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Hybrid professionalism: multilingual cosmopolitan identities of immigrant English teachers

Nashid Nigar[a], Sender Dovchin [b], Rachel Wilson[c] and Alex Kostogriz[a]

[a]Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia; [b]School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University, Bentley, Australia; [c]Faculty of Business, University of Technology Sydney, Ultimo, Australia

ABSTRACT

Australia faces a critical teacher shortage, yet skilled migrant teachers remain marginalised due to systemic barriers. This hermeneutic phenomenological and narrative inquiry study examines the professional identities of multilingual immigrant teachers from EAL backgrounds, focusing on their experiences with linguistic discrimination and native-speakerism. The research highlights the inequities NNESTs (non-native English speaking teachers) face both pre– and post- migration and their negotiation of hybrid professional identities. Findings align with the UN High-Level Panel on Teaching Report (UN, 2024), stressing the need for targeted policies that acknowledge NNESTs' evolving identities. To support their professional recognition, educational institutions must adopt culturally responsive pedagogies and equitable recruitment practices, enabling NNESTs to embed their linguistic and cultural expertise into hybridised teaching approaches. Incorporating Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Human Rights Education (HRE) into teacher training provides a postcolonial framework for understanding multilingual teachers' roles in fostering inclusive classrooms. This paper calls for a shift in teacher education and policy to recognise multilingual immigrant teachers' contributions across professional, academic, and social domains. It urges a reconfiguration of professional roles, the dismantling of exclusionary structures, and the promotion of social justice to cultivate a more equitable and globally responsive educational landscape.

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Introduction

Australia is facing a critical teacher shortage, mirroring a global crisis that necessitates an additional 44 million teachers to meet educational demands (United Nations [UN] 2024). Despite this need, systemic racism and exclusionary hiring practices persist, disproportionately affecting migrant non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Rooted in colonial legacies and racialised linguistic hierarchies, these barriers position migrant teachers as less legitimate educators, reinforcing white native-speakerism and neoliberal credentialing structures (Holliday 2018; Nigar 2024; Santoro 2007; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). While NNESTs bring vital linguistic and cultural expertise to educational settings, they frequently encounter racialised othering, restrictive language

CONTACT Nashid Nigar nashid.nigar@gmail.com

policies, and devaluation of their qualifications and accents. These structural inequalities necessitate a rethinking of professional legitimacy and inclusion in the Australian teaching workforce.

This study is guided by the following research question: How can the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Human Rights Education (HRE), and hybrid professional becoming transform teacher training to better support multilingual immigrant teachers in navigating systemic barriers and fostering inclusive educational environments? By addressing this question, we aim to contribute to the development of equitable and inclusive teacher training practices that recognise and value the diverse contributions of multilingual educators.

The underlying meanings of linguistic and cultural discrimination, native-speakerism, and nativespeaker saviorism involve distinct but related hegemonies: linguistic and cultural discrimination dismisses so-called non-standard accents, cultural norms, values, knowledge, and identity as inferior; native-speakerism privileges native English speakers as inherently superior language models; and saviorism frames native speakers as rescuers who 'correct' perceived deficiencies in NNESTs' language use or teaching (Dovchin and Wang 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). These structural hindrances impact not only NNESTs' access to employment but also their professional development, retention, and recognition within the education system (Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Santoro 2007; Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). Consequently, these dynamics perpetuate inequities across recruitment, retention, and professional recognition, further limiting NNESTs' inclusion into the workforce and reinforcing colonial legacies in the formation of their professional identities.

Hybrid professionalism and cosmopolitan identities emerge as key strategies through which NNESTs navigate these racialised exclusions. Drawing on hybrid professional becoming (Nigar 2024) and cosmopolitan pedagogies (Rizvi 2009), migrant educators develop professional identities that hybridise linguistic diversity, transnational teaching practices, and intersectional solidarities. The process of hybrid professional becoming enables NNESTs to actively challenge exclusionary language ideologies while fostering inclusive, globally engaged classrooms. By repositioning NNESTs as global educators rather than linguistic outsiders, hybrid professionalism and cosmopolitan identity frameworks offer a transformative pathway for reconfiguring teacher education and policy, ensuring equity in recruitment, professional mobility, and pedagogical recognition.

Literature review

Native-speakerism, a discriminatory ideology within Australia's teaching profession, positions NNESTs as marginalised figures, significantly impacting their professional transition, identity and integration (Yip 2023; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). This review examines how hybrid professional becoming, Global Citizenship Education (GCE), and Human Rights Education (HRE) provide transformative frameworks for supporting NNESTs and promoting more equitable educational practices.

Native-speakerism and its impact on NNESTs' professional identity

Native-speakerism that favours native English speakers (often white), positions NNESTs as perpetual outsiders within Australias teaching profession (Rizvi 2009; Yip 2023; Dwyer et al. 2024; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). This ideology perpetuates colonial structures that equate standard Australian English with social and professional recognition, leading to systemic racism and pressures for NNESTs to assimilate into dominant linguistic norms (Fotovatian 2018; Santoro 2007; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). These pressures affect NNESTs' professional development, identity formation, and sense of belonging and wellbeing within the workforce (Collins and Reid 2012; Dovchin 2022; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). Discrimination extends beyond recruitment and retention, with NNESTs often overlooked in favour of (less qualified) native speakers, reinforcing entrenched hierarchies (Mahboob and Golden 2013; Nigar 2024). This exclusionary

practice contributes to broader professional challenges, including isolation, devaluation, and a lack of support, further impeding NNESTs' embracement and development in the teaching sector (Santoro 2007; Bense 2015; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). The impact of native-speakerism is profound, as it not only shapes how NNESTs are perceived by others but also influences their self-perception. Research indicates that these barriers contribute to low self-esteem, imposter syndrome, and significant mental health issues, including self-marginalisation, social withdrawal and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation (Kamhi-Stein 2016; Dovchin 2022; Nigar 2024). Additionally, racialised and gendered 'othering' exacerbates feelings of inferiority, complicating NNESTs' professional journeys and reinforcing their sense of marginalisation (Gatwiri 2021; Nigar 2024).

