



Diverse Interpretations on Nativeness but Unanimous Subscription to Native-speakerism: Identity of Future Non-native English Teachers in Taiwan

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In the current body of knowledge about the influence of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) on the professional identity of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), the fundamental question of 'What exactly do native English speakers (NESs) mean to NNESTs?' has been left unanswered and the voices of preservice NNESTs are largely absent. This study examined the influence of NESTs as 'significant others' in the English language teaching profession on preservice NNESTs' identity by looking into how preservice NNESTs interpret the term native English speakers, accept native speaker norms, and respond to the active recruitment of NESTs through the national policy in Taiwan. Survey and interview data were collected from 258 preservice English teachers. The findings show that although the participants held diverse views on who constitute NESs, they shared a unanimous subscription to native-speakerism. The participants gave conditional support to the policy of recruiting NESTs while highlighting their opposition to uncertified NESTs and differentiated payment. Implications to teacher education and policy decisions are provided.

Keywords: preservice teachers, teacher identity, education policy, language education

Introduction

Since the pioneering work of Peter Medgyes on non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) (Medgyes, 1994), there has been a surge of discussion on issues related to the identity of NNESTs in the English language teaching (ELT) profession. One popular approach researchers have taken to understand the construction and development of NNESTs' professional identity is through the construct of relationality (Derrida, 1978; Saussure, 1959), utilizing the 'mirroring effect' provided by native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to realize how NNESTs see, position and evaluate themselves in the ELT profession (e.g., Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Rajagopalan, 2005). Although the literature has provided abundant evidence showing NNESTs' unquestioning acceptance of native speaker norms and an overwhelming subscription to 'native speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1996, p. 185), one

fundamental question has been left unanswered: *'What exactly do native English speakers (NESs) mean to NNESTs?'* NNESTs' subscription to the native speaker fallacy can only be meaningfully interpreted by providing an understanding of what NESs actually mean to NNESTs. In addition, compared to inservice NNESTs, preservice NNESTs have received much less attention from research communities (Anderson, 2016). Voices of preservice NNESTs are as significant as those of inservice NNESTs, if not more, since teacher education is the critical stage at which preservice teachers are active agents constructing identity. This study aims to examine the influence of NESTs on preservice NNESTs' professional identity by presenting preservice NNESTs' interpretation of the term NESs, reception of native speaker norms, and responses to the active recruitment of NESTs through the government policy. This case study in Taiwan will yield valuable implications to teacher education and language education policy in a number of East Asian countries or regions including Japan, Korea and Hong Kong SAR, where similar policy initiatives are implemented by their governments. This paper first provides a brief review of the literature on professional identity of NNESTs as well as the research context of this study. This is followed by an introduction to the methods adopted to tackle the guiding questions of this study and a presentation of the findings. Specific recommendations for language education and policy makers based on the findings are made at the end of this paper.

Literature Review

Professional Identity and NNESTs

Identity can be viewed as the unique set of characteristics associated with a particular individual relative to the perceptions and characteristics of others (Pennington, 2015). For individuals operating in different professions, professional identity could be referred to 'a set of externally ascribed attributes that are used to differentiate one group from another' (Sachs, 2001, p. 153). Hence, one popular approach to understanding professional identity is through the concept of relationality, treating social space as a space of complex, constantly negotiated networks of relations in which individuals' identities are constructed relationally via similarities and differences (Derrida, 1978; Saussure, 1959). In teacher identity in English language teaching, Pennington and Richards (2016) proposed an approach for integrating personal, contextual and professional factors. To NNESTs, professional identity could be a useful construct that distinguishes them from 'the other group' of individuals in the profession who offer a 'mirror' for comparison, namely teachers who are native speakers of English. Furthermore, language education policies like NEST recruitment projects could be seen as the institutional factor of context, putting English teachers in a situated place with a 'default' identity. The first recorded use of the term native speakers is 'the first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language' (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 43). Since then, the term has been defined and referred to different individuals, such as those having identification with a language community (Johnson & Johnson, 1998) and possessing the ability to produce fluent discourse and knowledge of linguistic variations (Davies, 1996). These various definitions imply the complex nature of the dichotomy of native English speakers (NESs) and non-native English speakers (NNESTs). However, with the global spread of English as the most important international language, the NESs/NNESTs dichotomy has been deeply embedded in the field of English teaching and learning, positing American or British native speaker norms as the 'legitimate variety world-wide' (Llurda, 2009, p. 100) and spreading the idealization of NESs (Phillipson, 1992). Over the past few decades, the dichotomy has been under serious attack since it raises concerns regarding the nature of linguistic imperialism (Nayar, 1994), exclusion of non-native varieties of the English language (Mufwene, 1998; Norton, 1997), and a lack of contextualization and awareness of intercultural communication (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Kramsch, 1998; Rampton, 1990). The dichotomy has also been criticised for being confidence-affecting (Davies, 1991) and 'rich in ambiguity' (Davies, 2002, p. 44). Andrews (2007), for example, argues that the dichotomy oversimplifies the

