



Students' Perceptions of Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers and Their Implications for English Language Learning

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Abstract: English has increasingly functioned as global communication among people around the world with diverse cultural background. In this era, English is more frequently used among non-native speakers than native speakers themselves especially in academic, professional, and intercultural settings. Despite these developments, native speaker norms continue to have a strong influence in English language teaching and English language learning. NESTs are often viewed as a role model, and NNESTs viewed as someone who are incompetence in teaching a language. This research aims to find the strengths and weakness from students' perspective, using a qualitative method and interview questions about each strength and weakness and their implication in English language learning. The result of this research was that each side was beneficial for students, as the NESTs helps with their pronunciation, idiomatic, and real-life communication usage to train students and building their confidence, and The NNESTs understood the students' difficulties in learning and could be apply a teaching strategy to help them understand. However, the status of native or not wasn't the important thing, it is the quality of teaching and the outcome for students so it will help them ready to communicate with people around the world.

Keywords: Language Learning; Native Teacher; Non-Native Teacher; Student Perception; Teaching Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

English has increasingly functioned as a global communication among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this era, English is more frequently used among non-native speakers than between native speakers themselves, especially in academic, professional, and intercultural settings. This reality has challenged traditional assumptions in English Language Learning that position native speakers as the primary owners and ideal models of the language. Recent studies within the Global Englishes and Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL) paradigm highlight that English should be understood as a shared international resource shaped by its global users rather than a language owned exclusively by native speakers (Fang, 2018).

Despite these developments, native speaker norms continue to have a strong influence in ELT practices. Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) are often perceived as more authentic and linguistically competent, particularly in terms of pronunciation and fluency. Such perceptions contribute to the persistent belief that native-like English represents the ultimate goal of language learning. However, research in English as a lingua franca and Global English indicates that effective communication does not necessarily depend on native-like accuracy but rather on intelligibility and pragmatic competence (Fang, 2018). This mismatch between communicative realities and pedagogical ideals highlights the need to critically reconsider the dominance of native-speaker models in English teaching.

In English language learning contexts, the privileging of native-speaker norms has fueled continued debates surrounding the roles and legitimacy of native and non-native English-speaking teachers. Numerous studies have reported that NNESTs, despite possessing professional qualifications, pedagogical training, and contextual knowledge, often face discrimination based on their linguistic background rather than their teaching competence (Selvi et al., 2024). This issue commonly referred to as native-speakerism, this maintains unequal power relations and contributes to discriminatory hiring practices in various educational contexts, including EFL settings in Asia and Indonesia (Voorsmit & Sakhiyya, 2017). As a result, the native versus non-native categorization remains one of the most controversial and persistent issues in ELT.

From the TEIL perspective, such as native-speaker ideology is increasingly viewed as incompatible with the global role of English TEIL rejects the idea that effective English teaching is determined by native-speaker status and instead highlights pedagogical effectiveness, intercultural awareness, and contextual relevance. Recent studies show that NNESTs often demonstrate particular strengths, such as heightened awareness of learners' difficulties, explicit knowledge of grammar, and the ability to draw on shared linguistic or cultural experiences to facilitate learning (Silalahi, 2021). Furthermore, research suggest that the presence of both NESTs and NNESTs can contribute positively to English learning when teachers' competencies are valued over their linguistic background (Ismar & Refanja Rahmatillah, 2023a)

The native-non speaker debates carrier broader implications that influence learners' attitudes and shape their English language learning experiences. Learners who are exposed primarily to native-speaker norms may develop unrealistic expectations of language mastery and experience anxiety regarding their accents or linguistic identities. However, a TEIL informed approach promotes positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity and encourages learners to view English as a flexible tool for global communication rather than a perspective norm to be a perfectly imitated (Fang, 2018). Therefore, this research aims to discuss the debate between native and non-native English speakers and to examine is implications for teachers and learners within the framework of Teaching English as an International Language.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL)

Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL) views English as a common tool that helps people from different languages and cultures talk to each other. It doesn't see English

as something only for people who speak it natively. Instead, it treats English as something that many people from around the world use together. In today's English language teaching, especially in places like European Flamenco Language Schools, English is being used more and more to help people from different backgrounds communicate (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Rose et al, 2020).

