

Myths and Misconceptions About Nonnative English Speakers in the TESOL (NNEST) Movement

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Parallel to the growing recognition of English as an international language, the fundamental premises of the TESOL discipline (e.g., the ownership of the language, native speakers as a goal and model of competence for learning and teaching, linguistic standards and language variety/ies to be taught, monolingual/monocultural approach to teaching) has undergone a serious challenge and reconceptualization over the past several decades. While this trend resulted in an unprecedented recognition of the issues surrounding nonnative speakers in the field of TESOL, it also meant the emergence of a series of unfounded ideas or false beliefs about nonnative English speakers in the TESOL (NNEST) movement. By discussing and problematizing these commonly held myths and misconceptions about the NNEST movement, the current article aims to clarify a number of important issues and shed a light onto the past, present, and future of the movement. Having a solid grasp of the movement in the context of global dynamics, changing times, and reconfigured fundamental premises of the discipline has a paramount importance for all stakeholders involved in TESOL who long for a professional milieu characterized by democracy, justice, equity, participation, and professionalism.

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He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle and took him in!

—From the poem “Outwitted” by Edwin Markham

Today, the field of English language teaching (ELT) is characterized by some unquestionable facts. Characterized as the fastest growing language in the world (Mahboob, 2005), English is the world's first truly global language (Crystal, 2012), often referred to as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2006), or the zeitgeist (Mauranen, 2012) in today's globalized world. Nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English are estimated to outnumber their native speaker (NS) counterparts by three to one (Crystal, 2012), the ownership of English is shared by all its speakers, regardless of their nativeness (Widdowson, 1994), and 80% of English language teachers worldwide are considered to be nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNEs; Canagarajah, 2005).¹ This portrayal has paved the way for the growing realization of issues related to nonnative English-speaking professionals, and has consequently resulted in skyrocketing of research efforts (books, journal articles, opinion pieces, presentations, workshops and colloquia in conferences, and MA theses and PhD dissertations), policy and advocacy initiatives (establishment of the NNEST Caucus [later restructured as an Interest Section in TESOL International], NNEST-related entities in local TESOL affiliates, white papers and position statements), and teaching activities (infusion of NNEST issues into teacher education curricula through class discussions, activities, and assignments), all delineating different facets of the issues surrounding NNESTs in TESOL (Braine, 2010).

This growing trend is now considered to be a *movement* (Braine, 2010; Mahboob, 2010) operationalized at several different levels. Theoretically, it builds a more inclusive intellectual space

¹ Both *nonnative English speakers in TESOL* and *nonnative English-speaking teachers* are denoted by the same acronym (i.e., NNEST) and used interchangeably throughout this article. However, readers should be reminded that the former subsumes the latter, and is more comprehensive in its scope as it encompasses professionals other than classroom teachers (e.g., teacher aides, teacher educators, researchers, professors, material writers, publishers, and administrators). In the same vein, the former denotation has been adopted as the title of the Interest Section in the TESOL International Association.

On a related note, even a perfunctory look at the NNEST movement and literature reveals that the acronym is operationalized somewhat narrowly, placing considerable emphasis on teachers (and a range of issues germane to them and their realities). I argue that this exclusive emphasis on a particular group of professionals within the TESOL profession is rather limiting, and therefore should serve as a source of motivation to expand and diversify the intellectual base of the NNEST movement and literature.

defined by a shift from the traditional monolingual, monocultural, *native-speakerist* approach to teaching, learning, and teacher education in TESOL. Practically, it brings together and supports a wide spectrum of threads from the research, teaching, and advocacy realms to promote and institutionalize discourses of multilingualism, multiethnicism, and multiculturalism. To be more specific, it aims to transform these theoretical discourses and conversations into everyday practices, forming and informing TESOL activity (e.g., benchmark for learning, teaching, assessment, teacher education, material development and hiring). Professionally, it aims to redefine the fabric of the TESOL profession characterized by qualities such as democracy, justice, collaboration, equity, and professionalism. This translates into the promotion of a pedagogy that is highly sensitive to diverse uses, users, functions, and contexts of English; the execution of more participatory and collaborative teaching practices; and the promotion of equity, justice, and professionalism in the workplace and hiring processes.

Paradoxical as it may seem, despite the fact that the NNEST movement and literature have been receiving tremendous attention in the field, a wide range of myths and misconceptions about the movement persist. Using an evaluation of these emergent narrow conceptualizations about the scope, purpose, and direction of the NNEST movement and its research and advocacy efforts as a point of departure, the present study aims to clarify a number of important issues and shed a light onto the past, present, and future of the movement. It springs from the need that most basic assumptions about the NNEST movement should be reevaluated and renegotiated vis-à-vis the current sociolinguistic and educational landscape of English as an international language.

Departing from this realization, the current article is organized in two main parts. The first presents an overview of the emergence of this relatively young area of inquiry (i.e., NNEST literature) with specific reference to its current discussions and future directions. In the second part, myths and misconceptions about the NNEST movement will be unpacked, deconstructed, and problematized with specific examples and implications. The overall aim in this article is twofold. First of all, it is hoped that

this article will serve as an orientation for TESOLers who might be interested in learning more about the NNEST movement. Second, it is intended to generate a discussion platform for those who are interested in moving beyond these myths and misconceptions toward an embrace of the ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic parameters of diversity in TESOL.

FROM THOUGHT TO MOVEMENT

Theoretical Underpinnings: Problematizing the NS Construct

The emergence of the NNEST movement can be traced back to the problematization of the Chomskyan (Chomsky, 1965, 1986) representation of the *idealized native speaker-hearer*, a linguistic abstraction in theoretical linguistics the manifestations of which affected the TESOL profession (Jenkins, 2006; Y. Kachru, 2005) by means of cognitivism-oriented mainstream second language acquisition² (SLA) research. What lies at the heart of this term is the distinction between competence and performance, where the former is defined as the underlying cumulative system of rules governing knowledge, whereas the latter is formulated as the actual manifestation of this knowledge by the speaker (Chomsky, 1965). This approach to competence as a rule-governed system unaffected by social and situational variations, the ideal and the absolute source of native-speaker intuitions, and its construction as a psychological or mental property or function was criticized in the literature (Lyons, 1996, as cited in Llorca, 2000).

