

NATIVE OR NON NATIVE: STUDENTS' PREDILECTION OF THEIR ENGLISH TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

A debate on the effectiveness of Native English Teacher (NEST) and Non Native English Teacher (NNEST) has been an outstanding and continuous issue. The debate becomes more interesting since there are differences in some research findings about which one is more effective in teaching English. Therefore, this present research wants to investigate students' predilection about the effectiveness of their Native and Non-Native English speaking teachers' in teaching English and its relation towards the students' achievement in learning and comprehending the materials. A survey was conducted by distributing a questionnaire towards students of MAN 1 Kraksaan- Probolinggo. The result of the survey shows that students believe that having NEST is more preferable if they want to be successful in learning English.

Keywords: *NNEST, NEST, student perception*

INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a process when students get exposure of knowledge from their teacher. The success of the students in processing the exposure/input into intake is affected by many factors; and one of them is the teacher (Healy, 2008:3). The existence of the teacher in the teaching and learning process cannot be neglected. Even though we live in a modern era, in which all information can be retrieved from the internet, the

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existence of the teacher still becomes a crucial factor in the teaching and learning process. However, the debate has changed nowadays. It is not merely whether the existence of the teacher is still needed or not but it is focused more on which teacher who are able to present the best English teaching service, NEST (native English speaking teacher) or NNEST (non-native English speaking teacher). Recently, some scholars have designed and conducted studies on the perception towards NEST and NNEST, such as those conducted by Torres and Turner (2014) and Saville- Troike's (2006), and Sung (2010). Unfortunately, the result of those research studies showed different findings about which one is better in teaching.

Based on the continuously unsolved debate on the effectiveness of NNEST and NEST, the researchers were then inspired to conduct a study about students' perception on their English teacher. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. How are the students' perceptions of their NEST and NNEST effectiveness in teaching English?
2. Which one is more effective in teaching English?

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The participants of this research were 105 students of SMAN 1 Kraksaan- Probolinggo. There were 27 students from XII Science 1, 20 students from XII Science 3, 29 students from XI Social 1 and 29 students from XI Social 2 grade. There are three reasons for selecting this school. Firstly, one of the researchers was associated with the institution, as a non-permanent teacher. Secondly, there was an opportunity to access the students as the research participants. Thirdly, this school had several NNESTs, and in certain months in one academic year, the school also had an opportunity to have a NEST. Having the chance of getting an access of NNEST and NEST in one educational institution is a beneficial point because the researchers could identify much information about the

students' perception regarding the effectiveness of NEST and NNEST in their school.

Procedures

The questionnaire was designed and distributed to the students in order to find out the students' perception of the effectiveness of NEST and NNEST. 24 items were used in the questionnaire. The students were assigned to respond based on their own perceptions by giving a tick () to the given space.

Before distributing the questionnaire, the researchers explained the intention of this research was to identify the students' opinion about their NEST and NNEST teachers. During the process of administrating the questionnaire, the researchers were physically present to monitor and help the respondents to understand certain parts of the questionnaire.

Variables Investigated

In this study, we focused on the students' perception about the effectiveness of their NEST and NNESTs by distributing questionnaires to the research participants. The questionnaire was adopted from Medgyes and Timmis in Murtiana (2011) who conducted a research study on a similar topic. The following are the variables that were assessed using the Likert scale (modified 5 point to 1 scale point), ranging from as SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; NA= Neither Agree nor Disagree or U= Unsure; A= Agree to SA= Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Questionnaire about Native and Non Native English Speaker Teachers

Number 1-13 are related to NEST (Native English Speaking Teacher)

| Item Num- ber | Statement | SD | D | U | A | SA |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | Having a native speaker is a must if we want to be successful in learning English. | | | | | |
| 2 | Learning English with native speaker is more effective. | | | | | |
| 3 | Native speaker has better methods and techniques in teaching than non-native speaker. ... and so forth, up to | | | | | |
| 12 | I feel nervous when practicing my English with native speakers because I am afraid they would not understand me. | | | | | |
| 13 | Although I have learned from a | | | | | |

| Item Num- ber | Statement | SD | D | U | A | SA |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | native speaker, I am still not confident with my ability. | | | | | |

