

Book Review

Questioning the Native Speaker Construct in Teacher Education: Enabling Multilingual Identities and Decolonial Language Pedagogies, by Julie Waddington.
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Julie Waddington's *Questioning the Native Speaker Construct in Teacher Education* makes a timely and critical intervention in applied linguistics and teacher education by interrogating the persistent dominance of native-speakerism in language education. Foundational critiques have traditionally emphasized the binary opposition between the “native-speaking self” and the “non-native-speaking Other” (p. xv, e.g., Medgyes, 1992; Moussu & Llorca, 2008), framing the issue primarily in terms of linguistic legitimacy and marginalization, thereby reinforcing essentialized links between language proficiency and speaker identity. What distinguishes this volume is its rejection of fixed identity categories and its integration of interdisciplinary perspectives, including raciolinguistics (e.g., Flores & Rosa, 2015), translanguaging (e.g., Sánchez & García, 2021), funds of knowledge and identity theory (e.g., Waddington & Esteban-Guitart, 2024), and postcolonial studies (e.g., Waddington, 2021), to reconceptualize native-speakerism as a structural ideology rooted in racialized and colonial language hierarchies.

Drawing on Judith Butler's (1990) notion of “intellectual promiscuity,” a call for theoretical hybridity and resistance to disciplinary closure, Waddington brings together diverse conceptual strands to interrogate dominant identity constructs that sustain native-speakerism. This framework not only informs the book's theoretical orientation but also its organizational structure, as it deliberately interweaves multiple disciplinary voices. Waddington demonstrates that teacher identity functions as a performative and socially situated site through which native-speakerism is both reproduced and contested, since it shapes not only linguistic norms but also how teachers are positioned, perceived, and legitimated within educational contexts.

The book's conceptual and pedagogical contributions are grounded in a reflexive research design. Drawing on interviews with five teacher educators—including Sarah Mercer, Nayr Ibrahim, Vijay Ramjattan, Michael Rabbidge, and Katarina Mentzelopoulos—Waddington constructs a multifaceted account of how native-speakerism is experienced and contested across diverse geographical (e.g., Austria,

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Canada, Norway, South Korea) and disciplinary (e.g., TESOL, early childhood education, applied linguistics) contexts. Through reflexive thematic analysis (p. 8), which integrates positional awareness with interpretive engagement, she amplifies participant voices while grounding interpretations in critical theory. As a result, the book remains both rigorous and pedagogically actionable.

Building on this empirical foundation, one of the book's key contributions lies in its ability to translate conceptual critique into pedagogical practice. Rather than stopping at theoretical analysis, Waddington advances practical frameworks that support teachers in navigating and resisting structural inequities embedded in language education. This theory-to-practice commitment is reflected in the book's two-part organization. Part 1 (Chapters 1–5) presents a set of critical theoretical frameworks addressing themes such as teacher wellbeing, multilingual identities, monolingual ideologies, raciolinguistic critiques of “nativeness,” and the motivational role of “nativelikeness.” Part 2 (Chapters 6–10) develops concrete strategies and activities that correspond closely to the critical frameworks presented in Part 1.

The book begins by examining teacher self-efficacy and well-being (Chapter 1), increasingly recognized as essential for sustaining the professional lives of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Through an interview with Sarah Mercer, Waddington explores how deficit discourses rooted in native-speakerism undermine NNESTs' confidence and professional identity. Mercer explains how internalized perceptions of linguistic inferiority contribute to lowered self-efficacy, burnout, and attrition. This is illustrated through the case of Anna, an English teacher in Austria who, despite her qualifications and positive feedback, felt inadequate due to native-speakerism biases. Mercer emphasizes that this erosion of confidence is a structural consequence of discriminatory ideologies in hiring, assessment, and professional recognition. In response, Chapter 6 offers pedagogical strategies that position emotional well-being as a core professional competency. Drawing on Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Waddington encourages a shift to strength-based reflection, helping teachers reframe professional identity by affirming linguistic and pedagogical assets. Structured self-reflection and discussions on linguistic discrimination equip NNESTs to develop resilience and critically resist native-speakerist ideologies.