The sphere of influence of the idealized native speaker-hearer notion transcended theoretical linguistics and penetrated into mainstream SLA research through Selinker's (1972) concepts of *interlanguage* (IL) and *fossilization*, both of which propagated the

²It needs to be acknowledged here that with the social turn in SLA, there has been a paradigm shift in the field of SLA which has resulted in stretching the traditional boundaries and parameters of the cognitivist-oriented mainstream SLA research. On the one hand, this shift spearheaded a wider recognition of the contextual and interactional use of the language in the mainstream SLA research; on the other, it spurred a greater interest in alternative approaches to SLA, such as the sociocultural approach and conversation analysis. Interested readers may review Block (2003) for a detailed discussion of the social turn in SLA, Firth and Wagner's (1997) seminal work on the importance of contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, Atkinson (2011) for a comprehensive survey of alternative approaches to SLA, and Mahboob (2010) for a forceful critique of the notions of IL and fossilization.

native speaker as the benchmark (see Kato, n.d.; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2010). Selinker defined IL as the systematic and structurally intermediate knowledge or state between a learner's first language (L1) and second language (L2), yet which is independent of both the learner's L1 and L2 (Selinker, 1972; Tarone, 2006). Fossilization, on the other hand, is defined as "the real phenomenon of the permanent non-learning of TL [target language] structures, of the cessation of IL learning (in most cases) far from expected TL norms" (Selinker, 1992, p. 225). Reading between the lines, one sees that Selinker's concepts of IL and fossilization rest upon the tacit claims that (1) the default starting point for L2 learning is the L1, (2) L2 learners are not able to achieve *native* proficiency in L2, and therefore (3) the ultimate goal for L2 learning is to achieve *native-like* proficiency in L2.

Along the same lines, Long (1983) proposed the *interaction hypothesis*, another pervasive paradigm of SLA which essentially further perpetuated the ongoing idealization of NS by placing a considerable emphasis on native speakers. Long argued that "participation in conversation with NSs, made possible through the modification of interaction, is the necessary and sufficient condition for SLA" (Long, 1981, p. 275). Collectively, these notions pushed mainstream SLA practice toward monolingual bias (Cook, 1997; Y. Kachru, 1994), and utilization of methodological approaches conducive to comparing learner language with NS norms (e.g., grammaticality judgment tests, error analysis, etc.), a trend described as *comparative fallacy* by Bley-Vroman (1983). As a result, the interaction hypothesis further intensified the deficit discourse (Bhatt, 2002) because it characterized learner language as deficient by definition (Kasper & Kellerman, 1997). In conclusion, the idealized NS model creates a monolingual bias in SLA theory that "elevates an idealized native speaker above a stereotypical 'nonnative' while viewing the latter as a defective communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence" (Firth & Wagner, 1997, p. 285).

Reconceptualizing the NS–NNS Dichotomy

Questioning the de facto authority and the prestige of the NS-as-target model for foreign or second language acquisition, several

scholars attempted to reconceptualize the ideologically fused NS–NNS dichotomy. In his symbolically provocative and powerfully entitled *The Native Speaker Is Dead!*, Paikeday (1985) argued that “the native speaker exists only as a figment of linguists’ imagination” (p. 12) and proposed the more encompassing term *proficient user* of a language to refer to all speakers who can successfully use it. Along the same lines, Davies (1991) argued that “the native speaker is a fine myth: we need it as a model, a goal, almost an inspiration; but it is useless as a measure; it will not help us define our goals” (p. 157). In a similar vein, Swales (1993) concluded that “it no longer makes any sense to differentiate between the native speaker and the nonnative speaker” (p. 284). However, “even though a dichotomy vision of the NS–NNS discussion does not appear to be linguistically acceptable, it happens to be nonetheless socially present, and therefore, potentially meaningful as an area of research in applied linguistics” (Moussu & Llurda, 2008, p. 316). Thus, an impetus and catalyst were provided for the reconceptualization of the ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994) and default legitimacy and expertise (Canagarajah, 1999) in English language teaching (Leung, 2005) and SLA (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Jenkins, 2006).

The TESOL Profession Under the Influence of the NS Model

By the time the term *native speaker* arrived in circles of TESOL, it was already a loaded term, due to issues of linguistics, race, ethnicity, and country of origin, among others. Mahboob (2010) acknowledges that terms such as NS/NNS and related conceptualizations represent “a hidden ideology that privileges the NS . . . [and] helped give authority to the NS model in SLA and, by extension, in language teaching models” (p. 3). Consequently, adopting a NSist worldview means privileging a *self-selected elite* (Widdowson, 2003) of language professionals, and thereby pushing NNESTs towards marginalization at the periphery of the TESOL profession (Rajagopalan, 2005). Different facets of the TESOL profession (e.g., theory, research, publishing, instructional materials, assessment, teacher training and hiring practices) have traditionally been under the decisive and destructive influence of the NS construct (Braine, 2010; Canagarajah, 1999). Historically,

the operation of the TESOL enterprise has been under the influence of White, modernist, male-oriented, Western, value-laden, discourses of TESOL (Amin, 1997; Kubota & Lin, 2009).

Highlighting the detrimental implications of the NS-model, Phillipson (1992) first used the term *native speaker fallacy* to refer to unethical treatment of NNESTs by challenging the notion that NESTs make better teachers. Braj Kachru (1992) carried the discussion one step further, expanding the boundaries of the fallacy to an extent which includes teachers, academic administrators, and material developers who “provide a serious input in the global teaching of English, in policy formulation, and in determining the channels for the spread of the language” (p. 359). Finally, Holliday (2005) argued that the field of TESOL has been under the dominance of “native speakerism,” “an established belief that native-speaker teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (p. 6). The presence of native speakerism as the Damocles sword hanging over the TESOL profession and its members is detrimental at many different levels: as the “bedrock of transnationalized ELT” (Leung, 2005, p. 128), leading to unprofessional favoritism (Medgyes, 2001) and frequently resulting in hiring discrimination (Clark & Paran, 2007; Flynn & Gulikers, 2001; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010), and diminishing job prospects of NNESTs in both ESL and EFL settings (Braine, 1999; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004). Most importantly, native speakerism generates the *I-am-not-a-native-speaker syndrome* (Suarez, 2000) or the *impostor syndrome* (Bernat, 2009), both of which have damaging effects on teacher persona, self-esteem, and in-class performance. As a result, NNESTs may question their professional qualifications, inadvertently subscribe to a deficit model, and even feel that they are not respected by their colleagues, students, and administrators (Amin, 1997; D. Liu, 1999).