complexity of individuals' language backgrounds, because NNESTs are defined in terms of what they lack rather than what they possess. Sharing a similar perspective, Kachru and Nelson (1996) also argue that what have lain beneath the label of NNESTs are attitudinal problems, marking NNESTs as less competent users of English.

Since Peter Medgyes brought up the identity issue concerning NESTs by discussing a series of controversial topics such as 'natives and non-natives in opposite trenches', 'the dark side of being a non-native' and 'Who is worth more, the native or the non-native?' (Medgyes, 1992, 1994), there has been a surge in the empiricist community concerning the identity of NNESTs in relation to NESTs as 'significant others' in the ELT profession. For researchers who share interest in examining NNESTs' identity construction through the construct of relationality, significant attention has been paid to the impact of NESTs on NNESTs' self-image, self-perception and self-esteem. For example, the presence of NESTs was found to make NNESTs feel they are less competent teachers (Arva & Medgyes, 2000), 'second class citizens' in the workplace (Rajagopalan, 2005, p. 287), and in a disadvantaged position in the ELT profession (Llurda & Huguet, 2003). In collaborative settings such as co-teaching and team-teaching, NESTs were also found to make their non-native counterparts in teaching suffer from the imbalance of power relationships, causing the latter to develop an anxiety of losing authority, a devaluation of their own usefulness as English teachers, and a fear of being negatively judged by their colleagues and students due to linguistic issues (Diniz, 2011; Mahoney, 2004; McConnell, 2000). NNESTs were found to show unquestioning acceptance of native speaker norms, or native-speakerism, revealing their preference for native-speaker English as the correct model and NESTs as the ideal role models for learners (Ahn, 2011; Lee, 2016; Ma, 2012), although conflicting results also exist (e.g., He & Zhang, 2010; Litzenberg, 2016).

While the role NESTs play in shaping or reshaping the professional identity of NNESTs has received considerable attention from research communities, the fundamental question of 'What exactly do native English speakers mean to NNESTs?' has been left unanswered. The answer to this question needs to be provided before the prevailing subscription to native speaker fallacy among NNESTs can be meaningfully interpreted and implications can be drawn. Furthermore, the majority of the interest from the aforementioned researchers has been in the influence of NESTs on inservice NNESTs' identity. Much less work has put preservice NNESTs on the spot (for exceptions, see Coskun, 2011; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), and some of them were not even published or circulated (e.g., Reis, 2010; Tseng, 2011). In Kamhi-Stein's (2000) study, the focus is on how learning alongside NESs affected preservice NNESTs' status and self-confidence, and it was found that NNEST participants often suffered from a sense of identity inferiority in relation to their NES peers. In Coskun's (2011) study, most of the preservice NNESTs perceived the goal of a pronunciation class to speak like a native speaker and regarded English native-speakers as the correct model in ELT. Despite these efforts, as Nguyen's (2017) study shows, the focus on native speaker models has resulted in the negative self-image of NNESTs, and eventually interferes with learners' language performance. The voices of preservice NNESTs deserve more attention, since these teachers are at the critical stage of being active agents, exerting different forms of agency and engaging in social interactions in constructing identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016; Yuan, 2016). This identity construction is through the process of making sense of themselves, positioning themselves, and differentiating themselves from others (e.g., other NNESTs and NESTs) in the ELT profession.

