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Article

The Future of English Language Teaching: Personal Perspectives

Steve Copeland*
Mike Solly
Mina Patel
British Council, UK

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Abstract
This paper outlines the British Council's Future of English programme from both a historical perspective (the work on the futures thinking in English language teaching since the turn of the millennium) and the British Council's 2023 publication, The Future of English: Global Perspectives. The three authors of this book give personal perspectives on the changing role of teachers and the teaching of English from their own experiences as first language English speakers, and speculate on how this role has changed and will continue to change.

Keywords
The future of English, nativespeakerism, teachers, multilingualism, paradigm shift

1 The Future of English Programme: Background

Predicting the future in any field is a speculative and uncertain business, as has been amply demonstrated by the course of world events in recent years. Predicting the future of languages, even a globally established one like English, is no exception to this. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine trends in the use of English and extract implications about the future of these in order to plan English language policies in education, culture, and the economy. At the request of the British Council, one of the first people to do this for English was the late linguist and futurologist David Graddol in his publications *The Future of English* (Graddol, 1997) and *English Next* (Graddol, 2006). In the latter publication he predicted fourteen "trends" that he felt would chart the direction of English teaching and learning for the following fifteen years.

At the end of this period, and at a particularly uncertain time for the world during the first UK Covid lockdown in 2020, the British Council decided to examine how many of Graddol's predicted trends had proved correct. This was done through desk research (Rich, 2021). Some of what Graddol predicted has come about, but most of his trends have probably evolved at a slower rate than he envisaged. Building on these findings, we organised fourteen roundtable discussions with ninety-two cross-disciplinary policy

*Corresponding author. Email: Steven.Copeland@britishcouncil.org

makers and influencers in forty-nine countries and territories. The focus of the roundtable discussions was on key trends that would shape the future of English in the many contexts represented. The data was analysed twice, externally and internally. The findings were not so much future predictions as we had imagined at the outset but eight thematic questions reflecting trends that participants felt would have impact on the future of English, its roles and uses. These then formed the basis of an ongoing research agenda around the future of English.

The eight thematic questions are:

1. Will English remain the world's most sought-after language?
2. What role will English play in our multilingual reality?
3. What is the role of English as a medium of education?
4. How will teachers remain relevant in future English language learning systems?
5. Public and private English language provision: who has the answers?
6. Can English language assessment meet stakeholders' changing needs?
7. Can technology narrow the equity gap in English language education?
8. To what extent is employment driving the future of English?

The details of the thematic questions and their relevance in different contexts can be found in *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* (Patel et al., 2023).

All of the above thematic questions relate in differing ways to Graddol's original fourteen trends and generally build upon or replace them. Two particular trends, however, have evolved, and as a further development of the Global Perspectives research we would like to discuss these from the personal perspectives of all three authors. The first is "the end of English as a foreign language" and the second the "irrelevance of native speakers" (Graddol, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Robert Phillipson referred to these issues as the monolingual [and] native speaker "fallacies" (Phillipson, 1992, p.185), widely held beliefs that were part of an ELT industry in the 1960s he regarded as "dogmatic, behaviourist [and] monolingual" (Phillipson, 2016, p. 84). These two fallacies went on to become embedded in the communicative approach that came to dominate English language teaching from the 1970s. As we will discuss, these are areas the British Council has sought to address in recent years but which remain problematic in many contexts. *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* (Patel et al, 2023) focussed mainly on basic education around the world, but in this paper we are approaching these issues from the context of our own experience in, mainly, private English language teaching.

Here are our personal experiences of these controversial tenets.

2 The Changing Role of English and English Teachers: Is It "the end of English as a Foreign Language"? An Individual Perspective by Mike Solly

Graddol's prediction of "the end of English as a foreign language (Graddol, 2006, p. 15) certainly grabbed attention, but Graddol went on to clarify that what he meant by this was not that people would stop learning English, but that the changing needs of learners would lead to a shift away from the established models of "EFL" and an opening up of new pedagogies resulting in a new paradigm for English language teaching, with accompanying changes in teacher education, resources and assessment. Using my own experience as an English Language teacher and professional over the last four decades, I will take a personal view of how this predicted trend may have developed and then look at how *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* sees this as continuing in the future. It may seem counter-intuitive in an article about the future to look at the past, but at least two of the thematic questions in our

2023 book, concerning the changing role of English and English teachers, are part of a continuum from the past into the future. My own experience as a UK-born first language English teachers traces this continuum from the 1980s.

I had been teaching English for around twenty years in a variety of contexts and countries when Graddol wrote *English Next*. The analysis of Graddol's trends demonstrated that a number of them were happening to differing degrees. The trend that particularly struck me, as a British EFL teacher with a traditional EFL background in terms of qualifications and experience, was "the end of English as a foreign language". Really?! Of course, Graddol was talking about the way English was being taught and marketed around the world using the traditional methodology that reflected my experience, and not the notion of learning English itself. My experience, so far by 2006, had reflected what was taught on the RSA diploma in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults (TEFLA) and, prior to that, the RSA Certificate in TEFLA. In the years that I undertook these courses (1986-1987). I was teaching English to multilingual groups in the UK who were, generally, quite privileged younger adult students (18 to 30ish) from mainly European nations or highly privileged students from further afield. I was, I thought at the time, basically teaching wealthy students a skill to help them become wealthier. I was, like most teachers, keen to do a great job of teaching English. But I also accepted notions that were in the ELT cultural zeitgeist and conveyed in the pedagogy at the time. Some of these, now highly questionable notions, were that:

- learning a language was best done through a teacher who spoke it as their first language;
- the target language (English) should ideally be used in the classroom at all times;
- because culture and language are intricately entwined, you therefore should learn about the culture of the "host nation" in order to navigate effectively in the target language.

These notions were often shared by the students I taught and were conveyed, in various ways, through the teaching and resources of the time. Robert Phillipson had questioned these notions in his landmark work, *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), but this was written after my training and it took many more years, it seemed to me, before the influence this book affected policy decisions. Graddol's prediction that the following decade would see "the end of EFL" was referring to this model of ELT that I, along with many others, had imbibed, and that every one of the notions mentioned above would change. They have, and continue to do so, but there remains some resistance.

When I started teaching beyond the shores of the UK in 1987, I recognised that the materials used in UK-produced EFL textbooks, which were widely used in many institutions around the world, were not culturally appropriate to the many situations I worked in in the Middle East. It wasn't just cultural inappropriacy. The content of many of the materials was entirely irrelevant to the learning needs of students who were increasingly learning English not for an insight into the culture of first language speaking nations (often the US or UK) but to communicate with others who also did not speak English as a first language, and often to communicate for very particular purposes. Working at a medical facility in the military in Saudi Arabia, the students needed a type of English for specific purposes (ESP) that reflected the particular needs of medical and military practitioners. This did not really accord with the UK-produced resources of the time, or even, necessarily, with the model of EFL that I was using.

Some years later (1989-1992), working at the University of Sarajevo in the former Yugoslavia teaching undergraduate students learning English literature and language for a BA, I was, once again, rather more comfortable with the EFL paradigm that underpinned my own methodological training, as the students' learning and interests were bolstered by a desire to learn more of the cultural background by having a teacher steeped in this old model of EFL. They were also clearly enthusiastic about the opportunity to be taught by a "native speaker" of English (who were rare, at the time, in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

On returning to Bosnia in 1997 after the wars in Yugoslavia, I was working with teachers in state schools where the post-war realities and needs of teachers and students in English could not really be met by the UK/US model of EFL and the need for local teachers and the fast training of them was a priority. This experience with teachers in the public education system was quite different from the needs of the private system where most of my former experience had been. English language classes for the many NGOs and INGOs in the country at the time were also in great demand, and the needs here were often very specific to a particular area of work or business where the usage of English was likely to be with other non-first language English speakers, and where, for example, accuracy in very specific areas of English (such as peacekeeping) was likely to be the priority, and a generalised fluency (as in the EFL model) was less likely to be central.

In the light of this varied experience of teaching the language, even from a committed "EFL" first language English speaker trained in the pedagogy of the time, it seemed that in certain contexts at least, Graddol's prediction of the death of this model in the future did not seem so far-fetched.

From 2009 to 2014, some years after the publication of Graddol's English Next (2006) I was working on a large-scale English language project with the Open University UK (English in Action: https://www.eiabd.com/about-eia.html), which aimed to improve the teaching of English in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh. There were many positive benefits of the communicative methodologies that underpinned my learning and teaching in this situation. This was helped by the fact that in Bangladesh around 98% of the population spoke Bangla as their first language (Rahman, 2010). I became increasingly aware that English would be a key language for the many Bangladeshis who became migrant workers in the Gulf (and other areas). But were they learning the kind of English they were likely to need as migrant workers? A team of Open University and Bangladeshi academics conducted some research into the needs of migrant workers from Bangladesh (Solly et al., 2017), working in the Gulf. As we expected we found that English was crucial for Bangladeshi migrants to communicate effectively with non-Bangladeshis in various contexts in the Gulf. But the needs were for forms of English that related closely to their working contexts and could be understood by other nationalities they worked with who may also have only a basic grasp of the language. What was clear was the growing importance of multilingual practices and therefore the need for multilingual training.

Of course most of the world is multilingual, and this reality is not really emphasised or even considered in the traditional EFL model. My work later took me to a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (2014-2016), a world away from the privilege of the classes I originally taught on the South coast of the UK! Many of the contexts on this vast continent meant that students might speak a range of languages and multilingualism was an ordinary part of life. But this could be a challenge in classrooms (in all subjects) and the accepted methodology of the time did not encourage and promote the use of the rich language ecology available in such classrooms.

Counter to Graddol's prediction, this model of English language teaching has not died, and there are arguably positives from this methodology that are recognised and promoted by English language policy makers and policy influencers around the world, such as the continued preference, in some contexts, for this model. This was revealed in the research carried out for our 2023 publication. However, as reflected in the experiences of all three contributors to this paper, the indications are that each of the embedded notions that I mentioned above are undergoing real change and being re-examined in ways that are likely to have profound effects on the learning of English (and other languages) in the future. The idea that learning a language should be done with a teacher that speaks it as a first language was regarded as obvious by many international teaching organisations and no doubt many would still assert is best for learning fluency in English. But this notion is now being widely questioned. What kind of English? With only around 15% of English speakers now being from countries that speak English as a first language and most communication in English being between speakers of other languages, this part of the old paradigm is surely called into question. And anyway, hasn't it always been the case that you would learn

from the best teachers (UNESCO, 2014), regardless of their first language (Kurniawati et al, 2018) and in an increasingly multilingual world having multilingual teachers in many (if not all) contexts is likely to be advantageous? This notion of the fallacy of "native speaker teachers" is examined in more detail in the next section of this paper.

For similar reasons it is no longer the case (if indeed it ever was) that the only language used in an English-speaking classroom should always be only English. There is, as the 2023 research also indicated, a growing need for multilingual classrooms to be not only recognised, but celebrated, and training and resources in this area seem to be the way of the future (the British Council have recently produced resources for multilingual classrooms: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/using-multilingual-approaches-self-study-booklet and https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/using-multilingual-approaches-moving-theory-practice). The perceived need to learn about the culture of the "host nation" becomes increasingly questionable as English is learnt for so many different reasons and for use in so many different contexts. I encountered this issue from my earliest non-UK teaching experience with the Saudi military. Undoubtably some will still want to learn about UK or American culture as they learn the language, but the majority will learn English and attain their desired proficiency without needing these cultural inputs. This also links with the notion of ownership. It is contentious to say that any language can be "owned" at any point and in any place. But surely none more so than English, which is owned by everyone who speaks it and in so doing moulds the language into new forms and in new directions.

There was no evidence in The Future of English: Global Perspectives to show that the learning and teaching of English is likely to decline in the foreseeable future. In fact our research indicated that it will continue to thrive and that teachers will remain a necessary part of the learning process. But the old EFL teaching paradigm that Graddol saw as waning even 20 years ago, and I have witnessed changing in my own career, is likely to continue to change where English is learnt for so many reasons, and in so many contexts, and is a part of a linguistic ecology that is fluid and global.