This prevalent fallacy has spurred the interest in reconceptualizing the native speaker construct in TESOL and applied linguistics. For instance, Kramsch (1997) argued that native speakership is neither a privilege of birth nor of education but “acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and nonnative speakers” (p. 363). The dichotomy of

(in)competence results in defining the NNS as deficient or less-than-native (*near-native*; Valdes, 1998). As a result, several scholars have offered alternatives that allow us to move beyond the perennial nomenclature of NS—for example, *language expert* (Rampton, 1990), *English-using fellowship* (B. Kachru, 1992), *multicompetent speaker* (Cook, 1999), and *competent language user* (Lee, 2005). This trend of proposing an alternative nomenclature for this contested construct has been echoed for the nonnative construct. Analyzing the listserv discussions on appropriate alternatives of the term, Brady (2009) compiled such alternatives as *Anglophone teachers of English*, *BEST* (bilingual English-speaking teacher), *legitimate teacher of English* (adapted from *legitimate user of English*), *transnational English teacher* (Menard-Warwick, 2008), *MEST* (multilingual/multicultural English-speaking teacher), and *DEST* (diverse English-speaking teacher). More recently, Motha, Jain, and Teclé (2012) proposed *translinguistic/transcultural English teacher*.

In conclusion, thanks to critical approaches in SLA, TESOL, and applied linguistics, the transformative nature of the NNEST movement, the diverse uses and users of Englishes (World Englishes), and the reconceptualization of English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) have been widely embraced. The foundational principles of TESOL³ have been reassessed, redefined, and re-envisioned (Burns, 2005; Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2002; Selvi & Yazan, 2013). This leads TESOL (both as an activity and profession) towards a more participatory, democratic, collaborative, and inclusive future.

The Birth and Rise of the NNEST Movement

From a more practical standpoint, the emergence of a new paradigm in circles of TESOL necessitated the establishment of

³As a pedagogical response to the changing landscape of the TESOL profession, McKay (2002) argued that “the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second and foreign language” (p. 1). Resting upon this simple yet profound statement, scholars generated a series of questions about the foundational pillars of the TESOL profession: Whose language are we now talking about? Which speakers are we modeling our instruction upon? Which language variety/ies should we be teaching to our learners? Which teachers are qualified to teach the English language? Which approaches are the best in teaching?

institutionalized structures and responses with a transformative motive (including awareness, advocacy, and activism; Selvi, 2009). In order to sustain and increase the momentum of this trend of moving beyond NSism in TESOL, a group of scholars including George Braine (chair), Jun Liu (chair-elect), Lia Kamhi-Stein (newsletter editor), and Aya Matsuda (webmaster) established the NNEST Caucus in the TESOL International Association in 1998, which later transformed itself to Interest Section status in 2008. Serving as the institutionalized home base and the intellectual space of the NNEST movement since then, the foundational motivation of the NNEST Caucus/Interest Section is to (1) create a nondiscriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth, (2) encourage the formal and informal gatherings of NNS at TESOL and affiliate conferences, (3) encourage research and publications on the role of nonnative speaker teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, and (4) promote the role of nonnative speaker members in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions (NNEST Interest Section, 2014). The establishment of an NNEST-related entity was echoed in local TESOL affiliates through the foundation of the WATESOL's (Washington Area TESOL) NNEST Caucus, and CATESOL (California TESOL) NNLEI–Nonnative Language Educators Interest Group.

An important milestone in this process was a series of institutionalized responses against the unfair treatment of nonnative English-speaking professionals in the TESOL profession. The TESOL International Association, the world's biggest international organization for English language teachers to speakers of other languages (with more than 12,000 members in more than 100 international affiliates), passed two resolutions entitled "A TESOL Statement on Nonnative Speakers of English and Hiring Practices" (TESOL, 1992), and "Position Statement Against Discrimination of Nonnative Speakers of English in the Field of TESOL" (TESOL, 2006). Following the traces of professionalism, South-East Asian countries agreed in 2005 to establish centers for English language training to create support and solution mechanisms for local needs by local NNESTs (Graddol, 2006). More recently, CATESOL (California TESOL

affiliate) issued a white paper opposing discrimination against NNESTs and teachers with *non-standard* varieties of English (CATESOL, 2013). Despite these institutionalized initiatives and responses, discriminatory hiring and workplace practices continue to exist across the world (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010), which highlights not only the further need for the sustainability of the NNEST movement but also necessitates the diversification of trajectories (i.e., broadening the theoretical and practical knowledge base of the movement) toward a more democratic, participatory, professional, and egalitarian future for the TESOL profession.

COMMON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Although this transformative trend resulted in an unprecedented recognition of the issues surrounding nonnative English speakers in the field of TESOL, it also witnessed the emergence of a series of unfounded ideas or false beliefs about the NNEST movement held by TESOLers, NSs, and NNSs alike. Thus, in this section of the article, I intend to discuss and problematize these commonly held myths and misconceptions about the NNEST movement, and clarify a number of important issues related to the past, present, and future of the movement.

Myth 1: The NNEST Movement Is for NNESTs (“I Am a NS, So I Do Not Belong Here!”)

Interest Sections (ISs) are provided individual time and space during the TESOL Convention, during which they set up their individual booths to interact with TESOLers about the roles and activities of their ISs. In the 2013 TESOL Convention in Dallas, Texas, I was responsible for organizing the booth for the NNEST IS and used an idea pad to attract the visitors’ attention: On a white board, I placed two questions: (1) How do you envision the future of TESOL? and (2) What can NNEST IS do about it? I asked visitors to use sticky notes and board markers to write down their responses. The following conversation occurred between a TESOLer and myself:

TESOLer: (looking at the idea pad)

Ali Fuad: Would you like to write something down to our idea pad about the future of our profession and what we can do about it?

TESOLer: No thanks, I am a native speaker!

Ali Fuad: But the future belongs to all of us, right?