Research Context

The growing emphasis on English and English language education, accompanied by the influence of native-speakerism, has prioritized the acquisition of 'native-like' English as an ultimate goal of English learning, thus pitching NESs as ideal English teachers in many East Asian countries and regions (Holliday, 2005, 2006). The belief that NESTs might make a unique contribution in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms is vividly shown in the educational policies of Japan (JET Programme), Korea (EPIK), Hong Kong SAR (NET Scheme) and Taiwan (FETRP) (Jeon,

2009; Trent et al., 2014; Wang & Lin, 2013). Joining the active recruitment of NESTs in its neighboring countries, the Taiwanese government set up two official channels to recruit NESTs: one through several city or county governments and the other through the Ministry of Education (MOE) under the FETRP. Initially, NESTs recruited by the MOE needed to possess teaching certificates in their home countries. However, due to the difficulty of recruiting a sufficient number of NESTs, the MOE disclosed its consideration of hiring uncertified NESTs. Under the FETRP, NESTs are expected to play diverse roles, including team teaching with Taiwanese English teachers (TETs), helping to compile English teaching materials, organizing teaching programs, and assisting in training TETs (Lin & Wang, 2016). To attract NESTs, the FETRP offers a differentiated pay scale to applicants. With the same academic degree (i.e., Bachelor's) and teaching qualification, the pay of TETs is about one-third less compared to the recruited NESTs. Although the NES/NNES dichotomy, as mentioned, is the subject of criticism in many educational contexts, it is explicitly endorsed by the Taiwanese government, as shown in the requirement that the FETRP applicants can only be citizens of six native English-speaking countries, including the United States, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland (Chang et al., 2008; Wang & Lin, 2013).

Preservice NNESTs represent the majority of the professionals in the future of the ELT profession. Their interpretations of their native counterparts in teaching, reception of the dominant native speaker norms in EFL/ESL classrooms and their attitude toward educational initiatives for recruiting NESTs can lend insight into the directions of teacher education programs and language education policies. Litzenberg's (2016) study found that although native speaker norms continue to be the standard in English-dominant regions, there has been a shift toward greater acceptance of non-native varieties of English as a possible pedagogical goal. Comparatively, the phenomenon of the native speaker fallacy becomes worthy of further investigation. Given the fundamental but unaddressed question of what exactly NESs mean to NNESTs and the largely absent voices of preservice NNESTs in the contemporary discussion of the influence of NESTs on NNESTs' identity construction, the three guiding questions of this study are: How do preservice non-native English teachers do the following:

1. Interpret native English speakers?
2. Receive native speaker norms?
3. Respond to NESTs-recruitment policy?

Methodology

Participants

In order to tackle the proposed research questions, a mixed-methods approach using questionnaires and interviews for data collection was used. The adoption of this approach was inspired by studies that utilized a similar design to explore issues concerning NNESTs across different educational contexts (e.g., Holmes, 2003; Inbar-Lourie, 2001; Walker, 2001). The participants were 258 preservice English teachers, who were recruited from the English language departments of five major teacher training institutes in Taiwan. All participants had completed at least two years of their training program and had the experience of learning English with NESTs during their training in education before their recruitment. Out of the 258 participants, 128 (49.6%) were in the secondary school track, while 130 (50.4%) were in the primary school track. The gender distribution of the trainee participants in this study (84.9% female and 15.1% male) is in line with the national demography in the country, where nearly 90% of English teachers are female (MOE, 2011). Among the 258 participants who completed the survey, 35 (P01 to P35) were recruited to participate in follow-up interviews, including 9 males and 26 females.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection from the participants was divided into two phases: survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In the first phase, the participants completed the questionnaires in their classes. The questionnaires (see Appendix) sought the participants' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in teaching ESL/EFL, which are closely related to their identity construct. The content of the questionnaires was drawn from the studies of Arva and Medgyes (2000), Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) and Murdoch (1994), in light of the well-received impact of these studies and the similar purpose of this study and the aforementioned research. Then the researchers identified and contacted potential interviewees and recruited 35 after a preliminary analysis of the participants' backgrounds and verification of their willingness to continue participating in the second phase, as indicated by their response to a question at the end of the questionnaire. In the second phase, most interviews were conducted in face-to-face settings with the venue chosen by the interviewees, and the rest were completed by telephone according to the interviewees' preference. The participants were asked the same questions but in a different order for the researchers' intention to elicit as much information as possible. All the survey and interview participants were informed about their right to withdraw from data collection and were assured of the confidentiality of the data by the researchers either in the face-to-face setting or by phone.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were performed on the survey data. Thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased analytic tool was applied to analyze the data from the semi-structured interviews. First, all the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were first proofread by one of the researchers and then sent back to the participants to check and confirm their responses. After that, the researcher read the transcripts several times and wrote down the initial ideas in order to become familiar with the data (phase 1). At the beginning of the analysis, the researcher conducted open and focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) and generated initial codes relating to features of the participants' responses to the questions across the transcripts. The other research team member then took a thorough review of each code generated and communicated with the main coder several times to discuss which codes should be added, deleted or merged. Changes were made to the codes on reaching consensus between the research team (phase 2). Two colleagues were invited to comment on these codes and provide suggestions for alterations (phase 3). After receiving feedback from the colleagues, the main researcher started refining the themes and ensured each theme was related to the respective codes (phase 4). Ongoing analysis was conducted by the coder to refine the specifics of each theme (phase 5), select illustrative extracts, and relate the analysis back to the research questions (phase 6).

Findings

Interpretation of Native English Speakers

Five characteristic themes emerged from the participants' response to the question of 'Who are native English speakers (NESs)?', which showed a wide variation in the participants' interpretation of NESs. These themes reveal the 'criteria' used by the participants to define NESs and imply how the participants interpret the NEST/NNEST dichotomy. These themes include ethnicity, language competence, culture, geography and function. These themes and representative extracts are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Themes and Extracts on Interpretation of NESs

Themes	Extracts
Ethnicity	<i>They [NESs] should be people who were born in the US or the UK (Dorothy, P12).</i>
Language Competence	<i>NESs should have been born and grew up in a country where English is the major language and they must be able to speak Standard English (Bridget, P06).</i>
Culture	<i>NESs must be fluent in speaking and use English as the mother tongue. But people who do not understand much about American or British culture are not NESs, even though they can speak fluent English (Andy, P03).</i>
Geography	<i>They [NESs] must be foreigners. Basically, they should come from Western countries, not necessarily from the US, Canada, New Zealand or Australia. They can also be foreigners who come from European countries (Opal, P27).</i> <i>NESs are those people who were born in native English-speaking countries. They are not necessarily American or British (Denise, P09).</i>
Function	<i>I feel people who live or stay in an English speaking environment and communicate with other people in English can be counted as NESs. They need not necessarily come from English-speaking countries. They do not have to be white people (Wendy, P35).</i>

Reception of Native Speaker Norms

When asked about NESs' teaching competence, the majority of the participants thought that NESs are good at teaching phonology-related skills, including pronunciation (90.4%), speaking (88.0%) and listening (65.5%). Comparatively, less than half of the participants thought that NESs are good at teaching writing and reading (Table 2).

TABLE 2
Areas NESs are Good at Teaching

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean# (SD)
Vocabulary	2.3%	17.1%	31.0%	34.5%	15.1%	3.43 (1.02)
Pronunciation	1.6%	2.7%	5.4%	29.5%	60.9%	4.45 (0.84)
Listening	0.8%	8.9%	24.8%	40.3%	25.2%	3.80 (0.94)
Speaking	0.8%	3.5%	7.8%	37.0%	51.0%	4.36 (0.88)
Writing	3.5%	26.4%	43.8%	22.1%	4.3%	2.97 (0.89)
Reading	3.9%	26.0%	45.7%	19.4%	5.0%	2.96 (0.90)

SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, N=neutral, A=agree, SA=strongly agree

