# Liberal forms of exclusion in international education: A postcolonial reading

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**Abstract**

Over the past two decades, the cultural politics of race and gender in language education has received a great deal of attention. However, this is less so in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand. This is not so much because these issues are absent from education in Southeast Asia, but more because, in countries such as Thailand, there is a great deal of unwillingness to examine questions related to race, even though aspects of international education in Thailand is profoundly raced and racist. This is evident indirectly in the curriculum and pedagogy, and more directly in employment recruitment and staffing of language centers, be they international schools, private language schools, language departments within private schools, or government and semi-government agencies such as the British Council, and Thai government universities. In fact, the racist privileging

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and exclusion has a mundane sameness throughout the industry, with Whites, especially those of Anglo-American background, capitalizing on the easy association Thais make between skin color and English language proficiency. The paper is divided into two parts. First, drawing from a wide range of in-school publication and press articles, it documents and analyzes, in a close-up way, the techniques and strategies of the cultural politics of privilege and liberal forms of exclusion within the field of teaching English as a foreign language in international schools in Thailand (EFL). More specifically, it looks at some of the ways in which English negatively affects the lives of Asian children in and out of the classroom, and the way this is often justified by school administrators, parents and the wider Thai community. The second section of the paper examines the way in which the concept of the "native speaker" works to privilege, marginalize, include and exclude teachers of various backgrounds. It begins by situating the native speaker issue theoretically before examining how it works empirically in racial discrimination in teacher recruitment.

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## Introduction

Over the past two decades, the cultural politics of race and gender in language education has received a great deal of attention. However, this is less so in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand. This is not so much because these issues are absent from education in Southeast Asia, but more because, in countries such as Thailand, there is a great deal of unwillingness to examine questions related to race, even though aspects of international education in Thailand is profoundly raced and racist. This is evident indirectly in the curriculum and pedagogy, and directly in employment recruitment and staffing of language centers, be they international schools, private language schools, language departments within private schools, or government and semi-government agencies such as the British Council, and Thai government universities. In fact, the racist privileging and exclusion has a mundane sameness throughout the industry, with Whites, especially those of Anglo-American background,

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capitalizing on the easy association Thais make between skin color and English language proficiency, while many native English speaking non-white and Asian teachers knock from door to door looking for opportunities to put their professional qualifications and skills into practice.

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**Liberal forms of exculusion: curriculum and pedagogy**

Sneja Gunew has insightfully suggested that in the cultural politics surrounding English/englishes distinctions,

> *it is not simply that (British?) English still functions as reference points for all the 'englishes' operating in the global context, rendering them, often, as something which at best provides the exoticism of cultural tourism and at worst furnishes evidence that their version is always dis-eased, inadequate or two dimensional …. It needs to be pointed out that one does not ever acquire them outside of social and psychic relations, and it is here that matters become more complicated. The somatic effects of discrepant English Studies effect a specific kind of consciousness, particularly when imposed on the bedrock of another language and its cultural entourage …. The phobia of aphasia and muteness lurks as a result of this exposure or submission to another language and culture*
>
> *(Gunew, 2013, p. 63).*

What Gunew is suggesting is that beyond the general socio-cultural inferiorization of English's non-native users and privileging of Anglo-Americans in discourses on English, the English language/non-native user's encounter can have debilitating somatic and psychic effects on the latter. While such effects can be observed across East and Southeast Asia, few studies have documented them. In South Korea, "fluent and unaccented English is the top goal of

language study and is pursued with fervor" (*The Nation*, April 1, 2002, p. A11). One report notes that in pursuit of this holy linguistic grail, some parents in South Korea are having surgical operations performed on their toddlers and young children. The procedure, known as frenectomy, involves cutting the band of tissue under the tongue (the frenulum). A doctor who has performed numerous such operations notes that "parents are eager to have their children speak English so they want to have them get the operation," normally before they are five years old (*The Nation*, April 1, 2002, p. A11). Another medical doctor notes that in South Korea "you get 10 times as many parents who want the operation as children who really need it" (*The Nation*, April 1, 2002, p. A11).

