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JOURNEY TO THE WEST: ACKNOWLEDGING INTERSECTIONALITY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A CHINESE ENGLISH TEACHER'S CAREER FROM HONG KONG TO GERMANY

by

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Abstract

Issues of inequalities persist in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) despite acknowledgment and discussions of outdated, prejudicial practices. The goal of this dissertation is to show that acknowledging discrimination in TEFL is not enough to rectify the problems Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) face. In the form of an autoethnographic study of the career of an English teacher of Chinese background spanning almost two decades and two continents, this dissertation aimed to show the intersectional nature of the discriminations NNESTs face within the professional setting. More importantly, this dissertation aimed to highlight those said discriminations are reflections of greater societal attitudes by showing how the discrimination the author experienced in TEFL intersects with the discrimination he encounters in everyday life in Germany. In order to create a more just professional environment in TEFL, research that builds on the lived experiences of NNESTs is absolutely essential. The experiences lived by the author and subsequently shared and analyzed in this dissertation should: serve as a bridge that fills the gap between the professional and personal spheres of 'International English Teachers', increase awareness of the problems NNESTs face, and encourage NNESTs to speak out against unjust treatments by sharing their own lived experiences in both their professional and adopted private environments.

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Author's Declaration

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution."

Printed Name: Jason Chan

Signature:

1. Introduction

The title of any writing is a name for the work, which is, in most cases, carefully chosen by the author. The title is significant in that it shows the reader a glimpse of what the work is about. It also helps the reader to place the work in context and serves to arouse the reader's curiosity.

This dissertation's title pays homage to my roots: *Journey to the West*, one of the Four Greatest Classical Novels of Chinese literature, written and published by Wu Cheng'en in the 16th century - Arthur Waley's abridged version is known in English-speaking countries as *Monkey*. The novel is an extended fictionalized account of the trials and tribulations encountered by the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Xuan Zang during his legendary pilgrimage to the 'Western Regions' – Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent – to obtain sacred Buddhist texts. Enduringly popular, the novel is a comical adventure story, a source of spiritual insight, and a fable of obtaining enlightenment through virtuous attributions.

At the conception stage of this dissertation, it dawned on me while reading *Monkey* with my children that my journey as a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) professional and migrant to Germany, though admittedly less dramatic, mirrored that of *Monkey's* protagonist – Xuan Zang's. At the beginning of my teaching journey in Hong Kong, I was naïve and ignorant of the forthcoming difficulties of being accepted as a non-native English-speaking teacher and the problems that I would encounter in my personal life in Germany. Later on, as a more experienced teacher, my teaching journey would be challenged by setbacks, brick walls, and disillusions peppered with self-doubt growing naturally from unrelenting external opposing forces. Unlike Xuan Zang's journey, however, my career in TEFL and my time in Germany are hopefully far from over. Through this dissertation, I hope to achieve a deeper understanding of the events that have transpired in my professional and personal life, which began in the East but took form in the West, as I approach the next phase of my journey.

Mirroring the title of this dissertation to the famous novel, I intend to more than foreshadow but to clearly illustrate the difficulties I encountered in my westward journey. I also want to indicate to the reader three distinct and essential aspects of the dissertation: first, the overlapping nature of my experiences. Second, this being an autoethnography, a personal account of my experience, and third, the precise context of my journey, namely, my transition from Hong Kong (an ex-colony where English is an official language) to Germany (where most of the inhabitants do not speak English as a first language). The last point is vital as it differentiates this study from other non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST) penned studies where often the subjects work in their native countries or in an English-speaking environment, and they themselves originate from countries where English is not an official language. For example, Huo's (2017) autoethnographic study 'You Don't Look Like a Professor' and Suhr's (2014) study 'An Autoethnographic Inquiry of an Experienced NNEST in an English-Dominant Country.' In contrast, I am from an English-speaking country and working in a German-speaking country.

In addition, it is also important to note the deliberate absence of the use of the term NNEST in the title. Just as a title is vital in signposting to the readers the content of which they are about to read, the perception of a teacher can be easily skewed by overly simplistic categorical labels. Dewey and Jenkins (2010) point out the problems associated with the term 'non-native speaker', and although I do acknowledge that the terms NNEST, along with NEST (native English-speaking teacher), exemplify a negative undertone of NNESTs, nevertheless I have made the decision to use them in this dissertation as an attempt to promote further discussions regarding issues of NNEST/NEST dichotomy. As Selvi (2014) suggests, the sole purpose of using such terms is to put our finger on the problem and not shy away from it. While ideally, I would have liked to avoid using the terms altogether or substitute them with the alternatives proposed by various scholars over the years (Cook, 2001; Jenkins, 2007), it is essential to employ these terms, though problematic, in order to attempt to untangle the biases and prejudices behind them (Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016) as meaningful, positive changes are often slow to materialize. It should be noted that although discussions on the problematic aspects of the terms native and non-native speaker have been around for decades, both terms are unfortunately still widely used and accepted.

There have been various interpretations of what being a native speaker of English entails. McKay (2002) summarizes them by stating that, for some, a prerequisite of being a native speaker is that English must be the first language acquired. For others, being a native speaker requires a continual usage of the language throughout one's life. For the least strict, being a native speaker merely implies that one possesses a high level of English competence. These variations of defining native speaker status can be problematic, as the definitions can be vague. For example, my children have acquired both German and English from birth from their German mother and their Chinese-Canadian father. Since they have learned English from me, some may not consider English as their native language, as I may not be considered a native speaker. What these complications could imply is that there should be more criteria, such as one's attainment of a high level of linguistic intuition (Davies, 1996). Davies (2003) further suggests that being a native speaker has a lot to do with being a member of a particular group. He states that the differences between native and non-native speakers are learned rather than born with. However, the learning is so imprinted that it solidifies one's membership in the group of native speakers. Davies adds that attributes such as fluency, intuition, paralinguistic indicators, and cultural knowledge should be included as defining features of a native speaker. Irrelevant to the criteria set, they must be subjected to problematization. For example, competence as a criterion is questionable, for one could learn English since birth and use it on a daily basis but fail to achieve a high level of fluency. Indeed, many of Davies' criteria would exclude many in society who are considered native speakers. As a TEFL professional, I pay special attention to language usage during my traditional and social media consumption. On a daily basis, I encounter a surprisingly high number of instances of incorrect English grammar and syntax, where the utterances are made by a so-called native speaker. As early as 1990, Rampton contributed to the native speaker debate but ultimately acknowledged the extreme difficulty of reaching a concise definition, suggesting instead that the terms native and non-native speakers be replaced by levels of expertise.

1.1 Background

My professional journey as a TEFL professional has been deeply intertwined with colonization, the rise of English as a lingua franca, and English commercialized as a sellable tool, which will be discussed in later sections. First, it is essential to provide some background information: I was born and raised until the age of 9 in Hong Kong, where English has remained one of the official languages together with Chinese after the de-colonization of Hong Kong in 1997. From the ages of 9 to 23, I attended school and worked in Toronto, Canada, where my family emigrated. In 2000, I decided to return to Hong Kong, where by chance, I started my initial English teaching work without any professional training. In 2005, upon meeting my future German spouse, I moved to Germany, where I have lived for the past 16 years. While raising a young family and working in Germany, I earned a CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults), LCCI DTBE (London Chamber of Commerce Diploma of Teaching Business English), and a Master's degree in Education from the Open University in the United Kingdom. At the same time, as my academic experience progressed, I began teaching English at various private and public institutions in Germany. Over the past 16 years, I have taught English in Germany and held courses at various family-owned companies, which range from small to mid-sized parts suppliers to all levels of the national consumer electronics chain with international suppliers. I eventually began my work as an oral English examiner for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) with the British Council in Germany and CAE (Cambridge Advanced English) with Cambridge English Assessment. In September 2016, I began my doctoral studies as a Doctor of Education student in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow while continuing my professional work as an adjunct/part-time university instructor of English and English examiner. The fact that almost all of my students are ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students with whom I share a similar language learning experience. This has helped reduce the anxiety caused by the self-consciousness of being one of the few non-native English-speaking teachers in Germany. In addition, working with ESL and EFL students has brought a sense of familiarity and comfort, which mirrors my own learning experience of English and German. My unique background, in particular, has prompted a small number of administrators in German higher education institutes, namely those who have been abroad themselves or have dealt with international students, to express confidence that my cultural and linguistic sensitivities would prove a valuable resource and that my experiences, strategies, and perspectives would enrich students and help them attain a better-rounded intercultural picture. Their positive opinion of my background and experience has not only provided me with much-needed emotional support but also acted as an assurance of my professional self-worth.

The dissertation data, however, address how I am now deemed a non-expert in a field in which I was previously recognized as an expert (Schecter et al., 2014). I was somewhat naïve in thinking that I would be regarded the same way in Germany as I had been regarded positively in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, despite my lack of professional experience and qualifications, I was hired simply based on my perceived fluency in English. Contrastingly, in Germany, there had been several occasions when my qualifications and, consequently, my professional identity as an English teacher had been brought into question. How my German students perceive me is vastly different from how my former students in Hong Kong did and also different from my students in other Asian countries (similar to Chu, 2013), who, out of respect, never overtly questioned my competency as an English teaching professional. Similar to the students in Germany, some administrators in higher education in Germany who have the power to decide my professional fate would be skeptical of my professional abilities and my background, causing some unpleasant experiences. Ironically, despite my understanding of Chinese, British, and Canadian education systems, and notwithstanding my varied international experiences and acquired intercultural competence, my unique strengths are rarely acknowledged nor valued but instead regarded by some institutions and peers as weaknesses and deficiencies. The personal discriminations I believe I encountered in TEFL are not the sole reason for the motivation of this study. Just as *Monkey* inspired the title of this dissertation, the following statement, taken partially from a job advertisement for an English teacher's position in Germany that appeared on one of TEFL's biggest job platforms, was another reason why I wanted to carry out this study.

Basic Requirements: Native Speaker Competence (C2), Preferably British English

Despite the fact that World Englishes are and have been flourishing for a number of years and the number of NNESTs worldwide has reportedly exceeded NESTs (Fithriani, 2018), the misconception of the superiority of the native variety of English (Selvi, 2014), that is, the earliest range of English – British English which is spoken in the UK, and a general preference of so-called NESTs over NNESTs still exists globally. The complex issues of inequality within the TEFL community have been longstanding. At the center stands the often quoted and criticized idea of native-speakerism (Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016) – a persistent idea within English Language Teaching, characterized by the belief that NESTs represent a 'Western culture' from which come the ideals of the English language and of English language teaching methodology (Holliday, 2005).

However, if World Englishes – localized or indigenized varieties of English, especially varieties that have developed in territories influenced by the United Kingdom or the United States – are indeed the new norm and the number of NNESTs is steadily increasing (Canagarajah, 2010), the validity of the often-pushed argument by TEFL advocacy groups could seem questionable. Reading the often-cited perceived issues of discrimination on TEFL advocacy websites (Mahboob & Golden, 2013), it is easy to jump to a quick conclusion that discriminations hinder career trajectories and have adverse effects on the working conditions of NNESTs. Upon closer inspection, however, the issue of inequality is far from being straightforward. This dissertation aims to show with the study findings and its analysis that it is probable the stereotypes that occur in TEFL stem from societal perceptions of minorities in Western contexts and that the discriminations NNESTs face in their professional contexts are reflections of the discriminations that occur in general society. In other words, I aim to show, using myself as an example, how a NNEST is treated and perceived as a minority in a Western country is representative of how said NNEST is treated and perceived in a mostly white-dominant field of work.

As a TEFL professional, naturally, it is of significant importance for me to push for a higher level of transparency and social justice within my professional sphere. But from the perspective of a 'global citizen,' how I am perceived outside of my professional sphere is equally essential. Additionally, as I am one among many non-native English language speakers who are working as English language teachers throughout the world, the objective behind this dissertation's topic is more than merely stating an observation, as I have personally experienced what I thought were acts of discrimination. In addition, the unfair treatment of NNESTs warrants attention since TEFL is a lucrative business, one that provides financial opportunities for many worldwide. According to John Knagg - former Head of Research at the British Council, in a recent article, there were an estimated 1.7 billion learners and users of English worldwide in 2015 (Beare, 2020). Established English proficiency exam providers such as Cambridge and IELTS are steadily increasing their global penetration. In particular, Cambridge Assessment has more than tripled in size since 2002 and has generated revenue of over 400 million pounds from 2016 to 2017. It is an irreversible trend that more people are speaking English as their second or additional language throughout the world than native speakers of English (Llurda, 2004; Widdowson, 2002), and the use of English is not limited to native-speaking contexts (Widdowson, 2002). As a result of English's established and expanding status as a 'world language,' there is an increased demand for qualified English language teachers. The number of Native English speakers is insufficient to satisfy the global demand for English language courses. It is estimated that over 80% of the 15 million English teaching positions within the English language teaching professions worldwide are taken up by NNESTs (Freeman et al., 2015). In addition, it is interesting that English is instructed by non-native teachers to non-native students in most contexts and that it is likely that members of neither category have had any interactions with a native speaker before (Kachru & Nelson, 1996, 2006).

1.2 Aim

Although the inequalities facing NNESTs are well documented, there is an open gap within existing research which I aim to address with this dissertation. In the form of an autoethnography, this dissertation is supported by intersectionality as a theoretical framework and, based on an in-depth literature review combined with my own experience, aims to fill a gap that I believe is currently open in existing research. While there is a good number of studies detailing the intersectional discriminations facing NNESTs in TEFL, and even a greater number of studies focusing on the tribulations of being a minority both in one's native country or as a foreigner, I failed to find literature that combined both experiences of being a NNEST and a minority during my dissertation research. Acknowledging the relationship between the discrimination I experienced in the professional sphere and how I am perceived in society is essential, as this will help legitimize the issues NNESTs face working outside of their home countries. One acknowledges that factors do indeed exist on professional and personal fronts and that discriminatory practices do stem from stereotypes in society. For example, at the beginning of my TEFL career in Hong Kong, an administrator at a local language school told me he would not hire black teachers because his students thought black teachers were from Africa. Also, teachers of Indian background whom I have met in Hong Kong have confided in me that they were treated as second-class teachers compared to our white colleagues, and even when compared to someone like me, a non-white overseas Chinese. But why is being from Africa or India not desirable as an English teacher? Are the discriminations they face strictly limited to TEFL, or do they suffer the same injustice in society? While the interconnecting concepts of racism, prejudice, and discrimination have been the subject of much research, and in many professional settings, anti-discrimination policies are strictly observed, they tend to deal with prominent socially unacceptable forms of discrimination. Less severe or subtle forms of stereotyping behavior are likely not to be recognized, disguised as daily events, or even unchallenged, leaving recipients with little or no option for remedial action (Hopton & Petursdottir, 2014).

I am somewhat ashamed to admit that I paid little attention to the troubles of the NNESTs in Hong Kong because I did not share their experience as an overseas Chinese and hence was given NEST status. It was only after I moved to Germany more than 15 years ago that I began to experience what they must have gone through, experiences that make up the data analysis section of this dissertation. In the data analysis section, not only will the incidents which occurred within my professional context be examined, but also the incidents that occurred in standard everyday settings. Like most people, I am defined by more than my profession, as I also possess everyday identities. By scaffolding the experiences associated with both my professional and private lives, I hope to examine how differently I am perceived in Hong Kong compared to Germany, both as a person versus a TEFL practitioner, and to show how the societal perceptions of a person play a role in the discriminations that occur in the TEFL context. Although I was arguably less qualified professionally in Hong Kong, I was given preferred treatment there, and yet afterward, armed with years of invaluable experience when entering teaching in Germany, I experienced many instances of discrimination. Why was that the case?

1.3 Structure of Study

Journey to the West spans one hundred chapters that can be divided into four unequal parts: the first part is the introduction to the main story, the second part introduces the central character, and the third and longest section of the work is an episodic adventure story in which the protagonist sets out to bring back Buddhist scriptures from India as he encounters various evils along the way. The fourth part, which consists only of the final chapter, quickly describes the return journey and its aftermath. This dissertation is organized in a similar fashion, unfolding through six chapters. To ‘set the stage,’ the first chapter through chapter four of this dissertation introduces the topic with background information about my professional journey and the current surrounding environment, as well as information regarding the chosen theoretical framework and methodology. In particular, this chapter (which chapter? In chapters one through four?) provides basic background information about myself and the dissertation. More importantly, I highlight what is currently lacking in existing literature surrounding the topic of unfair treatment within TEFL, and the correlation between the discriminations faced by NNESTs in both their professional and private spheres will be highlighted in this section. Chapter five details my journey as a chronological story of my encounters with critical incidents from the beginning of my career in Hong Kong to my current situation in Germany and an analysis of the underlying meanings of the perceived discriminatory encounters. Chapter seven will be a short final chapter consisting of concluding remarks and discussion. So far, in this first chapter, I have presented my rationale for my chosen dissertation topic. Chapter 2 will provide comprehensive literature reviews of research relevant to my dissertation focus. I will expand on the English language's complicated status within the current post-colonial era and explore English's proliferation as a world language. In addition, literature relating to the critical perspectives from both NESTs and NNESTs will be examined, as their experiences as practitioners form the backdrop of the TEFL industry while the English language maintains its global status.

Chapter 3 will introduce the theoretical framework of Crenshaw's intersectionality that undergirds my dissertation research. Since I am working predominately in the German context, the interpretation and criticisms of intersectionality in Germany will be examined.

Chapter 4 will complete the background picture by introducing autoethnography as a research method.

Chapter 5 will consist of my retelling of critical incidents – significant life experiences which are overwhelming events that are sudden and unexpected (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004). It will be written from a first-person perspective with an autoethnographic lens and will detail the trials and tribulations encountered by a non-native English-speaking language teacher of Chinese heritage in both professional and personal contexts.

Chapter 6 will consist of an analysis of the critical incidents described in the previous chapter.

Chapter 7 will discuss my research results, speculate on anticipated theoretical and applied contributions, and offer future research recommendations.

In the following sections, I will discuss in detail the historical background of English's elevation to a lingua franca status and the subsequent commodification of the language, which has made my career in TEFL a possibility and reality. In addition, I will examine how colonization and contemporary globalization trends have resulted in both the increased power imbalance internationally and the parallel increase of inequalities within the TEFL sphere. Despite the existence of numerous studies surrounding TEFL and NNEST issues (Moussu, 2018), most NESTs I have talked to in Germany do not seem to be aware of the problems facing NNESTs. The lack of interest in the matter can be one explanation for the ignorance, as noted at the last TEFL conference at which I presented the topic of TEFL inequality. Only one participant attended (and he simply came too early for the next talk). Braine (2005) speculates that the main reason NNEST issues have not gained prominence in the wider TEFL field may be that non-native graduate students in English-speaking universities are the ones more interested in doing the majority of research surrounding NNEST issues, but these studies are only stored at university libraries as dissertations and rarely published. So, does this imply that NNESTs experiences are not worthy of inspection? The answer, I believe, is no. In fact, NNESTs' experiences are especially relevant today. Globalization and internationalization of English in most levels of education nowadays require the input of all TEFL professionals. NNESTs, by sharing both their experiences as teachers and as learners, can help to improve future English curricula, which would be better suited to the needs of future English learners. These experiences need not only be about discriminatory practices but could also be related to classroom management, teaching methodologies, and intercultural contacts with students. On many occasions at professional conferences, I have heard NESTs boldly generalizing student behaviors which were undeniably filled with cultural bias. For instance, statements beginning with "my Chinese/Indian/Asian students" are often made and heard. Due to the fact that I am always the only professional of Asian background at these events in Germany and the neighboring countries, I have always felt too self-conscious to speak up, for I was afraid, as previously mentioned, that the legitimacy of my contribution might be questioned. Regarding legitimacy, Moussu and Llurda (2008) concur with what Medgyes (2001) stated more than two decades ago: there still needs to be more research to give voice and legitimacy to the NNESTs positioned in the periphery.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the NEST vs. NNEST dichotomy in existing TEFL literature and reviews how this dichotomy has affected NNESTs' inequality through an analysis of scholarly work in this area. Prior to assessing the literature related to the aforementioned topics, it is crucial to take a step back and examine the two concepts from which much of the NEST/NNEST discussions stem, namely, the ideas of language ownership and native-speakerism. The literature discussed in the following section, though related to many areas of discrimination which NNESTs face, does not represent the complete picture of the injustices from which NNESTs suffer. In particular, the intersectional nature of the discrimination NNESTs face in their everyday environments and their professional environments, which this dissertation aimed to investigate.

2.1 Introduction

Spearheading the need for a global language are the transnational companies which usually originate from North America and Europe. Not only do these giant entities have complex corporate structures, but very often, they also conduct business as complicated joint ventures, which are increasingly having production facilities in less developed countries (Graddol, 1997). In addition to the global flow of people mentioned earlier, the international nature of these companies has consequently created a demand for their staff members to communicate with one another in a common language. In the German context, case in point: Adidas, the German-based sportswear giant, is one of the many private companies at which I have taught English. Since they have subsidiaries internationally, the company has opted to use English as its official company language, meaning that all company correspondence is conducted in English and that all meetings are held in English. Another example is Siemens, a German multinational company at which I have taught English. Although English is not employed as an official company language, a high percentage of its staff members' daily correspondence is conducted in English with other Siemens employees outside of Germany (as I have observed from the work of my wife, who has been a Siemens employee for more than two decades). Audi, the German car manufacturing giant where I have also taught English, shares a similar story to Siemens. It is important to note that the extent of the importance and usage of the English language in German businesses is not only affecting the industry leaders mentioned above. But also affects the affairs of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), which represent 99% of all businesses in the EU (European Commission, 2022). The demand for learning and improving English for international business is a clear sign of how English has come to take up the role of global lingua franca. In addition, not only do international companies rely on English as a lingua franca for communication in their workplace and with their customer and supplier bases, but international organizations such as the World Health Organization and UNESCO also make official use of English. As previously mentioned, the current language at the United Nations is English, which is unlikely to change despite the UK having left the European Union.

As Crystal (1997) laments, English has attained a unique role that cannot be overlooked in any country. Since English has transitioned into a new role in the world through globalization which native speakers had not previously experienced, it is not unspeakable to think that the status and role of native-speaking English teachers should be dutifully reevaluated. Robert Phillipson, whose work we will look at more closely in chapter 2, is a proponent of the view that English's supremacy serves the West's purpose of post-colonial dominance. Phillipson (1992) coined the term 'linguistic imperialism' to describe what he views as colonialism in the disguise of English as lingua franca because he was skeptical of the ever-growing demand for English. He believes that the perpetuating idea of English opening 'doors of opportunities' fuels only a modern-day power imbalance and that people's hopes that English will lead to more prosperous lives are an idealistic view often shared by contemporary media. However, his view is challenged by Bisong (1995), who argues that Phillipson does not take into account the learners' ability to think critically. Bisong (1995) points to the example in Nigeria, where Nigerians understand what they must do to be competitive in a global market and that learning English allows them to operate fluidly in two or more linguistic codes. Similarly, in Singapore, Chew (1999) agrees with Bisong that being multilingual allows Singaporeans the luxury to choose the language they want to use. In terms of the focus of this dissertation, this view could be further expanded to explain the actions of a NNEST. Rather than seeing the improvements in one's academic standing and professional qualifications as a burden and a form of injustice in the form of 'backpackerism' (Mackenzie, 2021) - when NESTs are hired regardless of their qualifications, level of experience and commitment, a NNEST chooses to view these as self-motivated actions for more significant future achievements, an idea which will be further explored later.

Contrastingly, English learning can be argued to have adverse effects on social equality, as not everyone has the same access to education, leaving the underprivileged more marginalized than before (Tollefson, 1995). Just as the early translators and interpreters had closer access to the English elites and thus to power, people who belong to the modern-day linguistic class and possess a high level of linguistic competence can also use English as a manipulation tool to aid their upward social mobility. English as a gatekeeper to better lives is not a novel concept. However, Pennycook and Tollefson (1995) put it precisely, "English is the language through which much of the unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and knowledge operates" (p. 54). No other language in the current world climate has such power. The imperative to learn English is so strong and the demand so high that in some Asian cities and countries, such as Hong Kong and Korea, the so-called English tutor 'kings' and 'queens' are treated like Hollywood stars and pop idols, often commanding seven-figure salaries in American dollars. While there are solid arguments for the wide use of English being the cause of increasing inequalities, there is no absolute way to be sure that the use of English is solely responsible for the societal unfairness mentioned. With the ever-increasing levels of global connectivity and the fact that multinationals are increasingly adopting a one-language policy to standardize inter-company communication (Rao, 2019), it is safe to assume that the trend for people to learn English in the hopes of acquiring the tickets to better opportunities for themselves and their children will continue. Bourdieusian interpretations between English acquisition and social classification have suggested that learning or improving one's English can potentially lead to increasing the level of linguistic capital, enabling one to participate in discourses in more esteemed public contexts (Smith, 2019). In other words, English gives voice to the previously unheard and affords them the ability to empower themselves in the era of what Phillipson describes as linguistic colonialism.

Globalization bestows power and wealth on the countries that already have amassed resources (Samli, 2008). Although there is an increasing trend in the movement between African and Asian countries, developed countries that possess advanced knowledge and technology still dictate international academic mobility and stand to gain the most profits (Altbach & Knight, 2007). As early as 1989, McLuhan and Powers had already argued that with the ever-increasing and irreversible trend toward a globalized economy, a fragmented world had become a global village. More recently, Pennycook (2010) added that "globalization is not only about economic processes, but political, technological and cultural processes as well." Prompted by capitalism, globalization is tied to "international capital" (p. 113). As a consequence of globalization (Seidlhofer, 2011), English has become a world language (Mair, 2003) and an international commodity (Block, 2008; Rajagopalan, 2005). In terms of cultural globalization, the omnipresence of the English language in popular entertainment worldwide is a salient example of the one-way flow of culture which constitutes contemporary globalization (Mandal, 2000). Driven by American, namely Hollywood, productions, English remains the lingua franca of popular entertainment. This, in turn, posits America in the prime position to exert its cultural influence worldwide. The UK has also been in a similar position, albeit less with filmed entertainment but rather through popular music. The implication is that English has gained sufficient value and currency to acquire linguistic capital and power (Kachru, 1986), resulting in the increased economic value of English and its subsequent importance in the job market. A quick glance at the member profiles to which I am personally connected on LinkedIn, a leading networking website for professionals, would reveal that most members state their English level as fluent or native. With significant benefits, English learning for non-native speakers, unsurprisingly, has also become more critical. Two outcomes of the commoditization of language are the imposed monetary connotations of the language (Block, 2008) and the interpretation of language "as a measurable skill, as to a talent, or an inalienable characteristic of group members" (Block, 2008, p. 35).

Just as English's value is increasing globally, minority people's languages are being devalued, as in the case of indigenous peoples around the world who are financially disfranchised and excluded (Block, 2008). In many cases, colonial languages such as English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese and their associated cultural traits acquired economic and social values that are treasured above all else. In contrast, the languages and many indigenous peoples' cultural traits are devalued and often despised (de Varennes, 2012). For example, my education in Canada has played an integral part in my journey as a TEFL practitioner, and as such, it is noteworthy to highlight the treatment of indigenous languages in Canada. Canadian and Métis author, Chelsea Vowel (2017), points out that currently, three-quarters of the indigenous languages in Canada are endangered. More alarmingly, she writes, there has been more than a 50 percent drop in mother tongue speakers of indigenous languages in Canada. Although she does not provide reasons for the lack of support and protection of the indigenous languages, she does question the constitutional protections and substantial yearly funding for Canada's two official languages – English and French, both languages of a colonial past, when the languages of the original peoples of Canada which have existed and been in use before the confederation of Canada are not given the same treatment. Many indigenous languages in Canada currently face an imminent threat of extinction, partly due to Canada's history of extinguishing First Nations' traditional ways of life by imposing residential schools which eradicated indigenous cultures and languages (Khawaja, 2021).

2.2 Commercialization of English

Since English became the lingua franca for international education and science, the commercialization of English language teaching and assessment has addressed the many diverse opportunities and imperatives presented by globalization (Rumbley et al., 2012). Just as there are clear winners in the case of English becoming the lingua franca in an overall international context (proficient users of English and native speakers), there are also people who benefit most from the sustained growth of English teaching, namely, the native speakers who can conveniently claim ownership of the language. However, as the number of non-native English speakers far exceeds that of native speakers (Mersad & Senad, 2019), the status of the standard variety of English is being challenged by local varieties of English. Therefore, standardized tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) are increasingly being used as gatekeepers by Western institutions and governments. They have perpetuated the narrative that TEFL learners must participate in standardized English language certifications such as IELTS and TOEFL to improve one's prospects. As Phillipson (1992) puts it, influential organizations that promote English describe the language as something "providential, well established, and as the gateway to the world" (p. 309). This belief has caused the testing business to explode exponentially over the last decade, making it a multi-million Euro industry (Labi, 2010).

Since its inception in 1962, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) has single-handedly enabled 27 million students who have English as their second language to access more than 8,500 universities and colleges in more than 130 countries (ETS, 2011). It was first developed by educators together with government officials for the purpose of creating an English language assessment for international students who wished to pursue higher education in the US. Despite its longevity and international recognition, TOEFL's standards are not without criticism. According to Xi (2010), a test would be considered fair if it provides consistent results regardless of the test takers' cultural and individual differences. Xi further observes that fairness should focus on the comparison of test outcomes and test practices across different groups which are not geographically or racially related. Shohamy (2006) is of the opinion that the representation, preservation, and maintenance of knowledge of various culturally diverse groups are equally important. The near monopoly of TOEFL may be detrimental to the achievement of respect for cultural diversity. One might argue that TOEFL is inadequate in representing the various worldwide English varieties that are used globally. For instance, the listening section of TOEFL might not be effectively carrying out its mandate of testing the English proficiency of a student because it tests the ability of students to understand English only as it is spoken in North America (Jang & Roussos, 2007). Stoynoff (2012) further asserts that another one of the shortcomings of TOEFL is that it only represents the language used in North American universities and colleges. This approach disadvantages the students who are not familiar with daily English idiomatic discourse and language conventions of academic institutions of higher education in North America. It is a possibility that, under the cloak of global mobility, test providers are unintentionally promoting a linguistic duopoly between the UK and the US. Arguing against the fact that language exams offer companies and higher education institutions insights into the suitability of the candidates regarding their language abilities would be futile. While there are studies concerning the motivations of English test takers, such as Haggerty and Fox's 2015 study on language testing motivation among South Korean youths, the same cannot be said regarding research into the motivation of assessment creators. Since English testing is a thriving industry, financial rewards would be one motivation.

For example, the IELTS operation was recently sold by the British Council to IDP in India for a substantial amount of 130 million pounds in 2021 (British Council, 2022). Less clear, however, is the role the test creators play in maintaining the native speaker variety of English being the only acceptable standard. Non-native speakers employ different interaction dynamics than that of native speakers. Therefore, the needs of speakers of various World Englishes to claim ownership of the language, find a voice, and claim the right to speak as equals to the native speakers (Johnson, 2018) and the contexts in which they use the language should be taken into account.

