Deconstructing aspects of native speakerism: Reflections from in-service teacher education

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In many Asian contexts, issues of who teaches and educates teachers in English Language Teaching remain challenging with status accorded to so-called 'native speakers'. Issues still remain after two decades of research calling for deconstruction of the native speaker fallacy. Drawing on critiques of the concept, as well as teacher education research, this paper suggests ways to deconstruct the maze of native speakerism. Recent Malaysian in-service training research shows that positioning and modeling can override the origin of the teacher educator, namely a so-called native speaker background. Descriptions of techniques to help deconstruct native speakerism at the interactional level are derived from teacher educator reflection on data. Possibilities for countering native speakerism are suggested through descriptions of how teacher educators may model and use humour to address perceptions of hierarchy. With the growing use of English as an additional language, research into who teaches or educates teachers could also address the challenges of hidden professional racism sustained by factors such as so-called Standard English. Practical approaches from teacher educator reflections on their interaction with Malaysian teachers suggest ways to reconstruct aspects of native speakerism.

Key words: teacher education, native speakers, reflection

INTRODUCTION

While the privileged position of the English language 'native speaker' (NS) has

been extensively critiqued, there still remain concerns about a hidden racism in the TESOL and TEFL profession. In this paper which addresses related concepts and practices, the term native speaker will refer to English language native speakers (NS) and use of this term which is often contrasted with non-native English speakers (NNES). There are well known views that sustaining the native speaker as an expert may link to 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 1992). Holliday (2006) elaborates on earlier research with the term 'native speakerism' asking that as professionals we problematize the native speaker concept and related practices in the English language teaching community to develop internationally based and culturally attuned professionalism. Anderson (2003) examined the status and experiences of varied teacher trainees from undergoing British teacher training and found numerous examples of discourse which Holliday (2009, p.671) terms 'chauvinistic professional discourse'. Holliday also suggests that many of the profession may be unaware of how there is an embedded cultural chauvinism which 'resides so deeply within the ideological structure of the profession that teachers can be either unaware of it or ignore it' (Holliday, ibid). Others foreground the notion of a native speaker privileged and sustained in language teaching marketplace practices (Derivey-Plard, 2005; Lee, 2005; Llurda, 2004; Medgyes, 1994). Further research describes how the majority of English language teachers who were not born into an English as a first language home may be treated as step children of the teaching profession, in such settings as American college level English Language Programmes (Mahboob, 2004). This sustaining of the native speaker as a privileged norm is also very impractical when it is estimated that globally up to 80% of English language teachers have other languages as their first or second languages (Canagarajah, 1999). As we shall see, there are conceptual and professional reasons why one needs to construct professionalism beyond the questionable nonnative/native construct.

This paper argues that the very concept of the English language native speaker (henceforth native speaker) is a flawed notion requiring reconstruction and describes how the reconstructive process arose during in-service teacher education. Research, including that of this writer researching Malaysian rural in-service education, suggests that the native speaker concept is a myth sustained by

perceptions based on questionable categories. One way of countering this is by supporting effective bilingual or multilingual teachers of English, no matter what their hereditary language background, as they model learner success having been through the process of learning an additional language. Research into the issues of accent and learners' perceptions also suggests that one can go beyond the commercial sustaining of a Standard English norm and its related "native speakerism" (Holliday, 2006). Later in this paper techniques derived from teacher education practices are suggested for ways of situating learning while modeling oneself as an ongoing learner. These techniques are derived from research into native speaker teacher educators and their interactions with teachers as they began courses. The native speaker teacher educators found themselves using techniques to foster interactivity and consequently these techniques also deconstructed perceptions of reliance on so called native speaker norms. First we turn to the questionable concept of a *native speaker*.

DECONSTRUCTING THE NATIVE SPEAKER MYTH

The term *non-native speaker* has been perceived by some of the English language teaching professional community as a negative term. The source of native speaker foregrounding runs at least as far back as "the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching Of English as a Second Language in Makarere, Uganda which stated that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker" (Maum, 2002, p.1). This term therefore aligns ideal teacher with native speaker as one and the same. This construct has moved on far less than one would expect in the subsequent half a century of English Language Teaching, as will be seen.