Some scholars emphasise the vulnerability of NNESTs (Ennser-Kananen and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2023; Yip 2023), as well as the acculturation and professional transition issues they face (Bense 2015). While these challenges are often framed under the guise of *benevolent assimilation*, critics argue that such approaches perpetuate inequities (Bartlett 2014; Deuchar 2023; Kim 2023; Nigar 2024). Despite these obstacles, many NNESTs exhibit multiplicity, critical reflexivity, and hybridity in redefining their professional identities (Ahn and Delesclefs 2020; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney et al. 2024b). They actively navigate cultural and linguistic segregation, demonstrating agency and resisting exclusionary norms. However, systemic gatekeeping continues to complicate their representation and reinforces their status as the 'Other' (Teo 2022; Nigar et al. 2024b). To create a truly inclusive environment that values the diverse contributions of NNESTs, structural changes in recruitment, support, and retention are essential (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024b; Yip and Xu 2024).

Despite systemic constraints, NNESTs exhibit significant fluidity and agency in shaping their professional identities (Deuchar 2023; Yip 2023; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). While vulnerability narratives often frame discussions about NNESTs, there is increasing evidence of their resistance, mediation and agency to exclusionary practices (Ennser-Kananen and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2023; Yip 2023). Nigar's (2024) concept of hybrid professional becoming demonstrates how NNESTs blend cultural and linguistic backgrounds with professional demands to create fluid, cosmopolitan identities that defy exclusionary norms (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Rizvi 2009). Drawing on Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto and a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, Nigar, Kostogriz, and Hossain (2024d) reveal how immigrant NNESTs in Australia hold hybrid identities that challenge native-speaker hierarchies, foster inclusivity, and drive professional and pedagogical innovations, underscoring the importance of 'hybrid professional becoming' in policy and practice to promote intercultural teaching.

Hybrid professional becoming emerges as a response to systemic racialisation in education, where NNESTs strategically negotiate their professional identities beyond exclusionary native-speaker norms. Hybrid professional becoming enables NNESTs to actively contest linguistic marginalisation by foregrounding their multilingual and multicultural capabilites as assets rather than deficits. Through transnational teaching methodologies and the cultivation of cosmopolitan identities, NNESTs reframe their professional legitimacy beyond native-speaker norms, thereby fostering more inclusive and globally engaged curriculum and pedagogies (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024c; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024).

Addressing the deeply rooted hegemony of native-speakerism is essential for creating an equitable teaching environment, where the diverse contributions of NNESTs are recognised, valued, and engaged in professional practices and policies (Dovchin and Wang 2024; Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a).

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Human Rights Education (HRE)

By embedding hybrid professional becoming within GCE and HRE frameworks, NNESTs mobilise their linguistic and cultural hybridity to challenge monolithic ideologies of teaching capability. This fosters globally oriented classrooms where knowledge production is not confined by racialised

English norms but instead embraces plurality and translingual practice (Osler and Starkey 2018; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a).

GCE and HRE provide theoretical foundations for inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural education (Osler and Starkey 2003, 2018; Rizvi and Beech 2020). While GCE promotes cosmopolitanism and global capabilites such as empathy, respect for diversity, and social responsibility (Robertson and Robarts 2022; Osler and Starkey 2003), HRE emphasises recognising NNESTs' rights and developing equitable learning environments (Ferguson and Brett 2023). Together, these frameworks empower NNESTs to challenge exclusionary practices and foster equitable education systems (von Berg 2023). However, as Kenway and Lazarus (2017) caution, both frameworks risk neoliberal co-optation, prioritising economic competitiveness over social justice.

In Australia, where nearly half the population has migrant heritage, GCE and HRE are especially relevant. Yet, despite this multicultural demographic, the teaching workforce remains largely homogenous (ABS 2021). A longitudinal study of 16 immigrant NNESTs (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a) highlights how these teachers engage in hybrid professional becoming amid misrecognition and inequity. Grounded in postcolonial theories (Bhabha 1994; Brah 1996), their experiences illustrate how NNESTs navigate race, language, culture and modalities of power to foster inclusive pedagogy (Brah, 1996; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d; Kenway and Lazarus 2017). By continuously negotiating cultural identity and professional expectations, NNESTs construct resistant and transformative professional roles (Bhabha 1994; Norton and Toohey 2011). While GCE and HRE offer significant potential, their effectiveness depends on critical application to address equity and inclusion, rather than reinforcing neoliberal imperatives

Hybridity as a framework for professional identity

Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity is vital for understanding how NNESTs inventively navigate professional hurdles by merging their linguistic and cultural backgrounds with the expectations of the Australian educational framework, cultivating approaches that counter power relations of native-speakerism (Brah 1996; Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Teo 2022; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). This journey of hybrid professional becoming embodies agency, imagination, and critical reflection, as NNESTs engage in transcultural literacy and dialogical exchanges, manoeuvring through thresholds, subversion, and resistance (Rapoport 2021; Kenway and Lazarus 2017). Mohanty's (2005) postcolonial feminist critique further highlights how NNESTs contest exclusion by constructing inclusive spaces that recognise their experiences while also contending with ambivalence in their professional domains (Nigar 2024). These dynamic challenges the native/non-native binary and calls for a more interculturally attuned model of language education. Ultimately, hybrid professional becoming (Nigar 2024) empowers NNESTs to assert their professional roles while enriching multinational, multicultural and multilingual pedagogy, benefiting the broader student body (Mahboob 2010; Ilieva and Ravindran 2018).

Embedding GCE and HRE in teacher training

GCE and HRE into teacher education is not only necessary but urgent for advancing equity and social justice in Australia's education system (Rizvi and Beech 2020; Ferguson and Brett 2023). This incorporation is particularly crucial given Australia's teacher shortage and the lack of diversity within the teaching profession. Embedding GCE and HRE principles into teacher training and policy would not only help attract and retain NNESTs but also actively dismantle exclusionary practices that perpetuate native-speakerism and marginalisation. As Nigar (2024) argues, hybrid professional becoming is key to reshaping educational institutions to genuinely reflect Australia's multicultural reality. NNESTs play a pivotal role in this transformation, navigating complex intersections of race, language, culture, gender and religion while resisting pressures to assimilate (Dovchin and Wang 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, Gurney et al. 2024b). By prioritising GCE

and HRE, the education system can support NNESTs in asserting their professional identities through negotiation and resistance, rather than passive adaptation (Osler and Starkey 2018; Rapoport 2021).

