University Students' Perceptions of the Teaching Effectiveness of Native and Nonnative Teachers of English in the Saudi Context

Mohammad A. Alseweed, Ph.D.
Ayman Sabry Daif-Allah, Ph.D.
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Abstract

The present paper addresses the debate comparing the traits of native English speaker teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs). It reports on the design and outcomes of a study carried out in Qassim University with 169 Saudi Preparatory Year Program (PYP) students to obtain a deeper insight into their perceptions of the influence of native and nonnative teachers on the English language classroom.

A triangulation technique was used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data in two stages by means of students' questionnaires and interviews in addition to classroom visits to both groups of teachers.

The results indicated strong significant differences between native and nonnative teachers in teaching specific skill areas, with a significant increasing preference for NESTs over NNESTs as Saudi students move from pre-university to university level. The study concluded that the debate can be discussed only in terms of professionalism rather than nativeness and that a combination of both native and non-native EFL

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teacher would create a healthy and productive learning environment for English language learners in Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

English today has gained international importance and recognition. It has tremendously increased due to the death of distance, the disappearance of many national boundaries, and the prioritization of regional and transnational economies (Liu & Zhang, 2007). On this account, Crystal (2003) observes that there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. The ongoing increase of the world status of English has made English language teaching a major concern for several educationists and students in many parts of the world.

Nativespeakerism has been an issue of debate from the moment English began to be taught internationally. Arguments in favor or against NESTs or NNESTs have been tossed back and forth in previous studies (Medgyes, 1992; Widdowson, 1994; Milambling, 2000; Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001; Al-Issa, 2002; Zughoul, 2003; Madrid, 2004; Bulter, 2007; Wu & Ke 2009; Daif-Allah, 2010).

Laborda (2006) found roughly 1,500 papers discussing EFL teacher's effectiveness with regard to national origin. Despite this huge amount of information and numerous essays, it seems that there is not any way to agree about who the better teacher is according to the single criterion of birth. Luksha & Solovova (2006) claimed that there are competent and incompetent teachers, both native and non-native, and that the debate cannot be discussed only in terms of native/non-native, but trained versus untrained. They believe that a good teacher is one who knows the subject, is willing to share the knowledge, loves the job, and has plenty of patience. For this reason, they suggested that a well-trained, well-educated teacher will always be the best, whatever his/her native language may be.

Research Problem

Mirroring a trend worldwide and following the lead of many international universities, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education has announced that Preparatory Year Programs will become compulsory for most high school graduates who are interested in attending scientific colleges (e.g. Medicine, Pharmacology, Dentistry,

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Engineering, Computer Sciences).One of the main purposes of the Preparatory Year English Programs in Saudi universities is to foster a smooth transition from the Arabic language education environment in the secondary schools to an English medium one in the university setting through developing the English language skills of PYP students prior to starting a college program.

Qassim University launched its centralized PYP for young learners six years ago. It's a nursery and feeder for the different colleges of the university. Qassim University has decided to implement the PYP to support the chances of employment for the scientific college graduates in both private and public sectors by improving their English and computer skills. Towards this end, most universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have now NESTs teach various English courses to students at different levels. In Qassim University, more than 40 native and 30 non-native EFL teachers are working together to help PYP students move smoothly from Arabic language learning environment in their high school to an English medium one at the university.

The recruitment of NESTs of English in several countries around the world where English is a foreign language, combined with an increasing concern over teaching effectiveness, has led to a deeper investigation into teachers' performance through student feedback (Lasagabaster & Sierra,2002; Jin, 2005; Clark & Paran, 2007; Liu & Zhang, 2007; Chen, 2008; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009; McDonald & McRae, 2010). In the Saudi context, not much research has been carried out to assess the classroom teaching outcomes of both NESTs and NNESTs. Therefore, this study intends to investigate PYP students' perceptions of their native and nonnative EFL teachers to identify how each type of teachers can facilitate English language learning.

Research Questions

1- What are the PYP students' learning preferences for NESTs or NNESTs?
2- To what extent does the education level of students influence their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs?
3- Whom do PYP students generally prefer, NESTs or NNESTs?

Hypotheses

Based on the previous research questions, the following hypotheses can be presented:

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1- There is no significant difference in the respondents' preferences for NESTs or NNESTs as regard to the language skills.

2- There is no significant development in the respondents' preferences for either NESTs or NNESTs as they go higher up in education

3- In general, Saudi PYP students will not show clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs.

Research objectives

The present study aims to:

1- Explore PYP students' general preference for NESTs as one group and NNESTs as another that teach the same PYP students in terms of the English language skills,

2- Highlight the traits each group of teachers has as well as those which they share,

3- Raise NESTs and NNESTs' awareness of their strengths and deficiencies, and

4- Find with whom PYP students believe they learn more: with native or with nonnative EFL teachers.

