

"Do Native and Nonnative English Speaker Teachers Really Matter?: Chinese Undergraduate Students' Perceptions in a Sino-Foreign University

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Abstract

This descriptive-exploratory paper investigated Wenzhou Kean University students' perceptions of their Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in the aspects of linguistic, teaching, and personal factors. Quantitative data was collected through a survey from 400 respondents using convenience, random, and snowball sampling. A sample size of 16 interviewees was applied to collect qualitative information. The majority agreed NESTs have a broader vocabulary and use native English expressions in contextualized applications. Many students agreed they learn better authentic pronunciation from NESTs' fluency and pronunciation. More than half agreed that NNESTs can better teach EFL students in remembering and using words in sentence construction. Most agreed that NESTs' and NNESTs' grammatical knowledge levels are dependent on their formal English instruction acquisition. Many agreed that NNESTs tend to give more formal lectures in content courses although about half claimed that NNESTs' teaching materials preparation is more understandable for EFL students. Many students perceived that NESTs employ more engaging teaching methods to explain lessons with better clarity and effective student learning. The majority agreed that NNESTs' shared English language learning process makes them more sensitive to EFL students' English language learning difficulties, and is a good model for learning English. Many felt nervous when talking to NESTs because of language barriers and possible misunderstandings. A majority agreed that NNESTs' competence and experience make them compatibly qualified with NESTs in English language teaching whereas NNESTs with overseas learning and/or teaching experiences are better qualified than other NNESTs without overseas experience.

Keywords: linguistic-factors; NESTs; NNESTs; teaching-styles; teacher-factors