Addressing Australia's teacher shortage demands more than merely increasing teacher numbers – it requires confronting the systemic marginalisation of migrant teachers. Interweaving GCE and HRE into teacher education programmes can empower NNESTs to construct hybrid professional identities and reshape the system to reflect diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives (Osler and Starkey 2018; Ferguson and Brett 2023). This transformative approach aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, emphasising inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all (UNESCO 2017). Failing to act perpetuates existing inequities and limits the educational opportunities of both students and NNESTs, ultimately undermining the very principles of equity and inclusion that GCE and HRE advocate. This raises the central research question of this study: How can GCE, HRE, and hybrid professional becoming be productively embedded in teacher training to address native-speakerism and enhance NNESTs' professional identities within Australia's education system?

Methodology

This study employs the methodological approaches of hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative inquiry (van Manen 1990; Nigar 2020, 2024) to explore the lived experiences of five multilingual English teachers in Australia, tracing their journeys from childhood through migration to their professional roles. As van Manen (1990) explains, phenomenology serves not only as an epistemological framing but also as a practical guide for investigating lived experiences, making it suitable for both the conceptual framing and methodological foundation of this study. This approach aligns with the study's aim to delve into experiential meanings, enabling a holistic exploration of how NNESTs' professional identities emerge through recursive interpretations of the narrative accounts, positioning phenomenology as a core part of the study's epistemological scope.

Nigar (2020; 2024) emphasises that hermeneutic phenomenology is particularly useful for exploring the multi-layered experiential meanings constructed by participants, allowing researchers to capture the depth and dynamics of their communal lived experiences. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how NNESTs engage in hybrid professional becoming, intertwining their linguistic and cultural backgrounds with the professional expectations in the Australian TESOL sector. Narrative inquiry complements this methodology by focusing on participants' storytelling, revealing how their professional identities are constructed and reshaped over time (Nigar 2020, 2024). The combination of these methods enables a detailed exploration of NNESTs' identity negotiation, wherein they resist and reconstitute their roles in response to systemic challenges such as linguistic discrimination and cultural marginalisation.

Table 1. Participant Profile.

Pseudonyms	Gender	Cities taught	Country-of-origin	Areas of Recognised Qualifications/ Training (Australia)	Sectors mostly taught (Australia)
Mahati	Female	Melbourne	India	Secondary (EAL; English)	EAL ([im]migrant programmes)
Natalie	Female	Melbourne	Bangladesh	Secondary (EAL; English)	ELICOS, EAL ([im]migrant programmes)
Janaki	Female	Melbourne	India	Applied Linguistics; TESOL	EAL ([im]migrant programmes)
Quang	Male	Sydney	Vietnam	Applied Linguistics; TESOL; Secondary (EAL; English)	ELICOS, EAL ([im]migrant programmes)
Laura	Female	Melbourne	Philippines	Secondary (EAL; English); TESOL	EAL ([im]migrant programmes), ELICOS

Systemic challenges such as linguistic discrimination and cultural marginalisation significantly impact NNESTs. The selection of five participants (Table 1) was guided by purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in cultural, linguistic, and gender backgrounds, as well as varied teaching contexts and post-migration experiences in Australia. Table 1 presents their profiles, illustrating the diverse trajectories of hybrid professional becoming across different contexts. While the focus on five cases may appear limited and potentially suggest cherry-picking, it aligns with hermeneutic phenomenology's emphasis on depth over breadth (van Manen 1990; Nigar 2024). This approach prioritises rich, in-depth narratives that illuminate the multifaceted and multilayered nature of NNESTs' professional identity formation across times, spaces, bodies and relations to others. The five teachers narratives, drawn from a broader study of 16 multilingual teachers (Nigar 2024), were selected to capture key variations in personal histories, migration experiences, and professional journeys, facilitating a nuanced exploration of identity negotiation within intricate systemic contexts.

The data generation process involved written narratives obtained through interview prompts, collected asynchronously over an 8-week period via Google Docs. This digital setup encouraged participants to engage in deep refletion while maintaining flexibility. The use of written narratives was particularly suited to the study's focus on lived experiences, as it enabled participants to articulate their reflections in their own time and voice, reducing the pressure of immediate verbal responses (Nigar 2020; 2024). This approach aligns with van Manen's (1990) emphasis on capturing the essence of lived experiences through reflective and open-ended methods, allowing participants to express their narratives authentically and at their own pace, thereby enriching the depth and authenticity of the data collected. The follow-up interviews and reflective journals provided additional insights into participants' professional navigation within often exclusionary systems, capturing their evolving identities over time.

The data analysis employed a thematic approach, focusing on identifying key themes related to linguistic discrimination, professional exclusion, and cultural identity negotiation within the Australian TESOL context. The coding process involved detailed transcription and examination for recurring patterns of marginalisation and professional formation processes. For instance, participants frequently described instances where their accents were judged, such as Mahati recalling how her Indian accent led to doubts about her teaching ability, highlighting the linguistic discrimination they faced across post-colinal settings over time. The analysis also uncovered the affective dimensions of participants' experiences (Spinoza, 1819–1880), including their desire to teach English and feelings of exclusion, frustration, and guilt. For example, Quang expressed a strong desire to connect with his students, despite often feeling sidelined in professional settings. These affective responses were interpreted as active reflections that empowered participants to challenge marginalisation and assert their value as teachers, aligning with the concept of hybrid professional becoming (Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d).

