

Non-native English-speaking teachers of writing, native-speaker ideologies, and feedback uptake in first-year composition

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Abstract

Research on non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and writing feedback has rarely examined how students' perceptions of multilingual instructors shape feedback uptake. This critical literature review synthesizes scholarship from composition studies, second language writing, translanguaging, and NNEST research to examine this relationship in first-year composition. The review argues that native-speaker ideologies may shape perceptions of instructor credibility in ways that could influence students' willingness to trust and apply feedback during revision. It identifies a significant gap in existing scholarship and calls for empirical research and pedagogical practices that promote linguistic justice, multilingualism, and equitable writing instruction in higher education.

Keywords feedback uptake, linguistic authority, translanguaging, multilingualism, second language writing, NEST/NNEST

1. Introduction: The Enduring Influence of Native-Speaker Ideologies

In the closing years of the 2000s, I moved to the Middle East for an English teaching job. Upon arrival, I noticed that my contract differed from those of other teachers and later learned that these differences were based on nationality. At the time, I did not know that teachers of English and writing were often categorized as native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) or non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). I began to recognize that my credentials, including a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and years of teaching experience, could matter less than my accent and the citizenship represented by my passport.

I also observed that many English language learners and writing students preferred NESTs, primarily because of their accents, while native Arabic-speaking teachers could draw on their own experiences as learners of English to understand students' struggles. These observations align with research documenting discrimination against NNESTs in hiring, compensation, and professional advancement despite their pedagogical qualifications (Braine, 2005; Mahboob, 2004; Moussu, 2018; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Although much of this research focuses on English language teaching broadly, it has important implications for writing instruction and first-year composition (FYC), where perceptions of linguistic authority may shape how students evaluate instructors and respond to feedback. Similar concerns have emerged for multilingual instructors teaching FYC in U.S. colleges (Ruecker et al., 2018; Tseptsura & Ruecker, 2024).

I further observed that students' attitudes toward teachers were shaped by nationality, with teachers from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada often receiving the highest prestige. This hierarchy reflects what Phillipson (1992) termed the "native-speaker fallacy", the belief that native speakers are inherently better language teachers regardless of pedagogical expertise. Such assumptions raise an important question for FYC: how might students' perceptions of NNESTs' linguistic and professional identities shape their perceptions of instructor credibility and their willingness to trust and apply feedback during revision?

In a study examining English learners' perceptions of native and non-native English-speaking teachers, Aslan and Thompson (2017) found that students often assigned different areas of expertise to each group. For instance, learners believed that NNESTs were better suited to teaching grammar, while NESTs were preferred for developing speaking skills. Although their study did not specifically focus on FYC classrooms, it revealed how learners form hierarchical views of teacher competence based on native-speaker status; however, these attitudes were not solely based on nationality; they were further entangled with issues of gender and racial identity. Scholarship on NNESTs in U.S. colleges demonstrates that native-speakerism frequently intersects with race and institutional power (Ruecker et al., 2018). These patterns are particularly relevant in FYC classrooms, where multilingual graduate instructors often navigate assumptions about linguistic credibility and authority.

The experience in the Middle East raised several questions for me when I began teaching FYC classes as an assistant instructor and doctoral student in the United States: How do students perceive NNESTs of writing in U.S. FYC classrooms? What perceptions do students have of the feedback provided by NNESTs of writing? How do students' negative perceptions of NNESTs of writing, such as the belief that they provide incorrect feedback (Tsou & Chen, 2019), influence the way they engage with feedback from these instructors? These questions intersect composition studies, first-year writing pedagogy, and rhetorical theory, particularly in relation to identity, authority, and credibility in feedback processes. Thus, although this critical review focuses on first-year composition in U.S. higher education, it identifies linguistic authority, native-speaker ideologies, and feedback uptake as issues relevant to multilingual writing instruction and English language teaching in many educational contexts worldwide.

