Facts and Fictions of Native Speakerism: Local EFL Teachers’ Experiences and Viewpoints

母語者主義的實與虛：本土EFL教師的經驗與觀點

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Received: 18 January 2022 / Revised: 18 September 2022 / Accepted: 1 October 2022
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Abstract
Most literature on native speakerism has criticized its impact especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts where native English-speaking teachers, who are deemed to be more competent and desirable, enjoy more benefits and privileges than their nonnative counterparts. However, recent research has suggested that such assumptions associated with native speakerism may not accurately reflect what is actually happening in EFL school settings. The current study examines Korean English teachers’ views on various dimensions of native speakerism in order to capture the impact of native speakerism as experienced by local English teachers. Data were collected from 37 in-service teachers working in elementary and secondary schools in South Korea via surveys and interviews. The survey results showed negative effects of native speakerism for some constructs; however, the qualitative results revealed that concerns surrounding native speakerisms were not as problematic as one might hypothesize based on the existing literature. The results are discussed with suggestions aimed at alleviating any negative effects of native speakerism in EFL settings.

摘要
大多數關於母語者主義的文獻都對其影響作出評論，特別是在以英語為外語的環境中（EFL），母語為英語的教師被認為更有能力和更為合意，比母語非英語的教師享有更多的福利與特權。然而，近年的研究顯示，這些和母語者主義相關的假設也許沒有準確反映EFL學校環境中的實際情況。本研究探究韓國英語教師對母語者主義不同面向的看法，以了解母語者主義對於當地英語教師的影響。我們透過問卷和訪談，搜集了37位韓國中小學在職教師的數據。問卷結果顯示，母語者主義在某些結構面向產生負面影響；然而，質性結果顯示，對於母語者主義的擔憂，並不如現有文獻暗示的那樣有問題。本文於討論和結論中，對於減輕母語者主義在EFL環境中產生的負面影響，提出建議。

Extended author information available on the last page of the article
**Keywords**  Native speakerism · Local English teachers · NESTs · NNESTs · Korean English teachers

**Introduction**

Native speakerism, an ideology in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), is based on the assumption that native speakers of English are better at English and therefore are better teachers than nonnative teachers of English. This ideology extends far beyond the scope of language proficiency or teaching ability and impacts many aspects of school practices and policy, ranging from employment procedures to the model of English to be presented in class, among others. The concept of the native speaker as representing a desirable model of English has been the target of criticism because it can create an unnecessary divide between native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), also known as local English teachers. In this paper, we use the term local English teachers (LETs) in place of NNESTs in light of the negative connotation inherent in the dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs (Copland et al., 2020). Given the irreplaceable position of English in the age of globalization, the ramifications of native speakerism are especially evident in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), where the co-teaching of NESTs and LETs is prevalent in school settings.

Most literature on native speakerism has criticized the discrimination of and prejudice against nonnative-speaking teachers on a number of grounds, including English teaching methodology (Widdowson, 1994), linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), and the identity crisis of LETs (Nuske, 2018; Park, 2012), among others. Additionally, research examining the advantages granted to NESTs—for example, the popularity of NESTs among students and employers (Butler, 2007)—has inadvertently veiled the impact of native speakerism on LETs, wherein LETs suffer from epistemological difficulty in overcoming prejudice derived from native speakerism (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kim, 2011). On the other hand, a few recent studies have shown that the severity of the negative effects of native speakerism may have been overly emphasized or exaggerated compared to what is actually happening in practice (Copland et al., 2020). However, most studies either lack an empirical basis (Hwang & Yim, 2019) or employ merely a perception-driven methodology (Derwing et al., 2008; Magne et al., 2019), warranting more concrete empirical evidence to accurately portray the actual impact of native speakerism on EFL school settings.

In 1995, South Korea enacted its governmental NEST scheme, known as the English Program in Korea (EPIK), to recruit and place NESTs in primary and secondary schools. After the initiation of EPIK, the co-existence of NESTs and
LETs in Korean schools has revealed relatively undetected conflicts, such as unequal workload and privileges (Jeon, 2010) and the lack of mutual understanding and communication between NESTs and LETs (Heo, 2016), despite its seeming successes in collaborative teaching (Kim, 2016). Although it has been more than 25 years since the inception of EPIK, studies explicitly examining the influence of native speakerism as experienced by LETs working with NESTs in Korean public school settings are scarce. Existing studies either lack a sufficient number of participants to validate the reliability of the results (Choi, 2016) or focus only on the perspective of NESTs (Copland et al., 2020; Jeon, 2010; Kim, 2016) or LET-NEST pairs in team teaching (e.g., Heo, 2016; Khanh and Spencer-Oatey, 2016; Moote, 2003). These studies have failed to focus on the views of LETs who must team up with NESTs and are therefore directly influenced by the attitudes and repercussions stemming from native speakerism. In addition, most of these studies only involved the qualitative analysis of interview data (e.g., Jeon, 2010; Kim, 2016; Moote, 2003; Trent, 2012; Trent 2016). In the current study, we adopt a mixed-methods approach of quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to obtain an accurate understanding of local Korean in-service teachers’ perspectives and experiences with regard to native speakerism.1

**NESTs, LETs, and Native Speakerism**

In discourses of native speakerism, NESTs can be defined as monolingual English teachers with an ethnically white heritage, typically from the states of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and North America (BANA). This notion of NESTs has been critiqued by several scholars, including Davies (1991), who criticized the definition of native speakerism as being built on a mythical ideal that native speakers are from a linguistically impeccable and homogenous community. Some scholars (e.g., Kramsch, 1997) have also argued that the concept of a native speaker is an imaginary construct since the linguistically error-free community of native speakers does not—and cannot—exist. Despite the falsifiable definition of “nativeness,” it is widely accepted that ethnic-based NESTs continue to enjoy more economic and cultural privileges than their LET counterparts.