TESOLer: (Walks away with a smile on her face).

My professional roles and responsibilities as a teacher educator and an emergent leader in the NNEST movement entail meeting and interacting with (both face-to-face and online) TESOLers from diverse backgrounds. Oftentimes, graduate students and colleagues who describe themselves as NSs approach me with a supportive attitude of the awareness, advocacy, and activism generated through our collective efforts. However, they may not be informed about the all-inclusive nature of the NNEST movement.⁴ Therefore, it is not uncommon to hear such questions as “I am a NS/NEST, can I join?” and supportive comments followed up with a remark like “. . .but this comes from a native speaker.” Online discussions on listservs and social media platforms reflect a similar hesitant attitude of self-described NSs/NESTs, who may refrain from making comments, taking volunteer roles, or even participating in related activities for the same reason: being a NS/NEST. Part of the misconception may stem from the fact that the movement as well as the entities in local TESOL affiliates uses the term NNEST (see Myth 7). This may inadvertently signal that the NNEST movement is stuck between being an exclusive NNEST club and preaching to the choir.

In addition, outreach efforts (both at local and global scales, and by means of various modes of communication) should be a prime and instrumental strategy of the movement in reaching out to those professionals who may not necessarily have (the habit of) easy, direct, and regular access to research and literature on the NNEST movement. This will increase the awareness and advocacy

⁴Resting upon the critical approaches in TESOL and applied linguistics that aim to redefine the traditional and prevalent NSist discourses shaping the legitimacy in language learning and teaching, the NNEST movement aims to recognize, support, and promote ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in TESOL, both as a profession (e.g., issues of professionalism, standards, teacher education, hiring, and workplace) and an activity (e.g., benchmark for learning, teaching, assessment, methodology, and material development).

efforts specifically targeted towards those professionals who may principally be interested in and supportive of the movement, but not practically informed about it. More importantly, this will transcend the (both visible and invisible) status quo set by those gatekeepers who take discriminatory decisions. To be more specific, it will provide a greater exposure to the issues surrounding the NNEST movement, and thereby bypass any administrators who either do not support or deliberately restrain their employees' access to professional resources (e.g., conferences, journals, memberships to professional organizations) because it is not in their best interest to do so.

It should be noted that the TESOL profession has long suffered from subscribing to the dominant either/or discourse (i.e., NEST or NNEST). Therefore, one of the overarching aims of the NNEST movement is to establish a more encompassing both/and discourse (i.e., NEST and NNEST) (Selvi, 2011). Whereas it should be acknowledged that raising awareness, engaging in advocacy, and demonstrating activism about the issues related to NNESTs have been among the integral motivations of the NNEST movement (Selvi, 2009), the broadening scope of the movement encompasses the establishment of cooperation and collaboration among NESTs and NNESTs and legitimate involvement by all professionals for a more participatory future in our profession. This understanding enables cooperation and collaboration that can foster more educationally, contextually, and socially appropriate English language learning opportunities (Mahboob, 2010) through which English language learners will gain a wider sociolinguistic and intercultural repertoire (McKay, 2002). Consequently, such an understanding lends further support to the establishment of a professional milieu that “welcome[s] ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity” (Selvi, 2009, p. 51).

Myth 2: Native Speakers Are From Venus, Nonnative Speakers Are From Mars (“We Are Two Different Species”)

Critical approaches to TESOL have been around for several decades. The emergence of studies within the context of TESOL with specific emphasis on issues related to NESTs and NNESTs dates back to the pioneering work of Péter Medgyes (1992, 1994). In

his early work, Medgyes's scholarship focused on the idea that both NS and NNS of English could be and become successful teachers. However, Medgyes (1992) argued that each group is equipped with a distinct set of characteristics because "NESTs and non-NESTs use English differently and, therefore, teach English differently" (p. 346). In other words, many of the differences in teaching practices between NESTs and NNESTs can be attributed to variation in language proficiency (Medgyes, 1999). Medgyes (1994) lists six assets that NNESTs have and that NESTs cannot offer:

1. NNESTs can serve as imitable models of the successful learner of English.
2. NNESTs can teach learning strategies more effectively.
3. NNESTs can provide learners with more information about the English language.
4. NNESTs are more able to anticipate language difficulties.
5. NNESTs can be more empathetic to the needs and problems of their learners.
6. Only NNESTs can benefit from sharing the learners' mother tongue.

While Medgyes's efforts spurred a great interest in the circles of TESOL and pushed the field towards taking a more critical stance towards the contested concepts of NEST/NNEST, it needs to be acknowledged that his aforementioned characterization is an inadvertent byproduct of the pervasive dichotomy that he has been working against (Mahboob, 2010).⁵ Despite his warnings that this false dichotomy "may be conducive to forming wrong judgments about the differences" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 347) between NNESTs and NESTs, in another article Reves and Medgyes (1994) characterized NNESTs with "language deficiencies":

Because of their relative English language *deficiencies*, non-NESTs are in a difficult situation: *by definition they are not on a par* with NESTs in terms of language proficiency. Their *deficit* is greater if they work in *less privileged teaching situations, cut off from NESTs or any native speakers*. (p. 364, emphasis added)

As Mahboob (2005) contends, this shows that they "not only buy in to the 'comparative fallacy,' but they also believe that NESTs

⁵While Cook (1999) and others argue that there is a qualitative difference between the cognitive processing and language competence of monolingual and bilingual speakers, and NNESTs are, by proxy, (at least) bilingual speakers, using this perspective to support a "different species" argument would not only be a narrow way to approach the term NEST but also unfair to bilingual/multilingual NEST colleagues.

provide a better teaching and learning model and the NNESTs may not perform well if they are not in contact with NESTs” (p. 72). This approach is in line with the view that NESTs and NNESTs are categorically considered *two different species* (Medgyes, 1994), and NNESTs are believed to be in a constant struggle with their own language deficiencies (Medgyes, 1986) and therefore need to adopt the teaching practices and methods of NESTs (Sheorey, 1986).

