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The Decentering of Native English Speaking Teachers in English as a Lingua Franca Contexts

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For several decades English has been growing into the largest second language in the world, and now there are more nonnative English speakers (NNESs) than native English speakers (NESs) across the globe (McKay, 2002). Additionally, nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) make up 80% of the English teachers internationally (Floris & Renandya, 2020). The development of English as the dominant lingua franca in the world has coincided with great technological, global, and educational shifts. As educational and business forces have driven this growth, we have reached a new cultural paradigm that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion that has not been a primary influence on the field until recently. These are some of the factors that have led me to pose the primary question of this paper: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?* In the first chapter of this capstone I will discuss the rationale behind choosing my topic from both a personal and professional viewpoint, present the question being asked in this paper, and provide an overview of the rest of the chapters in this paper.

Rationale

My introduction to the ESL sphere came in 2007 when I initially enrolled at Hamline University to acquire a teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) certificate. At that time, my goal was to live abroad while teaching English. After completing a few years of study and teaching/working in ESL in Minneapolis, I took a position teaching English to undergraduates at the Chongqing University of Technology.

My desire to live abroad comes from a lifelong love of travel. Luckily for me, I had a tool in my toolbox that was desired across the world: my knowledge of English. This knowledge, bolstered by years of study and work experience, allowed me to experience living in foreign, non-English speaking country, and share my knowledge and experience with students who had never left their country.

For nearly all of my students in China, they would never have the chance to live or study abroad. So why did they want to major in a language that they would perhaps never use in the countries where it is spoken as a first language? It is because English has become the dominant lingua franca. It has been estimated that by 2050 NNEs will greatly outnumber NESs. Gradol (as cited in Wang, 2016) estimates that by 2050 there will be 508 million NESs globally, and Crystal (as cited in Wang, 2016) estimates the NNEs population at roughly 2 billion people by the same year, making English the most widely used second language in the world by a large margin. For my students, English was a professional pathway. It allowed them to work in multinational corporations that did business in English, teach English within China, work and study abroad, etc. However, despite the opportunities that learning English provided, the vast majority of those students would have far more interactions with other NNEs in English than they ever would with NESs. I believe this influenced my perspective on the role of NESs, our cultures, and our influence on the role of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as it continues to grow.

The centering of NESs in English language instruction across the globe presently provides an unnecessary challenge to the continued growth and development of ELF. This behavior will be discussed in the next chapter as the history of English's spread

throughout the world and the engrained practices are explored. Centering NESs in ELF influences student attitudes and behaviors, presents cultural and pedagogical problems, and reinforces power dynamics that can ultimately limit the expansion and usage of ELF. One goal of this paper is to describe these barriers and discuss options for how to limit their impact on ELF.

My current work is in the social and environmental impact field where I work as an impact analyst. I have witnessed a great effort by governments, businesses, and organizations to understand and incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their practices. Experiencing and being a part of these efforts has informed this project greatly. I believe that the same efforts towards equity and inclusion in English teaching contexts are necessary and will greatly benefit the field and the future of English teaching in ELF contexts. Though my professional life currently is not related to English language teaching, I believe that the project being created during this capstone can be of benefit to the field. The goal is to create a set of self-guided professional development slide decks that can be used by TEFL certificate graduates to recognize their attitudes towards NNEs and their cultures, and hopefully positively inform those students on how they can decenter themselves and their cultures when teaching students who will use English as a lingua franca alongside other NNEs.

Context

As previously mentioned, by 2050 there will be roughly quadruple the number of NNEs to NESs around the world. As the largest second language in the world, English is a tool that many use to bolster their economic opportunities. This, coupled with the ever expanding effects of globalism and technology, has pushed English to an

unprecedented position as a lingua franca. If this growth continues, which it seemingly will, given the aforementioned trends and the lack of a likely challenger to English's dominance, it follows that ELF will increasingly diverge from the countries and cultures that spawned it. In student interviews around the globe, we are increasingly hearing about the challenges that centering NESs and their cultures present for English language learners (ELLs) (Canagarajah 1999b; Jenkins 2014).

In addition to issues surrounding the learning of English, we are also at a time in history when power structures are increasingly challenged and issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion are being brought to the fore. Therefore, there is an opportunity to address some of the cultural issues that prevent or lessen the growth of ELF.

Summary

This chapter has provided the rationale and context for why I am creating this capstone project. Ultimately the goal of the project is to answer the question: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact the future of English as a lingua franca?*

In Chapter Two of this paper I will discuss the relevant literature around ELF identifying gaps in literature and summarizing the current context of ELF research. Chapter Three will describe my capstone project. In Chapter Four I will discuss my reflections on the process of this capstone.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to explore how native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are centered in ELF contexts. English language teaching has historically been focused on, and catered to, NESTs. As ELF continues its growth throughout the world, NNESTs play an increasingly large role in the spread and practice of ELF instruction (Swearingen, 2019). It is therefore essential to reflect upon how NNESTs and NESTs are viewed, how they view their own identities, experiences, and positionalities, and how these ideas in turn impact the ELF field. By understanding the roles, perceptions, and characteristics of NESTs, NNESTs, and the native speaker fallacy, the aim of this chapter is to assist in answering the question: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?*

Chapter Overview

This chapter has three sections. The first section will look at NNESTs in ELF settings. This will be done by addressing both the barriers NNESTs face and the strengths they bring to ELF. The roles and identities of NNESTs will also be discussed. In the second section, NESTs will be analyzed. Similar to the first section, the discussion around NESTs will focus on challenges, strengths, and roles and identities. Finally, Phillipson's native speaker fallacy, and its impact upon the ELF field, will be addressed.

History and Context of ELF

As mentioned in Chapter One, English has become the dominant lingua franca in the world, with some estimates as high as 2 billion speakers globally (Jenkins, 2015). To understand how English became so widespread, it is necessary to understand the historical developments that created these circumstances. This section addresses the major events and practices that led to English becoming the primary lingua franca. After providing historical context, the ‘-isms’ (colonialism, racism, imperialism) that were intentional aspects of English's spread, and now remain as vestigial impediments to its growth and acceptance, are addressed. Finally, this section looks at the current state of ELF through the lens of globalism, usage, and future.

History of English's Spread Across the Globe

As cited by McKay (2002), Crystal suggests there are a number of historical, geographical, and sociocultural factors that impacted the rise of English globally. The initial driver behind English's spread was British colonialism in the 17th and 18th centuries. That being said, it is important to acknowledge the “stereotypes, half-truths, and myths” that are intertwined with British colonial history (Canagarajah, 1999b, p. 57). The earlier stages of this colonial expansion would lead to the creation of what would eventually be the core of *Inner Circle* nations, a concept that is part of Kachru's (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) three-circle model for World Englishes. These nations include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and others. Both culturally and linguistically, these Inner Circle nations retained major characteristics of Britain (Jenkins, 2015).

After what Jenkins (2015) defines as the first dispersal or diaspora to what would become inner circle nations with English as their first language, there was a second dispersal that saw English expand into other parts of the globe, creating the *outer circle* nations as described by Kachru (as cited in Jenkins, 2015). The relationship to English, as spoken in Britain, was very different than that of the ‘first dispersal’ nations. In the ‘first dispersal’ there was more often a mixture of eradication and/or displacement that saw native populations replaced by British colonialists (Motha, 2014). The ‘second dispersal’ had very different results than the first (Jenkins, 2015). Geographically focused in West Africa, East Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, and driven by trade (including the slave trade), exploration, and the imposition of British hierarchy over local governments, there was less population replacement than the ‘first dispersal’ though the longterm damages were often no less abhorrent. Motha (2020) describes these different modes of colonialism as *White settler colonialism* and *external colonialism*, their varied purposes and outcomes affecting colonized peoples and lands in different ways .