LETs can be referred to as local English teachers working in their birth states. Although LETs are deemed to outnumber NESTs (Selvi, 2011), most literature has only focused on examining native speakerism from the perspective of NESTs (Copland et al., 2016; Copland et al., 2020; Kim, 2016; Trent, 2012). However, since English language programs in EFL school settings are mostly implemented and run by local teachers, LETs’ experiences and perspectives should be delicately scrutinized to foster a harmonious collaboration between NESTs and LETs. Yet, the wave of native speakerism has offset LETs’ efforts to achieve equal status with NESTs. In particular, many LETs reportedly lack confidence in their English skills compared to NESTs (Garton et al., 2011; Heo, 2016), despite their advanced levels of English and teaching qualification, just because they do

1 The current research is based on the first author’s MA thesis.
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not possess the “nativeness” of English (Nuske, 2018; Park, 2012). Likewise, it has been reported that LETs in Korea tend to depreciate their teaching skills despite having gone through rigorous undergraduate and/or graduate training as well as a competitive teacher certification examination which they must pass in order to become a school teacher (Chung & Choi, 2016).

Negative Characterization of NESTs and Native Speakerism

It seems self-evident to state that a language can be well manifested by native speakers of that language. From segmentals to suprasegmentals, a speaking model can be exemplified by the oral production of native speakers. As the nativeness principle states, L2 learners of English are naturally prone to refer to the native-speaking model under the assumption that acquiring the target native-like pronunciation is achievable (Levis, 2005). However, for most post-puberty learners, obtaining native-like pronunciation is unlikely to be fully realized biologically (Asher & García, 1969; Munro et al., 1996), nor is it always desirable to do so in view of recent discourses on English as a lingua franca (ELF). Regrettably, however, this seemingly unrealistic goal is at the root of the self-deprecation of LETs vis-à-vis NESTs. In this respect, discourses on ELF (Graddol, 1997; Seidhlofer, 2011), Global Englishes (Crystal, 2012; Galloway & Rose, 2017), and English as an international language (EIL) (Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2011) have argued that students should not be obsessed with the nativeness principle since ELF users often depend on intelligibility when communicating in English outside the classroom. In addition, the entitlement and rights of competent LETs should not be compromised just because they were not born in one of the BANA states. Holliday (2006) also criticized the long-ingrained assumption that the teaching methodologies implemented by NESTs are innately superior to those of LETs. Similarly, Widdowson (1994) attributed the influence of native speakerism on NESTs’ teaching methodology to the cultural representativeness of NESTs in English. As Kumaravadivelu (2016) pointed out, communicative language teaching (CLT), mainly promoted by Western cultures, has been regarded as the most appropriate methodology in East Asian NEST schemes, which undermines the teaching methodology of LETs. Another related concern pertains to NESTs’ insensitivity towards local cultures (school or otherwise), where some NESTs have been reported to be aloof about accommodating the local norms and thus exhibit intercultural incompetence (Bunce, 2016). Indeed, such cultural clashes between LETs and NESTs have been reported in Korean school settings, which have been attributed to NESTs’ lack of appropriate respect and understanding for Korean school practices (Kwon, 2000). Mahboob and Lin (2016) have specifically critiqued that the communication skills and teaching methodologies of NESTs are insensitive to local norms, for instance, by downplaying the role of the local language, which could help stimulate students’

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2 Korean LETs are required to hold a BA in English education. Additionally, they have to pass a highly competitive teacher certification exam which consists of three screening stages: a written exam, a micro-teaching demonstration, and an interview.
motivation by furnishing them with familiar topics for oral or written communication. As Mahboob and Lin (2016) have suggested, any form of intercultural incompetence is best examined by investigating the perspectives of LETs rather than those of NESTs.

The putative privileges enjoyed by NESTs in the recruitment procedure have also been subject to criticism. According to Ruecker and Ives (2015), language institutes in Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand tend to favor white NESTs of English heritage. In fact, EPIK requires a bachelor’s degree and a native-speaker status, but no previous teaching experience is required from the candidates. In addition, many language institutes tend to recruit NESTs by highlighting the economic and leisure benefits, such as financial incentives or adventuring in exotic Asian states, rather than emphasizing the job description and teaching qualifications required for the position. This is a cause for concern because these specifications can determine NESTs’ qualifications and professionalism, which has a direct influence on their teaching skills. As Carless (2006) noted, failure to recruit experienced and qualified NESTs in Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong has diminished the effectiveness of the co-teaching of NESTs and LETs, defeating the very purpose of the NEST scheme, which is to complement and support the LETs.

Potential Disconnect Between Theory and Practice

As noted, most literature on native speakerism underscored its negative impact on NEST schemes and LETs. However, recent research has suggested some counter-arguments. For example, Copland et al. (2020) argued that criticisms regarding the negative effects of native speakerism implicated in the academic literature might be disconnected from what is actually being practiced in schools. They examined the views of NESTs working in East Asian countries on the following five constructs pertaining to native speakerism: (a) awareness of native speakerism (i.e., whether the teachers were aware of the concept of the ideology), (b) workload and classroom roles (i.e., whether they experienced an unequal burden in terms of workload and classroom roles), (c) experience and qualification (whether they experienced differences in teaching experience and qualification vis-à-vis LETs), (d) monolingualism (whether they only spoke English or were familiar with the local language), and (e) intercultural incompetence (whether they exhibited sensitivity to local cultures). In-depth interviews with NESTs on the afore-mentioned constructs revealed that contra to the widespread assumptions, most of the NEST participants showed respect for local teachers’ English proficiency, teaching methodology, and for local norms and cultures. The NEST interviewees also recalled their experiences of working with their LET counterparts to be cordial and harmonious. Based on their findings, the authors cautioned that the widespread criticisms and negative perceptions of native speakerism implicated in the academic literature might not fully reflect what is actually happening in institutional settings.

