



Native-speakerism in English teacher recruitment in Indonesian schools

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Abstract

Despite growing recognition of the limitations of native-speakerism in English language education, Indonesian schools continue to grapple with it. This study investigates Indonesian schools' perspectives on recruiting English teachers, specifically examining attitudes toward Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs). Using a survey administered to 73 Indonesian school administrators, the research explored perceptions of teaching abilities, the capacity to address student learning difficulties, and departmental preferences regarding NESTs versus NNESTs. Respondents rated their agreement with Likert-scale statements concerning native and non-native speaker teaching abilities and recruitment preferences. The findings revealed that while NESTs were sometimes preferred, there was no consistent pattern of prioritizing them over qualified NNEST candidates, particularly within schools with an international curriculum. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions surrounding the phenomenon of native-speakerism within Indonesian English as a Foreign Language context. They highlight the complexities inherent in teacher recruitment practices and suggest that professional qualifications, rather than native-speaker status, should be the primary basis for teacher recruitment decisions, ultimately benefiting students through access to highly qualified educators regardless of their linguistic background.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's growing economic influence and central role within ASEAN have significantly increased the importance of English language education. As the world's fourth most populous country, projected to become the fifth-largest economy by 2030, Indonesia holds a pivotal position in ASEAN, where English is a key driver of globalization. Consequently, interest in English language teaching and learning has surged across all educational levels (Zein et al., 2020).

However, this growth is intertwined with native-speakerism, which is the belief that 'native' English norms are superior and favouring 'native speakers' as ideal instructors (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Rahman & Yuzar, 2020; Sarie, 2018; Zacharias, 2006). Traditionally, English teaching prioritized 'standard' forms of the language, often modelled on native speakers. However, recent studies indicate shifting attitudes among students, teachers, and teacher educators (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Kirana & Methitham, 2022; Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022; Mersad & Senad, 2019). This reflects a move from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as argued by Zein et al. (2020) and supported by Kobayashi (2017) and Kirkpatrick (2018), who suggest that EFL and ESL are increasingly outdated terms given English's current function within ASEAN. This shift presents an opportunity to fundamentally rethink English teaching in Indonesia, moving away from an ENL framework towards a lingua franca approach.

Research demonstrates that both native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) can be effective educators, as TESOL qualifications are a more reliable measure of teaching proficiency than native status alone (Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1994). Indonesia faces challenges including a shortage of qualified language teachers and a difficulty for schools to compete with the high demand and cost of hiring NESTs (Hamied, 2012). Stringent requirements for foreign English teachers, including a relevant Bachelor's degree, five years of experience, and crucially, citizenship from an English-speaking country, perpetuate native-speakerism and limit the candidate pool. Attracting NESTs globally remains difficult due to international salary competition (Zein, 2012).

Kramadibrata's (2016) research explored Indonesian students' perceptions of native-speakerism through video analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, revealing an implicit preference for NESTs but emphasizing that nativeness is not essential for effective teaching. Similarly, Zacharias (2006) found diverse views among Indonesian teachers, with many advocating for competence over native status. Native-speakerism can also foster resentment among local teachers who may feel NESTs lack understanding of Indonesian educational culture (Zein, 2012).

While the debate surrounding NESTs and NNESTs has been extensively explored in Indonesian contexts, a research gap remains: a comprehensive understanding of how native-speakerism shapes English teacher recruitment practices within schools. This study addresses this gap by investigating the extent to which perceptions of native-speakerism influence these practices. To achieve this, the following primary and supporting research questions were adapted from Alenazi (2014), whose study on attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs at Saudi universities provides a relevant framework for the research. The primary question asks: to what degree does native-speakerism affect EFL teacher recruitment practices? To answer this, the study asks these supporting questions: how do school administrators weigh various criteria in their hiring decisions, specifically the applicant's academic qualifications, linguistic learning relatability, nationality, and native speakership? Additionally, what are school administrators' attitudes towards hiring both NESTs and NNESTs?

Literature review

The following literature review examines three key areas: the ideology of native-speakerism, its effects on EFL teacher recruitment and professional development, and its role within the context of EFL in Indonesia.

Native-speakerism

The core belief underpinning native-speakerism is that 'native' speakers embody ideal teaching methods and represent 'Western culture' (Holliday, 2006). This ideology positions native speakers as superior language models, leading to discrimination against NNESTs (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022). However, Kachru's (1997) "World Englishes" framework challenges this view by emphasizing the value in diversity of English forms. Waterworth (2016) reinforces this inclusive perspective, noting that British and American English no longer dominate in ASEAN countries, which have developed

their own varieties. In Indonesia, EFL is significant due to its role in the global economy and regional influence within ASEAN. Research indicates a complex situation: while Kramadibrata's (2016) study revealed an implicit preference for native speakers among Indonesian students, others found that many students value NNESTs' cultural insights and do not necessarily consider native speakers as teaching "correct" English (Rondonuwu, Liando & Olii, 2022; Rasyid et al., 2023). This ideology also manifests in EFL textbooks (Kirana & Methitham, 2022), where schools often favour imported U.S. publishers believing they better prepare students for studying abroad (Harsanti & Manara, 2021).

Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

Native-speakerism significantly impacts EFL teacher recruitment and professional development in Indonesia, frequently leading to discriminatory hiring practices that favour NESTs regardless of qualifications (Holliday, 2006; Mahboob & Golden, 2013), perpetuating inequalities. NNESTs often face lower-status positions and unequal pay, with progress towards equitable workplace practices remaining largely theoretical (Selvi, Yazan, & Mahboob, 2023). In Indonesia, biases favouring NESTs limit professional opportunities for NNESTs despite their skills (Rahman, 2019), often relegating them to teaching grammar and writing while NESTs focus on pronunciation and speaking (Harsanti & Manara, 2021). A global survey by Kiczowski (2020) showed general satisfaction with NNESTs, but native status remains a significant hiring factor. Indonesia's legal framework reinforces this bias by restricting foreign English teaching positions to citizens of specific countries (Rahman, 2019), limiting opportunities for qualified NNESTs. Consequently, recruitment practices influenced by native-speakerism devalue NNESTs and undermine language diversity (Mersad & Senad, 2019; Moussu, 2018); Yawan (2024) advocates for hiring based on pedagogical competence rather than nativeness.