While such surgeries are usually done in the name of enhancing language proficiency, the practice appears in a different light when set alongside the theme of other 'beautification' surgeries and skin whitening operations. In Thailand, the pressures to associate with, acquire and display a modern identity and status has also led parents to adopt drastic measures to have their children learn English, often with the effect of psychic dislocation. Spending up to 200,000 baht (6,000 dollars) a year for tuition, "the trend of sending toddlers to school to learn English is growing among Thai middle class parents, with places running out in the 13 international kindergartens" (*The Nation*, June 5, 2001, p. A1). One parent who sends her child to an international kindergarten claims to do so because "even though Thai schools use native speakers, they still follow the Thai curriculum

which … does not develop analytical thinking in children …" The same parent goes on to advise others that "If your children are not familiar with English, they may have problems communicating with their peers and teachers. I have seen and sympathized with many children suffering in this situation" (The Nation, June 5, 2001, p. A1). In another context suggesting the infliction of suffering on children in the desire to have English inscribed in their consciousness, one Thai parent proudly explains that "I started to speak English with my child when she was one year old, even though she didn't understand" (The Nation, June 23, 2004: A16). Although no specific study can be cited to illustrate the psychic damage done to such children through these educational strategies, the above references to young children being spoken to in a language they cannot understand, and 'suffering' from being placed in environments which ignore their inability to communicate and receive care, point to the normalization and institutionalization of widespread psychological, cultural and social alienation and estrangement in the pursuit of English in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. It also points to the institutionalization of an educational regime founded on the utilitarian belief that "the end justifies the means," the end being the enhancement of one's English language proficiency.

However, once children are thus institutionalized, parents run a losing battle to have their progeny acquire the status and ability of proficiency in English. On being admitted to an international school, most Asian students are marked as lacking in English proficiency

and placed in EFL special classes while other students study English or other languages in mainstream classes. This practice is founded on the dubious distinction of native versus non-native speaker language proficiency, with the native's accorded the status of the preferred and acting as the point from which the non-native is judged. Thus, not only is the non-native variety of English rendered lacking, but it is the basis for the lifelong intervention from those who claim to possess the language naturalistically from birth and for according students so stigmatized an inferior social and educational location within the school community. In fact, in British based international schools, such linguistic, cultural and psychic inferiorization is normalized and permanent. For example, Bangkok Patana, one of the largest and most established and influential international schools in Thailand, points out that "we really insist than any English as a second language student who is below a native English speaker's level studies English as a second language" (Fredrickson, January 15, 2002, p.1). The school's ESL coordinator, Robert Brown, continues: "we drop a lot of students on to the programme if there is any hint that they have ESL difficulties whatsoever – including quite talented high flyers…. Coming off is almost a no-no to be honest" as "an ESL student is really always going to be an ESL student (Fredrickson, January 15, 2002, p.1). Like other English international schools in Thailand, Bangkok Patana makes use of a linguistic hierarchy in which not just English, but the English of native speakers occupy the privileged position and the non-native student's language the lowest rung on

the ladder. This is clear from the use of terms and distinctions such as “drop” and “ESL difficulties,” terms which are widely used to refer to the process of being given language support in international schools but which indicate an attitude and practice of marginalization of students who require such support. It is also evident in the significant “parental pressure to take children out of the programme,” a struggle which Bangkok Patana counters by having their ‘ESL students’ sit for an ESL credit through the British based International General Secondary Certificate Examination (IGSCE). While “having ESL as a fully credited IGSCE course helps Bangkok Patana resist such pressure,” non-native English speaking students, which effectively means almost every Thai student, find their marginal and inferior position further institutionalized through this process (Fredrickson, January 15, 2002, p.1). Maurice Broughton perceptively notes that “the proprietorial attitude to English is not only found among the British, of course. It permeates the world view of many native speakers … and it permeates into so-called international education …. If Thai students who lack a native speaker-like command of English are treated as second class citizens in the international education system, it will lead to a sense of rejection” and alienation (p.76). Ironically, this is the only ‘international’ qualification which these students acquire through their international schooling.

