

**Colonialism ‘still’ Rules in English Language Teaching:
Recruitment to Prestige Programs in Saudi Arabia Universities**
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Abstract: *In the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), studies and scholarly publications questioning the NEST/NNEST (Native-English-Speaker Teacher/ Non-native-English-Speaker Teacher) dichotomy have steadily increased over the last 25 years. This dichotomy has resulted in discriminatory practices against NNESTs, underpinning the contested assumption that native speaker status should be the gold standard in TESOL. This study explores how this problematic perception plays out in the specific context of the Preparatory Year Programs (PYP) in two Saudi universities. This study, based on the analysis of 18 teacher interviews, examines the lived experiences of university English teachers, both native and non-native, locally and internationally recruited, working in the same programs. This paper discusses two themes: the participants’ qualifications and their beliefs about the main reason why they were recruited. The data indicate that only a few teachers believe that being a NS is the main factor in being hired whereas the majority believe that qualifications are the most important requirements for job recruitment. As the most required and obtained certificate for English Language Teaching (ELT) in the PYP, The Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) does appear to replace the NS status requirement based on the participants’ opinions. However, CELTA does not escape criticism as an English teaching qualification. The study argues that buying into the CELTA requirement perpetuates colonialism in ELT.*

Keywords: CELTA; English teacher qualifications; NESTs; NNESTs; teacher recruitment

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the validity of the TESOL profession has been undermined by widespread recruitment practices leading to hiring native speakers (NSs) without teaching qualifications over non-native speakers (NNSs) with professional registration from a variety of backgrounds. The literature provides ample evidence of instances of discrimination against non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in terms of job advertisement and overall access to employment opportunities: these attestations demonstrate the tenacity of the perception that NS status should be the gold standard in TESOL. Holliday (2005) criticised this simplified ideology by which native speakers are identified as the source of ‘Western culture’ and therefore the perfect fit for English teaching and referred to it

as native-speakerism. This ideology underpins the distribution of power, privilege, and prejudice in the field of English language teaching. It is the basis for different categorisations such as 'us' and 'them', 'self' and 'others', and 'East' and 'West' which 'clearly account[s] for the socially accepted superiority of the 'native speaker' over the rest of the world's speakers of English and assigns the former innumerable qualities and values that give them the aura of being the "ideal English teacher"' (Llurda 2016: 53).

The division of power could be clearly seen through the representation of English uses and users in the Kachruvian concentric circles; the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. According to Kachru (1987; 1992), the Inner Circle represents the countries where English is spoken as a mother tongue such as the United States and Britain while the Outer Circle refers to the former colonies where English is used as an official language, such as India and Singapore. The Expanding Circle, on the other hand, is constituted by countries which use English as a foreign language such as China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Besides being widely accepted, Kachru's classification is a clear indication of the multi-sociolinguistic realities of English today. Therefore, installing the 'standard' NS model of English teaching in other countries is not relevant, and the dichotomy between NSs and NNSs of English is "functionally un insightful, particularly in multilingual social contexts" (Kachru 1992: 3).

2. Literature review

Dealing with the topic of 'English' and power, Phillipson (1992) made a significant argument in his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, in which he claimed that global ELT is a form of linguistic dominance. Phillipson proposed the term 'NS fallacy' to describe the contested assumption that NESTs are better than NNESTs in ELT and described this fallacy as a creation of the core English-speaking countries to conquer other countries through marginalising other nations' languages and their attached cultures. NESTs have enjoyed a prestigious status in the English teaching profession compared to their non-native counterparts, and this prestigious status remained largely unchallenged until the work of Medgyes (1992; 1994) made NNESTs visible in the TESOL literature. Working in the field of applied linguistics, Medgyes (1994) studied the experiences of NESTs and NNESTs in ten countries around the world. Using a questionnaire, he examined the individual differences in teaching styles and competencies for English teachers and claimed that both NESTs and NNESTs could excel in their teaching practice although there was a clear categorisation in the profession. Differences between the instructional practices of the NESTs and NNESTs were predominantly language-based; Medgyes found out specifically that

