

Native English: Preference of Employers in Second Language and Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

Teaching English has witnessed a cross-border job market in many countries. The study was a mixed method using and investigating job advertisement websites. The contents of the most popular teaching job advertisement website in Thailand in teaching job advertisement were investigated. It was found that 98% of job advertisements used nationality-specific criteria and 90% of jobs were associated with Native English speakers. Most employers prefer native English speakers for teaching English. Even for non-language related subjects, employers also prefer native English-speaking teachers. The study found that there was job discrimination against non-native English-speaking teachers in the job market. Non-native English teachers faced multiple challenges such as overcrowded class sizes, lack of motivation, lack of confidence by teachers themselves, and unequal salaries for the same job.

Keywords: English, native speaker, non-native speaker, teaching

Introduction

English is an international language and it has been widely used in business, entertainment, the Internet, and academic purposes and publications. English speakers have been marked as native speakers and non-native speakers. Countries where English is the native or primary language are known as native English-speaking countries. These countries are the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. South Africa was also considered a native English-speaking country despite English being one of the official languages, and it is widely spoken, but it is not the native language of the majority of the population.

Apart from these native English-speaking countries, there are many countries where English is used as an official language. English speakers from other countries not mentioned in the above native English-speaking countries were given different names of versions of English depending on the accent of English. There are varieties of English such as Hinglish (English variety spoken in India), Singlish (English variety spoken in Singapore), etc. and it became clearer of the existence of terms

Native English Speaker (NES) and Non-Native English speaker. There has been discrimination in the English teaching job market for non-native English-speaking teachers (Ponce & Emmanuell, 2020; Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). English variety also reflected the job opportunity. Around 2004-2006, there was a peak of growth for the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) call centre in India. Thereafter, the business was falling down in India and one of the reasons for such fall in call centre business was to language gap specifically, the heavy Indian accent that was not accepted by customers (Arun, 2013).

India produced 6.91 million bachelor's degrees in 2020 according to a Statista survey report (Rathore, 2023). In the same period 2020-2021, the USA was expected to produce 1.998 million bachelor's degrees (ThinkImpact Report, 2021). India's bachelor's degree number is far ahead of the USA's number. Despite the large size of the graduate population, there is little opportunity for teaching jobs for Indians abroad. According to search engine Quora, there are over 100,000 Indian teachers working in the United States. Based on Global Immigration Services GetGIS, there are over 50,000 Indian teachers working in the United Arab Emirates alone. This figure is small in terms of the size of graduates produced in India. English is an official language in India. Based on the language policy, English is taught as one of the major subjects at schools. It is estimated English speakers in India is 194 million (Oliver, 2019, April 30). There is little scope for Indian graduates to teach English abroad. This study tried to understand, why Indian teachers could not be a major player in English language teaching in spite of English being an official language and widely used in Indian education and as large graduates produced in India.

Objectives

1. To investigate employers' preference for native vs non-native English teachers during job recruitment.
2. To investigate job discrimination based on native and non-native speaking status.

Background history of English teaching

The English language was one of the major subjects in the academic discipline in many countries. English teaching was a business of \$63 billion a year industry in 2020 (Bentley, 2022). The demand for native English-speaking teachers has been increasing over the years. There were 250,000 English teaching jobs for native English speakers according to a report of **International TEFL Academy** report 2021-2022. English teaching jobs are popular among native English speakers as teaching while travelling in Asia, especially in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and China. The terms Native-Speaker and Non-native speaker have been commonly specified words in job advertisements, especially in non-native English-speaking countries.

The discussion of native speakers and non-native English speakers has been going on for many years. From such discussion, there have been summed up the advantages and disadvantages of native and non-native English-speaking teachers. There were cases of preference given to native English speakers among high-level teacher recruitment. In 1998, four hundred native English teachers were recruited at secondary schools in Hong Kong and native speakers were preferred for the job (Luk, 2001).