3 As of 2015, TEFL/TESOL/CELTA certificates are mandatory for applicants who do not have bachelor’s or master’s degree in education (EPIK Policy Changes 2015).
The results from Copland et al. (2020) revealed new insights, suggesting that the negative attitudes associated with native speakerism may not be as severe as has been traditionally assumed. However, as the researchers themselves acknowledged, their study was a small-scale study, representing 16 NESTs from five different states (Brunei [1], Taiwan [3], South Korea [7], Japan [4], and Hong Kong [1]). This inevitably translates to an overrated or underrated description when it comes to the per-state level. In addition, similar to prior research (Copland et al., 2016; Lawrence, 2016; Trent, 2012), Copland et al. (2020) focused solely on the NESTs’ perspectives without taking LETs’ perspectives into consideration. Since native speakerism works at the angle of relativeness between the two parties, LETs’ perspectives are critical to obtaining a complete picture of the impact of the ideology.

In view of what has been discussed, the current study examines the views of LETs working in Korean schools on the five constructs of native speakerism examined by Copland et al. (2020). Some modifications were made to adapt Copland et al.’s study to a Korean context and to accommodate the LET participants’ viewpoints. For example, Copland et al. did not investigate contextual factors, such as the NESTs’ interpersonal relationship with LETs, which can influence job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and involvement in the decision-making process (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In the Korean school context, where teachers must work with other colleagues in the same working division based on the teaching subject, certain environmental factors—the academic climate and perceived colleague support (You et al., 2017)—can seriously affect one’s job satisfaction. To capture this element, we added the construct—i.e., relationship with NESTs—to the five constructs examined in Copland et al. (2020). Also, we left out the construct of “monolingualism” since we target Korean LETs who are at least bilingual, unlike the NESTs interviewed in Copland et al. (2016). The data collection and analysis were guided by the following research question: to what extent are the effects of native speakerism experienced by LETs in terms of the five constructs of native speakerism?

Method

Participants

A total of 37 Korean LETs (primary school [13], middle school [12], and high school [12]) participated in the study. All participants had at least 3 years of teaching experience and had direct working experience with NESTs in the same school. The participants were recruited from five different educational districts in Korea; 23 held a bachelor’s degree (BA), and 14 had a master’s degree (MA). Their mean teaching experience was 12.01 years [SD = 9.83 years], and their mean teaching experience with NESTs was 4.67 years [SD = 3.29 years] (see Table 1).
We employed a mixed-methods approach consisting of a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. In light of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), a survey was distributed and collected through Google Survey over 3 weeks in September 2020. The survey covered the five constructs of native speakerism: (a) awareness of native speakerism, (b) workload and classroom roles, (c) experience and qualification, (d) intercultural competence, and (e) relationship with NESTs. As noted, these constructs were modified from those of Copland et al. (2020) to suit the Korean school context and the LET participants. The survey consisted of 21 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = confirming the negative effects to 5 = countering the negative effects). Each survey question was accompanied by a supplementary question to elicit a further explanation from the participants, wherein the participants were provided with a prompt to provide their opinions in an open-ended manner. For example, a question that asks “Do you consider NESTs’ English to be more beneficial for your student than yours?” would be followed by a prompt that reads, “Please provide reason(s) for your answer.” Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with select participants to explore detailed narratives on the survey questions. Six LETs took part in the interview, with each interview lasting 50 to 60 min. Due to the pandemic, the interviews were conducted via Zoom or by phone. The interview questions were based on the survey but elicited supplementary examples and anecdotes when applicable. Based on Copland et al. (2016), the questions were modified to suit the LET’s context. For example, the question that asked, “Did you have much contact with LETs?” was rephrased by replacing “LETs” with “NESTs.” (see the Appendix for sample questions). Since the participants comprised LETs, the survey and the interviews were conducted in Korean, their native language. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

### Table 1  Background of the participants

| School type | No. of participants | School district | Final degree | Teaching experience (mean years) | Experience with NESTs (mean years) |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Primary     | 13                  | Chung-buk (3)   | BA (8)       | 21.15                           | 5.11                             |
|             |                     | Gyeong-gi (1)   | MA (5)       |                                 |                                  |
|             |                     | In-cheon (1)    |              |                                 |                                  |
|             |                     | Seoul (8)       |              |                                 |                                  |
| Middle      | 12                  | Chung-buk (9)   | BA (7)       | 8.08                            | 5.5                              |
|             |                     | Dae-gu (2)      | MA (5)       |                                 |                                  |
|             |                     | Gyeong-gi (1)   |              |                                 |                                  |
| High        | 12                  | Chung-buk (11)  | BA (8)       | 6.04                            | 3.35                             |
|             |                     | Dae-gu (1)      | MA (4)       |                                 |                                  |

**Data Collection**

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Data Analysis

From the 5-scale options (1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree), a positive response (a scale of “5”) to a survey statement rejects the negative effects of native speakerism. Since the analysis was based on the mean scores of responses, we posited the null hypothesis ($H_0: M \leq 3$) as confirming the existence of native speakerism and the alternative hypothesis ($H_1: M > 3$) as rejecting the negative effects of native speakerism.