By putting the students into different learner-type ‘drawers’ too early, teachers may feel they need to assert their authority prematurely if they feel certain groups of students are from less obedient cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, from the students’ perspective, they may view NESTs as the ultimate authority in the subject and not question their teachings. Said (1995) established that power and knowledge are inseparable components of a binary relationship with which the West claimed knowledge of the East, that the applied power of such inventive cultural knowledge allowed the West to freely reshape and thereby control Oriental peoples and places into imperial properties. To this day, such imaginative interpretation persists in mainstream media, which falsely promotes often unflattering or stereotypical characteristics of the Orient. Such Orientalist limitations are, as Said (1995) posits, the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, and denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region. It is alarmingly common to see Asian characters in Western productions of film and television be either villainous, hapless, cowardly, or all of the above (Wang, 2013). Even when an Asian person is shown in a favorable light, the character attributes are nothing more than cartoonish representations of reality (Lee, 2011), from the academically gifted student who is socially awkward to the typical minority immigrant whose obedience and fear of authority is of stark contrast to their Western counterparts. Some of the prevalent, educational stereotypes of Asian students in America, in particular, are that they tend to be ‘overachievers’ and ‘nerdy’ (Lee, 2011) to behavioral stereotypes such as ‘compliant’ and ‘passive’ (Yeh, 2001). To that end, it is not uncommon, in my professional context, to find NEST colleagues who would sweepingly generalize the behaviors of Asian learners, from commenting that all Asian learners are shy and therefore not good at oral communication to requesting advice on dealing with Asian students in general (as if all Asian students behave in the same perceived robotic and predictable manner). Poonacha (2020) notes that international students, particularly Asian students, are often labeled as quiet and shy in the classroom but believe that the negative stigma of shyness is actually false. She believes that the students simply have a difficult time adapting to the Western classroom dynamic and teaching methods which are much more focused on open dialogue in the classroom.

2.3 Native-Speakerism

While a lingua franca - a language used to aid communication between peoples who do not share a common language - has been used for centuries, the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca is unique in the extent to which it is used. The idea that English did not become the de-facto language in global spoken, written, and computer-mediated communication (Martin-Rubio, 2018) overnight is something that this dissertation has already discussed. The following sections will illustrate in more detail the global spread of English. TEFL occurs predominately in non-English speaking countries but can also happen in English-speaking countries as a means of assimilation for emigrants. Those emigrants may, later on, become proficient enough with their language abilities that they may wish to become English teachers themselves, as I have accomplished in my own journey. Although being a native speaker of English is not an official requirement for becoming a TEFL practitioner, many TEFL employers apply discriminatory hiring practices against non-native speakers (Mahboob & Golden, 2013). TEFL as a profession was created during the colonial period by the then-British empire (Howatt & Smith, 2014). Kachru (2008) has identified English as both a colonial language and a language of the oppressors. The historical effects can be traced to English's colonial origin with non-native speakers and non-native varieties (Maftoon & Esfandiari, 2013). Institutionalized 'non-native' varieties of English have developed in ex-colonial countries such as Nigeria and India, where English is widely used as a second, often official, language in a broad range of intra-national domains. These varieties are characterized by 'nativization' (Kachru, 1981): systematic changes in their standard features at all linguistic levels, which result from the use of English in new socio-cultural settings in contact with other languages, and the absence of native speakers of English. From a historical perspective, the first phase occurred from the seventeenth to the twentieth century during British colonialism of North America, Australia, and New Zealand, consequently spreading English from a remote island to two large continents (Pennycook, 2010). Although English was initially used (Seidlhofer, 2011) in the colonies by a small number of English speakers, it flourished among a more significant number of indigenous people and grew into a strong language due to its association with the ruling class (Kachru & Nelson, 1996, 2006) during the second phase of the spread of English with the British colonization in Asia and Africa (Kachru & Nelson, 1996, 2006) from 1815 to 1914, which is known as Britain's imperial century.

From 1914 to 1945 saw two world wars which changed the political and economic skylines globally. Although 1945 to 1997 saw the process of decolonization and the resulting devolution of the empire, the global spread of English could not have been stopped and resulted in the emergence of a diverse range of postcolonial varieties worldwide. During the post-colonial period, historical, social, and ecological factors have shaped local forms of English, incorporating local lexical features and cultural identities. Schneider (2007), in his book *Postcolonial English. Varieties Around the World* describes postcolonial English from sixteen different countries: for example, Indish, Singlish, Nigerian English, Zambian English, and American English. Although English has traditionally been seen as a potential killer of any local language (Fishman, 1998), paradoxically, the rise of these local varieties of English has significant negative implications on the supremacy of the standard variety of English (Makoni et al., 2010). While these forms of English have developed new and unique properties that differ significantly from one location to another, their spread and diversification can be explained by a single underlying motivation, which is the ongoing relationships and communication needs of the colonizers and other parties (Schneider, 2007).

In recent years there have been growing discussions about these privileges in Western mainstream media. It is argued that people (white males in particular) receive institutional benefits because of their resemblance to the people who hold influential positions in our society (Kendall, 2002). According to McIntosh (2001), white males see their privileges as fair conditions which are universally available to everyone rather than as conferred power that is underserved. The same statement could be made about people who are born with native English fluency, or as Kachru (1985) states, the inner circle nations such as Britain, Canada, and America. Holliday (2003) first coins the term native-speakerism, which he defines as a prevalent belief in the field of English Language Teaching (an umbrella term under which TEFL falls) where native speakers or those perceived as native speakers are considered superior to non-native speakers as English teachers. This ideology is steeped in the belief of otherness, employing the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy where NNESTs and language students are viewed as culturally inferior and in need of instructions from native experts (Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). In addition, native-speakerism makes liberal use of ‘cultural disbelief,’ which Holliday (2005) describes as casting doubt on the legitimacy of the contributions that non-native speakers can provide to the profession. To complicate matters, Holliday’s original definition of native-speakerism as a belief that only benefits native speakers over non-native speakers have recently been challenged. Houghton and Rivers (2013) have shown in their research that native speakers could also potentially be victimized by the native-speakerism ideology. Hence, native-speakerism has since been updated to describe an ideology that, while putting Western institutions on the pedestal, employs stereotypes to assess language teaching professionals’ superiority or inferiority simply based on their perceived membership in the native-speaker group (Holliday, 2015; Houghton & Rivers, 2013). The word ‘perceived’ is of importance, as scholars now agree that one’s native-speakerness is not a biological construct but rather a socially created attribute (Davies, 2014; Holliday, 2013). In fact, Davies (2014) suggests that there are no reasons, at least linguistically, to uphold native and non-native distinctions. This idea addresses the fact that being a native speaker is a social construct based on factors such as ethnicity, nationality, accent, name, and one’s own eagerness to identify oneself as a native speaker (Bonfiglio, 2010; Inbar-Lourie, 2005; Singh et al., 1998). This point is essential for this dissertation as it illustrates the relevance of intersectionality in the field of English teaching, specifically, the overlapping of factors that determine the perceived identity of teachers, which ultimately decides their treatment by colleagues, students, and employers. Holliday (2013, 2015) cautions professionals in the field of TEFL from treating the NEST, and NNEST labels as objective and measurable since being awarded the native speaker badge is highly subjective and political. For example, how I was treated as a NEST in Hong Kong but often as a NNEST in Germany is certainly not a black-and-white matter. In addition, one can be denied his or her native speaker status simply based on personal attributes such as race and name (Amin, 1997). People who have the right look - white and Western-looking, are perceived as confirmed native speakers. Since I am not white, I have never experienced the associated privilege. However, during my time in Hong Kong teaching, I did meet African American colleagues who expressed to me their dismay at being paid less than their White American counterparts, which is blatant and unacceptable. Ali and Sonn (2009) write of native speakers whose names, in the eyes of the prospective employers, are not sufficiently Western sounding and are therefore treated as non-native speakers and ultimately have their employment opportunities denied. Many times, I had wondered when I failed to hear back from job applications whether my last name – Chan, had anything to do with the lack of interest in my application. Outside of TEFL, I have encountered acquaintances whose female spouses in Germany have opted not to adopt their husbands' foreign-sounding surnames for fear that doing so would jeopardize their careers in medicine.

2.4 Ownership of English

Currently, it is taken for granted that English is the lingua franca in many areas of trade. English's significance is apparent not only in the areas of commerce and tourism but in international politics and science as well (Schneider, 2007). It is also the official language of international and multinational companies and industries, international air traffic control, popular media, and the Internet. It is assumed that about a quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English (Crystal, 1997) and that there are a total of 75 territories where English has a special place in society (Fennell, 2006).

However, that was not always the case. Fennell (2006) divides the progressive global spread of English, leading to its status as a world language, into four phases: 1) British colonialism; 2) British leadership in the Industrial Revolution; 3) American economic superiority and political leadership; 4) American technological domination. Schneider (2007) categorizes the first phase as the foundation, where English was introduced to new territories. In this first phase, the colonial expansion of English fueled the beginning of the modern English period. Bilingualism, at this point, was marginal as only a few members of the local population may have had the capacity to take on essential roles, such as interpreters and translators. The story of the spread of English is intertwined with the teaching of English. Stemming from the early roles reserved for the privileged few, the need and desire to learn English had, over time, exponentially multiplied, and an increase in the number of learners required an increased number of teachers. While the roots of TEFL were laid already in the first phase of the global spread of English, modern-day adult migration, coupled with the often-discussed concept of a globalized economy, has further promoted the TEFL industry's growth in modern times (Rao, 2019). Currently, English is being used as the official language in over 70 countries. Fluency in both written and spoken English plays an ever-growing role in many aspects of professional life, from securing employment to communicating with clients and customers and achieving successful business partnerships globally.

Not only is English's superior status in commerce and culture evident in our everyday lives, but its political clout is also evident in its current position as an official language of the European Union and the European Parliament. One might question, however, now that Britain has withdrawn from the EU, there might be reasons for other member countries to choose to remove English as an official language (Setter, 2019), although this decision would have to be made by a unanimous vote in the European Parliament. Such a scenario seems unlikely, as in 2016 when German EU commissioner Guenther Oettinger spoke at the time of the UK referendum to explain that English would continue to be accepted due to its world language status and the fact that a considerable number of EU member countries do speak English. English is, therefore, likely to stay relevant on the international stage for the foreseeable future (Jenkins, 2017) and subsequently continue to be the driving force behind the TEFL industry. However, it must be noted that Brexit has had an impact on the TEFL industry in the UK and the EU. The reality for UK teachers is that teaching English in the EU will no longer be as easy or straightforward as it was during the pre-Brexit age. In addition, the ongoing pandemic and the associated travel restrictions further complicate matters. In Germany, I have learned from professional contacts that were previously administrators who had no problems filling short-term teaching positions they suddenly found themselves without suitable candidates. For others in the industry, namely the comparatively few NNESTs who work within the Western context, TEFL's continual growth represents a double-edged sword as English continues to spread in post-colonial times. On the one hand, new opportunities mean financial and professional rewards for some, yet the same opportunities might come at the price of unfair treatment and discrimination for others.

In 1997, the British Council commissioned Graddol to conduct a study into the future of English. The report found that English is being learned by an increasing number of non-native speakers globally, a fact which I personally was bemused by as native speakers often claim their expertise of the language from birth. Crystal was more specific in his estimation that at the time of the study, there were almost 2 billion reasonably competent English users worldwide. Already in 1985, Kachru had identified the speakers of English with the three circles model: the inner circle, which includes native speakers of English in Canada, Australia, America, the UK, and other English-speaking countries. The outer circle includes speakers in ex-colonial countries like India and Singapore, where English is widely spoken in both private and professional settings, and the expanding circle includes countries where people generally study English as a foreign language. Just as ownership of a language can change, so can the language. Language is constantly evolving (Kirby, 2007), and with that comes changes to grammatical structures and lexis. Thus, the practice of blindly adhering to the linguistic standards set by the inner circle nations should be avoided or, at the very least, questioned. I am often surprised to see outdated or infrequently used English terms and expressions being taught at my children's high school in Germany. For example, in 2018, thousands of German students voiced their concerns about an English test that was held in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. In their petition, they say that some of the English examples in the abitur test (similar to A-levels) contained English examples that were written a long time ago and consisted of many old words. They claim that many of the words used were so outdated that some modern dictionaries do not even include them. Another example I often provide my students to illustrate the importance of being current is that of our Canadian national treasure – Celine Dion. Being a French speaker from Quebec, she is often ridiculed for her French language skills when interviewed in the French media, as she would use words and expressions that are no longer in use in France. Perhaps this will be the fate of the native speakers who refuse to adapt to the globalized way of English usage. German linguist Grzega (2011) proposed the idea of Basic Global English, which is a type of English that can be learned more quickly than British or American English and that serves as a tool for successful global communication.

2.5 NESTs vs. NNESTs

In the field of TEFL, Cook (1999) puts forward a commonly accepted definition of a native speaker – a monolingual person who speaks their birth language. Disregarding whatever prevailing definitions of the native and non-native speaker are or whether or not support exists in replacing the terms, the fact is that NEST plays a widespread and complex iconic role both inside and outside of the English-speaking spheres (Holliday, 2006). Holliday (2006) adds that the terms NEST and NNEST have a genuine value within the current TEFL discourse. The label NEST especially conveys much more than just mere information about one's linguistic ability. In fact, various scholars (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005, 2006; Kubota, 2002; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992) have expressed their beliefs that the label of NEST encompasses a spectrum of prejudices and opinions, from which inherent practices and ideology in TEFL stem.

The field of TEFL has typically employed two 'species' of teachers (Medgyes, 1992): those who are from countries that use English as their first language (i.e., the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, and South Africa), and the rest of the professionals who are usually categorized as being NNESTs. When used as a noun to describe people, as in a native of a place, it denotes a person born in a specified place or someone who is associated with a place by birth. When used as an adjective to describe a plant or animal, native is used to differentiating the species' indigenous, domestic origin. Animals, plants, or people, as a native, are afforded the birthright to be rightfully associated with a place. On the contrary, non-native, primarily when used in conjunction with species, often evokes feelings of otherness. It is, to a certain degree, understandable for people to label things, people, and ideas that are foreign with the prefix non-. As the idea of otherness is closely tied to Orientalism, such labels often present a much deeper uncertainty of the unknown. In fact, the term 'invasive species' is often coined synonymously with 'non-native species' in scientific circles to describe an organism that is introduced, negatively impacts a new environment, and in turn, threatens the well-being of the native species. When used as a noun to describe people, as in a native of a place, it denotes a person born in a specified place or someone who is associated with a place by birth. When used as an adjective to describe a plant or animal, native is used to differentiating the species' indigenous, domestic origin. Even though considerable numbers of NNESTs teach English worldwide (Canagarajah, 1999), NESTs have been traditionally trusted to be better linguistic models and a more reliable source of input in the student's goal to master the English language (Chomsky, 1986). Chomsky's somewhat outdated argument that language is best learned from a native speaker of English gave power to the already prevailing language and the countries that seemingly 'owned' it, thus giving NESTs superior status over NNESTs. Although I would agree that a native speaker of English is proficient, I do not agree that they are people who live ‘in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and are unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors’ (Chomsky, 1965, p.3). While Chomsky’s argument was not the sole cause of linguistic imperialism, it likely was a contributing factor as ‘it not only promoted linguistic imperialism in countries that were smaller and weaker (which will be discussed in detail below); it also monopolized TEFL into a robust money-making business for the native speakers (Braine, 2012).

Since Chomsky made the above argument in the 80s, academics in linguistics, applied linguistics, and education have been calling for a re-evaluation of this unfounded division (Braine, 2005, 2012; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Faez, 2011; Kramsch, 1997; Liu, 1999; Mahboob, 2005, 2010; Medgyes, 1992; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Paikeday, 1985; Park, 2012; Phillipson, 1992, 2009; Stern, 1983; Widdowson, 2002), arguing the injustice of categorizing people by their place of birth or marginalizing people based on the so-called lack of nativeness of a particular language, and that teachers are not born but rather made, irrelevant as to whether or not they are native speakers. In “Language in a New Key,” Ibbotson and Tomasello (2016) contend that Chomsky’s revolution in linguistics, including his account of language acquisition, is being overturned. Paikeday (1985) was ahead of his time in asserting that “the native speaker is an imaginary being” (p. 12). Widdowson (2002) argues that NESTs have no advantage when the focus is on learning the language rather than language usage. Similarly, Kramsch (1997) questioned the idealization of NESTs, saying that being a native speaker of the language is not a privilege by birth or resulting from education but rather an invitation and acceptance by the ones who differentiated between native and non-native speakers in the first place. Kramsch further points out that even if learners and non-native speakers believe native speakers are ideal for their improvement in the spoken form of the target language, they have to be reminded that not all native English speakers speak the idealized, standardized version of the language and that everyone’s speech is influenced by their upbringings and social positions. Therefore, Kramsch concludes that the ideal speaker of any target language simply does not exist, and there is certainly no reason for non-native speakers to try to imitate a native speaker’s speech. In fact, in my professional experience, I have encountered numerous German students who have acquired bad speaking habits through their prolonged interactions with native speakers whilst abroad in the UK, America, and Australia.

Summarizing some of the research on the NEST and NNEST controversy argued by the scholars mentioned above, it could be pointed out that the main reasons for disagreements on the terms seem to be that: 1) nationality cannot be the basis of credibility as to who are better teachers of English; 2) there is no standard English as it varies by region, country, and personal history among the native English speakers; 3) the prefix 'non' in NNEST has a negative connotation and implies that one lacks something that others possess which may lead to an inferiority complex among those who do not speak English as their first language; 4) while NESTs may be better language models and learners' references, NNESTs also possess equally significant advantages for learners who wish to learn the target language and may sometimes be more qualified to teach the target language; 5) there are some qualities only NNESTs possess – deeper meta-linguistic awareness, that is, the ability to think about language and structure objectively, higher sensitivity toward the learners' cultures and learning journey through their own learning experience, and most likely able to speak the first language their students speak (if they are teaching in their own countries) which could be helpful in creating a familiar learning environment (Medgyes, 2001). Faez (2011) warns that "attempts to categorize individuals as native/non-native speakers can result in the misrepresentation of their true linguistic identities" (p. 396). Using a qualitative case study approach, Faez examined the native/non-native English speaker status of six linguistically diverse teacher candidates in Canada and found that the teacher candidates did not fall under the simplistic native/non-native English speaker categories. Instead, they actively negotiated and constructed their personal linguistic identities, which were much more nuanced, suggesting that linguistic identities were neither set nor fixed.

Aside from the debates surrounding the terms NEST and NNEST, there has also been an increase in the literature that focuses on NNESTs' legitimacy in recent times. The majority of research on NNESTs status or legitimacy in TEFL began with the work of Robert Phillipson (1992), Peter Medgyes (1992), and George Braine (2012). It is worth mentioning their work since they provide the grounds for many NNESTs to speak up against the inequality they face against NESTs. Although there are still significant changes to be made in the area of the treatment of NNESTs in TEFL, the works of the above scholars became the tipping point for TEFL equity advocacy; much like Crenshaw's work has done for black women's rights. In the following sections, we will examine the works of Phillipson, Medgyes, and Braine in more detail.

2.6 Linguistic Imperialism

According to many scholars, the inequality between NESTs and NNESTs is still apparent in textbooks, teaching materials (Cook, 1999), and teacher training curricula (Ilieva, 2010; Park, 2012). For example, with respect to English textbooks, from both my professional context and my children's German high school textbooks, the learners depicted in them are always of foreign; namely, non-Caucasian backgrounds where the teachers depicted are never NNEST in appearance. Such archaic representations in learning materials serve to further promote a false heterogeneous English learning environment. Furthermore, as will be illustrated in this dissertation, later on, the scheme of English education government policies such as NET (Native English Teachers) in Hong Kong and JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) in Japan bring forth the unequal treatment of NNESTs in the field of TEFL with the preference of hiring NESTs over NNESTs while many learners and administrators hold the unsubstantiated belief that NESTs are the better teachers for the students (Mahboob et al., 2004; Moussu, 2006). For example, Moussu (2006) found that overall, students' attitudes were more positive towards NESTs than NNESTs, even though students taught by NNESTs had a more positive attitude towards NNESTs in general than students taught only by NESTs. The findings suggest that NNESTs usually needed more time to be recognized as a legitimate teacher by their students. In my experience, an extended explanation of my academic and professional background is often required to earn the trust of my students. Moreover, schools' preference for hiring NESTs diminishes the chance for NNESTs to prove their worthiness.

NNESTs often find it more difficult to find a teaching position in TEFL (Rizki, 2018). Even if they do secure employment, they are often limited to teaching particular English language skills (Mahboob & Golden, 2013) or a particular level of students. Although I had already learned English in Hong Kong, the first year in Toronto as a young immigrant was quite challenging linguistically. Luckily, one of my aunts, who had previously immigrated to Toronto and had studied to be a teacher there, gave me a lot of support. At that time, I never questioned why she chose to become an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher instead of a 'regular' English teacher. Now upon reflection, however, I realize that perhaps the choice was never hers to make. A current example is the shortage of teachers in America. Due to the low salaries and unfavorable working conditions, America is going through a shortage of teachers, especially in rural areas. Some schools have taken the drastic step of hiring teachers from the Philippines (where the official language is English), but only to take up teaching posts in subjects such as math and sciences (Sterling, 2018). Despite the fact that English is the medium of instruction in all subjects and that there is an acute shortage of teachers in all subject areas in America, English teaching jobs are still strictly reserved for White Americans. Even when NNESTs are given the opportunity to teach, they are occasionally ridiculed for their lack of native-speaker status and language proficiency (Braine, 2012; Park, 2012). Moussu (2006) notes that the majority of the international students from 21 different countries participating in his research expressed positive attitudes towards NNESTs' language instructions in an American university. Moussu's research shows that most learners are accepting of being taught by NNESTs, and thus learners' teacher preference is not the cause of discriminatory hiring practices. Braine (2012) argues that this kind of unspoken filtering in hiring NESTs over NNESTs should not be justified by putting the responsibility on the students' preference of NESTs or by blaming the complexity of the work permit applications for foreign workers. Braine views these 'hurdles' unmistakably as NESTs' ways of defending their authority and status in TEFL.

While this dissertation aims to focus on more current issues of NNEST discrimination and how they are intertwined with societal attitudes, they stem from the idea of linguistic imperialism, an area where much work has already been done. Proponents of linguistic imperialism view the field of TEFL as an imperialist exercise from the British colonial era which intends to subjugate the people, particularly in postcolonial settings in the Far East and Africa, albeit this time clad in a less direct, softer form of control. The most outspoken and earliest proponent of the theory of linguistic imperialism is Robert Phillipson. In *Linguistic Imperialism*, he defines English linguistic imperialism as the dominance asserted and retained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson, 1992). Not only does English jeopardize the continued existence of local languages and provoke inequality, Phillipson argues, but students are also unavoidably influenced by Anglo-Saxon cultural norms during their language instructions which plant in them the idea of Western cultural supremacy. While working for the British government to promote English globally, Phillipson began to reflect on the imperialistic traits of English and criticized English as a tool for ongoing maintenance and reconstitution of power. He believes that English language imperialism upholds structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages and has put English, and all things closely related to English, on a pedestal of privilege. In his more recent work *Linguistic Imperialism Continued*, Phillipson (2009) notes that not much has changed since his work in 1992, in which he criticized the five tenets of English applied linguistics and English language teaching theory. Phillipson renamed them as fallacies: 1) the monolingual fallacy – the belief that English is best taught monolingually; 2) the native speaker fallacy – the belief that the ideal teacher is a native speaker; 3) the early start fallacy – the belief that the earlier English is taught, the better the results; 4) the maximum exposure fallacy – the belief that the more English is taught, the better the results; and 5) the subtractive fallacy – the belief that if other languages are used, standards of English will drop.

Phillipson's idea of the five fallacies is enlightening as it exposes the hidden agenda and the often-overlooked power game underscoring the field of TEFL. The first fallacy, the belief that no other language besides the target language should be used during the lesson, was ingrained in me during my initial teacher training. The reasoning is that limiting the language of instruction to the target language would promote utterances and understanding of English by the learners. From my professional experience, however, I have found this to be, on occasion, counterproductive for beginning learners. They could quickly feel dejected for not understanding instructions as they would also lack the ability to speak in complete sentences in English. I have found that using their language, though sparingly, could have positive and encouraging effects on the learners.

The second fallacy is one that I find outdated and only applicable when teachers do not have the additional tools or materials to enhance their lessons. Perhaps it would be true previously when all teachers had was themselves with limited technological support. Nowadays, NNESTs can quickly analyze appropriate usage and teach the target language through teacher training and practice online. Furthermore, Phillipson also notes that NNESTs are better qualified to teach the target language once being learners of the language than those born into it.

The third fallacy is one that I find most easily expunged. The belief that the earlier English is taught, the better the results is, in my opinion, overly simplistic. Of course, the duration and the number of learning hours play a role, but so does the individual effort of the learner. Professionally, I have encountered adult students who have had English instructions since kindergarten yet do not possess the same level of fluency as learners who have only started learning English in their adolescent years. Mastery of a language has more to do with motivation and effort than simply the duration of instruction.

The fourth fallacy can be described as quantity over quality. It is natural to assume that the more time one spends on learning something, the better and faster one might be at the subject. However, what this belief fails to consider is the quality of the instruction and whether or not appropriate corrections and feedback are provided to the learner. For example, I have had a lot of students who have participated in intensive English programs in English-speaking countries such as the UK and the US, only to return without making much improvement.

The last fallacy is closely tied to the first one, as they both relate to the language of instruction. The difference is that the fifth fallacy associates a drop in quality with the addition of other languages. Although I cannot argue for sure that there is no correlation between the two elements, I can highlight from my own teaching experience that in a multilingual classroom, incorporating the occasional use of multiple languages, such as the learners' mother tongues, could promote feelings of rapport and community, which in turn allow the learners to feel more comfortable in making crucial mistakes.

According to a recent report (Hawksworth & Chan, 2015), China and India are on track to become the two largest global economies by the year 2050, while Indonesia continues to deliver strong growth, according to the International Monetary Fund's latest regional assessment (IMF, 2022). It is doubtful that English learners from around the world are debating the question of English's imperialistic dominance, but instead, they are more likely to be enjoying the benefits of rising economies, as illustrated by Bisong's (1995) example of Nigerian learners in chapter 1.

Compared to Philipson, Hungarian linguist Peter Medgyes's work offers a NNEST perspective and is more focused on the teachers and their teaching methods than the language itself. In *The Schizophrenic Teacher* and *Native and Non-native: Who is Worth More?*, he shares his experience as a NNEST in Hungary. For him, NNESTs are teachers who speak English as a second or foreign language and the language their monolingual students speak. This definition, as discussed earlier in chapter 1, is, in my opinion, overly simplistic, as perceptions are relative. For example, I consider English to be my first language as 1) I was born in a place where English is an official language; 2) I have used English continuously and extensively from birth. However, intersectional factors such as ethnicity, race, appearance, accent, and nationality might be factors that allow others to justify categorizing me as a NNEST. The second part of his definition that NNESTs speak their students' mother language can only be primarily possible if the NNESTs are teaching in their home countries. In my experience in Germany, I did not speak German when I first arrived, and yet I was often considered a NNEST by students and hiring staff.

Despite not agreeing with his definition of what being a NNEST entails, I do appreciate his suggestion that instead of arguing that NESTs and NNESTs are equals, he proposes that they are actually different species. If they are treated as different, and not better or worse, that would make them equally essential beings in the field of TEFL. He comes to this argument by comparing the two groups in terms of 1) language proficiency, 2) behavior in teaching, 3) the correlation between factors 1 & 2, and 4) the value or worth of being equally good teachers. He was able to conclude, from findings based on data collected from both NESTs and NNESTs in the form of self-reports, that the NNESTs' shortcoming of language proficiency turned out to be the most valuable quality, as this shortcoming promoted the development of other capacities in NNESTs. These qualities of NNESTs, which include meta-linguistic awareness, sensitivity to learners' cultural diversities and struggles to learn the target language, and being better language learner models, were teaching qualities that NESTs either did not have or had a challenging time trying to acquire. Just as real shortcomings can promote personal development, so can perceived inadequacies. While NESTs can rely on their innate nativeness as a credential, NNESTs must continuously improve their qualifications to be viewed as equally competent. I have found myself in this predicament in my career, where I felt and still feel the constant need to achieve a higher level of academic success in order to be treated equally. In fact, this is a significant factor in my decision to pursue a doctorate degree, an endeavor that is extremely taxing on all aspects of my life. To take Medgyes's idea further, I would even suggest that there should be no distinguishing between NEST and NNEST, but only an assessment of their capabilities as teachers based on merit. In the way of analogy, restaurant patrons would not judge how good their food is by where the chef comes from but by the food itself, nor would classical concertgoers assess the quality of the music based on whether the musicians come from the birth countries of Bach and Mozart. While Phillipson's discussion of the native speaker fallacies stems from the binary ideological opposition of the terms NEST and NNEST (Ishihara, 2010), Medgyes concludes that the two species' differences make it meaningless to judge who is better or worse. Instead, they should be understood as equally good teachers. Where Phillipson's views can be seen as dismissive of the long-held belief of NEST superiority, Medgyes' suggestion of collaborative teaching to complement each other's shortcomings might be more productive.

Edited by George Braine, the book *The Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching* is a collection of articles ranging from addressing NNEST identity issues, to socio-political concerns, to teacher education implications. The first part of the book, *Who We Are*, includes stories of self and others on credibility and of identity on being non-native speakers of English in the field of TEFL. For example, Thomas's (2018) autobiographical story on the various credibility issues in NNESTs is still significant today, more than two decades since its publication. It reflects how deeply the idea of native-speakerism has been believed to be a non-negotiable truth. In the previous section discussing native-speakerism, I have introduced the idea of intersectionality as a way to understand the treatments of NNESTs. The second part of the book, *Socio-political Concerns*, deals with more prominent social and political issues such as race, gender, and power and offers more proof of the overlap of different discriminatory factors. The last part of the book, *Implication for Teacher Education*, includes suggestions and implications for teacher training programs for future NNESTs. Since the book's publication, many issues concerning NNESTs in TEFL have been brought to the forefront, prompting discussions and research. It is not difficult to see the book's significance within NNEST research. Not only is it the first book to vocally and visibly show the reality of what it means to be a NNEST within the field of TEFL, but most of the issues and topics the book addresses still seem to be relevant today. More recently, in 2020, Braine published another book, *Non-Native Speaker English Teachers: Research, Pedagogy, and Professional Growth*, where he provides the past, the present, and the future of research into the issues of NNESTs. This book explores the discrimination against NNESTs in the inner, outer, and expanding English circles, an idea proposed by Kachru (1986), which was mentioned earlier. Braine also presents his research on the life stories of two NNESTs, analyzing the different lives they have lived. In addition, the book guides future researchers interested in pursuing research in this field by providing a historical overview of past NNEST research findings and stating the latest trends and shortcomings of NNEST research. He suggests that future researchers should avoid the already saturated research areas, such as teachers' and students' perceptions, and instead diversify research areas by investigating areas beyond perceptions and distinctions. Heeding his advice, this dissertation is focused on an area within TEFL inequality research that is rarely discussed, namely the overlapping of injustice in NNESTs' professional and private spheres.