Previous Related Studies

The term NNESTs has created a division among professionals in the ELT profession. Supporters of the term believe that it is necessary to distinguish between native and nonnative-English-speaking teachers because their differences are, in fact, their strengths and should be recognized (Madrid, 2004; Evrim, 2007; Park, 2009; Wu & Ke, 2009). Maum (2002) validates that those who oppose the dichotomy feel that differentiating among teachers based on their status as native or nonnative speakers perpetuates the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT profession and contributes to discrimination in hiring practices.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as in most of other countries, where English language teaching has been expanding in popularity and significance on a daily basis, the majority of people including administrators and educators seem to view English language teaching as the sole domain of the NESTs and assume that the ideal EFL

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teacher is necessarily a native speaker (Daif-Allah, 2010; Al-Issa, 2002; Philipson; 1996). This myth leads to the fact that NNESTs in these countries are not praised and admired less day by day, and they even face discrimination in hiring practices. Also, NESTs with minimum qualifications are likely to be hired easily and get more financial advantages than highly qualified NNESTs who graduated from international universities. Suarez (2000) points out that non-native teachers of English, finding themselves being compared to their native speaker colleagues in an unfair way, build the "I-am-not-a-native-speaker syndrome", which has catastrophic effects on these individuals' self-esteem, and thus, ultimately on their performance.

Samimy & Brutt-Griffler (1999) surveyed and interviewed 177 NNS graduate students from Korea, Japan, Turkey, Surinam, China, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Russia to determine the differences in the teaching behaviors of both native and nonnative English language teachers. 90% of the subjects perceived a difference between these two groups of teachers. They identified NESTs as being informal, fluent, accurate, using different techniques, methods, and approaches, being flexible, using conversational English, knowing subtleties of the language, using authentic English, providing positive feedback to students, and having communication (not exam preparation) as the goals of their teaching. NNESTs were perceived as relying on textbooks, applying differences between the first and second languages, being aware of negative transfer and psychological aspects of learning, being sensitive to the needs of students, being more efficient, knowing the students' background, and having exam preparation as the goal of their teaching. However, they did not consider the NS teachers superior to their NNS counterparts. The differences in the teaching practices of NS and NNS teachers, as stated by the subjects of this study, could be attributed to contrasting sociocultural factors embedded in English and non-English speaking societies.

Matsuda (2001) argues that NNESTs is not just a group of people; it's a movement. He, surprisingly, added that there are very few native teachers in state institutions, mainly because the great majority lacks the proper training to become teachers. Why is it then that they are considered the very best all over the world? Dr. Bueno (2006) has rightly said, "I do not know of any piece of research that has

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shown that they are better teachers; however, the long-held belief that they are better is still there with no proof whatsoever to support such theory.

Liu and Zhang (2007) attempted to identify the differences between NNESTs and NESTs in China in terms of attitude, means of instruction and teaching results as perceived by the students. 65 (53 girls and 12 boys) third year college students majoring in English language and literature from English department of a key national university in South China took part in the survey. They were asked to comment on the six teachers of native English speakers and eleven Chinese teachers of English who have taught them various courses in the past five semesters. In terms of attitude towards students and teaching, the findings reveal that there is no significant difference found between the two groups. The students perceive both groups as hardworking and competent. As far as the means of instruction is concerned, foreign teachers' approaches to text materials are more varied. But the Chinese teachers of English use considerably more media, PPT and the Internet in class instruction. The foreign teachers use more conventional media to assist teaching, e.g. recorder, CD/DVD players, movies and radio programs. Evaluation is something that students concern most. Both groups are believed fair in evaluating students' performance and achievement. However, the students believe that their foreign teachers are more flexible than the Chinese teachers in evaluating the students' achievement. With regard to the teaching results, the students believe they benefit more from courses taught by the Chinese teachers. Some courses, especially Comprehensive English and Business English are test-oriented. Progress is easily seen and felt when they take the national TEM-4/8 (Test for English Majors) and BEC (Business English Certificate). The progress they have made in such courses as Oral English, Writing, Literature, Media and English Reading given by native speakers of English are rather slow to experience.