In Fig. 1, for example, the average response score for Q5 was 4.027 [$SD = 0.799$, $p < 0.000$], which can be interpreted as evidence against the negative effect of native speakerism. In other words, LETs in Korea acknowledged the beneficial contributions of NESTs to their students. A few statements in the survey questions were reversely formulated to preserve the naturalness of expression (1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree), in which case the null hypothesis ($H_0: M \geq 3$) and alternative hypothesis ($H_1: M < 3$) were modified accordingly.

For all statistical computations, we employed R to allow for the replication of the current study (Mizumoto & Plonsky, 2016). Before computing the statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test was performed for each question to review the normal distribution for choosing the statistical test type. Even though a non-parametric test was deemed useful as the total number of the responses ($N = 37$) satisfied the condition for approximating normal distribution, $^4$ we employed both the one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test (non-parametric test) and a one-sample t-test (parametric test). The results from both tests were identical, confirming their normal approximation and improving the credibility of the analysis (Weiers, 2008). In this article, we present the results from the non-parametric test.

As noted, we also collected supplementary interview data from select participants to better understand their survey responses. Following the coding procedures in the qualitative research protocol (Glesne & Peshkin, 1999), the interview transcripts were reviewed independently by the two researchers to identify the most frequently mentioned issues and examples that were directly concerned with the five constructs of native speakerism examined in the study. Any disagreement was resolved through discussion.

$^4$ Following Weiers (2008), the number of participants ($N = 37$) makes for an appropriate case of applying the central limit theorem, making possible statistical inferences for the population.
The results from the survey on the five constructs of native speakerism are presented below.

**Awareness of Native Speakerism**

As shown in Table 2, the first four questions were fact-checking questions to see if the participants were familiar with the term native speakerism and the EPIK program. The remaining questions (Q5–Q7) concerned the participants’ views about NESTs’ input and teaching. Two (Q5 and Q7) from the latter set of questions yielded significant results.

While most LETs were not familiar with the term “native speakerism” per se, they generally acknowledged the privileges and benefits enjoyed by NESTs. The results showed that the LETs viewed the NESTs’ English to be more beneficial than their own (see Q7) and that they also rated the teaching of NESTs to be highly beneficial for the students (Q5). These results align with the literature on native speakerism, indicating that native-speaker input is deemed more valuable than that of LETs. Many respondents attributed the benefits provided by the NESTs to their ability to provide authentic input and native-like pronunciation to their students, as illustrated in the following comment: “The reason why NEST teaching is better than mine is that the student can learn authentic pronunciation from native speakers.” Thus, Korean teachers believed that the English spoken by NESTs was linguistically more beneficial and superior especially in supplying natural, “real-life” English to the students. These assessments are unequivocally in line with the L2 literature, supporting the importance of the nativeness principle in L2 teaching, which has been pointed out as one of the negative aspects of native speakerism that can potentially result in
a sense of linguistic inferiority among local teachers—an issue that is revisited in
the “Discussion.”

While the LETs regarded NEST input to be more desirable and beneficial, the
same favorable sentiment did not automatically transfer to their teaching methodol-
gy (see Q6 and Q8 wherein the results remained neutral at 3.14 and 2.76, respec-
tively). In the interviews, several LETs explicitly pointed out some of the weak-
nesses in the NESTs’ teaching skills, especially in regard to grammar instruction.
One participant commented: “Most NESTs lack professional skills in explaining
… particularly, they are weak at explaining grammar, so they need assistance from
us [Korean LETs].” This comment is reminiscent of Cook (1999), who noted that
grammar teaching is an advantage for LETs, who have had first-hand experience
learning the L2 grammar as a student. Such empathetic guidance from LETs who
have already gone through the experience of learning English as a foreign language
can be far more effective for students who may be motivated by someone with a
common L2-learning background. A related issue raised by the LETs was the
monotonous teaching repertoire of NESTs. Some participants expressed concerns
that inexperienced NESTs tended to merely procure existing teaching materials from
online communities created by other NESTs. The participants were specifically con-
cerned about the blind usage of online materials without modification to tailor to the
students’ linguistic needs and levels. Several LETs acknowledged the NESTs’ class
time to be “fun with game-like activities,” but this was not always received favora-
bly especially when the fun activities were not tailored to meet the target students’
needs, classroom context, and curriculum requirement. This is an issue that has been
pointed out by other researchers who critiqued that several NESTs tended to draw
on CLT without considering important factors such as the class size, students’ needs
and goals, and local educational norms (Copland et al., 2016; Widdowson, 1994).

Experience and Qualifications

The survey results on the NESTs’ teaching qualifications from the LETs’ perspec-
tives are provided in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, the LETs’ responses were relatively neutral, with neither
of the two corresponding questions reaching significance. In general, the LETs
assessed the NESTs’ qualifications to be of greater value than their (NESTs’) teach-
ing experience, which is unsurprising since EPIK does not require NESTs to have

| Survey questions                                      | M      | SD     | Wilcoxon p |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Q9. Do NESTs have sufficient teaching qualifications? | 3.297  | 1.127  | 0.070      |
| Q10. Do NESTs have sufficient teaching experience?   | 2.811  | 0.967  | 0.115      |
teaching experience. Also, since each teacher has different credentials and experiences, LETs’ experiences have varied depending on their co-teacher. As one participant noted, “It all depends on the teacher. Most of the NESTs were skilled and courteous, but few were inexperienced and not very sincere.” To illustrate, the LET recalled instances where a NEST was absent from school without prior notification. Another LET remarked that for some NESTs, teaching English under the NEST scheme was considered a short-term job and perceived as “a way to earn easy income and a chance to travel in the host country.” The participant further added that such a casual attitude may signify a lack of commitment as some NESTs did not seem to take their teaching position seriously. Since many NESTs who work for EPIK are novice teachers that are teaching for the first time, several LETs attributed the insincerity of NESTs to their lack of teaching experience and their temporary status. Such noncommittal attitudes can have serious repercussions, as inexperienced NESTs without passion for teaching can undermine the effectiveness of co-teaching (Carless, 2006; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Since co-teaching is underpinned by a sophisticated role assignment between LETs and NESTs, close cooperation between both parties is essential. If members of either party are frequently absent from work or lack enthusiasm for teaching, the co-teaching session cannot be implemented successfully, which defeats the purpose of the LET-NEST collaboration.