The second thematic arc centers on multilingual identity as both a lived reality and a pedagogical resource. Chapter 2, through an interview with Nayr Ibrahim, explores how teacher narratives shaped by migration and language learning can disrupt categories such as “native” and “non-native.” Ibrahim, once pressured to conceal her Portuguese-speaking background, later reframed her multilingualism as a strength. Her approach models how teacher educators can support pre-service teachers in recognizing identity as fluid and politically situated. Chapter 7 extends this into practice, offering strategies that affirm heritage languages and promote multilingual well-being. Activities such as Dominant Language Constellations and language portraits invite reflection on linguistic repertoires, while myth-debunking exercises help shift discourse from deficit to asset-

based framings. Together, these chapters show how multilingual identity work can serve as personal empowerment and structural intervention.

The third thematic strand addresses how monolingual ideologies shape classroom practice and teacher identity, and how translanguaging offers resistance. Chapter 3, through Michael Rabbidge's experience in South Korea's Teaching English through English (TETE) program, highlights how such policies marginalize local pedagogical knowledge. Teachers' concerns centered not on proficiency, but on how English-only mandates hindered learning. Chapter 8 builds on this critique by presenting translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy. Activities like belief audits and scenario analysis help educators validate students' full repertoires and promote equitable classroom ecologies. These chapters advocate reframing goals from native-like proficiency to cultivating multilingual agency.

A fourth strand interrogates how native-speakerism is tied to racialized ideologies. Chapter 4, drawing on Vijay Ramjattan's research, reveals how racialized educators are often perceived as "non-native" due to embodied assumptions linking whiteness with linguistic legitimacy. Chapter 9 applies a raciolinguistic framework to critique how colonial notions of nativeness persist through what Flores and Rosa (2015) term the "White listening subject." Activities such as debates and reflection on accent discrimination help surface and contest these ideologies. The chapter calls for public pedagogy and collective action across the English language teaching (ELT) profession. Together, these chapters argue that dismantling racialized linguistic hierarchies requires structural change.

The final strand explores the role of nativelikeness as a motivational goal. Chapter 5, through Waddington's conversation with Katarina Mentzelopoulos, challenges binary discourses that reject or endorse native-like proficiency. While acknowledging native-speakerism's harms, the chapter recognizes that many learners aspire to nativelikeness for reasons tied to belonging or career goals. Rather than dismissing these desires, Waddington calls for inclusive pedagogies that critically frame such aspirations. Chapter 10 extends this by presenting strategies to reframe linguistic "otherness." Activities like pronunciation bias analysis and role model reflection encourage learners to center multilingual selves over native speaker ideals. Together, these chapters position language learning as identity work and offer tools for affirming diversity while promoting realistic, aspirational goals.

While the book makes a compelling case for teacher agency and reflective practice, future research could build on its insights by examining how institutional structures—such as hiring practices and evaluation frameworks—might be reimagined to support linguistic equity more systemically (e.g., Kunschak & Kono, 2020). Though firmly situated within English language teaching contexts, the book's conceptual tools—particularly its emphasis on raciolinguistic critique, teacher identity, and strength-based pedagogy—hold potential relevance for a broader range of multilingual educational settings. For instance, research in heritage language education (Amanti, 2019), world

language teacher preparation (Zang et al., 2024), and community-based language programs (Melo-Pfeifer, 2023) could productively extend Waddington’s frameworks, adapting them to the unique challenges and ideological landscapes of those contexts. Such extensions would not contradict the book’s core focus but rather affirm its broader theoretical value.

In conclusion, *Questioning the Native Speaker Construct in Teacher Education* offers a timely and theoretically grounded contribution to debates on linguistic equity, teacher identity, and multilingual pedagogy, particularly as they relate to NNESTs and the ideologies that shape their professional experiences. By weaving together diverse perspectives and centering educator voices across contexts, Waddington invites readers to reconsider who is recognized as a legitimate language teacher, and how language learning is entangled with race, power, and belonging. While the book focuses on classroom-based teacher education, its conceptual tools hold broader implications for policy and community engagement. Ultimately, it serves as both a critique of native-speakerism and a resource for reimagining language education as a more inclusive and socially just practice.

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Luqing Zang is an Assistant Professor of Education at Slippery Rock University whose scholarly agenda advances the field of language education through research on multilingualism, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and transformative teacher preparation. Her work interrogates how fostering critical multilingual awareness in pre-service teachers can dismantle systemic inequities and empower multilingual learners, leveraging multimodal and technology-enhanced approaches to design culturally responsive pedagogies. Her scholarship has been published in peer-reviewed journals, presented at leading national and international conferences, and recognized with the prestigious ACTFL Research Priorities Award. She champions equity-driven, justice-oriented approaches that reimagine teacher preparation for inclusive, linguistically diverse classrooms worldwide.

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