From the works of Phillipson, Medgyes, Braine, and the works of many others, it can be seen that there is indeed interest and effort in finding a voice for NNESTs; however, a more substantial effort is required to bring about change. Braine's suggestion to avoid familiar topics is of significant importance for this dissertation, as it led me to focus on what I believe to be an overlooked area within TEFL research, which is the connection between the treatment and perception of a NNEST in greater society as a person and the treatment and perception of a NNEST within the professional context. While research on professional identities and injustice does exist, they are not explicitly associated with intersectionality but are instead focused on one particular aspect. In her research, *The Complex Construction of Professional Identities: Female EFL Educators in Japan Speak Out*, Simon-Maeda (2004) utilizes open-ended life history interviews of nine female EFL educators in Japan to provide context for examining the possibilities and constraints that have shaped their careers. Xiang Ying Huo (2017), in her study, *You Don't Look Like a Professor*, discusses the prejudices she has experienced at a Canadian university writing center and focuses mainly on perceived discrimination caused by race. Combining Braine's insight into existing research and my own reading of the studies by Simon-Maeda and Huo, I was able to narrow down my research focus on my own experience in Hong Kong and Germany, both as a native/foreigner and as a TEFL professional.

2.7 NNESTs Inequalities within TEFL

As previously mentioned, the unfair treatment of NNESTs in TEFL extends to the bias toward hiring NESTs over NNESTs, as many learners and their parents believe in the perpetual myth that NESTs are the better teachers (Mahboob et al., 2004; Moussu, 2006), resulting in the difficulties NNESTs experience in finding work in TEFL contexts in BANA (Britain, the Australasian, and North American) countries. Even in NNESTs' home countries, which mainly do not employ English as their sole primary language, unequal treatments are also visible. The negative feelings towards NNESTs reflect the deeply rooted belief that language is best learned from a native speaker, a fallacy, as stated by Phillipson. I cannot say much about other Asian countries, but at least in China, I am aware of how much this deeply held belief feeds the enormous, two-billion-dollar industry of foreign language education in the country. Despite the demand, smaller local providers are nevertheless being forced out of the TEFL arena by foreign corporations such as Disney English – a subsidiary of the US entertainment giant, and EF Education First (Thorniley, 2010). Braine (2012) states, "NNESTs who return to their countries after obtaining higher degrees and teacher qualifications in the West are not always able to find work because notably in Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong, for instance, employers appear to prefer unqualified NESTs instead of qualified local teachers" (p. 4). Even once hired, NNESTs are likely to witness the reality of NESTs being hired more easily and receiving a significantly higher amount of salary with fewer duties compared to themselves. Surprisingly, while it has been suggested that native-speakerism is more prevalent in private institutions (Mackenzie, 2021), such practice is not only carried out by small, locally-owned language schools but is also commonly reflected in government policies. In Asia, for example, with the intention of improving the quality of English language teaching and further exposing students to Western cultures, a Native-Speaker English Teacher (NET) scheme was implemented in Hong Kong's public primary and secondary schools from 1998 and 2002, respectively (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2022). It is a scheme that subsidizes public primary and secondary schools to employ "authentic" English language and Western cultures. As part of their job description, NET teachers are expected to assist with teaching, material development, and professional training for local English teachers. NET teachers are offered a renewable two-year contract and receive a gratuity at the end of each contract in addition to a special allowance which is intended to partially compensate for the additional costs of living overseas (although the living costs in Hong Kong can be substantially less than in the teachers' home countries). Similar programs exist in other Asian countries, such as the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) program in Japan, EPIK (English Program in Korea), and FET (Foreign English Teachers) program in Taiwan. Such NEST-favoring government policies are not limited to ex-colonial or Asian states. Similarly, in South America, the policies of the Colombian government actively encourage native-speaker-favoring practices. Between 2004 and 2016, in an effort to increase the employability of Colombian human capital on the global economic stage (Gomez Sara, 2017), the Colombian government recruited thousands of native speakers to work alongside local teachers, often with better salaries and working conditions, regardless of their qualifications. Interestingly, in my research, I was unable to find similar policies in European countries, at least certainly not in Germany. I can only deduce that such internalized racism, which promotes hiring practices that often favor Western candidates, is partly due to the Asian countries' belief in Western superiority.

It is noteworthy, from personal experience being a teacher in Hong Kong, albeit only in the private sector, that the preference for NESTs is often limited to native English speakers with a particular appearance. This practice is also well reflected in the literature on the topic of sensitive issues such as race and language learning, teaching, and teacher identity (Amin, 1997, 2001; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Kubota, 2014; Lee, 2011). In general, researchers argue that race cannot be treated as neutral. Like race, whiteness has been unspoken of and intentionally ignored but is also highly prominent in causing inequality amongst language teachers. Kubota (2014) suggests that racialization should be understood as beyond personal hate and stereotyping towards a specific ethnic group and should be viewed as institutional and epistemological. When looking at racialization as institutional practice in North American contexts, Kubota observes that it is not difficult to notice that the preference of a particular skin color and what constitutes epistemologically appropriate knowledge or language is founded upon the assumption that "a legitimate English speaker is closer to a white settler" (p. 6.). For many learners, the process of English language learning is associated with becoming white linguistically. This desire fuels the learners to value certain types of teachers over others whom they view as less legitimate.

Furthermore, discussions about native-speakerism only emphasize the discrimination that those perceived as NNESTs suffer. It is often forgotten that there is a far more sinister problem, which is racism, lurking in the background, as I have tried to show in my story. Many people who were born, raised, and educated in English-speaking countries and who might not even speak any other language than English are not perceived as NESTs simply because of their skin color, accent, ethnicity, or name. There is substantial research evidence to show that being a "native speaker of English is often a proxy of whiteness" (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013, p. 197). For instance, despite having spent their childhood and teenage years in the US, Sundstrom and Kim (2014) report that employers in South Korea would only give their exam preparation or low-level classes solely due to their perceived non-nativeness, despite their fluent language proficiency. Another example is a study by Kubota and Fujimoto (2013) in which they relate a story of a Japanese American English teacher who, while working in a Japanese language school, felt she was always viewed as and referred to as 'the Japanese American.' On the contrary, an Italian American teacher never had his Italian heritage highlighted because of his white skin color and Western appearance, which the Japanese American lacked. Similarly, Javier (2016) shows in his study that Li – a Chinese Canadian, and Andres – a Mexican American, had their native-speakerness questioned by students and parents who had expected a native speaker to be white and Western in appearance. Names also play an important role in defining nativeness. For example, in the Gulf countries, language school recruiters were found to reject inner circle applicants based on their non-Anglo-Saxon ethnicity or even surnames (Ali & Sonn, 2009). Furthermore, I would also argue that some TEFL recruiters base the notion of a native-speaking country on a racist idea. Bolton and Kachru (2006) pointed out that the naming and classifying of countries and Englishes into native and non-native has much more to do with race than linguistics. For example, Caribbean English is interestingly not given the same status as British, Australian, or American English despite the fact that English is the official language of many Caribbean countries. In fact, the history of English in the Caribbean is as long as that of American English and much longer than that of its Australian cousin. It is also interesting that the native-speaking countries labeled in TEFL only typically refer to the UK and its former settler colonies (i.e., Australia and the US), while unquestionably multi-ethnic now; these countries had been predominantly white. On the other hand, all predominantly non-white countries where English is an official language and where many of their citizens speak it as a first language are not seen as native-speaking countries. Romney (2010) considers this a prime example of the effect race has on how Englishes are described and classified. Another paradox worth mentioning in a Japanese TEFL context, which relates to how seemingly harmless the label ‘native speaker’ has become racialized, is those NNESTs who are white and Western-looking and are also enjoying the same higher salaries as NESTs due to their Western appearance (Toh, 2013).

In this chapter, I have provided more information on the current debates regarding NEST and NNEST issues based on the discussions of the works of leading scholars in the field of TEFL. While it is accepted to use the term native speaker to refer to someone whose mother tongue is English, it is important to see that in TEFL, the term has become very much racialized, which in turn arbitrarily divides English users into genuine and fake naïve speakers (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). Precisely, some individuals are labeled as NNEST solely based on racial and ethnic prejudice. On the other hand, some white and Western-looking individuals who speak English as a foreign language can escape this prejudice and be treated as native speakers (Holliday, 2009). Despite the fact that there is a significant amount of research that already deals with the unequal treatment of NNEST, being denied or being given a tiny window of access to do what they want and are qualified to do could only lead to frustration and an inferior complex in the field of TEFL. Living in Germany, this reality as a NNEST is entirely different for me than when I was treated as a NEST in Hong Kong twenty years ago. I was in a different position back then: a NEST who was regarded as a teacher with native-like proficiency in the target language and rarely felt inferior to my white NEST colleagues. I was confident of who I was and whom I wanted to be seen as. All of that changed when I came to Germany, where I encountered various experiences, which will be examined in chapter 5 of this dissertation in these categories: gender, race, ethnicity, appearance, and nativeness. The overlap of different areas of discrimination can be best studied and made sense of under the lens of intersectionality, which we will examine in the next chapter.

2.8 Teacher Identity

Teacher identity has emerged as an area of considerable interest within educational research (Sachs, 2005). Generally, it is understood as the beliefs, values, and practices a teacher holds about themselves and their profession, which are inextricably intertwined with their teaching behaviors and interactions. Teacher identity is dynamic, constantly evolving over time and impacted by factors such as personal experiences, cultural contexts, professional experiences, and interactions with students and colleagues (Hong, 2010). It plays a crucial role in shaping a teacher's pedagogical decisions, teaching style, and professional development (Izadinia, 2013).

Within the field of TEFL, teacher identity becomes even more multifaceted due to the complexities associated with the 'native'/'non-native' English speaker teacher (NEST/NNEST) distinction. This dichotomy categorizes teachers based on their first language, inadvertently setting expectations about their language proficiency, pedagogical skills, and cultural knowledge. While native English speaker teachers (NESTs) are often perceived as the "ideal" teachers, non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) can face implicit biases, despite possessing valuable attributes such as multilingual abilities and first-hand experience of language acquisition.

These biases have significant implications for NNESTs' identity construction. In many cases, they face an identity struggle, constantly negotiating their professional selves within the native/non-native dichotomy. This struggle may influence their perceived legitimacy, self-confidence, and teaching practices. The stereotypical image of the ideal English teacher as a native speaker can lead to feelings of inadequacy and impostor syndrome among NNESTs, which may negatively impact their professional growth (Park, 2012).

However, it is essential to note that this dichotomy has been increasingly criticized for its oversimplification of teachers' linguistic identities and competencies. Thomas (1999) has argued for the need to shift away from this binary division, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of teacher identity in TEFL. Amin (1997) suggests recognizing and valuing the diverse skills that NNESTs bring to the classroom, such as their understanding of learners' needs, their capacity to teach language learning strategies effectively, and their ability to serve as successful models of proficient non-native English speakers. Bedrettin Yazan, an assistant professor of educational linguistics at the University of Alabama, has contributed significantly to the research of teacher identity, the native/non-native speaker distinction, and autoethnography. In his works, Yazan promotes the use of autoethnography, a qualitative research method that uses the researcher's personal experience to extend understanding of a particular cultural or social phenomenon. This method offers unique insights into the complex interplay of personal and professional identities, providing a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of English language teachers, particularly those identified as non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs). Yazan (2018) takes a critical perspective on the native/non-native speaker dichotomy prevalent in the field of English language teaching and criticizes the still firmly held belief in English learning that the ultimate goal is to reach native speaker status. He argues for the need to move beyond this simplistic binary, emphasizing that it often leads to implicit biases against non-native English speakers, thereby affecting their professional identities and teaching experiences. By bringing the discussion of teacher identity negotiation to the fore, Yazan (2018) illuminates the complex and dynamic nature of this construct. He suggests that teacher identity is not a fixed attribute, but rather a constantly evolving entity shaped by various factors, including the teacher's linguistic background, cultural experiences, pedagogical beliefs, and interactions within the classroom and the broader educational community. Specifically, his narrative provides valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by NNESTs, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing these issues in teacher education and professional development.

Teacher identity is an abstract concept that has been explored and conceptualized in various ways in the academic literature. For example, in "Teacher Identity Discourses: Negotiating Personal and Professional Spaces", Alsup (2006) uses narrative analysis to explore teacher identity as an ongoing negotiation between personal and professional dimensions. She suggests that identity is continually shaped and reshaped through experiences, reflections, and interactions in both personal life and professional practice. Similarly, in "Professional Identity and Social Work", Webb (2017) applies his exploration of professional identity to teaching. He suggests that professional identity is a complex construct influenced by factors such as personal beliefs, values, experiences, and the socio-political context of the work environment. This perspective emphasizes that professional identity, including that of teachers, is multifaceted and situated within larger societal structures. In Identity and Pedagogy in Higher Education: International Comparisons, Bhopal and Danaher (2013) examine the intersection of race, identity, and gender in higher education. It explores the challenges of applying these concepts to students' experiences, considering both local and international perspectives in the UK and

Australia. The research acknowledges the dominance of predominantly white, middle-class values and perspectives in education, complicating discussions on race, gender, and identity. It further explores the potential of education as a catalyst for change amidst controversial debates on racial and gender inequalities. Haladay and Hicks (2018), in "Narratives of Educating for Sustainability in Unsustainable Environments", explore teacher identity in the context of sustainability education. Their work highlights how environmental and societal challenges can influence teachers' identities and practices, positing that teacher identity is not only individual but also socially and environmentally situated.

All these works collectively and crucially present teacher identity as a dynamic and multifaceted construct. They convincingly emphasize that teacher identity is influenced by personal and professional experiences, beliefs, pedagogical practices, and social and environmental contexts, and is continually evolving and being negotiated throughout a teacher's career.

Yet another key concept that underpins research on teacher identity and the concept of teacher identity taken in this dissertation is that the identity of language teachers, including English language teachers, can be likened to a complex tapestry. The broadest threads represent the overarching personal and professional identity shared by all educators. These threads interweave with more specific strands that represent the identities of language teachers, which in turn become intertwined with those representing English language teachers. In the intricate heart of this tapestry, we find tightly woven threads representing the identity of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) who are teaching in Germany.

It is worth noting that NNESTs significantly outnumber native English teachers globally (Freeman et al., 2015). This means there are many educators teaching English as an additional language, often alongside their native language and possibly other languages they are proficient in. As a Chinese Canadian NNEST working in Germany myself, I am particularly interested in how fellow NNESTs navigate the complexities of their identity. Important considerations often include English proficiency, cultural identification, and the evolving dynamics of what is considered the target culture for English language education. There has been a shift from focusing solely on American or British cultures to a more global perspective, understanding different English dialects and cultures beyond traditional English-speaking countries.

While language teacher identity research is growing, yet it remains a niche field within academia. A significant recent contribution to this field is Gary Barkhuizen's work (2016), "Reflections on Language Teacher Identity Research", which presents diverse perspectives from both native and non-native English teachers and educators. It was enlightening to learn about experiences like those of Suresh Canagarajah, a non-native English speaker from Sri Lanka, who faced questions about his authority and expertise due to his linguistic, national, and racial identities. His experiences highlight the unique strengths of NNESTs, who often have a deeper understanding of the challenges that students face when learning English, especially in academic writing.

Another recurring theme is the influence of personal and professional identity on teaching methodologies, as explored in Thomas Farrell’s contribution "Who I am is how I teach". Farrell (2016) promotes a constructivist approach and encourages critical thinking, highlighting how teacher identity impacts pedagogy and, when educators become teacher trainers, the ripple effect on the broader education sector.

The anthology on language teacher identity offers a wealth of qualitative data and rich narratives from a diverse group of educators. Various contributors share their professional paths, emphasize social justice perspectives, and discuss the transformative potential of teacher-researcher roles in shaping teacher identity. The book also outlines potential areas for future research in language teacher identity, providing valuable guidance for aspiring researchers. Some particularly resonant suggestions include exploring the intersection between classroom practice, critical pedagogy, and language teacher identity, as well as examining language learning histories and their impact on teacher identity, especially in multilingual contexts. This seminal work is a thought-provoking contribution to the field of language teacher identity research, offering insights from experienced practitioners that will be of interest to all English-language educators, whether native or non-native, teaching in diverse contexts such as Germany.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is a multifaceted field that encompasses a variety of concepts, including teacher identity, the distinction between native and non-native speakers, and the use of autoethnography as a research methodology. Bedrettin Yazan's scholarly contributions along with his colleagues provide an in-depth exploration and understanding of these key areas.

One of the most significant aspects in Yazan's work is the exploration of teacher identity, especially within the context of TEFL. Unlike static views of identity, Yazan emphasizes that teacher identity is not a fixed construct but is fluid and continually evolving. According to Yazan and Rudolph (2018), this evolution is influenced by a myriad of factors including personal experiences, professional encounters, as well as the sociocultural contexts within which teaching and learning happen. In this complex process of identity formation, interactions with students, colleagues, and broader institutional norms play a critical role, all contributing to the ongoing construction of a teacher's professional identity. Such a nuanced understanding of teacher identity, as offered by Yazan and Rudolph, is instrumental in informing teacher education programs and professional development initiatives in TEFL.

The distinction between native and non-native speakers is another pivotal point in Yazan's work, representing a significant, though contentious, issue in the field of TEFL. The conventional view within this field has often favoured native speakers, who are typically perceived as the 'ideal' teachers due to their supposed 'innate' grasp of the English language. This perspective, however, has been increasingly challenged in recent years, and Yazan's work is a part of this movement.

In his research, Yazan asserts that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) bring valuable linguistic and cultural resources to the classroom that are often overlooked (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Having navigated the path of learning English as an additional language themselves, NNESTs can empathize with their students' language learning journey. They can provide explicit grammar instruction, employ effective learning strategies, and offer insight into the challenges of acquiring English—all informed by their own experiences. Yazan's work thus contributes to the growing movement to deconstruct the native/non-native dichotomy and promotes a more equitable TEFL profession that values the unique strengths of all teachers, irrespective of their native language.

Autoethnography, a research method that uses self-reflection to explore personal experience within a larger cultural context, is another significant area that Yazan delves into. By utilizing an autoethnographic approach, Yazan allows for a deeply personal yet analytically rigorous investigation of both teacher identity and the native/non-native speaker distinction (Yazan, 2019). This method enables a nuanced exploration of how these constructs are experienced by individual teachers, providing rich, detailed insights that can inform practice and policy in TEFL.

Yazan's use of autoethnography further exemplifies the potential of this research method to challenge dominant discourses and give voice to marginalized perspectives. His work illustrates how autoethnography can serve not only as a tool for personal reflection and professional development but also as a means of advocating for change in the TEFL field. Through this method, Yazan gives voice to unique personal experiences, thereby challenging and expanding the conventional narratives within TEFL (Yazan, 2019).

Yazan's work provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of teacher identity, the native/non-native speaker distinction, and autoethnography within the context of TEFL. His research underscores the complexities of these constructs and their interconnectedness, offering invaluable insights that can enrich the practices of English language teachers and inform the research of scholars in the field. By delving into these key areas, Yazan's work contributes to a more nuanced, equitable, and inclusive understanding of TEFL.

In short, the concept of teacher identity is complex and multifaceted, particularly in the field of TEFL. The NEST/NNEST dichotomy adds a layer of complexity to the identity construction of English language teachers, with significant implications for their professional experiences and development. Recognizing this complexity is crucial for promoting equity in TEFL and for fostering a more inclusive, diverse, and effective language teaching and learning environment.

3. Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality as a framework for understanding layers of discrimination has been established in the context of African-American feminist legal and social studies and was inspired by the outcomes of social movements, in particular by African-American and socialist feminism. Intersectionality is more than merely a theory. It is a valuable tool for understanding real-life issues of overlapping discrimination. From intersectionality, we know that black women in America suffer not only from issues of race but also gender and class.

3.1 Introduction

The term intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989) and is a non-empirical qualitative analytic framework. Intersectionality is also referred to as intersectional feminism. Intersectionality identifies how gender overlaps with different aspects of social and political discrimination. It aims to identify how existing and connected power structures marginalize particular groups in society (Cooper, 2016). Initially, scholars using intersectionality as a framework had only explored the issues of oppression specifically targeted at women of color. Since its conception, the theory has expanded into the analysis of many more aspects of social identities. In a Time magazine article published in 2020, Crenshaw was asked to explain what intersectionality meant 30 years after she had introduced the concept. She replied that intersectionality was ‘basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.’ She further explained that ‘we tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts’ (Crenshaw, 2020, para. 2). Both social and cultural implications of different factors, such as gender, race, age, religion, and class are incorporated into intersectional considerations. The relationships between these discriminating factors must be established and taken into account in order to increase social equality (Cooper, 2016). In other words, intersectionality is the concept to which all oppression is linked and is the acknowledgment that each individual has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. Building on the work of Crenshaw (1989), Collins and Bilge (2020) define intersectionality as:

> “a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences from the perspective that in terms of social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other” (p. 2).

In 2015, intersectionality was added to the Oxford Dictionary, where it is defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender and is regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Despite its importance increasingly being recognized in the world of women’s and minorities' rights, intersectionality is not without critics, as with all theories. Throughout its relatively short history, as compared to other social theories, opponents of intersectionality have pointed out that it relies heavily on concepts that are not objective, such as ‘systems of power,’ which arguably is merely an empirical basis for study or a theoretical set of ideas, and does not amount to a legitimate sociological concept. Due to its non-empirical nature, critics have dismissed studies associated with intersectionality as not verifiable, subjective, irrelevant, and nonscientific (Salskov, 2020). To Crenshaw, the most common criticism of intersectionality – that the theory represents a hierarchy of victimhood, is, in reality, an affirmation of the theory’s fundamental truth, that people have individual identities which intersect in ways that impact how they are perceived and treated or mistreated. For example, black women are both black women, but because they are black women, they experience specific forms of discrimination that black men may not. In the context of this dissertation, I am both a foreigner in Germany and an NNEST in TEFL, and because I am a non-native English-speaking teacher of Chinese heritage living in Germany, I experience forms of discrimination that someone ‘just’ being Chinese in Germany or ‘just’ working as a NNEST in their home country may not.

Intersectionality is usually a framework that serves the interests of the underprivileged. For example, Tamboukou (2015) focuses her work on education in primary and secondary schools and gender; Blackwell and Cruze's (2015) work on intersectionality and crime, and most recently, Sparks (2021) links intersectionality with identity and symbolic privilege, to name a few. Most of the scholars who employ intersectionality as a framework are female scholars who are dealing with issues concerning women. As the first-born son with a good education and a higher social capital (Bourdieu, 1977) from a traditional middle-class patriarchal family, it is somewhat surprising that I have found myself attempting to use intersectionality to understand my current predicament. At the initial stages of conceptualizing my dissertation, Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital were considered to provide a useful framework for understanding how English has become a commodity that many students hope to acquire in order to lead more prosperous lives (Lee, 2011). In particular, I wanted to use Bourdieu's concepts to help me contextualize my students' views of my role as an educator with regard to the acquisition of social status in a global economy. In addition, the idea was that Bourdieu's frameworks could be helpful for critically considering the capital, power, and language used in educational settings that involve the instruction of English. However, despite Bourdieu's significant contribution to the theories of cultural and social capital and legitimate language, he did not explore the issue of race in depth, which I believe is a main contributing factor to my own experiences. Therefore, I searched for a second, complimentary theory - Critical Race Theory (CRT), an intellectual and revolutionary approach that places race at the core of critical examination. It challenges liberal and current beliefs about civil rights, with a particular focus on race and racism, as its name clearly implies. In particular, the framework analyzes how legal principles and educational concepts, as well as policies, are employed to subordinate minorities (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). As a tool, it is significant in the "deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 10). I believed at the time that utilizing both theories as frameworks would allow me to analyze my experiences fully but ultimately decided on using intersectionality as the framework, which I believe is well suited for the purpose of this dissertation. I made the decision not to employ CRT in this dissertation on account of the ongoing and fierce debates surrounding CRT in the American political and educational contexts, which happen mostly in public school districts where shareholders such as parents, teachers, and administrators disagree on race education in the classroom (Zurcher, 2021). I did not want the choice of theory to distract from the main issue this dissertation aimed to address – the unfair treatment of NNESTs. I was initially skeptical of the suitability of intersectionality as the dissertation framework because my upbringing is anything but typical of the experiences normally represented by intersectionality. On the contrary, as a son and grandson of factory owners in China, I had, until my move to Germany, mostly lived a sheltered, privileged, middle-class life. In fact, prior to my TEFL career, I had not experienced any forms of discrimination or inequality. However, upon conducting my research, I realized that an intersectional framework is beneficial for understanding why I have experienced discrimination professionally in Germany and not in Hong Kong. Intersectionality allowed me to understand firstly that there is more than one factor contributing to the inequalities in TEFL and the overlapping effects they have had on my career. Nevertheless, intersectionality added a further dimension to my analysis, that is, the compounding effects of discrimination in my professional and private spheres. Intersectionality provided me with a Venn diagram view (a widely used style of diagram visually depicting the relationships between sets of data) of the overlapping discrimination I encountered professionally and privately and helped me analyze my experiences and subsequently confirmed my opinion that TEFL discriminations stem not only from professional bias like native-speakerism but also from societal prejudices. In addition to the previously mentioned research, which investigates the intersectional nature of discrimination in TEFL, there is also existing literature that tackles work-life intersectionality issues such as 'Work-Life, Diversity and Intersectionality' (Ozbilgin et al., 2010) and 'Intersectionality in Real Life' (Windsor, 2016). However, what is missing in current research are works that focus on issues of intersectionality in TEFL, which at the same time look at the work-life dimension of the issues.

3.2 Intersectionality and NNESTs

Block and Corona (2016) argue, "injustice is never about just one dimension of being … by grasping this complexity and confronting it as such, researchers are more likely to be able to propose action on behalf of those who suffer injustice" (p. 519). While intersectionality as a framework provides researchers with a lens through which they can observe the overlapping nature of injustice, Yuval-Davis (2011) expresses her concern that it is perhaps problematic to automatically assume that those injustices are only racially related and only affect minorities who live in Western environments. For example, it is incorrect to automatically assume that a ‘black woman’ who suffers from injustice is a minority black woman living in white societies when in fact, the majority of black women in today’s world are black women in black societies, who also suffer from overlapping forms of injustice. Conversely, discussions on NNESTs often assume the NNEST is working in his or her native country and not as a minority working in a white Western society. Although intersectionality has only become a widespread concept in feminist and gender studies in Europe and the United States in the 90s and ultimately also in the social sciences in general, it is actually deeply rooted in feminist ideas from the past (McCall, 2005). As a theoretical framework, the concept of intersectionality does not provide a concrete method or research design. Instead, an intersectional perspective can provide a complete framing for overlapping inequalities. The concept aimed to give credit to the overlapping of different types of discrimination, such as racism, class prejudice, sexism, or homophobia. This means that self-identifications are always determined by various factors such as a person’s gender, age, sexuality, or racial background. However, exclusion, oppression, discrimination, and privilege are also marked by numerous interlocking factors (Roth, 2021). Multiple discriminations, including intersectional discrimination, are now widely accepted in academic circles and are relatively recent concepts. They have yet to be fully reflected within the law and legal practice. Anti-discrimination law and its associated practice have traditionally taken a single-axis perspective, identifying and addressing single grounds in cases of discrimination. While this is not the focus of this dissertation, there were instances where I considered taking legal action against prospective employers because I felt I was discriminated against. Even though I possess all the necessary skills and attributes listed in the job descriptions, I was not even granted the chance of an interview. If I had taken legal action, the lack of precedence in intersectional discrimination cases would most likely render my - claims invalid. In the process of discrimination, there can be an interaction of lines of difference and intersectional identity (Lueck & Arapi, 2008). In this process-oriented approach, discrimination is understood as a product of the social construction of identity, which stands in a social, historical, political, and cultural context (Gummich, 2014). Furthermore, this perspective can demonstrate how the respective constellations differ from place to place and from context to context. Intersectionality is not a famed but used concept in Asia and Latin America, as I will show in the coming paragraphs. Before we look at how intersectionality is viewed in different contexts, we should first understand its history.

3.3 Intersectionality in Context

Intersectional theorizing relates to a long tradition of critical interventions and resistance to the dominant discourse. Soon after the French Revolution, the freedom fighters who built the first independent Latin American state in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) pointed out the contradiction between ideas of human rights and freedom and the system of institutionalized enslavement. Around the same time, De Gouges (1791) in France and Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) in England highlighted the fact that the newly introduced 'human rights' were limited to white male citizens. At the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in the USA in 1851, Sojourner Truth, in her speech "Ain't I a Woman?", questioned the universality of white bourgeois feminism by pointing out her intersectional experience as a black and formerly enslaved woman. In her statement, Truth anticipated the problematic differences between women as well as the entanglement of class, racialization, and gender. At the beginning of the 20th century, socialist feminists like Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg criticized bourgeois feminists for ignoring other socio-economic positions. More than a century later, the Manifesto das Mulheres Negras in Brazil provided decisive interventions into dominant feminist representations, pointing to the entangled and interdependent character of different forms of oppression. Davis (1982) has examined the interplay and 'triple oppression' of racist and sexist regimes as well as class struggles. More recently, in 2011, Zapatista women's representative Comandanta Esterunderscored her double oppression as an indigenous woman in Chiapas, Mexico, in her speech at the Congreso de la Union in Mexico City by pointing out that she was both indigenous and female.

Conceptualizations of intersectionality are embedded in processes of unequal circulations of knowledge (Roth, 2021), that is, the unequal geopolitics of knowledge that grants the most significant authority to theories produced in the northern hemisphere (Connell, 2020). While the concept has been transferred to different places and carries different meanings in different contexts, the concept of intersectionality, as it is widely understood today, stems from critical race and gender studies and goes back to the height of black masculine and white feminist social movements in the United States. For example, in 1970, The Combahee River Collective called for the fight against 'interlocking systems of oppression,' and Davis (1982) raised the issues of interrelated hierarchies of women, race, and class. The collective was a black feminist lesbian socialist organization active in the US from 1974 to 1980. It argued that both the white feminist movement and the Civil Rights Movement were not addressing their specific needs as black lesbian women. The collective was influential in introducing a fundamental concept of intersectionality – the idea of interlocking systems of oppression. While the collective did not coin the term intersectionality, it was the first to acknowledge the interlocking systems of oppression that work together and reinforce each other.

Black women have often been excluded from the history of the feminist movement in the United States as they were often viewed as having more similarities to black men than to a 'typical woman' – a white woman. This has led some feminist movements to fail in advocating their rights (Coles & Pasek, 2020). Coles and Pasek (2020) lament that black women are often overlooked in discussions about racism and sexism despite the fact that they face a unique combination of both of these forms of discrimination at the same time. Such intersectional invisibility means that social justice movements that are supposed to help black women may actually be contributing to their marginalization. This is similar to the treatment of NNESTs, who work outside of their countries. Since they do not belong to the high numbers of NNESTs who are not discriminated against in their home countries, they are often not seen as typical NNESTs.

While intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding the particular discrimination and oppression caused by the combination of multiple personal identities such as gender, caste, sexuality, race, class, religion, disability, and physical appearance (Tucker et al., 2022; Yonce, 2014) it can also be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses that people experience due to a combination of these factors. These intertwined and overlapping social identities can be empowering and oppressive (Holley et al., 2016). Prior to the popularization of intersectionality, second-wave feminism focused on experiences that unified white, middle-class women.
The experiences of people from other minority groups who did not fit that feminine image were not included in the agenda of this wave of feminism. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many black feminists, such as Anna Julia Cooper, began to question this historical exclusion. They rejected the idea that the earlier feminist movements led by middle-class white women homogenized the

lived experiences of groups of women, arguing that the forms of oppression suffered by black, poor, or disabled women differed significantly from those suffered by middle-class white women and began to examine how gender, race, and class identity could be combined to determine the fate of women (Cooper, 2016).