The group which is often compared with native speaker (NS) is that of non-native English speaker (NNES). Negative perceptions of the *nonnative English speaker* could occur because the term is a contrastive label comparing the majority of English language teachers to the *native English speaker*. However, Matsuda notes (2001) that related words such as nonsmoker or non-traditional teaching are

not seen as negative. It is suggested that

> It is not really the *non*-part that people find unfortunate. For *nonnative* to be a pejorative term, its counterpart would have to be positive. *Nonnative* is unfortunate because *native* is supposed to be fortunate. *Nonnative* is marked, whereas *native* is unmarked. *Non-native* is marginal and *native* is dominant (2001, p. 4).

In Davies' early thorough study of the positioning of the term (1991), he concluded that the native speaker construct is a social concept, not a linguistic construct. Moving away from the populist notion that the language your mother spoke is your <u>one</u> native language, Davies notes that the binary division native/non-native avoids the fact that more and more fluent speakers of English are multilingual in the home setting, raising the question of 'native' in what.

Another aspect of the difficulty in accepting the conceptual validity of the nonnative native speaker dichotomy is that is not easy to sustain an 'either or' situation when one examines the growth of English as an international language or lingua franca (Jenkins, 2000, Seidlhofer, 2001). Higgins (2003) discusses the wider development of English as an international language by drawing on concepts of ownership of English in the Outer Circle, namely countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and India. She draws on Kachru's well-known model of inner and outer circles of English speakers (1992) acknowledging the widespread use of these categories linked to native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS). The paper highlights that those who uncritically apply the division as well as the construct of Inner and Outer Circles, ignore increasing change related to World Englishes. Citing Mufene (2001) Higgins notes that both the dichotomies of NS/NNS and Outer Circle and Inner Circle can lead to views and actions based on the notion that 'only a minority of speakers around the world speak legitimate varieties, the rest speak illegitimate offspring of English' (p. 139). Kachru in more recent work (2004) has suggested that the 'inner circle' is best seen as a group of highly proficient speakers of English, namely those who have 'functional nativeness' regardless of how they learned or how they use the language. One could add the

more obvious factor of where they learned their English.

The challenges in defining multiple situations of English with a growing minority of monolingual English speaking teachers also make the concept of native speaker a questionable one. As Cook (1999) notes, English is no longer the property of a few powerful countries but is the communicative medium of many, taught by many in multilingual settings. Cook suggests that **if** the proficiency of the users of the language is related to birthplace (English as a hereditary language) and not to the capacity of speakers to use the language fluently, one may support the term 'native speaker'. However, this may be of little relevance to professionalism in language learning or teaching. This is especially evident when English is no longer the realm of native speaking communities but is a global language scene in which newly arrived speakers have the right to a voice (Graddol, 1997).

Deconstructing NS myths of the speaker as the teacher

Even if one settles for defining native speakers as 'habitual users of English for all communicative purposes' (Timmis, 2005, p.123) there still remains an issue of the language skills level and teaching expertise **if** the native speaker is seen as an expert, teacher or teacher educator. Being born in a setting where English is the major language for communicative purposes and one of the first languages acquired in a naturalistic setting may fuel the definition of a native speaker. Yet being a hereditary speaker is a curious rationale for hiring educational professionals, namely his or her birth place: an environment where English predominates. One may be left questioning the usefulness of empowering the infant acquisition of a language as a statement of language proficiency; a statement then mistakenly viewed as relevant to professional language settings (Bailey, 2005).

With the English speaking community as the originating matrix of a native speaker, one may overlook the fact that a native speaker is not necessarily a fluent speaker or skilled as a language teacher. To use a universally loved pursuit of cuisine as an analogy, being experienced and knowledgeable about food does not make you a cook or a chef. Derivey-Plard's research in France describes a "strong social construct which confuses 'speaker' with 'teacher' and native speaker' with

'native teacher'' (2005, p.62). Some native speakers may lack proficiency or be fluent in a marked vernacular or a less known dialect. Kachru and Nelson have gone so far as to say that the "label 'native speaker' is of no a priori significance, in terms of measuring facility with the language" (1996, pp.78-79). Bailey (2005) makes the point that proficiency is not the same as 'nativeness' and that people can continue to develop or diminish proficiency, although pronunciation may be resistant to change. She argues for the need for relevant education in preparing a language educator with both proficiency and professional skills to counter native speakerism and this point will be elaborated further and linked to techniques which teacher educators used during in-service education.