The processes of marginalization and inferiorization noted above are also at work in other English international schools. For example, “in common with other international schools in Thailand,

Windsor International School has an all-English policy" which actively discourages and represses the use of Thai language among the school's pupils (Douglas, June 13, 2003, p.1). However, unlike Bangkok Patana's conservative strategy of erecting an official institutional barrier against non-native English speaking students entering the privileged domain of full English language proficiency, schools such as Windsor International School use a more liberal strategy of exclusion. In such schools, the all-English policy means that English is not only the language of instruction for all subjects, other than the legally required Thai lessons, but that it is also the only language actively promoted and valued on the schools' campus. At Windsor International, this is done through a system of incentives and disincentives which allows students to be awarded points for speaking English outside class, with each point recorded on a point card which children carry around in their pockets all day. "Pupils who have the most points win prizes" (Douglas, June 13, 2003, p.1). Through this system, Windsor International proudly claims that while "the staff had worried that the less confident children might be marginalized," they have managed to turn "a school where there was a lot of Thai spoken outside class, into one where there is virtually none, more or less overnight" (Douglas, June 13, 2003, p.1). In other words, Windsor International seems to have been so successful in establishing a monolingual educational regime which devalues and delegitimizes the importance of the Thai language while privileging English that Thai children studying in Thailand no

longer want to speak their native language, even among themselves. If one is to take Windsor International at its word, it would mean that in place of the usual socialization via their mother tongue, Thai children now perform English for their White English teachers (the school recruits teachers only from the UK and Australia), who offer them “prizes,” much like the trinkets European colonizers offered to Africans and Native Americans in the early periods of European conquest and colonization of those civilizations.

Having delegitimized the local language and privileged English, the neo-colonial cultural expedition then unfolds a new liberal chapter by the name of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism as it is practiced in Windsor International and other international schools is essentially a liberal strategy of marginalization, inferiorization, and exclusion of non-Western cultures and the privileging of the Western. It represents selected cultural traditions such as food, music, dance and dress as a country’s culture, and offers a form of cultural recognition and intercultural cooperation which leaves the racist colonial hierarchy of cultures, societies and peoples unremarked. As will be demonstrated in chapter seven, the long history of European colonialism and imperialism and the struggles against those which have gone into the making of our contemporary world of global inequalities receive scant attention in the curriculum. Thus, we find the school’s Headmaster saying that Windsor International’s language policy “does not mean that Thai is not valued …. ‘At the same time [as promoting English] we keep in touch with the children’s

own language, culture and heritage. Thai lessons continue as normal and Thai festivals are celebrated and so on. We had a lovely Loy Kratong last November, for example" (Douglas, June 13, 2003, p.1). How and who exactly "keep in touch with the children's own language, culture and heritage" is not mentioned but the suggestion is that celebrating Loy Kratong, a Thai festival in honor of the water spirits, is an example of the manner in which this is done. The Thai language lessons referred to involves one hour per day for Thai students and two hours per week for non-Thai students as mandated by the Thai Ministry of Education. Two points are most interesting here. First, monolingualism is celebrated over multilingualism, and secondly, even though Thai children are studying in Thailand, their national culture is delegitimized and then re-offered to them in ossified forms more akin to staged performances for tourists than experienced as living webs of significance.

What are the effects of the simultaneous privileging of English and its cultural entourage with the linguistic and cultural devaluating of Thai language and culture on Thai society? Here we come to the crux of the issue on the effects of English's colonial adherences noted by Pennycook. As we saw earlier, Pennycook argued that colonialism not only imposed cultural forms on colonized populations but was highly productive of racialized discourses of self and others which were inscribed in and diffused through a series of binary opposites, and that these have left indelible imprints on the English language and European culture. We have been arguing in