The first feminist convention in the US in 1848 was the beginning of the first wave of the feminist movement, which initially only dealt with white women's rights and interests. The wave of feminism from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century was primarily concerned with white men and women's political equality, while racial inequality was largely ignored. The first wave of feminism focused on fighting for women's political power, as opposed to other inequalities (Hewitt, 2010), and offered no intersectional perspective (Hughes, 2011). The second wave of feminism stemmed from Betty Friedan's (2010) *The Feminine Mystique,* which worked to eliminate the gender discrimination suffered by women in the home. During this period, feminists were successful in the Wage Equality Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act, and Roe v. Wade, but they also alienated black women from mainstream movement platforms (Downing, 2018). The introduction of intersectionality in 1989 coincided with the start of the third wave of feminism. Feminists at this time noted the lack of attention to race, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity in earlier feminist movements and sought to provide an outlet for addressing political and social disparities. Proponents of intersectionality acknowledge these issues that early feminism ignored. Many modern scholars, such as Ryanne Lau (2018), have argued that the achievements of intersectionality defined the third wave of feminism and disseminated a widespread understanding of how the experiences of sexism are differentiated by identity factors. Before the emergence of this theory, there had been little specific research into the experiences of people who suffered multiple forms of injustice in society (Tomlinson, 2013). Although the wave metaphor is a simple tool to grasp fundamental historical developments of feminism, the categorization of a multi-faceted movement like feminism can be dangerously prone to oversimplification. Similarly, in TEFL, discussions on NNEST discrimination are often reduced to a single source, namely, native-speakerism, even though the issue is much more complicated and involves factors such as gender, accent, and ethnic background. In terms of feminism, it must be noted that each wave evolved from the previous and did not happen independently of each other. The rigidity of these set time frames implies a fragmented history, conveying a false sense of a linear trajectory when in fact, feminist waves have been pulled by currents from all directions, much like the multilayered nature of TEFL discrimination issues. In addition, due to the fact that intersectionality has become a highly established term in various academic fields, it is necessary to find a way of contextualizing and decolonizing the discourse on intersectionality in order to research interdependencies in the Americas (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Gender or race is often neglected or subordinated to the perceived 'major contradiction' of class oppression. Feminists who put gender relations at center stage seldom use the terminology of intersectionality produced predominantly by US-American theorists. Although intersectionality is nearly absent as a concept in Latin American feminist discourses, the notion of intersectionality does exist and is being discussed. What academics in the US and Europe term as intersectionality has been debated under the heading of either 'inequalities,' which is more frequent in Latin American gender studies, or 'multiculturalism,' a concept coined in social science contexts.

Many Latin American feminists contradict the intersectional paradigm, as they claim that the concept does not provide anything new for them: their specific experiences have long forced them to deal with simultaneous and intersecting forms of oppression on a very practical level. Cuban feminist discourses, for example, currently focus predominantly on neglected racist structures (Castillo, 2011), while a number of Mexican feminist thinkers have recently reemphasized the necessity to bind discourses to the more strongly social inequalities of gender with a particular focus on the situation of indigenous women (Damian, 2011). Collaboration has been undertaken between established feminists such as Brah and Phoenix (2004) in the academy and political activists from diverse social spheres, as well as from radical thinkers to Zapatista feminists. Representatives of indigenous feminists and other social movements outside academia have, in particular, emphasized institutionalized feminism's lack of intersectional thinking as related to other disenfranchised groups, especially with a radical feminist agenda. From a Latin American perspective, one could consider their politics as taking the notion of intersectionality out of the ivory tower and back to its radical political roots. Others consciously reject the concept as part of the knowledge asymmetries that define the North-South divide. A perspective that goes beyond the 'Anglo-Saxon/Latinist cultural dichotomy' (Shohat & Stam, 2012) is hence highly desirable. This means, for instance, taking the different meanings, concepts, and workings of 'race' in different places and contexts in the Americas into account

(Castillo, 2011; Wade, 2009). ‘Race’ articulates and relates to other categories of inequality very differently in Brazil and Colombia than in the US, the UK, or Germany. The same holds true for gender relations and concepts of sexuality. In other words, class oppression or privilege can carry a different meaning in Caracas than in Berlin, likewise for women versus men or white women versus black women. Therefore, it may be more sensible to speak of ‘intersectionalities’ in plural form as intersectional discriminations occur on multiple levels, as I had proposed earlier. One way to address the concerns raised by the Latin American feminists is to employ, as this dissertation does, autoethnography as the methodology as it only draws on one’s own experience and does not represent the narratives of others, as no other’s experience can be as representative of one’s journey as their own. Moreover, while I acknowledge my journey is not representative of that of other NNESTs, I do believe that it offers an initial perspective for others to identify with, just as I was able to identify with the experiences of earlier feminists. Most feminist and anti-racist scholars and activists are already very familiar with intersectionality and the respective Anglo/American-dominated catalog of English language academic texts in the Western world. In other parts of the world, however, some theorizing of unfamiliar forms and politics of knowledge is still required and in process. Being indebted to the explicitly political paradigm of African-American, Indigena, and Chicana feminisms and feminist thinking produced in other languages and locations, Critical Race and Critical Whiteness approaches and intersectionality can function as practical tools in the hegemony of power. It is, therefore, essential to link the analysis of multiple and intersecting forms of oppression made visible through an intersectional lens to considerations of how to overcome these inequalities.

3.4 History Behind the Rise of Intersectional Focus in Germany

In Germany, the first criticism of the one-dimensionality of the feminist movement was already voiced in the 1930s. Clara Zetkin, a representative of the communist women’s movement, pointed out the fundamental connection between gender and class. At the same time, she criticized the fact that the women’s movement only addressed the interests of bourgeois women. Another example from a few decades later is the intervention of women with disabilities during the legal debates in the 1970s and 1980s. While a large part of feminists understood ‘my body belongs to me’ as finally wanting to decide for themselves whether they could abort an unborn child, women with disabilities identified themselves under this slogan in other respects. Much less common issues, such as the widespread practice of sterilizing disabled girls and young women, were possible without the actual consent of those affected until the 1992 Care Act in Germany, or the health risk problems for women from impoverished countries when testing new contraceptive methods were scandalized or fought against much less frequently. In 2007, legal scholar Julia Zinmeister used the example of these and other current specific experiences of discrimination against disabled women to examine the legal treatment of intersectional discrimination in Germany for the first time (Zinsmeister, 2007)

The black and Jewish German women's movement can already be described as intersectional, even before the existence of the term 'intersectionality.' Meanwhile, the concepts of racism, anti-Semitism, class relations and sexism also came about as early as the 1980s in Germany's federal Republic (Krall, 2013). The process of discrimination can lead to an intersectional relationship. Tracing this history shows that intersectionality is similarly helpful in both analyzing my experiences and providing an understanding of the existing broader systemic and institutional discrimination impacting NNESTs. According to the Council of Europe (2022), the concept of multiple discrimination recognizes that discrimination can occur on the basis of more than one perceived characteristic. For example, a person who is discriminated against on the grounds of their ethnicity may also be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, and age. Such discrimination can, and often does, create cumulative disadvantage. In 1995, at the Beijing World Conference for Women, attention was drawn to the fact that age, disability, social and economic status, ethnicity, and race could create particular barriers for women. This led to the development of a framework for recognizing multiple and coexisting forms of discrimination, which became part of the Beijing Platform for Action (United Nations, 2022). Fredman's (2016) study on intersectionality in the EU proposes three main ways in which discrimination on more grounds than one can be conceptualized. The first way is referred to as sequential multiple discrimination, where a person suffers discrimination on different grounds on separate occasions. For example, a woman with a disability might suffer discrimination once because of her gender and on another occasion because of her disability. This type of discrimination, according to Fredman, is the easiest to deal with because each incident can be assessed individually and judged accordingly. The second way is called additive multiple discrimination, which occurs when a person suffers discrimination on the same occasion but on two grounds. For example, a gay woman is harassed because of her gender and her sexuality. This type of discrimination is additive because each of the grounds can be identified independently. The third and final type of discrimination is referred to as intersectional discrimination, where two or multiple grounds operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination. For example, a young Romani woman is discriminated against in the labor market because she is Romani and is perceived to be ‘dangerous,’ because she is a woman and is, therefore, ‘bound to have children soon,’ and because she is young and therefore inexperienced. In particular circumstances, the combination of these factors creates a negative synergy so that the discrimination cannot be fully understood with the addition of criteria alone. In being considered inexperienced and incompetent, the woman shares certain experiences of discrimination with young people; in being assumed to fit into a traditional role, she shares experiences with other women; and in being perceived as dangerous, she shares experiences with all Romani people, including men. However, it is the particular intersection of these factors that makes her case individual (Fredman, 2016). The publicist Bari Weiss, who criticizes the handling of the concept of inclusion in the US, which often amounts to social exclusion in its effect, says that the concept of intersectionality in practice usually amounts to a categorizing system in which people are judged according to how much suffering their group has experienced in history. The concept tends toward a Manichean worldview in that it forces a dichotomous distinction between victims and perpetrators. In the US, conservative political commentator and media personality Ben Shapiro (2018) described intersectionality as a form of identity politics in which the value of one’s opinion depends on the number of victim circles one belongs to. He further added that at the bottom of the intersectionality pool is the straight white male. Multiple victimhood would be tantamount to canonization, but oppressors and oppressed in one person are not allowed to exist in this concept as it often forces people to hide part of their identity, seen in a contradictory role in the hierarchy of discrimination (Weiss, 2017). This is a concept that I will discuss later in the dissertation because I have benefited from being perceived as NEST in the initial stage of my career in Hong Kong and, therefore, could be considered as a ‘part of the problem.’ The educationalist Juergen Budde criticizes that the categories of oppression are often added to a competition for the greatest possible disadvantage. In social structure analyses, he says, one can concentrate on a few categories and the aspects of structural or institutional violence. In the analysis of subjective constructions of difference in the course of biographical processes, on the other hand, the categories cannot be firmly defined in advance. Budde (2013) states that the concept of intersectionality lacks a sharpened concept of power at the micro-level. To analyze how power relations affect identities' formation, power does not have to be imagined as bound to an agent with the power to act; instead, it can come from any direction. To address this, one must view intersectionality as a tool to promote understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social categories. These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power, and through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression are formed (Hankivsky, 2022).

Both through practices of domination and discourses, social positionings are produced at all intersectional levels, but whether identities are formed precisely at the intersections is questionable (Budde, 2013). The further development of the concept of power relations, in particular, is not bound to a powerful agent; instead, it can come from any direction. In particular, the further development of intersectionality into an approach of process-oriented interdependence already faces considerable problems in the research process (Walgenbach, 2007). This begins with designing standardized survey instruments, e.g., with questions such as 'male/female?' It also remains questionable how this approach's results can find practical application outside of biographical work since all politically set categories enumerated would have to be modified to do legal justice to the complexity of life realities and the resulting discrimination mechanisms.

To show that intersectionality is truly a transferable concept in different contexts, we should look at a specific example in Germany. The relative reluctance to accept intersectionality as a legitimate academic concept can be illustrated by Germany's opinion on the hotly discussed topic of cultural appropriation. For example, many Germans participate in Indian 'hobbyism' - a form of appropriation that is often brushed off as well-meaning affection towards Native Americans. Moreover, the issues faced by Turkish women in Germany, be they first, second, or the third generation, are similar to the issues black women in America face. Not only are there issues regarding racism, but sexism as well. However, perhaps the issue which is almost always present and makes Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality so prudent to German marginality is that racism is so rarely 'just' racism but is also joined by xenophobia, or at the very least, an indifference in attitude towards foreigners. Because the multi-cultural debate is relatively new in Germany (Borneman, 2017), even though conflicts surrounding immigration and ethnic tolerance have now been going on for decades, instances of racial discrimination are almost accompanied by moments of xenophobia and general ignorance of other cultures. To be very clear, this is not a claim that German society as a whole is racist or xenophobic, but that rather where racism occurs, xenophobia typically follows. Sundstrom and Kim (2014) posit that racism and xenophobia are related but conceptually distinct phenomena. Where racism focuses on physical characteristics to identify a specific group as inferior, xenophobia is the general sense of fear of an outside group. Though these issues are related, it is important to treat them separately to see the ways in which they can compound already existing social issues, the framework for which is provided by Crenshaw's model of intersectionality. As a comparison, in Canada, as early as 2002, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had already taken steps to assimilate intersectionality as an approach to address multiple grounds in human rights claimed, not only by publishing related information on their website but also by soliciting outside expertise in the process of consultation (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022). This is not to shine a bad light on Germany's seemingly indifferent attitude to intersectionality. It is important to mention Canada here, for I have previously mentioned Canada's importance in my journey, and most, if not all, of my impressions of Western society, come from my immigrant experience in Canada, of which my expectations of what living in Germany are based on as well. Leaving geographical contexts behind, we will now discuss the relationship between intersectionality and teacher identity. Recent research on teacher identity taking a poststructuralist approach considers the importance of 'socio-cultural and sociopolitical dimensions of teaching' (Varghese et al., 2005). In this framework, researchers have turned their attention to teachers' identities as classroom-based research have shown the extent to which teachers' identities play a central role in classroom practice (Varghese et al., 2005). For example, recent thinking has drawn on the Douglas Fir Group (2016) trans-disciplinary framework that recognizes the relationship between the macro (societal), meso (school), and micro (classroom) and applied it to teacher identities (De Costa & Norton, 2017). In addition, Cheung et al. (2015) bring together a wide range of current perspectives on teacher identity, including social theories, narratives, emotions, and reflexivity. The reflective approach is also taken up by Barkhuizen (2017) to explore personal narratives with regard to teacher identity research. Therefore, while more attention has been paid to teacher identity as an integral part of teacher education and professional development, Kanno and Stuart (2011) suggest that teacher identity should be placed at the center as the core component of teacher development. Although this dissertation does not deal with teacher identity per se, it does focus on the relationship between societal views of me and how I have been treated within the field of TEFL. Of the different categories I will examine later on, race and gender play the most critical roles, as they are much more visible than nationality, qualifications, and experience.

During the research for this dissertation, it became apparent to me that intersectionality is seldom used as a framework to discuss the overlapping inequalities in TEFL. One reason could be the comparatively little interest held by the scholars engaged in TEFL discrimination research. However, even in more extensive and more widespread research areas such as applied linguistics, little research has been conducted to date despite calls for research drawing on intersectionality as an analytical framework (Block & Corona, 2016; Levon, 2015). Some of the studies that do take intersectionality into account include Block and Corona (2016), which analyze Latina immigrant experiences in Spain, and Park (2017), which uses narrative analysis to investigate the intersection of gender, race, class, and linguistic status to expose the complex relationship between privilege and marginalization in different contexts. Since this study primarily details the accounts of my experiences in Germany, it would be sensible to provide a basic understanding of the development of TEFL in Germany.

Even before the days of colonialism, it has always been necessary to learn foreign languages in order to trade with other nations. This need-based learning is often defined as the acquisition of 'marketplace' language skills. According to the marketplace tradition, the need for active language learning ceases once the fundamental goal has been met. That is, the learner is able to communicate at a sufficient level for doing business and reaching his or her immediate goals. There is also the 'monastery tradition,' in which a language is learned to fulfill the social norm of interaction (McArthur, 1983). Both traditions pertain to English learning in Germany. While some tradesmen and craftspeople in past centuries had to learn English to a 'marketplace' level in order to peddle their wares and regulate shipping, interest in English in the 'monastery' sense came later in Germany, as education in English was long considered far less important than education in the classical languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek. However, Klippel (2003) has asserted that, by the 19th century, classical languages were no longer considered more important than modern languages and that the interplay between teaching methodologies of classical and modern languages may have been more complex than many historical accounts appear to suggest.

Howatt (1984) used locally produced textbooks to trace the path of English teaching in Europe. He pointed out that the first European countries to have an interest in TEFL were the countries closest to England: France and the Netherlands, as well as Germany, Denmark, and Norway. Countries farther away followed later as the result of a ripple effect, with the English learning trend gradually spreading to Italy, Sweden, Spain, Russia, and beyond. He buttressed his argument that English was evolving into more than simply the language of trade by listing the numerous textbooks that appeared at the end of the 18th century. At this time, there was heightened interest in English drama and Shakespeare. An overview of the early books Germans used for learning English was provided by Schroeder (1975). It should also be noted that, as Roesler (1994) had concluded, classifying and accurately assessing foreign language learning materials was not always straightforward.

English as an academic subject also gained a foothold in the university system as postsecondary curriculums were expanded to include modern languages. The first German university to engage an English language master was Greifswald in 1686 (Strauss, 1992). Other masters followed as more and more universities included English in their curricula. As the number of masters increased, language instruction began to be structured around a ‘Lektorat,’ and courses were offered by a ‘Lektoren.’ These masters were either native speakers of English or non-native speakers who had become skilled at the language through travel and study. The number of masters, the ratio of NESTs and NNESTs, and their terms of contract and salaries varied from city to city and from one decade to the next, depending on funding and politics (Macht, 1992). Whereas during the Renaissance, the dominant languages were Greek and Latin, by the late 19th century, modern languages had caught up in popularity and recognition (Haenicke, 1979; Noordegraaf & Vonk, 1993; Weber, 1982). By the 20th century, more people were learning English, and TEFL was gaining status in Germany and in other European countries. It was at this time that new teaching methods for modern languages were being defined and developed in an effort to break from the grammar-translation method. These methods were first introduced in the late 19th century, beginning with the early ‘new methods’ which paved the way for ideas of the next wave of modern methods in the 20th century. These included, among others, Berlitz in the 1950s, Curran's Community Language Learning by the early 1960s, and Total Physical Response in the late 1960s. Each new method or 'discovery' was touted as the ultimate solution for language learners and often disregarded what had come before. Even in our own times, Huellen (2000) has observed that language education research rarely refers to any insights that are more than 30 years old; that is to say, teachers today can hardly benefit from past mistakes or knowledge.

The growth in the number of learners, combined with rapid changes in teaching methods and the expectations these methods encouraged, meant that modern language teachers were no longer merely expected to be experts in the target language. Teachers and the institutes that certified them were developing professional pedagogical profiles based on varying approaches to teaching and varying definitions of what made a good teacher. Although many schools of thought were defining how people should learn a language, they were not always clear about what level of language skills an English teacher should have in order to teach the language to others. Richards (2008) noted that the education of foreign language teachers had changed dramatically due to "internal pressures from within the field and from academic developments, as well as external pressures of demands for standards and accountability" (p. 159). By the beginning of the 20th century, English was being taught in many German schools, and the need for more English teachers was slowly increasing. The training these teachers received varied depending on where they lived. Knoll (1967) attributed these differences to the cultural sovereignty of each province, which was respected by both the Reich and the Weimar Republic. Weber (1982) listed various forms of teacher education during the Weimar era, which, she noted, differed not only in their internal structures and external forms but also in their standards. Teacher training was briefly centralized in the 1930s after the National Socialists came to power. Lehberger (1986) outlined specific examples of education and training for future English teachers and for those who were already teaching in the classroom. In addition to requiring that all teachers support Nazi ideology and know how to structure their classes accordingly, by 1937, the Nazis had also defined a central national list of certification requirements for all English teachers. Although the National Socialists intended to unify teacher training and streamline the German education system, the overall status of modern languages, at least in the 'monastery' sense, fell during their rule. Huellen (2005) observed that Hitler's basic attitude toward language learning was guided by simple pragmatics and that people who were not going to have the need or opportunity to speak French should not concern themselves with learning it, especially as French was the language of the enemy. English was, however, held in greater regard, and the number of school hours devoted to English increased in the Nazi era.

After the end of the Second World War, English instruction and English teacher training changed based on the flow of politics and special interests. The division of Germany and the founding of two separate German states a few years later meant that the status of TEFL and the resources invested in it reflected the political goals of each division. In West Germany, English grew in popularity as a school subject and gradually replaced French as the undisputed primary foreign language. The 11 states made West Germany revert to the pre-war ideals of education autonomy while retaining central commissions and boards to ensure some semblance of continuity among the states. The eastern part of Germany took a slightly different path after the war. For ideological reasons, Russian was the first foreign language taught in East German schools, with English ranked a distant second. After German unification in 1990, the two education systems had to be synchronized. The need to make quick changes and to ensure that the structures implemented would withstand the test of time meant that it was most expedient to bring in the established Western system and install it in the East, similar to how Western English learning methods were implemented in ex-colonial countries where the necessary reworking and considering of local needs were done without.

The majority of English teachers in Germany are NNESTs who are state-certified and have received their training through the university system and subsequent student-teacher training programs. From a historical perspective, this professionalization of language teaching is a relatively new phenomenon. Up until the end of the 19th century, there was no longer a need to have a large number of foreign language teachers for English or any other language. Learners of a foreign language were usually members of households with tutors or language masters who were engaged privately by the family. These tutors were either native speakers or well-traveled individuals who had mastered the language elsewhere. Teachers' qualifications varied and were not officially or centrally monitored. Hence, there was no set definition of what an English teacher was nor what language abilities a teacher must possess. Only as English gradually came to be regarded as an important foreign language and as German schools began to offer it to more significant numbers of students that more English teachers were needed. It was not until the 20th century when the idea emerged that a person who wished to become an English teacher would need special training and certification, a fact that is entirely at odds with the famed German 'Meister' system, where individuals are required to apprentice for a number of years before they can claim mastery of their crafts. Even today, the qualifications of English teachers, both as educators of a foreign language and as speakers and users of the language, are still being actively discussed.

It is often at the invisible intersection of those issues where the work is most necessary and where real transformation and healing can take place. Contrary to Budde's (2013) view, the work of intersectionality is not about creating hierarchies of oppression but about looking at the points of solidarity of people suffering multiple and layered oppressions. In Western societies, Asians are often viewed as the 'model minority' – hardworking and dutiful –, but this stereotype's negative side is 'passive and acquiescent,' which are attributes that often promote unconscious bullying. Nowadays, with the rising popularity of intersectionality, people engaged in social equity works, such as activists and community organizations, are calling for and participating in more dynamic conversations about the differences in experience among people with overlapping identities. Just like in Germany, where there are hardly any Native Americans, and therefore no genuine interest with the general public in raising issues of cultural appropriation, the discriminations minorities face in societies are more often than not ignored, simply because their issues lack 'cultural cachet.' Ever since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates of violent and discriminatory incidences targeting Asians have skyrocketed. Over the past few months, the media has latched onto anti-Asian racism after a surge of anti-Asian hate crimes across North America, as their 'cause of the day. Despite years of xenophobia, movements such as Stop Asian Hate have only gained traction in mainstream media recently. The very fact that these conversations fall in and out of fashion is indicative of a more significant problem with the way society functions. Sensationalizing movements, reducing them to individual 'sellable' moments – such as recent events of elderly Asians being physically attacked on the street – and boxing them into their own categories come precariously close to treating real issues like fast fashion trends. I distinctly remember the advice of a course tutor that when considering writing our dissertations, we should ask, 'So what?' – 'why should people care?' So what if elderly Asians are attacked? So what if unarmed black men are murdered by the police? So what if a Chinese English teacher's feelings are hurt because he feels discriminated against? In this chapter, I have explained my reasons for adopting intersectionality as a guiding framework to analyze the complex confluence of different identity makers and link these to wider social dimensions of power. I see my current situation as reminiscent of the plight of black women before the popularization of intersectionality; namely, the discriminations I face are not included in everyday discourse because I do not fit the mound of a typical NNEST. That is the reason why I believe, in this case, the best champion for my own cause is myself, which I will explain in the following paragraphs.

4. Methodology

It is often difficult to change the actions of others, if not even impossible. (In most cases, not even possible). As 'the best champion for my own cause,' I aim to utilize autoethnography to help me understand the discriminations that I have faced in the hopes of not necessarily changing others but rather increasing my readiness for future events. Furthermore, I believe evocative autoethnography is the better research method for my purpose in that evocative autoethnography encourages reflexivity, the constant conversation with one's inner self, interpreting one's life experiences, and making sense of it all by using writing as its expressive tool (Bochner & Ellis, 2002). Park (2013) describes writing as the starting point, as opposed to the common belief in writing as the expression's outcome. This idea resonates strongly with what I believe my dissertation should be – an expression of my past that also transforms as a starting point of change for others.

4.1 Introduction

Autoethnography is a form of autobiographical writing and research method that connects the individual to the culture and shows multiple layers of awareness. I have selected evocative autoethnography, in particular, as an investigation tool for my experience because it purposely unveils life's hidden details, unearths emotions, and unfolds relationships between the people with whom I associate over a specific period (Pace, 2012) and me. As mentioned in chapter one, the narrative of this dissertation is conducted using autoethnography. The type of autoethnographic methodology I have chosen to use is evocative autoethnography, as described by Ellis (1997, 2004, 2009), Bochner (2001), Denzin (2018), Spry (2001), and Holman Jones (2018). In this chapter, I will elaborate further, borrowing the words and arguments of some of the leading researchers behind the debate regarding autoethnography as a methodology, as well as justify why autoethnography is the most suitable method for this study.

In broad terms, a qualitative research approach, contrary to quantitative research where data are numerical, employs verbal and visual data (Buchanan & Bryman, 2009). Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research more specifically as an inquiring process that involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach. While quantitative research draws on a few variables and many cases, the opposite is true for qualitative research, which examines a few cases and many variables (Ragin, 1987). An epistemological perspective provides a framework for predicting, describing, empowering, and deconstructing population-specific worldviews, increasing the base knowledge that leads to an enhanced understanding of the purpose behind qualitative research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). With the epistemological assumption, subjective evidence is assembled based on personal views, thus acquiring knowledge through the subjective experiences of people – that is, being myself in this dissertation. Where epistemology deals with theories of knowledge, ontology is concerned with the existential conditions related to material, social, cultural, and political contexts (Ejnavarzala, 2019). Ontology is necessary for qualitative research such as autoethnography because it helps researchers to recognize how certain they can be about the nature and existence of the objects they are researching (Moon & Blackman, 2017). Creswell (2013) compares qualitative study to "an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of materials" (p. 13). Qualitative research entails the careful gathering and employment of a range of empirical data that illustrates challenging instances and meanings in the lives of individuals on a regular basis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) compare qualitative research to a crystal with "'multiple lenses,' or 'quilt making' or 'jazz improvisation' process, and a 'set of complex interpretative practices'" (p. 6) with each practice making the world visible in a different way. In other words, personal narratives can be potent tools for change. While acknowledging the relatively low prospective interest in the 'practice' of this dissertation, through examining the challenges in the form of specific incidents of my TEFL journey, the aim of this dissertation is to provide alternative views of the TEFL 'world' to the reader.

4.2 An Autoethnographic Study

The design of a research study begins with the selection of a topic and a paradigm. A paradigm is essentially a worldview, a whole framework of beliefs, values, and methods within which research takes place. It is within this worldview that researchers work. Creswell (2013) asserts that a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words. Those words in an autoethnography form an autobiographical variety of writing and investigation that connects the individual to the culture – that is, the surrounding environment in which the individual is active and shows multiple layers of awareness. The biggest misconception surrounding autoethnography outside academic circles is that autoethnography is merely a synonym for autobiography. In fact, when told my dissertation topic, bemused family and friends would inevitably ask if it was possible to write an autobiography as a doctorate dissertation. While both autobiography and autoethnography require individuals to share their experiences, an autobiography is when people tell their own life experiences and events with or without their own interpretations, whereas an autoethnography requires the autoethnographers to critically analyze his or her personal experiences in the specific context of the surrounding culture. In the words of two of the most significant proponents of autoethnographic research, Ellis and Bochner note:

> “Autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on the social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond clear recognition” (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 739)

Autoethnography, as a term, was first put forward by David Hayano (1979). Chang (2008) succinctly states that autoethnography should be ethnographical in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretative orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation, hence, ‘auto-Ethno-graphic.’ While ethnography often (but not always) researches the other as ‘an unfamiliar topic’ (Patton, 2002), autoethnography utilizes the self as a familiar topic to study the other by placing personal narratives at the core of the examination and "searching for an understanding of others through the self" (Chang, 2008, p. 49), "where self refers to the ethnographer self" (Chang, 2008, p. 46). In this dissertation, the self is me: in my private and professional identities, and the others are the people whom I, either through personal or professional contexts, have come across and form parts of the critical incidents. The 'introspective, personally engaged self' (Bochner & Ellis, 2000) includes "self-awareness and reporting one's own experiences and introspections as a primary data source" (Patton, 2002, p. 102).

Autoethnography, being both a lens and a methodology (Muncey, 2010), "has become the term of choice in describing studies and procedures that connect the personal to the cultural" (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 740), "the personal and the social … and link macro and micro levels of analysis" (Bornat, & Wengraf, 2000, p. 2-3). In the case of this dissertation, there will be examinations of the relationships between treatments outside and inside of the TEFL circle, both analytically and interpretatively. This dissertation is an example of an analytic autoethnography in that I, as the sole researcher, am committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena (Anderson, 2006), i.e., by using intersectionality to make sense of the discriminations I experience in TEFL and in German society. At the same time, any form of biography is interpretive. In Denzin's (2014) book 'Interpretive Autoethnography,' he describes interpretive autoethnography as a biographical study of the life experiences and performance of a person. In this dissertation, I aim to connect the dots between the turning points in my life and their interpretations as a means to make sense of my fragmented experiences. Chang (2008) points out that it is this duality of the analytical and interpretative that differentiates autoethnography from other narratives. Autoethnographers aim to seek cultural interpretations of their autobiographical data by associating the self with society in a critical fashion. Most importantly, in Chang's (2008) vision, autoethnography is especially useful for research in multicultural contexts, for fostering intercultural awareness and promoting cross-cultural understanding and tolerance, and consequently fosters "self-healing, self-transformation, and self-empowerment through self-reflection and self-understanding" (p. 54 - 57). In this manner, the community with the 'unfamiliar others' can be turned into an inclusive community or extended community. While at first glance, this autoethnography might appear to be about the experience of a single individual, it has the potential to achieve Chang's vision by contributing to the discussions of discrimination in TEFL contexts that occur across multiple cultures. Sharing my experience in this dissertation does more than facilitate my own self-improvement but also that of potential readers who share my background and experience.

4.3 The Autoethnographer

An autoethnography is both an easy and challenging form of writing. It is viewed as 'easy' and, therefore, often dismissed because the autoethnographers are 'only' writing about themselves and their own experience. However, where quantitative researchers can rely on external data collection methods such as interviews which allow them to interact with others, whereas autoethnographers' data come solely from within, leaving them to work mainly in solitude. What is more, when people dismiss autoethnographers' efforts, they often forget that there is, in fact, a tremendous amount of emotions involved. Although the revisiting of such negative emotions can be therapeutic, as we will later discuss, they frequently can arouse stress and different degrees of associated physiological damage. For this dissertation, I had, on more than one occasion, felt the pain and anger that I had felt at the time of the incident as I revisited and described these unpleasant critical incidents. At those moments, it was vital for me to acknowledge the occurrence of these incidents but not to allow myself to be debilitated by them, which I believe is part of the process of overcoming traumatic experiences. Taking a cue from the title of this study, it is essential to acknowledge the existence of a problem before it can be fixed. Personal feelings aside, an additional problem for researchers engaged in autoethnographies could be the stigma associated with being 'whiny' and attention seeking or being recognized by the worst moments in their lives. In my case, the dissertation will be published and potentially be available to the public. If potential employers would read it, I worry that I may be labeled as a possible 'troublemaker' who prefers to 'play the race card,' jeopardizing my future chances of employment.

