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It does not Matter Who you are, but it does Matter How you Teach and What you Know

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الملخص

أكّدت العديد من الدراسات بأن طلاب اللغة الانجليزية يفضلون معلمي الانجليزية الناطقين بها كلغة أم (إلياس والغفيلي، 2019) من ناحية أخرى ظهرت أبحاث لاستكشاف صفات اللغة الانجليزية الفعالة، تحاول هذه الورقة فحص تلك الآراء من خلال إجراء المقابلات مع معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الناطقين بها كلغة أم ، والغير ناطقين بها ،حول ماهيّة الصفات الفعالة لمعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟ في حين أظهرت النتائج أن من صفات معلّم اللغة الإنجليزية الفعال – من وجهة نظر معلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية الناطقين بها كلغة أم، وغير الناطقين بها– أن يكون مرِناً وواثقاً من نفسه عند تدريس اللغة، ومحفّزاً للطلاب، وأن يكون له معرفة بالمحتوى التربوي مثل: إتقان اللغة، ومعرفة الموضوع، والمعرفة التربوية.

الجدير بالذكر أن كل المجموعات المشاركة لم تذكر مكان المعلم ونشأته ولغته الأم بوصفها دليلاً ثابتاً على فعالية المعلم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية؛ لذلك فإن الحجة المركزية لهذه الورقة هي "ليس من أنت، ولكن ماذا تقدّم؟ وكيف تدرس تلك اللغة؟ وهذا ما يجعلك معلماً فعالا للغة الإنجليزية".

الكلمات المفتاحية: معلم اللغة الانجليزية الناطق بها كلغة أم، المحتوى المعرفي التربوي، معلّم اللغة الإنجليزية الفعال.

Abstract

A growing number of studies have explored how students prefer Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) (e.g. Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019). On the other hand, research has also emerged to investigate the qualities that can help to develop an effective English teacher (e.g. Tatipang, Manuas, Wuntu, Rorintulus & Lengkoan, 2022). This paper tries to examine English teachers' attitudes towards native-speakerism and teaching effectiveness, from the perspective of NESTs and Non-native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs) working in Saudi Arabia. The findings reveal that an effective English teacher, as perceived by the teachers, is flexible, motivated, self-confident and builds rapport with students. Teacher participants discussed the characteristics of an effective English teacher in relation to Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and affective qualities but without reference to linguistic background, thereby supporting the central argument of this paper: that it is not who you are but what you know and how you teach that makes you an 'effective' teacher of English.

Keywords: Native English Speaker Teacher, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Effective English Teacher.

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1. Introduction

English is becoming a lingua franca around the globe because there is a demand for English for successful communication among speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2005). It has played a crucial role in several fields including scientific conferences and publications, global trade, and mass global telecommunications (Szimigiera, 2021). As a consequence, the number of people learning English worldwide has grown rapidly, with an estimation of over 1.5 billion people globally who speak English either as a native speaker or as a second language (Dyvik, 2024). For example, in Saudi Arabia, English is used for communication purposes between multiple nationalities and ethnic groups and also between Saudis and expatriates that have recently resided in the country (Al-Seghayer, 2023). For that reason, the study of English has been made compulsory in Saudi Arabia from primary school onwards (8 to 9-year-olds).

The growth of a worldwide English market has generated a need for effective teachers, either teaching English as a second language (SL) or as a foreign language (FL). Therefore, the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners has caused a rapid rise in demand for qualified English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019). There are two types of English teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT), who are either multilingual teachers or monolingual teachers. The first type are Non-native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs), who speak English as their second language and work within an EFL/ESL setting (Medgyes, 2001). The second type are Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs), who use English from early childhood and continue using this language throughout their life (Phillipson, 1992; Davies, 1996, 2002; McArthur, 2002). NESTs can produce fluent speech, and English is their first language (L1) (Medgyes, 1992, 1994).

In ELT, there is a big demand for the latter type, NESTs, because they are perceived as ideal teachers due to their language competence, which leads to them being viewed as better than NNESTs. This is described as the native speaker fallacy, which is critiqued and challenged by Phillipson (1992) who stated that considering the NEST as an ideal English teacher is an unethical treatment of NNESTs. Holliday (2018) used the expression 'native-speakerism' to refer to a pervasive belief in ELT in which NESTs are perceived to be better teachers as they 'represent a Western culture from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology' (Holliday, 2006, p. 6). Based on previous studies, native-speakerism was accepted by the education system, students, administrators, and stakeholders in the majority of Asian countries (Al-Omrani, 2008; Moussu, 2018; Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Alruwaili, 2020; Zhang, 2021). In the context of Saudi Arabia, for example, native-speakerism has influenced recruitment practices, as NESTs are hired in language centers and university departments, irrespective of their qualifications or their previous experience (Alsweed, 2012; Alruwaili, 2020, 2021). This practice is designed to meet the demands of clients who want to learn English from NESTs, in the belief that this is the correct model to which they should aspire (Copland, Mann & Garton, 2020). In recent years, the majority of Saudi universities have recruited more English language teachers, specifically NESTs, due to their native language and as part of the trend for internationalization of the higher education system and the expansion of English majors. As part of this program, in 2010, the preparatory year was established at all universities (Alghamdi, 2017) and it is now compulsory for students graduating from high school and joining college. Expanding students' English language skills is one of the objectives of the preparatory year (Alghamdi, 2021).