Torres (2004) examined preferences of adults, specifically immigrant and refugee learners, for NESTs or NNESTs. A 34-item, 5-point Likert attitudinal survey was given to 102 students (52 immigrants, 50 refugees) enrolled in ESL programs in a large metropolitan area in Texas. After responding to the survey, 32 students volunteered for group interviews to further explain their preferences. Results

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indicated that adult ESL students have a general preference for NESTs over NNESTs, but have stronger preferences for NESTs in teaching specific skill areas such as pronunciation and writing. There was not a significant difference between immigrants' and refugees' general preferences for NESTs over non-NESTs based on immigration status. Similarly, Madrid's paper (2004) reports on the design and outcomes of a study carried out to obtain a deeper insight into student and teacher perceptions of the influence of native and nonnative teachers on the English language classroom. Using a questionnaire with 459 students and 35 teachers, the results of the study portrayed that students did not evince a preference for native teachers, whom they value as much as nonnative ones. However, the teachers in the sample are slightly inclined towards native as opposed to nonnative teachers and acknowledge the advantages the former have in the language teaching/learning process. Nonetheless, as the students advance on to the higher grades, their preference for the native teacher also increases. Despite the differences which can be gleaned from the teachers' and students' qualitative data, the quantitative study has not revealed any statistical significance between them.

Chen (2008) investigated Chinese college students' perceptions of non-native English speaker teachers. The participants in this survey were 75 university students majoring in English. 25 were year-one English Translation-Interpretation students; another 25 were year-two English Literature students; and the last 25 were year-three English language education students. The majority of them were female（54 participants ；75 ％of the sample）. The data were collected by means of both closed and open questionnaires. The findings have shown that students recognize their NESTs and NNESTs as having strengths in different fields. A high proficiency in English，ability to use English functionally，and the awareness of the culture of English speaking countries were the strengths observed in NS teachers. In the case of NNESTs， the ability to empathize with students as fellow foreign language learners，a shared cultural background，and the emphasis they placed on grammar and strategies were seen as their strengths. The findings also indicate that students have a clear preference for NESTs believing that they are more fluent and accurate with a special emphasis on their good pronunciation and sound knowledge of the

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target language. This paper concludes that Chinese students see their NESTs and NNESTs having their respective strengths.

In his attempt to prove that teaching ability rather than provenance determines learners' preference for the English language teacher, Park (2009) investigated preferences of the Korean university students toward native/nonnative English speaking teachers in order to draw more reasonable generalizations. The participants were 177 students from a national university in a metropolitan city. The results indicated no overall preferences for native English speaking teachers over nonnative English speaking teachers. However, the students showed a preference for native English speaking teachers in teaching specific areas, such as pronunciation, culture, and communication. The students in this study considered that a combination of native English speaking teachers and nonnative English speaking teachers is appropriate. There was no significant gender or student year difference in Korean university students' preferences toward native/nonnative English speaking teachers. The results suggested more comprehensive considerations when taking teacher choice and preferences into account for Korean university students.

Wu and Ke (2009) intended to explore how Taiwanese university students perceive their NESTs. Mutual expectations between the NESTs and students are also investigated. Collected data included questionnaires from 107 students and interviews with three NESTs and 19 students who have filled out the questionnaire. The result showed that students expected more encouragement and interaction with the NESTs, and more relaxed activities with fewer assignments and tests. A third of the students expected NESTs with a standard accent, while a quarter did not care about accent at all. The NESTs revealed their dissatisfaction toward the students' passiveness and lack of responsiveness. While students expected their NESTs to be interactive, they themselves seemed to give the NESTs an impression of unwillingness to participate.

Consequently, the related studies discussed above reveal no consensus as regard the ideal English language teacher, native or nonnative. They show that both NESTs and NNESTs have their own merits and demerits and it is unfair to judge one group based on their disadvantages. Therefore, Celik (2006) emphasized the need for

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NESTs and NNESTs to embrace each other and to work in a partnership. Celik added that the assumption that NESTs are better teachers has never been tested pedagogically and hence should be discounted as prejudice. Similarly, Liu (2008) found that co-teaching between NESTs and NNESTs can contribute to the improvement of the teaching quality of both of them.

Method

The present study is carried out in Qassim University with Saudi students of the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) who had been taught English by both native and nonnative English speaking teachers. The respondent sample consisted of 169 male undergraduates; their ages were 18-22, (mean age 20 years); and the number of years of studying English ranged from 6 to 10 years, (mean 8 years). These students were chosen because they had two semester experience with both groups of teachers and could express their preferences towards their preferred teachers.

The English Language unit has 70 male native and nonnative instructors in the Preparatory English Program. 30 of these are NNESTs from eight countries (Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Pakistan, Syria, India, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon). Most of them are lecturers with Master degrees in English literature or linguistics, and only four are PhD holders in applied linguistics and English literature. These teachers are aged between 35 and 56 with diverse experience (12 to 30 years) of teaching English as a second/ foreign language in various institutions at different levels. Almost all teachers had been taught by both NESTs and NNESTs and they have an average of nine year experience working with native speaker teachers of English. The NESTs are from Canada, USA, England, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The majority are language instructors with Bachelor degrees in English, 6 with Master degree in applied linguistics, and 2 are PhD holders in linguistics and curricula & instruction. NESTs aged between 26 and 62 having diverse experience (3 months to 35 years) of teaching English as a second/ foreign language in various places worldwide. These teachers have a little experience working with nonnative speaker teachers of English.

