
The Effect of Native English-Speaking Teachers on the Language Acquisition of EFL Learners

Mofareh Alqahtani

King Khaled Military Academy, Civilian Studies, English Department, Riyadh Saudi Arabia.

*Corresponding author email id: mqahtani2004@yahoo.com

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Abstract – The favouring of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to instruct Arab students in the core English language skills of reading, writing and conversation has sparked considerable controversy among official stake-holders, academia, and interested commentators. Supporters of this trend take the view that a qualified EFL teacher working in the medium of the mother-tongue offers the most efficient and accurate language delivery. Such teachers are also generally perceived to be more highly trained and conversant with relevant EFL teaching technologies. As living representatives of their culture and society, native-speaker teachers are also thought to impact learner attitudes more positively than their non native counterparts. However, critics of the trend firmly reject these assertions. On the contrary, they maintain that native English-speaking teachers cannot secure the desired learning results due to the wide variation of social factors which pose challenges to ‘foreign’ teachers, such as student inability to understand the language of instruction, teacher difficulty in engaging with the prevailing educative customs and content, and regional linguistic and socio-cultural barriers. In light of these ongoing debates, the current study sought to determine the factors which influence the success of EFL instruction by native English-speaking teachers and/or impacted their ability to achieve the desired results. The research adopted a descriptive methodological approach with subsequent data analysis. This paper presents a clear statement of the problem, core questions and importance of the study, and the main objectives. The hypotheses and methodology are also fully elucidated along with the research findings, and summative recommendations for research in the field are suggested. The study concluded that the native English-speaking EFL teacher outperforms domestic counterparts for a number of reasons. The study also found that the NEST methodology and style best align to the learning requirements and needs of contemporary EFL students. The paper concluded that the effectiveness of the English-speaking teacher lies in the authenticity of instruction through the mother tongue and an enhanced knowledge and experience of applying modern educational methods. The survey results demonstrated widespread student satisfaction with the native English-speaking teacher in terms of consistent improvement and progress in their English language skills. The native English-speaking teacher was found to depend on teaching methods which include teaching in the original language, the introduction of modern technology means, and periodic student dialogue seminars to maximize student confidence and the timely acquisition of EFL skills. While the invaluable experience of the native English-speaking teacher remains largely limited to private schools and educational institutions to date, it is held that such expertise would be of equal learner benefit within the public education sector. The data collected from a random sample of students confirmed that 75%-95% preferred an English-speaking teacher and 70%-85% were completely satisfied with the performance of their current English-speaking teacher. Only 5%-25% responded poorly to foreign instructors. Native English-speaking teaching methods were also well-received by 70%-80% of the participants; in stark contrast to the 20%-30% who were dissatisfied with such approaches. Finally, data collected regarding the satisfactory learning of English skills through NESTs, recorded ratios of 65%-90%, while students taught by domestic teachers recorded ratios of 10%-35%. In short, the statistics and ratios derived from this study demonstrate a marked differential in favor of the English-speaking teacher.

Keywords – Language, Native Speaker Teachers of English, Non Native-Speaker Teachers of English, Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The English language now enjoys a privileged global status and has achieved undisputed linguistic dominance

as a result of its absorption, malleability, multiple register options, and vast vocabulary. Since English language proficiency is no longer a merely desirable addition, but rather a social and professional prerequisite then, the prevailing issue of low EFL student achievement has become something of an obsession for Arab education stakeholders. In light of this, the use of a native English-speaking teacher in tandem with a local teacher is now deemed necessary to properly develop the language competencies and skills of learners studying English as a Second Language (ESL) Alghofaili, N. M., & Elyas, T. (2017).

While it is self-evident that such teachers have the advantage of expertise in their mother-tongue, the majority are also highly qualified and accredited professionals, as certified by TEFT (Teaching English as a Second Language) and/or the TKT (Cambridge Test of English Teaching Knowledge). In addition to undergoing specialized teacher training and the accumulation of practical experience, such teachers also demonstrate a knowledge ability and openness to contemporary pedagogies and teaching aids. In short, the native English-speaking teacher outperforms the domestic teacher because he operates within his mother-tongue while the local teacher toils in his second foreign language. Thus, the present study proposes a wide variation in favour of the native English-speaker teacher.