NNESTs, based on the participants' perceptions, were not as fluent as their first language colleagues. Reves and Medgyes (1994) also found that the views of NNESTs were shaped by their perceptions of self-efficacy and pedagogical competence, which the teachers described as a handicap. The debate on the NEST/NNEST dichotomy was then taken up by Braine (1999), who edited a book on the experiences, social challenges and pedagogical future of NNESTs. Llurda, a world-renowned and prolific scholar on the topics of assumptions and biases in the field of ELT, established a presence in the literature as an advocate for NNESTs. Moving from a substantial critique of Chomsky's (1965) misinterpreted assertion of the primacy of native speakers (Llurda 2000), he studied the self-efficacy of NESTs teaching EFL to Spanish children in the city of Lleida, and focused specifically on the teachers' views on the NS/NNS debate (Llurda and Huguet 2003). Llurda (2005) supported Braine's (1999) contribution, outlining the psychological and social struggles experienced by NNESTs. Issues including inadequate recruitment and working conditions policies for NNESTs were pursued by Mahboob and Golden (2003), Clark and Paran (2007), Holliday and Aboshiha, (2009), and Copland, Garton and Mann (2016). These scholars argued that despite decades of research attention and the fact that a minority of English language teachers speak it as a first language, the English language education market remained skewed to NESTs, especially in Asian countries. Whilst many scholars such as Llurda (2016) have contributed to more nuanced understandings of the NEST/NNEST debate, according to Kamhi-Stein (2016), the debate evolved as the basis for policy and advocacy initiatives. Emerging from these initiatives was the NNEST Caucus, or an Interest Section in TESOL International (Braine 2010). This organisation produced opportunities for leadership amongst its adherents and created a venue and a forum for professional development. Selvi (2014; 2016) termed these professional activities the "NNEST movement". It developed amongst NNEST researchers and practitioners to address issues such as ownership of the language, NS primacy in defining the language and its curriculum, linguistic and language standards for assessment, recruitment and working conditions, and monocultural or multicultural focus. The work within the movement has been primarily focused on confronting the NS construct as well as re-conceptualizing the essentializing terms of NS and NNS (Lee 2005; Mahboob 2010). As a result, a great amount of research has considered the impact of the NS/NNS dichotomy on NNS teachers (Llurda 2005; Mahboob 2010; Rudolph 2018) and NNS preservice teachers (Aneja 2016a; 2016b;

2017). Selvi argued that the movement is inclusive of NESTs, is democratic, and addresses myths such as separate competencies and skill levels for NESTs and NNESTs, learners' preferences for their educators, and standardisation (benchmarking) of language and linguistic objectives (Selvi 2014). Rudolph, Selvi, and Yazan (2015) continued these themes, further analysing trends in forms of discrimination in the profession. Many scholars (e.g., Houghton and Rivers 2013; Llorca 2016; Rivers 2016; 2017), however, claimed that most studies undertaken within the movement were biased towards one group of teachers, NNESTs, by promoting the victimised identities of NNESTs at the expense of the other group, NESTs. They argued that the NNEST movement's efforts fail to acknowledge the professional status of NESTs by suggesting that they are merely qualified by birth and "praised on largely imagined criteria rather than on professional or academic measures of ability" (Rivers and Ross 2013: 52). Therefore, the study addresses this gap in the literature by studying the post-recruitment experiences of both NESTs and NNESTs without limiting their identities to either NS or NNS framings.

A number of empirical studies have provided evidence of doubtful practices and their relation to native-speakerism in the TESOL profession in the Inner Circle context (particularly in the US and the UK) (e.g., Mahboob 2004; Moussu 2006; Clark and Paran 2007). Very little research, however, has focused on these issues in the EFL and ESL context (such as Ali 2009; Selvi 2010; Mahboob and Golden 2013). In this study, I examine how the tales of discrimination are paralleled in the Saudi context. My data will challenge the commonly held belief that NSs are hired for the simple fact that they are NSs, and yet will show that colonialism still rules in TESOL.

3. Setting and participants

The population for this study is that of English as a second language educators working with first year undergraduates in Saudi universities. Saudi Arabia has a compulsory Preparatory Year Programs (PYPs) for all its new student university intake in order to address any gaps in their use of academic English for their selected disciplines, besides other social and communication skills important for their academic life. The English programs are extremely important and have received a great deal of attention from Higher Education authorities in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, with respect to the aims of this research project, to contribute to the literature on NEST/NNESTs, these programs present several interesting characteristics. They employ English teaching staff from diverse cultures and backgrounds and the fact that thousands of students enrol in these programs every year puts English teaching staff in high demand for employment. However, these

programs have been criticised for hiring under-qualified teaching staff, which makes investigating PYP teachers' recruitments and experiences in these programs highly significant.