this work that as Thais and others seek productive and meaningful lives in the current phase of globalization of capital and culture, they are finding that they need to possess these Western colonial forms of cultural and symbolic capital. We have been trying to demonstrate that these are made available through the wide network of educational agencies, including schools, advertising and popular culture traversing the educational landscape in Thailand. In seeking to acquire these, that is, to become culturally 'modern', Thais increasingly experience the need to subject themselves to colonial systems of meaning. One clear example of this demand is found in English language requirements for nearly every job advertised in the newspapers in Thailand. And the response of Thais, as we have seen, is to flock to English language schools. But beyond this formal linguistic requirement is a broader range of cultural capital which 'successful' Thais need to acquire and display, all of which can be summarized in the word 'attitude'. Thus, one 'successful' Thai, the son of a former Foreign Ministry civil servant, tells us that "Attitude, language and communication skills are what you bring to business. And it is much more important for a child to be equipped with these things than culture alone, for Thailand to be competitive." He goes on to advise that "you need to ensure that our leaders have international sophistication to communicate internationally" (Wijayasingha, March 8, 2001, p.3). Working as he does for a United States multinational corporation, one surmises that he has acquired the right 'attitude' and 'international sophistication' to become 'successful.'

As we have seen earlier, a central aspect of the attitude and international sophistication that is mentioned here is the willingness to concede to and make use of the colonial binaries which adhere to and is made available in English. To get an idea of how the use of the right 'attitude' works in the work place, we turn to another former international school student, Knob, who also happened to have been educated overseas. Knob, who works as a radio operator for a US company in Bangkok, explains that his role in the company requires that he serve as a link between the foreign manager and Thai subordinates. He finds that his "assertiveness in the English speaking culture helps him in the Thai working environment" (Wijayasingha, March 8, 2001, p.3). Referring to his Thai colleagues, he continues: "I find that they are reluctant to speak their minds. In a meeting, the Thai colleagues quietly accept a policy while I would be debating it…. But because they find me expressive, I think that they feel that I am advancing relatively fast" (Wijayasingha, March 8, 2001, p.3). Knob's testimony allows us a glimpse into how those who have acquired the cultural capital which come with English constitute themselves and others in terms of attitudes such as assertiveness and expressiveness. From another perspective, one can argue that Knob's is "advancing relatively fast" because he speaks the same language, both literally and figuratively, as his American boss. Theoretically, we can argue that Knob's 'success' in his global organization is in fact a result of his willingness to subject himself to the English meaning system and, in doing so, transform

his self. Nevertheless, Knob has been encouraged by his parents “not to forget the beauty of Thai culture – the sawasdee, the khap” (Wijayasingha, March 8, 2001, p.3). Thus, in typical liberal multicultural fashion, Thai national culture is objectified and ossified around a few fragments before being re-membered. In this way, the subject which is split through the encounter with English and Western culture returns through the path of global exchange to be reconciled with its Thai origin.

**The Idolatry of the ‘Native Speaker’**

This racist cultural economy inscribed in and through English is equally at work in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In the rigid hierarchy of TEFL, one of the most vexed sites of contestation is “the native speaker.” This phrase appears consistently in academic discourses among applied linguists, language experts and teachers, and is a daily staple in advertisements for EFL teachers in Thailand and the rest of Asia. In this section, I want to take a close-up look at how this sign works in the everyday world of TEFL, particularly in terms of its operation in the job market in Thailand. My argument is that “the native speaker” is more often than not a code for ‘White’ and thus is integral to the racism and colonial-like hierarchy which colors the field of TEFL. I suggest that its extensive and mundane use points not to how well it masks the racism which has colored TEFL, but rather how normalized such racism has become in the field. I begin by first presenting empirical examples of the racial

economy which the figure of 'native speaker' moves in, before moving on to review the academic literature on this "particularly useful creature" (Kandiah, 1998, p. 83). Finally, I offer an analysis and interpretation of this sign using a postcolonial framework.

In almost every country in Asia, the globally ubiquitous figure of the native speaker has revealed itself to be a privileged carrier and powerful device in the exercise of global racism and white privilege. After a careful study of TEFL employment, pedagogical and curriculum practices in Hong Kong, Pennycook concluded that "English language education is … both a continuation of the racist hierarchies of colonial rule and the inherent superiority of the native speaker" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 194). Likewise, in Thailand, in a full page Bangkok Post article entitled "The Dark Side of English Language Education," one writer notes forthrightly that "as long as the teachers are white, and appear to be or are native speakers - a key selling point for most language schools – they will be able to find a job without a problem" (Avasadanond, October 8, 2002, p. 1). The article goes on to state that "Thai students studying English in private language schools in Thailand will, for the most part, expect their teachers to be native speakers and be farangs (Caucasians)" (Avasadanond, October 8, 2002, p. 1). The writer then emphasizes his point about racial exclusion in TEFL in Thailand by quoting several senior administrators who work in prominent language schools in Bangkok. For example, the Director of the TEFL training course for teachers at Muang Thai Pathra complex on Rachadapisek Road in Bangkok