EFL in Indonesia

The broader role of EFL in Indonesia is shaped by native-speakerism within a context where English is crucial for international communication and economic development. Kachru's (1997) concentric circles model places Indonesia in the "Expanding Circle." English is used widely there, but not as a primary language or with native-speaker norms. However, tensions exist between promoting local languages and responding to globalization, reflected in policy changes like the removal of English from primary schools in 2013 (Zein et al., 2020). Kirkpatrick (2018) suggests a shift towards ELF in Indonesian education. While many Indonesian teachers challenge native-speakerism and advocate for competence over nativeness (Zacharias, 2006), concerns remain regarding English proficiency among teachers, particularly at the primary level (Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018; Sikki et al., 2013). Educators also emphasize multiculturalism and diverse teaching materials (Kusumaningputri et al., 2022), reflecting evolving perceptions of English varieties and a desire to preserve cultural identity (Zacharias, 2016).

Gaps in Research

Despite extensive research on native-speakerism and EFL in Indonesia, gaps remain. There is "almost non-existent" data regarding recruiters' attitudes towards hiring NESTs and NNESTs from Asian countries (Kiczowski, 2020). Zein et al. (2020) highlight the need for professional development programs that value all teachers' pedagogical skills, aligning with Indonesia's professional teacher identity framework (Ministry of National Education, document number 16, 2007). Further research is needed that specifically examines how native-speakerism impacts NNESTs' professional development in Indonesia. Llorca and Calvet-Terré (2022) and Selvi, Yazan, & Mahboob (2023) also emphasize the need for studies that investigate biases in hiring practices and barriers to create a more equitable ELT environment. Addressing these gaps is crucial for informing policies that promote fairness and inclusion within Indonesia's EFL landscape.

METHODS

The research design employed a quantitative approach through surveys to examine how native-speakerism influences EFL teacher recruitment practices across Indonesian schools. This approach aligns with similar studies investigating hiring practices in language education (Alenazi, 2014; Kiczowski, 2020) and enables statistical analysis of recruitment preferences across different regions and school types. While surveys have limitations regarding response depth, they allow efficient collection of standardized data from a large and geographically diverse sample of school

administrators, which is crucial for understanding the broader patterns of native-speakerism's influence on hiring practices.

The study targeted 73 school administrators responsible for EFL teacher recruitment in Central Java and Yogyakarta. The two regions were chosen due to their mix of urban and rural schools and its accessibility to the researcher. Participants were recruited through publicly available contact information of relevant public, private, and international schools in the region found online and through the researcher's professional network, to ensure representation of different school types.

The structured survey questionnaire consisted of two parts and contained open questions for identification followed by Likert-scale questions designed to gauge the participants' perceptions of the importance of some of the criteria they use for English teacher recruitment. To ensure accuracy and equivalence of meaning, the English questions were translated into Indonesian. The translation process involved an initial version created by the researcher, followed by a review and confirmation of accuracy by the thesis supervisor; an experienced academic with expertise in EFL terminology. Furthermore, participants were provided the possibility to contact the researcher in case any questions occurred.

Part one of the questionnaire gathered respondent information through a series of identification fields. Each participant provided their name, professional role, and institutional details. The institutional information included the school's educational level (elementary/SD, junior high/SMP, or senior high/SMA), classification (public, private, or international), and curriculum model (national, international, or hybrid).

In part two, respondents were asked to react to ten statements concerning native and non-native English teachers. The possible answers to this question were: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'not sure', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The ten statements were as follows.

1. Native and non-native speakers may have the same teaching abilities.
2. Non-native speakers can understand and deal with the learning difficulties of my students better than native speakers.
3. I prefer NESTs over NNESTs to teach in my department.
4. I prefer foreign NNESTs over Indonesian NNESTs to teach in my department.
5. I prefer Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs to teach in my department.
6. If I could, I would employ English native speakers only.
7. I usually employ non-native speakers because native speakers are hard to attract.
8. I prefer to employ native speakers to teach in my department even if their qualification level is lower than that of non-native speakers.
9. The students in my department prefer to be taught by English native speakers.
10. The parents of students in my department prefer them to be taught by English native speakers.

The questionnaire questions were adopted from Alenazi (2014), which is a similar study into the effect of NEST vs. NNEST on the hiring practices of program administrators in higher education institutions in a non-English-speaking country, whose' in turn were adapted from Mahboob and Golden (2013) and Clark and Paran (2007). Similarly, the questions in the present study have been adapted to suit the context in which it takes place. Question 10 was added because of the reported strong preference for NESTs among parents of Indonesian students (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024).

Data collection

Data collection took place over one month using Google Forms as the survey platform. This tool was chosen for its ease of access for participants and its capacity to automatically compile responses for later analysis. Throughout the data collection period, invitation emails containing the survey link were sent to 73 prospective participants via publicly available institutional email addresses. Each message included a concise explanation of the study's purpose, the estimated time required to complete the survey, and a guarantee of confidentiality.

The survey's introductory page presented participants with essential information, including the study's objectives, the researcher's credentials, and contact details for any further inquiries. The online format enabled participants to complete the survey at their convenience, while also ensuring consistent data collection across all respondents.

Data analysis

The quantitative analysis aimed to give a descriptive overview of recruitment preferences, based on the ordinal nature of the Likert-scale responses. Microsoft Excel was used as the main tool for analysis because it is easy to access and has enough functions to perform the descriptive statistical analysis needed for this study. Excel's built-in statistical tools made it possible to calculate important measures efficiently, without needing more advanced software.