According to Crystal (as cited in McKay, 2002), the next development that continued and accelerated English’s rise was Britain’s position as the dominant force in the industrial revolution by the late-19th century. Many of the inventions and innovations during the industrial revolution were born in Britain, and along with those innovations, the technical and scientific language that was necessary to participate and compete in those fields. This era saw the origins of the centering English at the core of the global economy.

After several centuries of British colonialism and ascendance to economic dominance, it was in the second half of the 19th century that America began to take the

reins in driving English to its current primacy as the lingua franca of the world (Crystal, as cited in McKay, 2002). Though globalism and its current contexts will be discussed later in this chapter, a brief summation of its major avenues should be introduced here, as they describe some of the pathways that the United States paved in the the 20th century leading to English's position as the dominant lingua franca. These arenas include, but are not limited to: international organizations, the entertainment industry (film, music, literature, etc.), travel, education, advertising, and business (Jenkins, 2015; McKay, 2002).

Colonialism, Imperialism, and Racism

The practices and methods of British colonialism and subsequent American imperialism that led to English becoming the world's leading lingua franca created a plethora of issues around colonialism, imperialism, and racism. To convey the breadth of the influence of colonialism, Motha refutes the assertion, put forth by Ashcroft et al. (as cited in Motha, 2014) that colonialism has impacted more than 75% of the world population, instead arguing that no person in the world has been unaffected by European colonialism. Some of these negative outcomes felt by colonized people include: devaluing of indigenous language, culture, and population; and loss of ethnic identity (Jenkins, 2015). Motha goes on to argue that these were not unintended consequences of colonialism, but rather known and deliberate practices that were inherently tied to the spread of English. Canagarajah (1999b) further implicates colonial administrators and missionaries in these deliberate practices when describing the intended goals of these actors when economizing and converting colonized peoples as methods of subjugation,

though he also states that sometimes the governing and clerical entities were at odds over their own position in the developing hierarchies of colonies.

Alongside the similar, though not identical, practices of colonialism and imperialism was the ever present issue of race, which Motha (2014) and Von Esch et al. (2020) assert is inseparable from colonialism and imperialism. Pieterse (as cited in Motha, 2020), states that racism is “not simply a by-product of empire but an intrinsic part of it, part of the intestines of empire” (p. 130). Von Esch et al. (2020) state that while race and language have been intertwined for millenia, it was not until the past few decades when these issues began to be addressed in academic literature, specifically calling out the 2006 work of Kubota and Lin. There are myriad reasons why race has gone undiscussed in English language teaching (ELT), but one reason for the aversion to discussions on race that Phillipson (2016) puts forth when discussing his theory of linguistic imperialism is the reticence of linguists to engage with such a political matter. Motha (2020) expands on this issue of willful ignorance when speaking about issues of objectivity in applied linguistics, which she equates to race-neutrality, a simple but deceptive form of inherent racism. The presence of this self-delusion surrounding the role of race in ELF is highlighted in an exchange between Canagarajah and O’Neill, where the latter expresses offense and disagreement with Canagarajah over assertions that EFL (English as a foreign language) has racist undertones (Canagarajah, 1999b).

The product of racism born from colonialism and imperialism, ignored in English language teaching for the majority of its history, and presently avoided or derided by modern linguists, is the effect it has upon English language learners around the world. In the ELF context, this racism manifests itself in the creation of linguistic, and by proxy,

cultural hierarchies, at which English sits atop. This positioning allows for ‘Standard English’ (i.e. English based upon NES or Anglophone countries’ varieties), to be idealized, which is inextricably linked to Whiteness (Von Esch et al., 2020). The characteristics of Standard English are founded upon notions of ‘correct’ grammar, pronunciation, etc., that are associated with the idealized version of a White NES (Motha, 2014). This idealized English speaker is most associated with Whiteness (Von Esch et al., 2020). The results of racism, and its forebearers in colonialism and imperialism, are the centering of Anglophone speakers and cultures at the cost, marginalization, and subjugation of NNSs around the world, and most impactfully in former colonies with non-White populations.

The Current State of ELF

Though the roots of ELF are in British colonialism, Crystal (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) asserts that English’s current role as the dominant lingua franca is due to American economic power and its supremacy since the 20th century. Phillipson (2009) describes the impact of this phenomenon when he states that:

the use of English is increasing throughout Europe: as the dominant corporate language; 70%+ of films on TV and in cinemas in Europe are Hollywood products; youth is consumerist, Coca-colonised, and more familiar with U.S. products and norms than others; English is the most widely learned foreign language and other foreign languages are mostly in retreat; research is increasingly published in English, which is seen as more prestigious than a national language. (p. 336)

Dewey (2007) disagrees with this picture of American cultural dominance, arguing that claims of cultural homogeneity are overstated, and cultural diversity remains healthy.

Alongside American economic power influencing the cultural landscape are a number of other areas where Anglocentric power is felt. In many preeminent international organizations and agencies, Giddens (as cited in Dewey, 2007) states, America and Britain are at the center. In education, American and British economic influences, and historical efforts, are at the core of the ELT world. Phillipson (2006) states that the UK economy gains £23 billion annually in direct and indirect benefits from international education. In the United States, Grin (as cited in Phillipson, 2006) asserts that the economy saves \$19 billion annually by not spending money on foreign language education. These economic benefits illuminate the massive economic interests in promoting English globally. Though the established and protected institutions propping up the economic advantages gained through spreading English do not have total control over world affairs, Dewey acknowledges that they are “disproportionately influential” (Dewey, 2007, p. 245).

The role of ELF is contested, often due to the aforementioned issues. Some, such as Phillipson (2006) and Motha (2014), view English’s prominence as a detrimental force born out of colonialism and viewed through a lens of intentional supremacy and racism, while others, for example Canagarajah (1999b), view English’s role as the lingua franca as an opportunity for beneficial appropriation, or, in the case of Dewey (2007), as a phenomenon in line with the world’s current path and an effect of globalization and historical trajectory.

NNES Students' Attitudes, Needs, and Interlocutors

An essential facet of learning how to decenter NESs from ELF is understanding how NESs and their cultures are viewed by NNES learners. This section will first look at NNESs' positive and negative feelings towards their English learning, attitudes towards their own English skills, and NNES identities regarding ELF. Then the needs of NNESs will be reviewed to identify how NNESs use, or plan to use, English in their lives. Finally, the role of the interlocutor will be examined, specifically looking at the differences between NNES-NNES interactions and those between NNESs and NESs. In an attempt to provide a broad view to this topic, literature reviewed for the section was pulled from studies across the globe.