The duration of the PYP is one academic year, divided into two semesters, as well as a summer session, if necessary. The English program is the major component of the PYP courses. The students study English for 16 hours a week, distributed among the four language skills (reading 6 hours, writing & grammar 6 hours, listening& speaking 4 hours).

A triangulation method was used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data in two stages by means of questionnaires, interviews, and class visitation. In the first

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stage, a questionnaire was administered to the sample with the purpose of finding about their preferences for NESTs and NNESTs at the pre-university and university levels in relation to the language skills.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 statements and was administered to level two PYP students at the end of the academic year 2009/2010. The language skill component was judged on the basis of 14 statements covering the areas of listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading, vocabulary, writing, and grammar. The second component explored how PYP students recognize their preference to NESTs or NNESTs at the pre university and university levels (see questionnaire in Appendix one). Each of the questionnaire items included two choices (NESTs - NNESTs) and respondents were asked to choose one.

The second stage consists of two parts. Part one consists of interviews with 36 level two PYP students who had volunteered for group interviews to further explain their responses to the questionnaire items in light of their experience with NESTs and NNESTs. Those students were randomly chosen to represent level two PYP students. The interviews were administered in Arabic so that students can express themselves precisely and clearly. Candidate were asked to give their answers in response to a set of questions about their experiences with native and non-native EFL teachers, the appropriate level learners can benefit from either group of teachers or both, and which language skill(s) would develop better with native or non-native teachers. Students were also encouraged to give comments or other additional information the interview questions did not cover (see interview questions in Appendix two). The second part is analysis of 20 class visitation reports on the actual teaching abilities of both NESTs and NNESTs. These reports included feed back from the four PYP English language skill coordinators regarding the teaching performance of both groups of teachers inside the classrooms.

Findings and Discussion

The quantitative data was gathered by means of students' questionnaires. Findings from the questionnaires are discussed below.

Part One

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to find out students preferences for NESTs and NNESTs to learn the English language skills of listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading, vocabulary, writing, and grammar.

Table (1) Frequency and percentages of PYP students' responses with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of their native and non-native EFL teachers.

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Skills	Percentages of Students' Preferences			
	Pre- University		University	
	NEST	NNEST	NEST	NNEST
Listening	71%	29%	88%	12%
Speaking	67%	33%	81%	19%
Pronunciation	68%	32%	86%	14%
Reading	56%	44%	70%	30%
Vocabulary	49%	51%	65%	35%
Writing	46%	54%	30%	70%
Grammar	49%	51%	30%	70%

Table 1 clearly answers the first research question" *What are the PYP students' preferences for native or non- native EFL teachers as regard the language skills?* A close examination of the percentage distribution of responses reveals PYP students' recognition of the strength and challenges of their native and non-native EFL teachers. In terms of the language skills, the majority of the students showed a preference for NESTs in the areas of listening (88%), pronunciation (86%), and speaking (81%). The students believe that their listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills would be better with native English speaking EFL teachers at both the pre-university and university levels with a remarkable increased preference for NESTs as the educational level rises. Using Paired Samples T Test, statistical results show a significantly stronger preference ($p<0.05$) for NESTs in the language skills previously mentioned at the pre-university and university levels as indicated in Table (2) below.

Table (2) multiple comparisons of PYP students' preferences of native and non-native EFL teachers in the areas of different language skills.

Skill	Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Tabulated (t)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Listening	Pre-	169	0.42	0.152	29.518	168	1.645	0.000

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		N	Mean	Std.	t	df	Crit.	Sig.
Univ.	University		0.76	0.141	96.581	168	1.645	0.000
Speaking	Pre- Univ.	169	0.34	0.099	19.691	168	1.645	0.000
	University		0.62	0.392	63.360	168	1.645	0.000
Pronunciation	Pre- Univ.	169	0.36	0.510	21.687	168	1.645	0.000
	University		0.74	0.214	83.880	168	1.645	0.000
Writing	Pre- Univ.	169	-0.08	0.021	1.181	168	1.645	.277
	University		-0.40	0.145	26.880	168	1.645	.000
Grammar	Pre- Univ.	169	-0.02	0.313	.024	168	1.645	.877
	University		-0.40	0.191	25.929	168	1.645	.000
Reading	Pre- Univ.	169	0.12	0.299	2.381	168	1.645	.123
	University		0.40	0.415	27.524	168	1.645	.000
Vocabulary	Pre- Univ.	169	-0.02	0.308	.150	168	1.645	.699
	University		0.30	0.176	14.552	168	1.645	.000