This view resonates with typical forms of division of labor supported by anecdotal evidence in many institutions in different parts of the world: NNESTs are designated teachers for reading and grammar whereas NESTs are reserved for the teaching of speaking, listening, and writing skills. NNESTs are considered to be *insiders* with absolute authority on the local, whereas NESTs are always *outsiders* and will remain so for the rest of their professional lives. While these scenarios may not necessarily be fully representative of the diversity in workforce designation in many educational institutions, the existence of such or similar patterns is quite significant in attesting and perpetuating the divide between NESTs/NNESTs. More importantly, these constructs are positioned in such a fixed, rigid, and mutually exclusive manner that they leave no room for contextualized negotiations of the borders of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity. As a result, these oversimplified and essentialized categories become regimes of “truth” defining what a teacher can and should do (i.e., professional legitimacy) without any consideration of their professional histories and/or negotiations of their professional identities (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Park, 2008, 2012; Rudolph, 2012). Thus, the next generation of studies propagating moving beyond the NS model is expected to embrace teachers’ sociohistorically situated negotiations of translinguistic and transcultural identity in their quest of negotiating, challenging, reconceptualizing, and crossing borders in *globalized* representations of TESOL (Rudolph, 2012).

Myth 3: NESTs Are Better Teachers Than NNESTs (or NNESTs Are Better Teachers Than NESTs) (Who’s Worth More? Debate)

With the emergence of the scholarship on NNEST as a bona fide area of inquiry as an extension of the professional movement in

TESOL, researchers examined different facets of the issues pertinent to NESTs and NNESTs. In their quest of unpacking the notion of professional legitimacy or who might be legitimate teacher of English, a considerable emphasis was placed on teachers', students', and administrators' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs (D. Liu, 1999; Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Mahboob, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2010; Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Moussu, 2006; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). (For a compilation of the literature on the advantages of NESTs and NNESTs, see Table 1.)

Despite the fact that Medgyes (1992) argued that the question of "Who's worth more, the native or the nonnative?" is pointless (p. 440), the traditional asymmetrical power relations between NESTs and NNESTs and the employment landscape suffering from the discriminatory workplace and hiring practices (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010) remain bitter manifestations of the unspoken premise that NESTs are better teachers than NNESTs. The exponential growth of research endeavors as part of the NNEST movement placed a considerable emphasis on the advantages and challenges faced by these teacher populations (i.e., NESTs and NNESTs). Although there might be some inherent benefit in focusing on these matters (e.g., construing the legitimacy, making a better case for collaboration, etc.), such a focus could inadvertently lead us to generalize about what a teacher can or should do. In other words, using a causal relationship between these denominations and the associated teacher skills and competencies would essentialize the NEST and NNEST constructs and thereby bolster the existing dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs. To be more specific, associating teaching practices and competencies with contested and isolated concepts such as NEST or NNEST would be reductionist and simplistic ways to construe teaching competencies with little or no consideration of the situated, historical, glocal, and transformative facets of their identities. As a result, the divide may be broadened, making the professional borders even more salient. Moreover, the divide may prevent teachers from crossing these borders, because certain skills and practices are exclusively associated with certain groups.

TABLE 1. Advantages of NESTs and NNESTs: A Compilation of the Literature^a

Advantages of NESTs	Advantages of NNESTs
Procedural knowledge (Lasagabaster & Manuel Sierra, 2005)	Declarative knowledge (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1994)
Facility with the teaching of vocabulary and knowledge of idioms, colloquialisms, and slang (Lasagabaster & Manuel Sierra, 2005; Reves & Medgyes, 1994)	Successful in identifying areas of potential difficulty, thus fostering a better teacher–student rapport (Braine, 2004; Ellis, 2002; Maum, 2002; McNeill, 2005)
Speaks English clearly and fluently and possess <i>the original English accent</i> (Lasagabaster & Manuel Sierra, 2005)	Share and use students’ L1, if/when possible (Mahboob, 2004; Medgyes, 1994; Tatar & Yıldız, 2010)
Thorough understanding of English language and culture	Teach reading and grammar more effectively (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Mahboob, 2004; McNeill, 2005; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999)
Teaching listening and speaking, and interaction in class (Pacek, 2005)	Provide appropriate learning strategies (Lasagabaster & Manuel Sierra, 2005; Mahboob, 2004)
No apparent language difficulties (Reve & Medgyes, 1994)	Provide a thorough exam preparation (Benke & Medgyes 2005; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999)
Provide linguistic authenticity (Barratt & Kontra, 2000) and <i>real language</i> (Medgyes, 1994)	Able to make cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons and contrasts thanks to their multilingual and multicultural experience (Ding, 2000; Hansen, 2004; J. Liu, 2001)
More relaxed attitudes towards grading and error correction (Barratt & Kontra, 2000)	Empathize with the learner since they are themselves L2 learners (McNeill, 2005; Tatar & Yıldız, 2010)
Not relying heavily on the course book (Benke & Medgyes, 2005)	Willingness to work hard (Mahboob, 2004)

^aIt should be acknowledged up front that the literature is not conclusive about the advantages and challenges of these teacher populations, and thus it should not be surprising to find counter-evidence in the literature. While readers are advised to treat the table for summary purposes, they should be reminded that these constructs are often quite complex, messy, and socially situated.

Instead of juxtaposing competencies to teaching practices in relation to these contested terms, we could acknowledge that perhaps *which one is better?* is not the most useful question to pose, and instead devote our time and energy to examining the

skills and competencies necessary for a glocalized approach to teaching in a way that is conducive to the negotiation of teachers' professional identities. We problematize the NS fallacy due to its "automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone" (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 236). However, we should not fall to the trap of the NNS fallacy, an automatic extrapolation from competent learner to competent teacher based on language learning histories alone. In other words, whereas one side of the debate argues that "people do not become qualified to teach English merely because it is their mother tongue" (Maum, 2002, p. 1), the other side should argue that people do not become qualified to teach English merely because it is their second language. If the former is native speaker fallacy, then the latter becomes the nonnative speaker fallacy.