Given ongoing concerns about the NEST/NNEST divide (Fithriani, 2018; Medgyes, 1992; Moussu, 2018), and recent research exploring its specific impact on writing instruction and composition pedagogy (Wang-Hiles, 2024; Zheng, 2017), it becomes essential to examine the growing presence of NNESTs in U.S. colleges, a shift largely driven by international graduate students, many of whom serve as graduate teaching assistants (Ruecker et al., 2018). Despite their increasing numbers, NNESTs often face discrimination, bias (Karamcheti, 1993), and unfavorable perceptions from both students and colleagues. These challenges can undermine their effectiveness as writing instructors, especially when providing feedback on student writing, and may ultimately hinder student writing development. This underscores the need for critical reflection on the NEST/NNEST dichotomy.

Encouragingly, our field appears very open to non-dichotomous thinking, and we have much to show for it. Various Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) position statements and resolutions actively reject the foundational assumptions of the NEST/NNEST dichotomy. Composition studies have increasingly challenged monolingual assumptions through translingual scholarship and position statements that advocate linguistic justice, multilingualism, and the legitimacy of diverse Englishes (CCCC, 1974, 2015, 2020, 2021). However, even as these statements promote multilingualism, the persistence of the NEST/NNEST framework continues to marginalize diverse Englishes within first-year writing pedagogy and composition classrooms, implicitly positioning the NEST dialect as the normative standard.

In like manner, the call by scholars for a shift to multilingual and translingual models in writing instruction necessitates rethinking the NEST/NNEST binary, which reinforces a monolingual teaching approach (Bou Ayash, 2019; Horner et al., 2011; Jordan, 2012). While these multilingual and translingual frameworks continue to gain traction in theory, their practical uptake is often marked by uncertainty and stumbles in execution. In fact, progress has been slow, largely due to deeply ingrained historical, social, economic, and political factors that resist such pedagogical change. One of the most significant barriers to this shift is the persistence of language ideologies, such as the belief that the native speaker is the ideal model of proficiency, which reinforce the dominance of Standard English. As Gonzalez and Melis (2000) noted, such ideologies have also fueled movements like English Only, which stigmatize linguistic diversity and marginalize speakers of nonstandard or non-English varieties. Furthermore, these ideologies not only categorize students as either native or non-native speakers but also intensify the division between NESTs and NNESTs. While much attention has been focused on the injustices faced by NNESTs, less consideration has been given to how students experience the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, particularly in terms of how it affects their interactions with feedback from NNESTs.

Although previous scholarship has examined students' perceptions of NNESTs and a separate body of research has explored feedback uptake in writing instruction, these literatures have developed largely independently. This article contributes to the field by bringing these bodies of scholarship into dialogue and advancing a conceptual framework through which teacher identity, perceived credibility, and feedback engagement can be understood as interconnected dimensions of multilingual writing instruction. Accordingly,

this article addresses the following guiding question: How does existing scholarship explain the relationship between students' perceptions of non-native English-speaking teachers of writing and their engagement with instructor feedback in first-year composition classrooms? By critically synthesizing scholarship from composition studies, second language writing, translingualism, and NNEST research, this review identifies areas of consensus, points of tension, and significant gaps in current knowledge while outlining a research agenda for future empirical investigation.

