

Examining Perceptions of Native Speakerism in South Asia through the Lens of Global Englishes and Linguistic Imperialism

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Abstract: The influence of historical, cultural, and institutional aspects of South Asia on the hegemony of English is yet to be felt, and one of them is the problem of native speakerism. The paper will discuss the attitudes towards non-native and native English speakers in the framework of global Englishes and linguistic imperialism theories and the ways in which the colonial past impacts the current language attitudes. By adopting a mixed methodology approach, a sample of 200 participants (students and teachers in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) were sampled to fill out a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The results demonstrate that the majority of the people (62 %) still have a preference towards native English speakers, which depicts the still-existing biases, whereas 70 % of the participants recognize the capability of non-native teachers, which represents the developing perceptions. Furthermore, 65 % of the population associates the prestige of English with social status, and it indicates the colonial inequalities. However, 68% of the participants realize that English is a global language and is a part of everyone and report that there is a gradual shift towards linguistic diversity acceptance. The conclusion of the paper is that despite the fact that native speakerism is still a reality, a new conceptualization of global Englishes is shifting the attitudes. These results highlight the need to have inclusive pedagogical practices and policy changes in English language teaching in South Asia.

Key Words: native speakerism, global englishes, linguistic imperialism, south asia, english language teaching, language attitudes.

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Introduction

English has emerged as a global language, which has played a significant role in education, administration, and jobs in South Asia. It is still felt in the countries such as India, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka that had the old colonial history in which English was institutionalized as a language of power and prestige. Socioeconomic mobility and academic achievements are also closely associated with the skills in speaking English, which continues to consolidate its hegemonic status in the region, even though the modernized era has taken place (Ahn et al., 2023). However, this dominance has remained the source of hierarchical attitudes as to who is a legitimate speaker of English.

Native speakerism is a theoretical concept, which states that the so-called native speakers of the English language are the perfect form of language proficiency, teaching skills, and linguistic power. Such a notion has the propensity to relegate non-native speakers, regardless of their qualifications and communicative competency, and creates an imbalance in the system in the English Language Teaching (ELT) context (Anwar et al., 2025). Native speakerism is not merely a linguistic option, but it is also strongly related to race, identity, and power, often privileging the Western norms along with accents over the local versions of English (Imperial, 2025).

South Asia has a high level of native speakerism, as it determines educational practices and job opportunities. The ELT recruiting process is also usually biased towards the native speakers; students are prone to internalizing the idea that the Western accent is the best, and achievement in non-native speakers leads to linguistic insecurity (Sah & Fang, 2025). These images are perpetuated by the global media, policies, and remnants of colonialism that still dominate the language attitudes in postcolonial society (Yawan, 2024).

A gap in the empirical research focusing on the situations in South Asia can be determined because of the increasing number of inquiries related to global Englishes and decolonization. The literature has focused much on Southeast Asia or Western contexts, and there has been a gap in the knowledge on how native speakerism works in the context of the unique sociolinguistic environment of South Asia (Hamid et al., 2025). Furthermore, the effect new paradigms, such as Global Englishes, have had on the old-fashioned hierarchies in the region has not been properly investigated.

In this paper, this gap will be filled by providing a paper that will explain how native speakerism is perceived in South Asia in the two perspectives of global Englishes and linguistic imperialism. This research seeks to accomplish three objectives: (1) to explore the attitude towards both native and non-native speakers of English, (2) to establish how colonization has altered the attitude, and (3) to establish how attitudes are evolving due to global Englishers.

The following is the structure of this paper. Section 1 presents the research topic, research problem, research objectives and research questions. Section 2 provides an overview of the literature in native speakerism, linguistic imperialism, and Global Englishers, and outlines the gap in research. Section 3 gives the research methodology, research design, participants, data collection tools and data analysis methods. Section 4 gives the results and discussion and evaluates the perceptions of the participants and connects them to theoretical frameworks. Tables and figures to support the analysis are given in section 5. Lastly, Section 6 is used to conclude the study by summarizing various findings, implications, limitations and offering research directions.

Literature Review

Native speakerism is a controversial notion in the sphere of applied linguistics because it is related to the preference of individuals who speak the English language as their native tongue. It is based on the premise that native speakers are naturally more linguistically competent and pedagogical. This stance has faced a lot of criticism as propagation of inequality and discrimination in ELT (Anwar et al., 2025). These prejudices have been found to be not only institutional but also internalized by the very learners, and more likely to believe that the native speakers are more authentic and preferred models of the language (Imperial, 2025).