Myth 4: Learners Prefer NESTs Over NNESTs (Supply–Demand Debate)

One of the most common reasons used as a justification for NEST/NNEST discrimination in the field of TESOL is the belief that students, in general, tend to prefer NESTs over NNESTs. Although this supply-demand approach to the TESOL enterprise is criticized for being a manifestation of a business approach in the age of neoliberalism (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010), it may not be far from classroom reality. Both anecdotal and empirical evidence (Lasagabaster & Manuel Sierra, 2005; Pacek, 2005) provide accounts that language learners may have a tendency to prefer NESTs.⁶ Oftentimes, the typical justification would be that "while it seems more acceptable for students to have a NNEST in their home country, when they go abroad they expect to be taught by NSs" (Pacek, 2005, p. 260). Other scholarship examined the experiences of NNESTs when they return to their home country and seek employment (Hsu, 2005 as

⁶Critical readers may rightfully question this line of research by problematizing the students' perceptions and definitions of NS and NNS. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some employers recruit Caucasians (Germans, Russians, or Swedes) or Africans with an intention of invoking the NS stereotypes in the perceptions students and their parents. The multifaceted, complex, and messy nature of the NS/NNS constructs, as well as narrow conceptualization in the minds of students and their parents, may bring lucrative benefits to these employers.

cited in Braine, 2010; Shao, 2005). All types of evidence suggest that 1.5 or second generation immigrants in the United States with *native*-level proficiency in English may encounter unfavorable attitudes from students (Hsu, 2005 as cited in Braine, 2010; Shao, 2005), a finding which validates that the NS construct is not only related to language but also to race and appearance (Amin, 1997; Kubota & Lin, 2009).

Leaving the discussion here and not presenting counter-evidence that problematizes, if not completely dispels, this myth would be unfair in depicting a comprehensive picture of the “preference” debate. And indeed the scholarship generated as part of the NNEST movement has provided numerous accounts that contradict this standpoint (Mahboob, 2003, 2004; Moussu, 2002, Moussu, 2006; Mullock, 2010). In several studies, students demonstrated no clear preference of NESTs over NNESTs; however, they highlighted the salient characteristics that every teacher should have: strong pedagogical skills and high levels of declarative and procedural knowledge of English language (Mullock, 2010), or clear pronunciation and/or accent (Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002; Liang, 2002). Other researchers examined the influence of time in students’ attitudes. Cheung (2002) identified that positive attitudes towards NNESTs tend to increase with longer stay at an educational institution. In the same vein, Moussu (2006) found that students who were taught by NNESTs displayed a more positive attitude towards their teachers by the end of the semester. Moussu also found that students at higher levels of English proficiency showed a more positive attitude towards NNESTs. Another group of researchers emphasized the combination of both NESTs and NNESTs. For example, respondents in Lasagabaster and Manuel Sierra’s (2005) study called for a combination of NNESTs (at lower educational levels) and NESTs (at higher educational levels). This finding was further corroborated by Benke and Medgyes (2005) in the Hungarian context. Along the same lines, Lipovsky & Mahboob (2010) argued that students do not necessarily prefer being taught by NESTs or NNESTs but rather value the combination of their qualities. In conclusion, it would be fair to argue that “students do not necessarily buy into the ‘native speaker fallacy’” (Mahboob,

2005, p. 66) because they often do not have a clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs (Mahboob, 2005).

Myth 5: Why the NNEST Movement? (“The Field of TESOL Is Discrimination-Free”)

Well, it is not! The field of TESOL is not discrimination-free. Unfortunately, constructs such as nativeness, accent, race, gender, religion, country of origin, schooling, age, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or even the passport carried (or a combination of these constructs) may be blatant or subtle ways TESOLers are treated in their workplace or in the hiring processes. Despite the fact that the notion of discrimination is a multifaceted phenomenon, it would not be far-fetched to argue that NNESTs suffer the most from such practices due to native speakerism (Holliday, 2005) and the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992).

Program administrators and other gatekeeping stakeholders unfortunately often accept and operate under the paradigms of native speakerism and the native speaker fallacy, which by definition categorize NNESTs as less instructionally qualified and less linguistically competent than their NEST counterparts (Lippi-Green, 1997; Maum, 2002). More recently, Moussu (2010) provided evidence on administrators’ recognition of the positive impact that NNESTs bring to the ESL classroom. While the administrators in Moussu’s study emphasized teaching experience (as opposed to nativeness) as a benchmark in hiring decisions, the market value of native speakerism in TESOL also manifests itself in discriminatory job advertisements (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010). If and when necessary, these stakeholders play the supply-demand card to justify their discriminatory practices. They argue that it is the students who prefer to be taught by a NEST (Mahboob et al., 2004; Medgyes, 1994). Sometimes, this favoritism goes to such extreme levels that even NESTs from non-Center countries like India and Singapore are often perceived as less credible and competent than their counterparts from the Center, which “legitimizes this dominance of Center professionals/scholars” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 85). Ironically, NNESTs who return to their home countries after obtaining degrees, experience, and qualifications in the West may

not always be able to find jobs (Hsu, 2005 as cited in Braine, 2010; Shao, 2005) and find themselves competing with unqualified NSs.

The emergence of the NNEST movement has generated a substantial intellectual leap forward and provided a more coherent and powerful response towards the understanding of teacher qualifications and credibility. Such efforts have been backed up by institutionalized responses toward hiring and workplace discrimination (TESOL, 1992, 2006). Nevertheless, as the past-president of TESOL Deena Boraie (2013) argues, there is still a very long way to go in terms of having people change their thinking and understanding about what makes a good teacher. Whether characterized as *Machiavellian* (proselytizing existing prejudices by packaging native speakerism as a marketing tool to meet the needs of the “customer”) or *dramatic* (becoming institutionalized routines in different contexts) (Selvi, 2010), the discriminatory landscape in TESOL has been and will be a driving impetus for the NNEST movement.

Myth 6: Nevertheless We Need NS as a Benchmark to Define Our Goals in TESOL (The Benchmark Debate)

English is now the world’s international language. While this statement is neither new nor revolutionary, the interesting implications commence with the way we interpret this understanding in our everyday practices as language teachers, teacher educators, assessment specialists, and researchers. For some, it may be one of the trendy buzzwords of our time, for others it is the driving force of a paradigm shift in the teaching of English. It is the latter standpoint that shapes the roadmap for a pedagogy that is sensitive to diverse uses, users, functions, and contexts of English (Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2002; Selvi & Yazan, 2013). Putting it differently and more eloquently, McKay (2002) argued that “the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second and foreign language” (p. 1).