For the demographic information collected in the first part of the questionnaire, the data was analysed using frequencies and percentages to give a clear picture of the participating institutions, including their school types, education levels, and curriculum models. These basic statistics helped describe the sample and identify patterns in the types of institutions represented.

In the second part, Likert-scale responses were analysed using descriptive statistics suitable for ordinal data. Central tendency was measured using Excel's AVERAGE function for means, MODE.SNGL for the most frequent answers, and STDEV.S to calculate the standard deviation. These statistics helped show how participants responded to the ten statements about preferences between NESTs and NNESTs.

Descriptive statistics were used because this research was exploratory and the data was ordinal. Although these methods cannot be used to make causal conclusions or generalize the findings to a larger population, they provide useful summaries of the preferences and attitudes shared by the participants. This helps to understand how native-speakerism appears in the hiring of EFL teachers in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents findings from a study investigating how native-speakerism influences English teacher recruitment practices within Indonesian schools. The research aimed to understand the degree to which perceptions of native speakers affect hiring decisions, exploring administrators' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. The findings reveal a nuanced landscape where traditional biases favouring NESTs are gradually being challenged by a growing appreciation for the capabilities and cultural relevance of NNESTs. While native-speakerism remains a factor, its dominance appears to be waning as administrators increasingly prioritize pedagogical competence and local contextual understanding.

Demographic overview

This study examined EFL teacher recruitment practices among school administrators in Central Java and Yogyakarta using a structured survey questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The initial outreach targeted 73 schools. However, a total of eleven emails were returned as undeliverable due to technical issues with recipient addresses. The majority of invited schools did not respond to the invitation to participate. As a result, the response rate was very low. Only three responses ($N = 3$) were recorded, resulting in a response rate of approximately 4%. This significantly low response rate presents a considerable limitation and raises serious concerns about the representativeness of the findings. It highlights the need for caution when drawing broad conclusions and underscores the potential for selection bias. The small sample size, comprising administrators from public schools (0%), private schools (100%), and international schools (0%), suggests that the results may be more reflective of the perspectives within the private education sector than the broader Indonesian school system. The limited representation of public schools, in particular, warrants careful consideration when interpreting these findings, as their recruitment practices might differ significantly due to budgetary constraints and government regulations. The distribution of respondents across educational levels was as follows: elementary schools (33.33%), junior high schools (33.33%), and senior high schools (33.33%). Respondents indicated their school's curriculum model with the option to select multiple models. Percentages presented reflect the frequency of each selection across all responses. The most common model reported was international (100%), followed by national (66.7%) and hybrid (33.3%). This prevalence of international curricula suggests that the administrators surveyed may hold perspectives shaped by global educational trends, potentially influencing their attitudes towards teacher recruitment, for example, a greater emphasis on standardized testing or specific communicative approaches.

A major limitation of this study is the response rate. Out of 74 school administrators contacted, only three responded, resulting in a participation rate of less than 4%. This very low number raises concerns about how well the findings represent the wider situation. The reasons for this low response rate are unclear; it could be due to difficulties in reaching participants (perhaps inaccurate contact

information or logistical challenges), lack of interest in participating in research, time constraints on administrators' schedules, or other factors not considered in this study. Future research should prioritize improved outreach strategies and consider offering incentives to encourage participation, ensuring a more representative sample, and mitigating the limitations inherent in this study's small dataset. Furthermore, exploring the reasons for non-response could provide valuable insights into potential biases within the population of Indonesian school administrators.

Perceptions of Teaching Competence: NESTs vs. NNESTs

This section explores school administrators' perceptions regarding the teaching competence of NESTs and NNESTs. The term 'teaching competence,' as used in the questionnaire, was intentionally left open to interpretation by the respondents, allowing them to define 'teaching competence' based on their ideas about good teaching. This approach aimed to capture a more complete understanding of what administrators value in EFL teachers beyond simply linguistic proficiency or native status. The responses are shown in Figure 1.

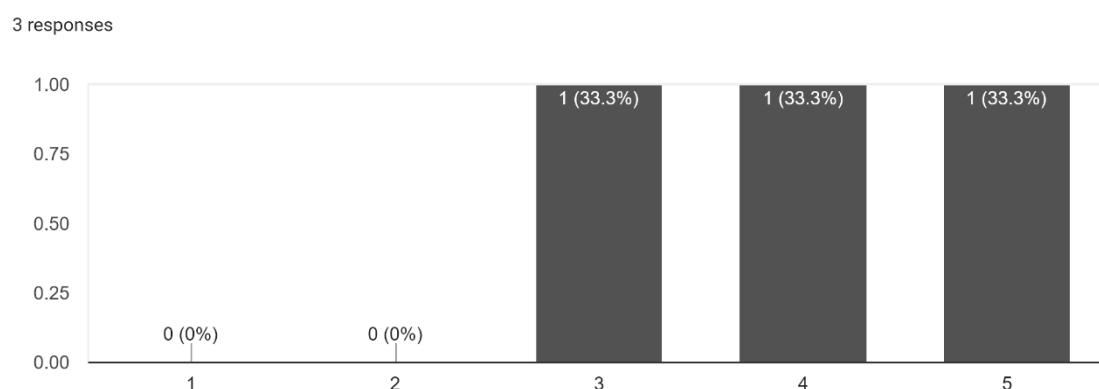


Figure 1. Distribution of responses regarding perceptions of teaching ability equivalence between NEST and NNEST.

The mean score for perceived equivalence in teaching ability between NNESTs and NESTs was high ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$), with a mode of 3, 4, and 5. This indicates that school administrators generally do not perceive NESTs as inherently superior teachers. This represents a significant departure from the traditional view prevalent in many EFL contexts, where native-speaker status is often conflated with teaching effectiveness (Holliday, 2006). The data presented here challenge this traditional view by suggesting that many school administrators are moving toward a more equitable understanding of teaching competence – one that values pedagogical skill, classroom management, student engagement, and the ability to adapt teaching strategies to diverse learning styles. This shift is particularly noteworthy given the ongoing debate surrounding the validity of native-speakerism in language education (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022).

