Teaching Effectiveness of Native and Non-Native EFL Teachers as Perceived by Preparatory Year Students in Saudi Context

Dr. Choudhary Zahid Javid

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the perceptions of Saudi preparatory year programme (PYP) students, who are taught by native English teacher (NETs) as well as non-native English teachers (NNETs), towards teaching effectiveness of NETs and NNETs in the intensive English language PYP at Taif University. The study investigated 132 Saudi PYP students through a self-developed 2-point questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were run for data analyses. It has been found out that the participants of this study have exhibited positive attitudes towards their NETs and NNETs. Though the results have shown an overall preference for NETs but it seems that the respondents also believe that NNETs effectively contribute by virtue of their own experiences as English language learners and their experience as teachers. It may be concluded that Saudi EFL learners represented by the participants of this survey believe that NETs are more successful in creating richer classroom environment, teaching/assessing speaking skills, listening skills, vocabulary and reading skills better.

The findings reveal that NNETs use innovative strategies and explain lessons more clearly to make their students learn better. By virtue of their personal experiences as language learners themselves, they have been perceived to understand their students' questions and language difficulties in a better manner that facilitate learning process. Therefore, it may be concluded that each group has been perceived to have their own particular strengths which give one an advantage over the other, these differences do not make one better than the other.

Key Words: Native, Non-native, effectiveness, Preparatory Year Programme

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Introduction

English has acquired international proliferation and recognition due to the advent of modern technology, faster means of communication and advent of international economy (Liu & Zhang, 2007). This phenomenon has initiated an era of un-precedential English language teaching in all the countries including the Arab countries where it is used as a foreign language (Javid, 2015). With this increased scope of ELT, "native speakerism has been an issue of debate from the moment English began to be taught internationally" (Alseweed & Daif-Ullah, 2012, p. 36). This increased demand of English teachers commenced an academic discussion in favour or against NETs and NNETs reported in a growing mass of research (Widdowson, 1994; Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001; Al-Issa, 2002; Zughoul, 2003; Bulter, 2007; Wu & Ke 2009; Daif-Allah, 2010; Alseweed & Daif-Ullah, 2012). The scope and width of this research aspect may be evident from the fact that around 1500 papers have been reported which discussed the effectiveness of English teachers with reference to their countries of origin (Laborda, 2006).

Saudi Arabia Preparatory Year Programme (PYP)

Several large-scale steps have been taken to cater to the needs of Saudi students and introduction of Preparatory Year Programme (PYP henceafter) in all Public universities in the KSA is one major step that attracted English language teachers from all over the world including the countries which are included in the inner circle, outer circle and expanding circles (Al-Segheyer, 2012; Javid, 2014a). It has been reported that the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education introduced PYP as compulsory for high school graduates who intend to join colleges with a purpose "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" (Alseweed & Daif-Ullah, 2012, p. 37).

Dichotomy of Native Versus Non-Native Speakers

Al-Issa (2005) has posited that with an increased scope of teaching in the foreign language context, the issue of native versus non-native has raised many eyebrows though many felt that it is politically appropriate to discuss this sensitive issue openly. This dichotomy of

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discussing native versus non-native speakers has met criticism from several people as well (Davies, 2003; Edge, 1988; Kachru & Nelson, 1996). Canagarajah (1999) has stated that 80% of English language teacher worldwide are non-native speakers of English indicating that it is not possible to insist on having native English teachers to cater for the growing needs of ELT in the modern world. If native speakers naturally have an advantage to teach their mother tongue, non-native speakers, being learners of a foreign language themselves, have a strong claim to exploit their own rich foreign language learning experiences in teaching English as a foreign language to their students.

Research has offered significant insights into the fact that there does not exist any definite definition of the term and "*nativeness* itself appears to be complicated both psycholinguistically and socioculturally" (Butler, 2007, p. 4). At the level of considering an individual as native, the factors like the age of a person when he/she was first exposed to a language, his/her linguistic competence, his/her identity along with various other factors may be relevant, but it is rather controversial to determine a clear cut boundary between native and non-native varieties of English language (Butler, 2007; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003).

An overview of relevant literature strongly suggests that comparative merits and demerits of NETs and NNETs have been intensively discussed in ELT research (Butler, 2007; Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Davies, 2003; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005; Alseweed, 2012; Alseweed & Daif-Ullah, 2012; Javid, 2014b). Though a huge mass of research is available related to this topic, the studies that attempted to investigate the perceptions of English language learners are comparatively scarce (Ling & Braine, 2007 and Wu & Ke, 2009).