The transformation towards a language pedagogy conducive to present-day realities of the diversity, contexts, uses, and users of the English language necessitates a critical interrogation of the idealized NS model that runs as a common thread through

employment practices (Braine, 2010; Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010), language assessment (Firth, 2009; Lowenberg, 2002), teacher education (Leung, 2005; Selvi, 2013), and linguistic and cultural targets for instruction (Canagarajah, 2007). Here I would like to refer to the three-level analysis of Smolder (2009), who showed how subscription to the idealized NS benchmark⁷ can be impractical, inappropriate, and unfair in many EIL teaching contexts.

To begin with, relying solely on NS norms is not a *practical* endeavor. As reviewed earlier in this article, statistics describing the speakers of English(es) around the world attest to the reconceptualization of the ownership (Widdowson, 1994) of the English language. Seen in tandem with the understanding that the great majority of interaction is among NNSs (i.e., English as a lingua franca situations), relying on NS norms basically posits a practical reevaluation of deeply ingrained NS-oriented attitudes, policies, and practices in TESOL. More significantly, it serves as a rationale for a departure from introducing a single variety to the more glocal approach of exposing and embracing multiple varieties determined by learners' contextualized needs and goals in learning the language. As an alternative to a standard variety in a decontextualized fashion, we might consider the centrality of such concepts as "intelligibility (recognizing an expression), comprehensibility (knowing the meaning of the expression) and interpretability (knowing what the expression signifies in a particular sociocultural context)" (McKay, 2002, p. 52).

In addition, relying solely on NS norms—the *NS-as-target* framework (Y. Kachru, 2005), or the *standard English* framework (Canagarajah, 2006; Davies, 2003)—is not an *appropriate* approach in most EIL contexts (Alptekin, 2002; Smolder, 2009; Widdowson, 1994). Traditionally, terms such as *authentic*, *target*, and

⁷ B. Kachru (1994, 1995) noted other problematic myths besides the native speaker fallacy: the *interlocutor myth* that people learn English mainly to interact with native English speakers from Center countries; the *monoculture myth* that English learning occurs primarily for the purpose of learning British or U.S. culture; the *model-dependency myth* that U.S. or British models are the ones that are taught and learned globally (in reality, local models provide the main input); and the *Cassandra myth* that diversification of English is a sign of linguistic decay. These myths support the ideal of the NES from Center countries and implicitly stigmatize many groups, such as NNEs, NNESTs, and non-Center NESs (Oxford & Jain, 2010, p. 241–242).

appropriateness, used as euphemisms or codes so as to exclusively define them from an Anglo-American perspective, are carefully utilizing NS as a yardstick against which all users of English might be measured, irrespective of local contextual dynamics and parameters (Canagarajah, 2007; Leung, 2005; Medgyes, 1994). Imposing a single English as a Native Language (ENL) standard has several drawbacks. It conceptualizes language as a static construct, prioritizes imitation over communication as the ultimate reason in learning the language (Burns, 2005), and “place[s] it [standard variety] in a privileged, and thereby all others in an underprivileged, nonstandard, and marginalized position” (Selvi & Yazan, 2013, p. 5). The ultimate goal for language teaching should be establishing a socioculturally appropriate language use (Alptekin, 2002; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Such an approach will be better aligned with the sociocultural histories and realities of the local teaching context; conducive to local culture of learning; and recognize and promote individual agency, identities, and imagined goals.

Finally, relying solely on NS norms is not a *fair* practice. There has been an ongoing trend in the applied linguistics circle (re-)defining and problematizing the contested nature of the idealized native speaker. Scholars have approached the debate from several perspectives (e.g., biodevelopmental features, identity matters, implications on language teaching, benchmarks for language learning and teaching), and offered operational definitions and portrayal of these perspectives (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991, 2003; B. Kachru, 1992; Mahboob, 2005; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990). While these discussions have not led to a satisfactory definition of terms, the general consensus in the field is to view the constructs of NS/NNS on a three-dimensional axis: (1) language expertise; (2) language self-affiliation or self-perception (Inbar, 1999) and positioning (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001); and (3) language inheritance (Davies, 1991; Rampton, 1990). At any rate, the NS/NNS construct may be used as a reference or standard to guide language learning (Davies, 2003), or as a temporary measure (Cook, 1999), but certainly not to measure “final” achievement.

The greatest peril behind the utilization of the NS benchmark begins when NNS (or *nonnative* speakers) are defined “in terms of

what they are not” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 28), often portrayed as perpetually incompetent, imitating, or *less-than-native* or *near-native* (Valdes, 1998). Ultimately, an inevitable byproduct of this frame of reference is to view and treat NNESTs as second-class citizens in the TESOL profession (Rajagopalan, 2005). Consequently, the utilization of the NS benchmark engenders a dubious, problematic, and damaging psyche among many NNESTs who are unable to see themselves as legitimate users of English (Alptekin, 2002; Cook, 1999; Widdowson, 1994). As a response, some scholars have repositioned the dichotomous treatment of these constructs by offering the more dynamic approach of placing them along a continuum (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Cook, 2003; Liu, 1999).

Myth 7: As Long as NNESTs Call Themselves *NNESTs*, They Will Perpetuate Their Marginalization (The Nomenclature Debate—What’s in a Name?)

Acknowledging the problems that accompany the terms, NS and NNS teachers, I use them in this paper for the lack of better ones, but my intention is to interrogate the NS–NNS dichotomy and the supremacy of or the sole use of the NS model in language pedagogy. (Ishihara, 2010, p. 52)

When you read a piece that deals with some aspect of the issues related to the NNEST movement, it is not surprising to encounter a footnote or endnote by the authors reminding the readers that the terms *NS* and *NNS* (or *NEST/NNEST*) are used in the article for practical purposes or for the lack of better ones (see the example above). The comment is usually followed with a self-justification that the ultimate aim is to push the field towards overcoming these binaries. While I acknowledge the sincere efforts of these authors, I argue that such commentaries are powerful snippets manifesting the most controversial questions within the NNEST movement: Why is it called the NNEST movement?⁸ Why do we use an acronym which by any other name would be as

⁸The nomenclature debate and whether the term *NNEST* actually propagates marginalization is a very delicate and sensitive matter with no easy solution. As will be discussed in this section at length, depending on the perspective one holds this debate may be referred to as myth or reality. The complicated nature of the issue can be found in the motivation behind referring to it as both myth and reality, and acknowledging the valid perspectives of both schools of thought.

confusing? (Brady, 2009). If we are aiming to move beyond such problematic and mutually exclusive constructs as NS/NNS, why do we persist in calling ourselves NNESTs? If we are advocating for NNESTs whose professional qualities, competencies, and personae are confined by the *non-* prefix, and defined in terms of NESTs, why do we still insist on the term? If we seek greater participation, collaboration, and inclusivity with our NEST colleagues, would we not be limiting our scope and efforts (i.e., *othering* NESTs) by calling the Interest Section and the movement after the term NNEST? (cf. Myth 1 and the idea pad anecdote.) So, are we preaching to the choir? Or shooting ourselves in the foot? Or locking ourselves in a prison of our own device? These are all valid questions to raise, but difficult questions to answer. Let's consider this double-edged sword (see Table 2).