The so called native speaker is often sought after when recruiting for mass programmes, particularly at the lower levels of professionalism, such as the backpacker teaching environment of South Korea which my son encountered(Hall J., 2010, personal correspondence). This action is perhaps based on assumptions which are a product of the emphasis on communicative competence in TESL and TEFL. It is assumed that models of spoken proficiency linked to the 'Inner Circle' are what are needed in classrooms while such a view is perhaps sustained by a learning culture of teacher-driven delivery (Hall & Yulisari, 1995). Such a focus within the industry compounds 'speaker' with 'teacher' and does not build TESOL/TEFL professionalism.

Recent work by Selvi (2010) documents how job advertisements sustain native speakerism. Internet search engines and a plethora of web sites such as www.tefl.com reveal that little has changed with many jobs calling for 'native English' applicants. Here we encounter the construct that confuses a 'speaker' with a teacher or educator and a 'native speaker' with a competent teacher. There is the notion that a correct accent related to hereditary acquisition of language is more important than educational skills, particularly at the entry level of ELT. Advocacy in fostering professional standards in hiring practices still requires much development. This is not to favour non- native speakers of English per se but to suggest that <u>all</u> English language educators should be by skilled and trained educators, as in other professions. However the construct is sometimes sustained by views of so called standard English, an issue to which we now turn.

WHOSE ENGLISH IS IT ANYWAY?

Standards and Accents

While English is spoken by an increasing people as a second or third language, there remains a strong push for native speaker 'standards' originating out of English as a first language context. These standards often link 'standard English' to pronunciation based on British or American norms. John Honey (1997) argues for a promotion of a prescriptive set of standards. Modiano (2001) in his provocatively entitled "Linguistic Imperialism, Cultural Integrity and EIL' paper discusses Pennycook, then summarises Honey's argument and views of so called standard English.

> It is through a mastery of standard English that the disenfranchised are given an opportunity to partake in the discourses which will lead them 'forward.' For Honey, to be without a command of an educated form of English is to be denied the tools which are required to lift oneself up, so to speak, and to get on in the world. Thus to those on the left, English is exploitative, while those in the conservative camp insist that the 'disenfranchised' must conform to specified standards in order to acquire 'wealth' (2001. p.342).

The debate on standards and standard English is an age old one (Canagarah, 1999). It is to the regional setting of South East Asia that I will now turn, for examples of the empowering of native speaker models and teachers through insistence on so called standard English. One such standard is that of 'Good English' in Singapore.

In Singapore one finds it hard to pin down the definition of 'Good English'. However there is an organized movement for good standard English, led unsurprisingly by the government. This writer was part of a debate in April 1999 held at Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore in which I argued that there is no such norm as a native speaker 'Good English' norm and that any standard should be

functional and situational. I meant that one should have the capacity to switch codes depending on who one is speaking to. This linguistic skill is common in the Singaporean and Malaysian setting (Lee, 2003) and little used by monolinguals for obvious reasons. Yet the industry in South East Asia continues to hire native speakers, many of them monolingual and as will be discussed later, to engage native speaker teacher educators for national projects in Malaysia. The rationale is linked to the idea of good spoken 'standard' models, namely the so called 'good' native speaker who is seen as in a superior position as a transmitter of standards. Yet it is worth noting that now even proponents of 'Good English' argue for a vaguely defined 'neutral intelligibility', *not* a native speaker norm, a position change acknowledging the role of varieties of English (Koh, 2005). Kirkpatrick (2006) working from his multilingual expertise in China argues that only the small minority of learners learn English to communicate with native speakers or are interested in understanding the culture will benefit from choosing native speaker teachers as models. He develops this further arguing for recognition of other Englishes and English as an international medium where the focus should be on international comprehensibility and the strengths that bilingual or multilingual teachers can model.