Learners' Perception

A growing mass of research has reported that identification of learners' perceptions regarding important pedagogical aspects are instrumental in achieving much sought-after goal of effective English language teaching/learning process (Al-asmari & Javid, 2012). The present

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study is an attempt to investigate Saudi PYP learners related to the merits and demerits of native and non-native EFL teachers.

Literature Review

Research has offered valuable insights into the fact that an unprecedented increase in the use of English language by so many people has initiated an era of wide spread English language teaching worldwide as more than one billion people are involved in this growing education industry (Crystal, 2003; javid,2010). The use of English language may be divided into "the expanding circle" including countries like China, Caribean Countries, Eygpt, Indonesia, Isreal, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South America, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, "the outer circle" comprising Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia, and "the inner circle" consisting of USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand (Brown, 2013).

It has been reported that though the issue of 'native' and non-native' English language teachers has not been a major concern for common people, it is a topic of heated discussion among English teachers of either affiliation (Jin, 2005). Research suggests that the term 'native' is related to locality and birth and is positively linked with English language teaching whereas 'non-native is considered embarrassing and inferior as compared to their teaching counterparts; i.e., native teachers (Suárez, 2000).

Liu (2008) has stated that "the use of the terms "native" and "non-native" is admittedly a very contentious matter, especially in the sociolinguistics of English and its pedagogical dimensions" (p. 103). Much research has attempted to define this knotty term such as Chomsky (1965) has defined a native as a person who is qualified to judge grammatical correctness and Strevens (1982) has declared that a native speaker is one who has acquired English during infancy and childhood. A comparatively comprehensive definition has been articulated by Mora (2006) who has stated 'native speaker' is

> "A person who learnt the language in childhood, as a dominant language
>
> and continued using it in adulthood on a regular basis and has reached a

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certain level of proficiency…it is a construct with social political, personal and geographical implications denoting a perceived advanced level of language expertise" (p. 18).

A growing mass of research seems to suggest that there is a need to reconsider the casual use of this term (Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Liu, 2008). In this regard Lee (2005, p. 8) has suggested six defining characteristics of a native speaker which are:

"the individual acquired the language in early childhood and maintains the use of the language, the individual has intuitive knowledge of the language, the individual is able to produce fluent, spontaneous discourse, the individual is communicatively competent and able to communicate within different social settings, the individual identifies with or is identified by a language community, and the individual does not have a foreign accent."

The status and effectiveness of NNETs has come under discussion since the time English has been taught globally. Cook (1999) has revealed that a dominant majority of English language learners study English in foreign language context and majority of teachers who teach them are NNETs. Significant research conducted by Medgyes (1992, 1994) has laid the foundation in this regard as he emphasized on the perceptions of English language teachers as well as English language learners regarding the effectiveness of NETs and NNETs. Brown (2013) has elaborated that it was the groundbreaking studies of researchers like Medgyes (1994) and Braine (1999) that set the stage and

"it took almost ten years for new discussions to emerge from establishments such as the Non-native English Speakers' Caucus in the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) organization in 2003 in favor of the Non-native English Speaker Teachers (NNEST)" (p. 4).

A growing mass of research has been reported that discussed EFL teachers' effectiveness and Laborda (2006) has enumerated around 1500 studies in this regard. Gulf countries have not been an exception in this regard and numerous studies have been conducted in the Middle East to

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investigate this pedagogical component (Al-Issa, 2005; Alseweed and Daif-Allah, 2012; Javid, 2013; Daif-Allah, 2010; Zughoul, 2003). Though, this large amount of research has not reached at a conclusion regarding a single criterion of birth. Alseweed & Daif-Ullah (2012 citing from Luksha & Solovova, 2006) stated that "that there are competent and incompetent teachers, both native and nonnative, and that the debate cannot be discussed only in terms of native/non-native, but trained versus untrained" (p.37). They have also claimed that the relevant literature has not suggested any consensus with regard to ideal English language teacher, native or non-native as both have their own strengths and weaknesses and it is not fair to judge them on the basis of their birth. Furthermore, it has also been reported that the assumption of NETs being better teachers has never been investigated scientifically and it should be considered as prejudice instead of a pedagogical reality (Celik, 2006).