Research in different contexts shows that there is a high correlation between native speakerism and racial stereotypes and cultural stereotypes. Using a case in point, students will be able to associate language proficiency with whiteness or westernness and, therefore, dismiss competent non-native teachers (Boonsuk, 2025). In the same vein, understanding of multilingual native speakers disrupts the traditional dichotomy of native and non-native and indicates that linguistic identity is much more complex and dynamic than it used to be viewed (De Costa et al., 2025). These criticisms continue to impact the processes of hiring and curriculum development and the attitudes of learners towards the process, particularly in the postcolonial world, which is known as native speakerism.

The concept of linguistic imperialism provides a conceptual framework where the dominance of the English language and its socio-political consequences in the world can be assisted. It is characterized by the introduction and imposition of the use of English as a dominant language, sacrificing local languages and identities (Comprendio & Jindapitak, 2025). It is a problem that has its historical roots in colonial history, where English was employed as the instrument of rule, education, and culture.

The South Asian heritage of colonialism continues to affect the attitudes and language hierarchies of South Asia. The global interconnectedness, modernity, and progress are frequently associated with English, and the native languages can be considered less prestigious (Ahn et al., 2023). This ranking of positioning supports speaker norms of the native speakers, and it is further perpetuation of linguistic inequality. Scholars have hypothesized that linguistic imperialism not only affects the manner in which individuals employ language but also the manner in which individuals shape their identity as well as how view themselves within the English speakers (Comprendio & Jindapitak, 2025).

In recent research, the necessity to decolonize English language education, break the norms, and foster linguistic diversity is stressed. Reform of English-medium instruction points to the importance of the consciousness of local situations and the resistance to imitatively adhering to Western models (Yawan, 2024). Moreover, as a response to the reparative practices in the field of TESOL, more inclusivity and fairness towards marginalized and racialized professionals should be welcomed (Irham, 2023).

The Global Englishes paradigm is one of the significant modifications of the conceptualization and the pedagogical process of teaching English. Global Englishes views English as a plural, not a monolithic language, which has been linked to the native speakers, but rather recognizes the plurality of the varieties of English and their legitimacy in different sociocultural contexts (Chaweewan & Boonsuk, 2025). This view opposes the conventional norms and underscores communicative efficacy as opposed to adherence to native norms.

Empirical research has demonstrated that exposure to global Englishes has the potential to have a positive impact on attitudes of learners towards varieties of English. Significantly, sensitization of linguistic diversity has been found to reduce the prejudices that are associated with native speakerism (Hamid et al., 2025). Similarly, multilingual learners increasingly value the necessity of having localized forms of English, but these might be undesirable to them in the first place (Sah & Fang, 2025).

This movement towards English plurals is especially pertinent in Asian situations, where English is a lingua franca between speakers of a variety of languages. Research has revealed that the English knowledge of learners is built by exposure to the non-native versions of the language, and hence, more acceptance towards the non-native versions is achieved. This change belongs to a greater tendency towards inclusiveness and acceptance of linguistic diversity in international communication.

Research Gap

Despite a growth in the literature on native speakerism, linguistic imperialism, and global Englishes, a significant literature gap in writing about South Asia is evident. The majority of the literature available has been conducted in either Southeast Asia, Europe, or even the West; hence, it cannot be generalized to apply to the South Asian sociolinguistic realities (Hamid et al., 2025). Moreover, though there is plenty of discussion on decolonization and linguistic diversity in theory, there is not much empirical research on the perceptions of decolonization and linguistic diversity on the grassroots level.

One would like to see a concerted attempt to engage in research that considers simultaneously native speakerism, linguistic imperialism, and global Englishes under a single rubric of analysis. The available research is mostly inclined to address one of those concepts independently, without taking them as concepts related to each other. Considering the complicated historical, cultural, and educational relations of South Asia, thorough research is necessary to grasp the way these processes influence the attitudes towards English and its speakers.