The results in Table 2 indicate that NNESTs cannot compete with their counterparts in teaching listening, speaking, and pronunciation. In this context, Medgyes' (1994) surveys of teachers revealed that NNESTs more frequently reported difficulties with those skills. However, the students' preferences changed in the opposite direction towards NNESTs in the areas of writing and grammar at the university level as seen by 70% of PYP students who found NNESTs accurate in teaching writing and explaining grammar, whereas some NESTs are not careful in writing on the board and do not stress grammatical issues unless they hinder communication. In addition, the statistical analysis of students' responses show a very significant preference ($p<0.05$) for NNESTs at the university level in the areas of writing and grammar which are, as identified by Al-Buainain (2006), the most difficult skills to teach and test. In this context, Arva and Medgyes (2000) observed that NNESTs had a greater awareness of the mechanisms involved in language acquisition and had a far superior metacognitive knowledge of English grammar. Also, Cook (2003) goes to say that writing is also a norm of profession where NNESTs sometimes outperform some NESTs.

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The research results also show students' preference for NESTs in the skill areas of reading and vocabulary at the university level only. The above Table does not show any significant differences in students' preferences for NESTs and NNESTs in the areas of reading and vocabulary at the pre-university level. Nevertheless, a strong significant difference ($p<0.05$) in university students' preferences in these skill areas is remarkably reported in favor of NESTs. This result can lead to the assumption that NNESTs could help enhance students' reading ability and vocabulary building through using L1 in reading classes. In this context, Torres (2004) found that if teachers are from the same background as the students, they can give explanations in the students' language.

Students' previous learning experience with NNESTs helped them to recognize and acknowledge NESTs' rich language input. Students are convinced that NESTs would be better teachers of reading and vocabulary since they could improve their vocabulary and comprehension through the natural and effortless use of a wide range of synonyms, antonyms in addition to the cultural information they could provide to facilitate students' understanding. Students also believe that NESTs are able to provide more cultural inputs and accordingly could be used as rich sources of cultural information.

In conclusion, the discussion above gives three reasons for disproving the validity of the first research hypothesis "There *is no significant difference in the respondents' preferences for NESTs or NNESTs as regard to the language skills*". First, students showed strong significant preference for NESTs in the areas of listening, speaking, and pronunciation. Second, a remarkable preference for NNESTs in the areas of writing and grammar was also significantly demonstrated. Finally, although students did not show any significant differences in their preferences for both groups of teachers in the areas of reading and vocabulary at the pre-university level, they expressed considerable preference for NESTs over NNESTs in these areas at the university level.

Part Two

This part of the questionnaire consists of two items requesting students to express their general preference to be taught by NESTs or NNESTs as indicated in Table (3)

Table (3) Students' general Preferences of NESTs and NNESTs

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Items	NST	NNST
At the pre-university level, students prefer ……	56%	44%
At the university level students prefer ……….	78%	22%

The above findings show a very slight difference in students' preferences to both types of teachers at the pre-university level, while illustrating a remarkable difference at the university level. The results also show that the majority of the students (78%) prefer to be taught by NESTs at the university level**.**
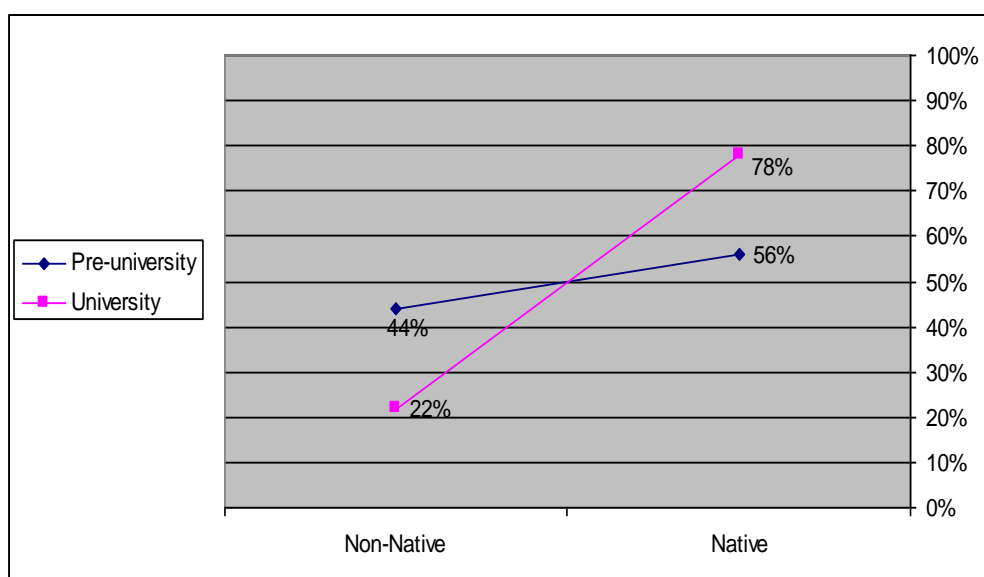