2. Approach to the Literature Review

This article employs a critical literature review to synthesize scholarship situated at the intersection of composition studies, second language writing, translingualism, writing feedback, and NNEST research. Rather than providing an exhaustive bibliographic review, the article examines influential theoretical and empirical studies that explain how students' perceptions of multilingual writing instructors shape assumptions about linguistic authority, instructor credibility, and engagement with feedback. The literature was located through searches of major scholarly databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using combination terms such as “NNEST,” “non-native English-speaking teachers,” “multilingual writing instructors,” “native-speaker ideology,” “instructor credibility,” “writing feedback,” “feedback uptake,” “student perceptions,” and “first-year composition”. The review primarily draws on scholarship published from 2000 to 2025, while incorporating earlier foundational works where necessary to contextualize the development of research on teacher response, native-speaker ideology, the NEST/NNEST distinction, and multilingual writing. Sources were selected for their direct relevance to the article's central concerns with teacher identity, linguistic authority, instructor credibility, and students' engagement with writing feedback, with particular attention to theoretical frameworks and empirical studies that illuminate connections among these areas. The literature was then analyzed to identify recurring themes, areas of consensus, points of tension, and gaps that warrant further investigation. Through this critical synthesis, the article develops a conceptual understanding of how teacher identity, perceived credibility, and feedback engagement intersect while identifying priorities for future empirical research.

I therefore begin with an exploration of the role of feedback in writing instruction. Next, I will address the concept of the native speaker, which lies at the heart of the NEST/NNEST divide. This will be followed by a review of research on the NEST/NNEST distinction. After that, I will discuss how students' views of NNESTs of writing can influence their engagement with feedback provided by NNESTs. This article's final sections advocate for rethinking the NEST/NNEST categorization as a pathway to fostering a more inclusive and linguistically diverse writing classroom.

3. Feedback in Writing Instruction

Feedback plays an important role in revision practices within first-year composition and writing instruction, and a substantial number of studies in broader literature have examined its role in enhancing student writing (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003). It is important to emphasize that, when discussing feedback, I am referring not only to grammar correction but also to feedback on the content and rhetorical aspects of students' writing, as explored in the works of Pearson (2022) and Anson (1989).

Feedback has transformative power, as effective commentary not only guides students in their revisions but also encourages deeper engagement with their writing processes. Nancy Sommers (1982) emphasized that well-crafted comments on students' writing can significantly enhance their final drafts. She noted: “We need to show our students how to seek, in the possibility of revision, the dissonances of discovery—to demonstrate through our comments why new choices would positively transform their texts, and thus to reveal the potential for development inherent in their own writing” (Sommers, 1982, p. 156). Sommers thus viewed feedback as a means of helping students improve their revised work by incorporating fresh ideas, thereby unlocking their latent writing abilities. For instance, through revision, a student might realize that their argument in an essay contradicts evidence provided earlier. This dissonance could lead them to strengthen their argument or rethink their position.

Ellis (1998) contended that negative feedback is helpful if the focus is on the meaning of what the student has written rather than on the form. He was essentially arguing that feedback can strengthen the rhetorical effectiveness of student writing in composition contexts by improving arguments, organization, and overall communicative purpose. Therefore, he appeared to place less emphasis on form, which includes diction,

sentence structure, paragraph organization, general structure, and the use of literary devices.

Hyland and Hyland (2019) also addressed the critical role of feedback in strengthening learning. They discussed its vital role in a process-based, scaffolding learning approach to composition in the context of second language writing. In fact, feedback has long been recognized as central to revision and writing development in composition studies. Research consistently showed that meaningful engagement with instructor feedback can strengthen rhetorical awareness, organization, and overall writing effectiveness (Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). While these studies demonstrate the importance of feedback in writing development, they pay comparatively less attention to how students' perceptions of instructors may influence whether feedback is trusted, interpreted seriously, or applied during revision. Because students' engagement with feedback is shaped partly by perceptions of teacher credibility and authority, it is important to examine the NEST/NNEST distinction and the language ideologies surrounding the concept of the native speaker.

4. The Notion of the Native Speaker

The concept of the native speaker has long been debated. Some scholars view it as an innate linguistic characteristic (Chomsky, 1965), a category tied to geography (Kachru, 1990), or a construct shaped by political and economic forces (Trimbur, 2008). Others regard it as a myth (Paikeday, 1985) or as a concept that exists ambiguously between myth and reality (Davies, 2004). Writing studies, FYC scholarship, and applied linguistics increasingly challenge the legitimacy of this category, arguing that definitions of "native" are arbitrary (Ruecker & Ives, 2015) and reinforce linguistic hierarchies and biases (Canagarajah, 2013). Yet, as Horner et al. (2011) argued, professional contexts often require flexible language use, not native-like proficiency. This challenges the emphasis on standard English in academic and workplace settings.