Thematic analysis of participants' narratives revealed key themes encapsulating their experiences of hybrid professional becoming. These themes include linguistic discrimination, where participants encountered accent-related biases that questioned their teaching competence; professional exclusion, reflected in systemic barriers privileging native-speaker norms; cultural identity negotiation, highlighting the tensions between their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and institutional expectations; affective dimensions, capturing their emotional responses such as frustration, agency and fluidity; and mentorship and support, demonstrating the significance of collegial relationships in navigating exclusionary practices. These themes arose through recursive interpretations of participants' lived experiences, aligning with the hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Nigar 2020, 2024; Spinoza (1819–1880); van Manen 1990), which emphasises depth over breadth in understanding the layered formation of professional identities.

Ethical considerations were rigorously followed, with informed consent obtained and confidentiality maintained through data anonymisation. Participants reviewed their contributions via member checking, ensuring accuracy and authenticity. Sensitive discussions, such as those involving

racial or linguistic discrimination, were handled carefully, with debriefing and support provided. Trustworthiness and credibility were ensured through a multi-layered approach: participants' written narratives were cross-verified with follow-up interviews and reflective journals (van Manen 1990; Nigar 2020, 2024). For example, Mahati's reflections on linguistic discrimination in her written narrative were elaborated upon in her follow-up interview, providing deeper insights into specific incidents of discrimination for her so called non-native accent. This iterative process, grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, allowed for an in-depthunderstanding of participants' lived experiences, enhancing the study's trustworthiness, transferability (van Manen 1990; Nigar 2020, 2024).

In short, this research explores how five immigrant English teachers in Australia navigate systemic barriers and construct their professional identities. Connecting to a broader study of 16 multilingual teachers, the findings offer representativeness and nuance, capturing diverse NNEST experiences. Using hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative inquiry, the study reveals how these teachers respond to exclusionary practices, reshaping their professional roles meaningfully.

Results: trajectories of professional development and identity

The professional narratives of these teachers provide a profound exploration of international marginalisation and discrimination, profoundly underscored by their dedication to educational excellence and a fervent commitment to equity and intercultural learning and teaching. Experiencing barriers both prior to and following their entry into the teaching profession in Australia, these narratives not only shape their professional identity, pedagogical methods but also strengthen their resolve to instigate systemic change within the education sector (Nigar 2024; Nigar and Kostogriz 2019, 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024a, 2024c, 2024d).

Reconstituting of professional identity in Australia

Upon initiating their professional careers in Australia, these multilingual teachers and/or international students encountered substantial barriers within an educational system largely predicated on native-standard Australian English, intertwined with predominant white Australian linguistic, cultural and onto-epistemic norms. This environment led to frequent scrutiny of their linguistic capabilities and academic credentials, often measured against unrealistic white Australian norms (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d).

Laura's poignant reflection on her journey to establish her professional identity in Australia highlights the significant financial and emotional burdens of meeting stringent language proficiency requirements. Over two years, she spent the equivalent of four months' salary attempting the IELTS test four times, illustrating the often-overlooked economic strain these tests impose on non-native English-speaking professionals. 'So, I took the IELTS test (one of the many requirements for a Secondary Teacher) four times. I applied for reassessment of the result of the fourth take. It was the most difficult part, but the rest of my requirements were ready and easy to obtain', Laura recounted, emphasising the linguistic discrimination she faced despite her readiness to meet other qualifications. Her experience points to broader systemic issues within the certification process that prioritise rigid language criteria over a more holistic evaluation of transculturally diverse teaching capabilites (Nigar 2024; Hopkyns and Dovchin 2024).

Similarly, Quang, who completed two postgraduate degrees in Australia, including one in international teacher education, expressed frustration over the inequitable requirements imposed on non-native English speakers (Nigar 2024). Despite his qualifications and successful completion of all course and practicum requirements, he was still subjected to redundant testing. Quang articulated his exasperation, questioning the necessity of further language tests: 'With the IELTS results that we got to be eligible to teach anyway, and after passing through the course and all the practicums, I think we have proven that at least we can communicate in English in our subject areas. Why

do we have to sit for the test again?' This sentiment underscores a broader issue faced by many internationally trained teachers who feel their abilities and academic achievements are persistently undermined. Hamid (2016) contextualises this issue by highlighting how globalised English proficiency tests like the IELTS function as gatekeepers, often burdening non-native speakers despite their proven abilities. He argues that these tests are not merely about language assessment but are driven by commercial interests, raising ethical concerns about their fairness and validity within educational and professional contexts.

These teachers encountered discrimination not only based on linguistic and academic misrecognition and undervaluation but also through nuanced layers of racism, cultural hegemony, and gender stereotypes and their interactions (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Hopkyns and Dovchin 2024). An example of this can be seen in a job advertisement for a Secondary English Teacher at Lycée Condorcet, The International French School of Sydney, which specified native speakers as a requirement (SEEK 2022). Natalie described her experience with job market favouritism, noting a decline since she first started job hunting in 2004: 'Job ads sometimes specified native speakers only or demanded that NNESTs possess postgraduate degrees, whereas NESTs required only a CELTA.' Her experience underscored the intersectionality affecting job prospects: 'Changing my resume name from 'Nabila' to 'Natalie' slightly improved my chances, but rejections became commonplace once my background was disclosed during interviews, often without justification'.

Despite facing systemic exclusion, NNESTs strategically construct hybrid professional identities by engaging in critical-reflective linguistic positioning and professional multplicity. This process allows them to assert their professional worth while simultaneously disrupting hegemonic native-speakerist standards (Nigar et al. 2024a; Mahboob and Golden 2013). The professional experiences of immigrant teachers reveal persistent challenges in navigating a system that favours racialised native-speaker norms and traditional cultural expectations (Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar et al. 2024a; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). Despite these barriers, their commitment to reshaping educational practices through equity and intercultural understanding underscores their resolve to drive systemic change within the teaching profession in Australia.

Additional credentials and advocacy for inclusivity

Despite their extensive qualifications, multilingual teachers like Mahati, Janaki, and Natalie often must pursue additional credentials to meet Australian standards, reflecting systemic segregations against NNESTs (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Dovchin and Dryden 2022). This need to upskill highlights broader issues of exclusion rooted in linguistic and cultural hegemonies, revealing a struggle for recognition in a system favouring native-speaker norms (Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Yip 2023).