Figure (1): *Differences of students' preferences to NESTs and NNESTs across academic levels*

The above graph illustrates PYP students' views of the teaching effectiveness of native and nonnative EFL teachers across levels. It indicates a significant increase in the respondents' preferences for NESTs as they go higher up in education. This finding shows that the education level of English language learners is an important contextual factor affecting students' preferences to the kind of teachers they want to have. Although 56% of PYP students believe that they would benefit from NESTs at the pre-university level, yet this preference developed greatly at the university level as seen by 78% of the sample. On the other hand, respondents' preferences for NNESTs decreases as they move from the pre-university level (44%) to university level (22%). This result clearly answers the second research question" *To what extent does the education level influence PYP students' perceptions of native and non-native EFL*

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teachers? In addition, statistical analysis, as shown in Table (4) below, found no significant difference in students' preferences to NESTs and NNESTs at the pre university level. Still, there is a meaningful preference for NESTs as students go higher up through the educational system.

Table (4) Statistical analysis of Students' general Preferences for NESTs and NNESTs

Level	N	*Mean*	Variance	Std. Deviation	Coefficient Variance	T	df	Tabulated (t)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Univ.	169	0.12	0.116	0.341	11.3%	2.136	168	1.645	.144
University		0.56	0.170	0.413	15.4%	50.188	168	1.645	.000

Rejecting the validity of the second research hypothesis, *" There is no significant difference in the respondents' preferences for either NESTs or NNESTs as they go higher up in education",* the statistical analysis in the above table shows a very significant difference in students preferences to NESTs and NNESTs in favor of NESTs at the university level (p.<0.01). Reasons for the change in students' preferences toward both groups of teachers were gleaned qualitatively by means of group interviews with PYP students and analysis of class visitation reports.

Data gleaned from group interviews revealed that difference in students' attitudes toward their EFL teachers are closely related to differences in their needs.

Students explained that their main purpose at the pre-university level was to obtain the Completion High School Certificate with a high score so that they can join a good government university where tuition is free and financial allowances are given to all novice students on monthly basis. Towards this end, high school students always prefer NNESTs whose teaching strategies, which are based mainly on memorization and recall, help them pass final exams and achieve high score regardless of learning outcomes.

However, students' instrumental motivation for learning English develops at the university level. Students feel that learning about the language alone is not enough to meet their needs at that level. They believed that they also need to learn to use the language for communication purposes with their instructors in different university classes where English is the medium of instruction. Learning the English language has become a major aim for university students who recognized English as an

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effective tool necessary to continue their college study. Therefore, PYP students expressed a significant preference for NESTs over NNESTs at university level for the former stress language performance over language achievement.

Students' rationale was validated by class observers who described NNESTs as product-oriented in their teaching where mastery of language structure is always given more importance than language usage. Conversely, NESTs were seen as process-oriented in their teaching where they tend to use lots of interactive activities that develop students' confidence in using the language. For that reason, students' showed significant preference toward NESTs who were able to meet learners' needs at the university level by emphasizing language fluency over language accuracy.

The data solicited from class observers revealed that the participants' preferences to NESTs in the areas of listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading and vocabulary are attributed to the natural linguistic competence of these teachers to produce the English language smoothly and effortlessly.

Class observers admitted that NESTs are advantaged for some reasons. Firstly, they could stimulate students' curiosity to learn about the English speaking people and their culture. Secondly, they always welcome students' questions and appreciate their input for the purposes of encouraging them to practice the language, establishing effective rapport with students and developing cross-culture awareness. Thirdly, they caused the students to be highly motivated for students were forced to use the foreign language as a means of communication. Finally, they could help students develop linguistic competence as well as linguistic self-assurance by giving them the chance to speak without being interrupted or blamed for any grammatical mistakes.

Similarly, PYP students evinced their preference to NESTs for similar reasons. Students explained that NESTs are flexible and friendly in managing their classes. They work out students' discipline and academic problems in a creative, a relaxed and passionate manner. They answer students' queries with confidence and patience, and they are never nervous when students ask more or inappropriate questions. Students remarked that NESTs are informative, especially when they talk about cross-culture features and sources of culture shocks. Students feel that NESTs' fluent and spontaneous use of English encourage and motivate them to learn the language in a better way.