Purposive sampling was used in order to select teachers who can represent three groups of English teachers in order to capture the diversity of the English teacher population in the Saudi context. **Robinson (2014) distinguishes** between two forms of purposive sampling (also referred to as non-random sampling): stratified sampling, where the population is divided into groups by some characteristic; and quota sampling, where a percentage of the population is recruited. In this research, stratified sampling was used to select participants who were English second language educators in the preparatory undergraduate years of two Saudi universities. The two national universities are comparable in terms of size, prestige and the courses offered. The choice of two sites allowed me to recruit greater numbers of participants and to avoid over-generalising from conditions at one specific institution. It also helped me enhance the confidentiality of the study participants and protect my participants from any danger or job loss resulting from being identified by their employers. As speakerhood status is an important element in this study, the sample requires educators from populations who have English as their first language, and educators who do not have English as their first language. Furthermore, Saudis and non-Saudis are included in the latter because these two types of NNESTs might have different positioning in the program and thereby different experiences.

Three groups of teachers were necessary to represent the diversity of English teachers in the PYPs: NESTs, NNESTs from overseas, and NNESTs from Saudi Arabia (i.e., local English teachers). The reason for choosing these three groups was to look at how each one positioned itself in the teaching programs and how they described their experiences. The group of expatriate NNESTs is an under-researched group as most studies in the literature have focused on the comparison between NESTs and NNESTs and the NNESTs tend to be local English teachers. However, in my study I include both NNESTs from overseas and NNESTs from Saudi Arabia, intending to explore how their different cultural identities would affect their positions in this teaching context. The literature strongly suggests that there will be differences between NNESTs and NESTs in general, however the inclusion of three groups allowed me to see if there were other factors that differentiated between teachers, or that grouped them together. All the participants had at least one semester of teaching experience in the PYPs. This length of experience would allow them to describe their recruitment

and post-recruitment practices, taking into consideration the circumstances of the shortage of teachers and the use of limited-term contracts for teaching staff.

Once the selected population has been identified, the size of the sample needs to be determined (Robinson 2014). In case study research, there is no clear-cut sample size since “the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information but to elucidate the particular” (Creswell 2013: 157). Therefore, I considered it appropriate to have six participants for each group with a total of 18 participants.

Finally, all participants were female due to religious and cultural reasons, which prevented me from interviewing male teachers. There are separate programs for male students with male teachers due to gender segregation in the Saudi education system.

4. Data collection method

Data were collected through surveys to access the participants' demographic information and through interviews to obtain insight into their lived experiences of teaching in the PYPs. All the participants were asked to fill out a brief demographic survey before the main interviews, stating their names, ages, affiliations, qualifications and the period of their teaching experience. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were the main data collection instrument in this research. In the interviews, the participants answered 13 open-ended questions concerning the following themes: perceptions of influential factors for gaining employment, in-service benefits and challenges, peer relations; career lives, impacts on their teacher identity, opinions about whether the NEST-NNEST dichotomy was visible in their current teaching practice and how it affected their experience.

A thematic approach was used as my analytical strategy because it is considered a useful ‘tactic in reducing and managing large volumes of data without losing the context, for getting close to or immersing oneself in the data, for organising and summarising, and for focusing the interpretation’ (Wiebe, Durepos and Mills 2010: 927). The data from the interviews were coded through the Nvivo program. Through using the auto-coding feature, each question created a theme node and each participant created a case node. This helped in quickly identifying broad themes and narrowing the focus to the most significant issues and topics. Some themes were created through running a Text Search query looking for specific terms. For example, I looked for the terms such as CELTA as they emerged from the initial coding of the data as important factors in the teachers' experiences and coded all occurrences of each term at a new node under its name. Finally, I developed naturalistic generalizations from the data analysis process, which Creswell

(2013: 200) defines as “generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases”.

This paper reports only two themes from my data: analysis of the participants’ qualifications and their beliefs about the main reason why they were recruited. The former is generated from written responses in the surveys and oral responses in the interviews while the latter is derived mainly from the participants’ answers to one of the interview questions: “What do you think is the main reason why you were accepted for this job?” Other themes from the interviews’ data were used in other publications.