Despite holding degrees from their home countries, teachers like Mahati, Janaki, and Natalie were compelled to acquire additional qualifications to align with Australian standards. Janaki's journey illustrates this challenge: Already a qualified primary school teacher in Australia with overseas credentials, she faced unemployment and a lack of support, prompting her to pursue a Diploma of TESOL and additional certifications in Australia to meet the qualifications required for teaching roles within the TAFE sector. Similarly, despite already holding an MA in ELT, Natalie's extensive background was still insufficient to secure a role until she pursued an additional Master's degree in Applied Linguistics with a specialisation in TESOL. This highlights the systemic oppressions that non-native English-speaking teachers face, requiring them to continuously upskill to meet local credentialing demands, despite their existing expertise (Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a).

The cumulative impact of these systemic barriers led to profound professional insecurities and feelings of imposter syndrome (Nigar 2024), as illustrated by Quang: 'Aware of my non-native status, I frequently felt compelled to apologise for perceived shortcomings.' This constant self-doubt reflects the psychological toll exerted by entrenched disparities in the system, where non-native

teachers often feel inadequate despite their qualifications (Dovchin and Dryden 2022). This sense of being diminished from 'heroes to zeros' (Dovchin and Dryden 2022, 365) exemplifies the demoralising effects of such systemic discourses. Laura's experience mirrors this sentiment: 'I feel intimidated again because I'm not local, I'm not a native English speaker.' Her doubts about advancing professionally in Australia were candidly expressed in a conversation with a colleague: 'I don't think I'd be able to do that in Australia.' Her colleague's response, 'So, you've lost your confidence when you stepped in Australia?' poignantly underscores the erosion of self-assurance that many multilingual teachers face in native English-speaking contexts. These narratives vividly highlight how systemic barriers not only obstruct professional maturation but also erode self-worth, emphasising the urgent need for structural reforms to create a more equitable and inclusive environment (Nigar et al. 2024a).

Natalie encountered challenges tied to her religious identity too, which intensified her exclusion at work, aligning with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC [Australian Human Rights Commission] 2022) report that nearly half of Australian Muslims (48%) have experienced workplace discrimination or unfavourable treatment due to their race, religion, or ethnicity. Often fetishised or stereotyped based on her attire, appearance, background and name, she was reduced to an 'exotic' or 'Other' figure, heightening her ostracisation. These experiences reflect Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, where non-Western individuals are viewed through an exoticised, essentialised and feminised lens (Said 1978). Natalie shared how a colleague made sexualised jokes in Bangla, calling her 'mal' (desired object) or 'defiant'/ 'unreligious' for eating during Ramadan, despite her religious exemptions, while another assumed she was a 'hijabi woman' because of her name. These interactions reinforced her feelings of marginalisation and exclusion within the professional community.

These experiences show a continued battle against barriers that diminish NNESTs' professional value, emphasising the need for reforms to create a more inclusive educational environment that recognises diverse skills and contributions (Santoro 2007; Yip 2023; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024).

Systemic change through continuous cultural and professional renewal

Multilingual teachers like Mahati, Janaki, Natalie, Quang, and Laura have faced significant systemic barriers in the Australian educational setting. Driven by these challenges, they leveraged their agency to pursue further education and advocate for inclusivity within their institutions, transforming personal adversities into catalysts for broader structural change (Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a).

Driven by their experiences of othering, these teachers exercised and amplified their agency sought further education in multicultural education and leadership, aiming to improve their circumstances and advocate for others facing similar discrimination (Nigar 2024). Natalie highlighted the empowerment that comes from purusing further education: 'Realising the need for change, I pursued additional qualifications to advocate decisively for diversity and inclusivity within educational settings'. Natalie's journey reflects a broader trend where minoritised teachers often seek additional credentials to counter systemic barriers. Her decision emphasises the value of education as both a personal and political tool for advocating for equity in environments that may undervalue diverse perspectives. The nuance here lies in how Natalie frames her pursuit of further education—not simply as self-improvement, but as an act of resistance and an exercise of agency, amplifying her efforts to pursue initiatives that enhance her professional abilities and equip her to challenge exclusionary practices within educational systems.

Mahati's resistance and agency were evident in her active role in challenging exclusionary practices within educational spaces. She not only hyrbidised diverse Englishes and cultures into her professional practices and led volunteer tutor training programmes but also organised large cultural events like 'Harmony Day,' which promoted inclusivity. When a student requested to hear only

'Aussie' English, Mahati firmly rejected this exclusionary view, stating, 'We live in a multicultural society … I'm Australian too now. My English is Australian English too' This moment demonstrated her exercise of agency in advocating for the recognition of diverse Englishes and resisting dominant narratives that privilege standardised forms (Dovchin and Wang 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). Her journey from marginalisation to actively shaping institutional policies reflects her commitment to fostering inclusivity through community engagement and her determination to challenge entrenched norms.

Starting her career as a TESOL teacher in Australia was an intimidating experience for Janaki, as she grappled with the systemic obstacles and uncertainties about finding work and proving her capabilities. 'I always felt apprehensive as to how I would find work, how I would perform, etc.', she reflected. However, through perseverance, she overcame these challenges, noting, 'I can confidently say that I have proved myself in this field', after being employed at the same TAFE since 2004 and progressing from teacher to Lead Teacher, now serving as the Programme Coordinator for AMEP (Adult Migrant Education Programme) at Broadmeadows. Her journey required not only learning new teaching methods but also navigating the cultural complexities of her diverse student cohorts, ranging from African and Iraqi refugees to Bhutanese students. 'I had never had so much contact with refugees or an understanding of their journey', she noted, highlighting the intersectional hurdles she overcame. Drawing inspiration from her students' fortitude, she remarked, 'They are my source of inspiration to make something of myself in my field'. Janaki's application and amplification of agency allowed her to transition from navigating structural exclusions to actively shaping inclusive practices within the educational system, while continuously promoting understanding and diversity in her teaching.