explains: "Thai people go for 'native looking' rather than 'native speaking'…. It's like people who drive around in a Mercedes Benz because it 'looks good.' Thai students want teachers who have blue eyes and are blonde, rather than someone who looks like themselves" (Avasadanond, October 8, 2002, p. 1). In a similar vein, the Director of Kings Language School from the United Kingdom adds that his school "only accepts native speakers because only they can teach the language most effectively" (Avasadanond, October 8, 2002, p. 1). Another language school calling itself Success Language Center in Chonburi, a neighboring province of Bangkok, is just as forthright in excluding non-whites from applying to teach EFL while seeking Mercedes Benz-type capital in the form of blond hair and blue eyes. Its advertisement was placed on the popular website www.ajarn.com, the primer channel for recruitment of TEFL teachers in Thailand. It read: "qualified Native Speaking teachers of European descent needed urgently for well-paid full and part time corporate work" (ajarn.com, 27 January, 2006). Similarly, two provinces north of Bangkok, "in the old capital of Ayutthaya, Language Services & Serendib-Thailand is currently offering opportunities to English native speakers with and without teaching experiences to teach English at our listed government primary and secondary schools network which locate at [sic] different locations of Thailand." Another private school, 'American Global Education Group' was less bold but no less a participant in the idolatry of the 'native speaker' than the vast majority of TEFL schools in Thailand in placing this advertisement on the

same website: “Urgent [sic] required Math and Physics teacher, native speaker only.” However, this practice is not only to be found in private schools as government owned and supervised primary and secondary schools and universities use such schools as models of ‘best practices’, and thus deploy the ‘native speaker’ sign in the same way. Thus, it is of no surprise to find the Prince of Songkla University in the southern Thai province of Songkla “seeking 3 native speaking English instructors,” who are “American, Briton, Australian, South African, or New Zelanders only,” or that **Rajabhat** University in the northeast province of Surin “is looking for a full time native speaker language teacher to begin work as soon as possible. The applicant should be under 50 years old, preferably have some experience, and be from England, North America, or South Africa,” or that **Nakhon Sri Thammarat Nursing College** in the province of Nakhon Sri Thammarart requires a “Native English speaker … to teach both staff and students at the nursing college of Nakhon Sri Thammarat,” or that “**Nareerat School**, the biggest secondary school in Phrae [province] is seeking two female English native speakers to teach English to English Program students,” and so the list goes on, seemingly endless (ajarn.com, January 19, 2006). Reports from other countries in the region indicate that the traffic in white privilege and racial employment discrimination built around the figure of the ‘native speaker’ is no less intense. Thus, we learn that “Taiwanese English teachers are reported to be furious at government’s plans to bring in 1,000 native speakers to teach in schools,” and pay them

twice as much as fully qualified Taiwanese teachers, (*EL Gazette*, Issue 277, February 2003, p.1) that “speaking English with a native accent is widely prized in South Korea”, (Butcher, 2005, p. 15) that Japanese English education calls for students to acquire English proficiency like native speakers,” (*The Nation*, May 14, 2003, 9. A4 ). that a private school in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Singapore was seeking “NATIVE SPEAKING, CAUCASIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS,” (Kandiah, 1998, p. 79) that Hong Kong schools have asked a recruitment agency “not to supply Indians and that they would prefer teachers with blond hair and blue eyes,” with one school spelling out the details clearly in saying, “don’t send us a dark-faced man because they would scare our pupils,” and that a British born Chinese teacher who showed up for a TEFL job in Hong Kong was questioned about “his claim to be a native speaker of English because his mother did not speak to him in English.” The errant employer had no qualms in telling the *South China Morning Post* that “Students want to learn English from a genuine Englishman” (Gibb, EL News, September, 2002, p. 2). Against this mountain of evidence for the racial and racist meaning of the term ‘native speaker’, how do we begin to understand its normalized presence in ELT in Asia and elsewhere?