Since they now maintain that the pressurised English learning process cannot be properly completed without specialist expertise, many Arab educational institutions seek the assistance of native English-speaking teachers as a means to instruct non-native counterparts in their teaching philosophies and strategies. Nonetheless, a number of education experts purport that the arguments which support non-national teaching in schools are largely anecdotal and stress that such experiments are yet to yield any significant long-term benefits. Indeed, they point out that the original aim of using such teachers to elevate student achievement in the English language remains as yet unrealised due to intrinsic linguistic difficulties and socio-cultural barriers. In light of these contentious and ongoing debates, this study considers the advantages, disadvantages, and various additional factors which influence the use of native English-speaking teachers Al-Shara, I. (2015).

II. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- *Judgments of oral proficiency by non-native and native English speaking teacher raters: Competing or complementary constructs?*

Ying Zhang (2010)

This paper reports on the findings of an empirical study on ESL/EFL teachers' evaluations and interpretations of oral English proficiency as elicited by the national College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) of China. As such, it is informed by debates on the issue of native speaker (NS) norms which have come to the fore in recent years.

- *Native and Non-Native English speaking Instructing Styles and Students' Achievement*

Richards, Platt & Platt (1992)

The *Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics* characterized native language as the language learned at an early age. In a similar vein, Phillipson (1992) observed native subjects as the pattern of "standard grammar and vocabulary which teaching materials and sound recordings seek to reanimate". He went on to consider the talent of "demonstrating fluent, idiomatically appropriate language, in appreciating the cultural connotations of the language" (p. 194).

- *The Effect of Native Speaker Teachers of English on the Attitudes and Achievements of Learners*

Dr. Ismet Sahin (2005)

While the use of native English-speaking teachers has been a subject of controversy for some time, it has emerged that individual school objectives in hiring such teachers can differ. Some of the most important considerations, particularly in the context of Turkey, are boosting student enrollments and competing with similar institutions. In fact, Ardo (1997) stated that the director of a certain “big business” English language institution “encouraged” an experienced and over-qualified non-native English teacher to apply for a position.

- *Native and Non-native English Speaking Teachers’ Teaching Styles and Their Effect on Their EFL Saudi Students’ Achievement and Enjoyment of Learning English at Taif University*

Nasrah Mahmoud Ismaiel (2017)

This study assessed the discrepancies between native and non-native instructors working at Taif University. The subjects comprised 609 Saudi men and women EFL learners registered for preparatory year Science, Humanities and Health. Fifty-one teachers (20 males and 31 females) from the Taif University English Language Centre (TUELC) also agreed to take part. The research followed a descriptive analytical method using the Conti (1990) Principles of Adult Learning Scales (PALS). A ‘Learning English Enjoyment Questionnaire’ (LEEQ) was also devised and applied by the researcher.

III. THE PROBLEM

The fundamental research problem rests in determining the effectiveness of using the native English-speaking teacher (NEST) rather than a non-native teacher (NNEST) as a means to ascertain whether this fulfils the aim of elevating the low standard of student attainment in English language skills. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider individual methods of instruction, identify discrepancies in curriculum development, explore how teachers interact with students, and overall student performance (Conti, 1989, p. 88). Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) demonstrated that instructors’ native characteristics and presuppositions have no observable effect on the EFL Saudi learners’ acquisition methods, but rather attributed teaching success to such factors as competence and experience, enabling the L1 learner to fully engage in the EFL acquisition process, and individual instructors’ accent and personality.

Mahboob (2004) and Walkinshaw & Oanh (2014) maintain that NESTs may be perceived as superior instructors of reading, writing, grammar, and language-learning tasks on the basis of their social realization and metalinguistic capability. However, ring-fencing the merits and demerits of using the NEST via specific variables proved that the overall English student proficiency outcomes did not meet the anticipated levels of achievement. In this context, a number of educational institutions, including those of students and teachers, were surveyed to interrogate the teaching methods, styles, and strategies of English teachers. The final results revealed a number of NEST teachers among the teaching staff of several such establishments.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How effective is the native English-speaking teacher (NEST)?
2. How satisfied are students with, and how do they respond to the NEST?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the NEST?

4. What is the final outcome of comparing the teaching methods of NESTs and NNESTs?
5. What methods and tools are most used by NESTs to teach the English language?
6. Was the experimental use of NESTs conducted widely or limited to specific educational institutions?