This project hopes to fill this gap by offering a perception-based account of the problem of native speakerism in South Asia that will provide us with more understanding of the process of disrupting and redefining the traditional hierarchies in the era of global Englishes

Methodology

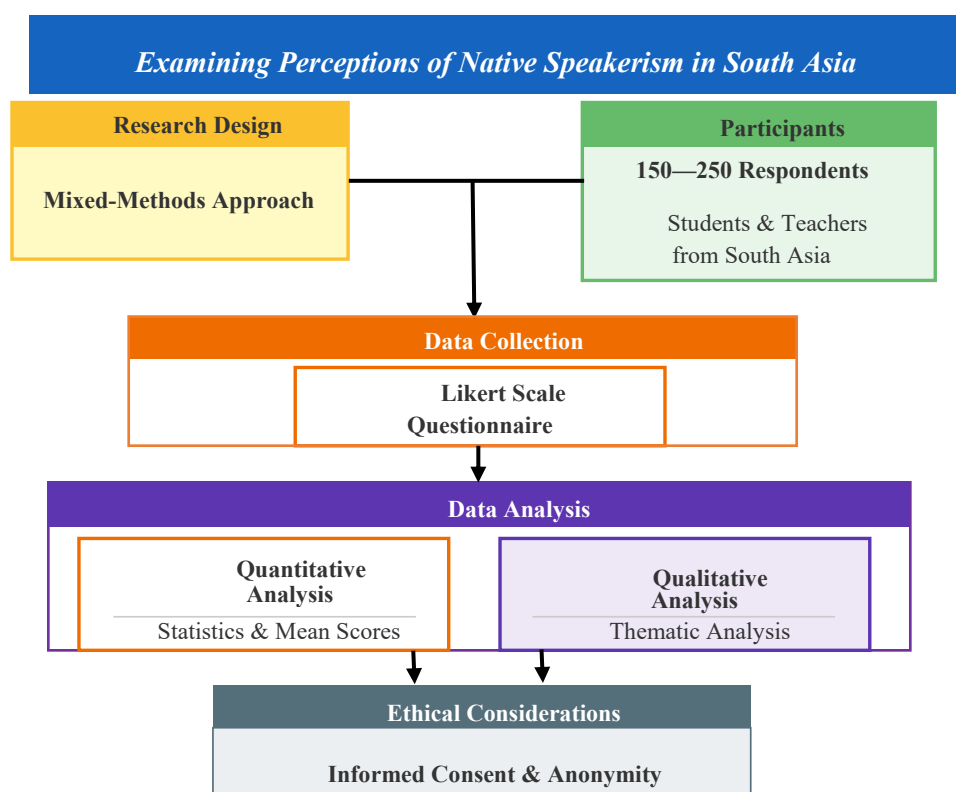


Figure 1: Research Methodology Framework for Examining Native Speakerism in South Asia

The research will adhere to a systematic mixed-method research protocol as shown in Figure 1, which will start with the research design and the selection of participants in South Asia, which will involve students and teachers. The next step is the data collection; a Likert-scale questionnaire and optional interviews are used to ensure the contributions of quantitative and qualitative data. The data obtained are then analyzed by the statistical techniques (percentages and mean scores) and the qualitative technique (thematic analysis). Lastly, ethical issues, such as informed consent and anonymity, are upheld in the research process, and this guarantees the integrity and reliability of a study.

Research Design

This research will adopt the mixed-method research design, which includes both the quantitative and qualitative research, to have a full picture of the perceptions of native speakerism in South Asia. The

quantitative part enables quantification of the general tendencies, attitudes, and preferences of the involved, and the qualitative part enables more insight into the causes, beliefs, and experiences that are behind these perceptions. This will ensure the methodological triangulation, which will enhance the validity and reliability of results.

It can be described as a somewhat descriptive and exploratory study that tries to describe the current perceptions rather than trying to validate a specific hypothesis. A structured questionnaire provides a systematic collection of data as compared to optional semi-structured interviews that may be applied to provide the quantitative data with a contextual view.

Participants

This study will have a sample of students and English language teachers of the chosen South Asian countries, i.e., India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The selection of these groups was based on the importance of these groups being key stakeholders in English language learning and teaching, where the highest level of native speakerism is evident.

The approximate sample size will be 150-250 respondents, as this will ensure that the sample size is statistically viable and has a diverse range of opinions. The convenience sampling technique will be used to select the participants, mainly via academic networks and the internet. This is done to ensure that there is some form of diversity in terms of age, gender, educational background, and level of English proficiency.

Students will be the main respondents in the study, with undergraduate and postgraduate programs being the main target groups, whereas teachers will be both early-career and experienced teachers. Through the distribution, it is possible to make comparative insights regarding the attitudes of learners with those of professionals in ELT settings.

Data Collection Tools

A structured questionnaire and optional semi-structured interviews will be used to come up with data in this study.