5. Findings

Data in this study suggest that the majority of these teachers believed they were hired because of their qualifications. Only three participants thought being a NS played a major role in job recruitment. Two of these were NSs and one was a NNS. In this study I used different labels to refer to the participants in order to ensure anonymity such as 1BNS (1= indicates the order of the interviewee; B= University B; NS= Native Speaker), 2ANNS (2= the order; A= University A; NNS= Non-native speaker) and 3AS (3= the order; A= University A; S: Saudi). The quotes below show the responses of these three participants when I asked them what they thought was the main reason why they were hired in their current position:

I think number one is being a native speaker. (1BNS)

I think perhaps coming from England, you know...it's nothing to do with me, probably just the fact that I'm from England. (2BNS)

Teacher shortage...Because they always look for native speakers, and I'm not native. (1BNNS)

Another NS teacher believed that her NS status and nationality were important, but alongside professional requirements (qualifications and teaching experience):

Well, I think because of my qualifications...I have a Master’s in Education, I have a Bachelor’s in Psychology, I have a CELTA certificate. I also have experience teaching. I'm a native speaker, I'm from the US, so I have the accent that they're looking for. (2ANS)

Interestingly, the other teachers (n=14) believed that academic credentials and experience were the most important qualities to get a job in the PYP. Their answers include:

Yeah, but you have to have the qualifications. As far as experience with the teaching, at least one year. Also, a CELTA or some type of teaching certificate. TEFL or TESL. (1ANS)

I think it was CELTA and then if you had experience in English that was preferred but they were accepting other experiences as long as you had a Bachelor’s or a Master’s. (3BNS)

My qualifications and my experience, and I met the standards that they are looking for after I passed both the writing task and all the interview. (2BNNS)

A BA in English major. Teaching experience, two years minimum I think, most likely, or preferably, to adults and in one of the GCC countries. Also a certificate in teaching English to adults, like CELTA, TEFL, TESOL, one of these. (2ANNS)

But I think they chose the best of the best. So they had to compare, or to get more applicants and to compare their qualifications. Maybe courses they've taken. (2BS)

When I collated the demographical information provided by the participants, responses showed that the majority of the participants were indeed experienced English teachers. There were, however, some differences amongst the three groups. Figure 1 below records these differences in terms of years of teaching experience.

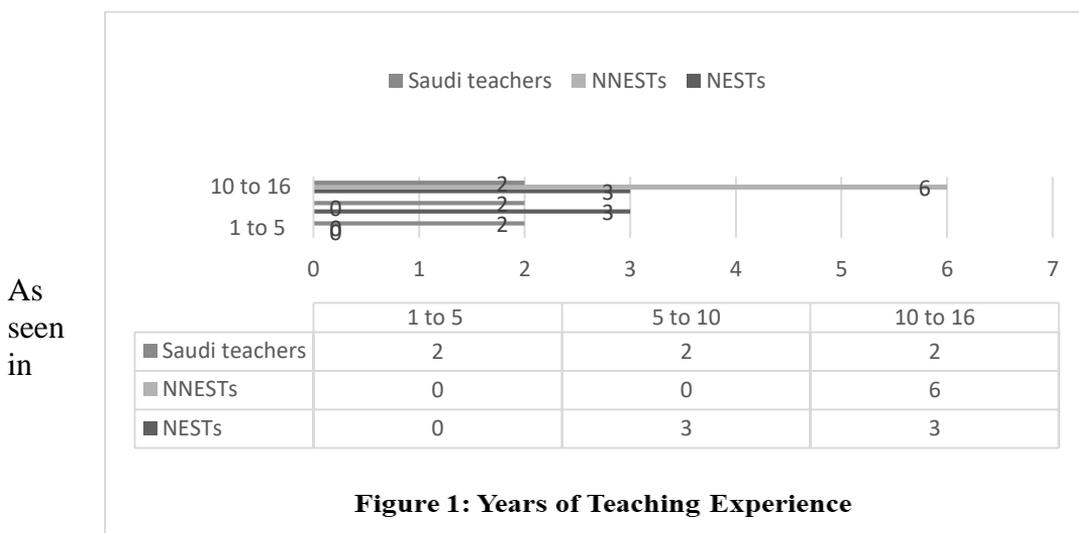


Figure 1, the NESTs had been teaching English for a period of five to 15 years while NNESTs had been teaching English for between 10 and 16 years. In the group of Saudi English teachers, on the other hand, only two had over 10 years’ teaching experience, two had six years of teaching experience or

more and two had less than four years. Overall, 11 participants had 10 or more years' experience in ELT. The majority of these were NNESTs with three NESTs and two Saudis. Two, both Saudis, had four years or less experience in ELT. As the data show that the majority of NSs had teaching experience of five to 16 years, it is hard to claim, as has been shown to be the case in other studies, that language teaching was dominated by inexperienced NSs. Furthermore, the lack of experience on the part of the Saudi teachers cannot be explained by a bias towards native speakers since other NNESTs had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