The role of English as a *lingua franca* has been proliferated as the commonest form of English in the world today. It has been reported that English has become "a language of cultural importance, and in a growing number of fields, English is now considered in many quarters to be a basic requirement in the labor market" (Modiano, 2009, p.171). Therefore, this increased role of English as a lingua franca has highlighted the fact it can no longer be limited to countries like England or the United States. Furthermore, it is also debatable whether these are the keepers of the 'standard variety' that refers to the form of the English language which is considered as a national norm in a country suggesting that even foreign speakers of English bear an influence over English language as 'native speakers' have (Kachru, 2004; Modiano, 2009).

An increasing use of English worldwide as a second or a foreign language has resulted in a growing mass of research on non-native English speaking teachers and it has been reported that issues related to NNETs was considered politically incorrect to be discussed openly (Al-Issa, 2005). The matter of fact remains that role of nonnative speakers in ELT especially in foreign language contexts has been established internationally as research has reported that English language is taught predominantly by NNETs (Bulter, 2007). It has been estimated that nearly 80% of English language teachers are nonnative English speakers nowadays (Canagarajah, 1999; Braine, 2010). Though an interesting fact is that NNETs experience mixed attitudes because of

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the reality that, 'on a global level the ELT profession is perhaps the world's only profession in which the majority face discrimination' (Ali, 2009, p. 37). This discrimination manifests itself in the form of preferences given to NET to teach English language and

> "many countries such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and The United Arab Emirates still consider that foreign languages should be taught by native speakers of the language and therefore they actively recruit native speakers of English". …………Al-Seweed, 2012, p. 42)

Al-Seweed (2012) has stated that Phillipson (1992) has termed it 'as the native speaker fallacy'. A growing mass of research has been conducted worldwide to discuss the differences between NESTs and NNESTs and their strengths and weaknesses as English language teachers (Alseweed and Daif-Allah, 2012; Ling and Braine, 2007; Liu, 2008; Todd and Pojanapunya, 2009; Wu & Ke, 2009) as well as in the Arab world (Alseweed and Daif-Allah, 2012; Daif-Allah, 2010; Al-Issa, 2005; Zughoul, 2003).

Summarizing the discussion of teaching effectiveness, Medgyes (1994, p. 435) has enumerated in detail the distinguishing characteristics between NET and NNET which have been provided in the following table.

Non-NESTs	NESTs
Own use of English	
Speak poorer English	Speak better English
Use "bookish" language	Use real language
Use English less confidently	Use English more confidently
General attitude	
Adopt a more guided approach	Adopt a more flexible approach
Are more cautious	Are more innovative
Are more empathetic	Are less empathetic
Attend to real needs	Attend to perceived needs

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Have realistic expectations	Have far-fetched expectations
Are stricter	Are more casual
Are more committed	Are less committed
Attitude to teaching the language	
Are more insightful	Are less insightful
Focus on:	Focus on:
Accuracy	Fluency
Form	Meaning
Grammar rules	Language in use
Printed word	Oral skills
Formal registers	Colloquial registers
Teach items in isolation	Teach items in context
Prefer controlled activities	Prefer free activities
Favor frontal work	Favor group work/pair work
Use a single textbook	Use a variety of materials
Correct/punish for errors	Tolerate errors
Set more tests	Set fewer tests
Use more LI	Use no/less LI
Resort to more translation	Resort to no/less translation
Assign more homework	Assign less homework
Attitude to teaching culture	
Supply less cultural information	Supply more cultural information

Phillipson (1996) has revealed an important pedagogical issue that is created due to 'native speaker fallacy' resulting in biased treatment of qualified NNET. A review of relevant literature highlights that this debate started a long time ago in the late 1960s when NET were preferred because of the proliferation of communicative approach for language teaching and learning process that emphasizes native-like pronunciation (Searle, 1969; Hymes, 1972; Halliday, 1975). It has been reported that "it came to a peak in the 1990s when having native teachers in schools and university became a guarantee of quality Clouet, 2006, p. 70). Nayar (1994) has stated that NNETs were marginalized as they were considered as "language deprived,

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error prone, unreliable speakers in terms of language competence and socio-pragmatically ungraceful when compared to native speakers, who have phonological, linguistic, and communicative competence as well as linguistic identity" (p.2).