3 Nativespeakerism in English Language Teaching: An Individual Perspective by Steve Copeland

"The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker."

So declared the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on Teaching of English as a Second Language, held in Makerere, Uganda, according to Robert Phillipson in his seminal book *Linguistic Imperialism* (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). The problem is that the report on the Makerere conference makes no such claim (the report does not appear to have been digitised, but copies can be accessed at the National Archives at Kew in London and the library archive at the London School of Economics); indeed, one of the recommendations says: "Our aim is to provide at all levels qualified teachers who are indigenous to the country in which the teaching takes place" (Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee, 1961, p. 6).

Similarly, the British Council annual report in 1961 acknowledged that "teaching English to the world is by no means exclusively the prerogative of English-speaking countries" (British Council, 2015, p16) and emphasised the British Council's work in providing training to teachers in their own countries and preparing materials and textbooks in response to specific local demands. Nonetheless, the 100,000-odd language students that British Council institutes around the world taught that year were more likely than not to have had 'native speakers' from the UK as their teachers, albeit well qualified ones; trained local teachers supported by suitable localised materials were most certainly needed in basic education, but those able to afford private English lessons often demanded and were given 'native speaker' teachers, a demand that still exists in many places today (Kirkpatrick, 2016; Patel et al., 2023; Selvi et al., 2023). (We have adapted Holliday's use in this paper by using single inverted commas around the terms 'native'

and 'non-native speaker' to signal "so-called" (Holliday, 2015, p12) except when quoting from other sources. We acknowledge, though, that this is a far-from-ideal solution to this problem of terminology.)

So Phillipson was right that this "native speaker fallacy" was a widely held belief. While local teachers were, and remain, the norm in basic education, in private language schools young people from the UK and the US were snapped up as English teachers in many countries around the world, not always with much consideration given to their qualifications (which were often limited or non-existent), experience (ditto) or teaching ability – sometimes all that mattered was that their main (and usually only) language was English (Kachru, 1985; Keaney, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Stainton, 2018). This was not true everywhere of course – the British Council, among others, usually had well qualified teachers – but it was an issue in many schools.

Even those of us who did undertake suitable qualifications (in my case the Cambridge/RSA Certificate and Diploma, now the CELTA and DELTA, in the 1990s) found little if any course content relating to multilingualism or the benefits of having had to learn the language you are teaching; both the 'native speaker' and monolingual fallacies remained embedded in much of the available teacher training. It was only when I did my master's some years later that I begin to explore these issues in more detail.

Having worked in language schools in Southeast Asia, South America, North Africa and the UK for the best part of twenty years, like many teachers I had never really thought about the 'native speaker' fallacy as it had never appeared to me to be an issue. It was only in my last two years as an academic manager in London some fifteen years ago that I began to properly consider the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' English-speaking teachers ('NESTs' and 'non-NESTs'), when I found myself working in a school where the teacher who was most popular with students was the only 'non-NEST'. Prior to that point, mindful perhaps of the legal obligation to treat all EU citizens equally when it came to employment, I had tended to interview the occasional 'non-NEST', if they had a suitable academic background and had completed the application form well – the same criteria I used for all applicants. Somehow none of the 'non-NESTs' made it past the interview, however; the person specification for teaching posts included references to 'suitable' pronunciation and intonation patterns that no 'non-NEST' applicants seemed to possess (although quite what 'suitable' meant was never really specified in the person spec). I was aware of the irony in this, having modified my Northern Irish accent when I moved into teaching in order to make myself more intelligible to my students, and in retrospect I suspect a number of the 'non-NEST' applicants had much clearer pronunciation than I did.

With the number of 'non-NEST' applications increasing, possibly due to a combination of EU expansion, the high-quality teacher training that had become available in Europe in recent years, and the onset of recession in many countries, one day I found myself interviewing a teacher with all the attributes I was looking for: good qualifications, excellent grammar knowledge, a wide range of teaching experience, awareness of both theoretical and practical pedagogic issues, enthusiasm, and a personality that I knew would fit in well with teachers and students. There was, however, one potential drawback: she had a mild but obvious 'non-native' accent. I pondered for a while, then bit the bullet and hired her. Within two years, she was leading on the school's premium (and most expensive) course, chosen because her degree was in a relevant subject and she had experience in the specific topic area of the course. The fact that English was not her first language was irrelevant despite the emphasis on pronunciation that the course, which was co-taught by a leading drama school, involved.

I am now, frankly, mortified by my previous ignorance. It is clear to me now that even the basic terminology of nativespeakerism is problematic, with the inherent deficit model of the 'non-native speaker' becoming increasingly untenable in a multilingual world where English is part of individuals' linguistic repertoires and spoken in a vast array of different varieties. The idea that there is an ideal model of English that students should aspire to (with the UK version usually associated with an RP – received pronunciation or the "Queen's English" – accent) seems anachronistic.

English is often one of the languages used in multilingual situations, where 'native-like' proficiency is not the aim and the standards of British or American English are obsolete; everyday communication is managed by individuals using their plurilingual competence – their full range of languages – with the objective being successful communication in specific situations. As a result, the 'NEST' is no longer an ideal, or perhaps even suitable, model for students, and the advantages that 'non-NESTs' can bring to the classroom are all the more apparent (for a detailed discussion of the perceived relative advantages of 'NESTs' and 'non-NESTs' see Selvi et al, 2023 & Medgyes, 1992). This is not to say that 'NESTs' can't be excellent language teachers, but rather that of the many components of a good teacher, first language shouldn't be regarded as an automatic indicator of teaching ability.

From a teaching perspective, many organisations now accept that nativespeakerism is an invalid concept. The TESOL International Association in the US has publicly opposed discrimination against 'nonnative' English teachers since 2006 (TESOL, 2006), and the UK association of accredited language teaching centres, EnglishUK, situates nativespeakerism as a form of racism, with historical connections to imperialism and cultural and racial supremacy (EnglishUK, 2021). The British Council, meanwhile, positions nativespeakerism within its EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) policy, stating that the quality of its English teachers does not depend on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, physical ability, cultural background, *or* first language (British Council, 2015). As a result, the British Council now employs teachers from a wide range of countries and with a range of first languages.

Despite these organisational positions, however, the Anglo-American monopoly of monolingual 'expertise' is still alive and kicking in many places (Kramsch, 2016; Phillipson, 2016; Selvi et al., 2023). There is still undoubtedly a bias towards 'NESTs' in many contexts, with discrimination against 'non-NESTs' still widespread in hiring practices, even if it may sometimes be less open than it used to be (Kirkpatrick, 2016). Language schools may use the perceived preference of students and parents for 'native' teachers as a justification for such discriminatory practices, and 'non-native' teachers are left facing limited employment opportunities as a result, often despite having superior qualifications and expertise (Selvi et al.,2023). As the academic director of a London language school said to me some years ago:

> "Private language schools [are] part of language tourism […] when people come here […] to study English […] they expect London taxis, Beefeaters and native speaking English teachers. It's part of the service; it's part of the experience" (Copeland 2012:34). (Beefeaters is the popular name for the Yeoman Warders who act as the ceremonial guardians of the Tower of London.)

Even at government level the problem of nativespeakerism can persist: a Minister of Education at an international conference in his country just a few years ago said that he would like to be able to bring in only English teachers with blond(e) hair and blue eyes, thus publicly making explicit the racism that can be inherent in nativespeakerism (see Mina's section below and for a more detailed exploration of racism in ELT see Ramjattan, 2019 and Von Esch et al., 2020).

So, given that nativespeakerism is clearly still entrenched in some contexts, what can be done? There is an ongoing need to work with others on decolonising English, challenging and dismantling linguistic hierarchies, and placing greater emphasis on recognizing the significance of the range of global Englishes. The recognition of different English accents and varieties is essential for linguistic equality, rather than privileging some over others, so that all English speakers, regardless of their home language or region, can be recognised and respected as both learners and teachers. Students benefit from exposure to a diverse range of language models, teaching styles, accents and cultural perspectives, preparing them for the realities of our linguistically diverse world.

The onus is therefore on all of us who are in a position to influence this debate – whether as teachers, managers, employers, publishers or academics – to consider what we can do to ensure that all English

language teachers are included in the practical application of equality, diversity, inclusion and antiracism policies, so that equal opportunities for all within English language teaching can become a reality. When Thomas Paikeday wrote his book *The Native Speaker is Dead!* (Paikeday, 1985), he surely couldn't have realised that his title would remain deeply ironic nearly 40 years on.

4 The Traditional ELT Paradigm – What Did It Mean for Language, Colour and Culture? An Individual Perspective by Mina Patel

I started my teaching career in a frontistírio (private language school) in Thiva, Greece in 1993. I taught English to primary school children mostly but I also had some exam preparation classes and a smattering of individual private students. I learned a little bit of Greek while I was there, just conversational Greek to help me assimilate into the small town. Sometimes in the classroom I used the odd Greek word to help the young learners mainly because it was efficient and because my pronunciation made them smile. I remember one day the language school owner was walking past and he heard me use a Greek word while teaching. At the end of the day, I got a good, old-fashioned telling off. The school owner told me that regardless of my good intention, I was not to use Greek with the students. He explained that parents were paying for their children to learn English through English and he was selling English language taught by foreigners so that we wouldn't use Greek in the classroom. That was my introduction to the *business* of English language teaching. I knew instinctively that it was alright to use Greek in the English classroom, but I was inexperienced, I needed the work and so for the most part, I did what I was told.

I decided I liked teaching and wanted to find out more. Therefore, I went back to the UK to do a part-time master's in applied Linguistics. At the same time, I taught English in a Further Education Colleague in Luton. My students were mainly young people from South Asia. They weren't very motivated to learn English and I encountered many discipline problems. Eventually I found out the main cause of these problems. They thought they were being discriminated against by having me as their teacher instead of a properly British white person. I finished my master's and left the UK.

When I joined the British Council in 1999, I had a Cambridge CELTA, a postgraduate diploma in TEFL and a master's degree in Applied Linguistics. I was still a little nervous as I had heard about the standards and the expectations. I started as a teacher of young learners in Colombo. In the staffroom as we got to know one another, we discussed backgrounds, qualification etc but colour was never discussed. Looking back, I think it simply didn't matter to the other teachers, or the management and that was great, but after Luton, it mattered to me. I will never forget that feeling of walking into my first classroom in Sri Lanka. A moment of silent appraisal (on both sides), the uncertainty and sliver of confusion and the fear in my gut. The uncertainty and confusion was the students', about my colour, as if to ask, 'why aren't you white?'. The fear was all mine. I was genuinely scared of being rejected because of my colour. This was the first time this has happened to me, and it wouldn't be the last. In the end, I had an incredibly powerful professional experience in Sri Lanka. Once I had established myself, I loved the teaching and the students. However, since that first class, the feeling of having to try a little bit harder, be a little bit better, because of my colour has never really left me.

After Sri Lanka I went to Malaysia, still with the British Council, this time to manage and work on teacher training programmes. In the first two years, I facilitated teacher training all over Malaysia. It was such a rich experience. I developed my own materials based on the Malaysian curriculum and by doing this learnt so much about the context and the education system. One thing I remember very clearly about all the workshops were two questions teachers asked me without fail. The first one, at the beginning of the workshop, was whether I was married and had children. Most teachers were female and from a cultural perspective, this was very important for them. When I first arrived in Malaysia I wasn't married and didn't have children but during my stay, my status changed. It was so interesting to see participants'

changing reception of me and the workshops during my stay. Being a wife and mother inferred an immediate solidarity and respect from them and surpassed any skill or expertise I may have had as a trainer. The second question, inevitably came at the end of the workshop: 'Please can you teach us to talk like you.' I had never thought explicitly about *my* accent or pronunciation. I had started lessons to learn Bahasa Malaysia (BM) but none of the teachers wanted to speak to me in BM, they wanted me to speak English so they could practise theirs.

So, my knowledge, skills and expertise about ELT, which I had worked hard to develop, were not only second to my status as a wife and mother but third to my British accent! These experiences portray aspects of the traditional ELT paradigm at a moment in time for a female British Indian ELT teacher. They reflect experiences shaped by the demand for English (Greece), socio-cultural values (Malaysia) and the misguided perceptions of teachers and teaching by learners outside their home context (Luton). As a young teacher, I used to think that native speakerism was about language, but it isn't, it's about colour and culture and so much more. It's encouraging to see work in the area of language and race that raises awareness about the concerns of many teachers and by doing this advocates conversations about the changing notions of 'nativespeakerism' (Ramjattan, 2019; Von Esch et al., 2020). These experiences shape who we are as professionals and eventually shape the changes we want to see.

5 Final Thoughts

Our three personal reflections no doubt mirror, to some extent at least, the experiences of many other teachers as many areas of our profession continue to change and develop in ways that can be hard to foresee. It is interesting to see how the organisation we work for, the British Council, is actively working to combat these monolingual and 'native speaker' ideologies.

The recent development of advice on using other languages in British Council English classes (British Council, 2024) is a welcome extension of work on own-language use in ELT initially commissioned over a decade ago (Hall & Cook, 2013) and more recent practical resources on multilingual approaches to teaching (Norris, 2019; Heugh et al., 2019). This builds on the earlier policy on nativespeakerism referred to above (British Council, 2015) to provide clear guidelines in these areas. We are well aware, however, that these are only initial steps in a long journey.

Perhaps, then, the "paradigm shift" predicted by Graddol (2006, p. 15) away from conventional EFL models characterised by 'native speaker' teachers and English-only classrooms has begun, in some quarters at least.

Discussion with our colleagues in ELT is an important starting point for this shift – the recent EnglishUK annual conference had plenary talks on nativespeakerism for both its management and teacher conferences, for example, and both the native speaker and monolingual fallacies have been discussed in recent IATEFL conferences. Ensuring teachers have access to relevant research, advice and teaching materials, as well as being given opportunities to reflect on their own practice and discuss these issues with colleagues, would be another positive step.

Both the monolingual and 'native speaker' myths remain prevalent within ELT in many places, however, and much work remains to be done to change perceptions and practice. We understand that these ideologies linger because some stakeholders still see the relevance of them in their context – British Council teaching centres often still face customer demand for 'NESTs' for example, despite the EDI policy outlined above. However, the world has changed enormously since the three of us were teachers and with increasingly positive conversations about multilingualism, justice, equality, diversity and inclusion, we look forward to new, exciting paradigms for English language teaching and learning that are contextually appropriate and content-relevant for all learners in whatever learning situations they find themselves. Time will tell.

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Steve Copeland is Research and Insight Lead for the English and School Education team at the British Council. He was previously the British Council's Global Examiner Manager and Head of Examiner Standards for IELTS, prior to which he spent twenty years as a teacher, examiner, teacher educator, materials writer and academic director in South-East Asia, South America, North Africa and the UK. Steve has presented at conferences around the world and is a co-author of *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*. He has an MA in TESOL from the Institute of Education in London and the RSA DipTEFLA.

Mike Solly is Head of English Research in the Research and Policy Insight Unit at the British Council, UK. Mike has worked in English language education for more than 30 years, as a teacher, trainer, materials writer and academic project manager and lived in worked in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Sun-Saharan Africa and South Asia. He also worked a senior lecturer in international education for seven years at the Open University, where his research and publications were in the area of language needs of migrant workers. Mike has presented and facilitated numerous sessions at conferences around the world. He has an MA from Kings College, London, and the RSA DipTEFL, and is a co-author of *The Future of English: Global Perspectives.*

Mina Patel is Head of Research for British Council's Future of English programme. Her background is in English language teaching and training. She has worked in the UK, Greece, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Malaysia as a teacher, trainer, materials developer and ELT projects manager and has extensive experience working with ministries of education in East Asia. Mina has presented at numerous national and international conferences on ELT-related matters. Her academic interests lie of language assessment literacy, teacher education and development and policy literacy. Mina recently co-authored *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* and is completing a PhD with the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) at the University of Bedfordshire, UK.