Within more global research, indications of the changing role of English beyond dichotomies include frequent references to World Englishes, along with recent writing on English as an International Language and English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2000; Llurda, 2004; Seidlhofer, 2001). There are other critiques of earlier dichotomies related to the native speaker notion. Holliday (2006) critiques some of the binary thinking in the problems of labeling in what he calls the 'we' of world TESOL including the Centre-Periphery grouping and native / non-native speaker divisions. He notes that the English speaking West is a source of dominant thinking while recognizing that this is too monolithic and simplistic a construct. As a multi-lingual speaker born in the southern realms of New Zealand I have problems with being labeled a 'periphery' participant, although I recognize that we were once colonized. Holliday also critiques the professional culture division of BANA and TESEP noting numerous exceptions to commercially run and transnational divisions (ibid., pp. 3-4). He then describes deconstructing native speakerism and

links this to the need to be culturally sensitive in an era where English is a lingua franca. He infers that all have a professional role to play in deconstructing 'the problems of the divisive native speakerism.' (ibid., p.16).

Market Forces

While much of the research field supports a wider ownership of English with caucuses of NNEST in TESOL and a long standing policy of non-discrimination in major professional associations (Tang, 1997), market forces and teaching practices may well drive change. I shall address three aspects of this: market forces in the media, the growth of English for Specific Purposes in education and English language teaching professional needs.

Market forces demanding other than conventional native speaker norms are evident in everyday communication. More people are acknowledging and experiencing that English is no longer owned by native speakers with a Received Pronunciation or mid-Atlantic accent (Crystal, 2002). There is a huge array of Englishes in popular media such as BBC, CNN, travel programmes, regionally specific advertisements for McDonalds or on regional MTV. Textbooks are more culturally inclusive even to the extent of being somewhat like a 'cultural supermarket' (Mathews, 2000). On a macroeconomic level, forces are at work which leave little choice but to accept greater English language diversity and an acceptance of NNES teachers and teacher educators as a crucial part of the profession.

Macro changes are pushing for less emphasis on what one could term English as First language expertise-native speakerism. One can discern trends that call for less reliance on native speakers as 'native speaker norms are becoming less relevant as English becomes a component of basic education in many countries' (Graddol, 2006, p.14). English is now becoming a basic element of education with a drive for English for Young Learners creating a practical need for more than so called native speakers. This can be seen in Europe, migrant education in the United States with the English First policy and language policy changes in Thailand (Pandian, 2004) and Korea. This move to large scale primary English creates a need for large

numbers of primary teachers, far more than can originate from the BANA countries at an economically viable level.

Secondly, as more multi lingual English speakers are involved in internationally diverse settings there will be a demand for more specialized English for Specific Purposes where content is interwoven with language. This may range from cross cultural training (which this writer conducted for Singapore Airlines international ticketing staff in 1999-2000) to Content Learning Integrated with Language (http://www.clilcompendium.com/). CLIL refers to any dual-focused educational setting in which an additional language, not usually the first language of the target learners is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content Such learning requires professional training and experience as the content and accountability levels are high. It is not enough to be able to speak 'good' English.

Thirdly, the English Language Teaching profession has seen a much needed upgrading of professional training so that being only a native speaker has now been pushed to the lower end of the industry. I will begin with some personal information then move to a broader perspective. When this writer first undertook post-graduate TESOL study at a university which begun teacher training in 1964 for Commonwealth teachers, 12 New Zealanders including the writer were on the 1978 course. By 1983 the course was limited to 40. The post-graduate diploma now involves a selection process for 50 places. On a more global note, Graddol notes that 'in 2003-2004 an estimated 1500 Masters programmes were offered in English in countries where English is not the first language' (2006, p.74).

There then remains little choice both in terms of growing professional awareness and in terms of the wider English language scenarios but to embrace greater professionalism and deconstruct dependencies on the non-native / native speaker framework. It is to the 'how' that we now turn with reference to research into Malaysian in-service teacher training which involved native speakers.

THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT: A STUDY OF NS TEACHER EDUCATORS

To begin to deconstruct 'native speakerism' one needs awareness of structural challenges and from that awareness to work with that which can be changed by many of us , namely techniques which may work in teaching and learning. These will be outlined, paradoxically, within the context of a national project where the client insisted that teacher trainers were native speakers. While perceptions of native speakerism are a factor, teacher development techniques could reposition the questionable concept through professional co-construction within teacher training. Examples of techniques which contribute to this will be drawn from doctoral research into behaviors observed during the early phases of teacher in service courses. It will be argued that it is possible to lessen dependence on the notion of an NS by the teacher educator (TE) modeling herself as an ongoing learner situated in local contexts. This is described in the context in which teacher educators found that creating interactive, less hierarchical interaction changed perceptions of the imported expertise. I will begin by briefly describing the national Malaysian Project setting and then relate the teacher educators' techniques to concerns raised earlier in this paper, namely the reliance on the concept of native speakers.