TEIL challenges the idea that being a native speaker is the best way to judge someone's language skills. Its main goals include helping people understand each other better, speak clearly, learn about different cultures, and use English appropriately in different situations. Good English teaching isn't about whether the teacher is a native speaker, but about how well they can help students learn to communicate and improve their language skills, no matter where they are (Galloway et al., 2020).

Native English-Speaking Teacher and Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher

The distinction between Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) remains a central topic in research on English language learning and teaching. A Native English Speaker (NES) is generally defined as an individual who acquires English as their first language and uses it as the primary means of communication from early childhood, an attribute often linked to natural fluency and intuitive language knowledge (Selvi et al., 2024). In the context of English language teaching, NESTs are often perceived by learners as ideal language models because they demonstrate pronunciation that aligns with native norms and possess automatic linguistic intuition. This idealization of NESTs has historically shaped expectations about what constitutes "good" English teaching in many educational settings.

In contrast, a Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) refers to individuals who learn English as a second or foreign language after acquiring their first language (Perry, 2023). Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) are therefore educators whose mother tongue is not English but who teach English based on academic training and professional certification. Empirical research shows that NNESTs represent the majority of English teachers in many parts of the world and often draw upon their own multilingual competence to support learners (Romadhon et al., 2024). In a vocational EFL context, students reported that NNESTs were particularly effective at explaining grammatical concepts, understanding student difficulties, and creating a comfortable classroom environment, suggesting that linguistic background alone does not determine teaching quality (Romadhon et al., 2024).

Despite the contributions of both groups, the ideology of *native-speakerism* has long influenced how learners perceive teacher effectiveness. Native-speakerism refers to the belief

that native speakers inherently possess superior language ability and, by extension, are better language teachers. This belief can shape learners' expectations, preferences, and motivation in English learning contexts. Research on teacher recruitment in Indonesian ELT shows that while NESTs may be preferred in some situations, there is increasing recognition of qualified NNESTs based on professional expertise rather than nativeness alone, especially in international curriculum contexts. These findings complicate simplistic hierarchies and emphasize the need to consider pedagogical competence alongside linguistic identity (Voorsmit & Sakhyya, 2025).

Students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs are further shaped by specific classroom and cultural dynamics. For example, a qualitative study involving vocational EFL learners found that students valued NESTs for their pronunciation and cultural familiarity but also appreciated NNESTs for their ability to understand learner challenges and provide clear explanations. These dual perceptions suggest that learners can hold *multidimensional views* of teacher effectiveness that go beyond native/non-native dichotomies and instead reflect practical teaching attributes that support learning (Romadhon et al., 2024).

Understanding these perceptions is essential because they have direct implications for English language learning. When students associate teaching quality primarily with native-speaker norms, they may undervalue the pedagogical strengths of NNESTs, potentially influencing motivation, confidence, and engagement. Conversely, recognizing the complementary strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs can contribute to more equitable and effective English language learning environments. Research also points to the importance of teacher preparation that addresses both linguistic and pedagogical competencies, suggesting that the combination of effective instructional strategies and cultural sensitivity can positively influence learners' outcomes regardless of the teacher's native status (Ismar & Refanja Rahmatillah, 2023).

Implications for English Language Learning

The differing perceptions of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) carry significant implications for English language learning. Students' beliefs about teacher legitimacy and effectiveness can directly influence their motivation, engagement, and confidence in using English. When learners perceive NESTs as superior language models due to pronunciation or fluency, they may prioritize native-like accuracy over communicative effectiveness. This orientation can lead to anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low in willing to participate in classroom interaction, particularly in contexts where English is used as a foreign or international language.

However, positive perceptions of NNESTs often support a more accessible and learner-centered learning environment. Research shows that NNESTs' shared linguistic background with students enables clearer explanations, effective use of learning strategies, and greater sensitivity to learners' difficulties (Romadhon et al., 2024). These qualities can promote a supportive classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable asking questions and experimenting with language use. As a result, students may develop stronger metalinguistic awareness and learning autonomy, both are crucial for long-term language development.

From a broader pedagogical perspective, students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs influence how learning goals are defined. When native-speaker norms dominate classroom expectation, English learning tends to highlight accent imitation and grammatical perfection. However, contemporary English language learning increasingly recognizes the importance of intelligibility, intercultural communication, and functional language use. Studies conducted in Indonesian ELT contexts show that students value teachers, both NESTs and NNESTs, who can facilitate meaningful communication and contextualized learning rather than a strict adherence to native norms (Ismar & Refanja Rahmatillah, 2023).