However, class observers reported that some NESTs sometimes make mistakes in spelling, capitalization, forms of writing mechanics and grammar when they write on the board. Class observers noted that some NESTs make spelling errors because they sometimes write words as they are pronounced. In addition, some NESTs often

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mix capital and small letters in the same word, and they are not meticulous about other forms of mechanics. Using a lot of slang in the classroom is also a common practice by NESTs who tend to use the type of language they use in their everyday communication.

Class observers noticed that using slang in the language class stimulates students' interest to learn more about it since it is the language used in foreign movies and TV serials which they enjoy. Some NESTs do not also follow the grammar rules when they speak or write since they always stress the meaning over the structure of the language.

Class observers found that these drawbacks caused confusion among students who used to correct spelling errors made by their NESTs on the board. Students added that NESTs intend to avoid and disregard students' grammar inquiries, and when a NEST feels that he has to, he doesn't give proper answers despite the fact that it is his native language. This view is confirmed by Cook (1999) who concludes that although some NESTs have more knowledge about the foreign language, they can not explain 'why' which can be done by NNESTs.

Another substantial comment by class observers highlighted that a considerable number of NESTs always go to class without being prepared depending on their native competency. They reported that all what some NESTs feel they need to do to teach a lesson is to grab a book and go to class. This could, to a great extent, work in the areas of teaching listening, speaking or pronunciation that are acquired by virtue of place of birth and mother tongue confidence, but never helps in a writing or a grammar class.

Class observers also provided remarkable data regarding NNESTs strengths inside the classroom. They reported that, whereas some NNESTs seem to be struggling in some oral skill areas, they are better at teaching grammar and writing due to their acquired knowledge of the rules underlying those skills. They use correct structures and follow the rules of grammar in oral and written communication. They hardly make mistakes on their spelling or the mechanics of writing. NNESTs were also seen by most of the students as enthusiastic about teaching, knowledgeable, conscious of learners' needs, informative, and able to deliver well planned lectures.

Accordingly, the discussion of the qualitative data provides the answer to the third research question *"Whom do PYP students generally prefer, NESTs or NNESTs?"*, and it also proves the validity of the third research hypothesis *"In general, Saudi PYP students will not show clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs "*

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because PYP Saudi students do acknowledge the teaching effectiveness of both groups of teachers. Students' and class observers' feedback makes it difficult to decide the one type of teachers, in isolation of the other, PYP students do prefer since they believe that they would benefit from the strengths of both of them. In addition, the majority of students and class observers suggest that each group of teachers is not superior to the other since both NESTs and NNESTs have a diverse level of mastery of the language as well as having certain inherent advantages and disadvantages.

Students and class observers suggest that the teaching effectiveness of both NESTs and NNESTs should be examined in terms of professionalism rather than nativisim. Therefore, they believe that a combination of native and non-native EFL teachers would help achieve the ultimate goals of any English as a foreign language program since the two groups had an equal chance of success as English teachers.

Conclusion and Implications

Our aim in this study has been to obtain a greater depth of insight into PYP Saudi students' perceptions of the influence of native and nonnative teachers on the English language classroom. The results reveal students' acknowledgment of the effectiveness of both native and nonnative EFL teachers in teaching specific skill areas. They believe that both groups of teachers complement each other with their strengths and challenges. While NESTs are better at teaching listening, speaking and reading, NNESTs are better at teaching writing and grammar. However, the students are remarkably inclined towards NESTs as they go higher up in academic level. This shows that competent NESTs with proper academic and educational qualifications will add a lot to EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia.

Another observable finding to come into sight from the study is that PYP students recognize both NESTs and NNESTs, despite their many challenges, as equal partners in the ELT profession. This recognition has given NNESTs more confidence and visibility in the profession regardless of native language and place of birth. The study also reveals that NNESTs are contributing in meaningful ways to the field of English language education by virtue of their own experiences as English language learners and their training and experience as teachers. In addition, their nonnativeness has turned out to be a self-righteous merit rather than an embarrassing limitation. However, NNESTs should collaborate with qualified native English-speaking teachers since teaming up and sharing strengths, insights from various linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds would provide moral support for each other and benefit both to grow professionally.