With regard to qualifications, all the participants had some sort of credentials. This contrasts with the situation in which just about any NS would be hired simply for being a native speaker. This may give the impression that 'qualification requirements' put everyone on an even playing-field, but these requirements are not the same across the groups of interviewees. An examination of the teachers' qualifications revealed that these certifications are different and meet different needs. So, what does 'qualification' in order to be hired mean for each group? The qualifications of the three groups are found to speak to different qualities: linguistic competence, academic knowledge and teaching ability. The table below reports the teachers' qualifications.

Teachers' Qualifications

Qualifications		NESTs	NNESTs from overseas	Local NNESTs
English-major degrees	BA	1	1	1
	MA		3	5
Non-English major degrees	BA	3		
	MA	2	2	
ESL certificates	CELTA	6	5	3
	Others	4	3	1

The table particularly illustrates the variations between the three groups of English teachers with respect to their academic certification. In the NES

group of teachers, only one participant had a Bachelor's degree in the English language whereas the rest had non-English major degrees: two had Master's degrees and three had Bachelor's degrees as highest qualifications. On the other hand, all of them had ESL certificates: all had CELTA (The Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) while some of them had additional certificates such as DELTA, Cambridge Level 5 Diploma in teaching adults, Teaching ESOL Subject Specialist, and TEFL. In the NNES group of teachers, four reported they possessed English-major degrees (three Master's and one Bachelor's). Two had non-English major degrees; both had Masters in Education. All of them had ESL certificates. Five had CELTA while one had a TESOL certificate. Two had other certificates in addition to their CELTA: one had TESOL and the other had a Level 7 Diploma in Translation. In the Saudi English teachers' group, all held English-major degrees; all had Masters except one who had a Bachelor's degree. Regarding ESL certificates, two had CELTA and one had CELTA and DELTA.

The overall findings are summarised as follows. Eleven participants had English-major degrees. Most of them were Saudi English teachers and NNESTs while only one was a NS with a Bachelor's degree in English. Of the 11 participants, eight held Master's degrees, and seven of them had CELTA. On the other hand, seven teachers had non-English-major degrees. Most of them were NESTs. Four of them held Master's degrees. All of them had CELTA. The degree for NESTs is a proof of academic knowledge and educational level rather than knowledge of English teaching since the majority of NESTs did not have a degree specialised in ELT. On the other hand, all Saudi teachers and most NNESTs had an English-major degree. Most of these English-major degrees do not relate to English teaching, but they provide evidence of their English competence. They are in English Language, English Literature, Linguistics and English Language and Translation. Since these degrees are not specialised in English teaching methodologies and grammar, the recruitment practices treat them like a demonstration of linguistic competence. There are a few exceptions where the teachers possessed English teaching degrees:

- Two Saudis and one NNEST had a Master's degree in TESOL.
- One NNEST had a Master's degree in English language teaching.

These degrees logically speak to the teachers' preparedness for teaching besides their linguistic competence as they specialised in English language teaching and education. However, the data showed that these degrees are treated as a proof of linguistic competence and not as professionally adequate for teachers to be considered competent in ELT compared to

CELTA. They seem to be considered theoretical (see below) and do not provide practical training, the classroom ideas.

CELTA has acquired a huge amount of importance in the PYP and many participants stated that it is an essential requirement for the job. Some of them had to take it before recruitment, and some believed that they needed to have it to secure their job and to be 'great English teachers'. CELTA seems to speak for their teaching ability. Thus, the majority of teachers are considered to be competent in English teaching because they had CELTA. Drawing on the data, we saw that the majority of these teachers were qualified in terms of English competency, academic knowledge, language teaching ability and teaching experience.

6. Critical reflection on recruitment discourses

CELTA can be seen to have acquired a significant amount of importance in the PYP. Many participants stated that CELTA was an essential requirement for the job. Some of them had to take it before recruitment, and some believed that they needed to have it to secure their job and to be expert English teachers. It is therefore useful to look at what this essential requirement actually is. CELTA is a certificate based on a four-week course, initially designed to train NSs with little or no previous English teaching experience to teach English in their home country. As well, its use has expanded to train candidates from the three circles to teach in different contexts (Anderson 2016). This course was based on the monolingual approach which suggests the intensive use of the target language in EFL teaching with no value given to the students' first language in the classroom (see Krashen and Terrell 1988) and has been highly criticised by many scholars (e.g., Philipson 1992; Holliday 2005; Lee 2016). It is important to bear in mind that if the CELTA approach to teaching English is the favoured model, then it requires a particular level of linguistic competence which means it is not enough to be able to teach the rules of English and presumably, that teachers do not really need to speak Arabic.