Though there were differing voices as well (Davies, 2003; Suarez, 2000; Medgyes, 1999) as it has been reported that NNETs has their own strengths and "even if non native-speakers normally use bookish language and speak in a less confident way, they are more empathetic, attend to the student´s real needs, show more commitment, have realistic expectations of the students and are more insightful" (Medgyes, 1994, pp. 58-59). It has been reported that NNETs find themselves in a situation where they are compared to NETs in a biased manner; i.e., with the "I-am-not-a-native-speaker syndrome" (Suarez, 2000, p. 84) which negatively affect their self-esteem and ultimately their teaching performance is negatively suffered. Talking about this situation, Kim (2002) has stated that this syndrome make some NNETs suffer from lack of confidence in their language proficiency. On the other hand, research has offered deep insights into the fact that this behavior seems unfair as many NETs are hired who do not have proper teaching training/experience on the basis of their being native speakers of English (Daif-Allah, 2010).

Therefore, it is suggested that hiring of English language teachers should follow some basic technical requirements irrespective of their native language which in turn rationalize the hiring process as well strike a balance in favour of teaching process (Phillipson, 1996). Clouet (2006) has suggested that "at the eve of the 21st century the debate should be approached from a different angle: that of globalization" (p. 71). He further explains his point of view that world today should not be considered as collection of different countries but globalization has changed it into a 'global village' where English enjoys the status of 'global lingua' and native as well as non-native English language speakers have significant role to shape scope and breadth of ELT as "contacts between cultures and all kinds of interests have made it easier to learn English than before" (p. 71) that demands greater acceptance of all English speakers in this realm.

Research Objectives/Questions

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The objective of the study was to find out the answer of the following research questions:

a.   What are the preferences of Saudi PYP students studying at Taif University English Language Center (TUELC) towards NETs and NNETs?

b.   Do Saudi PYP students studying at TUELC prefer NETs or NNETs?

Research Design

The theoretical background for this survey study was provided with relevant books, journals, academic articles, periodicals, magazines, internet etc. The empirical data were collected through a self-developed 2-point questionnaire based on the previous studies conducted to investigate Saudi PYP learners related to their preferences for NETs and NNETs.

The following steps for research design were taken:

a.   The researcher consulted several questionnaire used in the previous studies and developed a 34-item 2-point questionnaire.

b.   Technical opinion was sought from three experts regarding the initial version of the questionnaire and their suggestions were incorporated in the final version of the questionnaire that was piloted to measure its reliability.

c.   The final version of the questionnaire having 34 items was administered to 20 Saudi PYP students. Cronbach-Alpha was run and the reliability remained 0.83.

d.   The final version of the questionnaire was generalized and administered to the participants of this study.

e.   The responses of the participants were manually coded, entered and run statistical analyses.

f.   The data generated through the questionnaire were statistically analysed to prepare the final findings and conclusions.

The Participants

One hundred thirty-two (n = 132) randomly selected male and female students studying at TUELC participated in this survey study.

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Statistical Analysis

a.   The latest version of SPSS was used for the statistical analysis.

b.   The descriptive statistics i.e., the *means*, *medians, standard deviations* and *percentages* was calculated to describe the data related to the preferences of PYP students towards NETs and NNETs.

Results and Discussion

The tables below present the results generated through descriptive analyses of the responses of Saudi PYP students related to their preferences for NETs and NNETs for various pedagogical matters. The participants have been given option to choose the option of NETs or NNETs for all the questionnaire items. For the sake of analysis, NETs have been assigned 1 whereas 2 has been allocated to NNETs; therefore, mean of 1.5 is the neutral value suggesting that equal number of participants opted for both options. A mean of less than 1.5 reveals preference for NETs and lower the mean, the higher the preference for NETs. On the other hand, mean of higher than 1.5 stands for the participants' preference for NNETs and the higher the mean, the higher is the preference.

