



Native speakerism in Poland: different voices and perspectives

Tomasz Paciorkowski

(Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

PhD Supervisor: dr hab. Ronald Kim

Non-native speaker teachers are estimated to constitute approximately 80% of all English teachers worldwide (Canagarajah 2005, Braine 2010), with this percentage certainly being higher for Poland. Unfortunately, a vast body of research indicates that non-native speaker teachers face both covert and overt forms of discrimination in their professional lives. This ongoing marginalisation has been proven to engender numerous negative consequences. Reves and Medgyes (1994) showed that teachers have a tendency to fall into a vicious circle, i.e. on realising they make a mistake, they lose self-confidence, which brings even more mistakes in its wake. Furthermore, if non-native speakers are caught not knowing something about the English language, their professionalism is immediately questioned (Canagarajah 2005), whereas it is usually acceptable for native speakers to make mistakes (Amin 2004). This discrimination persists despite the fact that non-native speaker teachers can be every bit as effective as their native speaking counterparts (e.g. Widdowson 1994; Ma 2012). Such a state of affairs led Holliday (2005) to coin the concept of *native speakerism*, which can be briefly defined as the ideology favouring native speakers in the field of English language teaching (ELT).

The present paper reports some of the more interesting results of a mixed-methods study conducted to provide insight into the situation of Polish teachers of English in private language schools. The first stage involved a four-part survey which was conducted on four cohorts, namely Polish teachers of English, students, parents of students, and language schools. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with teachers to shed light on the results of the quantitative strand. Some of the more prominent findings are that Polish teachers of English are unaware of the discriminatory tendencies on the ELT market, native speaker teachers are more likely to receive employment even when officially unqualified, and non-native speakers tend to earn less compared to native speakers.

References:

- Amin, N. 2004. "Nativism, the native speaker construct, and minority immigrant women teachers of English as a second language", in: L. Kamhi-Stein (ed.) *Learning and Teaching from Experience: Perspectives on Nonnative English-Speaking Profession*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Braine, George. 2010. *Nonnative Speaker English Teachers: Research, Pedagogy, and Professional Growth*. London: Routledge.
- Canagarajah, Suresh. 2005. "Negotiating the local in English as a lingua franca", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26: 197-218.
- Holliday, Adrian. 2005. "Native-speakerism", *ELT Journal* 60, 4: 385-387.
- Ma, Lai Ping Florence. 2012. "Strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs: Perceptions of NNESTs in Hong Kong", *Linguistics and Education* 23, 1: 1-15.
- Reves, T. & Medgyes, Peter. 1994. "The non-native English speaking EFL/ESL teacher's self-image: An international survey", *System* 22, 3: 353-367.
- Widdowson, H. G. 1994. "The ownership of English", *TESOL Quarterly* 28, 2: 377-389.