NNESs' Attitudes Towards English

Unsurprisingly, NNESs' attitudes toward English are mixed. Positive orientations towards English come from many areas of an NNES's language learning experience, though Jenkins (2014) states that the majority of studies done in this area have focused more on cultural rather than linguistic aspects. In their study of Taiwanese university students, Ke and Cahyani (2014) found students held positive attitudes towards different cultures engaging in English learning, and saw their English studies as a way to communicate with the world. Similarly, in a study of Afghani undergraduates (Orfan, 2020), results showed that students held very positive attitudes towards their English learning, touching on several themes, such as: enjoying English, seeing the benefits of their English studies in other areas of their schooling, accessing new knowledge due to their English studies, and having the opportunity to interact with people from outside their own culture. In Tanzania, Hilliard (2014) found that secondary students not only

supported the designation of English as the official language of secondary schooling and beyond, but also felt that English instruction should be included as an official language of instruction alongside Kiswahili in primary education as well. In her study on the attitudes of postgraduate level international students at a UK university, Jenkins found that students used overwhelmingly positive descriptors when talking about their attitudes towards native English; however, Jenkins labeled these descriptions as circular logic, as native English was described as best because it was native. Jenkins went on to associate the positive view of NES accents and preference for NESTs with student affinities toward Anglo-American culture. This perception was similarly held by the Taiwanese students in Ke and Cahyani's study, who expressed their wishes to speak like NESs and have NESTs. In his study of Afghani university students, Orfan found that students who spent more time engaged with English, in this case students who studied at English language centers in addition to university studies, held even more positive views than their peers who did not study English as intensely.

A final look at positive attitudes towards English will look at how NNES students view the role of ELF in their studies. In a study of Chinese university students' attitudes towards ELF, Wang (2016) found that students were embracing the concept of ELF as the practice is increasingly focused on using English as a communicative tool in the international community, and a decreasing role of the NES as the gatekeeper and focal point of English learning. Wang goes on to reference a previous study by Wang et al. that finds Chinese university students benefit from ELF experiences and exploration as ELF becomes more prominent. Jenkins' (2014) work with international university students in the UK echoes these findings, stating that as students become more aware of the ideas at

the foundation of ELF and the ratio of NNES to NES in the world today, they have an increasingly positive view of ELF and their position within it. However, many of these students still held the view that native English is the ideal. One challenge to students accessing the more inclusive, and less NES-focused approach of ELF is presented in Csizer and Kontra's (as cited in Ke & Cahyani, 2014) study of Hungarian students, where they found that a lack of awareness of the role and characteristics of ELF led to student views that were rooted in the more traditional functions of English language teaching (ELT). Sung (2016) also acknowledges this gap in understanding or familiarity with the principles and functions of ELF in his work with international students at a university in Hong Kong. However, Sung also notes the positive associations students have with ELF, as they view it as an opportunity to be part of a larger global community, allowing them access to cultural exchanges they may not otherwise have experienced.

In contrast to the positive views towards their English language studies, many NNEs have myriad negative associations with studying English as well. These associations can be explained alongside positive views as a product of the common ambivalence that characterizes NNEs' attitudes towards English (Canagarajah 1999b; Jenkins 2014). Some negatively held views of English stem from classroom experience. In her study in the UK, Jenkins found that students had challenges with use of idiomatic language, clarity of speech, speed of discussion, among other issues. However, the students' greatest challenge was with writing assignments. They felt that there was an inconsistency, and even biases, that were involved in how they were graded and even viewed. These challenges with writing were often viewed through a lens of unfairness, and led to issues such as negative self-image, self-censorship, and resignation.

Other negative orientations towards English come in the form of personal and/or cultural identity. In his study of Indonesian university students, Canagarajah (1999b) found that many students feared that by pursuing English studies, they could possibly alienate themselves from their cultural roots and be perceived as trying to join the English speaking cultural elite or even to pass for a NES. This fear of cultural alienation is often balanced against the desire for the upward economic mobility learning English can provide. Canagarajah likens these findings to a similar study done by Resnik in Puerto Rico, where learning English also posed the challenge of loss of cultural identity versus potential economic benefits. Though her research was being done in a very different context than ELF, in this case a K-12 ESL program in the United States, Motha (2014) also addresses identity issues when discussing student desires to pass as native speakers. Some studies did not find as great of fears of loss of cultural identity. For the most part, these studies found that this fear was absent when students viewed English as a tool, rather than part of their identity (Hilliard, 2014; Jenkins, 2014).

One final aspect of student attitudes that is relevant to ELF and the question posed in this paper is the issue of NES awareness of the NNES experience. This is most thoroughly discussed in Jenkins' (2014) work with international students at the university in the UK. When assessing their NES peers and teachers, NNES students often felt there was a lack of empathy for the challenges that come with interacting in a foreign language, living in a foreign country, and doing both while trying to balance the workload of higher education. This theme of lack of awareness or empathy touched on several areas of the NNESS' lives: inclusivity, pronunciation, perceived lack of effort (on part of the NNESS in terms of effort put forth in school work, or on part of the NESs not making attempts

towards mutual intelligibility), and a number of other areas where NNEs perceived a dearth of empathy for their experience.

NNEs' Needs

Understanding NNEs' needs regarding learning English can better inform NESTs' approaches and their own positioning when teaching ELF. This section will explore NNEs' needs, or intended uses, with regards to studying English. In his survey of Indonesian students, Canagarajah (1999b) found that 76.1% of NNE students studied English to advance in education, 19.2% studied English to enhance job prospects, and 4.7% did so for perceived social status. Though these are findings from a specific context, they are representative of most NNE needs and goals for pursuing English, with perhaps travel being added as a less perceived goal. Similar to the Indonesian students' expressed needs, the Afghani university students studied by Orfan (2020) also focused heavily on education and career opportunities. There were English language requirements specifically tied to academic advancement and career opportunities within Afghanistan. However, given recent political developments within the country, it is unlikely that English will hold as important a place in advancement as was the case under the previous government.

As pursuing education is often one of, if not the, most common answers regarding English study needs, it is important to note that this pursuit can be viewed as the end point of English study, with few or no plans to use English after education is completed (Hilliard, 2014). In the case of Jenkins' (2014) international students in the UK, prior to attending university abroad, many students studied English with a major focus on passing exams such as the IELTS or TOEFL exams. This led to a negative opinion of this purpose

for studying English, as many of them found the work they put into passing those exams to be irrelevant, or even counterproductive, to the type of instruction and their needs as learners once they began to attend an international university in the UK (2014). Related to this same cohort's attitudes towards writing, as discussed earlier, many of those same students desired a pre-sessional writing program to help them adapt to the demands of an English only university setting (2014). Similar attitudes towards examinations can be found among Wang's (2016) university students in China. Though some may feel ambivalence towards standard English, they still recognize its central role in academic success. Wang goes on to describe the growing importance of intercultural communication within ELF settings regarding English language learning in China, but also recognizes that within the country, English language learning is still centered on standard English. This seems counterintuitive, given that Wang (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) also states that Chinese NNEs' primary use of English is communicating with other NNEs. The counterintuition is further complicated when Wang (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) addresses the promotion of English language learning through governmental and business efforts, while there is still resistance to English imperialism regarding Chinese culture and academia.

Academia is also addressed in Jenkins' (2014) study in the UK. Postgraduate students address the need for English when writing theses, dissertations, and entering academic publishing. Though there is far greater pressure on the demands for native-like English the higher students rise in academia, Jenkins does point out the growing areas of publishing in academic English, such as the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, that

are opening their doors to papers that do not have the same stringent requirements that the vast majority of academic journals currently hold.