In Malaysia, where English is viewed as a second language, there has been a general decline in the standard of English over the past 20 years, and this is particularly apparent in rural and semi-rural areas (Pandian, 2004). As a result, the Malaysian Government has been and still is investing in a number of initiatives designed to address the imbalance. The Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), a registered charity, and one of the UK's largest provider of educational services, was working closely with the Curriculum Development Centre at the Ministry of Education, to recruit and manage two project teams one of whom are native speaker teacher trainers. This writer managed the earlier phases of this teacher training project before researching.

Thirty English Language Coordinators (ELCs), teacher educators all of whom come from BANA or Australasian backgrounds, fostered classroom change through interactive task-based courses, workshops and specific skills development

in rural districts. I will use the term teacher educators' (TE) to refer to these ELCs. The TEs worked alongside the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education, District and colleagues in each locality for in service training. The project involved over 20000 Malaysian teachers throughout East and West Malaysia, providing alternatives to reliance on translation and teacher-fronted delivery. Core courses addressed methodology while fostering confidence to develop greater student use of English language. Shorter-term workshops and observations by trainers aimed to build a collegial approach and motivate rural learners. The Project ran for five years in rural districts. Subsequent projects continue with a more intensive model.

In the Malaysian Schools English Language Project, it was the client's concern that teacher educators were 'native speakers' and more importantly that they had international experience. In reality this means 'matsallehs', a Malay or Malaysian English term meaning those of European origin. All the 'matsalleh' teacher educators held post-graduate specialist qualifications and teacher development experience, in other words the provider worked with a high level of professional expertise. I will now outline four areas where teacher educators in the project found that they were deconstructing the myths of native speakerism through teacher education techniques although they were not explicitly tasked with this.

I will draw on a qualitative study of four native speaker teacher educators (TE) from four differing nationalities and diverse sites to outline techniques used in the first hour of beginning in-service methodology courses (Hall, 2009). There has been little work on describing the process of teacher education interaction when introducing in-service courses. This writer cannot find research linking the interaction during in-service teacher education with critically evaluating the acceptance of teacher development courses in terms of how "human learning is emergent through social interactions" (Singh & Richards, 2006, p.151). One may ask why focus on the early phases interaction; aside from the view that first impressions count and the practical concern that you want teachers to return to subsequent sessions. Hogg's (1988) research points to people latching onto their early impressions of others. He calls the early impressions 'central traits' and found that these have a disproportionate influence on how people are perceived when

compared to later impressions. His work which still has currency within the social psychology field found evidence of the primacy effect. Hogg describes the primacy effect as "an order of presentation effect in which earlier presented information has a disproportionate influence on social cognition" (Hogg, p. 47) and suggests "that perhaps people simply pay more attention to earlier information". The study therefore looked at the first hour of interaction and found interesting techniques which teacher educators described in later reflective interviews as deconstructing perceptions of being a native speaker.

The area of analysis was teacher educators' discourse strategies when introducing their pedagogy for English as an International Language. Analyzing the talk, with content analysis driven by data, was augmented by the researcher's field notes which recorded the non-verbal behaviors linked to introducing tasks and procedures. Teachers' reactions to the native speaker teacher educators were captured in two semi structured interviews, one very soon after the early phases of the first course session and the other later in the six to eight week course. Teacher educator perceptions had similar elements of more immediate recall and retrospection through later more reflective interviews. A third teacher educator interview used the transcript of the early phases lesson and the researcher's field notes as the springboard for teacher education reflection on how the course was introduced. It is these teacher educators reflections on the research data, triangulated with field notes and discourse analysis, which is the source of descriptions of techniques I will describe four approaches and use select teacher educator reflective quotes as comments on how the NS teacher trainers approached deconstructing native speakerism. These selected quotes are those which concur with teachers' perceptions, an area described elsewhere.