Table 1: Attitudes towards teaching and assessment practices

No	I prefer (**Native / Non-native**) English teachers because …	N	Range	Mean	SD
9	they use innovative teaching strategies to help students learn better.	132	1.00	1.5682	.49722
10	they explain lessons more clearly.	132	1.00	1.4848	.50167
12	they are better at explaining/teaching grammar.	132	1.00	1.4394	.49820
13	they are better in teaching vocabulary.	132	1.00	1.3182	.46754
14	they are better in teaching pronunciation.	132	1.00	1.3939	.49048
15	they are better in teaching listening skills.	132	1.00	1.4167	.49488
16	they are better in teaching speaking skills.	132	1.00	1.2424	.43018
17	they are better in teaching reading skills.	132	1.00	1.4545	.49983
18	they are better at assessing grammar.	132	1.00	1.4091	.49354
19	they are better in assessing vocabulary.	132	1.00	1.4015	.49207

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20	they are better in assessing pronunciation.	132	1.00	1.3333	.47320
21	they are better in assessing listening skills.	132	1.00	1.3106	.46450
22	they are better in assessing speaking skills.	132	1.00	1.2727	.44706
23	I prefer **(Native / Non-native)** English teachers because they are better in assessing reading skills.	132	1.00	1.4470	.49907
24	they are more confident in their use of English.	132	1.00	1.3864	.48877
25	they focus more on fluency in speaking.	132	1.00	1.3939	.49048
26	they focus more on accuracy in speaking.	132	1.00	1.4091	.49354
27	they always use English in class.	132	1.00	1.3636	.48288

Table 1 details the data generated through descriptive analyses for 18 questionnaire items that are related to the participants' attitudes towards teaching and assessment practices. Generally speaking the data strongly demonstrate the participants' preferences for NETs in nearly all items of this category: the only exception is item 9 that has been allocated the highest mean of this category and suggests that majority of the participants have suggested that NNETs use more innovative strategies to help their students learn better. The findings partially confirm the findings of Javid (2010) that EFL students prefer to have innovative virtual classrooms.

The second highest mean has been assigned to item 10 that is related to the teachers who explain lessons more clearly. The mean of 1.485 exhibits near neutral preference but in favour of NETs. The third and fourth highest means have been assigned to the items that elicited the participants' preferences towards the teachers who teach and assess reading skills respectively. The questionnaire item 12, which elicits the participants' preference regarding explaining/teaching grammar better, has also been assigned a mean of 1.439 indicating slight preference for NETs' over NNETs. Medium low mean value of 1.39 has been reported in favour of NETs to teach pronunciation. The finding partially confirm the findings of Medgyes (1992) who has reported that NNETs pay little attention to pronunciation teaching and avoid exploiting alternative sources including the required audio-visual aids. Umer, Javid & Farooq (2013) reported that Saudi EFL learners are very conscious about the assessment procedures and this study has revealed that NETs have been preferred in this respect.

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The least mean has been reported for item 16 indicating that Saudi PYP students represented by the majority of the participants of this study believe that NETs are better in teaching speaking skills. It seems quite evident that the NETs possess an edge over NNETs because they have acquired English language naturally and consequently they have better skills and techniques to teach speaking skills. The second lowest mean has also supported the preference of the participants as it has also been revealed that NETs are better in assessing speaking skills as well. Both these items have shown that the maximum number of participants of this study opted for NETs as the best choice for teaching and assessing speaking skills. Javid (2014b) has also reported that Saudi EFL learners assigned extremely high mean to teachers who act as a model for them. The finding is in accordance with the results of Llurda (2006) who has reported that "with respect to [NESTs], learners spoke highly of their ability to teach conversation classes and to serve as perfect models for imitation" (p. 207). Furthermore, Brown (2013) has also reported that Swedish EFL learners strongly agreed that NETs teach speaking skills more effectively.

The next most preferred item in favour of NETs has been the item that states that listening skills is assessed better by native teachers. The results have been in line with the findings of Alseweed & Daif-Allah (2011) who have reported that Saudi EFL learners have reported that native English teachers are better in teaching speaking and listening skills whereas non-native teachers are better in reading and writing skills. The remaining questionnaire items which have been related to teaching/assessing writing skills, pronunciation and vocabulary, assessing grammar, focusing more on fluency and accuracy, using the target language in class and using English language more confidently have been assigned lower values between 1.3 to 1.4 indicating a reasonably high preference for NETs in all these areas. The participants' preference for NETs for vocabulary teaching is in line with the findings of Merino (1997) who have revealed that lexicon is better taught by NETs and it is a burden for NNETs. It has been reported that

> "the English language is estimated to have over 400,000 words. It is
> something that cannot be completely mastered (neither by native speakers

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ñor by non-native speakers). However, native speakers have a *Sprachgefühl* that can often help them to know if a word used by a student is right or not (p. 71).

Table 2: Attitudes towards miscellaneous factors

No	I prefer (**Native / Non-native**) English teachers because …	N	Range	Mean	SD
1	they create a linguistically richer classroom environment	132	1.00	1.2803	.45086
2	they are more aware of their students' language needs.	132	1.00	1.4091	.49354
3	they easily understand their students' questions.	132	1.00	1.5909	.49354
4	they know their students' language difficulties.	132	1.00	1.6212	.48693
5	they are more responsible.	132	1.00	1.4318	.49722
6	they are friendlier and provide a relaxed atmosphere in class.	132	1.00	1.5530	.49907
7	they are more conscious of their students' learning styles.	132	1.00	1.4545	.49983
8	they motivate their students to have more positive attitudes towards learning English.	132	1.00	1.5227	.50139
11	they prepare their students better for independent learning.	132	1.00	1.4773	.50139
28	they have the ability to explain the differences in English and Arabic.	132	1.00	1.6515	.47831
29	they provide us with more meaningful opportunities to use English.	132	1.00	1.4318	.49722
30	they provide more connections between English and Arabic.	132	1.00	1.6515	.47831
31	they present cultural elements associated with English better.	132	1.00	1.4318	.49722
32	I feel more comfortable with a (Native / Non-native) English teacher.	132	1.00	1.4924	.50185
33	If I have an option to choose, I would choose a course taught by a (native / non-native) English teacher.	132	1.00	1.3636	.48288

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34	On the whole, I prefer (native / non-native) English teachers.	132	1.00	1.4394	.49820

The data analyses for the miscellaneous pedagogical factors related to native and non-native English language teachers have been presented in the table above. Out of the total 16 items, the participants have assigned high value of more than 1.5 to 6 items. Unlike the previous table, majority of the items have been allocated medium values and only 2 items have mean value of less than 1.4. The results have suggested that Saudi PYP students have preferred NETs in majority of the questionnaire items but predominantly medium values suggest liking for both native as well as nonnative teachers. The results confirm the findings of Alseweed & Daif-Allah (2011) who investigated Saudi EFL learners and reported that "PYP students recognize both NESTs and NNESTs, despite their many challenges, as equal partners in the ELT profession" (p. 52).

The highest mean has been reported for two items (item 28 & 30: 1.6515 each) which are related to teachers' ability to explain the differences in English and Arabic and to provide more meaningful connections between the two languages. These two items strongly exhibit the psychological underpinning of Saudi PYP students to learn the target language with the help of their mother tongue and surely non-native teachers have this ability to help them in this regard. The findings align with the previous research as Medgyes (1992) has stated that "only *non-NESTs can benefit from sharing the learner's mother tongue*" (347). The study of Phillipson (1996) strongly confirms the above finding as he has suggested that NNESTs are potentially the ideal ESL teachers by virtue of their personal experiences they have gone through while learning English as a second/foreign language. He has further revealed that NNETs, especially those who share the same mother tongue as their students, inculcate a keen awareness of the differences between their students' mother tongue and the target language; therefore, they possess the ability to foresee their students' probable linguistic problems and to exploit this awareness as an advantage in their teaching of the target language.

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Likewise, the second highest ranked item has been about the teachers who know their students' language difficulties. This is also an understandable phenomenon that NNETs have higher ability to identify their students' language difficulties by virtue of the fact that they have learned English language as foreign/second language learners and have practically faced the same problems; therefore, this affinity provides them with the advantage of knowing language problems of their students in a much better manner. Much research has offered valuable insights into the fact that NNETs can better understand their students' language difficulties because "*only non-NESTs can serve as imitable models of the successful learner of English*" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 346).

The next high ranking item also exhibits the same trend. It has been reported that NNETs bear better ability to understand their students' questions related to the target language. The logic behind this finding is also the advantage of NNETs to understand their students' questions easily because they themselves have been in the same shoes when they learned English language. The findings are in line with the results of Revés & Medgyes (1994) who have pointed out that native teachers may not be aware of the underlying mechanisms of the acquisition of a second or a foreign language, because their acquisition was unconscious whereas NNETs have gone through these problems during their own conscious learning process.