Interlocutors

The final portion of this subtopic will look at the role interlocutors play in ELF interactions. As both Jenkins and Sharifian (as cited in Ke & Cahyani, 2014) state, up until now, most interaction in English has been assumed to take place between NESs and NNESs. However, given the growing understanding of the foundations of ELF, and the increasing gap in NNES to NES populations, it is increasingly likely the interactions in ELF settings will take place between NNESs and NNESs (Wang, as cited in Jenkins, 2015).

Among her students in the UK, Jenkins (2014) found that NNESs have an easier time, and therefore more positive experience, when interacting with other NNESs. Related to the previously discussed issues with perceived lack of empathy of cultural awareness, NNESs find that even though accents from NNESs from different first languages (L1s) can initially be difficult to understand, there is more willingness to attempt mutual intelligibility when speaking with other NNESs. There is also the perception that other NNESs care less about grammar mistakes than NNSs, giving room for more effective attempts at fluency that can drop off if even one NES is present in a conversation. Sung (2016) has similar findings where he discusses more open-minded views towards linguistic differences facilitates more tolerant attitudes in NNES-NNES interaction, though Ammon states that often NNESs from similar linguistic backgrounds have an easier time understanding other NNESs (as cited in Jenkins, 2015).

Confidence in communication also differs greatly between NES-NNES and NNES-NNES interactions (Ke & Cahayani, 2014). Ke (as cited in Ke & Cahayani, 2014) found that NNES students had feelings of inferiority when speaking with NESs, whereas their confidence was greatly increased when interacting with other NNESs in an ELF setting. Beyond the reduced concern over correct grammar usage, there was also greater consideration for cultural sensitivities when conversing with other NNESs and an increased focus on mutual intelligibility (2015). This desire to foster attempts at understanding, and mitigate challenges in linguistic differences, was also found among Sung's students in Hong Kong.

As discussed in this section, NNES students have varied attitudes toward, and needs for, their English studies. Often these attitudes and needs are influenced and altered by their interlocutors. In the next section, the role of NNESTs in ELF will be examined.

NNESTs

Current estimates place the number of English teachers around the world at 15 million people, with 80% of that population made up of NNESTs (Floris & Renandya, 2020). Though they make up the vast majority of English teachers, NNESTs face a plethora of barriers, prejudices, and engrained practices that relegate them to second class citizenship in the English teacher hierarchy (Kilpatrick, 2014; Swearingen, 2019). Furthermore, though NNESTs are far more prevalent in ELF settings than NESTs, the idealization of the native speakers provides them with advantages over their NNEST colleagues in research and classrooms, subordinating NNESTs' "linguistic, cultural, and racial identities" (Swearingen, 2019 p. 3). This section will look at the challenges

NNESTs face, the strengths they bring to English language teaching vis-a-vis ELF, and their role and identity.

As Kilpatrick (2014) explains, there is a strong belief among NNESTs that there are prejudices against them in the English teaching field. Selvi (2014) expands on these prejudices, setting forth a number of ways in which the practice of discrimination manifests itself, including favoritism towards native English-speaking teachers, discrimination in hiring practices, and diminishing job opportunities. These practices can explicitly be seen in how schools and English language teaching centers advertise and recruit. For example, Kraus (2019) refers to a 2013 study of TEFL advertisements, where 79% of the advertisements studied stated they preferred or required NESTs. These types of hiring practices can lead to confounding and unjust scenarios, such as NNESTs who have studied, taught, and gained professional experience in the Anglosphere returning to their home countries, only to find themselves competing with less qualified NESTs and finding it difficult to find jobs in ELT (Selvi, 2014). Teng (2020) illuminates the same issues when describing NNEST:NEST ratios at universities in China, where concerted efforts towards hiring NESTs has led to marginalization of Chinese NNESTs, unequal pay, work, and living conditions, and the additional burden of requirements for NNESTs to research and publish. On top of the professional barriers NNESTs face is the reality that they can be perceived by their students through a more negative lens than their NEST colleagues (Pae, 2017). As both Widdowson and Rajagopalan (as cited in Selvi, 2014) suggest, the idealization of NESs places them atop the ELT hierarchy, and consequently marginalizes the NNEST. This portrayal of NNESTs as inferior to NESTs leads to NNESTs being subordinated in their own field (Selvi, 2014). And while this negative

perception of NNESTs often originates from external sources, Jenkins (2014) suggests that these pressures can also come from within, leading NNESTs to be complicit in the act of subordinating and negatively viewing their own English competencies. Varghese et al., (as cited in Swearingen, 2019) put forth the argument that the challenges NNESTs face can lead them to have to defend their legitimacy as English teachers and as English learners. As both Amin and Luo (as cited in Selvi, 2014) argue, the challenges discussed above can have detrimental effects on NNESTs, raising issues of self-doubt and feeling disrespected. As Swearingen describes in her study of NNEST teaching candidates (NNEST-TCs), many of the previously mentioned issues can lead to NNESTs finding it difficult to claim ownership of English.

Beyond the professional barriers NNESTs face is the issue of how accents are perceived and accepted in ELT. The detrimental impacts of perceived deficiencies in intelligibility lead to feelings of inadequacy among NNESTs, where intelligibility can often be equated to intelligence in the view of NESs (Swearingen, 2019). Pavlenko (as cited in Swearingen, 2019) describes the attitudes NNEST-TCs experience when viewing their own accents as deficient as feeling “less than human”. Swearingen goes on to provide other examples of how NNESTs’ accents are an internally and externally perceived weakness. Golombek and Jordan (as cited in Swearingen, 2019) state that NESs’ accents are still held as the ideal benchmark for intelligibility, and Kim notes that these issues around accent and the centering of NESs’ accents can lead to barriers for NNESTs acquiring jobs and their accents being perceived as deficient. However, though accents repeatedly arise in discussions around NNEST-NEST differences, most often with the former being perceived in a negative light compared to their counterparts, there

are studies such as Liang's (as cited in Pae, 2017) that show that students do not always view teacher accents negatively.

Though NNESTs face far greater challenges and many more barriers to success in ELT, there are many areas where they have strengths that their NEST counterparts do not, and there are opportunities to build upon these strengths that will benefit the field of ELF. As Kilpatrick (2014) puts forth in his work on ELF in Asian contexts, multilingual NNESTs have advantages over their NEST colleagues, one such advantage being the ability to communicate with their students in a common language to better instruct English learning. In addition to practical benefits like being able to explain complicated grammar questions in a common first language, NNESTs also provide their students with a role model for their language goals and can create an empathetic bond with their students who are following the same path as their teacher. Seidlhofer (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) echoes these impacts on students, adding that sharing the bond with an NNEST who has gone through the same process that they are experiencing can bolster their confidence. Another added benefit of NNESTs sharing similar experiences with their students is the building of authority in the classroom, which could act as an antidote to some of the aforementioned feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that NNESTs may experience (Teng, 2020).

While many studies have provided evidence of negative attitudes towards, or perceptions of, NNESTs, there are several studies that show different results. Moussu (as cited in Selvi, 2014) found evidence that the stronger an NNEST's English proficiency is, the more likely they are to view their NNEST favorably. Selvi also provides examples from other studies that showed no preference between NNESTs and NESTs by students,

but rather focused on the need for pedagogical competence, strong knowledge of the English language, or clear pronunciation. Perhaps these acknowledged areas of teacher competencies can be viewed as advantages that a better qualified NNEST can hold over a more poorly equipped NEST. Moussu provides another example of a ray of hope in ELF education and growth as she explains how administrators are beginning to recognize the strengths that NNESTs bring to the table, and additionally the administrators' willingness to focus on experience over the sole qualification of some NESTs which is their nativeness, though Selvi points out that discriminatory hiring practices are still alive and well. Pae (2017) adds to the positive aspects of NNESTs when putting forth that they have been found to have strengths in both grammar and teaching methods, and additionally they have a much stronger understanding of, and connection to, local teaching practices and culture.