One place to begin to answer this question is to look briefly at what the scholarly community of linguists and other social scientists have had to say about this globalized icon. Rather surprisingly, the first full scale frontal effort to engage this creature in 1985 announced

that "The Native Speaker is Dead!," only for us to find it being "displaced" five years later. (Paikdeday, 1985). Two years after its displacement, Phillipson still found the 'native speaker' stalking the corridors of power and privilege to ask, "ELT: The Native Speaker's Burden?" Phillipson, unlike Paikeday, was under no illusions regarding the location and health of this beast of burden and thus declared in very sober language that "The native speaker ideal has remained as a central part of the conventional wisdom of the ELT profession. As with many hegemonic practices, there has been a tendency to accept it without question. The ideal can be seen in operation implicitly in the practices of the main ELT publishers … [and] explicitly in the reports of seminal conferences which nursed ELT into institutional existence" (Phillipison, 1992, p. 15). Among the most damaging consequence of the 'native speaker' idolatry that was institutionalized in TEFL after the 1961 Makerere conference on the teaching and learning of English is that of monolingualism. According to Phillipson, the conference agreed to the tenet that in TEFL, "reference to the mother tongue should only be made *in extremis* and only as a check on comprehension" (p. 186). Phillipson suggests that the origins of the monolingual tenet can be traced back to "the colonial language teaching experience and the spoken language teaching methods…." He notes that as early as 1964, several scholars had proposed that ELT "abandon a single global norm," based on the native speaker" (p. 186). Nevertheless, twenty years later, the 'native speaker', having survived this early "British heresy in TESOL" (Prator, as cited in Phillipson,

1992, p. 15) and battled his way through his eulogy and other skirmishes, found himself face to face in 1999 with a veteran British linguist, Vivian Cook, suggesting that there was a way of “Going Beyond the Native Speaker,” even while it “maintains a ghostlike presence” in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Cook, 1999). After reviewing various criteria for defining the concept of the ‘native speaker’, Cook concludes that the concept is essentially a “biodevelopmental” one erected around the first language a child learns to speak (L1) and thus “being a native speaker in this sense is an unalterable historic fact; individuals cannot change their native language any more than they can change who brought them up” (Cook, 1999, p. 186). In reflecting on the possibility raised by Illich and Sanders that some people may have grown up with more than one language, Cook introduces the conceptual distinction between L2 user and L2 learner, and suggests that “L2 learning may produce an L2 user who is like a native speaker … but who cannot meet the developmental definition” (Cook, 1999, p. 187). In this way, Cook, like others, resurrects the ‘native speaker’ on the basis of biology and reappoints him to the center. The question of why one cannot be a native speaker of more than one language, and the specific manner in which the ghostlike figure of the native speaker continues to stalk EFL, escapes analysis. In particular, the ‘biodevelopmental’ identity of the native speaker points to a relationship between the body of the ‘native speaker’ and the considerable power which is exercised via the ‘native speaker’, sign, that is to say the whole issue

of bio-power which Foucault raised in *Discipline and Punish* an elsewhere. From his conceptual fortress, the most Cook offers was that in light of the underdevelopment of research on L2 users, the 'native speaker' acts as a convenient shorthand for models based on L2 users. Yet, in spite of these contradictions, Cook has made a valuable contribution to the critical research on the place of L2 in EFL and his recommendation that "L2 users be viewed as multicompetent users rather than as deficient native speakers" goes some way to address the native speaker fallacy (Cook, 1999, p. 187).

