a native speaker. How can you teach me?" She goes on to saying that, "They are interesting. Once they know you, there is a bond, and people get along". So, there is a period of transition and all the participants unanimously think that there is always scepticism when you start the class, but once everything gets going, students like the idea of having a teacher who might have had similar experiences and can easily relate to them. Ju-Won said, "*They smile and think ….oh!! Probably, she*

understands my challenges better." Amal mentioned the level of "comfort" students have. Elizabeth mentioned that an NEST might not have had experience of teaching in another culture outside their country and there are even stronger possibilities that they might not have had any experience of being a learner of another language. Skutnabb-Kangas (2001), in his chapter on linguistic human rights, outlines that in an "additive" language learning situation, one of the tenets needed is to understand the language learning experience first-hand and that is nothing to do with the NS fallacy. It has to do with the experience of being a bilingual or a multilingual which an NNEST would be, more likely than an NEST. Medgyes (1992) further goes on to establishing that in monolingual situations such as Canada, NNESTs can prove to be more efficient, based on the fact that they have gone through similar situations of language learning experiences and can empathize with the learners.

4.4.5 Tools for empowerment

One question asked was about the kind of tools these participants can suggest for NNESTs. In response to this question, many interesting and useful ideas came to light. Elizabeth pointed out how "open hiring policies" can empower and solve a few issues for NNESTs which echoes Amin's (1994) suggestion for the need to "disentangle the association of Canadian and American from native speaker and authentic English language teacher" (p.582). Some coping mechanisms suggested by the participants were finding a role model to look up to and staying engaged in constant learning; however, it was also suggested that some responsibility lies on the society itself. One participant suggested that the society (employers) needs to be educated in a certain way to accept change and let the change happen, in a certain way. The reason is that even after going through the gruelling process of joblessness, improving educational and cultural knowledge, and developing acculturation to the local society, NNESTs are still regarded as the one lacking some proficiency. Nonetheless, there is this dismal feeling of dimming hope that one participant expressed, *"Unfortunately, there isn't any support system for non-native English teachers, and there is no understanding also from the administrative side who hire for teaching ESL."*

5. CONCLUSION, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the analysis, I have tried to bring some of the commonly occurring issues related to NNESTs and their implications in Halifax; nevertheless, the aim of the study is also to bring forth some reflections in terms of "what's

next?" (a) Medgyes (1992) asserts that of NNESTs, the "more accomplished language user" and "implicitly more successful language learner" (p.347) can be a more effective teacher, so NNESTs should always be striving to improve their knowledge of language in order for them to overcome the only variable of language competence that stands between them and their native English speaking counterparts. This is very much reflected in what the participants in the study expressed. Elizabeth said, "But, I always have to learn, and I'm in a process of constant learning." Christina expressed similar idea and said that NNESTs who are hired should think that they got to this point because they possessed some proficiency, and they should keep working hard. Amal talked about developing confidence so that NNESTs are not judging themselves on predetermined standards of "who's worth more" (Medgyes, 1992). (b) Another reflection that emerged was to establish the distance between proficiency and personality. Once the distance is established, you will start seeing things even more clearly and would be ready to put up the fight with the idea of power and hegemony without having the feeling of self-pity. One of the participants said, "If you are in the rain, it's to get wet. So, just go for it". It may look like self-effacement and though I do not completely agree to what Medgyes (1983) said about the schizophrenia of NNESTs, in some cases, this idea of total resignation or total retaliation against the system can be eye-opening, can help NNESTs bring them out of the psychological state of exaggerated "self-efficacy" or "apathy", and look for tools of empowerment and emancipation. Finally, a few suggestions from my side: (a) *Question* the concept of "over-determined sense of linguistic fixity" (Pennycook, 2004, p.2), so that linguistic identity is not pre-set in rather spurious ownership of the concept that how language should be used or taught, or for that matter, by whom. (b) *Challenge* the term Non-native with all its "inherent ambiguities" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 342) and connotations to "issues of power and marginalisation" (Troudi, 2014, p. 4). (c) *Propose* to use the terms "bilingual and multilingual" (Troudi, 2014, p.4) to signify their strengths rather than deficiencies, and (d) *demand* to disenfranchise the terms from proficiency as Amin (1994, p. 582) proposed to disconnect the relationship between how a teacher looks to how he/she performs or can perform as a teacher.

6. LIMITATIONS AND THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research is limited in scope in terms of the context and in terms of the number of participants. It is a pilot study project for the author's doctoral studies. However, it is hoped that the findings and results gained through this research would provide a platform for similar studies

to be conducted at a larger scale in different contextual situations in Canada where the TESOL scenario is changing and is becoming diverse. Further research in the same subject area can provide an insight into what needs to be done. For example, is there a need for the enhanced training of the NNESTs and NESTs around the issues of race, ethnicity, and linguistic diversity in the field of ELT and TESOL?

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