Building upon these strengths, in conjunction with trends and growth around ELF, there are opportunities for NNESTs to overcome the myriad barriers to success in ELT and forge the path forward for a more inclusive and effective form of English learning within the framework of ELF. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (as cited in Swearingen, 2019) state that NNESTs can legitimize their place in ELT by rejecting the commonly held views of NEST superiority, developing their expertise, and thinking upon future teaching contexts. Kilpatrick (2014) advocates for the continuing development of local, multilingual NNESTs whose advantages and benefits were previously discussed. Leaning into professional expertise can allow NNESTs to shed feelings of inferiority, while promoting professional development (Pae, 2017). Luo (2017) specifically addresses how the promotion and growing awareness of ELF can benefit NNESTs. While

acknowledging some of the challenges facing ELF (lack of awareness around the topic, few teaching materials, and NNEST adherence to traditional views of native speaker centering), she states that by developing ELF pedagogy, NNESTs can help learners recognize the strengths of ELF as a method of communication between international communities, and their own role as communicators in this context. By uplifting NNESTs as agents of change, they can promote the voices of NNESs (both student and teacher alike) while helping localize ELT, thereby decentering the primacy of NESTs (Swearingen, 2019). Finally, Selvi (2014) asserts that by embracing the ideology and role of ELF, TESOL can move towards a more “participatory, democratic, collaborative, and inclusive future” (p. 580).

NESTs

As stated in the previous section, NNESTs face myriad challenges in the ELT world. This section will look at their counterparts, NESTs, and the stark differences in how they are perceived and treated in ELT. NESTs are preferred in the majority of ELT contexts, and as Kilpatrick (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) posits, their only qualification may be their status as a native speaker of English. Nayar (as cited in Jenkins, 2015) elaborates on this point, arguing that credibility and authenticity are innately granted to NESTs, despite potential lack of pedagogic acumen or teaching experience. This section of the paper will explore roles and perceptions of NESTs in ELF, NESTs impact on ELT in international contexts, and recommendations for how oversized NEST influence can be mitigated in ELF.

As Selvi (2014) states, when the notion of ‘native speakers’ entered the TESOL arena, it carried the baggage of issues related to race, linguistics, country of origin, and

other characteristics related to the historical backdrop of TESOL in international contexts described in the first section of this chapter. Amin (as cited in Swearingen, 2019) takes this argument a step further, explicitly asserting that native speaker constructs bestow ownership of English on White men who speak standard English. However, there are findings that paint a different picture of NEST dominance in ELF. Kuo (2006) addresses suggestions that NESTs have become less important and relevant in ELF settings, and given this shift, ELLs should no longer conform to NS norms. Though this is an insightful counterpoint to the typical depiction of NESTs as the foci of the ELF sphere, it is seemingly a minority opinion. Kuo would go on to describe that the participants in her study (a British EFL setting) enjoyed the NNEs-NNEs exchanges both culturally and linguistically, but they would turn to NESTs when issues of grammar or pronunciation arose, which is more in line with other research discussed in this chapter. For example, Pae (2017) asserts that NESTs are generally perceived as being stronger than their NNEs counterparts in areas such as accent, idiom usage, and cultural norms of Anglophone nations. Mahboob (as cited in Pae, 2017) describes similar, though not perfectly aligned, perceptions of NESTs, who were regarded as having superior speaking skills, vocabulary, and knowledge of culture, though students also felt they were weaker than NNEs in areas such as grammar, teaching methodology, and issues related to learning a second language.

The issue of cultural knowledge can cut both ways. As described above, NESTs are often well regarded for their knowledge of their home culture, or Western culture in general. However, NESTs also often lack competencies with regards to the cultures of the countries in which they go to teach, leading to an imposition of their own teaching styles

which may not be appropriate or beneficial for the contexts in which they are teaching, potentially leading to a disconnect between the NESTs and their students (Kraus, 2019). Kraus goes on to assert that this lack of intercultural knowledge is detrimental to the ELT process. In a study with Korean ELLs, Han (as cited in Kraus, 2019) found similar issues students had with NESTs as described above (both positive and negative), and adds that lack of knowledge of Korean culture, and the absence of Korean language proficiency, can erect a barrier between students and NESTs, leading to NESTs being perceived as cold and detached. Additionally, Salmona et al. (as cited in Kraus, 2019) describe how NESTs who face pressure in the classroom, which almost inevitably they will, will often revert to their own cultural biases with the expectation that the learners will or should adapt to that specific framework.

The aforementioned preference for NESTs has a unique characteristic, in that not all NESTs come from the United States or Britain (or other inner-circle countries as described by Kachru). As stated by Canagarajah (as cited in Selvi 2014), many NESTs from countries like India or Singapore face prejudices in ELF settings, which NESTs (specifically White NESTs) do not experience. Kraus (2019) found the same issue was present in Latin American ELF contexts, though in this case the NESTs from non-inner-circle countries were from Jamaica they experienced similar prejudices and barriers to jobs that Canagarajah (1999b) found in Asian contexts.

As it is unlikely that NESTs will be removed from ELF contexts in the foreseeable future, many scholars are calling for, and providing guidance towards, a reassessment and restructuring of how NESTs are trained, and how the negative impacts of centering NEST cultures and identities can be mitigated. The most common

prescription for reimagining and shaping the future role of NESTs in ELF, thereby progressing the decentering of NESs and their cultures, is NEST reflection on their own identities and bolstering their intercultural knowledge and competencies. Percy et al. (2019) describe how this critical self-reflexivity is present in numerous academic fields, but is uncommon in ELT. Though their work is focused upon English language teacher educators (ELTEs) (i.e., the educators that train NESTs), it is still very relevant to this field as instilling this reflection on identities is expected of ELLs, but uncommon in NESTs (Motha, 2014). Percy et al. (2019) go on to highlight an absence of scholarship around ELTEs' identities, and how this absence can impact both ELTE and NEST pedagogies. This impact on ELTE, and in turn NEST, pedagogies must be addressed, as gaps in the understanding of their own pedagogies affect both their students (NESTs) and the NEST students, who are "linguistically and culturally minoritized learners" (p. 4). This is in-line with Ibrahim's (as cited in Motha, 2014) concerns of repeating the colonial behaviors that are rooted in the ELF classroom, subordinating students of color to White NESTs. When discussing the identities of NNEST students and their linguistic-minority status, Motha (2014) argues it is essential that the same attention be paid to NESTs' identities.