### Workload and Classroom Roles

The results showed a clear imbalance of workload and classroom roles between the NESTs and LETs.

As seen in Table 4, all the responses reached significance, except for Q14 (balance in class preparation). The participants strongly acknowledged an imbalance in administrative workload (see Q11) and their role as disciplinarians (see Q13). The LETs further reported that the asymmetrical burdens in workload occurred mostly

| Survey questions                                                                 | Wilcoxon          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Q11. Is the administrative load between NESTs and LETs balanced?                  | 1.865 1.032 0.000*** |
| Q12. Are the classroom roles between NESTs and LETs balanced?                     | 3.568 1.120 0.004**  |
| Q13. Are the disciplinary roles between NESTs and LETs balanced?                  | 1.703 1.051 0.000*** |
| Q14. Is the division of class preparation between NESTs and LETs balanced?        | 3.000 1.179 0.468  |
| Q15. Do you prefer to co-teach with NESTs rather than teaching alone?             | 3.595 1.040 0.001**  |

5 Note that teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience are regarded as “experienced” teachers. This is based on Article 21 (Qualifications for Teachers) in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in Korea, where paragraph 2 distinguishes the first-grade qualification (grades I) from the second-grade qualification (grades II) among regular LETs based on the criterion of having more than 3 years of experience.
outside the classroom. In other words, the imbalance seemed to have stemmed from administrative work. From the open-ended questions and interview results, it was found that most LETs amicably accepted their workload and additional duties. This may be explained by the fact that LETs in Korean schools assume the status of public officials, which means that they are expected to perform additional administrative work outside the classroom (see “Discussion” for details).

Significant differences were found for classroom roles as well. In particular, disciplinary roles were mostly taken on by the LETs. Several LETs mentioned that NESTs typically do not take on disciplinary duty due to their lack of Korean language skills and their status as temporary “guest teachers.” While each school has a different protocol for co-teaching sessions, most of the LETs mentioned that the NEST usually takes on the role of the “main teacher,” and the LET works with the NEST to make sure that students understand the instructions given by the NEST and that the classroom activities are run smoothly. Some LETs mentioned that while the success of team teachings depends on the NEST co-teacher; in general, team teaching provides both the LET and NEST opportunities to grow as teachers. With respect to their overall preference on team-teaching sessions, the LETs were significantly in favor of team teaching than teaching alone (see Q15), and some also pointed out that team teaching and the related preparation provided them with a chance to enhance their own English.

### Intercultural Competence

Here, we equate intercultural competence with one’s awareness of and sensitivity to the local norms. Thus, the participants were asked about NESTs’ familiarity with Korean culture, including school and student culture. The results showed that most LETs did not experience instances of cultural insensitivity from the NESTs. LETs’ favorable responses regarding NESTs’ familiarity with Korean culture were significant, and the NESTs’ familiarity with the school and student culture also yielded modestly positive responses (see Table 5).

In the open-ended questions, the LETs recounted some touching gestures made by some NESTs to accommodate the Korean student culture. One participant

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**Table 5 Survey results: intercultural competence**

| Survey questions                                      | M   | SD  | p       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| Q16. Are NESTs familiar with Korean culture in general? | 3.784 | 0.854 | 0.000*** |
| Q17. Are NESTs familiar with Korean school culture?   | 3.054 | 0.998 | 0.362   |
| Q18. Are NESTs familiar with Korean student culture?  | 3.135 | 0.948 | 0.196   |

The results for the three questions are on the positive side (i.e., rejecting the negative effects of native speakerism)

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6 EPIK explicitly specifies a NEST as a “Guest English Teacher” (Heo, 2016, p. 174).
recalled a NEST co-teacher who was a fan of the K-pop group BTS establishing an excellent rapport with the students.

“The teacher planned lessons based on BTS songs for our students. This was a hit with the students since BTS lyrics contain a lot of English, but at the same time, their songs also carry Korean sentiment which our students can easily connect with. This NEST was very interested in trending issues that were popular among students and tried to incorporate these into her lessons.”

There were also favorable reports of NESTs’ willingness to accommodate last-minute modifications to lesson plans, which has been depicted as a “rapport-sensitive incident” that could be annoying or face-threatening to one or both teachers (Khanh & Spencer-Oatey, 2016). Other aspects included NESTs’ active participation during the school field day events, and their efforts to practice Korean customs by showing respect for elderly teachers. To our surprise, one LET mentioned that a lack of respect was observed from a LET, rather than a NEST, who tried to impose Korean customs on NESTs.

“There was an elderly Korean teacher who used to lecture NESTs about Korean customs as if they were kindergarteners. He would preach about why they [NESTs] should learn to use the chopsticks, and so on….I thought this was inappropriate, but the NEST handled the situation well with maturity and wisdom.”

In general, the current results are contrary to Bunce (2016)’s findings, which reported novice NESTs’ insensitivity to the local culture, unnecessarily impressing their linguistic superiority onto students.