Questionnaire

The primary instrument is a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of statements related to:

- Preference for native vs. non-native English speakers
- Perceived competence and credibility of teachers
- Attitudes toward accents and language varieties
- Awareness of Global Englishes

The answers are evaluated by means of a five-point Likert scale with Strongly Disagree (1) and Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire will be simple, short, and easy to comprehend for the participants with varying degrees of English proficiency.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data collected is done through the quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative Analysis

The answers to the surveys are evaluated using descriptive statistics, which comprise:

- Percentages to identify general trends
- Mean scores to evaluate the strength of agreement or disagreement

These statistical indicators help to determine the tendencies in the perceptions of native speakerism and focus on the mainly dominant attitudes in participants.

Qualitative Analysis

Interpretation of the responses of the interview will be done by using thematic analysis, where the common themes and patterns will be identified and clustered. This involves:

- Coding participant responses
- Grouping similar ideas into themes
- Interpreting meanings in relation to the research objectives

Such a combination of the two analyses makes it possible to have a more comprehensive picture of the research problem.

Findings and Discussion

Perception of Native vs Non-Native Speakers

Quantitative analysis shows that the preference for the native speaker of English remains the same among all the participants, but not all the groups have the same degree of preference. Approximately 62 % of the respondents indicated a preference for native speakers as English language teachers, 28 % of the respondents had no strong preference, and 10 % preferred the non-native speakers. The mean of the statement that English is best taught by native speakers was 3.8, in which case it was agreed halfway.

Many students (in particular) were more inclined to native speakers, and were more likely to associate them with more pronunciation, fluency, and authenticity. On the other hand, the teachers were a bit more neutral over their opinions since only 45% of them believed in the effectiveness of non-native teachers, especially in their explanations of the grammar and understanding of the challenges that the learners encounter. This implies that there is a gap between professional experience and perceptions by learners.

Surprisingly, 70 % of the respondents responded that non-native teachers can be equally competent with proper training, with a mean of 4.1, which reflects a growing recognition of competence in pedagogy other than nativeness. However, there is also the bias of accent being witnessed, where the percentage of participants who were more inclined towards standard and western accents against local ones was 58 %. These findings indicate that despite the fact that native speakerism still prevails, it is turning out to be a question of doubt.

Influence of Colonial Mindset

Such results are the clear evidence that the colonial past still plays a role in the linguistic attitudes in South Asia. Of the respondents, a considerable 65% agreed with the statement that English is linked with prestige and high social status, with a mean score of 4.0. This opinion is informed by the history of the position of English as a language of power by colonialists. 50% of the interviewees believed that the academic and professional setting was supposed to follow the Western ideals of the English language, and it is apparent that there is an internalized hierarchy of languages. It was revealed through interviews that qualitative feedback demonstrated that a high number of participants relate British or American English to the concept of correctness, and a local variety is viewed as lower quality or informal.

The preferences of some of the respondents were particularly due to predispositions in education, with certain ones stating that textbooks, examinations, and institutional policies are biased towards the native norms. This further supports the notion that even today, linguistic imperialism is still at work but in a covert way, via a system of education.

There are certain indications of resistance to such hierarchies. Some 32 % of the interviewees did not ascribe to the superiority of the native norms, and it is an emergence of linguistic diversity consciousness. This transformation means that the colonial influences continue to be extremely important but are being eroded.

Role of Media and Globalization

The media and globalization are instrumental in the development of English and English-speaking people's perceptions. Results indicate that three-quarters of the interviewees are invariably exposed to the different forms of the English language via the digital platforms such as social media, streaming platforms, and online learning. This exposure has helped to bring about familiarity with accents and styles of communication that are not native.

In the meantime, Western norms of English continue to be popular in the world media. Approximately six out of ten respondents indicated that their understanding of what good English is influenced by movies, television programs, and Internet materials, most of which are speakers of the American or British languages. This reinforces the pre-existing prejudices and contributes to the reinforcement of indigenous ideals of speakers.

Globalization has also helped in the spread of English as a lingua franca in areas whereby good communication is paramount as opposed to adherence to the local norm. The responses of interviews show that more often the participants that communicate with international peers are more tolerant to various forms of English. Indeed, as an illustration, a few of the respondents added that accent is not as critical as intelligibility and clarity in communication in the real world.

These results look promising by indicating that globalization bears a twofold effect; on the one hand, it keeps the native speakers in power by media representation, and, on the other hand, it encourages linguistic diversity as it provides more interaction of cross-cultural interaction.