Similar to Motha's call for NESTs' identities to be reflected upon in the same manner that is expected of their students, Kraus (2019) posits that as students engage in an intercultural exchange by learning English, it is necessary that NESTs who travel abroad to teach engage in this intercultural exchange as well, which should happen both before entering a new culture and also while living in a foreign country to teach English. Furthermore, if NESTs hope to interact with and engage their students effectively, they

must develop their intercultural competencies and adapt to their new teaching and living context. Peercy et al. (2019) refer to the maxim ‘You teach who you are’, therefore, in order to effectively and honestly teach intercultural competencies (an important facet of ELF instruction), Kraus states that NESTs must improve their own intercultural competencies. Though the focus on positively influencing the ELF environment through NEST reflection upon identity and cultural should remain on the learners, NNESTs, and the countries and cultures adversely impacted by the history of colonialism and linguistic imperialism, Kraus describes the positive impacts that these actions can have on NESTs as well, such as a deeper understanding of self, wider knowledge and awareness of other people and their cultures, and improved critical thinking.

The most common recommendations for changing and improving the role of NESTs in ELF are focused on reflection upon identity and improved cultural competencies; however, there are a number of other suggestions that can aid in the decentering of NESTs from ELF. Selvi (2014) points out the longstanding false dichotomy around the either/or nature of discourse regarding NNESTs versus NESTs. Instead, he suggests, ELF should adopt a both/and perspective on the matter, thereby dropping the adversarial stance, and making ELF instruction more inclusive and encompassing. When describing a study with Korean ELF students, Pae (2017) echoes Selvi’s position, stating that NESTs should continue to be hired by administrators. The rationale for this position is that students still express favorable attitudes towards NESTs, and therefore the hiring of NESTs can have positive influences on student motivation and intention for learning English. However, it is important to note that Pae makes this suggestion in tandem with developing NNEST training programs, as findings indicate

well-trained NNESTs are as effective as NESTs. The final suggestion for how to assist in the decentering of NESTs in ELF comes from Matsuda's (as cited in Kuo, 2006) position that some of the onus is on NNEST students, parents, and TESOL administrators to discard their attachment to, and preference for, native-speakers and their norms.

Native Speaker Fallacy

The final section of this literature review will address Phillipson's seminal theory of the native speaker fallacy. As Swearingen describes it, the native speaker fallacy "erroneously posits that all NSs are inherently ideal teachers of a language" (2019, p. 3). The notion that native speakers (specifically NESTs in the context of this paper) are the ideal teachers and the authority on English is rooted in Chomsky's linguistic concepts, though Canagarajah (1999a) argues that Chomsky's native speaker is an idealized and irrelevant construction given current ELF contexts and realities. Positioning NESTs as the ideal, therefore superior, ELT negatively impacts NNESTs in the ELF field (Tsuchiya, 2020). Additionally, it entrenches the aforementioned false dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs (Selvi, 2011). Kachru (as cited in Selvi, 2014) adds to the concept of the native speaker fallacy, asserting that its impacts are systemic in ELT, implicating academics, administrators, and publishers in the continuation of practices rooted in the native speaker fallacy. By zooming out even further into a macro level view, Canagarajah argues that there are economic, ideological, and political machinations at the foundation of the assumptions addressed by the native speaker fallacy. He expands upon this point when questioning why the notion of an idealized NESTs persists, asserting that it is partially due to the vested interests, as just listed, of the dominant speech communities.

Tsuchiya (2020) adds to the discussion addressing issues surrounding the automatic bestowing of legitimacy on NESTs based upon characteristics such as race, linguistic background, social class, gender, and other aspects of NEST identities. As Selvi (2014) states, the ELF field is not free of discrimination, and due to the practices related to the native speaker fallacy, it is the NNESTs that are most adversely impacted. Tsuchiya adds to the list of negatively affected populations in the ELF field when asserting that the definition of NEST itself is not a static concept. In the context of this discussion, Tsuchiya's point could be extrapolated into the idea of non-center NESTs, who come from countries where though English may be a native language, they do not share the same racial background, country of origin, and English variety as the idealized NEST. Tsuchiya uses the example of how NESTs are most often portrayed in English teaching advertisements as White Westerners.

Canagarajah (1999a) provides a litany of examples of how and why the native speaker fallacy is problematic and detrimental in ELF. He states that the fallacy enforces traditionalism by asserting that NESTs prevent the corruption of English and that ELLs' acquisition of English is conditioned by the received dialect, thereby favoring the NESTs, regardless of the diverse contexts in which communication takes place. He goes on to plainly state that it is not a given that an NEST will make a good language teacher, which is often at odds with the perceptions and hiring practices within ELF today. Beyond the Western-based institutions with vested interests in promoting practices based in the native speaker fallacy, Canagarajah also implicates academic institutions in non-center countries, whose hiring practices still favor and inequitably compensate NESTs. This in turn provides opportunities for NESTs who may be less qualified than their NNESTs

colleagues, leaving the latter party to focus on changing their accent to enhance their legitimacy and authority in ELF settings.

While the examples of the detrimental effects the native speaker fallacy has in ELF contexts, there are ways in which those impacts can be mitigated. Mahboob (as cited in Selvi, 2014) asserts that it could be argued that students do not buy into the native speaker fallacy as they do not also express a preference for NESTs over NNESTs. Though this may be true, it is important to also recognize how entrenched the native speaker fallacy is in ELF. Perhaps Tsuchiya's (2020) call for an open and honest conversation about the negative impacts created by the native speaker fallacy could help illuminate the challenges it poses for students and teachers alike. In addition, the adoption of the previously discussed both/and approach (i.e., promoting the notion that both NESTs and NNESTs have important roles to play in ELF) could help create a more inclusive and diverse body of teachers, thereby de-centering NESTs in ELF contexts (Selvi, 2011). Finally, by debunking the myths at the core of the native speaker fallacy, Canagarajah (1999a) sees the opportunity to build upon the strengths of NNESTs, who make up more than 80% of ELTs worldwide, thereby improving the current and future state of ELF.

Summary

Discussed in this chapter was the relevant research around NESTs, NNESTs, and the native speaker fallacy. The research review was done so with the goal of providing context and insights around how these issues impact the ELF field, and more germanely, to assist in answering the question: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua*

franca? The next chapter, Chapter Three, will build upon the literature reviewed in Chapter Two by describing the plan for creating a professional development tool for TEFL certificate graduates to assess and reflect upon their own identities, biases, and blindspots thereby attempting to answer the question posed in this paper.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Chapter Three of this capstone describes the self guided professional development tool and framework that are the core of this professional development project. Building upon supporting evidence laid out in the literature review, this chapter connects the context discussed to the rationale for creating a self guided slide deck meant to inform and explore TEFL graduates' understanding of, and positionality to, the current inequities in ELF settings. Ultimately, the goal of this project is to assist in furthering the issues raised by the central question of this paper: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?*

The goal of creating this professional development slide deck is to assist TEFL graduates in better understanding their own positionality in the field, and how they can best make ELF contexts more equitable and inclusive. The research discussed in Chapter Two provides plentiful evidence for why it is necessary and beneficial for NESTs to recognize their own biases and privileges, and ideally pushes newly minted TEFL teachers towards being a force for positive, equitable change in ELF contexts.

Rationale

The rationale for choosing an online professional development tool is based upon ease of use and access, and a focused effort for TEFL graduates to spend time reflecting upon and interacting with their own preconceptions of the realities in the ELF field. By creating a set of self-guided professional development slide decks, this project will not

only provide content that informs the audience of how the centering of NESTs impacts the ELF field, but it will also allow the TEFL graduates to reflect upon how their participation in the field impacts their students and colleagues, whether NESTs or NNESTs. Though there is increasing awareness of privilege and inequity in English teaching globally, there is still a great need for, and a dearth of attention paid to, tools and instruction focused on depicting the history and reality of inequity in ELF settings. In addition, if TEFL graduates are already abroad, an online accessible slide deck will still allow them to access and interact with a tool to better help them understand the need to decenter themselves in the ELF field. Finally, given the realities of COVID and the great shift towards remote work and learning, an online slide deck seemed the most fitting tool for accomplishing the goals of this professional development project.