This trend is supported by recent research from Indonesia (Kramadibrata, 2016; Rondonuwu et al., 2022), which highlights a growing recognition of NNESTs' strengths, particularly their ability to relate to students' learning challenges and provide clearer explanations based on shared linguistic backgrounds. The lived experience of language learners can equip NNESTs with valuable insights into the difficulties faced by their students, allowing them to offer targeted support and scaffolding (Faez, 2012; Moussu, 2018). Overall, the findings point to a slow but meaningful shift in attitudes, suggesting that native-speakerism is gradually losing its influence in certain educational circles. However, it is important to note that the standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$) suggests considerable variability in these perceptions; further investigation is needed to understand the factors driving this divergence. This aligns with Zein et al.'s (2020) argument for professional development programs that value all teachers' pedagogical skills, reflecting a move away from solely prioritizing native speakers and towards a more holistic assessment of teaching ability. On the other hand, the presence of variability also suggests that while there is a general trend toward equivalence, deeply ingrained beliefs

about native speaker superiority may persist among some administrators, perhaps influenced by societal perceptions or pressure from parents (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024).

Perception of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' handling student learning challenges

This section investigates how school administrators view the ability of NNESTs to understand and address the specific difficulties students encounter while learning English. It explores whether administrators believe NNESTs possess a unique advantage that allows them to better relate to and support students facing linguistic challenges, compared to NESTs – a perspective often highlighted in the literature (Faez, 2012; Moussu, 2018). The data are presented in Figure 2.

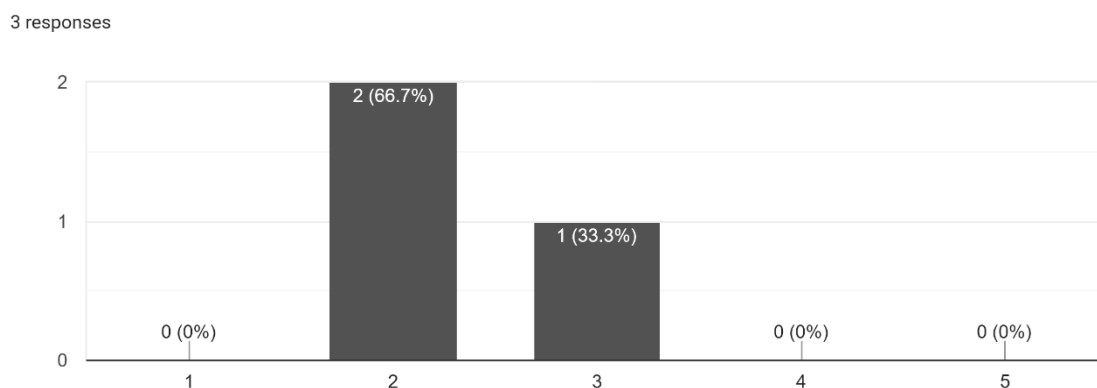


Figure 2. Distribution of responses regarding administrator perceptions of NNEST advantages in linguistic learning relatability with their learners.

While the literature frequently emphasizes the potential advantage of NNESTs due to their own experiences as language learners, this study found that administrators did not strongly agree with this idea. They showed mixed opinions about whether NNESTs were better at helping students ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.47$). This suggests that while the benefits of having learned a language as a second language are recognized, they aren't always seen as a key factor in hiring decisions. This could be due to administrators prioritizing other qualities, such as subject matter expertise or experience with specific pedagogical approaches. It also points to the potential influence of cultural factors; while NNESTs may possess valuable insights into the challenges faced by learners from similar backgrounds, administrators may prioritize other qualities. The relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 0.47$) suggests a degree of consensus around this issue, even if that consensus does not strongly support the idea of NNESTs having an inherent advantage in addressing student learning challenges. This could indicate that administrators view these challenges as requiring broader pedagogical skills rather than specific linguistic experience, which emphasizes the importance of effective teaching strategies regardless of the teacher's background.

Preference for NESTs

Figure 3 shows how people responded when asked about preferring to hire NESTs instead of NNESTs. When we talk about "preference" here, it means a tendency towards choosing NESTs. This preference can affect how schools make hiring decisions and could change the variety of teachers they employ. School administrators are key actors in these choices because they have significant power over who gets hired.

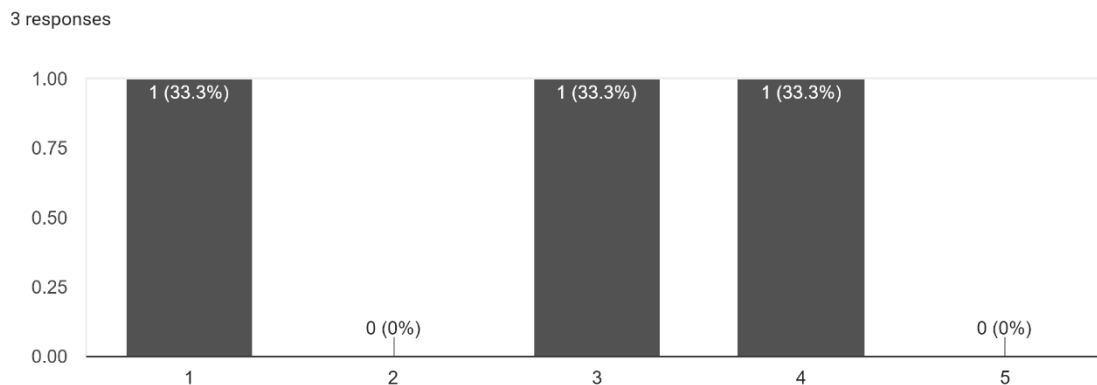


Figure 3. Distribution of responses regarding preferring NEST over NNEST hires.