As the most required and obtained certificate for ELT in the PYP, CELTA is now becoming the benchmark for English teachers. CELTA even appears to replace the NS status requirement based on the participants' opinions. Of the sample, there were no NSs in employment who did not have CELTA, which means that NS status alone, or even tertiary educated NS status, was not enough, and the majority of respondents (14/18) had CELTA and those who did not were NNS. CELTA seems to provide evidence of their practical training for teaching. Thus, the majority of teachers are considered

to be competent in English teaching because they had CELTA. It is not only powerful in obtaining employment but also in retaining employment once recruited as shown in statements from teachers who did CELTA after being recruited. The participants talked about the value of CELTA as compulsory in their teaching context even for highly qualified teachers:

Yeah, it [CELTA] was a mandatory thing. I have my Master's in English Language Teaching. (1BNNS)

So they wanted CELTA - they wanted, as a minimum, to have a BA in Education, and that's my speciality. I'm a holder of BA in Education, teaching English as a second language. (3BNNS)

The majority of the teachers (n=14) had CELTA and two of them had DELTA as well. Three Saudis and one non-native teacher did not have CELTA. These Saudis hold Master's (TESOL; Linguistics; English literature) with teaching experience (one had over five years' teaching experience and two had less than four years). The NNEST had 10 years of teaching experience, a Bachelor's degree in English language and literature, and a TESOL certificate. However, the TESOL certificate, according to the participants, is not recognised by recruiters as a proof of practical training, unlike CELTA. The quotes below indicate the practical training provided by CELTA from the teachers' perspectives:

But things like CELTA, this is why I even disagree with TESOL and stuff because they're all done online and I'm very much of a practical person. Teachers need to have practical experiences. They need to go into the classrooms, they need to be able to do simple things. (1BNS)
Yes [I did CELTA], afterwards. Because my MA in TESOL was purely research. But when I did my CELTA it became more as in how to do the games, how to do the things, how to present your lesson. (1BS)

The TESOL is actually more theoretical. CELTA is more practical, yes. (2ANNS)

In terms of the participants' beliefs, there seems to be some ambiguity about what this course accounts for. 2AS explained that the job requirements for NSs are different from other teachers, giving the reason that "because they're native. Maybe because they're native they don't need for example a [language] test... They ask for the CELTA... They should have... CELTA or DELTA". From her answer, CELTA seems to be the key to NESTs' employment. The qualitative data showed that the participants believed that CELTA is a passport for NSs to teach English. 1AS affirmed that a NS with CELTA "can be hired anywhere in the world. She can be hired in Japan, she can - CELTA is very well recognised". The previous quote suggests that this course is useful for NS in terms of professional mobility. 3BNS answered

the question about the main reason for her employment as, “I think it was CELTA and then if you had experience in English that was preferred”. She also said:

I just feel like after a few years unless you're in a position that's extremely challenging for you, you're becoming complacent. So it's better to - especially in jobs like this where you have the CELTA and it's sort of expected that you're going to pick up and go after a year or two. So if that's the expectation and it's how I like to be anyway, I don't see why I have to stick around if I can have the option of moving on. (3BNS)

Her answer suggests that CELTA offers short-term employment to NSs and brings mobility. Nevertheless, her answer also contrasts with the data which show the long period of experience the NEST participants have had in the PYPs. CELTA was also criticised by 2ANNS as providing NS with an easy access to employment and as ‘one of the issues that has been going on’ in the PYP. She believed “it is totally unfair, because sometimes we did have teachers who had no certificates in English language. They had certificates - BAs in other majors, but they have teaching certificates, like CELTA for example”. The sentiment of injustice in the participant’s use of ‘other majors’ is attributed to her apparent belief that universities in other countries would offer majors in teaching English as a second language.