It has also been reported that NNETs are friendlier and are more successful in providing relaxed atmosphere in English classes which is quite instrumental in enhancing learning possibilities. Among the other items which have been assigned medium values have been 11 and 7. The results indicate that the participants were divided in their choices for native and non-native teachers. A mean of 1.47 suggest that participants believe that both native as well as non-native teachers have the ability to make their students independent learners. The finding confirms the results of Brown (2013) who has revealed that EFL learners in Sweden also ranked NETs higher as compared to NNETs in directing their students towards independent learning. It has also been revealed that NETs are more conscious of their students' learning styles. The findings are partially in line with Javid (2011a) who have reported that Saudi medical undergraduates

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from the same academic context have high preference for the faculty members who take into account the learning styles of their students.

The questionnaire items which have shown Saudi PYP students' highest preference for NETs include items 1, 33 & 2. It has been reported that Saudi EFL learners represented by the participants of this study strongly believe that NETs create a linguistically rich atmosphere in language classes. It has also been reported that NETs are more aware of their students' language needs. It transpires that NETs seems more systematic in their teaching practices and effectively consider the need of identifying students' needs as an important condition of successful teaching.

The studies conducted in the same context have highlighted that for successful teaching practices, it is imperative to identify the needs of learners (Javid, 2011b; Javid & Umer, 2013). The finding is in line with the findings of Brown (2013) who has reported that Swedish EFL learners have agreed that NETs are best suited for their learning needs.

The three last items have been included in this survey to elicit the responses of the participants' overall attitudes toward native and non-native teachers. The results have revealed that Saudi PYP students are reasonably comfortable with their native and non-native English language teachers. The findings partially contradicts the study of Alseweed (2013) who has reported that Saudi university undergraduates from Qasim University have assigned an extremely high percentage of 89 to the item stating that they feel more comfortable with NETs.

Comparatively high preference has been reported for NETs if they have the option to choose between the courses taught by native and non-native teachers. The same tilt is evident in favour of native teachers as a reasonable high mean of 1.439 has been allotted for the items "on the whole, I prefer native/non-native) English teacher. This finding bears partial similarity with Alseweed (2013) who has revealed that Saudi university undergraduates from Qasim University have showed strong preference for NETs over NNETs in this respect. Similarly the participants of this study have also exhibited strong preference for NETs and stated that they would prefer to choose a course taught by native teachers. The remaining items related to motivating their

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students, showing responsibility, presenting cultural items judiciously etc. have been assigned medium values in favour of NETs. The finding differs from Brown (2013) who has reported that Swedish EFL learners have shown high preference for NETs in this respect.

Findings and Conclusions

It has been found out that the participants of this study have exhibited positive perceptions for their NETs as well as NNETs. Though the results have shown an overall preference for NETs but it seems that the respondents also believe that NNETs effectively contribute by virtue of their own experiences as English language learners and their experience as teachers. It may be concluded that Saudi EFL learners represented by the participants of this survey believe that NESTs are more successful in creating richer classroom environment. It has also been revealed that NETs are preferred because they teach/assess speaking skills better than their counterparts.

Other major areas where Saudi PYP students have shown preference for them include teaching and assessing listening skills, vocabulary and reading skills. Furthermore, they are perceived to know their students' learning styles and are able to create more meaningful opportunities to use English in more natural contexts. They have been reported to have motivating teaching methods which help in learning the target language in a better and effective manner.

However, the participants of this study are also aware of the strengths of their NNETs as well and the findings reveal that they have been considered as the ones who use innovative strategies and explain lessons more clearly to make their students learn better. By virtue of their personal experiences as language learners themselves, they have been perceived to understand their students' questions and language difficulties in a better manner that facilitate learning process. They have been reported to provide a relaxed atmosphere; therefore, motivate their students in a better manner to have more positive attitudes towards learning English.

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Another important advantage that has been highlighted by the perceptions of the participants is their ability to explain the differences between English and Arabic that help their students to establish more connections between their mother tongue and the target language. Though the participants have exhibited an overall preference for NESTs, they have also shown preferences toward NNETs as well.

The results seem to suggest that Saudi PYP students do not behave differently with native and non-native English teachers and understand their strengths for better learning. Therefore, it may be concluded that each group has been perceived to have their own particular strengths which give one an advantage over the other, these differences do not make one better than the other.

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Dr. Choudhary Zahid Javid (corresponding author), Ph.D. Applied Linguistics (ESP)
Associate Professor
Department of Foreign Languages, College of Arts
Taif University
P.O. Box 888
Taif, KSA chzahidj@hotmail.com

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