The perceived importance of nationality was moderate ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.25$), with a mode of 1, 3, and 4. These results partially contradict previous studies highlighting a preference for NESTs among school administrators in Indonesia (Sarief, 2018; Rondonuwu et al., 2022; Kiczowski, 2020). However, the high standard deviation ($SD = 1.25$) indicates considerable disagreement among administrators regarding this criterion, suggesting that nationality is not universally prioritized. This variability warrants further exploration – perhaps through qualitative methods – to understand the underlying reasons for these differing perspectives. Some administrators may be influenced by broader societal perceptions of English language prestige, while others prioritize practical considerations or pedagogical qualifications. The influence of external pressures from parents and stakeholders who may hold traditional views on native-speakerism also warrants consideration.

Preference for foreign NNESTs over Indonesian NNESTs

This section explores how administrators make hiring choices between foreign (non-Indonesian) teachers who do not speak English as their first language and Indonesian teachers who also did not grow up speaking English. It explores whether any of the believed benefits of bringing in international teachers, like them having experience with different teaching styles or a wider understanding of cultures, outweigh the value placed on hiring someone familiar with local culture, schools, and customs. Figure 4 shows how administrators responded when asked about this preference.

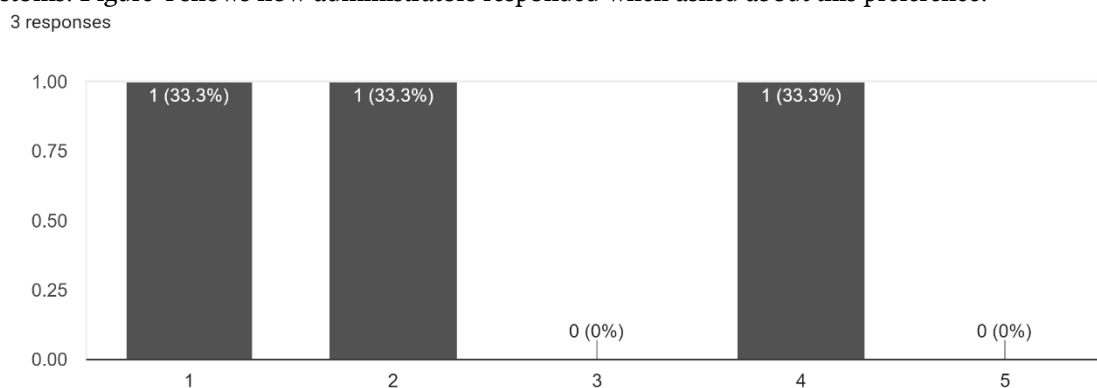


Figure 4. Distribution of responses regarding preferring foreign over Indonesian NNEST hires.

Administrators seemed not to prefer foreign NNESTs over Indonesian NNESTs ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.25$), with a mode of 1, 2, and 4. This finding is particularly significant as it challenges the assumption that international experience automatically translates into superior teaching qualities. The results indicate that administrators do not express a preference for foreign NNESTs over their Indonesian counterparts. This suggests that any perceived benefits associated with international

experience or exposure to diverse methodologies do not outweigh the value placed on local cultural understanding and familiarity with the Indonesian educational context, aligning with Yawan's (2024) advocacy for hiring based on pedagogical competence rather than nativeness. This highlights a growing recognition of the importance of culturally responsive teaching and points towards positive development regarding the concern that recruitment practices influenced by native-speakerism devalue NNESTs, undermining cultural sensitivity and language diversity (Mersad & Senad, 2019). The relatively high standard deviation suggests that some administrators may still perceive value in international experience, perhaps for introducing new pedagogical approaches or providing a broader cultural perspective.

Preference for Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs

This section explores whether administrators in Indonesia prioritize hiring Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs. It aims to see if there is a strong inclination towards prioritizing locally based NNESTs. Figure 5 shows the responses to this statement about preferring Indonesian NNEST hires.

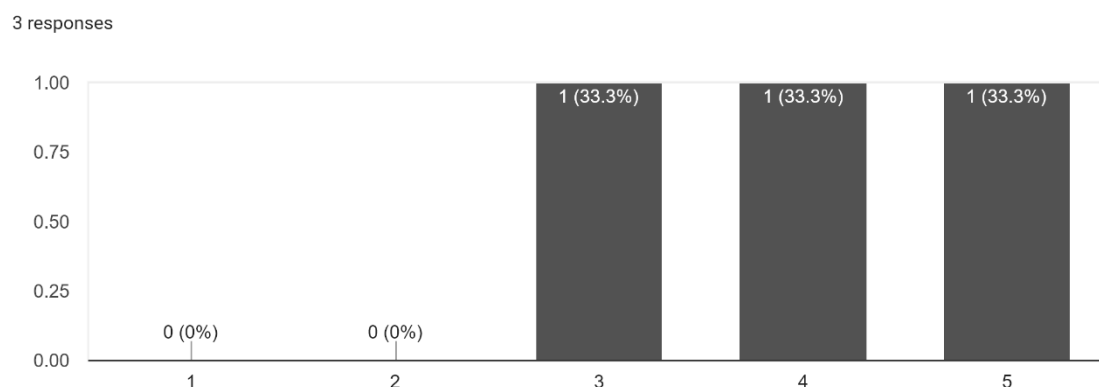


Figure 5. Distribution of responses regarding preferring Indonesian NNEST over NEST hires.

Respondents leaned towards preferring Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$), with a mode of 3, 4, and 5. This finding is particularly noteworthy as it directly contradicts the pervasive influence of native-speakerism previously documented in studies (Rahman & Yuzar, 2020; Zacharias, 2006). It aligns with growing research highlighting the value of non-native speakers and questioning the necessity of native accents in EFL teaching (Dewi, 2015; Manara, 2016; Zacharias, 2016). This preference may reflect a desire for teachers who are more culturally sensitive to Indonesian students or better understand their learning context. This shift suggests a move towards valuing local expertise and cultural understanding as essential qualities in EFL teachers. The lower standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$) compared to previous findings indicates a stronger consensus among administrators regarding this preference, suggesting a potentially significant change in attitudes over time.