These implications align closely with the principles of Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL), which positions English as a global means of communication rather than the property of native speakers alone. Within TEIL contexts, effective English language learning is not decided by the teacher's nativeness but by pedagogical competence, cultural awareness, and the ability to prepare learners for diverse communicative situations. When students recognize the legitimacy of NNESTs alongside NESTs, English learning becomes more inclusive and reflective of real-world language use. This shift encourages learners to value communicative clarity and adaptability over native-like performance.

Finally, understand students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs has important implications for teacher education and classroom practice. Teachers and institutions need to address native-speaker bias explicitly by promoting awareness of linguistic diversity and multiple English varieties. Previous findings suggest that when learners are exposed to both NESTs and NNESTs in balanced ways, they develop more realistic expectations about English use and greater respect for different teaching styles (Voorsmit & Sakhiiyya, 2025). Such awareness contributes to more fair English language learning environments and supports learners in becoming confident users of English in international contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative research methodology to thoroughly analyze students' opinions. A qualitative method was selected due to its capacity to enable the researcher to acquire extensive, descriptive information and to thoroughly comprehend the experiences and perspectives of individuals involved.

The population for this research were active students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang. The sample was chosen from this group through the use of purposive sampling techniques. The sample consisted of 15 undergraduate English Education students in their 7th semester, due to the belief that they possessed adequate academic background pertinent to the study's concentration.

A semi-structured interview served as the primary tool for data collection in this study. The interview comprised 10 questions that were open-ended and intended to extract opinions, experiences, and perspectives from the participants regarding the subject of the investigation. This instrument's design allowed individuals to expand upon their responses while ensuring the research objectives remained prioritized. The interview questions are presented below.

Table 1. Interview Questions.

No	Question
1.	What is your opinion of native English-speaking teachers in supporting students' English language learning?
2.	What is your opinion of non-native English-speaking teachers in supporting students' English language learning?
3.	In your view, how do native English-speaking teachers contribute to students' English language learning?
4.	In your view, how do non-native English-speaking teachers contribute to students' English language learning?
5.	In your view, are there any aspects of learning that may be less effectively supported by native English-speaking teachers?
6.	In your view, are there any aspects of learning that may be less effectively supported by non-native English-speaking teachers?
7.	Do you think being a native speaker plays an important role in supporting effective English language learning?
8.	How do your views of native and non-native English-speaking teachers shape your understanding of effective English language learning?
9.	Based on your views, what factors should be prioritized to support students' English language learning?
10.	In your view, what should be considered in English language learning in TEIL (Teaching English as International Language) contexts?

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Students Perception of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs)

Students tend to looked Native English-Speaking Teachers as a role model and the standard to learn and speak English because it is their first language, so their pronunciation becomes the strong standard.

First, most participants perceived Native English-Speaking Teachers as a valuable source of authentic pronunciation and natural language exposure. Students frequently mentioned that native teachers helped them develop more accurate pronunciation, better listening comprehension, and greater familiarity with real-life language use, including idiomatic expression and cultural nuances.

Second, Native English-Speaking Teachers were viewed as particularly effective in improving speaking and listening skills. Many participants noted that interacting with native speakers encouraged them to use English more actively, as communication could not rely on the use of the local language. This condition was perceived as beneficial for building fluency and confidence. In addition, several students highlighted the cultural dimension brought by Native English-Speaking Teachers. Exposure to cultural knowledge, everyday expression, and pragmatic language use was seen as developing Students understand of English beyond grammatical competence.

However, despite these positive perceptions, participants consistently highlighted that being a native speaker does not guarantee effective teaching. Many respondents stated that pedagogical competence, teaching strategies, and understanding of learners' needs were more important than native speaker status. Some students also noted that native teachers might face challenges in understanding difficulties commonly experienced by EFL learners.

Students Perception of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers was often viewed incompetence in teaching English because not having a perfect accent as the Native Speaker. But Non-Native Speaker could help students to learn based on their different background and understand their struggle better.