Working with English as an International Language

The first concern to address is that of the native speaker as an infallible source of language knowledge and standards in which there is a perceived standard English, whether, as in this study, he or she be American, Canadian, Welsh or Scottish. Teacher educators worked with answering questions about detailed language items

but pointed out that there are regional variations. Their focus was that one should concentrate on language items which are most common in the local context or needed for the rather dominant examinations. However, there was tendency for some teacher trainees to focus on accuracy details rather than communicative needs. As a response to one such concern, one TE pointed out that the pronunciation of *tortoise* was not worthy of much effort (Tweedie, email May 20 2007). This aspect of preoccupation with detail and reliance on the native speaker trainer as a walking dictionary was addressed experientially through acknowledging that there are varieties of English for varied contexts.

The teacher educator at Site 2 working with articulate secondary teachers found that she was viewed as a source of knowledge for finer points of usage. She reported that the senior high school teachers were interested in communicative appropriateness, much as Timmis (2005) found in his research into grammar and native speakerism. TEB's situation was also complex when she was asked about correctness in oral English, as she was a North American teaching in the Malaysian system which examined using British models of what is seen as correct, often with an arcane preoccupation with minute details. In defining correctness, she often explained the differences between teachers' American English television input and the examination-driven correctness. As some of her teachers were TESOL trained, they then saw the teacher educator as a model who knew things 'beyond the textbook' to quote an experienced teacher and who modeled English is an international language in which there are many varieties.

The Canadian teacher educator in Site 3 described his approach as switching like a tabbed browser between his own cultural programming, local mores and the need for a structured classroom. Part of his positioning of the native speaker of English was to highlight the number of points of origin that the *matsalleh* could come from in both his introductory Powerpoint presentation and in interaction. He made the diversity of origins of English language explicit in order to show the complexity of defining English language speakers and also so he could be identified as a Canadian. He was very explicit in describing an inner conflict between what he viewed as hierarchical structures, that which Hofstede (1997) terms Power Status and his own agenda as a teacher educator interested in non-hierarchical collaborative learning.

With TE D in Site 4, differences in classroom culture was the main response to questions about native speakerism, as he spoke of the approaches to learning being of more importance to him than perceptions of native speakers. TE D rapidly turned to comparison of 'cultures of learning' (Cortazzi, 2000) with statements such as "they come expecting it to be difficult, you know there is a culture in Malaysia – that you know- people are more motivated by getting things wrong. I don't believe that for a minute' (TE D 2 L 37-39). He then discussed cultural difference in terms of classroom management and this point was one which teachers also commented on - the novelty of the interactive task based pedagogy and a high level of enjoyment. TE D spoke of facilitating tasks where learners are successful, encouraged and praised. Drawing on his multilingual experience as he also teaches and trains in other languages, he noted that there is a different learning culture in Malaysia and he consciously set out to increase the use of positive reinforcement. He then spoke of consciously fostering change based on local needs rather than external norms. Positive feedback towards this was evident in the teachers' interviews for TE D's site.

In summary, even after probing and prompting, teacher educators addressed the issue of native speakerism with comparative statements about differences in cultures of learning. While TE B and her teachers responded most strongly to positive aspects of involving a speaker of English as first language, citing the knowledge of cultural aspects in accuracy, most teachers did not make native speakerism a central concern. For most teachers and teacher educators the central concern is how learning can be maximized by building a sense of success by learning applicable techniques and tasks relevant to classrooms. In other words, the approach was to situate the learning in local educational needs, rather than to offer a quick answer suggesting one correct NS approach.

Presenting as an Ongoing Learner

The second concern was when the trainer was seen as being a superior by virtue of being a native speaker, rather than a fellow teacher and teacher educator engaged in ongoing learning. This issue was compounded by perceptions that an outside

expert had more to contribute than a local teacher educator. All TEs worked with an interactive task alongside colleagues in group or pair work, while modeling that they too were ongoing learners. This was a deliberate curriculum plan to deconstruct the transmission mode of information delivery and break down the social and linguistic distance which the trainer may be seen as embodying (Randall &Thornton, 2001). In the early stages of the Project, TEs expressed concerns that the perception of the native speaker as a superior source of English language information would require deconstructing so as to foster teacher to teacher interaction in English. This shared concern then arose out of TE's experiences. I will draw on teacher interviews to elaborate.