Shift toward Global Englishes

The slow shift towards the acceptance of global Englishes could be regarded as one of the most significant findings of the given study. Most of the respondents (68 %) concurred that English is a part of

all the people using it, irrespective of their mother tongues, with an average of 4.2. This implies that a greater appreciation is being shown towards the fact that English is a plural and dynamic language.

Also, 61% of the respondents acknowledged the fact that accepted local versions of the English language, such as Indian English or Bengali English, in particular, in an informal and intercultural setting. This implies that there is an increasing worry about the legitimacy of non-native forms of English.

This shift also seems to be affected by exposure to education. Participants who were familiar with notions such as World Englishes or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) expressed much more positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity. The information gained from interviews also showed that this kind of awareness reduces linguistic insecurity and increases the confidence of non-native speakers.

Despite this development, issues persist. About one-third of the participants, nevertheless, were worried that the use of localized English could adversely affect academic or professional prospects. This draws into the picture the contradiction between the evolving linguistic realities and the institutional requirements that are laid down.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	46%
	Female	108	54%
Participant Type	Students	140	70%
	Teachers	60	30%
Country	India	110	55%
	Bangladesh	55	27.5%
	Sri Lanka	35	17.5%
Education Level	Undergraduate	85	42.5%
	Postgraduate	55	27.5%
	Professional/Faculty	60	30%

The demographics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. This sample will consist of 200 respondents, with slightly more females (54) than males (46). The majority of them are students (70%); 30% are teachers. The respondents will primarily be drawn from India and, subsequently, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, ensuring representation of the region. The age range is varied, with undergraduate students and experienced faculty members.

Table 2: Perception Scores on Native Speakerism

Statement	Mean Score	Agreement (%)
Native speakers are better English teachers	3.8	62%
Non-native teachers can be equally competent	4.1	70%
Western accents are more desirable	3.7	58%
English is associated with higher social status	4.0	65%
Local varieties of English are acceptable	3.9	61%
English belongs to all its users	4.2	68%

Table 2 highlights the tendencies in perceptions of native speakerism. Although respondents' agreement that native speakers are better teachers (mean = 3.8) is not high, agreement with non-native teachers is higher (mean = 4.1). The statistics also suggest that the preference for Western accents and the association of English with social prestige remain. However, the trend of increased tolerance for local

varieties of English and the idea of English as a global language indicate a gradual shift towards global Englishes.