The findings from the interviews are in accord with the results from the survey. The most characteristic theme emerging from the participants' reception of NESs' competence is the participants' acknowledgement of NESs' superiority in teaching phonology-related skills. A number of adjectives including correct, beautiful and fluent were used by the participants to describe the strength of NESs in phonology. They are provided with elaborative extracts in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Phonological Competence of NESs

Adjectives	Extracts
Correct/Beautiful	<i>What NESs' pronunciation is correct and students have a good model to imitate. When reading an article, their intonation is also more beautiful than ours [TETs']. Their intonation varies in a natural way. (Julie, P42).</i>
Correct/Fluent	<i>Since English is the mother tongue of NESs, their pronunciation is very correct and their intonation is pretty fluent. Their feelings about pronunciation and intonation are very important to young learners, and this is an obvious advantage of them. (Glen, P14).</i>
Precise/Correct	<i>NESs let us [TETs] know how to pronounce precisely, and this is something quite different from TETs. Students can learn how to pronounce correctly from them. (Maggie, P24).</i>
Better/Fluent/Natural	<i>NESs' speaking and pronunciation help students learn a better accent. They can offer students fluent and natural output. Students' listening skills can also be improved a lot by NESs. (Luke, P33).</i>

The participants' acknowledgment of NESTs' superiority in phonology-related competence was further validated by the survey results from the questions regarding NNESTs' language proficiency. Specifically, the majority of the participants thought that NNESTs are not good at teaching speaking (55.5%) and pronunciation (52.3%) (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Areas NNESTs are Not Good at Teaching

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean# (SD)
Vocabulary	8.5%	50.0%	28.7%	11.3%	1.6%	2.47 (0.86)
Pronunciation	2.3%	15.9%	29.5%	43.4%	8.9%	3.41 (0.94)
Listening	1.9%	28.7%	38.8%	25.6%	5.0%	3.03 (0.91)
Speaking	1.6%	19.0%	24.0%	48.1%	7.4%	3.41 (0.93)
Writing	13.6%	47.7%	23.3%	12.4%	3.1%	2.44 (0.98)
Reading	10.1%	60.3%	21.0%	7.0%	1.6%	2.32 (0.90)

SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, N=neutral, A=agree, SA=strongly agree

The interview findings are also consistent with the survey results. Phases such as *not correct*, *not precise* and *not authentic* were used by the participants to describe NNESTs' performance in phonological aspects of the language. These are summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Phonological Competence of NNESTs

Phases	Extracts
Not correct/ Not precise	<i>Even though TETs can speak English all the time, we might not pronounce correctly or precisely. Consequently, what students learn might not be correct English. (James, P26)</i>
Not authentic/ Strange	<i>Some TETs are knowledgeable in the profession but sometimes their pronunciation is unauthentic. Their pronunciation is strange even though they have had experience of staying abroad for quite a long time. (Becky, P04)</i>
Not standard	<i>One significant weakness of TETs is their pronunciation. Their pronunciation is not really Standard English. (Bruce, P05)</i>
Needs to be strengthened	<i>Sometimes our [TETs'] pronunciation is different from that of foreigners, and that might be something we need to improve or strengthen. (Tracy, P11)</i>
Not beautiful	<i>The English we [TETs] speak is not as beautiful as that spoken by NESTs even though our English proficiency is high. Our pronunciation is not that beautiful. (Veronica, P17)</i>

Responses to NESTs-recruitment Policy

As mentioned, the MOE in Taiwan has considered changing the recruitment criteria for NESTs (i.e., accepting uncertified NESTs). The survey results show that in the response to the statement 'The Taiwanese government should hire NESTs even though they have no teaching certificates', as much as 88.0% of the participants showed disagreement with the MOE's intention, while 5.4% indicated otherwise. The characteristic theme from the participants' comments on this is the participants' conditional support of the policy—they believe the presence of NESTs is helpful to students but are against uncertified NESTs and discrepant employment conditions. Three sub-themes that explain this conditional support were identified, including quality of teaching, fairness and discrimination. The first sub-theme reveals the participants' concern about the quality of teaching by uncertified or untrained NESTs:

Consequently, some students are lucky if their NEST is a qualified teacher. But others might become victims of the policy if their NEST has no teaching experience or relevant training background. I would wonder whether the policy would benefit our students in any way. (Kate, P22)

The second sub-theme has more to do with fairness. To a number of participants, the consideration of recruiting uncertified NESTs is unfair and reveals the MOE's double standards for teacher qualifications:

In Taiwan, we [TETs] cannot become primary or secondary English teachers if we do not get certificates. How can uncertified NESTs become English teachers in Taiwan? (Maggie, P24)

The criteria applied to select TETs should also be applied to select NESTs. The failure to recruit sufficient number of NESTs cannot be the excuse to relax the selection criteria. Relaxing the criteria is unfair to TETs who study hard to learn how to teach and devote themselves to learning relevant knowledge and skills. (Andy, P03)

The third sub-theme arising from the interviews is that the discrepancy in the pay scales between NESTs and local TETs is unacceptable and difficult to justify. This discrepancy made many participants feel that they were discriminated against by the MOE simply because of their 'non-native' status:

Why are NESTs paid higher than TETs? Are NESTs more prestigious than TETs just because they are foreigners? I am really confused about this. There is no need to pay NESTs more. It is fine to introduce NESTs but the Ministry must treat TETs equally. (Glen, P14)

I believe that NESTs and TETs have their respective advantages and disadvantages. The Ministry will find it difficult to justify the huge difference in the salary between NESTs and TETs who stand and teach together on the platform. Are NESTs paid more just because they are white? This is the thing I cannot accept. (Harry, P21)

Discussion

From 'Fallacy' Advocates to Diversity Practitioners

The most interesting finding of this study is that although the participants defined *native English speakers* differently, they shared a prevalent acceptance of native speaker norms. From the participants' point of view, native English speakers with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, linguistic competence, geographic habitats and functional language skills can all provide the same set of 'native speaker norms'. The finding that the participants applied different criteria to define native English speakers validates the assertion that the construction of the term NESTs is loose and diverse, reflecting the ambiguity of the NESs/NNESs dichotomy (Davies, 2002). Regardless of the clear diversity in the participants' interpretation of NESs, there is a widespread acceptance of native speaker norms among the participants, as illustrated in their description of NESTs' accent, intonation and pronunciation as authentic, correct and beautiful. Although the participants' subscription to native-speakerism in phonology-related competence is not surprising (see Jenkins, 2005; Tang, 1997), it was unexpected to learn that this belief remains so prevalent among the participants who actually have such diverse views on who constitute native English speakers in the first place. This finding highlights the need for teacher education programmes to provide courses with a specific focus on introducing the concepts and practice of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and World Englishes (Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2006). As Richards (2017) argued, teaching a language for specific purpose (e.g., ESL, EFL) does require specialized knowledge and skills, with native-speaker proficiency excluded. This would help the preservice NNESTs realize and accept that there are varieties of English languages and these varieties differ phonologically, lexically and syntactically, at the levels of discourse and text, and in their use of cultural conventions and pragmatic norms (Grau, 2005; Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2003). These differences cannot be treated as errors or deviant from some 'Anglo norm' (Kirkpatrick, 2002).

To further support preservice NNESTs' identity construction, the teachers' needs should be taken into consideration within their local context, rather than be imposed by any certain type or standard of language competence (Choi, 2016). For courses in teacher training programs, the reflexive teaching and

learning experience of preservice NNESTs should be highlighted (Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). Teacher training programs without empowering teachers with practical experience would be neither useful nor meaningful to transform their professional identity in ELT. Therefore, courses that provide diverse kinds of impactful sources of efficacy information such as mastery experiences, social persuasion and vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1986, 1997) should also be prioritized. These courses should feature activities of authentic teaching, role modelling and collaborative learning that provide different kinds of teaching and learning experiences for preservice NNESTs to learn and practice how to take advantage of their *non-nativeness* through reflecting on and exploiting their assets (e.g., knowledge about students' mother tongue and the teaching context). By shifting the emphasis from 'what they lack' to 'what they possess', these courses would help preservice NNESTs construct a better sense self-image and self-efficacy in teaching the language they are devoted to. The goal of these courses should be helping preservice NNESTs construct identities as competent bilingual language users with interactional intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000; O'Neal, 2015) rather than a failed, deficient version of NESTs. Preservice NNESTs must be aware and believe that they may be 'non-native' speakers of the language they teach, but they are 'native' in terms of their situational teaching competence, which is as much a part of professional competence as language competence (Shin & Kellogg, 2007).