Desire to exclusively employ NESTs

This section investigates the extent to which administrators express a preference for hiring only teachers who are native speakers of English. This exploration examines whether there is a strong inclination towards prioritizing NESTs, a practice that has historically been prevalent in many EFL contexts (Zacharias, 2006). The data presented in Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of administrator responses regarding this specific desire.

3 responses

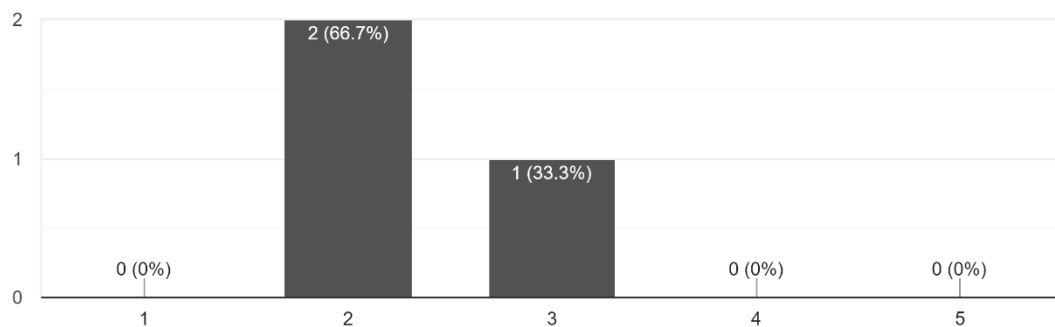


Figure 6. Distribution of responses regarding a desire to employ only native English speakers.

The respondents expressed a relatively low desire for employing only native speakers ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.47$), with a mode of 2. This suggests a moderate preference against exclusively hiring native speakers, further challenging the strong emphasis on native-speakerism previously observed in studies (Alenazi, 2014; Zacharias, 2006). The low standard deviation ($SD = 0.47$) indicates a high degree of agreement among administrators regarding this point, suggesting that the idea of exclusive NEST employment is not widely supported within the surveyed population. This finding represents a significant shift from earlier research, which often highlighted a more pronounced preference for native speakers, particularly in contexts where English language proficiency was viewed as inextricably linked to cultural authenticity and perceived teaching quality (Holliday, 2006). The move away from this exclusive approach suggests a growing recognition of the value of diverse linguistic backgrounds within EFL classrooms. It also potentially reflects an increasing awareness of the practical challenges associated with recruiting and retaining NESTs in Indonesia, including visa requirements, salary expectations, and cultural adjustment difficulties (Zein, 2012). While this does not negate the continued influence of native-speakerism entirely, it does indicate a softening of its grip on hiring decisions. Further qualitative research would be valuable to explore why administrators are moving away from this exclusive approach, whether due to practical constraints, changing student perceptions, or a broader shift in educational philosophy.

The influence of limited availability on the employment of NNESTs

This section investigates whether difficulties in recruiting NESTs serve as a primary driver for hiring NNESTs. Attracting NESTs can be challenging due to factors like international salary competition (Zein, 2012) and restrictive Indonesian work permit policies, which effectively reduce the number of available NEST candidates. This section explores whether such practical recruitment hurdles are the main reason school administrators might prefer to employ NNESTs. Figure 7 presents the responses.

3 responses

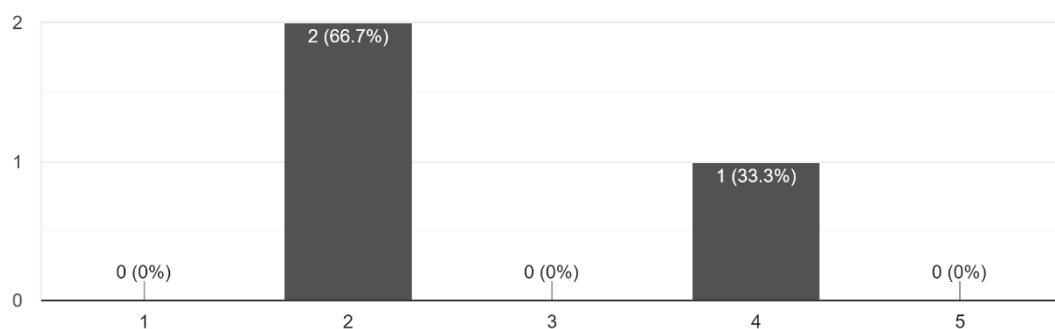


Figure 7. Distribution of responses regarding reasons for employing non-native speakers: availability of native speakers.

When asked if the practical difficulty finding NESTs was the primary reason for hiring NNESTs, responses were inconclusive and moderately divided ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.94$), with a mode of 2. This suggests that while recruitment challenges exist, as highlighted by Zein (2012) regarding international salary competition and restrictive Indonesian work permit policies, they do not appear to be the sole or even primary drivers behind hiring decisions. While practical considerations undoubtedly play a role – schools facing difficulties in securing qualified NESTs may naturally turn to NNEST candidates – the data suggest that ideological factors, even if subtle, continue to influence recruitment choices beyond mere availability. Administrators may be balancing the need to fill teaching positions with their own beliefs about ideal teacher profiles, which might still be influenced by ingrained notions of native-speaker superiority, despite a growing awareness of NNEST competence. The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 0.94$) indicates a range of perspectives on this issue; some administrators may prioritize filling vacancies quickly, while others remain more committed to their preferred hiring criteria regardless of availability. Future research could explore the specific recruitment strategies employed by schools and how these are influenced by both practical constraints and ideological biases.

Willingness to prioritize hiring NESTs regardless of qualifications

This section explores whether school administrators are willing to ignore a candidate's qualifications when deciding between a NEST and a NNEST. It aims to see if the idea that NESTs are more prestigious or better teachers causes recruiters to lower their standards. Figure 8 shows the responses to this statement about prioritizing NEST hires regardless of qualifications.