Still more recently, the 'native speaker' has seen a case brought against him by Carmen Butcher in the pages of *English Today*. Butcher's "The Case Against the '*Native Speaker*'" approaches this dodgy character from a historical perspective. The author concludes that "the contemporary use of the phrase reveals that native speaker, following Noam Chomsky, denotes an inviolate linguistic standard against which any 'deviation' is deemed erroneous" (Butcher, 2005). Her historical survey of the word 'native' as nominative and as an adjective finds that 'native' has been most frequently used "to describe the enslavement, denigration, and segregation of 'other' people and countries" (Butcher, 2005, p. 20). She correctly points out that "When a word with this sort of divisive, demeaning history turns up in the phrase *native speaker*, all kinds of negative associations attach themselves to its use and threaten to further divide people" (Butcher, 2005, p. 20). Butcher goes on to suggest that "the use of *native speaker* is not useful in this [global] context because its

one-sided use points to the lingering and totally unsustainable superiority complex of those countries where English was first spoken. *Native speaker* does not foster good international relations” (Butcher, 2005, p. 20). She then concludes by offering two suggestions, the first being alternative terms to designate linguistic competence. Here, she follows Jenkins and includes monolingual English speaker, bilingual English speaker, L1 and L2 among these. Her second suggestion is that we replace the word ‘speaker’ in the “short toxic phrase” ‘native speaker’ with the word ‘communicator’ as this more accurately reflects the sharing aspect of linguistic interaction (Butcher, 2005, p. 22-23). Nevertheless, while Butcher’s conceptual etiology has thrown light on the tortured career of the concept of ‘native’, like other commentators, she failed to analyze the *theoretical system* within which prior critical analysis and recommendations of the concept of native speaker has been carried out, thus leaving in place the entire scaffold which works to bracket out and neutralize perceptive critiques such as hers. In this regard, Thiru Kandiah’s essay on the ‘native speaker’ is exemplary.

Like Butcher, Kandiah begins his postcolonial critique with the acute awareness that in Asia terms such as ‘native speaker’, ‘expatriate’ and the like are codifications of exclusionary practices which privilege Whites. However, unlike Butcher, Kandiah argues that the question of the ‘native speaker’ needs to be looked at in terms of the ontological, epistemological and historical conditions of its emergence. To that extent he argues that one of the legacies

of colonialism was to establish a regime of truth which defines "the criteria by which all behavior is structured, regulated and judged to be normal, legitimate and acceptable, even to the extent of determining what questions it is possible to ask, what issues it may be valid to discuss, and in general, what the intellectual conditions are for all social, political and other arrangements." In addition, he suggests that "current problematizations of the 'native user', even those that make liberal gestures towards the situation in which this personage is embroiled in the real world, … appear to evade a proper engagement" with the key issues and thus "leaves untouched all of the issues which raised the problem in the first place" (Kandiah p. 65-86, 91). Kandiah suggests that the main problems with such efforts is that they are entrapped in a narrow essentialist, empiricist and scientistic mode of inquiry linked to positivist epistemology. Further, this is compounded by an unreflexive monocultural/mono-lingual perspective, the effect of which is to display "a near-absolute disregard of the experiential immediacy and reality" of the lives which these efforts purport to be concerned with (p. 87-89). In response to Paikeday's pronouncement that the 'native speaker' is dead, Kandiah points out that "it looks strongly like a truce just at the time when the postcolonial endeavor has sounded the call to struggle" (p. 92).

Unlike other critics who see the variations in non-native Englishes as simply a divergence from the standard, Kandiah, in typical Bhabhan style, places these variations within their linguistic

ecology and interprets them as a form of resistance to the norms of Standard English. Labeling these varieties New Varieties of English (NVEs), he points out that as "the initial adoption of the language was the result of imposition …, the human subjects involved … turned the adoption into an appropriation. *In practice*, they intuitively treated this language and the many new material and non-material things associated with it as a basis and means of creating another, independent (not just reproduced or mirrored) identity and world view for themselves" (p. 95). "Thus emerged speech communities of native users of NVEs, true bilinguals and biculturals who commanded more linguistic codes than just one and who were *in practice* enabled by these codes to express their very own messages … (p. 96-97). For Kandiah then, NVEs is part of a wider struggle involved in "post-colonial recovery, reconstruction and repossession" (p. 83). Most interesting here is Kandiah's employment of Homi Bhabha's reconceptualization of mimicry as appropriation, a fundamental moment in postcolonial struggles for voice, meaning and space (Bhabha, 1994). Yet, while Kandiah's postcolonial intervention in the debate has offered a much needed complex perspective and a number of insights, his notion of NVEs involved in wider post-colonial projects seem less applicable to Thailand and countries where English is learned as a foreign language, that is to say, countries which were not colonized by Britain. In such countries, as we saw earlier and will demonstrate below, the 'native speaker' continues to occupy the privileged center of English

and profit from the colonial economy of desire that we unearthed in chapter three.