V. METHODOLOGY

The study applied a descriptive analytical method based on the sequence of logical ideas to gauge both overall NEST teaching proficiency and the methodologies and strategies which underpin efficient teaching delivery. Thereafter, the researcher adopted a comparison methodology to identify the pros and cons of NEST and NNEST processes of teaching English to non-native speakers.

The participants comprised 5 NESTs and 5 NNESTs in addition to 30 students enrolled in the first level at King Khaled Military Academy. Fifteen of the students were taught by NESTs and 15 by NNESTs. The student age range was 19 to 20 years old.

Data was collected from NESTs and NNEST and students through in-depth semi-structured one-to-one interviews using Internet-based VOIP. The researcher ensured that the NEST and NNEST participants did not teach at the same schools and had no prior knowledge of or affiliation with each other.

VI. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Consideration of issues relating to the competence of NEST when employed.
2. Direct comparison of NEST and NNEST teaching skills in order to determine the optimum EFL teaching delivery and learning outcome.
3. Identification of local student vulnerabilities in order to ascertain whether NESTs are equipped to deal with these challenges.
4. Rating the performance and results of both NEST and NNEST EFL teaching processes.
5. Evaluation of student responses to a foreign teacher and their ability to follow NEST teaching methods.

VII. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The significance of this study rests on its discussion of general teaching issues, and in particular the teaching of English as the second language (ESL) as a vital means of keeping stride with current global developments. Although the English language is now the accepted leader of contemporary communication and knowledge, there is a dearth of studies which address its impact on local and/or regional environments. In this context, the increasing appointment of NESTs is a matter of cultural and social consequence. In addition, several factors governing EFL teaching by NESTs mean that certain educative and pedagogical comparisons are inevitably drawn between NESTs and NNESTs. This study is important in that it properly evaluates the NEST subject in terms of perceived advantages and disadvantages, and analyses the ensuing data to derive logical results which can be applied to achieve desired learning goals.

Technical Terms:

ENGLISH: Language spoken in the UK, the US, and other countries; particularly the American/British form.

NATIVE: Belonging to a particular place by birth.

TEACHER: A professionally trained educator who is engaged to teach a specific subject.

STUDENT: A person formally engaged in learning; especially when enrolled in a school or college.

LANGUAGE: A system of spoken and written communication consisting of sounds and symbols which is used by people of a particular country or region.

VIII. RESULTS

This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the native English-speaking teacher and to analyze the data regarding the pros and cons of the foreign teacher in achieving the desired goals. The results confirmed that NESTs performed better for the reasons previously outlined in this research. The study also revealed that NEST EFL methodologies and teaching strategies more closely align with the needs and requirements of contemporary students. While the current research results may not be currently generalizable to all educational institutions or ESL students, they nonetheless provide valuable insights into the general presentation of English teaching methods which assist students to assimilate better English language skills. The study, which was conducted on a random sample set comprised of students and NESTs, ultimately aims to share the results with all EFL instructors so as to promote the best of both domestic and non-indigenous teaching methods and strategies for every teacher. In fact, the results of the study clearly indicated the NEST approach to be a highly effective and positive method of teaching English as a foreign /second language.

A breakdown of the research results confirmed that 75% to 95% of students were satisfied with NEST teaching as compared to 5% to 25% who reported dissatisfaction. The statistical data found respondents to be even more receptive and enthusiastic to the use of EFL/SFL classroom technology, with 70% to 80% in favour. The surveys further demonstrated that 70% to 85% were completely satisfied with the performance of the English-speaking teacher as opposed to just 5% to 25% who expressed misgivings about foreign instructors. Finally, the data collected regarding satisfaction with the learning English skills in the presence of NEST recorded ratios of 65% to 90%, while those taught by a domestic teacher recorded ratios of 10% to 35%. The overall statistics and ratio derived from this study therefore demonstrate a marked differential in favour of an English-speaking teacher.

IX. DISCUSSION

This study is based on several main axes which identify the issue of employing a native English speaking teacher (NEST) to deliver English teaching to non-native speakers. So far we have summarized the main points in terms of the NEST competence and ability to understand student mentalities and abilities in order to access the English language subject. The second research point is related to the comparison of the NEST and the NNEST in terms of practical and logical performance. The merits and demerits of each take account of the preferences for the NEST due to the features previously outlined.