Framework

The framework that informs this project is informed by The University of Toronto's digital pedagogy guidelines (2021). Though the term digital pedagogy is challenging to define, the foundations of digital pedagogy are rooted in applying a "critical digital perspective" when enacting digital teaching tools, implementing those tools purposefully, and focusing on the impact of those tools with regards to learning. Croxall (as cited in University of Toronto, 2021) states that using digital tools can augment or alter the educational experience. Given the ever increasing shift to online components of education, the realities of the post-COVID learning experiences, and the fact that the audience for this project may very well be abroad by the time they interact with this professional development, it is important to acknowledge the strength and versatility of online professional development and education tools.

The University of Toronto's digital pedagogy guidelines include a number of best practices that informed the current project. Morris (as cited in University of Toronto, 2021) contends that teachers should not simply shift traditional teaching materials over to digital settings, but instead do so with purpose. This project was created specifically to engage the audience in an online setting, and though this means the material is not simply a rehashing of traditional classroom fare repurposed for digital means, the notion of focusing on the how of the delivery of materials greatly influenced their creation. Another suggestion Morris makes is to incorporate improvisation into online learning materials. This recommendation influenced the decision made in the current project to include an open ended self reflection assignment at the end of each session. Instead of having a simple regurgitation of facts for the audience to consume, they are asked to reflect upon and then create responses about their own experiences, knowledge, or plans for how to understand and interact with the reality of ELF contexts that privilege the NEST. One final idea that Morris put forth that influenced this project was the question around whether learning is perpetually sustained in the digital environment. Beyond sharing a list of relevant resources at the end of each session, it is difficult to know how or if the lessons in this self guided professional development will continue beyond the initial three sessions. However, it is hoped that given the knowledge provided in this project, accompanied with the characteristics of the TEFL graduate cohort (worldly, engaged, and equity-focused), that the audience for this project will continue seeking out and sharing opportunities to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in their classrooms and their online life.

In addition to Morris' suggestions for best practices in digital pedagogy, Ford (as cited in University of Toronto, 2021) puts forth two more recommendations that influenced this project. First, she suggests making the content accessible. Though all TEFL certificate holders from Hamline would have access to a computer, not all would have specific programs or acumen that would allow them to interact with more advanced or complex tools. This influenced the decision to create simple PDF slide decks that most anyone with access to a computer and the internet will be able to interact with. The second recommendation she makes is creating engaging tools. This influences the project in two ways. First, the content presented is written to be interesting, thought-provoking, and likely novel to the majority of students. Second, this suggestion influenced the decision to include the self reflection assignments at the end of each of the three sessions. Instead of simply presenting a set of facts and resources to the audience, the open ended assignment at the end of each session is designed to stimulate engaging, reflective thinking that will ultimately resonate with the audience more than if they were just digesting the material presented to them.

Content

The slide decks created for this project provides historical and current information, as described in the literature review, regarding the reality of NEST centering in ELF contexts. The first of the three slide decks contains content regarding the how and why NESTs have been positioned as the preferred or idealized candidates for teaching positions in ELF contexts. After guiding the audience through the relevant facts, a self reflection assignment concludes the first session. In this assignment, participants are asked to write a two page reflection upon incidents of bias or discrimination they have

experienced or witnessed in their lives. The second slide deck focuses on how the centering of NESTs in ELF context can negatively impact the students and NNEST colleagues that TEFL graduates will be teaching and working with during their time working abroad. The self reflection assignment for this session is a two page written assignment asking participants to describe their own biases and misconceptions that they previously or currently hold. The final slide deck describes how the decentering of NESTs can begin at a systemic level, addressing hiring practices, unequal remuneration, and biases of teaching institutions. The final self reflection assignment asks participants to reflect upon and discuss how they can be agents of change paving the way to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive ELF field. In addition to the content and self reflection assignments, each of the three slide decks includes a list of relevant resources for participants to further explore the topic.

Audience

The audience for this project is TEFL certificate graduates from Hamline University. The reason for this choice is because most of these students acquired the certificate intending to go abroad to teach. Given the focus of this paper on decentering NESTs in ELF contexts, they are among the exact audience that needs to better understand the inequitable realities of NEST privilege in ELF settings. In addition, the majority, though not all, of TEFL graduates are NESs. The goal is to educate the audience about the history of ELF, the privileges bestowed upon them as NESs, and how they can become part of the change that will benefit NNEST teachers and students around the world.

Timeline

Ideally, this slide deck will be used by TEFL certificate graduates after they have completed their certificate, but before they leave the US to teach abroad. Though the content and design may need to be updated to keep the material relevant and accurate, the slide deck could be used for many years to come, as the need to decenter NESTs in ELF contexts will take a very long time before the work is satisfactorily completed. The content of the project is designed to be interacted with over three two hour long sessions spaced over a period of three weeks. The development of the project took place over a three month period from February through April of 2022.

Summary

Chapter Three provided a description of the self-guided professional development slide decks created to complete the capstone project and, hopefully, help answer the question posed in this paper: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?* This chapter also discussed the rationale for choosing this method of professional development, the frameworks influencing its creation, the intended audience, and timeline. In Chapter Four, I will reflect upon the learnings experienced throughout this project, the implications and limitations of the project, and what potential future impacts this project and others like it can have.

CHAPTER FOUR

Project Reflections

Introduction

The guiding question for this project is: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?* The goal of asking this question was to understand the current inequities in the field by reviewing the historical foundations of ELF, presenting the current practices and challenges of administrators, teachers, and students, and creating a tool to mitigate the negative impacts of centering NESTs in ELF contexts.

In Chapter One, I provided the rationale behind choosing this question and project. This included personal and professional experiences that sparked the curiosity behind the question. I also discussed the larger shift in society that has led to more discussions around, and actions towards, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how that influenced my choice of question and project.

Chapter Two presented and synthesized the literature that was most impactful to this project. This literature was in the most part relatively recent, as the main push toward equity in this field has come in recent years. That being said, there were some resources from two or three decades ago that were foundational to the thinking and work being done today that were essential in understanding the current landscape. I will be returning to some of the most influential resources later in this chapter.

In Chapter Three I presented the project itself. This included a description of how I developed the project, who the audience was, and the rationale behind the content and method of delivery.

In this final chapter, I will discuss my own reflections upon this project, return to the literature to revisit some of the most influential resources, describe how this project developed and what some of the limitations are, and then address what I hope to be the project's impact and what potential next steps are that can further the cause of promoting equity in ELF contexts.

Reflections

One of the great challenges of writing about equity from a privileged perspective is looking at all the ways one benefitted from an inequitable system and all the blindspots that one had in the past. Ten years on from my experience teaching English at a university in China, I can reflect upon my decision to go there, the hiring practices that got me to my position, and how I was regarded by students and colleagues. I created wonderful connections with many of my students and colleagues, and I would not dissuade anyone from choosing to pursue a similar experience, but in hindsight, I wish I had been more cognizant of my position in the English department, and how I came to be there beyond personal choice.