Number 14-24 are related to NNEST (Non Native English Speaking Teacher)

| Item Num- ber | Statement | SD | D | U | A | SA |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 14 | In my view, non- native teachers can teach learning strategy more effectively. ...and so forth up to | | | | | |
| 23 | The ability of non-native teacher in using the same mother tongue as me is an advantage as it can help the process of teaching and learning more successful. | | | | | |
| 24 | The ideal non- native teachers are those who have | | | | | |

| Item | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| Num- ber | Statement | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| | achieved native-like proficiency in English. | | | | | |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the students' questionnaire was computer coded and processed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. The results of the research are discussed below.

a. Students' perception of native English speaker teacher (NEST)

It is surprisingly shocking and shockingly surprising (Basthomi, 2014) that, based on the students' response to several items which asked their opinions about native speaker teacher, it is proved that most of them favor native speakers as their English teacher and they generally believe that having a native speaker teacher is important to help them to be successful in learning English. The majority of students (48.57%) agree with the statement item 1; that is "having a native speaker is a must if they want to be successful in learning English", and even 14.28 % strongly agree with the statement. Only about 3.81% of the respondents strongly disagree, and about 19.04% feel unsure.

Interestingly, when they are asked on item 2 about whether they learn English with native speaker is more effective or not, 37.14% disagree with this statement. They think that learning English with NEST are not effective. Meanwhile, 32.28% students stated that they are not sure about this question and only 6.67% who strongly agree with this question.

Even, when the students were asked whether the NEST has better teaching methods and techniques, 46.67 % students say that they are unsure. Only 10.48% students agree with this statement, and even less than

9% strongly agree with this item. Overall, although NEST is preferred by many students, the next finding reveals that NESTs are not always the best teachers. Only 9.52 % students agree that an NEST is the best teacher, while the majority of the students (44.76%) disagree with this statement. Many students (52.38%) also disagree that NESTs are more approachable than NNESTs. The following table summarizes the participants' perception of having a NEST.

Table 1: Students perceptions of NEST

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 1 | Having a native speaker is a must if we want to be successful in learning English. | 3.81 | 16.19 05 | 19.04 76 | 48.57 14 | 14.2 8 |
| 2 | Learning English with native speaker is more effective. | 0.95 | 37.14 | 32.38 | 22.86 | 6.67 |
| 3 | Native speaker has better methods and techniques in teaching than non-native speaker | 5.71 | 28.57 | 46.67 | 10.48 | 8.57 |
| 4 | Native speaker teacher is more approachable than non-native teacher | 8.57 | 52.38 | 22.86 | 10.48 | 4.76 |
| 5 | Native speaker is the best teacher | 18.10 | 44.76 | 32.38 | 9.52 | 1.90 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 6 | My interest toward English language has increased because of a native speaker | 14.29 | 46.67 | 26.67 | 9.52 | 1.90 |
| 7 | My English would not be as good as now without the help of native speaker | 25.71 | 42.86 | 21.90 | 6.67 | 0 |
| 8 | I feel at ease when practicing my English with a native speaker | 13.33 | 39.05 | 24.76 | 20.95 | 1.90 |
| 9 | My interest toward English language has increased because of a native speaker | 14.29 | 46.67 | 23.81 | 14.29 | 3.81 |
| 10 | When I speak, I want to sound like a native speaker | 7.62 | 6.67 | 20.95 | 33.33 | 55.2 4 |
| 11 | My awareness and understanding toward western culture have increased after | 5.71 | 13.33 | 43.81 | 35.24 | 5.71 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| | learning from a native speaker | | | | | |
| 12 | I feel nervous when practicing my English with native speakers because I am afraid they would not understand me | 9.52 | 31.43 | 30.48 | 21.90 | 3.81 |
| 13 | Although I have learned from a native speaker, I am still not confident with my ability | 11.43 | 37.14 | 24.76 | 14.29 | 3.81 |

b. Students' perception of non-native speaker teachers (NNEST)

Despite the findings that the participants mostly like to be taught by a NEST and view the NEST as an important and good model, many of the students (40%) believe that a NNEST of English can be a better model for a successful language learner. Furthermore, 46.67% students agree that the NNESTs show more empathy toward students' learning problems rather than the NESTs. This supports the notion from Medgyes (2006), who stated that non-native teachers are models of successful learners because they would not be able to become English teachers if they had not learned English successfully. However, about 50.48% students feel unsure that their NNESTs can also have a competence and proficiency like a native speaker. This might be because they view their NNESTs in terms of their language competence, which is still considered lower than that of the NESTs. In addition to being a model of successful learner, the skills and

competences of the NNESTs can inspire the students to achieve the same competence or even better. 49.52 % of the students strongly agree with this statement, and 36.19% of students agree. It means that the students still put trust on their NNESTs in teaching them English.