Although there are some doubts about CELTA as a compulsory English teaching qualification from the teachers’ perspectives, the data would seem to suggest that CELTA has become the magic wand in ELT recruitment practices conferring teaching powers. So, did the CELTA succeed in producing teachers? 1ANS had taken CELTA as a way of getting her first job. When I asked her whether the one-month CELTA course (her only teaching qualification) was enough to help her teach the English language, her answer was, “No, I think I'm fine with it [English teaching] because English is my mother tongue and the curriculum, this is what I grew up with. Teaching English for almost 10 years now is not a big thing for me”. She reported that really she learned on the job. Most importantly, she considered that NS status and experience were the most important elements contributing to her current teaching ability. Thus, it was not about CELTA. Another NESTs (2BNS) who had CELTA as her only teaching qualification mentioned her nationality as the reason why she was recruited in the first place. The question raised here whether CELTA, which appears to indicate a shift from NS status to certification, is another form of native-speakerism.

In addition to the doubts about CELTA as a teacher requirement tool, it does not seem to cater for all teachers' needs. For example, one Saudi teacher (3BS) expressed how the course did not add much to her teaching experience, but she had to take it anyway. She stated, "Actually it's beneficial for the new teacher honestly but as for me, because I was working here already, I'm following the CELTA style. So I didn't find it difficult but because it's a requirement so I was forced to go and just, you know". In addition, one NNEST criticised the system that obligates teachers to do the course in her answer below:

I mean, I actually don't like the system that says you can have any degree but then you'll get a CELTA and you can start teaching. I do not agree that this make a - it can happen in a few cases but in most cases, it just does not happen that these people become real teachers. Because that's just a kind of crash course. It gives you a lot of basics but even - okay, the CELTA trainers, they say, that's when you're at the beginning. You have to develop yourself but no, I believe people who have studied education or linguistics or languages or any related field like this should really be in teaching. (1ANNS)

She went further to discuss the negative impact on the field of ELT of the requirement of CELTA as the basic entry to the TESOL profession:

I think during the [CELTA] course there were times where I taught the trainer...I think this is something where we are really mistaken because we do not take the teaching profession as serious as we should. We would never allow someone who made a four week course to go and work in a hospital as a doctor. We would never do that. But we're doing it with teaching, and that is a little bit sad. (1ANNS)

Despite the negative arguments above, CELTA is seen by some people to be very powerful. One Saudi teacher asserted the power of CELTA in ELT and believed in its importance for any English teacher. From her point of view, CELTA sat at the nexus of job requirements, peer pressure and teaching qualifications:

I've realised this is - the program is very keen on professional development. One of the professional development was doing your CELTA. So I really realised that it's even affected me as a teacher, it changes the ways I teach, it's changed the way I view my students... the CELTA I think is an essential qualification in any English teacher's life...some people are doing DELTA, some people are doing MA - it actually brings in you the sense of, okay, I want to achieve these things. I want to be also - I want to better myself and then...It's just the fact that everyone is taking care of their

professional development and attending workshops. Here, it's very interesting to be honest. (1BS)

However, the appeal of CELTA seems to lie with its link with the Anglophone Centre. For example, 1BS suggested professional development through working hand in hand with the British Council and administrating Cambridge exams when I asked her what things she would recommend to improve ELT in her current job:

Again I think for English teaching is like to encourage teachers to be part of the British Council training, to also again to be part of the training around the world. Let's say for example, to be belonging to an organisation like British Council...For me I think I would like to introduce the 'Cambridge exams', the KET and BEC and 1st certificate. These exams I think they're really essential. Because I've seen so many universities, they introduce these exams around the world. So I think if we become - in my opinion if [my University] can hold or become a Cambridge assessment centre where they hold exams for Cambridge, where they do hold the IELTS. I think this will give the university a different look.' (1BS)

She suggested that the university become a centre which teaches and tests for these basic qualifications. Her suggestion was not about preparing teachers for employment but it was about aligning the English teaching profession with a prestigious NS institution, and seeing that alignment as beneficial for the university. The link between professional advancement and the Centre appears to contribute to the power of CELTA since it is provided by an organisation from the Centre, the Cambridge English Language Assessment.

7. Discussion

In the light of the previous discussions about recruitment discourses, the PYPs appeared to indicate a shift from NS status to certification as an indicator of suitability to practise as a teacher of English. It was evident that only a minority of participants thought that NS status was the benchmark in their job recruitment. The qualifications for the three groups are different, but they are multiple proofs of linguistic competence and academic knowledge. Nevertheless, the three groups have the same teaching qualification. Nearly everyone has CELTA. It is clear from the findings that CELTA emerges as the new 'gold standard' under the guise of 'qualification requirements' which apply to everyone and appears to replace NS status as it is the highly sought after and obtained requirement in the PYP.