The concept of the "native speaker" has been widely critiqued as unstable, exclusionary, and tied to broader linguistic hierarchies. Scholars in writing studies and applied linguistics increasingly argue that native-speakerism privileges certain Englishes while marginalizing multilingual instructors and alternative forms of linguistic expertise (Canagarajah, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Such critiques expose how the NEST/NNEST binary disadvantages NNESTs of writing and narrows students' understanding of what constitutes legitimate or credible English instruction. This has important pedagogical implications, particularly in multilingual classrooms, where linguistic biases can influence how students engage with instructor feedback, often to the detriment of their writing development. These critiques of the native-speaker concept have led many scholars to question the assumptions underlying the traditional NEST/NNEST distinction.

5. Challenging the Native and Non-Native Teacher Binary

Many scholars are opposed to the NESTs/NNESTs division which they find to be discriminatory and sometimes racist, especially in cases where hiring of teachers for writing instruction is restricted to only Whites. Fithriani (2018) wrote about these discriminatory practices thus:

While more studies are needed to investigate discrimination in terms of race and income gap made by NESTs and NNESTs, this literature review has also proven that discrimination in ELT industry is sometimes racist, which gives employment opportunity to White people regardless their status as native- or non-native English speakers (p. 752).

Fithriani's perspective seems to be evolving from a simple binary outlook of NESTs versus NNESTs to an understanding that incorporates intersectionality, particularly when linking the issue of discrimination to race. Moussu (2018) also problematized the NEST/NNEST dichotomy and described how its negative effects have global implications for English language teaching, implications that can also be extended to writing instruction:

In spite of these new perspectives, and although as many as 80% of the world's English teachers are non-native English speakers, the myth of the perfect native speaker still holds strong, and a great number of ESL and EFL schools across the world still advertise teaching positions "for native speakers only." These practices are now seen as discriminatory, and the native/non-native dichotomy (or "native speaker fallacy" as it is sometimes called) is still discussed, researched, and criticized by linguists, TESOL scholars, and language professionals... (p. 2).

According to Moussu, the NEST/NNEST distinction can significantly shape how NNESTs construct their professional identities. Many multilingual instructors report feeling continual pressure to prove their linguistic competence, particularly in environments where native-speaker norms are treated as the standard of legitimacy. These pressures may affect classroom confidence, relationships with colleagues, and interactions with students, especially in contexts where perceptions of authority are closely tied to language background and accent.

Turning away from the definition and notion of a native speaker and the problematic nature of the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, I will now highlight some of the challenges faced by NNESTs of writing in U.S. colleges. Although much of this scholarship emerges from TESOL and global English language teaching contexts, similar forms of linguistic and racial bias have also been documented in U.S. college writing programs.

The discrimination faced by NNESTs is not limited to classroom interactions or hiring practices; it is also embedded in the language and categories used to describe teachers themselves. In light of the biases identified by Moussu, some scholars have documented specific forms of discrimination they face in writing programs at U.S. colleges. For instance, Indira Karamcheti (1993) drew on her experience as a freshman composition teaching assistant to describe the prejudices that minorities face as college instructors. Her work examined how race and ethnicity clashed with her authority as an instructor in the classroom. She expressed her disapproval of the way students were astonished and doubtful of her competence because of her ethnic background. Her work demonstrated how race and ethnicity may weaken the authority of an instructor in the classroom due to stereotypes. Karamcheti's firsthand experience in a predominantly White institution was therefore an indication of how students' perceptions of teachers can have pedagogical implications. What was striking about Karamcheti's experience was that the prejudice NNESTs of writing face came from different angles: from students in the classroom, from some colleagues, and from hiring managers. Additional evidence of discrimination against NNESTs of writing in the U.S. was presented in a study by Ruecker et al. (2018) that examined the prejudices held by students, hiring managers, and colleagues in U.S. colleges, revealing insights into the relationship between race and native speakerism.

The issue of the NEST and NNEST dichotomy, rooted in the notion of the native speaker, has long shaped how English language teachers are perceived and evaluated. This division has led to perceptions among both teachers and students regarding NESTs and NNESTs. Generally, the perceptions of students and teachers regarding NNESTs of writing have not been very favorable, and in some cases, their competence has been questioned. For this reason, many scholars today view the NEST and NNEST distinction as discriminatory, racialized, and biased (see Ruecker et al., 2018; Fithriani, 2018). Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized that the NEST/NNEST distinction cannot be understood solely through language proficiency because it intersects with race, nationality, gender, institutional status, and broader structures of power (Selvi et al., 2024). Rather than functioning as a neutral linguistic classification, the dichotomy often shapes how teachers are perceived professionally and socially within educational contexts. These intersecting assumptions help explain why NNESTs of writing may encounter skepticism about their authority and expertise even when they possess strong pedagogical qualifications and extensive teaching experience.

Research directly establishes that teacher identity and native-speaker ideologies can shape students' perceptions of linguistic authority and instructor credibility (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Rezvani & Miri, 2021). However, the literature offers considerably less direct evidence concerning how these perceptions affect students' engagement with or uptake of feedback from NNESTs of writing, particularly in first-year composition (FYC). Drawing on scholarship across NNEST research, writing studies, and feedback research, this review therefore proposes a theoretically plausible relationship among these dimensions: students' perceptions of teacher identity may shape perceptions of authority and credibility, which may, in turn, influence their willingness to trust, engage with, and apply instructor feedback during revision. This relationship should be understood as a conceptual proposition emerging from the synthesis rather than as an established causal pathway. The review thus identifies the need for empirical research that directly examines whether and how perceptions of NNESTs of writing influence students' feedback engagement and uptake in FYC.

Defining instructors through the label "non-native" may implicitly frame them in terms of deficiency rather than expertise, reinforcing skepticism about their authority despite strong pedagogical qualifications. While these theoretical critiques expose the ideological limitations of the NEST/NNEST binary, it is equally important to examine how students themselves perceive native and non-native instructors in educational settings.

6. Studies Demonstrating the Complementary Strengths of NESTs and NNESTs

Studies comparing NESTs and NNESTs often reveal complementary strengths rather than clear superiority of one group over another (Mahboob, 2004; Park & Shin, 2010). Other studies (e.g., Al Seweed, 2012; Çakir & Demir, 2013; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014) further analyzed the contrasting strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs. A recurring trend in all these studies was the perception of NNESTs as less proficient in teaching speaking, listening, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. These perceptions are particularly significant in first-

year writing contexts, where students' willingness to trust instructor feedback can shape revision practices and broader writing development. As a result, assumptions about linguistic authority may influence not only classroom attitudes but also how students engage with the feedback process itself. Because feedback in first-year writing classrooms depends heavily on students' trust in instructor expertise, questions of identity and authority inevitably become questions of credibility and feedback uptake. Although scholarship on NNESTs has documented students' perceptions of multilingual instructors and feedback research has examined factors that shape students' engagement with teacher comments, these two bodies of literature have rarely been brought into direct conversation. As a result, little is known about how perceptions of NNESTs specifically influence students' willingness to trust, interpret, and apply writing feedback during revision. This gap is particularly significant because feedback uptake represents one of the primary mechanisms through which students develop as writers. These studies on students' perceptions become particularly important when considered alongside research on feedback uptake in first-year writing classrooms.

7. How Teacher Identity Disrupts Feedback Uptake and Engagement in NNEST Contexts

In FYC classrooms, feedback is a deliberate communicative and rhetorical act that depends on how it is delivered, who delivers it, and how it is received. Consequently, perceptions of teacher identity can shape students' views of instructor authority, which then influences whether feedback is perceived as credible and worth engaging with during revision. According to Winstone et al., (2017), students' willingness to act on feedback is influenced by how credible they perceive the feedback provider to be. When the source is seen as knowledgeable, experienced, and attentive, learners are more likely to accept and apply the feedback. In writing instruction, however, perceptions of knowledge and expertise are often shaped not only by pedagogy but also by assumptions about linguistic identity and native-speaker status. They further noted that studies in other disciplines, including medical education, demonstrate that a lack of perceived credibility often leads students to ignore or dismiss otherwise useful feedback. However, the applicability of these findings to FYC remains uncertain. Existing feedback scholarship has extensively examined the characteristics of effective feedback, yet comparatively little research has investigated how students' perceptions of instructors' linguistic identities shape the reception and uptake of that feedback. This omission is especially important in multilingual writing classrooms, where assumptions about language proficiency and authority may influence students' responses to instructional guidance.

As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of writing feedback in U.S. college composition is not only a matter of pedagogical soundness but also one of perception, particularly how students perceive the authority and credibility of their instructors. Student trust and engagement with feedback cannot be separated from their perceptions of teacher identity. As Brandmo and Gamlem (2025) explained, “trust, respect, and teacher engagement” are moderating factors in whether students accept or act upon feedback (p. 28). While this suggests that the ethos of the teacher, their perceived credibility and authority, plays a pivotal role in rhetorical uptake of feedback, it also implies that the act of giving feedback is never neutral; it is always filtered through social assumptions about who holds authority, particularly in matters of language. For NNESTs of writing, these perceptions are often shaped by linguistic and racial biases that interfere with how their feedback is received and used.

Research has shown that students often perceive NNESTs of writing as less competent due to entrenched linguistic ideologies and native-speaker biases (Matsuda, 2006; Wang-Hiles, 2024). When students approach feedback with such a skewed perception, they may be less likely to process it seriously or internalize it as credible. Thus, feedback becomes a socially mediated rhetorical act, entangled in the relations of power shaped by trust, language ideology, and teacher identity. Lee and Schallert (2008) argued that trust is a key element in the teacher–student relationship and suggested that it can be particularly difficult to establish when the instructor is a NNEST. This concern is especially pressing in U.S. composition classrooms, where many first-year students may have limited exposure to linguistic diversity among instructors. These tensions surrounding identity, authority, and credibility were also evident in my own experience teaching FYC in the United States, where I occasionally observed subtle hesitation from students during feedback interactions.

Drawing on classroom experiences shared by NNESTs in American composition classrooms, we see how student bias can obstruct meaningful engagement with pedagogically sound feedback. Wang-Hiles (2024), for instance, recounted that, despite being described as a “good teacher,” some students expressed regret that “she is Chinese” or doubted her English fluency without any evidence of communicative issues (p. 115). She identified

these remarks as racially and linguistically discriminatory, and they point to the deeper problem: even when students follow NNEST feedback, they may do so mechanically, without reflecting on its value. When students engage with feedback mechanically, without reflection, they miss the opportunity to strengthen essential academic writing skills such as clarity, critical thinking, argumentation, and proper citation, which are developed through a process of drafting, receiving feedback, and revising.

This tension between perceived instructional effectiveness and doubts about linguistic legitimacy reveals how questions of identity and authority shape students' engagement with feedback. One student in Wang-Hiles' study confessed, "I learned new things from you, but I found it hard to take the grammatical criticism from someone who is not a native to the language" (p. 121). This account provides particularly direct evidence for the relationship proposed in this review because the student simultaneously recognizes the instructional value of the feedback and questions the instructor's legitimacy as a source of grammatical knowledge on the basis of linguistic identity. In other words, the student's response suggests that perceptions of nativeness may shape receptiveness to feedback even when students acknowledge that the feedback itself is useful. This evidence differs from studies that document general student perceptions of NNESTs or assumptions about their linguistic competence without examining how those perceptions affect students' responses to instructor feedback (e.g., Mahboob, 2004; Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Although a single student's account cannot establish a causal relationship between perceptions of linguistic identity and feedback uptake, it offers a concrete illustration of how native-speaker ideologies may influence students' willingness to accept feedback from NNESTs of writing. The contrast between this direct evidence and the broader perception studies supports the need for further empirical research examining whether and how instructor identity, perceived credibility, and feedback engagement are connected in FYC.

To further exemplify the power of perception of teacher identity, consider the telling account of Xuan Zheng, a NNEST of writing in the U.S. Her students questioned her competence based solely on her ethnicity, asking, "Isn't she Chinese? Can she teach us English?" (Zheng, 2025, p. 29). This reaction reveals how deeply the NEST/NNEST dichotomy is embedded in student consciousness. More importantly, it demonstrates how assumptions about teacher identity can weaken perceptions of authority and credibility, thereby limiting students' willingness to engage meaningfully with feedback. It is not just a casual assumption, but a deeply internalized bias that shapes attitudes and behaviors in the classroom. When credibility is weakened by racialized or linguistic assumptions, the trust necessary for meaningful pedagogical dialogue also becomes more difficult to sustain. Consistent with Paulo Freire's (2014) emphasis on dialogic trust, meaningful learning depends on relationships grounded in mutual respect and confidence between teachers and students. When students question the linguistic authority or credibility of NNESTs of writing, these conditions are weakened, making them less likely to engage meaningfully with instructor feedback. Zheng's (2025) account illustrates how skepticism toward multilingual instructors can undermine the trust necessary for productive feedback interactions and writing development.

The consequences of these biases are not just theoretical; they are pedagogically significant. A hierarchy positioning NNESTs as less authoritative results in students devaluing feedback from these instructors. When feedback is ignored or dismissed, students lose a crucial opportunity for development during the revision process. This was illustrated in a study by Beach (1979), who compared the effects of teacher evaluation (i.e., feedback), guided self-evaluation, and no evaluation on student writing. The results showed that writing feedback led to the most significant improvements in final drafts. In contrast, students who revised without feedback or with only self-guidance made less substantial progress. Yet, despite the proven value of writing feedback, many students remain skeptical of comments provided by NNESTs of writing. A study by Tsou and Chen (2019) found that almost a third of participants reported negative experiences with feedback provided by NNESTs of writing, claiming that these teachers had given wrong or incorrect feedback due to their limited English language proficiency.

Considering these findings, the question remains: Can students meaningfully engage with feedback from NNESTs of writing, or will entrenched biases continue to undermine this critical aspect of writing instruction? While there is no single answer, what is clear is that feedback must be understood not only as pedagogical input but as a rhetorical interaction shaped by structural issues of trust, identity, and social perception. If perceptions of linguistic authority shape students' engagement with feedback, then the implications extend beyond individual classroom interactions to wider questions of inclusion, equity, and linguistic diversity in writing programs.

8. Fostering Inclusivity and Linguistic Diversity

The persistence of the NEST/NNEST divide has important implications for efforts to create inclusive FYC classrooms and writing programs that value linguistic diversity and support both teachers and students. The classification shapes how instructors are perceived and how their expertise is recognized within institutional contexts, often privileging native speakers while marginalizing multilingual instructors (Matsuda, 1999; Tseptsura, 2024; Tseptsura & Ruecker, 2024). For NNESTs of writing, such categorizations may influence professional identity and self-perception, while also shaping students' expectations and attitudes toward their instructors. At the programmatic level, the distinction can also influence how teaching assignments and responsibilities are interpreted within writing programs.

When the NEST/NNEST distinction remains unexamined, it may continue to reproduce forms of marginalization within academic spaces. For instance, research has shown that such classifications can reinforce stereotypes about linguistic authority and expertise (Rudolph, 2018). Students' perceptions of instructors' linguistic identities may also influence their engagement with feedback and classroom participation; negative perceptions, in particular, have been associated with reduced behavioral and emotional engagement (Voeun et al., 2020). In this way, assumptions embedded in the NEST/NNEST dichotomy can indirectly shape students' writing development and larger academic experiences.

At the same time, overlooking the contributions of instructors with diverse linguistic backgrounds may limit the range of pedagogical perspectives available in multilingual classrooms. Researchers have emphasized that NNESTs often draw on rich linguistic and cultural resources that can inform their teaching practices and interactions with students (Khor et al., 2024). These perspectives may be particularly valuable in contexts where writing classrooms increasingly reflect multilingual and transnational realities. Maintaining rigid distinctions between NESTs and NNESTs may therefore constrain efforts within the field to recognize and engage with multiple Englishes and diverse linguistic repertoires. These classroom-level experiences are also shaped by institutional and disciplinary structures that influence how linguistic authority is constructed in higher education.

Institutional structures, professional cultures, and disciplinary discourses shape how linguistic identities and expertise are understood in writing programs. Hiring practices, professional development, and classroom interactions can either reinforce or challenge linguistic hierarchies. At the same time, multilingual instructors bring valuable perspectives that enrich writing instruction and support more inclusive pedagogical environments (Song & Del Castillo, 2015). Recognizing NNESTs' expertise is therefore both a matter of equity and an important resource for multilingual writing classrooms.

9. Conclusion

This critical literature review brings together scholarship on composition studies, second language writing, translingualism, feedback, and NNEST research to propose a conceptual relationship among teacher identity, perceived authority and credibility, and students' engagement with writing feedback. Existing research demonstrates that native-speaker ideologies and the NEST/NNEST distinction can shape perceptions of multilingual teachers' linguistic and professional competence. However, considerably less research has directly examined whether and how these perceptions influence students' receptiveness to feedback from NNESTs of writing, particularly in FYC. The review therefore does not claim an established causal pathway. Rather, it identifies a theoretically plausible relationship in which perceptions of teacher identity may shape perceptions of authority and credibility, which may, in turn, influence how students trust, engage with, and apply instructor feedback during revision. This conceptual relationship provides a basis for further empirical investigation.

Several directions for future research emerge from this review. First, empirical studies are needed to examine whether students respond differently to identical feedback when they believe it comes from a NEST versus a NNEST. Second, researchers should investigate how race, accent, nationality, and multilingual identity intersect in shaping perceptions of instructor credibility. Third, longitudinal studies could explore whether students' perceptions of NNESTs change over the course of a semester and how such changes affect feedback uptake and revision practices. Finally, research examining classroom interventions designed to challenge native-speaker ideologies could provide valuable insight into strategies for fostering more equitable and productive feedback environments.

Writing programs can play an important role in challenging the assumptions embedded within the NEST/NNEST dichotomy. Programs can prepare students to engage critically with linguistic diversity by incorporating discussions of language variation, World Englishes, and multilingualism into writing courses.

They can also support NNESTs of writing through equitable hiring, mentorship, and professional development practices that recognize multilingualism as an intellectual and pedagogical resource rather than a deficit. Composition programs can further draw on translanguaging approaches that foreground rhetorical effectiveness, critical thinking, and audience awareness rather than narrow assumptions about native-speaker norms. Although this review draws substantially on U.S. composition scholarship, the questions it raises about linguistic authority, instructor credibility, and feedback extend to multilingual ESL and EFL contexts more broadly. Ultimately, examining these relationships can help the field move beyond questions of who qualifies as a legitimate English user toward a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic diversity shapes the teaching and learning of writing.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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