Another positive perception towards non-native teachers is about the ability of non-native teachers in anticipating students' learning difficulties. 23. 81% agree with this statement and it is strengthened by 28.57% students strongly agree with this statement. Moreover, many students (55.24%) strongly agree that the NNESTs can teach learning strategy more effectively than the NEST, and nearly 33.33% agree with this. Regarding the NNESTs' empathy towards the students' learning problems, 46.67% students think that their NNESTs are quite empathetic. Empathy here means that the teachers could understand students' difficulties and try to give them solutions based on their previous experience as learners.

Another positive side of having NNESTs is that they can understand students' habits and behaviors better than the NEST does (item 20) - with 44.76% students agree with the statement. The fact that NNESTs can understand the students' habits and behaviors is possible because they come from the same cultural background as the students. Besides, the participants have interacted with the NNESTs longer than they do with their NESTs. Furthermore, most of the students (61.90%) strongly agree that the way their NNESTs teach and talk is easier to understand than that of their NESTs (item 15). This is reasonable because the NNESTs have the same mother tongue and therefore a similar accent to the students, so that students are more familiar with the way they talk.

The ability of NNESTs in using the same mother tongue with the students has been proven as an advantage of being non-native teachers. 57.14 % students strongly agree with item 23 which says that NNESTs use their mother tongue while teaching particularly in explaining difficult terms. The benefit of using the same mother tongue has also been expressed

by several students through their response in the open questions, as it can help students understand the material more easily. 30.48% students perceive that in order to increase the teaching skills, their NNESTs should pursue their higher education in countries where English is the first language.

The overall responses of participants regarding their perceptions of the non-native speaker teacher as well as the mean and standard deviation of each variable are presented in the next table.

Table 2: Students' perception of non-native speaker teachers (NNEST)

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 14 | In my view, non-native teachers can teach learning strategy more effectively | 0 | 2.86 | 8.57 | 33.33 | 55.24 |
| 15 | The way non-native teachers talk and teach is easier to understand | 0 | 1.90 | 4.76 | 31.43 | 61.90 |
| 16 | Non-native teachers are more able to anticipate | 2.86 | 5.71 | 9.52 | 23.81 | 28.57 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| | my difficulties in learning | | | | | |
| 17 | Non-native teachers show more empathy toward my learning problems rather than native speaker teachers | 0 | 0.95 | 11.43 | 46.67 | 40.95 |
| 18 | I believe that non- native speaker teacher can be the better model of successful language learner | 0 | 14.29 | 20.95 | 40.00 | 22.86 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 19 | Non-native teacher of English can also have competence and proficiency like a native speaker | 2.86 | 15.24 | 50.48 | 23.81 | 20.00 |
| 20 | Non-native teachers understand my habit and behavior more than native speakers do | 1.90 | 1.90 | 12.38 | 44.76 | 39.05 |
| 21 | To improve their skills, non-native teachers should pursue their higher education in countries where English is | 10.48 | 18.10 | 23.81 | 30.48 | 17.14 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| | the first language. | | | | | |
| 22 | The skills and the success of non-native teachers inspire me to achieve the same or even better competence than theirs | 0.95 | 8.57 | 4.76 | 36.19 | 49.52 |
| 23 | The ability of non-native teacher in using the same mother tongue as me is an advantage as it can help the process of teaching and learning more successful | 0 | 5.71 | 4.76 | 37.14 | 57.14 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 24 | The ideal non-native teachers are those who have achieved native-like proficiency in English. | 0 | 4.76 | 17.14 | 47.62 | 30.48 |

This study found that almost the majority of the students (48%) agree that having a native speaker is a must if we want to be successful in learning English. Yet, the students (40%) in this present research perceive that their NNESTs still can be a better model of successful language learner than their NESTs. This finding is in line with Sung's (2010) finding investigating NESTs and NNESTs in Hong Kong that there is a compromise process in students' perception of their NEST and NNEST. The participants in Sung's (2010) study have the same background with students in this present research. Both of them are Asian. As typical Asians, they have a tendency not to be too strict in judging other's people.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research show that students believe that having a native speaker is a must if they want to be successful in learning English; on the contrary, they also believe that their NNEST still can be a better model of successful language learner than their NESTs. Related to the students' perspective towards NNESTs and NESTs, it is expected for the NNESTs to do a continuous professional development such as presenting papers, writing about education in various media and attending

workshops can be alternatives to improve their teaching skill competencies and professionalism. Due to the fact that it is extremely difficult to imitate 100% the way native speakers' talk, the NNESTs should learn all the time; as Brown (2007) calls it as "lifelong learning".