The writing of an autoethnography is a problematic endeavor precisely because the autoethnographers must communicate the significance of those lived experiences to the reader. They must also realize the hard truth – that an event is not significant simply because it happened to them. The event should offer an alternative viewpoint or surface value so that the reader would not raise the question – 'so what?' To ensure this, one must create a connection with the readers by involving them in the narratives, either by pointing out the effects the issues might have on them or people they know or invoking their altruistic tendencies. For example, the supporters of topical social movements such as ‘Me Too’ or ‘Black Lives Matter’ are the sufferers of injustice themselves, or they are the friends and loved ones of the sufferers, or they are the activists who are investing their efforts on improving the greater society through change. Coincidentally, during the writing of this dissertation, anti-Asian sentiments and incidents across the globe have been on the rise due to the COVID pandemic. The answer to the question – ‘why’ is the primary purpose and ultimate point of a well-written autoethnography. An autoethnography is not merely a historical narration of events but instead serves to communicate the events’ meanings and promotes educated empathy. In other words, a well-written autoethnography attempts to put the readers in the ‘writer’s shoes.’

As an autoethnographer, one must take on dual roles. The autoethnographers is, at the same time, the author and focal point of the narrative, the one who informs and experiences, and the one who observes while simultaneously being observed. The autoethnographer is “at the junction of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller” (Ellis, 2009, p. 13). Pavlenko (2007) points out that over the past ten years, autobiographic narratives have become a popular approach in eliciting data in applied linguistics and that it is a valuable and legitimate approach to use in diving into issues in education, sociology, and sociolinguistics. Autobiographic narratives probe into researchers’ inner worlds and deploy the insider’s view, which cannot be approached by experimental methodologies. Furthermore, in the case where people from the majority dismiss specific issues as non-issues, the minority can ‘weaponize’ their autoethnographic narratives to critically analyze issues of inequality (Pavlenko, 2007).

In addition, in this section on autoethnography, I would like to confront the dichotomy of the native speaker/non-native speaker (NEST/NNEST) and discuss how it intersects with my personal experiences and teacher identity in Germany. The NEST/NNEST distinction traditionally categorizes English teachers into two categories: those who are native speakers of English and those who are not. This binary view, however, oversimplifies the complex nature of teacher identity. It does not account for teachers who, like myself, may not be native German speakers but are teaching English in Germany. Nor does it consider how other facets of our identities, like ethnicity, culture, or socioeconomic status, may impact our teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches.

In my case, being an English teacher in Germany who is neither a native German speaker nor a native English speaker complicates this dichotomy. My unique identity situates me in an intermediary position where I not only navigate language proficiency but also cultural nuances and differing pedagogical expectations. This complexity enriches my autoethnographic research, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of teacher identity within the context of language teaching in Germany. However, I continue to use the NEST/NNEST distinction in my study. Despite its limitations, it offers a useful lens to examine prevalent biases in language teaching, such as favoring native English speakers irrespective of their teaching qualifications. It also helps shed light on the often-unacknowledged complexities faced by teachers who don't fit neatly into this binary classification. The terminology is perceived as detrimental, yet I and the TEFL community persist in using them. The straightforward explanation is that they provide a convenient and tidy method for categorizing and compartmentalizing language identity, comprehension, and application. Yet, the nature of language identity, comprehension, and usage is far from simple or neat. It is complex, intricate, and fluid, shaped by a myriad of factors. The question arises of what we should substitute for these terms. The substitution of 'native' and 'non-native' with other binary extremes poses a challenge. This might alleviate some of the stereotypes and stigma attached to these terms, but it doesn't assist in accurately conceptualizing language identity, comprehension, and usage. There's a possibility that embracing this complexity and reflecting it more accurately and equitably through more nuanced and detailed descriptions could be the way forward.

The persistent use of these contentious terms compels the TEFL community, including myself, to question whether this binary categorization truly illuminates the often-overlooked complexities encountered by educators who don't fit into the binary. This oversimplified dichotomy complicates the classification of NESTs and NNESTs. The notion of a 'native speaker' itself has sparked much scholarly debate, particularly in the context of the status of English. While words can serve as instruments of subjugation, they can also possess immense power when wielded by the oppressed. So, why should we allow these damaging terms to remain where they can inflict harm, when we can reclaim them, and find ways to repurpose them to highlight the plight of those who have been hurt? Offensive terms grab people's attention, and those who are oppressed require this attention.

By examining my experiences within this dichotomy, my autoethnographic study provides potential interest for various reasons. Firstly, it challenges the simplistic understanding of teacher identity and advocates for a more complex view that considers multiple, intersecting identities. Secondly, it offers personal insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching English in a non-native context, shedding light on broader issues like linguistic imperialism, cultural competence, and pedagogical inclusivity. Lastly, my study serves as a catalyst for further research and discussions about teacher identity, particularly in the increasingly multicultural and multilingual classrooms of today.

Non-native English teachers often face job descriptions favouring native speakers, a bias increasingly questioned in the English teaching field. The Native vs Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers divide overlooks those outside the supposed 'Inner Circle' of English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1981). The stereotype of an English teacher as a white male from Anglophone countries contrasts with reality, where around 80% of global English teachers are non-native speakers (Beare, 2020). As English diversifies with rising bilingualism and multilingualism, the "native speaker" concept is losing its significance, urging flexible teaching that doesn't limit students to a single English variant (Moussu & Llurda, 2008).

Learners can reap numerous benefits from Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs), including comprehensive speaking and listening exercises, exposure to contemporary grammar and vocabulary, introduction to new words, collocations, and idiomatic expressions, as well as dynamic lessons from a unique cultural perspective. This explains why many learners prefer NESTs, especially when aiming to improve accent and auditory comprehension. However, the inherent ability to articulate a language does not necessarily translate into effective teaching skills. This was apparent in my experience teaching Chinese, my native language, in Germany, despite my technical knowledge of it. Furthermore, NESTs may lack a first-hand understanding of the complexities of second language acquisition, potentially diminishing their capacity to empathize with students' challenges. Therefore, NESTs often need to bolster their grammatical understanding before transitioning into teaching, a necessity emphasized during my CELTA course in 2007, where NESTs found theoretical topics like modal verbs and phonetics, seemingly instinctual to non-native candidates, to be considerably more challenging.

Despite biases against non-native English teachers, they bring several benefits to their teaching. Firstly, having learned English themselves, they understand their students' feelings, needs, motivations, and uncertainties better. Also, their deep knowledge of English, gained from rigorous study, often exceeds that of native speakers, making them better at explaining complex grammar rules. In many countries, English is taught from a young age, preparing non-native teachers to teach English effectively, regardless of their birthplace. This early learning also helps them understand common issues students face. Moreover, degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) make sure these teachers are up to date with modern vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics. Living in English-speaking areas further sharpens their language skills. In TEFL, non-native teachers who share the same first language with their students can use it to provide additional support. While this was once discouraged, using translation or comparing students' native language with English is now seen as a valid teaching method, particularly useful for beginners.

The label "non-native English teacher" includes individuals from all around the world, each with their unique quirks, cultural backgrounds, and English proficiency levels. The concept of a 'native speaker', however, remains elusive and contentious. It's often associated with individuals born in English-speaking countries or those raised in an English-speaking environment from an early age. However, despite English being recognized as a global lingua franca, the concepts of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker', along with their associated stereotypes, continue to be pervasive. This classification is often seen in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), where there have been ongoing efforts to do away with these potentially divisive terms, address the marginalization of non-native models and teachers, and decolonize our approach to English. Unfortunately, we still encounter systems that reinforce a hierarchy of English proficiency where English is seen as primarily owned by 'native speakers'.

The idealized status of 'nativeness' carries with it a cultural and linguistic dominance that prompts parents and students to prioritize native teachers, under the mistaken belief that they speak 'proper English' and are inherently superior instructors. This perspective overlooks the fact that effective English teaching involves much more than being a native speaker. It requires a teacher's skills, knowledge, language proficiency, experience, cultural understanding, and adaptability. Many so-called native speakers might lack these necessary attributes. The binary of 'native' and 'non-native' speaker has been a long-standing issue in TEFL, creating unnecessary divisions in a multicultural and multilingual world where these labels are insufficient to represent language identity, usage, and comprehension. As educators, we represent only a fraction of the diversity within the TEFL community. Despite English being our primary language of use, some of us might be considered 'more native' than others, underscoring the complexity and limitations of the 'native speaker' concept.

There's a common belief that teachers who are native English speakers are naturally better. This idea is often supported by saying that students like these teachers more, students need them to learn 'good' English and understand the culture, and that they are good for a school's image. However, these points are not as solid as they may seem.

Firstly, it's often said that students prefer native English-speaking teachers (Diaz, 2015). However, what students really care about is whether a teacher is respectful, communicates well, is helpful, comes to class prepared, is organized, speaks clearly, and works hard. Whether a teacher is a native speaker or not doesn't seem to matter as much to students as it might to those hiring teachers. Next, it's a myth that only native speakers can teach English well. Teaching is about more than just knowing a language well. It's also about having experience, qualifications, and a good personality. Schools should make sure all teachers, whether they're native speakers or not, can speak English clearly and understandably. But being a good speaker doesn't automatically make someone a good teacher. Also, while it's true that language and culture are linked, the idea of a 'native English speaker culture' doesn't quite make sense. English is used officially in over 60 countries, so it's not just tied to one or two cultures. Even within one country, there's a lot of cultural variety. Native speakers should remember that they don't know everything about their own culture.

Another point often made is that native English-speaking teachers are good for attracting students (Deng et al., 2023). However, there's no solid proof for this. A better approach might be to hire the best teachers based on their teaching skills, experience, and how well they speak English, not just whether English is their first language. What people want can change and should not be followed without question. Lastly, it's worth noting that teachers who are not native English speakers can bring their own benefits. They may be better at understanding and predicting the difficulties students will face, they can show that it's possible to learn English well, and they might understand better how the students feel.

The homogenisation of non-native English-speaking teachers, treating us as a single, uniform group, is a deeply flawed approach that overlooks the rich tapestry of our diverse abilities, backgrounds, and experiences. As an English teacher with a Chinese background and Canadian upbringing, I bring a unique, multicultural perspective to the classroom. This blend of cultures has shaped my worldview and informs my teaching style, enriching the learning experience for my students. My understanding of both Chinese and English, coupled with my Canadian upbringing, enables me to bridge cultural gaps and anticipate the specific challenges my students may face. Furthermore, I serve as a successful learning model for my students, demonstrating that English proficiency is not the exclusive domain of native speakers. The homogenisation of non-native English-speaking teachers risk undervaluing these unique contributions. It's essential to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity among us non-native English-speaking teachers, rather than simplifying our abilities based on non-native-ness. Each of us, irrespective of our native language or cultural background, brings our own set of skills and experiences that can greatly enhance the learning experience.

4.4 An Evocative Autoethnography

Holman Jones et al. (2013) conceptualize autoethnography as an approach of "using personal experience to examine or critique cultural experience" (p. 22). Stemming from this broad definition of autoethnography, there are two significantly different approaches as to how a research project can usually be written up – as analytic autoethnography or evocative autoethnography. Anderson (2006) attempts to distinguish between analytic and evocative autoethnography. He suggests that in analytic autoethnography, the researcher is a visible member of the research group and in the published texts, which is "committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (p. 373). Hence, analytic autoethnography is geared towards the direction of objective writing and analysis of a particular group, whereas evocative or emotional autoethnography is aimed toward the researcher's critical reflection of a particular topic to allow readers to make a connection with the researcher's feelings and experiences.

The type of autoethnographic methodology this dissertation utilizes is evocative autoethnography, which has no universally accepted format or methodology (Ellis, 2004). Ellis describes the construction and composition of an evocative autoethnography as "being lost in the woods without a compass" (Ellis, 2004, p. 120). Often autoethnographic studies are to be written in a format that best satisfies the needs of the researcher; however, for this dissertation, considerations have been taken regarding the academic requirements of writing a dissertation at a doctoral level. Bochner and Ellis (2000) express how "performance, visual arts, and narrations can give more evocative power and encourage empathy and engagement on the part of its audiences" (p. 3). Subjective autoethnographers suggest that autoethnography can take on a number of formats, for example: "short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose" (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 739). Due to the academic requirements of writing a doctoral dissertation, I will deliberately refrain from the above formats and reflect on my experiences as evocative anecdotal texts in chapter 5. According to Ellis (2004), evocative texts:

> "Showcase concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness. They appear as relational and institutional stories affected by history and

> social structure, which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts, and language" (p. 38).

For the readers of these evocative narratives, it is more than merely reading what someone allegedly claimed to have happened. An evocative text is a more demanding and interactive text as it assumes that readers will be active partners (or active examiners, in the case of this dissertation) in dialogue with the text rather than receivers of unmediated knowledge (Bochner, 2001). Denzin (1997) states that evocative autoethnographers "bypass the representational problem by summoning an epistemology of emotion, moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other" (p. 228). Bochner and Ellis go further, explaining that in evocative autoethnographies, "the mode of storytelling is akin to the novel or biography and thus fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature" (p. 744). Although I would not describe academic requirements as constraints, the followers of Ellis and Bochner's subjective evocative interpretive autoethnography reject the realist and analytic traditions of doing ethnographical research by insisting that the traditional structure of autoethnography is against the integral value of writing as evocative autoethnography. In this dissertation, I am required to meet the academic requirements of writing a dissertation, meaning that I must, as I am presently doing, provide a clear rationale, indicate research questions, explain the theoretical framework and methodology, as well as the reason for their selections, all of which require a clear and traditional structure.

The proponents of evocative autoethnography, Ellis (2004, 2009), Bochner (2001), Denzin (1997, 2014), and Holman Jones (20118) claim that autoethnography is autobiographical writing that reflects multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Bochner & Ellis, 2000) and that its emphasis is on the narrow scope of viewing and making sense of the world and the experiences it offers instead of trying to generalize an individual's experience into some social phenomenon. This view, in part, is problematic for this dissertation since without expanding my experiences to include others, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to create the necessary momentum needed for meaningful changes, ultimately rendering this dissertation an exercise in self-indulgence.

4.5 Criticisms of Autoethnography

Anderson (2006), one of the realist researchers who do not fully agree with the academic goal of evocative autoethnography, describes evocative autoethnography as “narrative fidelity to and compelling description of subjective emotional experiences to create an emotional resonance with the reader” (p. 377). Indeed, researchers and writers of evocative autoethnography base their works’ trustworthiness on how much their stories can evoke others’ emotional responses. From their perspectives, a well-written personal story can provoke and engage the readers, making the readers think, feel, and reflect on their own lives and relationships. Ellis (2004) argues that evocative autoethnography should be judged by whether it evokes the reader to believe the described experience to be authentic and possible. While Anderson proposes the importance of improving theoretical understandings about broad social phenomena when doing an autoethnographic study, Ellis believes that evocative autoethnography should be judged on how much it speaks to the reader about their own lives, just as Bochner (2001) voices that, “we can judge a narrative, if judge we must, in terms of the consequences it produces – the new stories it arouses, the possibilities for reforming and reshaping a life it introduces” (p. 31). This untraditional and relatively new autoethnography format is challenged by realist ethnographers, who argue the need for a more structural and analytic format in writing an autoethnography. They argue that autoethnography, although sounding like a new genre of research methodology, has always been a branch of ethnography (Atkinson, 2006) and thus needs to be seen and handled as “autobiographical data with ethnographic methodology and intent” (Chang, 2008, p. 56).

Anderson argues that the problem with subjective, interpretive/evocative autoethnography is that Elli’s evocative ethnography may become known as the only type of autoethnographic research even though it is not. His proposal – analytic autoethnography, focuses on traditional research values such as gaining insights into broader social phenomena through empirical data and drawing wider implications from personal experience. This is also what Chang (2008) suggests as what autoethnographic research should entail. He notes that while evocative autoethnography, as endorsed by Ellis, Bochner, and others, assumes that previous research in social sciences detaches the researcher from the subject in the name of objectivity, there has always been a close relationship between the researched and the researcher. One cannot assume any study to be objective. Atkinson (2006) agrees with Anderson's argument against the subjective autoethnography and praises Anderson's (2006) argument with great enthusiasm. Atkinson adds that subjective autoethnographers and their work are still highly marginalized from mainstream social science research because they reject and oppose the traditional values and styles of writing and promote "experiential value, its evocative qualities, and its commitments rather than its scholarly purpose, its theoretical bases, and its disciplinary contributions" (p. 402). Chang (2008), in her book *Autoethnography as Method*, writes about how the methodology can be helpful in researching social scientists and practitioners such as counselors, teachers, medical personnel, and social services workers. Her suggested conceptual framework in doing autoethnographic research is not much different from that of Anderson and Atkinson, as she also states that "telling a personal story is not enough to gain an understanding of self and others and that deeper understanding could only be possible through cultural analysis and interpretation" (p. 51). Chang identifies researchers such as Ellis, Bochner, and Denzin as researchers that "stand on the opposite end and endorse an evocative, more subjective approach to autoethnography" (p. 46). However, she stops short of clarifying her own stance throughout the book, choosing to remind the reader that that is not the intention of her writing. Taking these critiques into account in my own research, I have made sure that I am not merely telling my personal story, as that will not suffice in obtaining a deeper understanding of my lived experiences. It was essential, therefore, for this study to include sections on the rise of the intersectionality framework in Germany as well as its post-war, modern relationship with the idea of race in order to allow for nuanced, in-depth analysis and interpretation of my personal story.

Ever so popular, traditional scientific approaches require researchers to minimize themselves, viewing the self as a contaminant and attempting to transcend and deny it. The researcher presumably puts bias and subjectivity aside in the scientific research process by denying his or her identity. From a positivist perspective, there is only one way to conduct science, and any intellectual inquiry must confirm established research methods. In fact, most people, such as myself, have grown up believing that positivism is science (Neumann, 1996). Without knowing about the alternatives, I have been drilled to believe that real science is quantitative, experimental, and understood by only a select and elite few. So strong is the positivist tradition that researchers who use even well-established qualitative research methods are continually asked to defend their research as valid science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The ways of inquiry that connect with real people, their lives, and their issues are seen as soft and fluffy and, although pleasant, not valuable in the scientific community. I find myself leaning towards the post-modernistic view of autoethnography, which was promoted and practiced by Ellis, Bochner, and colleagues. My goal for this dissertation is for it to be a story that illustrates the incidents of unfair treatment within the TEFL community and to promote or evoke TEFL shareholders' desire for positive change towards greater equality of treatment for all practitioners. I consider my purpose for the dissertation to be aligned well with the academic goals of subjective autoethnographers; hence, it seems fit to frame my dissertation, especially the narrative chapter, with a subjective and evocative lens.

With the rise of postmodern philosophy and my awareness of it, I am able to learn to think differently about what constitutes knowledge. The essence of postmodernism is that many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged, which could easily be seen as a direct comparison to native-speakerism in TEFL, where a few people struggle to let go of their existing power and control of what they consider to be their birthright domain. "It distrusts abstract explanation and holds that research can never do more than describe, with all descriptions equally valid … Any researcher can do no more than describe his or her personal experiences" (Neumann, 1996, p. 74). Several researchers have highlighted the presence of the researcher's rhetoric, prejudice, and experience in the interpretation of observations and numbers and the way in which they construct one interpretation from among many that could be consistent with their numerical data analysis. In my own research, I have tried to allow the readers to come to their own interpretations of the experiences by posing what I believed to be the possible motives as questions. This way, I believe, the readers could view the experiences through their own lens rather than having my own prejudice color their interpretations of the events based on their own situations. As I discuss in the conclusion section, a limitation of this study might be that the readers would not be able to identify with my particular background. However, not forcing my own understanding of the events on them may potentially open them up to try to 'walk in my shoes.' The goal of postmodernism is not to eliminate the traditional scientific method but to question its dominance and to demonstrate that it is possible to gain and share knowledge in many ways. The postmodern era has made it possible for critical theories to emerge and take hold in academic inquiry and to open up the possible range of research strategies, without which, I believe, the legitimacy of studies such as this one would be called into question, even more so than it does currently. For example, feminist theory and feminist research using multiple research techniques have grown in reaction to the “male-oriented perspective that has predominated in the development of social science” (Neumann, 1996, p. 72). Many feminist writers now advocate for research that starts with one’s own experiences (Ellis, 2004). In contrast to the dominant, objective, competitive, and logical male point of view, feminist researchers “emphasize the subjective, empathetic, process-oriented, and inclusive sides of social life” (Neumann, 1996, p. 72).

Critics suggest that autoethnography often lacks a theoretical contribution because it is primarily based on personal narratives (Holt, 2003). I disagree with this assertion. In my study, I have used my personal experiences as a tool to examine and interrogate existing theories on cultural assimilation. This approach, I believe, deepens our understanding of these theories by applying them to real-world, lived experiences. When discussing autoethnography, it's important to acknowledge its criticisms and limitations at the end of each subsection, detailing to what extent I concur with these potential drawbacks. Autoethnography, being a form of self-reflective inquiry, often faces criticism regarding its subjectivity and lack of generalizability (Wall, 2008). While I agree that my individual experiences cannot be universally applied, I argue that they can provide valuable insights into the complexities of teacher identity in specific contexts. To mitigate the issue of subjectivity, I have designed the study to include constant reflexivity, ensuring my interpretations are grounded in the data and not solely on personal biases.

Some critics also argue that autoethnography lacks rigor compared to more traditional research methods (Wall, 2008). While I understand this concern, I see the method's flexibility and introspective focus as strengths rather than limitations. To increase rigor, I have employed strategies like member checks, rich thick description, and triangulation to ensure the reliability and credibility of my findings. Despite these criticisms, I chose autoethnography because of its ability to uncover deep, nuanced insights into personal experiences. It allows for an exploration of the intersection of personal, professional, and cultural identities in a way that few other methods can match. It brings a unique and compelling perspective to the complexities of teacher identity, particularly in the context of teaching English as a non-native speaker. Thus, it forms a vital part of my research and contributes significantly to our understanding of these complex issues.

Critics argue that autoethnography may allow for bias due to the personal involvement of the researcher (Ellis, 2011). They contend that because the researcher's personal experience forms the basis of the study, it could introduce subjective interpretation and affect the objectivity of the results. While I acknowledge this criticism, I believe that this subjective viewpoint is precisely what makes autoethnography a valuable research approach. In my study, I mitigated potential bias by cross-validating my personal narratives with external sources, other narratives, and established theories on cultural assimilation. Despite the potential for bias, autoethnography allows for rich, in-depth exploration of personal experiences that cannot be captured in more traditional, quantitative research methods.

By focusing on the researcher's personal experience, the findings might not be applicable to a larger population. However, I view this criticism from a different perspective. While my study might not offer broad generalizations, it provides nuanced insights into a specific cultural assimilation experience. Autoethnography isn't meant to achieve universal truths but rather to contribute to a broader conversation with rich and diverse perspectives. As previously mentioned, autoethnographic research can be viewed as lacking validity and reliability due to the interpretive nature of the method. In my study, I have sought to enhance validity and reliability by maintaining transparency about my experiences, thoughts, and feelings. I have provided thick descriptions, which lend themselves to understanding and interpreting my experiences within the context. Despite these criticisms, I chose autoethnography as it allows the investigation of cultural assimilation in a deeply personal and intricate way that other methods cannot provide.

4.6 Data Quality

As mentioned above, in an autoethnography, the researcher is the subject, and the researcher’s interpretation of the experience is the data (Bochner & Ellis, 2000). The researcher usually writes about critical incidents that have had a significant impact on their lives. These memories are usually in some form of crisis, where one is forced to re-examine and analyze his or her lived experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Denzin, 2014). However, these incidents should not be left as interesting stories but should serve a purpose: these personal experiences and the stories that illustrate the incidents should be critically examined and analyzed with the help of other existing research or other means (Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011). Ellis et al. (2011) urge autoethnographers to look at their experience analytically by using the set of theoretical and methodological tools at their disposal. If they fail to do so, Ellis et al. argue, the validity of their stories may consequently be jeopardized, for they would be reduced to the same level as personal stories people share on reality television.

Adhering to what Ellis & Bochner define as data, my autoethnography uses some of the vignettes from everyday encounters and my career in TEFL as data, then my data is 'restoried' (Creswell, 2013) and presented in a creatively rendered nonfiction format. The data is based on my life experiences which I have gained by observing and experiencing firsthand. This primary data will be the subject of reflective analysis. By creatively rendered, only the meaningful stories are selected from my life experiences and are crafted to form a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, to represent my career's various stages. Each incident is reflectively analyzed using my research questions as signposts to guide me in my analysis as I examine each incident with a lens influenced by my chosen theoretical framework. For example, to illustrate the overlapping of unjust treatments in both my private and professional spheres, the incidents are intentionally scaffolded to allow for immediate comparisons, meaning that an incident of discrimination in my private life follows that of one in my professional life. The data's reflective analysis will generate and illustrate some of the issues facing NNESTs in TEFL.

Typically, the research quality is determined by its credibility, validity, and generalizability (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, however, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for the trustworthiness of research are commonly discussed and used as determiners. Previously in the chapter, it was mentioned that Ellis (2004) and Bochner (2001) both suggest that autoethnographic work should be judged by the degree to how much the stories evoke others by providing resonance. Although Creswell (2013) categorizes it under narrative inquiry, autoethnography cannot seem to be entirely judged either by the typical quantitative or qualitative criteria for assessing the quality of research. Bochner and Ellis (2002) argue that for autoethnographers, reliability and validity depend on how credible both the story and the storyteller are. For example: 'Could the story have happened to the author?' 'Are the stories believable?' 'Are the stories coherent?' 'Do they connect the reader and the writer?' 'What do they have to do with me?' could be some of the questions related to the criteria.

Autoethnography's associative restrictions ought to be recognized, aside from its future potential as a subjective research strategy. Understandably, autoethnographic accounts of mundane, everyday encounters would not really grasp the enthusiasm of the intended readership of researchers and professionals. An alternative take on an everyday experience for many, however, may have some potential value. The most noteworthy restriction of autoethnography relates to its methodological status (Ponterotto, 2005) concerning the connection between the participant and the researcher. Narrative inquiry (Bruner, 1986) is in itself not the issue (Bochner, 2001). One must, however, acknowledge the limitations of self-knowledge (Wilson & Dunn, 2004) and self-report narratives (Polkinghorne, 2005). It should be acknowledged that although a single autoethnographic narrative analysis is limited in its generalizability, it has the catalytic potential to act as a stimulus for a deeper understanding of critical incidents and question the reader's idea of the status quo through a uniquely told story. In addition to generalizability, another criterion is to assess the research's validity by its evocativeness or resonance with the readers. In evocative autoethnography, how much the story moves the readers matters. Ellis (2004) argues, "readers provide validation by comparing their lives to ours, by thinking about how our lives are similar and different and the reasons why, and by feeling that stories have informed them about unfamiliar people or lives" (p. 195). To address the issue of reliability or the question of my credibility as the narrator in this dissertation, it was vital for me to fully disclose details of the background of events as factual evidence without revealing the identities of other parties involved. This was a delicate but necessary line to walk in order to convince the reader that the events described had actually happened. In addition, despite the solid residual feelings I had regarding the events, I must refrain from using polemic language that may be taken as a literary license rather than truthful accounts of events. Closely related to reliability are issues of validity. Ellis et al. (2011) believe that for autoethnographers, validity means that a work evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is believable and possible. In order to achieve this, I had to make sure the accounts described in this dissertation form a coherent story and that the story provides continuity in my narrative. As Plummer (2001) argues, 'what matters is the way in which the story enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller – to see the world from his or her point of view, even if this world does not match the reader's own reality' (p. 401). The issue of objectivity was always on my mind during the writing of this dissertation, so much so that, in attempting to steer clear of emotion and defensiveness to achieve a higher level of objectivity, I questioned whether I was unwillingly undermining the purposes of autoethnographic writing. During the course of my Ed.D program at the University of Glasgow, I have been told by course tutors on several occasions that I have a tendency to get excessively emotional in my writing without showing sufficient evidence.

Since pent-up emotions are involved, a potential problem with autoethnography is that the accounts described can be over-sensationalized. Despite my conscious efforts to significantly tone down my emotions and remain passive in my narratives, prospective readers might still likely sense a degree of subjectivity. Although I acknowledge that it might be problematic if I want to be seen as a traditional researcher, how I see myself as a NNEST is based on my understanding of past events, and it is impossible to exclude all emotions. By reconsidering traditional ideas about objectivity, one can see that "every view is a way of seeing, not the (only) way" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 137).

Ellis (1997) explained that in autoethnography, the writer tells a story that not only allows readers to enter and feel part of a story which includes emotions and intimate details but also examines the meaning of the human experience. Richardson (1999) further suggests that autoethnography authors should strive to allow their readers to feel their dilemmas, think with their stories rather than about them, join actively with their decisions, and become co-participants in the storyline with moral, emotional, aesthetical, and intellectual engagement. In the world of traditional science, objective distance seems to protect researchers and readers from the emotional and intimate details of human lives (Muncey, 2005). In comparison, autoethnographies aim to express a "patchwork of feelings, experiences, emotions, and behaviors that portray a complete view of life" (Muncey, 2005, p. 10).

In choosing to rely on memories based on my experience for data, one would be required to defend and justify this strategic choice. It is possible that data based on personal experience, without the collection and transcription by a third party, may fail to be recognized as a legitimate source. Recalling his experience of using his published autoethnography with a group of university students, Sparkes (2002) was surprised that the students rejected it as legitimate research. However, when he questioned the students about the data from the results of an interview that was conducted, analyzed, and written up by a third party, a man called Andrew Sparkes, the students replied with a resounding yes. In the same token, if I were to be interviewed by a researcher about my experiences as a NNEST, and this interview was recorded and transcribed, this data would be more readily accepted as legitimate, although the foundations for both my own autoethnographic narratives and the interview transcript would essentially be a single recollection.

Autoethnographic data are traditionally sourced from diaries, interviews, field notes, document analysis, and participant observation (Mayan, 2016). Sparkes (2002), for example, collected data from diary extracts, medical records, and newspaper articles written about him to discuss his career in sports and the chronic medical condition that resulted in his retirement. Ettorre (2005) consulted similar data sources, such as diaries, letters, articles, and medical reports to support the analysis of her experiences battling a prolonged illness. Holt (2003) based the discussion regarding his teaching practice on his reflective journal, just as Duncan (2004) utilized data from a reflective journal extensively to sustain an assessment of her professional achievements. Although Ettorre acknowledged the process of remembering as part of the analysis, none of the other aforementioned autoethnographers relied solely on their memories as data. The expectation persists that those interpretations and claims should be generated from available ‘hard’ data. Muncey (2005) suggests that the use of artifacts can be necessary for the legitimating of autoethnography if memory and its distortions appear to be critical features of the process (Muncey, 2005). Similarly, Duncan (2004) advocates the use of multiple sources of evidence and the need for ‘hard’ evidence to support personal opinions.

Atkinson (1997) alleges that the goal of a storyteller is therapeutic rather than analytic. My narratives seemed to be ultimately all about me and my process of acceptance, possibly rendering my insights into the issues at large as subjective and insignificant. As other autoethnographers have experienced, there are consistent and overwhelming issues surrounding the legitimacy of autoethnography and its credibility as scholarly work. In particular, Sparkes (2002) acknowledges the difficulty in legitimizing research methods that vary from what is traditionally accepted in professional and academic circles.

Beyond the issue of acceptance, evaluation of its quality is also not a straightforward endeavor. Personal narratives are potentially dismissed as self-indulgent merely due to the lack of alternative appraisal ideas (Atkinson, 1997; Sparkes, 2002). Adding to the discussion, Bochner and Ellis (2000) have suggested ideas for evaluating autoethnographies, such as the level of reader engagement and immersion in the story and how much the reader can sympathize with the author's story, as indications of the quality of the writing. Bochner and Ellis (2000) also suggest in evaluating such works that, it may be worth considering the goals and achievements of the author. In this dissertation, I aim to present a story that promotes dialogue by offering new information intended to help others understand my world and make legitimate claims which are supported by theory. Ultimately, I hope to meet Bochner and Ellis' (2000) expectation that the author is both challenged and changed through the acquisition of new wisdom by self-reflecting and treating the autoethnography as a bilateral conversation with literature and deciding what evidence to include and exclude proved to be difficult, as they all mean something to me on a deeply personal level. However, the selection of experiences became much more straightforward by investigating the intersectional nature between the private and professional spheres. Rather than engaging in an investigation that had been carried out in existing literature, i.e., looking into the intersectional nature of discrimination solely within the professional context of TEFL, it became clear to me that I had to do more than that. Looking back at my experiences, I had chosen the most impactful incidents which had significantly shaped my values and world views in both my private and work lives. Then, recalling from memory, the events were written down in the form of a journal, with the aid of a timeline with as many details as could be recalled.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

> Writing about your life brings you to strange places; you might be uncomfortable about what you learn about yourself and others. You might find yourself confronting serious ethical issues. Whom might you be hurting? How do you write a 'true' ethnography of your experiences? (Richardson, 2001, p. 38)

Writing about past experiences involving the lives of third parties can carry a significant ethical weight regardless of methodology, data collection methods, and style of presentation. Issues and questions surrounding truthfulness are often more apparent but challenging for researchers who choose to use an autoethnographic approach than for researchers employing other approaches. This is because the act of telling stories, even those of our own, implicates that all that we do is entirely in isolation. Given that I will be looking at critical incidents from the early periods of my career and my daily life and that it would almost be impossible to reach out to some of the parties that were part of these incidents, special care must be taken to ensure the anonymity of those involved. No names of individuals or institutions will be revealed in the descriptions of the incidents. However, it must be noted that if autoethnographic accounts are truly autoethnographic and are published under the researcher's name, all those involved in the narrative could potentially be identified, even if pseudonyms or fictional alterations and disguises are used. Consequently, the results of unethical research and writing practices of autoethnographers are potentially more damaging as they are more immediate and personal. As Kraus notes (2003), making use of others' lives to recount personal stories and borrowing identities as the basis for one's works often come with feelings of guilt. However, it must also be noted that, in today's hyper-connected world, it would also be ethically challenging for quantitative studies to guarantee the study participants' anonymity completely. Throughout the process of writing this dissertation, I have been concerned about the ethical implications of telling this story because it is almost impossible to tell one's story without referring to others (Roth, 2021). Wall (2006) observes that methods that are based on personal experiences, such as autoethnography, justify themselves by observing that individuals do not exist apart from their social context. Wall further states that personal experience can be the foundation for further sociological understanding. Autoethnography often focuses on particular life events. Such events typically occur before the autoethnographers seek to reflect on them for the purpose of research, but the resulting narratives inevitably include references to other people in addition to the narrator. In such circumstances, conventional ethical guidance is not always helpful. In this dissertation, I have sought to tackle ethical issues in terms of the representations of the people implicated in my narrative (Ellis, 2009). The critical incidents have been redrafted many times over the course of writing. By not speculating on their motivations, I believe I was able to keep my story as impartial as possible. It is especially imperative that autoethnographers adhere to strict ethical codes in any form of research. As motivated as I am by the desire to improve the situation in TEFL for NNESTs who share a similar background as mine, if the data in this dissertation is found to be falsified or in any way inaccurate, what is at stake will be more than just my personal reputation; instead, it will be a matter of jeopardizing how future accounts of NNEST discriminations be viewed. A recent example of a racial hoax is the case of American actor Jussie Smollett who was found guilty of falsely reporting to the Chicago Police Department a fake hate crime that he himself had staged.

In this chapter, I have described the history of autoethnography, its standing in the academic world, and the main challenges with writing an autoethnography. Although autoethnography can potentially be an interesting and powerful qualitative method, it can also be one of the most challenging approaches to attempt due to its intimate and personal nature (Wall, 2008). This dissertation has shown me that it is not a straightforward endeavor, as it involves the issues of self-representation, objectivity, data quality, legitimacy, and ethics. In the conclusion section of this dissertation, I shall reflect on the process of writing an autoethnography to highlight the issues that will require consideration for others who may consider this method to reflect on their experiences critically.

5. Critical Incidents

The primary purpose of this chapter is to recount my experiences which I believe are linked to incidents of discrimination in both my private and professional lives. This chapter will be followed by the data analysis chapter, where the experiences will be further discussed.

5.1 Introduction

> “Every once in a while, a student would come up to me and ask, ‘Senor Chang, why do YOU teach Spanish?’ They say it just like that, ‘why do YOU teach Spanish?’ Why you? Why not Math? Why not martial arts? Surely, it must be in my nature to instruct you something that is ancient and secret, like building a wall that you can see from outer space. Well, I’ll tell you why I teach Spanish. It is none of your business!” (Senor Chang, Episode 1 – Community)

Not only does this monologue from the Spanish teacher of Asian descent character portrayed by Ken Jeong from the comedy series Community surprisingly mirrors that of my own personal experience as a NNEST (the casting of a Korean actor to play someone with Chinese heritage fittingly illustrates the ignorance of Asian cultures I have mentioned earlier), it also foreshadows the format in which I will present my experiences. Although it reflects my own sentiments regarding such intrusive and ignorant questions, I do believe that it is ‘their business.’ As TEFL advocacy is the business of all shareholders from policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, and parents, the field of TEFL, much like the world economy at large, is being globalized. Moreover, much like other global issues of inequality with gender, race, and ethnicity, the residual effects are much more significant than what meets the eye in that the true motivations of any behavior usually lie under the surface, as illustrated by Edward T. Hall’s (1976) with the notion of a Cultural Iceberg Model – that culture is similar to an iceberg where only a tiny fraction of it is visible above the waterline with the rest hidden beneath the surface. In my opinion, Kachru’s (1985) aforementioned idea of circles of English-speaking countries is problematic due to the fact that it places native countries at the center of the circles, and by extension, it suggests the source of the correctness of modes of usage and teaching of English for countries in the peripheral spheres stem from the few native countries. With the number of countries in the expanding circle, made up of countries in which English is not an official language but nevertheless viewed as a lingua franca widely studied as a second or foreign language (Nordquist, 2019), actual English ownership now seems to be in the hands of the majority of international English speakers. Diane Davies (2014) suggests that countries in the expanding circle, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, among many others, have begun to develop localized ways of English usage.

The fact that I have been asked a similar question (why do I teach English and not Chinese?) by both students in class and hiring managers in interviews, notwithstanding, is the reason why I have chosen to include this monologue in this dissertation. It very much sets the tone of what my experiences are, at times absurd to the point of comedy, but upon closer inspection, one could easily detect the underlying factors which are at the roots of my negative experiences. While most of this story covers my experience in Germany, it does begin in Hong Kong – the setting of the prologue. This chapter is the data analysis of this dissertation, and what follows are the details of critical incidents in both professional and daily settings based on race, accent, gender, ethnicity, and appearance. The descriptive detailing of the experiences is layered to show the parallels between the same discriminating factor, which is followed by literature-related analysis.

5.2 Career Beginnings in Hong Kong

I like to take a communicative approach to teach English, allowing the students as much oral practice as possible and limiting teacher talking time to a minimum. I have found that people are naturally curious, and students like to get to know the details of their teachers' lives. Taking advantage of this, I often like to encourage students in the first lesson to ask me any questions they want to about me, and as long as they are in English AND grammatically correct, I will answer them. I find that this is an excellent way to build rapport with the students and allows me to assess their oral language level. Just like the television episode, I have been asked many times, "Why do you teach English?", "Where are you from?" which is usually followed by "No, but where were you born?" and "What else do you teach?" to which I would jokingly reply, "I'm not that talented. I only teach English. I don't know how to teach Chinese, martial arts, or acrobatics."

Exercising is a hobby of mine, and when the weather is nice, I prefer to exercise outdoors, at playgrounds and schoolyards, sometimes with my children, sometimes on my own. It is when I am alone that I catch the attention of parents, usually mothers. I would be cautious, too, if there were a man alone at the playground near my children. So, to avoid suspicion, I try my best to stay away from where the children are playing and limit my exercise to empty areas of the playgrounds. Interestingly, children often come to me, staring, paying attention to my every move. Inevitably, one child would ask curiously, “Are you doing kung-fu?” To which I would reply, “No” (to this day, I do not know how body-weight exercises could look like kung-fu moves). Sometimes the children would leave, but sometimes, they would continue with the ‘interrogation’ with follow-up questions like “CAN you do kung-fu?” At times, I would hear children, upon seeing me, say ‘ching chong ching chong’ in a sing-song yet innocent voice, to the complete obliviousness of their parents. To me, they present the ‘bury the head in the sand’ attitude many Germans take when it comes to sensitive issues such as racism; that is, they deliberately ignore the reality of the situation.

It is often said amongst TEFL practitioners that no one dreams of being an English teacher as their calling, but rather one often falls into this profession. For me, ‘falling into’ TEFL happened in Hong Kong. Initially, I had planned to move back to Hong Kong to try to find work in the local Hong Kong film industry and to ‘find my roots’ after a few years of working in the film industry in Toronto. After working on a couple of local productions, work suddenly dried up because of SARS. I desperately sought other employment options, and through the grapevine, I heard of a local English school that specialized in conversational English. I was told by one of my contacts that despite a lack of teaching experience and qualifications, I would still be considered since I grew up overseas and have the ‘right look,’ that is, one of a ‘banana’ – a term for ethnic Asian people who are considered to have lost touch with their Asian cultural identities as they adopted a Western mindset. It is derived from the banana fruit, which is ‘yellow on the outside but white on the inside, implying that people who are deemed bananas are physically ‘yellow’ but practice ‘white’ culture, language, and mannerisms of the Western world.

My contact, who was a ‘banana’ himself, gave me this advice: I was to pretend that I do not speak Cantonese (the local dialect of Chinese in Hong Kong) and that I was born in Canada. When asked why I should do that, he told me that this would show the company that I am a true Canadian and guarantee that I would be considered in a higher hourly wage group. I followed his advice during the interview and was hired on the spot with the ‘foreigner’s’ hourly wage. Looking back at this experience years later, the irony dawned on me that whereas at the beginning of my career in Hong Kong, it was beneficial for me not to speak the local language, I am now often penalized for my limited German knowledge in both every day and professional contexts. I believe that this incident illustrates what was discussed earlier in this dissertation, that ex-colonial states often display a retained sense of desire for any connections to the colonialists, which I like to call a 'post-colonial hangover.' For example, many former colonized subjects had reached for British and French shores upon de-colonization, hoping for better opportunities (Bleich, 2005). The positive effects of links to colonial pasts are also apparent in ex-colonial states. During my time in Hong Kong, I greatly benefited from my English knowledge and semi-NES status. Aside from securing employment as an English teacher without any experience or training, I was also hired as a wait staff at a Michelin-star restaurant despite the fact that I had never before worked in the food and beverage industry. I was also able to get reservations at popular restaurants by speaking English when my local friends who tried to reserve in Chinese would be told that the restaurant was fully booked. Such unexpected 'special treatments' extended to the way I was treated by authorities. Many times, as I made my way home from a late night of drinking, I would come close to being approached by police officers who were on patrol for routine ID checks, only to be dismissed by them as soon as they heard me carrying phone conversations in English. The reason for which I am describing these incidents is to provide what is to come: a context to show why I would be in shock and even, at times, feel humiliated. More importantly, I believe that the positive attitude Hong Kong people displayed towards English and the regard they had for the 'right kind' of foreigners (white Westerners, or 'bananas') in Hong Kong played a significant role in the way I was treated in the TEFL context, i.e., not only was I regarded as a native speaker at work and treated with respect, but I was also placed higher on the social ladder with better treatment in the TEFL environment. Graddol, in his 1997 report, predicted that "those who speak English as a second or foreign language will outnumber native speakers and will decide the global future of English" (Graddol, 1997, p. 11). Widdowson (2002) is of yet a stronger opinion. He expresses that:

> "How English develops in the world is not the business of the native speakers in England, the US, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter and no right to intervene or pass judgment. They are irrelevant. The fact that English is an international language means that no nation can claim custody over it. To grant such custody of the language is necessary to arrest its development and so undermine its international status. It is a

> matter of considerable pride of satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. However, the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language. It is not a possession that they lease out to others while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it" (Widdowson, 2002).

Crystal (1997) shares the same view but is less opinionated with his words; he states that "it is plain that no one can now claim sole ownership of English" (p. 139). Based on my own professional experience in TEFL, I cannot agree with Crystal more. The idea of ownership, as discussed in the literature review section, is a hotly debated topic, one with which I am familiar. Case in point: many of the invigilators and examiners I have worked with for IELTS and CAE exams are not native speakers of English. The exams may be 'owned' by British institutions such as the British Council and Cambridge, but the people responsible for the actual running of the exams and the exam takers are the ones who typically do not lay claims to the language. However, without their participation, English would be a much less desirable commodity, as in the example of the German language. Considering that English is now spoken globally and is an international commodity, what are the reasons for the still-existing discrimination and unfair treatment towards NNESTs? In the following sections, I aim to show the intersectional nature of the discrimination I personally faced in TEFL and how they are connected to the injustices I endure in everyday life.

5.3 Initial Training and Race

I met my future German wife in Hong Kong a few years after I moved back from Toronto. After a brief period of dating, we got married in Hong Kong and decided to move to Germany to start our family. We also considered going to Toronto, but since I already had immigration experience, I thought it would be easier for me to settle in Germany. After all, it was 'just another' Western country. How hard could it be? I never imagined that language would be a problem, perhaps due to my NES arrogance. I had expected that everyone in Germany would be at least conversant in English, so I never bothered even to try to learn the most basic words in German prior to immigrating.

By the time I moved to Germany, I had been out of the film business, and since where we settled in, Germany did not have a large entertainment industry, I decided to keep pursuing the career path of an English teacher. Instinctively, I knew that in order to build a career, I had to get certified through training, which is especially important in Germany, a country that some might say is obsessed with qualifications and titles. Weber-Wulff (2016), one of Germany's top experts on plagiarism in academia, puts it succinctly – the true aim of education is sometimes lost in Germany amid greed for title-associated prestige. Hence, I immediately applied to the CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults) program, which was run jointly by a local government-funded 'Volkshochschule' or adult education center and Cambridge English Assessment. My initial English teacher training was also my first of many encounters with the term 'native speaker. While reading the application prerequisites, I came across something along the lines of 'native speaker or close to native speaker ability required.' Whether or not I was, in fact, a native speaker was frankly a question I never considered. At that time, I thought all the years of schooling in Toronto would undoubtedly qualify me as a native speaker of English. I was, however, quite quickly proven wrong. During the telephone interview, which was part of the application process, I was asked by the course tutor whether or not I had any proof of my English level. When I replied no, the course tutor became somewhat skeptical of my 'nativeness' and insisted that I provide proof in the form of a Canadian high school diploma. I complied with the request and was allowed to participate in the course, in which I was the only candidate with an Asian background out of the 20-plus participants. Over lunch, with my cohort one day, the topic of application for the course came up, and to my surprise, I discovered I was the only person who had to go through the telephone interview even though I was also a Canadian passport holder like some of the other participants of the course.

My experience with CELTA would, unfortunately, not be my first and only discriminatory experience in Germany. In fact, what I experienced outside of the TEFL sphere was much more overt. I had never been subjected to any racism growing up in Toronto, an example of a Canadian mosaic city where ethnic groups have maintained their distinctiveness while functioning as part of the whole (Palmer, 1976). I had always felt welcomed and safe, and most importantly, I never felt out of place. This feeling of tranquility in a foreign country which I hoped to carry with me to my new life in Germany, was shattered one autumn day. My wife, who was about 7 months pregnant with our first child at the time, and I were on our way to visit family on the German 'autobahn' with a rental vehicle. We stopped briefly to use the bathrooms, and as we were walking to our car, I noticed a group of white men with very short hair walking toward us. At the same time, I also felt my wife being very alarmed by them. Just like my first encounter with 'native-speakerness,' I was not prepared for what would happen next at this parking lot next to the highway. As my wife was telling me to 'just keep walking quickly to the car and avoid making eye contact with these men,' one of them said something to us that, with my rudimentary German skills at the time, I could not understand. Once we were in our vehicle, my wife instructed me to lock the doors and start driving quickly. Only when we were out of the parking lot did my wife, now visibly shaken, tell me what was said. In fact, the slur was directed at her. Those men had told my 7-month pregnant wife '*rassenschande*' or 'race disgrace' – from the anti-miscegenation concept in Nazi German racial policy.

There is, on the surface, a minimal relationship between the two incidents. One is a clear case of blatant racism, and my CELTA experience is most likely a discriminatory practice based on stereotypes. However, if one were to look carefully, it is not difficult to see the underlying theme of these two incidents – race. What I had hoped to be single, 'one-off' incidents, unfortunately, became a staple of unpleasant pebbles in metaphorically 'both my shoes' – namely, both my professional context in TEFL and my everyday life in Germany. Unsurprisingly, in Japan, where Lawrence and Nagashima (2020) conducted a recent study, this native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) is particularly pronounced with the white, male, native speakers from the so-called inner circles (Kachru, 1985) countries which are held up as the ideal and authentic purveyor of the English language (Rivers & Ross, 2013).

Not only do minorities suffer professionally from the existence of glass ceilings, but as a counterpoint to the above argument, Houghton and Rivers (2013) point out that although native speaker status is often a benefit at the beginning of a career, a glass ceiling exists for native speakers working in TEFL contexts and renders them impotent and powerless (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020). Aligned to this are issues of respect and value judgments on skills that posit the native speaker as unqualified, incompetent, and lacking awareness of local social and cultural norms, in contrast to the culturally expert and highly qualified non-native speaker (Keaney, 2016; Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). This is an interesting point, as I feel that my motivation for constantly improving my credentials has to do with my own insecurities of not being perceived as a NEST in Germany, whereas at the early stages of my TEFL career in Hong Kong, where I was considered a NEST, I did not feel the urge or need to better myself academically.

In this TEFL environment, the native speaker teacher is seen as a native speaker first and a teacher second (Galloway, 2008; Hashimoto, 2013), with the native speaker teacher reduced to a commodity (Heimlich, 2013), despite any language abilities and cultural knowledge that the individual teacher may possess (Ellis & Bochner, 2016). Under this scenario, white, male native-speaking teachers have been found to be objects of romantic desire as part of an imagined identity in which (predominantly female) learners are able to purchase a simulation of an alternative identity within the safe, comfortable confines of a controlled classroom environment (Kubota, 2011; Piller & Takahashi, 2006). In Hong Kong, where my TEFL career started, I have witnessed firsthand such behaviors of students and the reciprocations of my white male colleagues in and outside of the classroom. In their 2011 study, Seider and Hillman describe this dominant group of teachers as ‘white, male, affluent, heterosexual, and able-bodied’ (Seider & Hillman, 2011, p. 2).

These socially constructed notions of native and non-native speaker identity are also closely linked to perceptions of race, with native-speakerness as a ‘proxy of whiteness’ (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013, p. 197). As advocated by Ruecker (2011), ELT researchers have begun to use Critical Race Theory (CRT) in order to deconstruct the ‘native/non-native’ hierarchies indicated above. Drawing on CRT, Kubota and Fujimoto (2013) used narratives from Japanese American teachers working in Japan to highlight the exclusion felt by teachers who self-identified as native speakers but were marginalized personally and institutionally based on physical indicators of race, a sentiment I share deeply. In my own experience in Germany, even though I self-identify as a native speaker, I still find myself having to justify my status at most job interviews. For example, I am often asked the age at which I immigrated to Canada, with ensuing discussions amongst the hiring committee regarding the ‘cut-off’ age for one to become a native speaker of

English. Sometimes, the question is more direct, 'Do you consider yourself a native speaker and why?' In a more quantitative study, Rivers and Ross (2013) found that when other traits, for example, country of origin, experience, and qualifications, were standardized, students rated white teachers as the most desirable. However, when the other factors were manipulated, race was second to native speaker status in terms of the idealized teacher. What both of these studies show is that the relationship between race and native speaker status is prominent and pertinent and that individual teachers' experiences are "not influenced solely by race or language in isolation, rather race, language, nationality and other social categories in complex ways in social interactions to shape their experiences" (Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013, p. 201).

5.4 Establishing in Germany and Accent

Armed with my newly acquired CELTA qualification, I was eager to start teaching in Germany. I knew that my chances in the public education sector were limited due to my limited experience and related training, so I planned to get my foot in the door and slowly work towards my goal of securing a position at a higher institute of education.

At that time, I had begun to learn German at a private language institute, preparing for the mandatory language test required for the residency permit. Without high hopes, I submitted my CV to be considered for future English teaching work at the language school, which was run by a German proprietor. To my surprise, a few days later, I received a call from the owner and was invited in for an interview. There were several English courses for which the school was searching for suitable teachers. At this point in my career, I was unaware of the various theoretical areas as previously discussed in the literature review section, and here, in particular, the issue of native-speakerism, though bizarrely in reverse, where I was favored for being a NNEST. Although I was prepared to answer questions related to nativeness from my experience with the CELTA interview (and had actually brought my Canadian passport along just in case), to my surprise, the owner never raised them. However, the conversation took a different turn than I had not anticipated. When the owner asked me where I was from, I said Canada. However, this answer was followed by another question, "yes, but where are you from originally?" a question which I was taken aback by since I have never been asked this question growing up in

Canada, where everyone is from somewhere else other than Canada originally. I told the owner I was born in Hong Kong, an answer which seemed to have satisfied the owner, and I was soon to find out the reason.

There were two requests from clients for new English courses. One company has requested a trainer who, as the language school owner put it, "can do an Asian accent, as the company deals a lot with suppliers in India, and they want a trainer who could familiarize the staff with the accent." Not that I could 'do an Asian accent' (as a matter of fact, I had spent a lot of time and effort growing up in Toronto to rid myself of my accent, as part of an adolescent need to fit in), even if I were able to, it would not possibly represent all of the accents in Asia. I expressed that I was not comfortable with being responsible for that request and was 'luckily' offered the second English course. It was a course with only two participants, both experienced engineers but beginners in English (as they were from former East Germany, they did not learn English in school, which was mentioned earlier in the dissertation). The owner went on to assure me that they were friendly participants and that since they were only beginners, I should have no problems teaching them. I was not aware of the practice of assigning lower-level students to 'less native' teachers at that time and did not take any offense, and only after I started with the school and began to socialize with other English teachers (who were all of the visible NEST variety) that I learned, they were responsible for higher level students. Obviously, it could have been the fact of my lack of experience at that point in my career, but years later, when I worked at a local university, I was still assigned all the lower-level general English classes when my NEST colleagues were teaching higher-level academic English classes. The lessons with the two engineers did not start off well. In fact, in our first class, upon learning that I hardly spoke any German, the students immediately called the owner and complained. Although the owner was able to calm them down, and the lessons continued, I always felt a sense of hostility in that classroom. I was never able to explain why but I did find it amusing that in Hong Kong, not long ago, the students appreciated the fact that I 'did not speak' Chinese, and here in Germany, my first students resented the fact that I did not speak German. Although this irony was clearly not lost on me, this experience in the TEFL context was only part of my language conundrum in Germany. Referring back to the previously discussed history of English education in Germany, I believe that the relatively short period of time English has been in the school curriculum could be a reason for this behavior. Unlike other countries, in particular former

British colonies such as Hong Kong, where English has been ingrained in society, English in Germany is still seen as a novelty, despite the globalization of industries. In addition, unlike other European countries such as Sweden, where most television shows and English films are broadcasted in English, German audiences are used to German dubbed versions. Another point one might consider is that, as previously mentioned, English, along with Latin, have been historically considered languages for the elites – the pupils who were enrolled in the highest level of schools – the German gymnasiums (which are considered the high schools for elite pupils). Therefore, people who did not graduate from gymnasiums might have developed an inferiority complex, leading to a higher level of insecurity when it came to their language abilities. Another possible reason for people not to want to speak English might be one associated with national pride and perhaps even ultranationalism. Although linguistic advocacy groups such as Aktion Deutsche Sprache (Action German Language) claim their goal is to turn the global capitalism tide, critics are weary that their motives are far more dangerous and nationalistic (Brown, 2019).

As I mentioned earlier, I was able to use my English 'super power' in Hong Kong to my full advantage. However, not being able to speak German in Germany became my 'kryptonite' overnight. My first experience with my new disability occurred when I tried to inquire about purchasing a used vehicle. When I called the car dealership to arrange for a test drive, I was bluntly told that the car was already sold, and without the possibility of asking about other available vehicles, the phone was hung up on me. I told my wife about this incident, and she decided to call the dealership herself because the car was clearly listed as available on the website. To both of our amazement, she was promptly given an appointment for a test drive, and when asked why they had told me just a few minutes ago that the car was sold, the reply was enough for my wife to cancel the appointment – the dealer said that they receive many calls from foreigners who are dealers themselves and they would instead not do business with them. Despite my efforts to learn German as quickly as possible, my German level remained very low for the first year. Not wanting to depend on my wife, I took it upon myself to handle as much of the daily business as I could alone. That included going to see the doctor. Furthermore, it was at my general practitioner's practice that the second incident involving my nascent German ability happened. I had been to a specialist, and the report was sent to my GP, who was supposed to go through it with me. Instead of explaining the report to me in a way that I would understand, the doctor read out the medical report in German, and when I used my limited German to ask if he would please explain it to me in layman's terms or perhaps even in English, he replied with a very curt 'no, this is Germany and we speak German.' Even more, what happened next took me a while to digest and comprehend - the doctor asked the nurse to give me my patient file and ushered me out the door, adding that I could find another doctor who could explain things in simple words.

I do not believe that these incidents were necessarily driven by my ethnicity but rather most likely had to do with language and, to an extent, accent. It is perhaps paradoxical, but the notion of language is quite often missing from the discussion of how socially and culturally constructed categories of identity can impact our experiences. In many ways, words said, and equally importantly unsaid, can contribute to discrimination, exclusion, and a narrowing of possibilities (Thomas, 2018). I grew up and went to school in Canada, but like many other people of Asian descent (Ro, 2021), I have had the awkward experience of people complimenting my English fluency. Linguistic stereotyping feeds into linguistic racism, or racism based on accent. It can be overt, or it can be subtle, such as a seemingly well-intended compliment toward an Asian-Canadian's English. Linguistic racism can take a significant psychological toll on people, who are ashamed of their language, develop inferiority complexes, and actually start believing that they are, in fact, less intelligent (Dovchin, 2019). Dovchin adds that, worse still; it can potentially lead to deprivation in education, employment, health, and housing. Precisely, even though racialization and gendering are accomplished mainly through intersectional discourse, language is often ignored as a medium of exclusion or as yet another factor attributing to otherness. A reason why language is forgotten as another dimension of our social experience could be that it is taken for granted, for language is such a regularly embedded aspect of our daily existence that people sometimes are unaware of how it can contextually shift in its use from communication to construct ideals of gender and ethnicity. Moreover, in German society, where one's education level is often indicative of one's social standing, having a low command of German often puts one in a lower social class, especially for visible minorities. This strict attitude towards language fluency was surprising to me because, growing up in Toronto; I had met many successful immigrants who did not speak perfect, accent-free English and were not penalized for their imperfect English abilities.

5.5 Career Progression as a Male NNEST

A second child, a Master's degree, more teacher training certifications, many hours working for close to minimum wage teaching English at private language schools, and a decade later, I had finally gotten my first job at a local university working as an English instructor. Although it was a limited contract because of state regulations, I mainly had fond memories of my experience at the university. I also remember my time there so vividly because it coincided with a difficult period of modern German history – the refugee crisis between 2015 and 2016. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015 from countries including Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Eritrea, sparking a crisis as European nations dealt with the influx in different ways. However, Germany stood out for its actions in providing assistance, and in the following weeks and months, the refugee crisis hit Germany with full force – authorities reported a total of 1.2 million asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016 (CGD, 2022). However, the open-door policy had not been smooth sailing, leaving behind deep dividing scars within society, giving rise to the right-way political party, particularly after the event of the 2015-16 New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Germany where over 1,200 women were reportedly sexually assaulted during the 2015–16 public New Year's Eve's celebrations, in most cases by men of non-European origin. The German national media reported that in Cologne, the assaulters mainly had been described as 'dark-skinned' or 'foreign.'

I was very nervous going into the interview at the university. Over the years, I have sent out many applications without any positive feedback, and this was the first time I had gotten so close to my goal of working in higher education. The interview consisted of two parts, and I had to first present a lesson plan in front of a panel of three interviewers: the human resources manager, the language department head, and the professor responsible for the language department. All three were coincidentally women. The 'usual' questions were raised during the interview, such as "when did I move to Canada?" and "would I be considered a native speaker?" questions that I had been, at that point, already desensitized to. What I did not expect was the question, "what is your experience teaching a group of mostly female students?" The university was not an all-female convent institution but a regular state-funded university. Sensing that I was taken aback by the question, the interviewers added for contextual reasons that because of the high number of female teaching students at the school of education, they would like to know my experience with teaching classes that were predominately female, as teaching is seen as a female occupation, especially at the primary level in Germany. I suppose my answer was satisfactory, as a few days later, I received news that I was hired. Although there was no clear evidence of any prejudice, still, it was still questionable whether or not the interviewers would have posed the same question if I were not a male foreigner. Whether or not my doubts are warranted, I could not help but relate this incident to an experience outside of my professional context. Seemingly unrelated at first glance, I believe they are both gender-related, as I will explain in the following paragraphs.

Juggling work and raising two children was not an easy endeavor, leaving very little time for myself. When I did have some time to spare, I enjoyed going out to the nearby woods for my jogs. Being the adventurous type, I would often wander off the sign-posted trails seeking new routes and often getting lost doing so. I always managed to find my way back thanks to the large maps that were scattered at major crossroads, which generally included a parking area for cars. One day, I found myself in the predicament of being lost yet again. Luckily, I saw the presence of one such map not far away. As I got closer to the map, a middle-aged white woman began screaming at me from her black Mercedes, which was parked next to the map. She was holding in her hand a leash to a huge and frightening dog - a Rottweiler, which was barking ferociously at me. In shock, I could not understand the woman at first, but as she kept repeating the same line while holding up what I thought was pepper spray, I understood she was screaming, “Go away! Not my car!” The woman quickly left in her Mercedes, leaving me frozen in utter and complete shock. After I collected my thoughts, I consulted the map and was able to find my way home, but I could not shake off the sense of disorientation. I wondered if she would have acted the same way if I were not a male foreigner.

Although I believe ethnicity and my skin color played a role in both incidents, I am doubtful that if I were a woman, the university interviewers would have asked the same question or that the woman in the woods would have reacted the same way. I believe that it was the combination of my ethnicity and my gender which had prompted such behavior and scrutiny, perhaps leaning heavily on my gender, which I find odd. As mentioned earlier, Asian men are portrayed in popular media as less capable and less dangerous than their Western counterparts in the Western world. The majority of people equate gender issues solely to women's issues, even though, by definition, gender includes male, female, and other gender identities (Chiu, 2019). Robert Blum (2019), a 4-decade veteran in the public health sector, asserts that the prevailing notion that only women and girls suffer from gender inequality is outdated. While intersectionality is more often associated with the discrimination of women, it cannot be stressed enough that men's lives and mental health are also very much impacted by race, ethnicity, and other factors that have social, political, economic, and cultural meaning (Griffith, 2012).

Reporting on the life history narratives of nine female TEFL professionals working in higher education in Japan, Simon-Maeda (2004) suggests that gender cannot be viewed as a free-floating attribute of individual subjectivities but rather must be seen as one of many components in an ever-evolving network of personal, social, and cultural circumstances. Critical feminist scholars have been focusing on the relationship between language and gender - a prominent aspect of research in identity and language education for the past 20 years. In this approach, gender is seen "as a complex system of social relations and discursive practices, differentially constructed in local contexts" (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004, p. 504) and is always intricately linked with other facets of social identities (Block, 2007; Shi, 2006). Therefore, in researching an individual's gender identity, it is essential to consider the interplay between the notion of gender and other aspects, including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

5.6 Presenting at Conferences and Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a concept related to race, which is occasionally used as a politically correct term for race (Miles, 2004). Thompson and Hickey (1994) add that it is often used as a category to distinguish groups based on their ancestry, language, religion, and custom. Ethnicity is a concept that sets one group of people apart from another by constructing differences among them (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). The notion of ethnicity appears to be concrete because of its close connection to the straightforward notion of culture, but the concept is as elusive as race. Moreover, just as race cannot be labeled as a biological construct, ethnicity, too, does not indicate the inherent characteristics of people.

Now that I was able to put my foot in the 'door' of higher education, I decided that it was time to attend TEFL conferences to broaden my network and gain experience presenting, which I believed would ultimately increase my standing in the TEFL community. Of all of the TEFL conferences I have attended so far, I was always the only Asian delegate, at least from what I could observe. Over the years, I have encountered odd looks and a couple of relatively ignorant and intrusive questions, such as "Your English is excellent. Where did you learn it?" I believe that this automatic assumption that I am an English learner stems from the deep seeded idea of linguistic imperialism, as previously discussed. After all, it is understandable, though not acceptable, that people immediately assume that if you are not Western-looking, then you must be an English learner because of the typical depiction of what a learner looks like in English teaching material. For example, if children were brought up to believe that the 'bogeyman' is a dark figure, they too m may develop a certain level of anxiety when meeting black strangers. However, at this point in my career, I am benumbed to the point that I can no longer be easily unfazed nor humiliated. However, the concept of 'face'- prestige or honor, is deeply ingrained in the Chinese psyche, and it plays a critical role in Chinese society. Christopher Earley (1997) describes 'face' as a fundamental part of human interaction and determines how we are judged by others. For example, to be publicly accused of stealing or committing a criminal offense would be an ultimate loss of face, the equivalency of public humiliation.

As I was looking at the different stands set up by TEFL publishers during a break at one particular conference in Germany, I came across some interesting sample teaching materials. Intrigued, I wanted to ask the company representative a few questions regarding the material, but the representative was engaged in a conversation with another person, so I waited patiently for a few minutes without the representative's acknowledgment of my presence. Since it was almost time for my presentation, I decided to quickly take a few samples (which were labeled as free samples), and leave enquires via email after the conference. At that moment, the representative suddenly stopped their conversation, turned toward me, and muttered, "Excuse me, those are for conference attendees only." When I gestured to the nametag I was wearing around my neck, indicating that I was not only a conference attendee but also a presenter, the representative coldly replied, "Well, you can only take one." With that, the representative turned back to continue their conversation. To give the representative the benefit of the doubt, perhaps the other person with whom he/she was talking was someone known to him/her. However, I question whether the ‘cold shoulder’ I received was related to the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, whereas a NNEST I was less qualified and therefore less worthy of the representative’s time, or perhaps was it a case of covert racism where the discrimination is disguised and subtle (Morrison, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, I enjoy exercising outdoors when I have the time. After a quick jog one day (why I have yet to learn my lesson, I do not know), I was cooling down and walking home. I passed a house two minutes from mine in our typical German middle-class neighborhood. In the years I have lived in this neighborhood, I have passed by this house more than a few hundred times, never encountering any problems. On this particular day, however, something happened that would shake my core beliefs as much as the incident on the autobahn would. As I passed the house, I noticed that there was a bicycle with shopping bags hanging on it that was parked on the driveway. Not wanting to cause suspicion, I deliberately walked as far as I could from the house and the bicycle without endangering myself on the road. The second, right after I passed the house, I heard a middle-aged woman, whom I could only presume to be German, call angrily after me. Drenched in sweat in my exercise clothing, I turned around. “Did you take something from my bags? I saw you touch my bags,” the woman said in an accusing tone. When I replied no, she was not satisfied with the answer and commanded me to stay put while she checked her bags. Of course, there was nothing missing, at which point I asked her, “Why did you accuse me of stealing? Is it because I’m a foreigner?” “Of course not!” she replied. “Because if you did, that would be racism,” I replied. “I’m not a racist!” she replied angrily. Not wanting to carry on any longer, I said, “Well, you owe me an apology.” “Sorry,” she said grudgingly, adding, “but you were so close to my bicycle. It was an honest mistake.”

To me, these two incidents had to do with my ethnicity, my skin color, my features, and literally, ‘my face.’ Unlike the experience described in the previous section, which would have been less likely to occur if I were not male, I believe that the incidents described in this section could have happened to a woman of different ethnic background as well. While intersectionality is a powerful theory in helping one understand and navigate the overlapping nature of different areas of discrimination, it does not actually touch on the issue of belonging, which I believe is the fundamental issue in these two similar incidents. At the conference, because of my ethnicity, I was seen as not belonging to the event and was given inferior treatment. Similarly, at the incident near my home, I was seen as a suspicious outsider to the predominately white, German, middle-class neighborhood because of my ethnicity.

5.7 Branching Out and Appearance

Now that I have been carefully sculpting my CV for a number of years, adorning it with different certifications, a couple of published articles in local professional journals, and held presentations at TEFL conferences, I thought it would be the logical step to add English examination work to my list of professional experiences.

I was really enjoying my new employment as an oral examiner for a world-renowned English assessment organization because interacting with candidates from all walks of life was indeed very interesting. Also, because the test centers were located throughout Germany, I was sometimes sent to different cities to carry out my duty as an oral examiner. I had never been to this particular venue before, so to be safe, I decided to arrive an hour prior to the start of the oral exams, which were scheduled after the candidates had completed their written exams. When I showed up at the test venue, I immediately looked for the exam invigilators to report my arrival and to collect the material I needed for the day's work. Seeing my approach to the testing hall, a middle-aged white man walked towards me while gesturing me to be quiet by putting his index finger over his lips and taking me to a quiet corner. "I'm here for the oral exam," I said politely and perhaps rather too cheerfully. "Well, you can't just do the oral part, and you are very late for the written," replied the man. Confused, I replied, "but I thought the oral part only starts in the afternoon?" The man, now clearly showing his annoyance, said in an exaggeratedly slow fashion, "you can't just do the oral part, don't you understand?" It was at this point that I realized he thought I was a candidate, so I rephrased for him, "Sorry, but I'm here to examine. I'm the oral examiner". Shocked at his mistake, the invigilator quickly and profusely apologized, pointing out that there were a few Asian candidates that were absent and hence had caused this confusion. I wondered, though, if I had been more 'examiner' looking, would he have made the same mistake? Would he have mistaken a white middle-aged examiner as one of the absent Caucasian candidates? Judging from Huo's (2017) experience, I do not believe that I can ever be as legitimate-looking, i.e., professor/examiner-looking, as my white counterparts. I have not discussed this with any of my colleagues, not only because I do not want to cause the loss of 'face' for anyone, but more importantly, I do not believe that anyone would openly admit to harboring stereotypes or bias towards a particular group of people.

After my wife and I bought our home, we were in a legal dispute with the previous owners. One day, we received a letter from the lawyer representing them, demanding financial compensation. From my perspective, it all seemed to be a case of misunderstanding, which I naively believed could be cleared up by an open dialog. I decided to take it upon myself to handle the situation so that my wife would not have to trouble herself with it. I drove to the lawyer's office, letter in hand, with the intention of clarifying the situation. When I got there, I rang the bell to the law office, and a middle-aged German man, whom I assumed was the lawyer, opened the door. Before I could utter a word, he asked rudely, "Who are you?" I told him my name, which he seemed to have recognized. "What are you doing here?" he asked bluntly. "I just want to talk to you about this letter" There's nothing to talk about. Just transfer the money, can't you read?" he interrupted. "You have to leave my premises, or I'll call the police," he added. Two minutes after I arrived at this lawyer's office, I was told that the police would be called to remove me. This upset me very much, and stupidly I decided to stand my ground. "No, I'm not leaving until we've talked about this letter and cleared this up." Without a word, he turned around and told his secretary to call the police. And within five minutes, two white male German police officers arrived at the scene and escorted me off the premises. I tried to explain the situation to them, but they were not interested. They did run a check on my ID and wrote down my personal details. "Where are you from?" asked one officer while the other was checking my ID. "Canada," I replied. Almost in disbelief, he asked, "You are from Canada?" "Yes, I have a Canadian passport, which makes me Canadian." At this point, I was beside myself, but I was grateful for my Canadian passport, for I am keenly aware of the global hierarchy of passports. The Canadian passport has consistently been ranked in the top ten most powerful passports in the world, and as of 2022, it has been ranked eighth on the Henley Passport Index (2022). "What is your occupation?" he continued. "I am a university instructor" "Excuse me?" he said. I repeated my answer and added, "I teach English at the university." It was at this point that the other officer came back with my ID and asked me how I got there. I told them that I had driven, and they asked me to point out my car. I pointed across the street to the general vicinity of my vehicle, and to make sure that I really did leave the premises, they escorted me across the street to my car. But rather than walking to my car, which was a Mercedes, they instinctively walked towards the car behind it, which was a very used, very old car. When I pointed to the Mercedes and said, “this is my car,” the officers, in unison, asked rhetorically, “THIS is your car?” Before I could drive off, the officers gave me some advice - “you are lucky the lawyer didn’t press charges this time, don’t come back here again.”

5.8 Frustration with Career Advancement

If my career beginning in Hong Kong is the prologue of my TEFL journey, and all the subsequent experiences are the middle of the story, then being enrolled in the doctorate program at the University of Glasgow and writing my dissertation could possibly be the climax of my TEFL story, a climax that should culminate in the form of stable employment, or so I had hoped. However, 20 years after I started my TEFL journey, as I am about to finish my doctorate studies, I am still constantly looking for work, due partially to the lack of permanent positions, the legal requirement for universities to limit contract periods to 2 to 3 years, and most importantly, in my view, persistent stereotyping. On a daily basis, I routinely scroll through university and other TEFL employment websites. As I browse through the requirements, I cannot help but notice that they have virtually remained the same as over a decade ago. Recently, I came across the following job advertisement from a local university which closely mirrors the job posting that was mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation.

Applications are expected to have a native mother tongue competence in English (preferably British English)

Although both my professional journey in TEFL and personal journey in Germany are far from being over, I would nevertheless like to offer a glimpse of closure to my story.

At one of the few local universities where I have been teaching as an adjunct staff, I was recently asked by the head of the language center about the progress of my doctorate studies. I was told that there is an opening for a ‘Business English Professor’ coming up and that I may wish to consider applying for it.

Professionally and personally, I work best by setting goals that I try to achieve systematically. Despite the occasional negative experiences while exercising outdoors, I continue to persevere in my training, for I have signed up to participate in my first triathlon event, which will be held in a small town in Germany, and according to the participants' list, I will be the only Asian participant of this event. At this juncture in both my professional and personal life, I have come to the conclusion that there have been many incidents that have shaped my career and my worldview. Through describing these incidents in this chapter, I have laid the foundation for the concluding chapter by showing that not only are the discriminations I face in my professional context intersectionalized, i.e., race, accent, gender, ethnicity, and age, they are also intersectionalized in the sense that they overlap with the discriminations I encounter in Germany outside of my professional sphere.

6. Analysis of Critical Incidents

In this chapter, by critically reflecting on the above experiences, I will evaluate whether these incidents have positively or negatively impacted my career trajectory and, more importantly, discuss the idea that I proposed in chapter one, the idea that intersectional discrimination in the professional context stems from perpetuating stereotypes in the society. Drawing similarities from another literary work, a series of books that I enjoyed reading called *Choose Your Own Adventures*, where the reader has to make certain choices as they are reading which would determine the outcome, I have asked myself questions to evaluate the impact my experiences have had on my career thus far. For example, if I had not experienced a particular incident, would I have made the same subsequent choices professionally? More importantly, I shall discuss the possible reasons behind the overlapping nature of discrimination in the private and professional spheres.

6.1 Introduction

Despite the shared views by academics on the topic of who native and non-native speakers are and the problematic usage of said terms, both labels remain common and ubiquitous both in society at large and in the field of TEFL. This point is of particular importance for this dissertation, as the relationship between discrimination in the field of TEFL is intertwined with the discriminatory views in broader society, and native and non-native speakers are terms which NEST and NNEST stem from. Taking cues from Said's idea of orientalism, I believe that the use of the terms NEST and NNEST in the field of TEFL perpetuates the ideas of native vs. non-native in both society and science, as TEFL is not a standalone circle but rather, like other fields of work, is deeply connected to society at large. In the age of globalization, where there is more competition than ever before for employment opportunities, one's social network can be a powerful asset. The ability to speak English by learning English through various TEFL-related activities can assist in the expansion of social circles and hence increase competitiveness and standing in certain societies where English ability is used as a measurement of success. This point and Said's idea of orientalism are important for this dissertation as they demonstrate the likelihood of the intersectional relationship between how 'the other' is perceived in society and in their respective professional spheres. Intersectionality, as this dissertation aims to show, is not only about the meeting of various forms of discrimination but should also represent the meeting of the same discriminations one faces in different areas of their lives. The belief that a language is owned and controlled by a group of people who are born into it is an outdated notion that requires review. Should English be controlled and regulated by a small number of native speakers, or is it fairer and more sensible for the majority of English speakers who are non-native to be in charge of English's future destiny? Perhaps one may not immediately see the monopoly of native speakers' ownership of English as a problem because it could be argued that a number of non-native English speakers are being hired. However, the majority of NNESTs are teaching in their native countries. If the number of NNESTs outnumbers NESTs, should there not be more NNESTs teaching overseas? In the next section, we will look at the idea of the ownership of English. A personal viewpoint that I would like to address is the negative literal connotation of the terms, as the word native often evokes feelings of ownership, possession, and entitlement. The importance of theory notwithstanding, I believe it is more important, from this point on, to illustrate with concrete experiences how I have been unfairly treated and marginalized and to show that there is indeed a correlation between the treatment a NNEST like myself receives at work and in everyday life.

6.2 Race

Race is often the first area of discrimination that is associated with intersectionality. From all my personal experiences, it is true that the ones to do with race stand out most, perhaps due to the fact that racism has been a topic in the public consciousness for much longer than other areas of discrimination, such as gender and ethnicity, which will be discussed later on. My experience with racism, the example I provided earlier, had truly been traumatic. Since that experience occurred in Germany, I believe it is essential to look at the current German attitude towards race to provide a deeper context than simply reducing xenophobia to the actions of right extremists. Despite scientific publications on intersectionality in Germany, the proportion of higher education staff of color is still deficient (Roig, 2017). This could be attributed to the fact that many people in Germany still believe that no structural privileges or discrimination are associated with skin color, and therefore there is no urgent need for more academic staff of color. Across the country, Germans celebrate carnivals with parades, drinking, and, most importantly, dressing up in costumes. Every year, pictures of some of the more racially charged 'costumes,' such as 'blackface' or 'Chinese' costumes complete with conical hats (I have seen on more than one occasion such costumes, complete with buckteeth), face backlash from the country's political left and its slowly growing Asian and Afro-German population. The same cannot be said of the abundance of 'Native American costumes, which are wildly popular due to the country's infatuation with Native stereotypes since the 1800s with the popularity of the works of writer Karl May and his 'Winnetou' character. The difference is that, compared to the Asian and Afro-German communities, which are more visible and therefore command a bigger audience, there is no significant indigenous population to resist these stereotypes, which coincidentally reflects the plight NNESTs face working in Western contexts. Compared to NNESTs working in their native countries, NNESTs working inside the inner circles experience much greater invisibility due to a lack of representation, education, and awareness (Mahboob, 2010). The problem is not limited to the field of TEFL but is rather a larger problem of representation in popular culture, as mentioned earlier in chapter 2. Over the last 16 years I have spent in Germany, I have noticed that talking about race in Germany is typically considered taboo. It is in such an environment that a type of color-blind racism has developed and become a widespread phenomenon. Even when I do bring up negative experiences I have had with German friends and colleagues, the usual reaction is usually disbelief, followed by a 'brushing off' statement such as 'well, there are unpleasant people everywhere.' Despite research demonstrating the automatic perception of race, the color-blind approach has become increasingly prevalent in a variety of important domains, from education to business (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). In daily societal discourse, I have encountered many people who like to declare that they do not see racial differences. While I believe this may be well-intentioned or a knee-jerk reaction to right the wrong of Germany's wartime past, it has led to the silencing of the minority's voices. There is a major lack of understanding of racial categories due to the general discourse on race. In addition, as a reaction to the perception of still being subjected to Nazi stereotypes, some Germans exhibit an intense effort to show that they have indeed moved past racism and anti-Semitism and, unfortunately, have ironically drawn even harsher criticism of racial insensitivities as a consequence of their enthusiastic but often ill-informed comments (Schumacher, 2020). For example, one of the most shocking recent examples of social acceptability of racism in Germany occurred in 2013 when a German citizen, whom the police had asked to see his ID because he did not 'look German' was manhandled on a train to Frankfurt and was forced to leave the train and subsequently held at the train police station. As another example, a black friend of mine had an incident only a few years ago where he was singled out for an ID check on the train. When his white German wife intervened and asked the police why her husband was singled out, the police bluntly replied that 'statistically, blacks are more likely to commit crimes.' For this dissertation, the German perception of race forms part of the basis of discussion in chapter 5, where my everyday incidents and incidents while engaged in TEFL-related activities will be scaffolded. In addition, the geographical context will play a vital role in understanding the specific issues that are connected to my teaching and my experience. Over the years, I can say that I have yet to see a visible minority teacher during all their schooling in their kindergarten, primary, and high schools. While some experts estimate that although the number of students with a migrant background is constantly rising, the number of teachers with a migrant background account for only between one and five percent of all teachers in Germany. According to the published figures in 2019 from the German Statistics Office, the percentage remains a mere 1.4% of all teachers in Germany (Deutsche Welle, 2022). This figure is an indication of the possible lack of openness towards foreign teachers in Germany in the pre-higher education sector. In English teaching, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that I teach English at the university level to teachers in training, I am not allowed to teach at primary, middle, or high schools, even though most German states are having difficulties recruiting new teachers.

When I comment to Germans about the lack of diversity in German society, they usually respond by stating that Germany is not an immigrant country like Canada. If the lack of representation of foreign teachers in German schools is a reflection of German society, then the TEFL circle is a condensed miniature version of the German public school system. In my 16 years of teaching English in Germany in both private and public sectors, from adult education centers to higher education institutes, I have never encountered any other English teacher who is not Caucasian. When I recently confronted a German acquaintance with this observation, I was given the somewhat expected response that it has nothing to do with racism and discrimination and that it is purely because the NESTs outnumber the NNESTs in the German teaching circle. Knowing that is not the case, as the number of NNESTs worldwide, in fact, exceeds the number of NESTs, my immediate thought was of the image on the cover of a popular German news magazine with an Asian person in a red hazmat suit, captioned in an alarming yellow font 'Made in China: When Globalization Becomes a Deadly Threat.' I have chosen to start my narrative with an incident involving racism because there is often an intersection of racism with other injustices. Just as the idea of race interacts with gender and sexuality in identity construction, as in teacher identity, which was discussed earlier, racism can also intersect in a complex fashion with other types of discrimination, such as sexism, classism, linguicism, and ageism, among others. For example, in the context of teacher recruitment in TEFL, there is an endless combination of teacher backgrounds where hiring decisions are influenced by the interplay of multiple factors and not just by a single factor of race. In my personal experience, it had always been easier to find work in the private sector, perhaps due to the fact that it is less desirable to work for private language schools than for public higher education institutions. One must be careful when assessing whether or not there are differences in the hiring practice. While it might be easy to jump to the conclusion that there are higher numbers of hires in the private sector because there is a high level of equality, the higher number of NNESTs working in private language schools might be because of the lower wages, which NESTs are not willing to accept. The perceived profiles of the candidates based on race, gender, age, and language background would not only have intersectional effects with one another but also interact with the prospective student backgrounds and institutional goals and type (Kubota & Lin, 2006). Racism also produces assumptions about someone's language proficiency. Rubin (1992) concluded from a matched guise test that the Caucasian face was perceived as superior to the Asian face, confirming that the NESTs of Asian background are perpetual foreigners regardless of their ability in English.

6.3 Accent

As illustrated by my personal experiences above, having the ability to speak with certain accents could sometimes be an advantage, though as a TEFL professional, not having a discernable accent would significantly increase one's chances of getting hired. In addition to appearance and name, accent is also a factor for discriminatory treatment. It has become an accepted reality that students prefer native-speaker pronunciation, as quite a number of studies have shown. However, it is problematic that learners tend to idealize native-speaker speech (Hu & Lindemann, 2009; Scales et al., 2006; Timmis, 2002), which can ultimately lead to skewed findings. Kramadibrata (2016) asked students to listen to two recordings: one of a white and Western-looking native speaker and one of an Asian-looking non-native speaker. The trials demonstrated that the perceived nationalities of the two speakers affected not only students' judgments of their pronunciation but also the assessments of their teaching abilities. This may result in a situation where non-Caucasian teachers who do not speak the standard varieties of English, both native and non-native, face prejudice from students and employers because of the implicit view that whiteness is an indication of desirability in a prospective English teacher (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Amin and Kubota(2004) further assert that when a student says that a teacher does not sound like a native speaker, the implication is that they imagine a native speaker of English to be someone who possesses a "White accent" (p. 65). In the TEFL context, it is, of course, an essential requirement that English teachers be fluent and knowledgeable in English to be able to teach others. However, there is also prejudice regarding non-standard English accents. Although it is not addressed in the previous section, as it pertained to only personal experiences. I have had the experience of German students making negative comments, in my presence, about Indian users of English and how impossible it is to understand them because of their accents. From talking to NESTs at work and at conferences, I can only confirm that people generally still believe in several long-held ideas of English learning. First, the fact that there still is a correct accent; second, accent and pronunciation are the same; and third, any deviation from the correct accent is wrong. For example, it is not unusual for me to observe friendly banter between American and British teachers of English regarding their accents and what is sought after more by students. From a purely linguistic perspective, there is no proof of one accent's correctness over another's incorrectness simply because there is no objective standard of a 'correct' accent. For example, how can one objectively justify the correctness of a New Yorker's accent over someone with a Texas accent? Despite how one might feel, either positively or negatively, about specific accents or accents, it is simply not possible to objectively say that one is more correct than others. Prior to my work as an oral examiner, where I was taught that accent is not the same as pronunciation and that as examiners, we should not penalize a candidate for their accents but instead focus on their pronunciation, I, too, shared the erroneous belief that accent and pronunciation are synonymous. In reality, pronunciation is one's ability to produce sounds in the form of lexis and utterances, and accent, on the other hand, denotes one's geographical origins and sometimes social class. In other words, it is perfectly possible that one has intelligible pronunciation but speaks with a Chinese or German accent. Since there is no correct accent, and accents are neither right nor wrong, the notion of native-speakerism, which states that any deviation from the correct accent is incorrect, would be baseless. What is more important for English learners is to focus on reaching a more achievable goal of developing a clear pronunciation rather than changing one's accent. With that in mind, not everyone who speaks English, however, is treated the same way. Although not every type of linguistic racism is intentional, judgments are nevertheless pervasive with our inherent biases. In particular, speakers of English from Asia, Africa, and Middle Eastern countries may develop inferiority complexes as English is spoken by natives from those countries may be challenging to be comprehended by others and even unpleasant sounding (Ro, 2021).

New dialects of World Englishes, such as Chinglish, Taglish, Japlish, and Singlish, have sprung up. Huddart (2014) suggests in *Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes* that although the consequences of English's spread have become increasingly clear to its diverse speakers, the willingness to accept that English has become Englishes might be less evident among native speakers due to their diminished authority and ownership of the language. Furthermore, Huddart (2014) reasons that the difference between error and innovation can no longer be decided through assumptions about language ownership. In reality, English is slowly transforming from being a hegemonic medium to becoming a medium of identity for more and more people in very different contexts (Huddart, 2014). Due to the associated economic benefits, learning English is, for many, an empowering exercise in upward social mobility. There are more English learners in China alone than the total number of native English speakers worldwide. As the demand for English instruction continues to grow worldwide, it is unlikely that there will ever be enough native-speaking teachers to satisfy the international demand. Unfortunately, the mentality persists within the TEFL community that the ideal teacher is a native speaker.

6.4 Gender

As far as intersectionality as a framework goes, gender for men is an area of discrimination that is often ignored or downplayed. While I do believe in equality for women, there is often a disparity in the treatment of men and women in certain areas. In terms of available literature in the area of gender equality within TEFL, it should be pointed out that while a great deal of research has focused on language learners (e.g., Norton, 2000, 2013), there have been comparatively few studies centering on language teachers' sense of selves with an emphasis on gender. However, studies by Nagatomo (2012, 2016) specifically paid attention to the interplay between professional identities and the notion of gender and other social categories regarding female scholars and educators in Japan. Furthermore, although yet to be investigated thoroughly, research has begun to emerge around masculinity in language teaching in recent years (Appleby, 2014) that marks out a male identity as an unmarked and overlooked category in the English teaching field, which is to be explored more in-depth. As most research focusing on gender deals with the issues of being a woman, one might question the legitimacy of this dissertation's choice to include gender as a characteristic of discussion. However, as mentioned previously, on several occasions, white males are at the top of the social pyramid, not males of other races. In fact, I intuitively knew, growing up as a Chinese-Canadian in Canada, that I was not considered as desirable as my white male friends, just as I had noticed how my white male colleagues in Hong Kong were adored by local female students. Contrarily, Asian-Canadian men never fit the traditionally masculine mold. Moreover, unlike Asian-North American women, who have long been fetishized in the West, Asian men have been desexualized ever since the early days of Chinese communities in North America. The stereotypical characteristics often associated with Asian men as passive, effeminate, and weak have, over the years, been popularized in films. To some extent, the gender biases usually targeted at women also occur to overseas Asian men in Western countries due to their de-sexualization and emasculation. A study published in 2014 revealed that the 160 male Asian international college students who participated in the study reported subjective masculinity stress, which was related to psychological distress (Wong et al., 2014). Specifically, in TEFL, while I was not able to find concrete numeric data to support my claim, I can confidently say that over the years, most of the TEFL professionals (both NESTs and NNESTs) I have encountered are primarily women. I cannot say that language schools or higher education institutions are systemically discriminating against male candidates, but I do have a theory as to why such a phenomenon exists. As most men are traditionally the breadwinners, the number of expatriate female spouses who are at home is disproportionately higher than their expatriate male spouses counterparts. Furthermore, because most native speakers view TEFL in Germany as a low-skilled job with relatively low entry requirements, the vacancies often attract mothers who wish to make some income while the children are at school or daycare, thus creating a rather female-centric TEFL environment in Germany, as I have experienced. Yet another reason for the high number of female teachers in TEFL in Germany could be that in the private TEFL sector, where remuneration is low, language school owners are actively seeking female teachers because they are willing to work for less money, as with NNESTs.

Men, just like women, have specific gendered needs. However, the interests of 'majority men' and 'majority women' are often given preferential treatment, resulting in the neglect of 'minority men's interests, similar to how black women were not included in either Black or feminist movements. The lack of momentum in resolving the issues surrounding men's interests, specifically those concerning 'minority men,' derives from the false impression that all men are equally represented. Although men's rights organizations exist, they are often plagued by criticisms of being anti-feminist and misogynist (Gotell & Dutton, 2016). Interestingly, while viewing the literature for this dissertation, I have come across studies concerning female teachers, even female NNESTs, but never any literature on male NNESTs. Despite the growing number of studies associated with gender equality in TEFL, the experiences of male NNESTs working in Western contexts remain relatively unexplored.

6.5 Ethnicity

Being accused of trying to steal someone's car is truly a traumatic experience, much more so than 'just' being given the 'cold shoulder' at a conference. Although the incidents did not occur during the pandemic, the effects COVID-19 have had on specific ethnic groups can critically illustrate the pressing need to disaggregate the complexities of racism not only by specific ethnicity but by intersections of other structural inequalities. Amid the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic), people in the UK and US have sparked critical commentary (Christoffersen, 2020), where ethnicity remains a lesser-discussed intersectional category compared to race and gender. In the case of Romani women, as mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Oprea (2005) views that neither the Roma movement nor the mainstream women's movement correctly conceptualizes their intersectional social position. The result is that Romani women's claims are very often politically marginalized or even excluded. There are numerous cases of women's organizations that equate the discrimination of Romani women with gender discrimination without any consideration of ethnicity (Kocze, 2009). Similarly, in TEFL advocacy discussions, discrimination based on ethnicity often takes on a less important role than other factors such as gender, race, or native speakers. I believe this is due in part to the nuances associated with ethnicity. In my own experiences, my initial thoughts were that I was being discriminated against by my race. However, after mentally dissecting the situation, I have come to the conclusion that it was impossible for the people involved to have known precisely what race I am. Hence, I believe that the discrimination occurred as a consequence of perceived cultural factors; namely, they were based on the social and cultural groups people believed I belonged.

6.6 Appearance

Going back to the experience where I was accused of theft, in my opinion, that was blatant discrimination based on my appearance, which I believe had to do with the color of my skin and the type of attire I was wearing. Unlike other forms of discrimination, appearance, which closely ties to age, affects us universally, regardless of our race, gender, or social class. While this may seem like discrimination that does not discriminate, different groups of people will experience ageism at different levels according to the intersectionality of other domains. For example, an older white man will experience ageism differently than an older black woman. People who experience discrimination in other areas, such as gender, race, and sexuality, are likely to experience cumulative and intersectional disadvantages due to multiple group memberships as they age (Nash & Peters, 2020). Interestingly, ageism does not only affect people who are advanced in their years. In certain situations, it can also have a negative impact on individuals who are perceived to be young. In both incidents, I was not wearing formal clothing, i.e., suit and tie, which tends to make me look younger than my age in the eyes of Germans, as I have come to realize. While carrying relatively youthful looks can be a blessing, it can also be a curse at the same time. My students would often be surprised by my age, even once joked somewhat non-politically correctly that "it must be the diet of rice Asian people are on that keeps them looking young." Closely related to the perceived age of a person, physical attractiveness is sometimes seen as a characteristic that privileges people who are more attractive and oppresses those who are less attractive (Yonce, 2014). On a more general level, physical appearance can overlap with privilege or oppression in the more talked about areas of gender, race, and social class. Social class, or the perceived social class of an individual, in particular, is tightly related to appearance, which is not only limited to attractiveness. For example, researchers have previously suggested that people care about their appearance because of the 'lipstick effect': during times of economic downturn, women are more likely to purchase products that boost their attractiveness, with the hope that the use of such products would attract potential partners with better financial resources. However, caring about how one looks, of course, does not apply solely to women. Men care about their physical appearance as well. People generally care about their physical appearance because it is tied to their perceptions of their social status or how other people perceive them (Belmi & Neale, 2014). Past research suggests that people assess their subjective social class by evaluating how much wealth and education they have relative to others. In Belmi and Neale's (2014) study, she found that people's beliefs about their physical appearance influenced not only their perceptions of their social class but also their subsequent attitudes toward equality. In Germany, Germans may feel they have little use for a class structure, yet one still exists. This may be less pronounced than that in the UK and the US, but it can be equally complex, and it still suffers from many of the same issues. Class indicators are everywhere: where a person was born, one's family name, accent, and the way one is dressed. Although Germans are not inherently class-conscious, the topic does inevitably arise. People are divided into 'white and blue collar' at work, and people collecting benefits at the unemployment office are categorized as either 'educated' or 'uneducated.' From these examples, it is clear that the status and desirability of particular class identities are not as socialistic as the Germans would like to believe.

Aside from the idea of ageism in these incidents, the representativeness is also an issue in the context of the language exam. Going back to the idea of ownership of English, the question that should be raised is: Whose interests are these exams actually serving? If most exam takers and users of English are non-native speakers globally, should the criteria of assessment not be adjusted to reflect the actual needs of these people? The idea of a more representative assessment framework is not a novel idea. Many involved in TEFL and exam preparations worldwide are aware of the unfairness and inadequacy of existing exams (Abbas, 1994) but are presumably unwilling to sacrifice their way of life for the betterment of their professional sphere. Freire (1972), in his seminal work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed,' laments that even the ones who do speak up are only engaged in an armchair revolution. While he was not referring specifically to TEFL, his comment could be extended to describe those TEFL professionals who are aware of the problems within TEFL but lack sufficient motivation to carry out the necessary positive changes. To justify their inaction, the people in charge presume the necessity of exploitation in the world, as TEFL professionals convince themselves of the necessity of standardized testing. It is inevitable, they would argue, that preserving existing hegemony is the only way to ensure fairness for all applicants. To Freire (1972), rationalizing exploitation is equal to the corruption of humanity and the construction of a false reality by the oppressors to justify their coercion over the oppressed. Furthermore, the idea that without partaking in such exams will only hurt the learners' chances of future development is an ever-present looming threat that the TEFL community has cemented into the learners' subconscious. In the TEFL context, proprietors of standardized exams would often mention the number and names of international companies and higher education institutions which accept their exam results in their advertising materials.

After carefully analyzing my autoethnographic experiences in their separate categories, I would like to delve deeper into the intersectional nature of my findings. Intersectionality, as developed by Crenshaw, explores how multiple social categories (e.g., race, class, gender) intersect at the individual level to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression. In my case, the categories of my identity do not exist in isolation. They interact in complex and dynamic ways to shape my experiences as a teacher.

Firstly, let's consider the interplay between my cultural background, language proficiency, and professional role. As a non-native English teacher of Asian descent in Germany, my experiences are shaped by the interplay of linguistic competence, cultural background, and racial identity. My Asian identity may confront stereotypes about language proficiency, impacting student expectations and classroom dynamics. Simultaneously, as a non-native English speaker, I navigate the challenges and biases within the previously mentioned NEST/NNEST dichotomy. Secondly, let's examine the intersection between my gender and professional role. Being a foreign male teacher in a predominantly female academic field in Germany may present challenges related to gender bias. Yet, it also provides opportunities to challenge these stereotypes and promote gender equity in the classroom. Lastly, my socioeconomic status and professional role intersect to influence my experiences. Coming from an immigrant background, I understand the struggles of students from similar backgrounds, which informs my pedagogical approach to be more inclusive and considerate of these challenges.

By using an intersectional lens, I can see how these identities do not operate separately but rather combine to produce unique experiences that are more than the sum of their individual parts. This understanding enriches the analysis of my autoethnographic findings, offering a more complex and nuanced understanding of my experiences as a teacher. This intersectional exploration may also have broader implications. It suggests the need for teacher education programs to not only address these separate categories of identity but also their potential intersections. Moreover, it calls for further research into the intersectionality of teacher identity, particularly in multicultural and multilingual educational contexts.

Drawing upon an intersectional lens, I have come to understand that my identities, whether they are related to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or linguistic background, do not exist in isolation. Instead, they intersect and interact, creating a complex and multi-layered version of 'me' that shapes how I experience and perceive the world.

When I say that these identities are "more than the sum of their parts," I am acknowledging that the combination of these identities leads to experiences that cannot be understood by considering each identity independently. The "new sum" is a multidimensional identity that engenders unique experiences, perceptions, and ways of interacting with the world. It is a unique identity unlike any other, much like my previously stated notion that not all Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers are identical. This intersectionality brings forth a truly individual identity.

As a Chinese Canadian Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher in Germany, each part of my identity—being Chinese, being Canadian, being a non-native speaker of English, and being a teacher—intersects to create unique experiences. Being both Chinese and Canadian in Germany often makes me feel like an outsider. However, this outsider status provides me with a unique perspective. Although sometimes challenging, it allows me to observe and understand cultural nuances and differences from a vantage point that is not entrenched in the dominant culture. This perspective enriches my understanding of diversity and multiculturalism, making me a more empathetic and effective educator.

These experiences are not merely the result of each individual part of my identity. They are shaped by the combination of these identities. For instance, the lived experience of being a Chinese Canadian Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher in Germany is distinct from that of a Chinese Canadian engineer in Germany or a German Non-Native English Speaking Teacher in Canada. The "new sum" of these identities results in a unique identity that is shaped by the intersection of ethnicity, nationality, linguistic background, and profession. This intersectionality results in a set of experiences, challenges, and perspectives that are unique and cannot be fully understood by examining each identity in isolation. Using an intersectional lens allows me to understand the complexity and richness of these experiences, and underscores the importance of recognizing and acknowledging this complexity in our interactions and policies.

As a Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) of Chinese Canadian heritage operating within the German educational landscape, I have discerned that the composite of my identity attributes significantly shapes the perception and treatment I encounter in my professional domain. This amalgamation of identity aspects has consequential implications on the trajectory of my career.

The presence of a NNEST in Germany is not anomalous; however, my experiences as an Asian NNEST markedly diverge from those of my German NNEST peers. My ethnic background, intertwined with my professional role, frequently incites a unique set of stereotypes and biases.

One particularly striking instance of this was when university hiring administrators, among others, questioned how I could be Canadian, revealing a deeply ingrained stereotype that equates nationality with ethnicity. The question seems to stem from an assumption that being Canadian implies possessing certain Western, or more specifically, Caucasian attributes.

Moreover, I have often found myself confronting assumptions about my English proficiency predicated on my Chinese descent. A pervasive yet erroneous belief is that a German NNEST would inherently exhibit superior English proficiency compared to an Asian NNEST such as myself. This stereotype appears to be rooted in the misconception that Western nations inherently possess superior English skills.

Additionally, I have wrestled with challenges borne out of racial biases. Upon uncovering my Chinese Canadian background, hiring administrators occasionally harbour preconceived notions about my pedagogical methodologies or linguistic capabilities. These biases, whether latent or overt, have impacted my vocational opportunities, professional relationships, and overall job satisfaction.

These experiences underscore the urgent need for rectifying these biases and championing diversity and inclusivity within the TEFL community and among university hiring administrators. My unique trajectory as a Chinese Canadian NNEST in Germany has reinforced my conviction that a plurality of experiences and perspectives fosters a richer, more holistic approach to language pedagogy.

In the complex landscape of the German educational system, my journey as a Chinese Canadian Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) has offered unique insights into the interplay of identity within professional settings. The multifaceted aspects of my identity—including my linguistic background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and internationality—profoundly shape the perceptions, interactions, and opportunities that I encounter.

One such interaction is when students, upon learning that my last name is Chan, would jokingly ask if I am related to the martial arts action star Jackie Chan. Although seemingly light-hearted, this question reveals underlying assumptions and stereotypes associated with my ethnicity and surname. Another instance that underscores the complexity of my identity arose during a job interview, when I was asked how I would approach teaching a class consisting entirely of female students. I responded that I would teach them in the same manner as I would a class of male students. This question illustrates a prevalent bias that a male teacher's approach might vary based on the gender composition of the class, emphasizing the need to address such biases.

Assumptions about my English proficiency, often tied to my linguistic background and ethnicity, are also common. The belief that a German NNEST would naturally possess superior English language skills compared to an Asian NNEST like myself is a clear manifestation of bias. This bias stems from a narrow view that Western nations inherently excel in English language proficiency.

Furthermore, being an Asian cisgender, heterosexual male within the TEFL community introduces unique challenges. Preconceived notions about my pedagogical methodologies or linguistic aptitudes, likely influenced by stereotypes associated with the 'Asian' tag, can arise and impact my professional opportunities and relationships.

These experiences underscore the urgent need to address biases, champion diversity and inclusivity, and embrace a more comprehensive understanding of internationality within the TEFL community, particularly among university hiring administrators. My journey as a Chinese Canadian NNEST in Germany has affirmed my belief that embracing a diversity of experiences and perspectives can enrich and inform our approach to language education.

7. Conclusion

The main aim of this dissertation is to highlight the intersectional relationship between discrimination outside of and within the TEFL context. Looking at my own experiences, I am reasonably sure that there is, as my story shows, the overlapping of various kinds of discrimination in Germany and in TEFL.

Before I address the questions raised in this dissertation and engage in subsequent discussions, I want to express my firm belief that the fallacies of native-speakerism should be advocated by more NESTs as it lends more power to the terms being considered invalid and unfair. The argument that disagrees with language teachers' differentiation should come from both NESTs and NNESTs in order to gain enough power to create change. It is my personal belief that it would take both groups of teachers to bring about change to the deeply engrained dichotomy. Writing out a set of conclusions does not precisely fit the evocative autoethnography style of writing, as evocative autoethnography is not intended to draw out a conclusion for the reader but to leave it open for the reader's interpretation of a personal encounter in the author's life (Ellis, 2004). However, for the purpose of this dissertation, I have decided to add a few concluding comments on my personal findings while keeping my research agenda in mind. As noted in the previous chapter, the experiences strengthened my belief that the treatments I had received within the field of TEFL were indeed mediated by societal views of myself, as well as the particular time and place in which I was situated. Clearly, some of the external factors affecting my professional experience were linked with and positioned by players of the TEFL community, as well as the broader discourses surrounding intersectional issues in Hong Kong and Germany. What the writing process brought out were more questions that may be topics for further research in understanding the social dynamics and positioning of experienced NNESTs in TEFL in regard to race, gender, age, ethnicity, and language. Furthermore, writing an autoethnography and looking at the incidents reflectively not only gave me the opportunity to re-examine myself in depth (for example, to consider whether I was genuinely disadvantaged by my experience) but also allowed me to see the need for further research, namely, the studying of experienced NNESTs pursuing professional careers in Western countries. Medgyes (2001) and other researchers who study NNESTs may have labeled teachers like myself as being rare, but I cannot entirely agree. As mentioned in detail in this dissertation, with the rise of globalization, the lines between Kachruvian circles (Kachru, 1986) have become blurred, and it is becoming more common for careers, including those of NNESTs, to take a global path. These NNESTs, like me, could very likely have experienced similar struggles in their professional and personal lives while working outside of their home countries. Hence, adding research around their experience may reveal the reasons for career stagnation. To pave the way for the final recommendation at the end of this chapter, it is important to revisit a previously mentioned point - one of the most visible effects globalization has had on English is the emergence of World Englishes. World Englishes, as a term, denotes localized or indigenized varieties of English that have mostly sprung up in ex-colonies of the United Kingdom or have been heavily influenced by the United States. In fact, significant changes have occurred to the English language as a result of those restructured communities which were positively affected by economic booms. English is continuously being reshaped and modified by these communities for international communication. The creation of new lexical items and the new definitions of existing words lead to a perpetual state of linguistic evolution (Dewey & Jenkins, 2010). Precisely because English is a lingua franca, an unprecedented predicament has emerged in which native speakers are finding themselves outnumbered by non-native speakers of English (Llurda, 2004). The result is a collective sense of ownership of English by various groups that manifests itself in the rise of World Englishes.

English's position as a global lingua franca is not as secure as it seems on the surface. There is growing discussion of Chinese becoming the next lingua franca due to the rise of Chinese economic power and the subsequently increased interest in Mandarin, the primary dialect of Chinese, internationally. Graddol (1997) suggests that Chinese is poised to become one of the world's top languages by 2127. While there is a consensus among researchers that English will remain a global lingua franca for the foreseeable future, several researchers have argued to different extents for the growing influence of the Chinese language (Ding & Saunders, 2006; Zhang & Li, 2010; Zhao & Huang, 2010; Lu, 2008; Zhang, 2011; Hua & Wei, 2014). The scale to which Chinese will become a lingua franca, however, is a hotly debated issue. Many argue that Chinese will become a lingua franca only amongst Chinese people of different ethnicity within and outside of China (Wang, 2017), while others argue that it has the potential to become an East Asian lingua franca (Ding & Saunders, 2006). There are even researchers who believe that the Chinese language could eventually replace or share the same status with English on the international stage (Lu, 2008; Zhang, 2011; Zhao & Huang, 2010). The issue of Chinese becoming the lingua franca is important in that as language spreads, so does the soft power of its nation of origin. In the case of America, it has acquired a significant amount of soft power around the world due to the spread of English, which consequently elevated the status of the English speaker. If the same were to happen with Chinese, the image of the Chinese speaker could potentially undergo a similar positive metamorphosis. Whatever the prospects of Chinese are, English remains today the dominant language of regional commerce, possibly due in part to the perceived difficulties in learning the Chinese language. This point is important for this dissertation because it is often viewed negatively by various players in the field of TEFL, the fact that I possess native speaker fluency in both English and the Chinese language, which is poised to overtake English as lingua franca possibly. Paradoxically, developments in China are consolidating English's supremacy in Asian, European, and African countries, which are increasingly relying on Chinese trade (Asongu & Aminkeng, 2013) since the Chinese are learning English at a rapid pace to be able to communicate with their foreign business partners. However, the increased demand for English instruction does not guarantee that everyone exposed to English will speak the same version of the language. When searching for employment opportunities on www.tefl.com – one of the biggest TEFL job search sites, it is difficult not to notice that the majority of the job advertisements are explicitly for native speakers, as the one at the beginning of this chapter. What promotes this mindset is the unsubstantiated belief that NESTs are more knowledgeable regarding lexicon and grammatical structures than their non-native counterparts. For many, native speakers being better teachers is an undisputed fact. What is worrisome is that this is often the mentality of the local learners.

In fact, from my own professional experience, learners often demand teachers whom they perceive as NESTs because of the superficial notion that their varieties of English are more desired than other varieties of World Englishes in the workplace, a fact that I greatly contest. In my business English classes, I like to prove to the students who are often from middle management that in the globalized world of today, World Englishes have become the de-facto communication tool. I would often show my students various non-native celebrated business people making speeches in non-standard varieties of English. By putting native-speaking teachers on a pedestal, an unbalanced teacher-student relationship is sustained, one that is especially detrimental to the learning process of students of Asian background whose respect for teachers is rooted in Confucian beliefs (Kwak et al., 2016). If World Englishes were to flourish for the benefit of the advancement of the TEFL field, it is vital to advocate equality in the hiring of teaching staff, allowing learners to have access to a variety of Englishes, and thereby recognize the equal status of native and non-native teachers. Besides, such a shift in attitude would serve as a catalytic first step to transform the one-sided, native-centric curriculum, which rejects the authentic contexts of the language being used by people who are non-native, to one that adapts to the needs of global learners of the 21st century.

A profession as an English teacher can be a rewarding experience, but it is a career that throws up a wide range of challenges that rarely cease. On top of these issues, a NNEST also has to tackle NNEST-specific problems, which adds to the stress that he or she is already facing. The classroom is seen as an abode of abundant knowledge and wisdom in the sense that the students are able to expand their horizons of skills in the language through the teacher. However, the need to grow as a teacher should always be there as well. A teacher should crave extra knowledge and skills through some form of input, as teachers can never afford to be content or become lethargic with their teaching abilities. However, often, in the field of TEFL, motivations of NESTs are low due to ‘backpackerism,’ as mentioned earlier. Looking back at my career development in the last two decades, it is clear to me that aside from being a requirement for certain positions, the need to improve my academic standing was motivated by the desire to be more qualified than the NESTs. I can understand why NESTs do not have the urgency for self-improvement because, just as I was in Hong Kong, they could comfortably ‘rest on their laurels’ without having their NES status questioned. Rather than viewing the discrimination I have experienced as debilitating, I consciously chose to view them as productive hurdles. By that, I mean without my competence as an English teacher being questioned, I would not have had the drive to enroll in Master's and Doctoral degree programs in education; without the doubt of the level of contribution a NNEST can bring to current TEFL discussions I would not have had the idea to attend and participate in professional conferences; and without the discriminative light shone on my personal attributes I would not have developed the personal skills, the ability to adapt and win over people who initially may not see me in the most positive light. As the saying goes, 'everyone is different,' and that is certainly true in the field of TEFL as well. Not all NNESTs would react in the same way as I have, but it is my belief that my experiences have only propelled me upwards in my career trajectory. Perhaps circumstances have slowed down my progress relative to a NEST with the same qualifications and experience, but they have not stopped me from achieving my goals, especially in the area of self-improvement, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Not to undermine the existence of systemic and institutional discrimination in TEFL, it is nevertheless essential to look at my experience from the point of active self-improvement. The process of self-improvement requires dedication, drive, and discipline. The process of becoming a better teacher often requires better qualifications, which might even be mandatory sometimes. An educational career path outside of the classroom almost always requires additional qualifications for NNESTs, but for NESTs, it could simply be a question of acquiring seniority. It is inevitable that teachers will always discover inadequate areas in their teaching which could be remediated with better qualifications. Teaching requires insight and introspection while one is learning the profession and involves careful planning about how students' knowledge is gained. Ideal teaching always has a personal element, as well as a general understanding within the student community and the classroom, albeit that alone will rarely suffice to satisfy the requirements of fulfilling the needs of the students. Ultimately, NESTs or NNESTs should seek strong, current, and effective methods of teaching, while achieving a better qualification is an instant tool for the purpose. The defining demands in teaching are the deciding factors for better preparation and procurement of an additional qualification. For example, if an English teacher has to understand the rudiments of grammar, he or she has to search for and secure an elevated educational understanding. Hence, the demands and needs of the student are the concrete concepts for an updated qualification.

However, merely obtaining a general degree or diploma may prove to be irrelevant if the learning gained is not implemented and reflected upon. Alternatively, in some cases, the degree of some NESTs is not even remotely related to English teaching, and these teachers have no desire to complete further training specific to teaching English. Teaching is a prolonged process where a teacher has to refresh and rebuild him or herself to achieve success in the teaching role. Mutual interaction and suggestions will pave the way for a better understanding of the requirements needed for the student and their English needs outside of the classroom. Attending various seminars and conferences organized by TEFL organizations will help both NESTs and NNESTs to expand and enrich their experience. In this way, the enrichment of knowledge and expansion of experience will result in the elevation of standards in TEFL. Personal demands and necessities alone decide whether a teacher can confine him or herself to the classroom or crave a career exceeding the current requirement. When one is engaged in continual self-improvement, I believe that there are definite opportunities for career development, even for NNESTs working in or out of their home countries. Many of my peers may choose to remain in the classroom, as this is perhaps why they had chosen to go into the profession in the first place. Others like me may aspire to become part of the administration team, such as a principal or a head of a department. Whatever their aspirations may be, the single most effective way to get there, in my opinion, is through self-improvement, though not necessarily in the sense of in-service training and further education. It is my belief that self-improvement of any kind begins with reflection, and it is through reflecting on my past experiences that my own research has helped me to make sense of the professional choices I have made, allowing me to find focus in my continuing journey in TEFL. Furthermore, self-reflection can potentially lead to self-empowerment, providing the strength for one to speak up against unjust treatment, just as I have done in this dissertation.

Although teachers generally like professional development and most see it as an essential part of their job, not everyone shares the same motivation to succeed. Therefore, in order to level the playing field between NESTs and NNESTs, I believe changes have to be made in terms of professional development opportunities, specifically in the area of in-service training. Reflecting on my data, that is, my own experiences in TEFL, I believe that if I did not deepen my knowledge and improved my credentials, my career trajectory would have been even more restricted than it was. Therefore, more in-service courses and workshops need to be made available for both NESTs and NNESTs, and these need not only focus on teaching methods but could potentially deal with issues of understanding each other's perspectives, perhaps even encouraging both parties to carry out collaborative research projects, where findings and subsequent recommendations could be beneficial not only to the institution but to the broader TEFL community as a whole. In addition, attendance at professional development sessions or conferences could be legitimized by linking participation to opportunities for promotion.

The existence of discrimination in society is not a novel idea. Often, German acquaintances I talk to would say, in passing, negative things about certain foreign groups, to which I would respond by pointing out that I, too, am a foreigner. The replies from them are always the same; they do not mean my kind of foreigner because I am well educated and have a respectable occupation. It is obvious to me that my views could be seen as selfish by my NNEST peers, and understandably so. In light of this criticism, I would argue that in order to promote positive changes, one might find it helpful to have the authority to make meaningful changes. Without a seat at the decision-making table, the effects of one's actions are only minimal and limited. To this, detractors might further argue that if all NNESTs were to stand together and create a louder voice, then the NES gatekeepers would have no choice but to listen. I see this as over-idealistic, as this dissertation has shown, after decades of discussion on TEFL equality and NNEST treatment, the general attitude within the public and professional spheres have yet to change, as illustrated not only by my story but also the examples of the job advertisements. Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016) outlined four levels of change within TEFL. In summary, they are 1) the individual level; 2) friends, family, and colleagues; 3) the institutions one belongs to; 4) policymakers and government. He argues that the most effective type of change occurs on levels 2 and 3 because they have the potential to reach the highest number of people quickly. Although I find his idea fundamentally sound, nevertheless I still believe that the first level of change, individual, is the most important, as without increasing one's knowledge as a by-product of one's professional standing, it is difficult to convince others of the legitimacy of the issues one is championing for. In addition, I would also question the true motivations of TEFL equality advocates, as I do not believe their actions are always based on altruism. On a well-known TEFL advocacy website, for example, their discussions on NNESTs issues are often connected to advertisements for paid workshops such as ‘how to find work as a NNEST’ or ‘career advancement as NNEST.’ Perhaps my view is simplistic, but if I could be enrolled in a doctorate program, have progressed from teaching at private language schools to have a real chance of a professorship at a local university in Germany, I would not be able to put any justifiable blame on the discriminations I have experienced, both within the field of TEFL and in my everyday life. Besides, in my research of other NNEST treatments, I had come across lists of recent scholarship winners of both major TEFL organizations in the US and UK, on which over half of the recipient names were non-Caucasian. Lil Wayne, the Grammy-winning African-American rapper, famously caused controversy by stating in a television interview his counter-position of the Black Lives Matter movement and that his own success as a Black man should prove that racism does not exist. Although I would not agree with his opinion regarding racism entirely because discrimination happens on a systemic and not individual level, I do understand his underlying message. In addition, I share the sentiments of another well-known African-American figure in the entertainment industry. Morgan Freeman, the Oscar-winning actor, when asked about his feelings towards racism in America, questioned why there is only a Black History Month and no White History Month and shared his opinion that the best way to fight racism is to not talk about it, by which he elaborated with the idea that by not distinguishing people by their race and simply as people, can society be truly ‘colorblind.’ Similarly, in TEFL, there is also no NEST rights advocacy but only NNEST advocacy groups. As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, perhaps one of the ways forward is to abandon the terms NEST and NNEST altogether and make distinctions solely based on attainable attributes such as qualifications and positive student feedback. However, learning from the treatment of race in Germany, as mentioned in this dissertation, that is, to pretend and ignore the existence of racism in public discourse, one might question whether covering one’s eyes is the proper solution. As I come to the conclusion of this dissertation, I am reminded of a conversation I once had with one of my wife’s friends. A Greek immigrant himself, he was kind enough to pick us up from the airport when I first arrived in Germany. Over a welcoming meal at his Greek restaurant, he gave me a tip for surviving in Germany – that in order to earn respect from the Germans, you must be more successful than them. Only then will they treat you as an equal.

Naturally, all research is bound by limitations, and this dissertation is no exception. Autoethnography, its advantages as a research method notwithstanding, can evoke unpleasant feelings in readers (Mendez-Lopez, 2013). Depending on the situation of the reader, these negative feelings could lead to resentment or annoyance, which in turn would render the efforts of the study counter-productive. Instead of empowering NNESTs in similar predicaments to speak out against unfair treatment, it might instead unwillingly cause them to lose hope and stay silent because they might falsely believe that if such experiences happen to someone who seems to have so much experience, then nothing can be done for their situations. Another possible limitation could be due to the particular nature of my experience, namely, my Chinese background and the German context in which I work. Other NNESTs, who albeit might be in similar situations, might not be able to identify precisely with the experiences described in this study and, therefore, will not feel the need to 'join forces' to push for positive changes. Due to the particular nature of each individual NNEST working in Western environments, it might be challenging to create a sense of comradery amongst each other, often leaving NNESTs in vulnerable and isolated states.

Although the critical incidents examined in this dissertation could be seen as mainly negative, my career thus far has also been peppered with a handful of positive experiences. I firmly believe that, without positive feedback from people whom I view as the gatekeepers to employment opportunities, I would not have had the patience and perseverance to continue pursuing my career path at TEFL in Germany. Both the negative and positive experiences from my 'origin story' – which is a term stemming from entertainment that denotes an account or 'back story' reveals how a character becomes the protagonist or antagonist. The 'origin story' adds to the overall interest and complexity of the narrative, offering reasons for the character's intentions. Returning to the book that partially inspired this dissertation, *Journey to the West*, Xuan Zang's humble origins are revealed in the second section, where his father is killed and his mother taken away forcibly by thieves. Left to float down a river by his mother in her effort to save him from the thieves, he is found by the head monk of a monastery. This origin section is followed by the third and main section of the book, which describes the difficulties Xuan Zang and his companions encounter, the demons they fight, and all the adventures they have on the way, leading to the fourth and last section of the book, which documents their return to China from the Western regions with the sacred scriptures, and ultimately attaining Buddha-hood and enlightenment. Although I can hardly compare my upbringing with that of Xuan Zang, I, too, am fighting my own battle to achieve not only recognition from my peers but also a proper understanding of myself. The writing of this dissertation is part of my journey to attain enlightenment, my journey to acquire the ‘sacred text.’ In addition, I had hoped that by analyzing my experience and the contexts in which they happened and explaining the tools I had used, I would be able to achieve the humble aim of intriguing the reader to come along on my journey in the hopes of offering a glimpse into a foreign culture for readers who are not familiar with the experiences of someone of my background; or solidarity to those who are in similar situations, just as *Journey to the West* has been a source of understanding of Chinese culture and values for many readers who were previously not familiar with them.

Just as it is vital to treat an illness, not only its symptoms, it is not enough to treat only the ‘surface wounds’ but to try to find out the root causes of the problems in order to achieve equality in TEFL. Instead of advocating for TEFL equality, perhaps it is more urgent to find solutions that would eliminate cultural and other forms of bias in society. Thus, whether or not such a relationship exists is, in my opinion, an important question to ask. In this dissertation, I have addressed this question by clearly pointing out the intersectional nature of discrimination in TEFL and in society in the hopes of channeling people’s awareness of injustice in the broader scope into their interest in the discrimination faced by a niche group of people in a very particular area, namely, NNESTs working in TEFL in Western contexts. While more research is still required to investigate intersectional discrimination faced by NNESTs, I would nevertheless make recommendations to begin countering discriminatory practices. World Englishes should be accepted and viewed as equal to American and British English; it should be a requirement for both NNESTs and NESTs to possess the same kinds and levels of qualifications; professional organizations such as TESOL and IATEFL should promote the discontinuation of using the outdated terms NNEST and NEST and be the voice of advocacy of fair treatment for ‘International English Teachers’.

Moreover, my conception of teacher identity has deepened and expanded. Originally, I viewed my teacher identity as static, as a constant that was formed by my academic preparation and teaching experience. The autoethnographic process, however, has helped me realize that teacher identity is not static, but rather a dynamic, evolving entity. It is continually shaped by our interactions with students, the curriculum, the school environment, and broader societal issues.

This perspective is crucial as it helps us embrace change and growth as inherent parts of the teaching profession. Intersectionality, meanwhile, has added a critical layer of complexity to my understanding of teacher identity. I've come to realize that my identity as a teacher is inextricably linked to my other identities – my ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, among others. These identities do not exist in isolation; they intersect and interact in complex ways, influencing how I perceive and approach teaching and learning.

This new understanding has several implications for my practice and potentially for other teachers. On a pedagogical level, recognizing the fluidity of teacher identity and the impact of intersectionality can lead to more inclusive, culturally responsive teaching practices. It has made me more aware of the diverse experiences and perspectives that students bring to the classroom, and it will help me design learning experiences that honor and leverage this diversity. In terms of how I view myself as a teacher, I now see my role as not merely an instructor but as a facilitator of learning. This shift encourages me to create a learning environment where students feel seen, valued, and empowered. It also encourages me to continually reflect on and adjust my practices in response to my evolving understanding of my multiple identities. For other teachers and educational stakeholders, the findings underscore the importance of acknowledging and exploring teacher identity as a complex, multi-dimensional construct. It invites teachers to reflect on their own identities and how they might be impacting their teaching practices. Additionally, it calls for professional development that goes beyond pedagogical strategies, focusing also on identity exploration and growth. In conclusion, the transformation I have undergone through this autoethnographic process is transformative, shaping my pedagogical practices and perception of my teacher identity. Furthermore, it offers significant insights for the broader teaching profession, suggesting a more nuanced, complex understanding of teacher identity and its role in education.

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