The majority of teachers described the role of the teacher educators in terms of what TES did rather than in terms of who they were. Apart from the modeling of standard English which appealed to three teachers out of sixteen, most comments on the native speaker aspect focused on novel experiences facilitated by the teacher education methodology. In response to open ended questions as to whether there were any or no differences between the teacher educator's approach and earlier teacher training, teachers were forthright. General statements on the innovative approaches, along with contrasts and comparisons were frequently made between previous training and the approach of Project teacher educators. Both novice and experienced teachers in every site compared previous teacher education experiences with the interactive Project approach.

Teachers' comments in order of frequency were that there were differences in the teacher educators' preparation, the use of gesture and movement, the presentation of aims and instructions, humour which was part of introducing oneself and facilitating interaction which linked or used classroom tasks. This aligns with teacher educator aims.

Supportive follow up visits which were part of teacher educators brief were described as important by five teachers. Four teachers mentioned the use of questioning as important and new to them, both through experiencing the questioning techniques and in as techniques which were part of how they changed their teaching. As teachers' earlier courses would have been large scale, it is clear that the smaller project courses would involve more interaction with the teacher

educator. Yet teachers were specific in that the teacher educators' techniques differed from earlier experiences "I enjoy. Because we never never got like this one" (T1 1 L 88). Linked to a sense of novelty was the participatory learning as 'trainees actively participate' (T 10 1 L5) and experience tasks which they described as relevant as they "can do to my student" (T1 1 L 40). This suggests that the major difference is not derived from the teacher educators being a source of the English language, or being a correct model but being a model of motivating teacher education with experiential tasks which could be transferred to the classroom.

Using Selective Bilingualism

All the teacher educators expressed the view that the process of not wanting to be "Othered" (Palfreyman, 2004) or stereotyped as an outsider with little concern for local factors may be aided by the use of bilingualism. In the project this generally involves the national language Bahasa Malaysia. The most fluent TE Malay speaker at Site 1 raised the pedagogic issues of the use of Malay both in the actual lesson and in the research interview. He commented that it made more sense to use the vernacular when you could not show a vocabulary item visually or you were talking of abstract qualities. When he espoused the use of Malay, the response was positive and audible, especially from early primary teachers. I heard audible sighs and exclamations of delight when observing the interaction. He consciously used Malay as did all the other teacher educators, albeit to the greatest extent reflecting his observable fluency. A sociolinguistic viewpoint underpins TE 1's view which was "As I said in the first interview, the use of Malay shows social convergence so that it's we are not the *orang putih* (white man) from far away, delivering lectures and moving out" (TE A Ref Prac 17 mins). All the other TEs concurred on this point, with one using the phrase "I use Malay to deforeignise myself" (TE C Ref Prac L 129). TE B said she had begun her earlier days of Malaysian teacher education by asking teachers for Malay translations so that she would use these for comparative grammar. For her, the main use of Malay was social as with TE D. TE C would use his beginner's level Malay as occasional input to liven up interaction. This range of reported and observed usage links to the notion that one's greater

advocacy of bilingualism in learning may reflect confidence in using both languages.

Relating Locally through Humor

The third concern was to share all learning in a non-hierarchical setting where learning was presented as a shared localized concern rather than imposed NS norms. This was part of the project design. Trainers spent at least two months in schools understanding and experienced local needs, aligning the specifics with a larger needs analysis (Hall & Dodson, 2004) and talking to teachers and administrators before the in-service courses. The 'native speakers' as the local press still calls them, were also living in the local community and this made them aware of local needs, put them in a learning situation and avoided a 'one size fits all approach' to teacher development. Yet there was feedback that the cultural framework of perceiving NS teacher educators as a superior source of imported norms still was evident in classroom interaction. Teacher educators turned to humour, an area not originally seen as important in the research.

The teacher educators all stated that they consciously used humour as a means of deconstructing teacher reliance on the perceptions that being a so called native speaker made them all knowing experts. Belz (2002) suggests that humour and playing with the unexpected in language assist language learning. He suggests that language play may help learners construct new multilingual identities and new social relations. There is little to suggest that this would not be the same for the teachers, in what is essentially a bilingual or multilingual encounter TE B consciously used self deprecatory humour saying that she would rather make jokes about herself than others. "I first started doing when I went overseas to counter the impression of the arrogant westerner who comes in from overseas" (TE B 20mins). All the teacher educators spoke of the importance of being humorous and positive about what they were doing so not to appear as part of an educational hierarchy which is often evaluative and therefore seen as judgmental, and at times negative.