The nomenclature debate within the NNEST movement⁹ is a very valid and interesting one, with plausible justifications from each stream of thought. It should be noted that the emergence of the NNEST movement rests primarily upon an advocacy agenda. Therefore, the NNEST label has enabled us to put our finger on the problem—using the term as a problem encourages TESOLers to explore their biases and misconceptions. By deconstructing the notion of teacher skills and competencies using the term *NNEST*, we were able to advocate for professionalism for all. The recruitment of an uncredentialed NS means marginalization of not only NNESTs but also credentialed NESTs. This call for establishing professionalism, teacher education, and equity in hiring and workplace settings has been the prime objective of the NNEST movement in establishing our professional legitimacy (Brady, 2009).

With the metamorphosis from an advocacy initiative to a bona fide area of inquiry (thanks to the formation of the NNEST Caucus/Interest Section), the roles, responsibilities, and influence (as well as the expectations from it) have grown exponentially.

⁹Raising such critical questions in different circles, by a wide range of individuals and for different reasons, is a testament to the vitality of the movement and the momentum it has generated over the past two decades. Most importantly, such questions enrich the intellectual foundation of the movement, diversify the voices within it, and provide an impetus to define the possible future trajectories of the movement.

TABLE 2. Advantages and Disadvantages of the NNEST Label (adapted from Brady, 2009)

Disadvantages of the NNEST label	Advantages of the NNEST label
Demeaning (comparing to the expression <i>non-White</i>)	Making a presumed “disadvantage” an advantage
Othering NNESTs	Valuing/acknowledging the periphery
Referring to a false standard (i.e., NS fallacy)	Making it easy to organize against discrimination
Being a specialist acronym (not transparent to others)	Can “own” the term like the other <i>n</i> word for African Americans or <i>queer</i> for gays
Leading others to assume that only NNESTs care about NNEST issues	Leadership models and development (more stakes to showing one’s ability and involvement)
Perpetuating the link between accent and professional competencies	Using the identification already present in the research field
Self-destructing (fighting against discrimination, while discriminating ourselves)	Benefitting the profession (valuing education and expertise)

While the advocacy element remains in place, today the accumulation of scholarship necessitates and validates a move on the next level: reconsideration of the ideas and ideals of the movement in the light of past achievements, present-day realities, and future directions. Therefore, discussions on problematizing the NNEST construct to further advance the scope of the movement are here to stay and will be instrumental in defining a roadmap for the movement.

CONCLUSION

The fields of TESOL and applied linguistics have witnessed a remarkable phenomenon over the last couple of decades: the NNEST movement. The movement rests upon a theoretical foundation underpinning the problematization and deconstruction of the NSism deeply ingrained in the traditional pillars of the TESOL enterprise. The chief aims of the movement may be listed as follows:

1. The reconfiguration of the depth and breadth of the NS construct (Davies, 1991, 2003; Mahboob, 2005; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990) beyond a pure

linguistic phenomenon (in such a way that accounts for other factors such as accent, race, gender, religion, personal affiliation, self-positioning, country of origin, schooling, age, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or even the passport carried, or a combination of these constructs).

2. Problematization of the NSism (Holliday, 2005) on conceptual (Kramsch, 1997; Rampton, 1990), political (Maum, 2002) and professional (Braine, 1999, 2010; Canagarajah, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004) grounds infused into different spheres of TESOL activity (e.g., benchmark for learning, teaching, assessment, teacher education, material development, and hiring).
3. The deconstruction of the NS fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) in defining teaching skills, competencies, efficacy, and legitimacy.

At more practical levels, it promotes empowerment and legitimacy, and advocates for a wider acknowledgement of such values as equity, justice, egalitarianism, and professionalism in workplace settings and hiring processes. The ultimate goal of the movement is to utilize the unique characteristics of the TESOL profession, that is, the all-encompassing boundaries that welcome and serve individuals from any ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic background (Selvi, 2009). Borrowing the words of Edwin Markham presented in the epigraph, the ultimate goal of the movement is to replace the circle of native speakerism that shut many TESOLers out with an all-encompassing one, which takes everybody in and welcomes diverse uses, users, functions, and contexts of the English(es) around the world. As a result, this will equip us with “contextualized accounts of English teachers’ and users’ ongoing negotiations of translinguistic and transcultural identities” (Rudolph, 2013, para. 10) as opposed to decontextualized, unidirectional, and universal regimes of truth of NSism.

The transformation in TESOL catalyzed by the NNEST movement is relatively recent, fairly well documented, and still in progress. Members and supporters of the NNEST movement should be very proud about the progress that has been made, but should be aware that the paradigm shift is far from complete. The *invisible and axiomatic* nature of the NS mindset (Mahboob, 2010) is still deeply rooted in various strata of the TESOL enterprise. The movement has reached a stage where it is now necessary to revisit its overarching goals, and (re)define its future agenda in forging new pathways to move beyond the power-driven,

value-laden, identity-shaping, and confidence-affecting NS-dependent model.

In conclusion, the prime impetus behind this article was an imperative call of duty at a time characterized by a necessity to move to the next stage in the NNEST movement. Although the attention and importance that the NNEST movement has generated over the last couple of decades cannot be overlooked, a great necessity now exists to delineate myths and misconceptions about the movement. Awareness of these issues embedded in the NNEST movement will be not only critically important in understanding the scope of the movement but also instrumental in shaping its future.

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