Prior studies have revealed glaring discrepancies in the levels of student achievement in learning English language skills. Students taught by NESTs are clearly conscious of peers who have been taught by NNESTs due to the local teacher's use of idiomatic language to deliver the course and the use of traditional teaching methods. It is further evident that the NEST frequently encourages students to practice English language through direct

communication with the teacher while the NNEST tends to resort to the local language when students are struggling or supports memorization rather than practice inside or outside classrooms.

As expected, the results confirmed that students graduating from private schools which employ NESTs exceeded the language learning performance of their local school counterparts. Other than positive attitudes toward the levels of student linguistic attainment of foreign school graduates, such correlation values further reveal a number of variables which determine the process of success as follows:

- A native English speaker with a very strong command of English language, cumulative classroom experience and training, and authentic pronunciation, ensure the NEST is the preferred choice of EFL/ESL teacher
- It is evident that language teachers who speak the mother-tongue reflect the desires and needs of today's students. It is critical to consider student attitudes and expectations regarding the provision of authentic and highly-qualified teaching since satisfied and motivated learners arguably assimilate improved grammar, pronunciation, reading, writing, and other language skills, in a more timely and effective way through the contemporary teaching strategies used by NESTs.
- Finally, the interview phase of the study confirms that the NEST approach is best suited to the mentality of the student. This interesting finding is yoked to advanced NEST teaching methods which are supported by intensive training and a distinct style that takes account of students' abilities and needs in terms of grammar, pronunciation, reading and writing, as well as the application of straightforward methods which students find easy to follow. While it is conceded that NNEST teaching method is accessible to students who share the same mother-tongue as the teacher, NESTs also tend to employ realistic teaching methods to convey the frameworks of the English language, and apply various forms of modern technology to assist students to assimilate accurate language skills.

To date, the practice of appointing native English-speaking teachers remains delimited to private educational institutions, but may gradually extend into the public sector in the near future.

NEST - Merits:

- A high degree of competence and teaching expertise due of specialist training.
- Adopts modern teaching methods and strategies which enable the independent learner to derive knowledge and information without constant teacher intervention.
- Correct use of the mother-tongue affords learner opportunities to practice English with a specialized teacher.
- Has the advantage of original mother-tongue pronunciation which improves student accuracy of utterance.
- Understands the meanings and connotations of word-use in multiple contexts.
- Builds confidence between teacher and learner through direct communication in the target language as part of the teaching process.

NEST - Demerits:

- Student inability to understand teaching language compounds potential weaknesses in learning language skills.
- The socio-cultural and linguistic gulf between teacher and student may hinder the process of mutual communication.

- Potential lack of understanding regarding the mentality of local students and lack of cultural context may lead to failure to achieve the desired results.

Comparative Analysis:

Comparative analysis between the native English speaking teacher and the non native English-speaking teacher clearly demonstrates that each has advantages and disadvantages. The principal advantages of the NEST is the ability to speak the English mother-tongue with fluency, confidence, and excellent pronunciation, and enabling learners to acquire living language skills through listening and communication. Moreover it is evident that practicing English with native speakers fosters an authentic and realistic use of vocabulary, a thorough understanding of the culture accompanying the language, a more genuine accent, and accurate pronunciation.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study confirms that the contribution of the native English speaking teachers in stimulating EFL learners by applying appropriate and enjoyable methodologies in terms of style, language strategies, and components, is both skillful and extremely effective. One of the most significant results revealed that NESTs motivate students to better understand and engage with the English language. Moreover, there is a positive shift in student opinion in terms of communication with the native English-speaking teacher. This suggests that attitudes towards the target language may be considered a meaningful barometer of teacher performance and learner achievement. As expected, the findings also confirmed that private schools students currently enjoy significantly better learning outcomes in English than their counterparts in the public education sector.

In light of overall findings, the following actions are recommended:

1. Greater reliance on qualified native English-speaking teachers within the English language teaching process.
2. The status of native English-speaking teachers should align with the needs of students according to the goals and objectives required.
3. Students should be encouraged to communicate with the teacher in order to hone English language skills.
4. Adoption of technological educative means in all its forms in order to motivate both the native English-speaking teacher and student to perform at their best.
5. Provision of a working environment which enables teachers to perform their duties professionally and effectively.

Greater promotion of the English language and emphasis on its value, not only a mandatory school subject, but as a prerequisite for ongoing social and professional life.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Mofareh Alqahtani

King Khaled Military Academy, Civilian Studies, English Department, Riyadh Saudi Arabia. email id: mqahtani2004@yahoo.com