### Interpersonal Relationship

The LETs generally regarded their relationship with NESTs to be cordial and harmonious. As seen in Table 6, the three questions also yielded positive responses from the participants, with all responses reaching significance.

The qualitative responses showed that LETs generally believed that NESTs were making efforts to interact and socialize with the LETs: “I could easily see that they

| Survey questions | M | SD  | Wilcoxon p |
|------------------|---|-----|------------|
| Q19. Are NESTs active in socializing with LETs? | 3.324 | 0.973 | 0.027** |
| Q20. Is the relationship between NESTs and LETs harmonious? | 3.865 | 1.032 | 0.000*** |
| Q21. Do NESTs and LETs respect each other? | 4.081 | 1.038 | 0.000*** |

The results for the three questions are on the positive side (i.e., rejecting the negative effects of native speakerism)
[NESTs] were making efforts to interact with us [LETs]. One NEST even visited our office during the lunch break, every day, to hang out with us.” Another LET mentioned that she would often have coffee with her NEST partner after class and that this NEST even came to her wedding—a gesture that the LET much appreciated. There were also reports of a few NESTs who did not seem very keen on developing personal relationships with the LETs, but this was simply perceived as the “Western way of having clear boundaries between professional and personal matters.”

Thus far, we have summarized the results from the survey. Significant negative effects of native speakerism were observed for only two of the five constructs—“awareness of native speakerism” and “workload and classroom roles.” In the following section, we discuss the LET experiences and viewpoints focusing on the two afore-mentioned constructs to further explore the effects of native speakerism.

**Discussion**

As noted in the survey results, the LET participants scaled the NEST input very highly, which they regarded to be more beneficial to the students than their own input. This could be interpreted as a negative aspect of native speakerism wherein native-speaker English is more highly valued than the English of LETs. In order to better understand what LETs meant by the benefits of native speaker input, it is useful to examine the qualitative data more closely. A close look at the interview results showed that while some LETs explicitly highlighted the value of NEST teaching based on their native pronunciation, they explained that there was more to it than just the accent and pronunciation. They commented that there were other aspects that NESTs bring to the classroom. One participant working in a high school commented: “it’s not only that [native-speaker input], students can be exposed to nonverbal gestures and facial expressions from NESTs that they can’t get from us, which I think is equally important... Also, native-speaking teachers convey aspects of the Western culture. They dress differently and carry themselves differently... they just exude Western vibes... all of this can stimulate and pique our students’ interest in learning English.”

As seen, the LET’s notion of native-speaker input here goes beyond the accent and pronunciation to include nonverbal communication. This participant believed that NEST input is beneficial as it can convey aspects of a NEST’s culture that a LET is unable to demonstrate (e.g., Kim, 2016). Exposing students to the various ways in which NESTs deliver the language input, as messengers of the target culture, can be a valuable cultural experience (Carless, 2006; Carless & Walker, 2006). Since language and culture cannot be separated, students can experience how input can be delivered differently depending on the cultural background of the speaker. Another participant also expressed a similar idea that Korean teachers’ way of thinking and behaviors are within the boundaries of Korean culture and customs, but “NESTs have a different culture... with different ways of thinking and speaking. Their language carries more authenticity because they deliver it differently.”
Again, this participant ascribed the values of NEST input not necessarily to the native pronunciation, but because of the cultural affordances it offers to the students. As one of the reviewers mentioned, the way the participant phrased his/her opinion (i.e., “carry more authenticity”) may seem problematic in light of the fact that the native speaker is heavily implied in the use of the word *authenticity* as “authenticity is implicit in the discourse on native speakerism” (Lowe & Pinner, 2016, p. 8). However, in this particular case, the LET participant was using the word “authentic” in the sense of the language input being more “natural and communicative” as opposed to being “rigid and modeled after textbook English.” This view was shared by another participant who commented that LETs’ expressions are often formulaic and lack variety:

“It has been my experience that all Korean teachers say, ‘Open your books to page seven.’ I am pretty sure that all Korean teachers use this expression, but NESTs use a variety of different ways to express the same meaning.”

Similar views were shared by Taiwanese teachers in Hsieh and Gao (2022) where there always seemed to be a “textbook English” model for Taiwanese students follow; on the other hand, NEST input provides various ways of conveying the same meaning.

Hence, the current findings show that LETs think highly of the benefits of native-speaker input, and this is indeed consistent with the existing literature wherein a NEST model is presented as the desirable model in light of the nativeness principle. In discourses of native speakerism, such an ideology has been criticized in that it can potentially instill a sense of linguistic inferiority in the LETs. Levis (2005) even cautioned that LETs’ preference and admiration for the NESTs’ pronunciation could prompt them to devalue their own pronunciation, leading to eroded confidence in their English, which can further result in their identity crisis as an English teacher (Garton et al., 2011). In the current findings, only a few participants scaled NEST input highly solely for the native accent and pronunciation. Most participants valued NEST input because NESTs can convey different aspects of their culture to Korean students through their thinking, expressions, body language, and even clothing. Through this, they afford various cultural experiences to the students—not only just their native accent. While the participants believed these were aspects that only the NESTs could convey, they were equally aware of other aspects that only LETs themselves could provide for the students, for example, the provision of effective instruction to achieve students’ immediate goals. One participant commented: “Given the Korean-style assessment procedure, our [LETs’] teaching is more effective in helping students score good marks on high-stakes tests, like the college entrance exam.” The participants also pointed out that LETs are far better at assessing students’ needs and incorporating a variety of pedagogic techniques to help them achieve their goals. This is not surprising since LETs have a better understanding of the school curriculum and the local teaching context which in turn can lead to successful classroom instruction. Such advantages surrounding LETs have been observed in other studies as well (Carless, 2006; Kim, 2016; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001). Thus, the LETs did not regard
their input or teaching as inferior to the NESTs, nor did they feel threatened about their identity as local English teachers.\footnote{We did not specifically focus on LETs' professional identity formation that has been the focus of recent research [e.g., Heo, 2016]. As Hsieh and Gao (2022) suggested, we agree that analyzing LETs' changing perceptions of self and others across contexts and over time could further enrich our understanding of LETs' linguistic identity, but this was beyond the scope of current study.} In summary, although significant negative effects were observed with regard to the superiority of NEST input, the qualitative results revealed that it was not as problematic as implicated in the literature. Additionally, the current findings did not reveal instances of LETs devaluing their English or teaching skills based on those of NESTs. The LET participants equally acknowledged the value of NEST input as well as their own input in the classroom.

We now turn to the issue of workload imbalance, which was another construct that yielded significant negative effects in the survey results. As discussed, our participants were appreciative of the benefits that NESTs bring to the classroom. However, some raised questions about the effectiveness of hiring NESTs especially considering the cost and the additional work that can be incurred on the LETs:

“\textquoteitch costs a lot to hire NESTs, and with native-speaking teachers in the school, we are burdened with additional administrative duties. I’m not sure if the benefits of having NESTs justifies the financial expenses and the additional work.”

The above quote addresses two concerns in hiring NESTs: the financial cost and additional work for LETs resulting from NESTs. The “additional work” factor is of interest here. It may be recalled that the category of “Workload and Classroom Roles” yielded significant effects of native speakerism from the survey results (see Table 4). The busy schedules of LETs have been noted not only in Korea (Heo, 2016; Kim, 2016) but also in other Asian contexts [e.g., Khanh and Spencer-Oatey (2016)], so creating any additional burdens can be a sensitive issue for overworked LETs. As addressed in the “Results,” LETs’ qualitative results revealed that they did not regard the imbalance of work assignments as a discriminatory aspect. As one participant pointed out, the EPIK contract does not legally bind NESTs to perform administrative duties, as opposed to Korean LETs who are legally bound to take administrative workloads as stipulated in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.\footnote{According to Article 20 (Duties of Teachers and Staff) of the \textit{Elementary and Secondary Education Act}, paragraph 4 and paragraph 5 stipulate that “administrative affairs” should be handled by not only administrative staff but by all relevant staff in school, including teachers. This is the legal ground that mandates teachers to take on administrative workloads, aside from teaching duties.} Some explicitly mentioned that NESTs should be “spared from additional administrative work” as they do not have the status of public officers like LETs do. However, there was a sense of frustration in one comment: “For NESTs who do not speak a word of Korean, we LETs have to tend to them like their private secretary.” This remark was made by a LET who had to co-teach with a young, inexperienced NEST who relied heavily on the LET for assistance; hence, the term “private secretary.” This was of course a rare case involving a NEST who needed assistance outside of school-related work. Most LETs took on their workload and disciplinary roles without resentment or complaint.
It may be recalled that LET participants also showed a preference for team teaching with NESTs rather than teaching alone. Some LETs pointed out that there were a lot of details that needed to be worked out for it to be successful, but it was helpful for the students and “students really like the team-teaching lessons.” One LET mentioned that when the NEST is in charge of the main teaching, she (the LET) takes the time as an opportunity to work with students who need extra help. This does not reflect the results from Copland et al. (2020) where a NEST reported that in most team-teaching sessions, “the LETs stood at the back watching” (p. 361), and one of the LETs “didn’t turn up hardly ever” (p. 361). In the current results, the LETs showed favorable attitudes and seemed committed to co-teaching with the NESTs. Thus, although the survey results yielded significant differences in workload and classroom roles, the LETs did not regard the imbalance of work assignments as discrimination stemming from native speakerism.

As mentioned previously, the constructs of native speakerism examined in our study have been adapted from Copland et al. (2020) whose results showed that the negative effects of native speakerism discussed in the literature were not as prevalent in practice. Their study interviewed NESTs, but our study targeted LETs, who are typically the “victims” of native speakerism. Our findings mirror Copland et al.’s (2020) results in that the negative effects were not as severe as sometimes portrayed. The LETs did not consider themselves to be inferior to their NEST counterparts, and they perceived the NESTs to be sensitive to local educational norms. However, it should be borne in mind that in Copland et al. (2020) and the current study, both groups of teachers were teaching in the LETs’ home country where the LETs are experienced (with a mean teaching experience of 12 years, see Table 1), permanent full-time teachers who have proudly earned their public teacher status via a rigorous screening process, compared to the NESTs who have temporary “guest” status in Korea. The results might be different if conducted in an environment where the non-native speaking teacher is not the LET (not locally born nor educated in the host country), as in the case of a Korean-born English teacher teaching in Singapore or France.