Perhaps the most essential word in the guiding question of this paper is 'decentering'. I would not advocate for the removal of NESTs from ELF contexts, because I believe there is much we have to offer and great benefits we can provide. However, there is a certain pedestal NESTs have been placed on within the field that we can start to chip away at that will create a more equitable English learning ecosystem that still recognizes the benefits NESTs can bring to the field, but also provides more space to uplift voices that are often marginalized yet have so much more to offer the field. In its current state, ELF contexts are poorer for the idealization of NESTs and marginalization

of NNESTs. I hope that the field continues to move in a direction towards equity that will ultimately be of benefit to everyone going forward.

In the next section I will revisit the literature that most influenced this project. One area that I will not delve into much is the focused, excellent work that is being done at schools and universities across the world to address the issues discussed in this paper. These studies provided a shining glimmer of hope that the decentering of NESTs is progressing. Again, there is, and always will be space for NESTs to teach abroad, but I hope the day comes when it is done on a more level playing field.

Revisiting the Literature

As stated earlier in the chapter, the vast majority of the research I reviewed was from the past 15 years, and much of that work was done within the past six years. I think this bodes well for the field, as it depicts a shift in understanding and values that will lead to a more equitable ELF profession. In this section, I will present a number of authors that most influenced this project and my own thinking. I will also identify the specific area that each researcher helped bring into focus.

I will begin by discussing Jennifer Jenkins, and her influence on my understanding of the ELF contexts as a whole. Though she does not solely use the term ELF, her work was essential for me to understand many aspects of English teaching internationally. Her general textbook from 2015 was formative for me in that it provided a broad understanding of the field. It also was an excellent resource as it aggregated many of the thoughts and opinions from top thinkers, practitioners, and teachers across the world on the topic of global English. However, her 2014 book on ELF at an international university was also an important resource for me. This book was far more focused than

the wide-lens perspective of *Global Englishes* (2015), and it provided some of the most in-depth student perspectives I came across in my research.

The next author I would like to discuss is Suhanthie Motha. Her 2014 book and 2020 article reviewed in this paper gave me the most thorough understanding of the impacts of colonialism and racism in English teaching that I found anywhere. A dyed-in-the-wool anti-racist, Motha pulled no punches when describing the history and impacts of colonialism and racism on our current English language system. It is essential to understand how inextricably linked these histories are with how the field operates today. Without acknowledging, understanding, and addressing the seeds that sowed our current ELF field, it will not be possible to make the necessary changes towards a more equitable future. I found Motha's work to be some of the most personally influential material I read during this process.

Another author whose work greatly informed this paper is Suresh Canagarajah. The two resources from 1999 cited in this paper (which also happen to be the oldest resources in the paper, reaffirming the point that much of the work around this topic is very recent) were influential for different reasons. His book *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* (1999b) was in the vein of Motha's work. He described the lasting impacts of colonialism in ELF contexts. His writings on these challenges helped me to understand just how deeply rooted the history of our field is in the colonialism that bore it. While today many people would not immediately associate 18th century British colonialism with how or why a university student in Sri Lanka or Indonesia is studying English, Canagarajah lays plain how connected these events are, and how much the former influence the latter. Another important source Canagarajah

(1999a) provided for this work was his article on the native speaker fallacy. His description of the detrimental impacts of idealizing the NEST at the expense of NNES teachers and students is essential reading to understand ELF.

Having brought up the native speaker fallacy, I should acknowledge its original creator in Robert Phillipson. Though I did not spend much time referring to Phillipson when discussing the native speaker fallacy, some of his other works were very influential to my own understanding of the field and to this project. Mainly, his influence on this paper had to do with the economic and cultural influences present in ELF. Similar to Motha and Canagarajah, Phillipson, in his 2016 work, addressed the issues around what he described as linguistic imperialism. But it was his 2006 work that most informed this paper. By describing the economic links and benefits associated with propping up the NEST in ELF contexts, he added another level of understanding the barriers that will need to be overcome to create a more equitable field. He also had excellent insights into the cultural impacts of English globally in his 2009 work. His writing on this topic was thought-provoking as much of the rest of the resources cited in this paper focused on academia, but to fully understand English's role globally, we must look at all of the other areas it influences, such as business, entertainment, perceived cultural norms, and more.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the many excellent resources I am not directly referencing here. I read studies that had interviews with students from Honduras, Tanzania, Afghanistan, and many more countries. Hearing the individual experiences and perspectives was as influential as any other resource I read in this project.

Project Development and Limitations

Initially I had conceived this project as being an interactive website that students could use to learn about the material and provide their own reflections on their thoughts and experiences around this topic. I ended up shifting away from that plan for two reasons. First, it has been a long time since I created a webpage, and I began to feel it wasn't the ideal platform for this project. And second, I wanted to create a contained document that could be shared as a whole, rather than sharing a link that would have separate, yet connected, pieces. This led me to shift to a series of three slide decks that were their own contained, thematic sections. I found the slide deck to be a much better medium for what, and how, I wanted to share.

Regarding limitations, I feel there are two areas that limited the project. The first is practical. Given the massive shift towards online learning that happened since COVID began, I felt that the project was best delivered in an online environment. This decision was also informed by the fact that many of the TEFL certificate graduates that are the audience for this project could potentially be abroad by the time they interact with this material. Choosing an online platform also allows for the project to potentially be more widely, and easily, disseminated across the globe, if there is interest.

The second limitation was around the relative newness of the topic. Though there have been researchers acknowledging this topic for decades, most of the major efforts have come in more recent years as society is hopefully shifting towards greater focus on issues surrounding equity. There are many great resources available, and work being done, on this topic, but there is much more work to be done around not only the breadth

of the issue of inequity in ELF contexts, but more importantly, what can and should be done about it.

Project Impact and Next Steps

I hope that my work can help add to the conversation about equity in ELF. If even a handful of TEFL certificate graduates get to interact with this material, I believe that can make a ripple effect in the field. The more eyes that are on the topic, the more voices that are part of the discussion around the issue, the better it will be. Earlier in this chapter I acknowledged the authors and academics that influenced the project. I believe that those conversations, and actions they create, can influence the field from the top down. However, just as, if not more, important will be the impacts of classroom and school-level changes. This is where I believe this project can have an impact. If the next generation of NESTs go into the field better informed of the realities in ELF, and more intentionally aware of their position, then they can begin to be the agents of change that will influence their students and NNEST colleagues. I feel hopeful and confident that more and more of the students who will be the next round of NESTs to go abroad will carry this knowledge with them, which will lead to greater equity in the field, and a brighter future for ELF.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to explore the question: *How can the decentering of native English speakers and their cultures from English language learning impact equity in English as a lingua franca?* From everything I read and wrote during this process, I came to the conclusion that the most effective tool to further the process of decentering the NEST in ELF contexts is awareness. I should make the caveat that awareness is not

enough, many difficult actions will have to take place, but I do believe it is the seed. That awareness will have to spread far and wide. It will have to be shared by administrators, NNESTs, students, and anyone involved in ELF. However, I feel that the greatest agents of change for decentering the NEST in ELF are the NESTs themselves. If they can be more aware of their privileged status, then they can take steps to mitigate the negative impacts that centering the NEST has in ELF. I would like to think that NESTs are, on the whole, worldly, compassionate, education focused people, and as such, they should have as much interest as any in creating a more equitable field that will benefit all.

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