From Ethnic-oriented to Professionalism-driven Policy

The participants' unanimous subscription to native-speakerism in phonology-related competence could be an explanation to their positive attitude toward the policy of recruiting NESTs, but it does not relieve their concern about the government's consideration of hiring uncertified NESTs and providing NESTs with a differentiated pay grade. Accordingly, the FETRP functions as an institutional factor in the ongoing process of the participants' negotiation of their teacher identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016), as revealed in their concern about professional factors like teaching qualifications and pay scale. In this situation, the participants need a better negotiation between their contextual (i.e., FETRP) and professional components of identity. Arguably, language teaching does not solely rely on one's language competence, nor is independent of societal and sociocultural realities (Anchimbe, 2006). Several researchers have questioned the degree to which monolingual and 'native-oriented' competence brought by NESTs to ESL/EFL classrooms are responsive or appropriate to the needs of learners in varying educational contexts worldwide (see Anderson, 2016; Canagarajah 2005; Holliday, 2005).

In this sense, policy makers must be aware that to achieve the intended outcome of the policy, it is not simply about where the NESTs come from. There are many other linguistic, pedagogical and socio-cultural aspects that need to be taken into account. Without requiring teaching certificates, the MOE will be running the risk of having an 'automatic extrapolation' that NESTs are naturally competent teachers based on their monolingual competence (Seidlhofer, 1996, p. 69). The differentiated pay scale also sends the message to preservice NNESTs that NESTs are more prestigious and worthy teachers, which has been seriously challenged in the profession. To offer a starting point for policy makers in Taiwan and other East Asian countries with similar policies of recruiting NESTs to review their policy constructs, we must ask the million dollar question again, 'To what extent is it appropriate to consider native speakerhood as in itself a significant qualification for teaching English?' (see also Alptekin, 2002; Ferguson, 2006; Llorca, 2004). As Phillipson (1992) points out, 'the insight that teachers have into language learning processes, and into the structure and usage of a language, and their capacity to analyze and explain language, definitely have to be learnt' (p. 14). For a professionalism-driven policy, the authority needs to realize that there is not a certain superior identity in the field of English language teaching; NESTs and TETs have their own advantages and challenges regarding language teaching. Through adequate support and resources provided by policy makers, including encouraging mutual sharing and collaboration between NESTs and TETs, they will both benefit from each other's strengths as well as reflect on their own identity as an ideal English language teacher (Mede et al., 2017). In sum, the most important aspect is that professionalism is an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration, along with language

competence, and it should not be sacrificed for the sake of emphasizing language proficiency or the nationality/ethnicity, whatever the policy intention is.

Conclusion

This study adopted a mixed-methods design to examine the influence of NESTs on preservice NNESTs' professional identity by presenting pre-service NNESTs' interpretation of NESs, reception of native speaker norms, and response to the NEST-recruitment policy. The findings reveal that although the participants defined NESs differently, they shared a unanimous subscription to native-speakerism. The participants showed conditional support for the policy of recruiting NESTs, underlining their opposition to hiring uncertified NESTs and offering differentiated pay scale to NESTs. To help preservice NNESTs construct a better sense of professional identity at this critical stage of their teaching career, teacher education programs should provide more opportunities for teachers to explore, value and exploit their 'non-nativeness'; and by doing so, to construct a better sense of self-image and self-efficacy as non-native ELT practitioners. Educational authorities should consider a shift in paradigm, from an ethnic-oriented one to a professionalism-driven one, in their consideration to refine and sustain the policy of recruiting NESTs.

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Appendix

Questionnaire Items

Areas NESTs are good at teaching					
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					
Listening					
Speaking					
Writing					
Reading					
Areas NNESTs are not good at teaching					
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					
Listening					
Speaking					
Writing					
Reading					
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree					