

Native and Non Native English Speakers In TEFL

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Abstract:

This research is about comparing the differences between (NEST) and (NNEST) in teaching behaviors, language backgrounds, qualifications and relevant teaching experience .

It also attempts to exhibit the advantages and disadvantages of being taught by Native and Non-native English speaking teacher .

Introduction :

Possessing the ability of speaking a language does not necessarily give the ability of teaching it . In fact teaching a language requires special preparation and qualifications .

Some people believe that foreign languages should only be taught by native speakers . Therefore, they prefer to be taught by (NESTs) even if they have no experience or training in language teaching . This is especially commonplace among teaching English as a Foreign Language .

Also many English (TEFL) institutions maintain that their students place greater value on learning from a native English-speaking teacher (NESTs) than from a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNESTs) .

However, In This research I will try to present a convincing argument that might disprove the fallacy that a native English speaking teacher is the best person to teach English as a foreign language .

Limitations of the Study :

In such study, researcher needs many participants and a lot of time for conducting interviews, thus I found it difficult to do so. It was also difficult to find many NESTs in my place. Another obstacle that I faced is the lack of references of prior research studies .

Significance of the research :

People's viewpoints toward this subject vary from one to another. Some people believe that native speakers of English are better teachers and trainers while others do not .

Knowing the right viewpoint is very important for improving EFL teaching approach. Therefore , this research is to analyze their differences in order to prove that non-native teachers have some advantages which should be taken into account .

Research Questions :

Questions that will be raised throughout this research are :

- What are the differences in teaching behavior between (NESTs) and (NNESTs) ?
- Are Native speakers better English teachers than Non-native speakers ?

Research Methodology :

I conducted some interviews with NEST and NNEST , and here are some thoughts on the discussion which I got as a result of the interviews :

[Tony Singleton states that :](#)

The advantage of NEST is that he will use correct pronunciation and stress and his vocabulary is more extensive . He will also bring with him a wealth of cultural knowledge .

While the disadvantage is that the NEST will have a hard time explaining the grammar because the students will not understand his explanation in English .

Another disadvantage is that the NEST will not be familiar with local customs and traditions and this may create barriers between the students and the teacher .

The advantage of NNEST is that he is able to predict hurdles when students might face when learning the target language and contrasting some grammar rules and sentence structure of the two languages which adult learners find helpful .

As for the disadvantages, students will always try to use their native language with their teacher, if they share the same one, which would compromise the learning experience .

So, each one will teach in a way that is acceptable in his culture, and I can say that the NEST has more advantages, provided that he is properly trained as a teacher .

Edward Hutchinson states that :

NEST knows through experience the subtleties and nuances of the language .

But it is more difficult for NEST to know whether students understand or not .

NNEST will be better at teaching the lower levels of English . But at higher levels he will face a difficulty knowing what is implied over what is spoken .

I cannot claim that NEST better than NNEST at all, but I can say that NEST offer more advantages to students than NNEST especially if he is highly qualified .

Rafiq Abdulaleem states that :

The possible advantages of NEST are :

- Learning accurate pronunciation and proper English communication skills .
- Learning language related to English culture and customs .

Possible disadvantages :

Native speakers of any language are able to communicate in their native tongue naturally. So, sometimes they are not very familiar with all the grammar rules related. This could be a disadvantage, for students; if the teacher, who is a native speaker, does not familiarize himself with the grammar lesson before coming to class.

Possible advantages of NNEST :

Non-native speakers of English have to study a lot of grammar when learning the language, in order to understand how it works and how to use it properly. So, they are more familiar than native speakers with the actual rules. This only means less preparation, for grammar lessons, before class.

Possible disadvantages :

a- Pronunciation

It may be difficult to understand if the teacher is not pronouncing words correctly or speaks with a heavy unclear accent. Students may struggle in the beginning but after a while grow accustomed to how the teacher speaks. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, as it is important for language students to be exposed to different dialects, accents and ways of pronunciation.

b- Teaching language related to English culture and customs

A non-native speaker of English may not be that familiar with all cultural aspects of the language. So, as a teacher may run into a few difficult questions here and there. This is not a real problem if he takes the time to learn about these things, depending on the needs of the students.

However, the true measurement of a language instructor is his training experience in the field and ability to address the needs of the students. The disadvantages for both NEST and NNEST, mentioned above, can easily be dealt with if the teacher prepares well for lessons and constantly updates his knowledge and methods of teaching the subject.

[Mazin Al Dawood states that :](#)

Definitely a NEST is a better teacher than a NNEST provided that he is specialized in English literature .

However, what happens in some educational institutes is that many teachers, namely foreign teachers, did not study English literatures .

Yes, I do agree that they speak English fluently because their mother tongue is English, but that does not mean that they are successful teachers

. in other words, I am an Arab and I can speak and write a good Arabic, but I cannot teach Arabic because I did not study Arabic linguistics and literatures .

Another important point is communication with students . An effective communication is an integral part of being a teacher . So, the whole issue is about being professional in English literature and about possessing the ability of communication with learners .

Dr. Khalid Atwa states that :

Learning a language is not an easy process at all because it demands main skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking as well as good interactive communication with others. Regarding Non-Native Teachers of English and when teaching English mostly for Bi-Lingual students, we think that it is very important particularly the preliminary stages i.e. Beginners to be taught by a Non- Native English Teacher because this will impact to a greater extent to what we call anti-cultural concussion. Comparative Linguistics and Grammar seem to be very essential to formulate a good understanding of the language. This will be of a great benefit. On the other side, I do agree that Native Teachers can contribute to a greater extent in improving the skills of listening and speaking but only for advanced level students who by now, can work skillfully on the techniques of the language and can easily communicate

with foreign teachers. Let me set an example, in Japan , it is not easy to learn English for those who use it for the first time, but where there is a professional Japanese English Teacher who can convey the message of learning to his students more perfectly.

However, we do agree that both Native and Non-Native English Teachers are on demand for a perfect learning process at a time when everyone can understand the language skills properly.

[Haidar A. Al hasan states that :](#)

Native speakers and non-native speakers of English, both, have their advantages and disadvantages as teachers of English .

Advantages of having a native speaker of English as a teacher includes :

- 1- Receiving authentic pronunciation of vocabulary and language in general .
- 2- This teacher enjoys a richer repertoire of vocabulary and expressions.
- 3- This teacher has a better command of language.
- 4- Students are often forced to speak in the target language with a native speaking teacher.

Advantages of a non-native speaking teacher :

- 1- Having a better understanding of students' culture.
- 2- Being able to realize similarities and differences between the first and target language; the opportunities of interference and useful transfer .
- 3- Being someone who has experienced learning a language; so, he can help students learn the target language .

However, being a good teacher has nothing to do with being a native or non-native speaker of the target language .

Literature Review :

Peter Medgyes (1992) argued that NNESTs should have the same chance of becoming successful teachers as NESTs .

In the book “When the Teacher is a Non-native Speaker” (P. 436) by Peter Medgyes in *Teaching English as Second or Foreign Language*. Medgyes reviews some of the literature and current discussions about this complex issue.

Medgyes lists six general pedagogical advantages exhibited by NNESTs. Namely, they can :

1. provide a better learner model .
2. teach language-learning strategies more effectively;
3. supply more information about the English language;
4. better anticipate and prevent language difficulties;
5. be more sensitive to their students;
6. benefit from their ability to use the students’ mother tongue”

In my opinion, this can be accepted only when they are aware of their deficiencies and consequently improve their proficiencies .

Phillipson (1992) uses the phrase “the native speaker fallacy” to refer to unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs.

In his book "Linguistic imperialism." (P.195) He states that a teacher is not adequately qualified to teach a language merely because it is his mother tongue . It is therefore arguable, as a general principle, that NNESTs may in fact be better qualified than native speakers, if they have gone through the laborious process of acquiring English as a second language and if they have insight into the linguistic and cultural needs of their learners .

Expected Results :

Due to the contrasting viewpoints it might be a little bit difficult to expect the results precisely . But from the little information which I presented in this research, it can be concluded that there are significant advantages to both native and non-native English teachers . Therefore, one is not necessarily better than the other.

In terms of pronunciation, I think students can greatly benefit from exposure to all sorts of accents so he will be able to understand English speakers of a very wide variety of origins. The majority of English speakers in the world are non-native speakers of English, and at the end, students should be prepared to be able to interact in English in the real world .

Native English speakers might be better for teaching high levels but i think it is important that beginners start learning the language with non-native speakers who speak their own language because they will feel more comfortable, encouraged and enthusiastic .

Moreover, qualifications and experience matter more than being native or non-native. So if a person has the skill and the right education, he will be an excellent teacher .

Ethical Considerations :

Works Cited

The included thoughts are for the following participants :

Tony Singleton a (NEST) teaching at the International House institute .

Edward Hutchinson a (NEST) teaching at the International House institute .

Rafiq Abdulaleem a (NEST) teaching at Jubail Industrial College .

Mazin Al Dawood a (NNEST) teaching at Jubail Industrial College .

Dr. Khalid Atwa a (NNEST) and head of the English Department at Al Khafji Joint Operations .

Haidar A. Al hasan a (NNEST) teaching at Ahsa College of Technology .

References :

Medgyes, P. (2001). When the teacher is a non-native speaker. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd ed., p. 436). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Phillipson, R. (1992). "Linguistic imperialism." Oxford: Oxford University Press.(p.195)