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In spite of the limited scope of the present study, some pedagogical implications could be traced. First, it may serve as the first empirical study to investigate students' perceptions of their learning preferences for both NESTs and NNESTs in Saudi Arabia. Second, it can also be taken as a reference for EFL learners to get a better understanding of their awareness of the potentials of different English language teachers with regard to NESTs and NNESTs. Third, both NESTs and NNESTs who seek professional development can gain some insights from the findings and take them into consideration in teaching the English language. Fourth, program administrators might take students' preferences into account when recruiting EFL teachers. In addition, educationists and policy makers may consider ELT a profession and not a natural part of a native-English speaker, and that being a native speaker does not make one a successful professional in an English language classroom. Finally, NNESTs may take advantage of their own strengths and improve their teaching abilities through engaging themselves in professional training in linguistics and sociolinguistics.

The study recommends a further research on factors that may influence student preferences between NESTs and NNESTs such as learning experience, level of English proficiency, motivation, interest, personality, age, and gender. Also, students' attitude towards NESTs is an important issue that could be covered by future studies.

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Appendix (1)
Students' Questionnaire

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Here are some statements about the native versus non-native teachers of English. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements. There is no right or wrong answer. Please be as honest as possible.

Thank you so much

Part One: *Personal Information*

- Age: --
- Academic year: ---------------------------
- Gender: Male (   )   Female (   )

- How would you see your proficiency level of the English language? (Circle one)
       Poor   Good   Very good
- Have you ever been to an English-speaking country? Yes (   )   No (   )
- Have you ever been taught by a native speaker English teacher? Yes (   ) No (   )
- How long have you been studying English?   (Circle one)
(1-3years)   (4-6 years)   (7-10 years)   (11-13 years)

 Please respond to the following statements by circling one of the following:

 (a) A native (Ex. British, American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealander)

 (b) A non- native (Ex. Arabs, Pakistanis, Indians)

Part Two: *Students' Perceptions of Native and Non-native Speaker Teachers of English*

Statements
Part One: Language Skills   *A- Listening*
1- At the pre- university level, my listening would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.
2- At the university level, my listening would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.

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B- Speaking	
3- At the pre- university level, my speaking would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
4- At the university level, my speaking would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
C- Pronunciation	
5- At the pre- university level, my pronunciation would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
6-At the university level, my pronunciation would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
D- Reading	
7- At the pre- university level, my reading would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
8- At the university level, my reading would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
E- Vocabulary	
9- At the pre- university level, I would learn more vocabulary with a native **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
10- At the university level, I would learn more vocabulary with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
F- Writing	
11- At the pre- university level, my writing would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
12- At the university level, my writing would be better with **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher.	
G- Grammar	
13 –At the pre- university level, **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher is better at explaining grammar.	
14-At the university level, **(a native / a non- native)** English teacher is better at explaining grammar.	
Part Two: General	
15- At the pre- university level, I would prefer a (**native / non- native**) English teacher.	
16- At the university level, I would prefer a (native **/ non- native**) English teacher.	

Appendix (2)
Interview Questions

<div dir="rtl">

1- متى درسك أول مدرس لغة انجليزية، وأين، وفي أي مرحلة دراسية؟

</div>

1- When did you start learning English? Where and at which stage?

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‑‑‑

2-   ما جنسيته؟

2- What was the teachers' nationality?

‑‑ ‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑

3-   هل ترى بشكل عام أن الذين درسوك أفادوك بشكل جيد؟ نعم/ لا: ما السبب؟

3- Do you believe that those who taught you English benefit you well? Why?

‑‑‑

4- ‑هل هم متحدثون أصليون أم لا؟ أو بعضهم؟ (التفصيل)؟
4- Were they native or non-native EFL teachers?

‑‑‑

5-   ما هو برأيك المستوى اللغوي المناسب للطالب الذي يمكن أن يستفيد الطالب فيه من المدرس متحدث اللغة الأصلي/ غير الأصلي؟

5- What is the appropriate English language level for students to benefit from native/non-native EFL teachers?

‑‑‑

6-   ما هي برأيك المرحلة التعليمية المناسبة التي يمكن أن يستفيد الطالب فيها من المدرس متحدث اللغة الأصلي/ غير الأصلي؟

6- What is the appropriate educational stage for students to benefit from native/non-native EFL teachers?

‑‑‑

7-   هل ترى انه من المفيد للطالب أن يتم تدريسه في جميع مقررات اللغة الانجليزية من قبل المدرسين متحدثي اللغة الأصليين أو غير الأصليين؟ ما السبب؟

7 - Is it useful for students to be taught in all courses by native/non-native EFL teachers? Why?

Mohammad A. Alseweed, Ph.D.
Qassim University, Saudi Arabia
malseweed@hotmail.com

Ayman Sabry Daif-Allah, Ph.D.
Qassim University

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Saudi Arabia & Suez Canal University, Egypt
sabryayman@hotmail.com

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