**Conclusion and Implications**

The current study examined the effects of native speakerism as experienced by LETs in the context of Korean schools. The results demonstrated that most of the constructs of native speakerism did not exert negative effects on Korean primary and secondary school settings. The findings thus suggest that it is important to re-examine some of the widely-held prejudices against NESTs who may be misperceived as uncooperative and/or insensitive to local school culture merely because of their linguistic background. At the same time, it is neither fair nor justified to assume that NESTs are better English teachers by virtue of their native-speaker status. Any prejudice towards LETs or unfavorable attitudes toward NESTs should be carefully examined since such perception-based judgments may bring unoward conflict between LETs and NESTs and depreciate LETs’ competence and teaching skills. In what follows, we conclude with some suggestions that can help reduce the effects of native speakerism and promote harmonious LET-NEST collaborations in EFL school settings.
In theoretical debates of native speakerism, one of the major issues concerns the deeply entrenched nativeness principle, which can potentially induce LETs to devalue their own English and even doubt their teaching skills. As discussed, this was not salient in our findings. The local teachers valued NEST input more than their own not necessarily because of the superiority of “native-ness,” but because the LETs believed that NEST input included more than just an accent or pronunciation in that the various ways (both linguistic and nonlinguistic) in which NESTs deliver the language can afford students with an enriched cultural experience. As such, our participants did not devalue their own English nor their teaching skills. Even so, it is important to regularly conduct a teacher-training regime specifically focusing on the importance of EIL and ELF, which can raise nonnative-speaking teachers’ awareness of diversely accepted English variations to reject the notion of native speakerism (Schreiber, 2019), and emphasize the role of English as a lingua franca in this era of globalization, where English is used more widely among L2 users rather than native speakers (Magne et al., 2019). It is also noteworthy to point out that EPIK requires that the prospective teachers to be from Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, the USA, or South Africa, implying that the program acknowledges only the “inner circle” varieties of English. This suggests that even the policymakers that make important decisions regarding EPIK have a very narrow definition of English(es). Clearly, there is a need to educate both policymakers and practitioners on all the varieties of English and the ethnic and cultural diversity of native English speakers.

Another suggestion may be made at an administrative level. The current findings showed that some novice NESTs displayed irresponsible and noncommittal attitudes toward their teaching duties.9 Ideally, the recruitment process for NESTs should be discussed at the governmental level to recruit well-qualified applicants who are passionate about teaching and who have favorable attitudes toward the host culture. Also, in addition to EPIK orientation programs where NESTs receive training before being dispatched to their respective schools, regular in-service training sessions should be conducted with both NESTs and LETs to not only enhance their teaching skills but also to better communicate and build rapport with their co-teachers. Such efforts can help reduce the negative effects of native speakerism and further provide a better quality of co-teaching for students and teachers alike.

Lastly, it should be borne in mind that the lack of (or limited) understanding of NESTs and native speakerism on the part of LETs can cause dissatisfaction and even resentment toward what might appear as favoritism or privilege granted to NESTs. An accurate understanding of native speakerism can help eliminate an unnecessary divide and prejudice between NESTs and LETs. In this regard, a more vibrant exchange of knowledge on TESOL between L2 scholars and practitioners is desirable (Copland et al., 2020). For example, TESOL scholars can expand the discourse of native speakerism from within academic circles to school practitioners and even to the general public. At the same time, public education sectors should encourage and train LETs to study and circulate knowledge of TESOL-related issues to get a full sense of the facts and fictions of native speakerism. Such efforts should help bridge the gap between academia and schools, thereby enabling LETs to evaluate the situation more objectively.

9 It should be noted that this type of attitude can be displayed by LETs as well.
The results of this study are bound by some limitations. We examined the perspectives of LETs, but ideally, it would be desirable to examine the perspectives of both LETs and NESTs working in similar teaching contexts since each group’s realities are not always understood by the other (Copland et al., 2020; Khanh & Spencer-Oatey, 2016). In addition, some of the questions used in this study elicited LETs’ views or perceptions of NESTs. For example, we asked LETs about their native-speaking co-teachers’ qualifications or experience. Although the LETs seemed to know whether a NEST was a novice teacher or an experienced teacher, we have no way of confirming it objectively. However, given that our purpose was to examine the LETs’ viewpoints, we feel that it was important to consider NESTs’ qualifications and experience from the viewpoint of LETs. Given the continuation of EPIK with significant fiscal budgets, we hope that further research, conducted with a periodical assessment of the impact of native speakerism, will be able to provide a more accurate lens in capturing the status quo in Korean schools, which can, in turn, enhance the effectiveness of the co-teaching of LETs and NESTs. As it takes a whole village to raise a child, we should make concerted efforts to involve all the relevant sectors—TESOL scholars, school administrators, teacher-trainers, and L2 practitioners—to foster a healthier learning environment for both students and teachers.

Appendix

Sample Questions

Are you familiar with the concept of native speakerism and its implication in the field of TESOL?

Do you assess the NEST scheme in Korea positively? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.

Do you believe that co-teaching with NESTs is beneficial to Korean students? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.

Do NESTs and LETs respect each other? Can you share any examples?

Do NESTs use various methods, including communicative language teaching (CLT)? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.

Do you consider NESTs’ English to be more beneficial for your students than yours? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.

Do you consider the teaching skills of NESTs to be more effective for students than yours? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.

Do you believe that the administrative load between NESTs and LETs is balanced? If so/If not, what are your reasons? Please elaborate with examples from your experience.
Do you believe that disciplinary roles between NESTs and LETs are balanced? If so/If not, …

Do you prefer to have co-teaching session with NESTs? If so/If not, …

Do you think that the qualifications of NESTs are sufficient in enabling them to be effective teachers? If so/If not, …

Do you think that NESTs have sufficient teaching experience? If so/If not, …

Do you think that NESTs are familiar with the general Korean culture? If so/If not, …

Do you think that NESTs are accustomed to Korean school culture? If so/If not, …

Do you think that NESTs are accustomed to Korean student culture? If so/If not, …

Do you think that NESTs actively socialize with LETs? If so/If not, …

Do you think that your relationships with NESTs are harmonious? If so/If not, …

Author Contribution First author: Daein Lim (data collection, analysis, write-up)
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Data Availability Not applicable.

Declarations All authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Ethics Approval Not applicable.

Competing Interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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