Quang reflected on his interactions with students who shared his concerns about linguistic identity:

> Interestingly, I had a few students who asked me if their accents were ok. Their grammar and vocabulary were perfect, but they were worried about their accent. I told them, 'Why do you need to worry about your accent? I can understand you perfectly, and your English is beautiful – don't worry about your accent'.

Quang's narrative introduces an additional layer to the conversation, emphasising the internalised linguistic insecurities that many non-native speakers experience. His role as a mentor who reassures students about their accents reveals how NNESTs, despite their own struggles with marginalisation, become advocates for linguistic diversity. Quang's approach subverts the native-speaker norm by validating non-native accents (Dovchin and Dryden 2022), offering a more inclusive understanding of linguistic identity. This nuanced position challenges the idea that 'standard' English is the only valid form, aligning with broader postcolonial critiques of language and power.

Laura, in turn, noted her professional construction in Australia:

> I have learned a lot since I started teaching here in Australia. I have learned new strategies for teaching English, gained confidence, and become more engaged with professional development. My time management skills, especially in marking assessments and lesson planning, have improved. I have also changed how I deal with students, becoming more professional yet personal with them.

Laura's reflection signals an important transformation, where initial feelings of insecurity are replaced by professional confidence and competence. Her narrative contrasts with Quang's focus on linguistic identity, as Laura emphasises practical skills and professional development. Her ability to combine professionalism with personal engagement in student relationships reveals the complex balance that NNESTs must navigate, often hybridising cultural sensitivity with educational rigour. Laura's formation highlights how engagement with professional enhancement can serve as a tool for overcoming internalised insecurities and barriers.

Their endorsement is not just a personal journey but part of a broader push for systemic reforms to create more interculturally inclusive and equitable educational environments. Through continuous professional development and engagement with educational policies, these teachers work

tirelessly to ensure that future generations of teachers and students face fewer barriers and experience a more inclusive learning atmosphere. Their narratives illustrate that overcoming systemic challenges is a multi-faceted process, one that involves both personal flourishment and active participation in policy reform. The interplay between individual advancement and structural change is nuanced, with each teacher taking a slightly different path toward empowerment, yet all contributing to the ongoing fight against educational marginalisation. Their experiences collectively underscore the urgent need for dialogue, policy reform, and collective action to dismantle the systemic obstacles that continue to impact NNESTs and other marginalised teachers (Santoro 2007; Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024).

Their efforts highlight a journey of resistance and empowerment, where continuous professional development becomes a means of advocating for systemic reforms. These educators' stories underscore the urgent need for inclusive policies and practices, aiming to create an equitable educational environment that values diverse skills and perspectives, ultimately dismantling barriers that marginalise and racialise non-native English-speaking teachers (Santoro 2007; Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024).

The interplay of marginalisation, agency and

Multilingual immigrant teachers face structural barriers such as discriminatory hiring practices and exclusionary workplace cultures, rooted in linguistic discrimination, racialisation, and entrenched power relations (Mahboob and Golden 2013; Nigar 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Ramjattan 2019; AHRC 2022). Despite these challenges, they demonstrate tenacity and agency, forming solidarities with marginalised groups to resist exclusionary practices (Kim 2017; Nigar 2024; Peeler and Jane 2005). Through cosmopolitan imagination, they bridge cultural divides, foster inclusivity, and turn their experiences of exclusion into opportunities for development (Smith and Neoh 2023). Their journey, characterised by continuous professional advancement and advocacy, highlights the urgent need for inclusive policies that value diverse perspectives and create an equitable educational environment for non-native English-speaking teachers (Santoro 2007; Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d). Support and recognition from school communities and colleagues play a crucial role in helping these teachers reimagine their professional identities (Yan 2021; Nigar 2024). Laura, for example, emphasises the impact of her supportive environment.

> Being surrounded by supportive and appreciative colleagues, coordinators, and managers has greatly influenced my work practice. They shaped me to be confident in teaching, as well as mentoring me to be a better trainer/teacher to students.

Similarly, Natalie's recognition led to her employment in the Women's ESL programme and later her nomination to coordinate a university language unit in place of a NEST. She reflected, 'This recognition of my qualifications gave me the confidence to see myself on par with NESTs, despite earlier encounters with linguistic racism'.

Like the findings of Peeler and Jane (2005) and Yan (2021), for Janaki, mentorship was vital: 'Getting the right guidance from the right person was the most important factor in developing my career', she explained. 'Just as for teaching, I had Veronica, and for record-keeping, I had Marissa. Learning wasn't easy, and there were failures along the way, but persistence helped me excel'. Other teachers, like Quang, Mahati and Natalie also benefitted from supportive mentors who empowered them with greater responsibilities. Quang shared, 'My colleagues generally saw me as another teacher from a different part of the world, rather than focusing on my non-native status. This slowly made NNEST less of an issue for me'. Mahati expressed a similar sentiment: 'I have a good relationship with my colleagues. They were great mentors – teaching me task-making – and

now, when I mentor new teachers, I remember to be patient and listen'. Such relations of affinity, support, and solidarity, along with the associated affect, amplified their agency, leading to the emergence of cosmopolitan identities among English teachers (Nigar 2024).

Natalie was highly respected and supported by her unit managers and mentors, who demonstrated their confidence in her abilities by assigning her the highest-level class, despite her being a new and early-career teacher. Her mentors were not only generous in allowing her to observe their classes but also, as she recalled, 'were very polite and supportive, patiently explaining the administrative processes'. They further encouraged her innovative teaching methods, often praising her assemblage of technology and interculturally creative pedagogy, such as 'storytelling' and 'translanguaging', which one mentor described as 'a refreshing approach that truly engaged students'. This support uplifted Natalie, empowering her to look into and refine her teaching intercultural and relational practices as 'curriculum 'folding' democratic practice' (Nigar et al. 2024c). In this context, 'curriculum 'folding' democratic practice' (Nigar et al. 2024c) refers to the approach of entwining democratic values and principles into Natalie's teaching methods, allowing her to create an inclusive, interactive learning environment that emphasises collaboration, critical thinking, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Mahati's experience with her supervisors exemplifies the importance of supportive mentorship in shaping her professional identity as a teacher. As she noted, 'The supervisors were great – very helpful and gave me all the independence I wanted.' This encouragement and the autonomy they provided allowed her to creatively engage her students through a poetry unit. She reflected, 'I still remember the glowing remarks given by one of the supervisors,' which highlights the positive impact of feedback on her confidence. While her focus on grammar, 'which scared the kids,' was initially intimidating, it ultimately 'made me feel in control of the class.' This relationship fostered a sense of agency and control in Mahati, illustrating how predictive feedback and empowering teaching experiences can enhance confidence and generative ness in the classroom. Her journey ultimately contributes to her dialogic imagination (Kostogriz 2005), enabling her to envision herself as a cosmopolitan teacher of English, where she actively embraces the complexities of global perspectives in education.