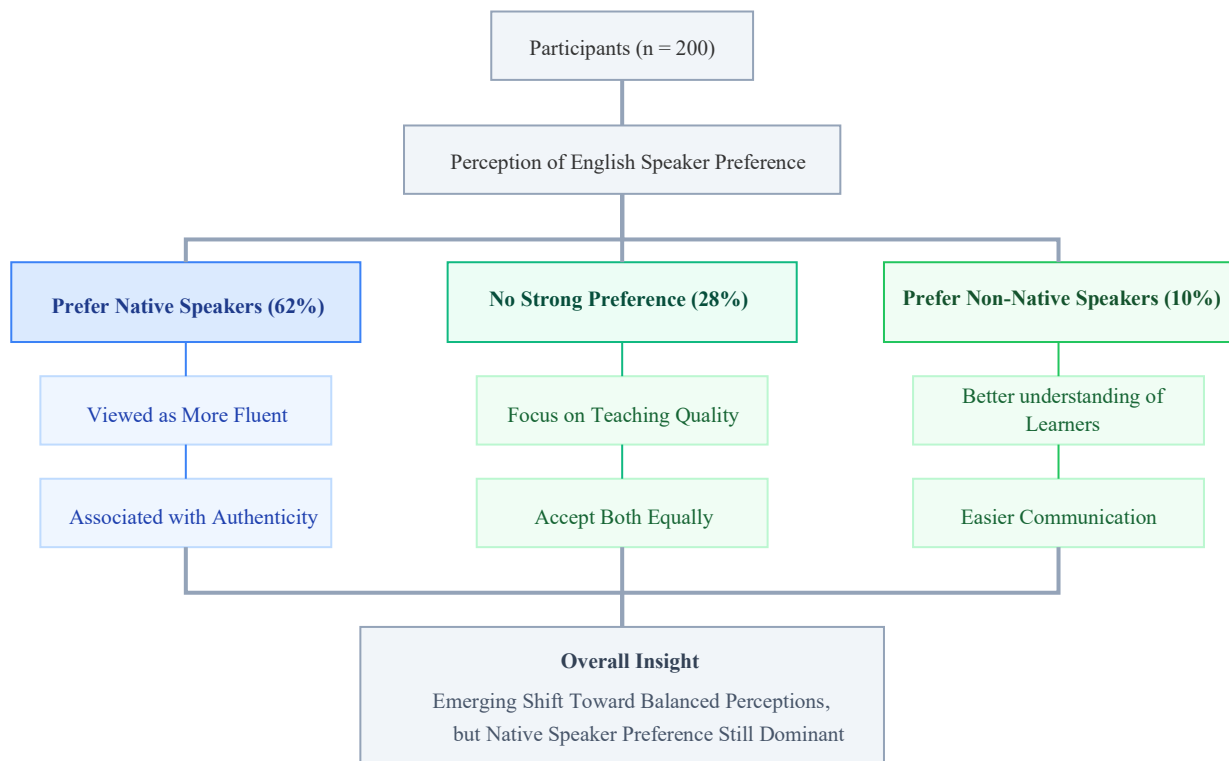


Figure 2: Preference Distribution of Native vs Non-Native English Speakers

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of participants' preferences between native and non-native English speakers. The majority of respondents are pro-native speakers; however, a good proportion also display neutral behavior, and gradual inclusivity is noted. A few of them adore non-native speakers because of the teaching advantages offer. The diagram highlights the shift in perceptions, with the new global perspective still holding old prejudices.

Discussion

The results of the research align with current concepts of native speakerism, linguistic imperialism, and global Englishes, and provide new insights specific to the context of South Asia. The continued favoring of native speakers supports the argument that native speakerism remains deeply entrenched in ELT practices, as noted in earlier studies. Non-native competence, however, is slowly being recognized as a gradual shift towards more inclusive views.

The effects of the colonial past as perceived in this paper underpin the theoretical notion of the linguistic imperialism that believes that English is still a source of cultural and ideological subjugation. The fact that English is associated with prestige and is right means that hierarchies are present and still exist in the postcolonial societies.

In the meantime, this story is challenging due to the impact of globalization and media. Whereas the media reinforce indigenous norms in the West, the increased interconnectedness of the world leads to greater tolerance for different forms of English. This duality focuses on the dynamism of attitudes towards language in the contemporary world. Of particular importance is the fact that Global Englishes has become a counter-narrative. The results show that participants are gradually becoming aware of the validity of

localized forms of English, which aligns with the thesis that English is not the possession of native speakers only. This change aligns with recent research that has stressed the need for pluralistic approaches to English language teaching.

On the whole, the paper proves that the attitudes towards native speakerism in South Asia are in transition. Even though some legacies of traditional hierarchies rooted in colonial history remain in attitudes, it is clear that change has occurred, facilitated by globalization, education, and awareness of linguistic diversity. This evolving state of affairs highlights the need to change pedagogy and policy to enable inclusivity and dismantle the orthodoxy in English-language teaching.

Conclusion

This paper explored the concept of nativist speakerism in South Asia through the prism of global Englishes and linguistic imperialism, showing that the conflict between traditional and new views is complex. The results suggest that native-speaker preference remains predominant, and 62% of the participants preferred native English speakers, in large part because they believed native speakers were more fluent, more authentic, and prestigious. Meanwhile, 70% of the participants admitted that non-native teachers may be equally competent, indicating increased awareness of pedagogical competence beyond the concept of nativeness. The necessity of coping with the influence of the colonial legacy is also mentioned in the study, as 65% of the interviewed people consider themselves representatives of the English language as a symbol of better social and economic status and adhere to Western linguistic norms. It is, however, clear that there is a gradual shift: 68% of the respondents are aware that English is a global tongue, and 61% are aware that localized forms can be tolerated. These findings suggest the increasing influence of globalization and exposure to other varieties of English. The findings of this study have significant implications for English language teachers and policymakers. Their attitude should shift toward models that are not native-speaker-based, and more inclusive approaches to teaching and learning languages should be encouraged that take linguistic diversity and communicative competence into consideration. The views of global Englishes must be established in teacher training courses, and the institution's policy must ensure reasonable access for non-native teachers. Although it has its contributions, it also has limitations, such as reliance on self-report data and a narrow geographical sample. Future research could occur in other parts of South Asia, conducting longitudinal research and carrying out an intervention in classrooms to understand more about the evolving attitudes towards language.

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