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Appendix

Percentage of Questionnaire about Native and Non Native Speaker English Teacher

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 1 | Having a native speaker is a must if we want to be successful in learning English. | 3.81 | 16.19 | 19.04 | 48.57 | 14.28 |
| 2 | Learning English with native speaker is more effective. | 0.95 | 37.14 | 32.38 | 22.86 | 6.67 |
| 3 | Native speaker has better methods and techniques in teaching than non-native speaker | 5.71 | 28.57 | 46.67 | 10.48 | 8.57 |
| 4 | Native speaker teacher is more approachable than non-native teacher | 8.57 | 52.38 | 22.86 | 10.48 | 4.76 |
| 5 | Native speaker is the best teacher | 18.10 | 44.76 | 32.38 | 9.52 | 1.90 |
| 6 | My interest toward English language has increased because of a native speaker | 14.29 | 46.67 | 26.67 | 9.52 | 1.90 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 7 | My English would not be as good as now without the help of native speaker | 25.71 | 42.86 | 21.90 | 6.67 | 0 |
| 8 | I feel at ease when practicing my English with a native speaker | 13.33 | 39.05 | 24.76 | 20.95 | 1.90 |
| 9 | My interest toward English language has increased because of a native speaker | 14.29 | 46.67 | 23.81 | 14.29 | 3.81 |
| 10 | When I speak, I want to sound like a native speaker | 7.62 | 6.67 | 20.95 | 33.33 | 55.24 |
| 11 | My awareness and understanding toward western culture have increased after learning from a native speaker | 5.71 | 13.33 | 43.81 | 35.24 | 5.71 |
| 12 | I feel nervous when practicing my English with native speakers because I am afraid they would not understand me | 9.52 | 31.43 | 30.48 | 21.90 | 3.81 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 13 | Although I have learned from a native speaker, I am still not confident with my ability | 11.43 | 37.14 | 24.76 | 14.29 | 3.81 |
| 14 | In my view, non-native teachers can teach learning strategy more effectively | 0 | 2.86 | 8.57 | 33.33 | 55.24 |
| 15 | The way non-native teachers talk and teach is easier to understand | 0 | 1.90 | 4.76 | 31.43 | 61.90 |
| 16 | Non-native teachers are more able to anticipate my difficulties in learning | 2.86 | 5.71 | 9.52 | 23.81 | 28.57 |
| 17 | Non-native teachers show more empathy toward my learning problems rather than native speaker teachers | 0 | 0.95 | 11.43 | 46.67 | 40.95 |
| 18 | I believe that non-native speaker teacher can be the better | 0 | 14.29 | 20.95 | 40.00 | 22.86 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| | model of successful language learner | | | | | |
| 19 | Non-native teacher of English can also have competence and proficiency like a native speaker | 2.86 | 15.24 | 50.48 | 23.81 | 20.00 |
| 20 | Non-native teachers understand my habit and behavior more than native speakers do | 1.90 | 1.90 | 12.38 | 44.76 | 39.05 |
| 21 | To improve their skills, non-native teachers should pursue their higher education in countries where English is the first language. | 10.48 | 18.10 | 23.81 | 30.48 | 17.14 |
| 22 | The skills and the success of non-native teachers inspire me to achieve the same or even better competence than theirs | 0.95 | 8.57 | 4.76 | 36.19 | 49.52 |

| No | Questions | Percentage (%) | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 23 | The ability of non-native teacher in using the same mother tongue as me is an advantage as it can help the process of teaching and learning more successful | 0 | 5.71 | 4.76 | 37.14 | 57.14 |
| 24 | The ideal non-native teachers are those who have achieved native-like proficiency in English. | 0 | 4.76 | 17.14 | 47.62 | 30.48 |