The majority of participants perceived Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers as highlight effective due to their strong understanding of students' learning difficulties. Many respondents highlighted that Non-native teachers are ale to relate to students' struggles because they have experienced learning English as a foreign language themselves. This shared learning

background was seen as allowing the Non-Native teachers to anticipate common errors, such as grammatical mistakes from the first language, and respond with appropriate explanations.

Second, clarity of explanation was identified as a dominant theme in students' perceptions. Participants frequently mentioned that Non-Native Teachers can explain grammar, vocabulary, language concepts in a more structured, step by step, and accessible manner. The ability to use students' first language when necessary was also viewed positively, as it helped learners better understand complex concepts and reduced confusion during the learning process. In addition, students highlighted the motivational role of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers. Several respondents noted that non-native teachers serve as a realistic role model, demonstrating that high proficiency in English is achievable even without being a native speaker. This perception was reported to increase students' confidence and reduce anxiety, particularly among learners who feel intimidated by native speaker norms.

However, some participants acknowledge certain limitation of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers. A small number of students mentioned concerns related to pronunciation accuracy, accent, or limited vocabulary range. Despite this, most respondents highlighted that these limitations did not outweigh the overall effectiveness of Non-Native teachers, especially in terms of empathy, pedagogical competence, and contextual understanding. Overall, the findings suggest that students view Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers as playing a crucial and supportive role in English Language Learning. Their ability to understand learners' needs, provide clear explanations, and create a supportive learning environment was perceived as more influential than native speaker status itself.

Implications For Students' English Language Learning

First, is Native English-Speaking Teacher. A dominant theme across participants' responses was explicit grammar instruction. Many students expressed that native English-Speaking Teachers may struggle to explain grammatical rules in a clear and systematic manner. Because English is acquired naturally by native speakers, some participants felt that native teachers tend to view grammar as intuitive, which can result in explanations that are less detailed or less accessible for EFL learners, particularly beginners.

Another frequently mentioned aspect was limited understanding of learners' first language difficulties. Participants noted that native English-Speaking teachers may not fully recognize how students' first language influences their English learning, including common errors caused by language transfer. This lack of awareness was perceived to make it more difficult for native teachers to anticipate learner errors or address persistent grammatical problems effectively.

Several respondents also pointed out that native English-speaking teachers may be less effective in using students' mother tongue as a pedagogical resource. Since many native teachers do not speak the local language, they are unable to provide explanations or clarifications in a familiar linguistic context, which some students considered helpful when dealing with complex concepts or abstract grammar rules. In addition, some participants highlighted that native English-Speaking teachers may occasionally underestimate the level of difficulty faced by leaners. Because they did not experience learning English as a foreign language themselves, native teachers may assume that certain language features are 'Natural' or easy to understand, leading to explanation that students find insufficient or less relatable.

Responses to Question 6 revealed several aspects of English language learning that participants perceived as less effectively supported by non-native English-speaking teachers.

The most frequently mentioned theme was limited exposure to authentic pronunciation and natural spoken English. Many participants noted that non-native English-speaking teachers may not always provide fully natural pronunciation, intonation, or rhythm compare to native speakers. As a result, students felt that their exposure to real-life spoken English, especially in informal or spontaneous communication, might be somewhat restricted.

Another concern was the use of idiomatic expressions and everyday language. Participants reported that non-native teachers may rely on more standardized or textbook-based English, which could limit students' familiarity with idioms, informal expression, and spontaneous language commonly used by native speakers. Some students mentioned that while they could understand their teachers well in the classroom, they experienced difficulty understanding English used in movies, media, or real-life interactions with native speakers.

In addition, several participants highlighted the limited representation of diverse native accents and cultural nuances. Non-native English-Speaking teachers were perceived as less able to expose students to the variety of accents, pronunciation styles, and cultural references found in global English use, particularly if their own exposure to authentic English environments was limited.

However, participants consistently highlighted that these limitations and implication are not inherent to non-native status itself, but rather depend on individual teachers' proficiency, confidence, and experience using English in real contexts. Some respondents explicitly stated that highly proficient non-native teachers can effectively address these issues through continued professional development, media exposure, and interaction with native speakers.

Discussion

Students' perception of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) reveal nuanced preferences that influence English language learning dynamics. Research shows students value both groups for distinct strengths, with implications for pedagogy and teacher training.