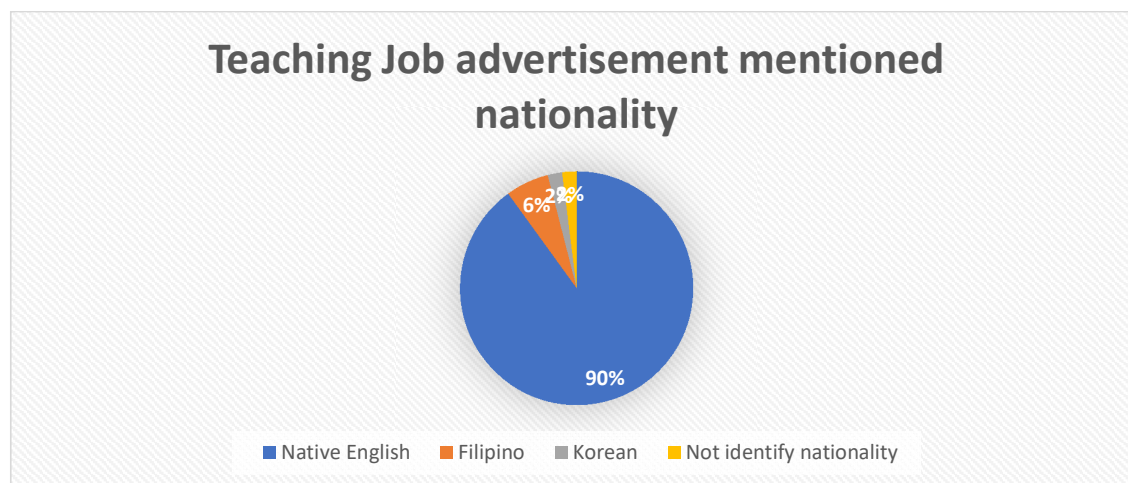
Research Methodology

The present study was a mixed method of descriptive analysis of the website contents about teaching English in countries where English is used as a second language or foreign language. It also investigated the online job advertisement for teaching the English language. Furthermore, it investigated the laws that allow and prohibit foreign English teaching based on their native or non-native status of English.

Native English teacher preference

The investigator accessed and collected from the popular teaching advertisement website www.ajarn.com in Thailand on September 29, 2023. From the website, the first 50 latest teaching jobs of advertisement was selected. The contents of the advertisement were investigated. The website published different subjects teaching jobs not only English language. Interestingly, out of 50 teaching jobs, 45 advertised jobs specified a native English speaker requirement, three jobs specified for Filipino nationality, one job specified for Korean nationality, and only one job mentioned that a non-native English speaker could apply. These teaching jobs were mostly for English language teaching. But, more interestingly, there were non-language-related subjects, however for such subjects too, native English criterion was imposed for teacher recruitment.

Figure 1. Teaching Job Advertisement Specified Nationality.



Source: www.ajarn.com accessed on September 29, 2023

Native English speaker was clarified in the job advertisement as teachers from the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

Other Asian countries also used native speakers as the criterion of foreign teachers for teaching English. In South Korea, foreign English teachers were given visas from English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, or South Africa for an E2 work visa (Bentley, 2023).

Teaching English in Japan also heavily focused on native English-speaking teachers. Japanese government requires that English teachers from foreign countries should have a Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution and that they must be native speakers of English or have completed their education in an English-speaking country (Paxton, 2014). However, there are some exceptions to this rule. For example, some companies may hire non-native speakers if they have a high level of proficiency in English and a TESOL or TEFL certification (Nicolaiuc, 2019).

To teach English in Taiwan, one needs to apply for a work visa. Most schools prefer native English-speaking teachers and passport holders from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, or South Africa (Teach English in Taiwan: Requirements, Salary, Jobs, 2023). However, non-native speakers of English can teach English in Taiwan if they have a high level of proficiency in English and a TESOL certification (TEFL org, 2023).