When asked how they imagined their future professional identities, all of these teachers see themselves as cosmopolitan teachers, though with ambivalence (Nigar 2024). Mahati reflected, 'My English is Australian English too. But the standards … You're imagining yourself as a global or multicultural teacher where all forms of English are regarded equally, not just through standardisation'. Despite this vision, she expressed some tension about the concept of a single 'standard' English, acknowledging that, 'I don't believe there should be a standard. English varies globally, and we need to embrace that diversity'.

Quang echoed this ambivalence about English norms: 'I see myself as a global English teacher. My experience as a NNES in multicultural Australia and my postgraduate studies have taught me that English cannot be defined solely by American, British, or Australian norms. Comprehensibility should be the goal, not nativeness'. While committed to a global vision of English, Quang also recognised the difficulties in reconciling diverse linguistic expectations across different educational contexts.

Janaki, reflecting on her evolving identity, expressed her cosmopolitan imagination and ambivalence regarding leadership roles: 'I'm considering leaving the Program Leader role to become a full-time teacher.' This statement encapsulates her journey of navigating professional identity and aspirations within a complex educational sphere. Her contemplation of stepping away from a leadership position to focus on teaching illustrates a desire to engage more deeply with her students and the curriculum, moving beyond the neoliberal gatekeeping of professionalisation and the affective labour it entails (Kostogriz 2012). This reflects a broader theme among multilingual immigrant teachers, where the negotiation of roles is shaped by personal values, pedagogical philosophies, and the aspiration to create inclusive learning environments. Janaki's ambivalence underscores the tension between administrative responsibilities and the call to foster

a direct educational impact, reinforcing the fluidity of her professional identity in the context of cosmopolitan education.

These teachers embody a narrative of resistance, tenacity and advocacy, mobilising capacity building as a means of personal formation and a strategy to challenge systemic barriers. Their experiences underscore the urgent need for inclusive policies that acknowledge diverse capabilities, aiming to create an equitable educational backdrop that dismantles binary power relations against non-native English-speaking teachers (Santoro 2007; Kostogriz and Peeler 2007; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d). As cosmopolitan teachers, they grapple with the complexities of global English standards and educational expectations while nurturing their imaginations. Bright (2020) highlights the potential for these generative experiences to help them envision new possibilities for their hybrid professional identities. Their identity formation, characterised by ongoing 'becoming,' is strengthened through relational connections and solidarities (Butler 2012), stressing the significance of support from friends, families, and colleagues (Danielewicz, 2001). Collectively, these experiences foster unique forms of hybrid professional becoming (Bhabha 1994; Kostogriz 2005; Nigar 2024).

Discussion

The results of the study reveal the significant barriers NNESTs encounter, including native-speakerism, racialisation, and credentialing practices that privilege standardised white Australian English and norms over diverse linguistic competencies (Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Yip 2023; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024). The professional experiences of teachers like Laura, who faced repeated language testing, and Janaki, who was compelled to acquire additional credentials, exemplify how these exclusionary practices impede NNESTs' professional inclusion and development (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a; Hamid 2016). The findings illustrate that systemic racism and linguistic discrimination are not just hegemonies but also catalysts for NNESTs' hybrid professional becoming. By actively resisting these exclusions, NNESTs cultivate fluid professional identities that transcend racialised linguistic hierarchies, demonstrating the transformative potential of hybrid professionalism in reshaping educational equity (Bhabha 1994; Rapoport 2021).

Building on this transformative potential, NNESTs actively engage in hybrid professional becoming, creatively navigating their professional conditions by aligning their diverse linguistic, cultural and onto-epistemic backgrounds with professional expectations (Bhabha 1994; Rapoport 2021). This process is further supported by frameworks such as GCE (Global Citizenship Education) and HRE (Human Rights Education), which promote empathy, cultural capability, social justice, and transcultural professional identity (Osler and Starkey 2003, 2018; Ferguson and Brett 2023; Nigar 2024). Bhabha (2017) points out that 'the unsettled universality of the Declaration is not primarily a matter of its inability to deal with cultural pluralism, otherness, or relativism, as problems that face it from the outside … ' (6). For instance, Quang's efforts to encourage students to embrace their linguistic diversity align with GCE principles that foster global citizenship and a sense of belonging (Ferguson and Brett 2023). Similarly, teachers like Natalie, who have experienced both linguistic and religious discrimination, use these frameworks to enhance cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity within their classroomsing, albeit with ambivalence, she pondered rejection at her next interview—resisting the pull of assimilative native-speaker saviorism (Dovchin and Wang 2024; Nigar 2024; Osler and Starkey 2018).

This advocacy is further exemplified by teachers such as Janaki, who demonstrate a commitment to dismantling barriers and driving institutional reforms grounded in GCE and HRE principles. Bhabha (2017) notes, 'minoritarian affiliations or solidarities arise in response to the failures and limits of democratic representation, creating new modes of agency, new strategies of recognition … ' (6). By creating cosmopolitan classrooms that engage with issues of power and privilege, NNESTs contribute to broader educational transformations that foster more diverse learning environments (Rapoport 2021; Smith and Neoh 2023). This approach not only supports their

own professional identities but also enhances the educational scene by promoting diverse perspectives and deeper understanding of global justice (Osler and Starkey 2018; von Berg 2023). Bhabha (2017) argues that suggesting an ethics of cosmopolitanism should not focus solely on our dignity as human beings but rather on our experiences of alienation, moral uncertainties, and personal struggles as individuals. This perspective highlights the complexities involved in understanding cosmopolitan ethics (8).