By looking closely at the provenance of the CELTA certificate, the argument goes back to the epicentre whence linguistic knowledge of English plus the default model of teaching come. Cultural and linguistic imperialism are still at work. How surprising is it the Cambridge English Language Assessment from a flagship native speaker country has the 'magic' power to give to its country-people the 'ability' to become qualified as teachers of English in a period of only one month? The data revealed that the CELTA certificate acts as the key to employment for NESTs in the Saudi context and attracts NNESTs as it is an essential job requirement and a key to 'good teaching practice'.

So, is CELTA really a guarantee of teaching ability? If it is mainly developed to suit the needs of NSs with no prior experience in English teaching, does it necessarily suit the needs of NNESTs or experienced teachers? Has it become popular due to its association with the NS authority? If yes, it is native-speakerism by another name. If no, it is still an example of colonialist rule in English language teaching. A number of researchers (e.g., Cooke 1979) have criticised the CELTA as following a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, leaving no space for teachers' reflections on the intersection of theory and practice (McBeath 2017: 249). As stated by IANNS, taking the CELTA course cannot make 'real teachers'; "it can happen in a few cases but in most cases, it just does not happen". It also fails to accommodate NNESTs' needs, interests and future teaching contexts, which seems to downgrade their positions as English teachers by instilling the Eurocentric assumption of ideal teaching (Anderson 2016).

The results show how the journey of NSs to become English teachers can start with CELTA, the 'crash course' described by one of the NNESTs in this study. The reason for their employment goes to the main quality of these teachers which is their NS status. None of the participants from the NEST group had a certification in English language teaching other than CELTA and other ESL certificates. With regard to the advertisements, the majority (20) accept NSs who have a BA in any field with CELTA, and three advertisements accept CELTA as a minimum requirement for NESTs. In contrast, NNESTs have to build first their linguistic competence and pass an IELTS test and even if they have a degree in English language teaching, they need to get a 'ticket' (CELTA) from a NS authority to practise their profession. This ticket is a sought-after entry from the colonial authority in the core country to give them access to ELT. Sadly enough, although this course mostly does not add much to their teaching ability, it is required by the local authorities in their teaching context. The findings showed that NNESTs can escape the NS criterion and gain employment without being a NS by having a degree in English and getting a high score in the IELTS but

then they are ‘forced’ to do CELTA, which means they need to go back and pay the price of not being a NS in the name of the CELTA power. Some might argue here: but NSs also have to get a CELTA certificate. This is indeed so, but it is the only qualification related to ELT they are required to have. CELTA still gives NESTs advantage over NNESTs as it is the basic entry requirement for them to the TESOL profession. On the other hand, NNESTs are being asked to go through a form of training that was designed for NS, and so the NS model is still there. Admittedly the benefits of this course for English teachers cannot be completely disregarded as some of the study participants explained, but the question to be raised here is whether or not this course alone provides NSs with adequate entry to the profession and places them at the same level as or even higher than qualified NNESTs in the recruitment process.

The data analysis clearly indicates that buying into the CELTA requirement is a bias towards the NS model and is therefore covert complicity in perpetuating colonialism in ELT. Since this training course does not meet the needs of NNESTs, why are they required to take it? Who benefits from this? If 80% of English teachers are NNESTs (Canagarajah 2005), should they have a better qualification that is designed to meet their needs and interests? This argument is supported by the voice of an expert teacher from the NNEST group with 12 years of teaching experience who said, ‘I think this is something where we are really mistaken because we do not take the teaching profession as serious as we should’. The results argue that with the expansion of English as the world language, England’s grip on ‘English’ is loosening, but this is an example of how the grip on English teaching has replaced it.

8. Conclusion

The findings indicated that only a few teachers believed that being a NS was the main factor in being hired whereas the majority believed that qualifications were the most important requirements for job recruitment. As the most required and obtained certificate for ELT in the PYP, CELTA did appear to replace the NS status requirement based on the participants’ opinions. This course alone, based on the interviewees’ perceptions, has some merits as it provides NSs with a minimum threshold level of professional training; nevertheless, it places NSs at the same level as, or even higher than, qualified NNESTs in the recruitment process. Therefore, CELTA does not escape criticism as an English teaching qualification, and it acts as a colonialist tool in the ELT profession.

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