Native English became a major criterion for foreign teachers in Southeast or Eastern Asia. There is a preference for a specific nationality to become an English teacher in many countries. Many schools and language institutions prefer native English speakers to non-native English speakers. In some countries, foreign English teachers were given working visas based on the status of the native-English speaker. From job advertisements, it is known that there is job discrimination towards non-native English-speaking teachers.

Issues faced by non-native English teachers

Nurul Hasanah and Pratiwi Tri Utami at Hiroshima University in Japan investigated the emerging challenges faced by English teachers from non-native English-speaking countries (non-NECs) such as China, Japan, Thailand, Senegal, Mongolia, Cambodia, and Laos (Hasanah & Utami, 2019). The challenges faced by non-native English teachers include inadequate learning materials, large classroom sizes, low student motivation, and a lack of support programs. The challenges faced by non-native English teachers include linguistic challenges related to accent, sociopolitical challenges rooted in race, and hiring challenges based on economic profits (Huo, 2020). Non-native English

teachers faced challenges in grammar, sentence structure, word formation, comprehension, and expressing themselves in English (Kekana & Montle, 2023). Other challenges include lack of training, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity with technology, lack of professional development, inadequate resources and facilities, and time constraints (Songbatumis, 2017), lack of appropriate materials, professional support, low learner motivation, and no provision of writing study module at medical colleges (Eligindi & Hoque, 2022). Teachers have challenges in keeping up with language changes, teaching the appropriate variety of English, addressing cultural differences, and addressing pronunciation issues (Irimiea, 2016). They also face other challenges including limited proficiency, adherence to curriculum and policies, lack of motivation, and teaching large classes (Lestari, 2021). Non-native English teachers encounter issues of dependence on rote learning, attitude, pronunciation, and grammar (AlAamri, 2013). Above all, attitudes toward non-native English teachers are demotivated often. It includes lower salaries, discrimination, and the impact of the "NES/NNES dichotomy" concept (Dumlao & Mengorio, 2019).

Findings

From the investigation of English language teaching job advertisements, it was clear that 45 out of 50 job advertisements mentioned native English speakers. This includes teaching other subjects rather than English subjects. Employers prefer native English speakers for teaching English as well as non-language related subjects. Non-native English-speaking teachers face discrimination not only in English language teaching jobs but also in other subjects skills are also mentioned native speaker during teacher recruitment.

Discussion

Song (2016) studies the discrimination in English teaching and the existence of such attitudes towards non-native English language teachers. Giving visas for foreign English language teachers is based on nationality in some countries (Bentley, 2023). Based on the investigation in the job advertisement for this study, www.ajarn.com highly focused on native English speakers. There is surely job discrimination based on nationality with native English status. Medgyes (1994) highlighted the issue of the native English fallacy that English teachers discriminate against non-native English speakers. There are higher demands from parents of students who want to learn with native English-speaking teachers. Learners feel positive feelings towards native speakers (Butler, 2007).

There is mixed reaction about the effectiveness in language learning with native and non-native English teachers. Ghane & Razmi's (2023) study found that language fluency increases when students learn with native English speakers, but language accuracy increases when students learn with non-native English speakers. However, it is clear from the job advertisement that native English

speakers are perceived as more positive despite findings showing that native and non-native teachers are equally effective.

Non-native English-speaking teachers also face numerous challenges such as lack of motivation, overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, lack of confidence in communicative language (Songbatumis, 2017), and unequal payment of salary. Regarding challenges faced by Indian students for categorically heavy accents in the English language, there is the possibility to improve by improving learning materials, and teaching methods, focusing on phonetics, pronunciation, language laboratory and even employing skilled native English teachers as well.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there is discrimination against non-native English teachers in English language teaching. Numerous challenges due to lack of resources, big class sizes, lack of motivation among learners, teacher difficulty in handling the language skills, negative attitude, and unequal pay for the same job exist. The challenges faced by Indian students were due to a lack of authentic learning material, and a lack of focus on accent and pronunciation, which could be improved through teaching methods and practices.

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