Finally, the findings align with the UN High-Level Panel on Teaching Report (UN 2024), amplifying the need to include and support NNESTs through hybrid professional becoming. This evolving process, shaped by NNESTs' lived experiences and diverse identities, requires significant policy reforms.

Key implications include

- **Recognition of Qualifications and English Proficiency:** Clearer guidelines for recognising overseas qualifications and embracing diverse Englishes would allow NNESTs to adapt their identities to local educational contexts while enriching teaching practices (Cruickshank 2015; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a).
- **Accessible Entry Pathways:** Simplifying entry pathways for refugee and displaced teachers, without redundant language proficiency tests, would facilitate smoother transition, supporting diverse perspectives in the classroom (Santoro 2007; Yip 2023).
- **Promotion of NNESTs' Contributions:** Actively raising the status of NNESTs, especially in crisis contexts, would dismantle stereotypes and cultivate a more inclusive educational community that values hybrid professional identities (Ilieva and Ravindran 2018; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Hossain 2024d).
- **Culturally Responsive Professional Development (PD):** Tailored PD programmes that stress culturally responsive pedagogy, diverse Englishes, and strategies for navigating systemic cultural essentialisms would empower NNESTs to tailor their teaching methodologies to local contexts, fostering inclusive classrooms (Osler and Starkey 2018; Ferguson and Brett 2023).
- **Creating Inclusive Work Environments:** Schools must implement policies that combat language-based discrimination and promote intercultural dialogue, allowing NNESTs to fully contribute to the educational community's diversity (Dwyer et al. 2024; Veliz, Gao, and Véliz-Campos 2024).
- **Recognition of Cultural Competence:** Prioritising cultural competence in teacher training can better equip teachers to address diverse learner needs, fostering hybrid professional becoming through broader global perspectives (Robertson 2021; Nigar 2024).
- **Highlighting NNESTs' Contributions:** Publicly acknowledging NNESTs' diverse contributions through platforms that share methodologies can inspire educational transformation and empower NNESTs as agents of change (Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). This aligns with Bhabha's (2017) assertion that 'the torment of the indefinite … in the creation of vernacular cosmopolitanism often presents itself as an existential and ethical anxiety that is at the heart of any cosmopolitical relationality' (6).

The study's focus on Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) who have navigated systemic barriers reinforce their hybridity and strategies over time, while also acknowledging those who switched and/or worked across sectors. Self-reported narratives from five participants provide valuable insights into the journey of professional identity formation through the evolving experiences of NNESTs, illustrating how they perceive and respond to challenges throughout their careers. However, this limited focus may not capture the full diversity of voices within the broader group of 16 participants, potentially overlooking the complexities faced by those who transitioned to different sectors. Despite these limitations, this qualitative approach, grounded in hermeneutic

phenomenology, offers a nuanced understanding of NNESTs' professional identity formation and the temporal nature of their experiences. Future research should investigate NNESTs' experiences across various contexts to identify broader patterns of marginalisation and hybrid professional becoming. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the lasting impact of GCE and HRE on NNESTs' professional growth. Additionally, engaging educational leaders in the implementation process could yield practical strategies for refining teacher training programmes and addressing systemic othering mechanisms.

The analysis reveals how integrating GCE, HRE, and hybrid professional becoming can transform teacher education to better support NNESTs by addressing systemic barriers like native-speakerism and restrictive credentialing (Yip 2023; Dwyer et al. 2024; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a). Laura's repetitive language testing and Janaki's credentialing needs exemplify how institutional norms hinder NNESTs' development (Hamid 2016; Fotovatian 2018). NNESTs engage in hybrid professional becoming by merging their linguistic and cultural identities with professional settings, navigating power dynamics, and redefining roles to counter native-speaker hierarchies (Bhabha 1994; Rapoport 2021). GCE and HRE foster empathy and intercultural capability, as seen in Quang's advocacy for linguistic diversity and Natalie's promotion of cross-cultural understanding (Osler and Starkey 2003, 2018; Ferguson and Brett 2023). This negotiated process empowers NNESTs to create inclusive educational spaces, enhancing pedagogical practices for all students and reaffirming the need for culturally responsive language education (Mahboob 2018; Ilieva and Ravindran 2018). By embedding these frameworks into teacher training, teachers can develop inclusive, equitable, and culturally attuned pedagogies.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the integration of GCE, HRE and hybrid professional becoming into teacher education is pivotal for addressing native-speakerism and strengthening the professional identities of NNESTs in Australia. These frameworks dismantle historically situated hegemonies inherent in native-speaker norms while fostering empathy, intercultural understanding, and social justice within classrooms (Osler and Starkey 2003; Ferguson and Brett 2023). Aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable education for all (UNESCO 2017), such reforms are essential for transforming NNESTs into agents of educational change. By embracing hybrid professional becoming, NNESTs not only adapt to but enrich educational environments, contributing to a multicultural reality that better reflects Australia's diverse society (Bhabha 1994; Brah 1996; Mohanty 2005; Nigar, Kostogriz, and Gurney 2024a, 2024d).

As Bhabha (2017) notes, 'the act of enunciation, which represents the ongoing processes and performances of the speaking subject … is intimately related to the assertorial and aspirational basis of rights, the ethics of rights which are often prior to their institutionalisation and their legislative power' (8). This perspective underlines how NNESTs' engagement in hybrid professional becoming is not merely a response to systemic essentialisms but a proactive enactment of their rights and identities, which often precedes formal recognition or policy change.

Overall, prioritising these reforms will not only enhance NNESTs' professional inclusion but also reshape the educational sphere, making it more inclusive, equitable, and globally aware (Norton and Toohey 2011; Rapoport 2021; Robertson and Robarts 2022). In doing so, the Australian education system can foster pedagogies that embrace linguistic and cultural diversity, benefiting both teachers and students and advancing social equity on a broader scale.

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ORCID

Sender Dovchin http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4327-7096

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