A recent Malaysian study of teacher educator preparation noted that well

received teacher educators understand 'the importance of not only being academically prepared, but also possessing positive attitudes towards the process of learning and behaving' (Vethamani, 2012, p.104). One TE observed that although he is not basically a humourous person, he would always be positive and would use humour when "it flys by" (TE A   Ref Prac 4 47 mins). While labeling herself as basically a serious person, TE B noted that "I like to give off the wall examples. I would rather use, like, the cop and the robber, than Ali and Bill. Or (laughter) Dick and Jane. I like to get their attention with…you know, some strange people" (TE B Ex Prac 3 20 mins). This approach was most clearly articulated by TE C who spent much of the interview discussing cultural issues and less on the methodology. His conscious view of humour as a tool to deconstruct distance and over reliance on the NS as a knowledge transmission source was detailed, as can be read below.

8   I   Humour comes in early in the course. The very first line in fact. You
9   notice here..and here (5secs) that you use *humour* ⹀
10   T   ⹀I try to. I am always learning what is humorous ,cross culturally.
11   I don't stop learning there.
13   I   Why such a use of humour?
14   T   I like a relaxed classroom atmosphere. My assumption based on the
15   last four years or so is that the teachers are stiff and guarded when they
16   come on a course
17   I   _____Stiff and guarded? Can you say more about that?
17   T   Teachers say..teachers tell me in private that they are afraid. They
18   say 'we have to be careful.' They feel they are being… well., judged
19   and evaluated. So my style is different. Somewhat Canadian style.

   It is possible that when the NS expert with the sanction of the centralized Ministry of Education comes into a classroom that teachers are guarded, as described above. If one is to build interaction, self-effacing humour may help diminish some of the distance and help to build collegiality. When discussing the role of humour and cultural difference, one TE drew my attention to the limitations of a simple division of Asian and European differences. She spoke of her

experience in Japan and then described how much of the deconstruction of the "expert role" she wanted to "counter" (ibid) occurred in the more informal setting of the lengthy coffee breaks which occur at all Malaysian events. This, to her, was a contributing factor in the 'culture' of teacher education courses in that communication overrode accuracy concerns or any focus on NS norms:

> T   While we are talking about culture. There's one thing in the rojak of Malaysian culture which is good as a whole. That's shooting the shit over tea. It's easy to build a group dynamic here because of that local culture, compared to Japan say.
> I   Are you talking about the tea break in between==
> T   ==No. I'm speaking in a more general way. For a lot of Malaysians they ..ah… Malaysians are very comfortable starting off with small talk and then they start building friendliness. It all happens very quickly. In other countries, I've been in it.. takes a long time to bridge distance between strangers and acquaintances….and the whole Malaysian thing of sittingaround for a long time and having these tea breaks (laughter)

In reconstructing perceptions of reliance on NS norms the NS teacher educators then used a variety of strategies to build empathy and collegiality with local teachers. They modeled that English is not one standard norm and used humour and presentation of oneself as an ongoing learner to create collegiality.

CONCLUSION

The definition and role of a native speaker in the English Language teaching profession has long been an area of controversy, yet it is clear that the positioning is still of professional concern even if the concept itself is problematic. With the growth of English as an international language and the dynamic of increasing numbers of skilled NNES professionals, the challenge is even more marked. Yet working with native speakerism may require local action by NS teacher educators

as well as increased advocacy and wider acceptance of critiques such as those described earlier (Holliday, 2006, 2009). Techniques for the reconstruction of perceptions of NS teacher educators have been suggested in the context of Malaysian in service teacher education, most of them derived from interactional experiences during in service courses. It has been argued that teacher educators may model English as an international language to go beyond perceptions of a NS standard. Modeling a role other than being perceived as a superior source of knowledge also requires sensitivity to the differences in cultures of learning while accepting the selective use of mother tongue. The research outlined has also suggested that building social empathy through humour may aid learning between professionals for whom English may be either a mother tongue or an additional language.

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