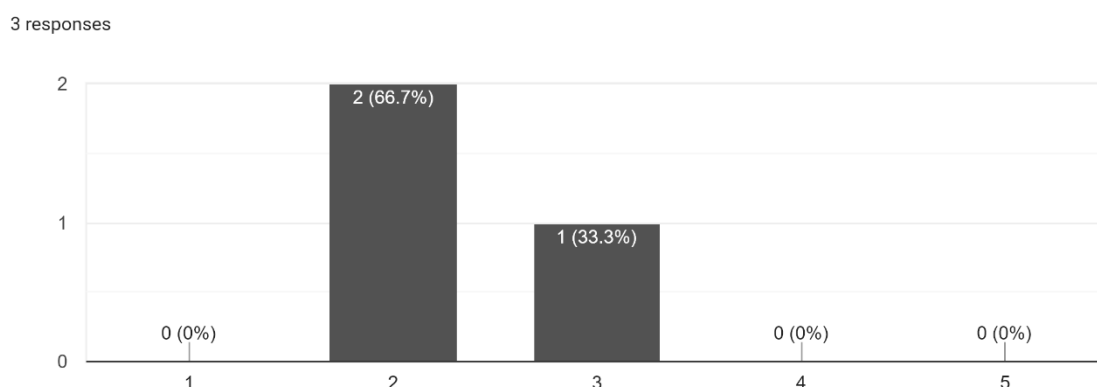


Figure 8. Distribution of responses regarding preferring NEST hires regardless of qualifications.

The respondents reported a slight tendency against employing NESTs over NNESTs, even with lower qualifications ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.47$), with a mode of 2. These results align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of formal qualifications in EFL teacher recruitment, particularly in Indonesian contexts (Zein, 2012; Rahman & Yuzar, 2020; Zacharias, 2006). They suggest that the “halo” effect associated with native English speakers, the tendency to attribute positive qualities simply based on their perceived linguistic background, may be less pervasive than previously assumed. While the halo effect remains a potential influence, administrators appear to place significant value on demonstrable teaching skills and qualifications, even when considering NEST candidates. This finding challenges the notion that schools are willing to compromise on quality to hire a native speaker, suggesting a growing emphasis on professional competence over nativeness. The relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 0.47$) reinforces this conclusion, indicating a consistent preference for qualified candidates regardless of their linguistic background.

Perceived student preference for NESTs

The section investigates how school administrators perceive the attitudes of students regarding their preferred type of EFL teacher. This aims to understand if school administrators perceive their students as having a clear bias towards NESTs. The responses are shown in Figure 9.

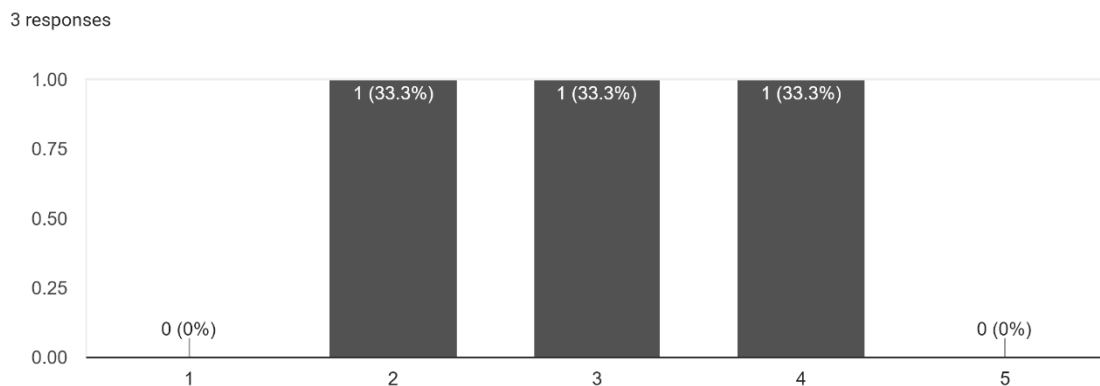


Figure 9. Distribution of responses regarding student preference for NEST over NNEST teachers.

The reported student preferences showed a neutral range of responses ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.82$), with a mode of 2, 3, and 4. While Kramadibrata (2016) noted that students often implicitly preferred NESTs, perhaps due to exposure to Western media or perceptions of more authentic pronunciation – the current findings suggest that these perceptions are becoming more balanced, reflecting a broader acceptance of NNEST competence and cultural understanding. These findings further align with Rasyid et al. (2023), who show only a slight, statistically insignificant preference for NESTs among East Javanese students. This shift could be attributed to increased exposure to diverse English speakers in global media, greater awareness of the benefits of NNEST teachers' cultural insights, and evolving pedagogical approaches that emphasize communicative competence over native-speaker accents. It is also possible that student preferences are influenced by their parents' attitudes, which may be undergoing a similar evolution.

Perceived parental preference for NESTs

This section investigates how school administrators perceive parent attitudes toward hiring either a NEST or a NNEST. The data are presented in Figure 10.

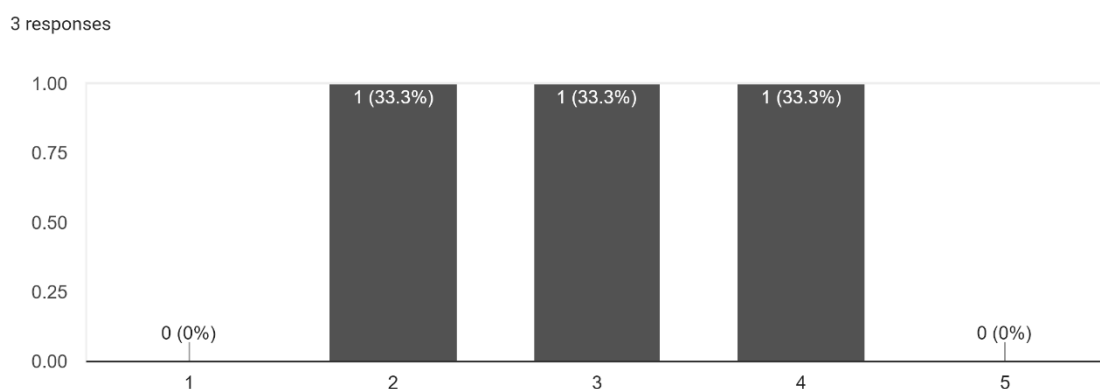


Figure 10. Distribution of responses regarding parent preference for NEST over NNEST teachers.