The sign of the 'native speaker' therefore continues to stalk EFL despite the challenges which it has encountered. As the normative reference for the preferred form of linguistic competence, it continues to act as a lever to regulate the flow of non-Whites into TEFL. Over the last two decades, the term has expanded from its initial linguistic home where it was meant to designate someone whose first language was English, to now represent any White person with a high level of English proficiency, with emphasis more on one's Whiteness than on their linguistic competence. Concomitant with this explicit racializing of TEFL, many White teachers, whether 'native speakers' or not, continue to be treated like movie stars and celebrities, as the opening paragraphs quoted at the beginning of this chapter testify. However, precisely because of the lavishness with which Thais and other Asians embrace and entertain people of White skin color, some White teachers have themselves begun to open the privileged fortress of the 'native speaker' for inspection and reflection, although not for evacuation. Thus, one letter to *the Nation* newspaper's daily 'Letters to the Editor' column, sarcastically jibes: "Hurray to Hibernicus who writes in *The Nation* that only white English speakers from Great Britain and Ireland should teach English in Thai language schools. Actually, I have known many non-whites, especially Indians, who speak better than the Queen of England. It is a fact that Great Britain

has many dialects and accents that are harder to understand than a Filipino or European accent" (*The Nation*, 12 February, 2003, p. 4A). Perhaps sensing the opening of a can of worms that would put the racial privileges of 'native speakers' under further scrutiny, Hibernicus, a frequent letter writer to Bangkok's two English newspapers, did not respond.

Another 'native speaker,' apparently overwhelmed with the 'native speaker's 'burden' is less shy in calling attention to the white privileges which people of her ilk are lavished with in Asia. She is worth quoting at length. After explaining that she is sent "to be one of the judges in the English speech competition, which is being held by the Ministry of University Affairs," she continues:

> *On my way to the Jubilee Room at Kasetsart University, where the competition is being held, I have a feeling familiar to me in Bangkok, the feeling of being a fraud. Here I sit in the back of a car being driven, actually chauffeured by a man old enough to be my father, as if I am someone important. All of a sudden I am struck by the complete absurdity of that. I have never quite overcome a sense of discomfort that his hierarchical society and my artificially high place in it evokes*
>
> *(Bennetts, 2004, p. 11).*

After informing her readers of her “misguided attempt to compensate for some of the other Farangs I know who seem to have bought the myth and forget how lucky they are to live here so comfortably,” she goes on:

> *Upon entry to the Jubilee Room everyone seems over-excited to meet me; everyone says they’re thrilled that I could join the judging panel. The fraudulent feelings escalate. I know that my boss has only sent me because there was absolutely no one else to represent our organization and I realize that even if these people knew anything about me, … they would know that I’d only been at my office for one week…. It is therefore clear that it is largely my race that is endowing me with such importance. They sit me at the front of the room. Here I am again, a celebrity for two days, just because I’m Farang*
>
> (p. 11-12).

Behind Ms. Bennetts’ personal anguish over the privileges which global racism affords her, is the ‘other side of the coin’, the institutional and everyday marginalization, exclusion and denigration of non-Whites in Thai society generally, and international education and TEFL in particular. Nevertheless, the exercise of this specific form of power moves openly in Thai society and economy, a public performative exercise which overflows that short toxic phrase, the ‘native speaker.’

This paper has examined, in both theoretical and empirical ways, the ways in which the English language is connected to liberal forms of exclusion in international education in Thailand. First, we looked at exclusions in school policies related to curriculum and pedagogy before moving on to a close up examination of racial exclusions in teacher recruitment in Thailand. In both instances, we have found a wide range of empirical data to substantiate the argument that international education practices liberal forms of exclusion. Given Thailand's increasing integration in South and East Asia, it is incumbent on policy makers to take steps to address these issues to insure that education in Thailand becomes more relevant to living in the 21st century.

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