The findings indicate that students generally perceive native English-speaking teachers as effective in supporting English language learning, particularly in developing pronunciation, listening skill, and exposure to authentic language use. In discussion, many positive sides that support the NESTs to be a great model in language learning, helping students to expose in real-life usage of the language. The most common students' perception of NEST's strength is that a NEST teaches English naturally as it their mother tongue where they have been accustomed to (Prayogi & Widiyati, 2024). This perception also aligns with previous studies suggesting that native speakers are often viewed as ideal language models due to their natural fluency, intuitive grammatical knowledge, and familiarity with everyday language use.

In the context of English language learning, exposure to authentic pronunciation and real-life language use is considered beneficial, especially for improving oral skill. Students develop on confidence building and increased use of English in the classroom supports the view that interaction with native speakers may encourage more spontaneous communication (Deng et al., 2023).

The findings further reveal that students strongly value the contributions of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers, particularly in terms of clarity of explanation, empathy, and understanding of learners' difficulties. Many respondents uttered "Non-native English-speaking teachers contribute by guiding student step by step in learning English. They are usually effective in teaching grammar, vocabulary, and exam strategies, and they can use students' first language when needed to clarify difficult concepts.", this shows that NNESTs are superior in teaching students who are not native or have English as their first language. NNESTs has many specific strengths over NEST, including a better and deeper understanding of learners' mother tongue. In addition, it is easier for NNESTs to use translation when explaining second language features (Rasyid et al., 2023). Students perceived NNESTs as more capable of anticipating common mistakes, explaining grammar explicitly, and using structured teaching strategies.

In addition, students' perceptions also the importance of shared learning experiences. Because non-native teachers have learned English as a foreign language themselves, they are seen as more relatable and supportive. This finding aligns with research suggesting that

NNESTs can serve as a realistic role model, demonstrating that successful English learning is achievable regardless of native-speaker status.

From an English language learning perspective, these findings highlighted that pedagogical competence and contextual understanding play a crucial role in supporting learners' development. This challenges the traditional privileging of native speakers and supports more inclusive views of English teaching in global contexts (Wulandari et al., 2022).

While students acknowledged the strengths of both groups, the findings also reveal perceived limitations. Native English-Speaking Teachers were often viewed as less effective in providing explicit grammar explanation and understanding first-language interference. This could be explained by their lack of experience as a second language learners, which can make it difficult to explain linguistic concepts that are acquired intuitively. Students reported "Sometimes, grammar explanations and learning strategies may not be explained in detail because they did not learn English as a foreign language themselves.", shows that it is important to pay attention to the learners' difficulties and understand it.

On the other hand, non-native English-Speaking Teachers were perceived as less effective in providing fully authentic pronunciation, idiomatic expression, and exposure to spontaneous spoken English. Students noted that reliance on more standardized language use may limit their preparedness for real-life communication such as understanding native speech in media or informal interaction. This suggest the NNESTs to have a good pronunciation in order to prepared the students to pronounce the introduced vocabulary. In language learning, a good strategy is not enough to teach students, but also have the skill and be competence in the target language is important to introduced the learners into a real communication.

Students also reported that the status of NESTs or NNESTs is not the key or determined the teacher, but the skill and ability to teach English in the best way. Student uttered "effective English language learning depends on teacher quality rather than native-speaker status.". This shows that learners value teachers' instructional skill, clarity of explanation, and ability to address learners over their nativeness.(Ismar & Refanja Rahmatillah, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that students appreciate and love both NESTs and NNESTs and both are beneficial in English language learning. NESTs have the experience with English as their first language, could help with the pronouncing the words that may seem unfamiliar or new, explore new vocabularies in new contexts, and their teaching could help to using the language in a real-life communication and able to practice it easier. But NESTs may

not be understood the learners' difficulties in learning language that are not their first language or mother tongue, so the students' learning strategies need to adjust more. NNESTs in the other hand, understood the difficulties and can help students shaping their understanding more effective. Both NESTs and NNESTs has their strengths and weaknesses. Each side needs a balance and understands that learning English is not just about speaking the language but to understand the context and able to use it correctly, and be confidence to use it in a real-life situation. Effective English learning comes from good teaching skills and collaboration between native and non-native teachers, not from native status alone.

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