Similar to administrators' perceptions of student preferences, their perceptions of parent preferences were also moderately varied ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.82$), with a mode of 2, 3, and 4. While research indicates that parents often prioritize NESTs due to perceptions of linguistic authenticity and

cultural exposure (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024), perhaps driven by aspirations for their children's future international opportunities, the school administrators' perception is that parents hold nuanced views on this matter. This suggests a gradual shift in societal attitudes towards EFL teachers, moving away from an exclusive focus on native-speaker status. The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 0.82$) indicates that parental preferences are not uniform; some parents may still strongly prioritize NESTs, while others are more open to considering NNEST candidates based on their qualifications and experience. Further research exploring the motivations behind parental preferences would be valuable in understanding this dynamic.

Discussion

The very low response rate of approximately 4% from the 73 schools contacted severely limits how widely the findings can be applied and shows potential selection bias, as the sample mainly consisted of administrators from private schools with international curricula. Despite this, the data provide valuable insights into current trends in teacher recruitment attitudes.

First, school administrators generally did not see significant differences in teaching ability between NESTs and NNESTs ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$). This indicates a shift away from traditional perspectives common in many EFL contexts where native-speaker status is often wrongly equated with teaching effectiveness (Holliday, 2006). This finding aligns with recent research from Indonesia (Kramadibrata, 2016; Rondonuwu et al., 2022), which highlights a growing recognition of NNESTs' strengths, particularly their ability to relate to students' learning challenges and provide clearer explanations based on shared language learning. The literature emphasizes that both NESTs and NNESTs can be effective educators when equipped with appropriate qualifications (Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1994), suggesting that TESOL certifications are a more reliable measure of teaching proficiency than native status alone. This shift seems to challenge the long-held assumption that native speakers naturally possess superior pedagogical skills and underscores the importance of evaluating candidates based on their demonstrated abilities rather than linguistic background.

Secondly, while administrators acknowledged potential benefits associated with NNESTs' lived experience as language learners (Faetz, 2012; Moussu, 2018), they did not strongly agree that this provided a distinct advantage in addressing student learning difficulties. This suggests that administrators prioritize broader pedagogical skills and effective teaching strategies over specific linguistic experiences. The data also revealed a surprising lack of preference for foreign NNESTs over Indonesian NNESTs ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.25$), indicating that international experience is not consistently valued in recruitment decisions, and that cultural understanding and familiarity with the local educational context more prevalent in Indonesian NNESTs are valued.

Perhaps most significantly, a majority of administrators expressed a preference for hiring Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$), directly challenging the widespread influence of native-speakerism previously documented in studies (Rahman & Yuzar, 2020; Zacharias, 2006). This trend suggests a move towards valuing local expertise and cultural understanding as essential qualities in EFL teachers. The relatively low standard deviation indicates some degree of consensus around this preference, suggesting a potentially significant change in attitudes over time. The findings also contradict the assumption that schools are willing to compromise on qualifications simply to hire a native speaker ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.47$), further reinforcing the growing emphasis on professional competence.

Finally, while administrators reported moderately varied perceptions of student and parental preferences for NESTs ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.82$ in both cases), these findings suggest that such biases are perhaps not as strong or widespread as previously assumed. This aligns with research highlighting the value of diverse English speakers and questioning the necessity of native-speaker accents in EFL teaching (Dewi, 2015; Manara, 2016; Zacharias, 2016).

These findings collectively paint a picture of Indonesian schools moving away from native-speakerism. The increasing priority of qualifications and preference for NNESTs suggest that recruitment practices are becoming more equitable and aligned with global trends in language education (Kiczowski, 2020). This shift could expand the pool of qualified candidates available to schools, potentially reducing costs associated with hiring NESTs (Hamied, 2012) while simultaneously providing students access to skilled educators regardless of their linguistic background. This ultimately benefits students by ensuring they are taught by professionals who possess strong pedagogical skills and a deep understanding of the Indonesian educational context, qualities that may not always be guaranteed by native-speaker status alone. The findings support the call for professional

development programs that value all teachers' pedagogical skills (Zein et al., 2020) for an inclusive ELT environment where competence, rather than nativeness, is the primary determinant of success.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how native-speakerism influences English teacher recruitment in Indonesian schools, which is an understudied area within an EFL context. A survey of 73 school administrators in Central Java and Yogyakarta suggests that native-speakerism's influence appears to be diminishing. The findings suggest that NESTs were not universally prioritized, with administrators in schools with international curricula showing a clear preference for qualified Indonesian NNESTs over NESTs. Importantly, respondents generally did not perceive significant differences in teaching ability between NESTs and NNESTs and were unlikely to compromise on qualifications simply to hire a native speaker.

These findings support the growing trend of prioritizing competence over nativeness in English language education globally. This research contributes to ongoing discussions about native-speakerism in Indonesia, reinforcing the importance of professional skills and qualifications. Consequently, schools can access a wider pool of qualified educators, potentially reducing costs and increasing teaching staff diversity, ultimately improving the quality of English language education for Indonesian students.

However, the very low response rate of 4% highlights the need for improved data collection strategies in future investigations. Future research should therefore replicate this study with a larger and more representative sample to strengthen the validity of these findings. It should also incorporate qualitative methods like interviews to better understand administrator motivations. Investigating the impact of policy changes on recruitment and exploring student and parent perspectives would also provide a more complete understanding of teacher preferences in Indonesia, informing future policymaking and promoting equitable English language education.

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