Although previous studies have explored the pros and cons of NESTs and NNESTs (Al-Omrani, 2008; Alseweed, 2012; Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012; Javid, 2016; Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Qadeer, 2019; Alruwaili, 2021; Alruwaili & Altalab, 2023), little is still known about how both groups of teachers view the qualities of an effective English teacher. The majority of research studies have focused on the response of either English teachers or Saudi students (such as Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Qadeer, 2019; Alruwaili, 2021). In addition, these studies do not consider the ability of the individual to teach but instead focus only on their mother tongue. Yet, as argued by Farrell (2015), it is 'not who you are in terms of your ethnicity, culture or race as a TESOL teacher, but what you know in terms of your effectiveness as a teacher regardless of your background' (Farrell, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, this study will address these gaps in the literature by examining English teachers' (NESTs' and NNESTs') attitudes towards native-speakerism in relation to teaching effectiveness in the Saudi context. It will explore the perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs, teaching at undergraduate level, towards the effective qualities of English teachers using a qualitative research perspective. The study also aims to comprehend any variations between the NESTs' and NNESTs' perspectives on effective English teaching qualities. To conclude, it reviews the implications for teachers and provides suggestions on how to modify and enhance their teaching skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Effective Language Teachers' Qualities

In foreign language teaching, several different qualities are ascribed to explain effective practices (Brosh, 1996; Freeman, 1996; Borg, 2006; Lee, 2010). According to the qualities that have been identified, foreign language teachers must strive to create a relaxing and interesting environment and build relationships with students (Borg, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Senior, 2006); to know the students well, and have a good understanding of the subject matter, the target language and its culture (Brosh, 1996); to be familiar with technology (Kourieos & Evripidou, 2013); to have native-like language competence, expertise in grammar and control of accent, and to spend time in class teaching about culture (Richardson, 2011; Taqi, Al-Nouh & Akbar, 2014). It seems that many of these qualities relate to the specific context and teaching methods.

Regarding language teaching, Richards (2010) has denoted that in the context of L2 teaching, 'the nature of what we mean by effectiveness is not always easy to define because conceptions of good teaching differ from culture to culture' (2010, p. 102). In addition, Richards (2014) has added that: 'The way a person teaches, and his or her view of what good teaching is, will, therefore, reflect his or her cultural background and personal history, the context in which he or she is working and the kind of students in his or her class' (2014, p. 5).

Although, there have been several studies in the literature that have investigated what it means to be a good or effective language teacher, as opposed to the qualities that make language teachers distinctive, they do nonetheless offer empirical evidence of the various ways in which language teachers' 'characteristics have been conceptualized' (Borg, 2006, p. 6). These research studies revealed how language teachers can share some qualities with their colleagues from other fields in teaching; however, these studies illustrated how there are qualities which are distinctive and unique

to language teaching. Therefore, a significant and growing body of literature has investigated and proposed a provisional list of the skills and characteristics of effective English teachers.

First, there is a significant amount of published research describing the importance for teachers to have knowledge of their subject (Brosh, 1996; Mullock, 2003, 2010; Pachler, Evans & Lawes, 2007; Lamb & Wedell, 2013; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017). This type of knowledge was identified by Shulman (1986) and was termed by him as Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). Shulman integrates the pedagogical knowledge of teachers with their knowledge of their subject, which combined leads to PCK. PCK indicates how teachers relate their knowledge of the subject (i.e. what they know about their taught subject) to their knowledge of pedagogy (i.e. what they know about the practice of teaching). In other words, in the interest of making knowledge teachable and comprehensible to their students, teachers transform knowledge into various forms, such as examples, explanations, problems and classroom activities, and adapt their teaching material to match the abilities, previous knowledge, and gender of their students (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). From the perspective of PCK, an effective English teacher must develop the type of knowledge that integrates various components such as knowledge of the English language (i.e. knowledge of the subject) and knowledge of teaching English (i.e. pedagogical knowledge).

Second, language proficiency in the target language (TL) is considered an important element of the subject knowledge that determines the effectiveness of a teacher (Richards, Conway, Roskvist & Harvey, 2013). Shin (2008), for example, viewed language proficiency to be one of the critical attributes of an outstanding foreign language teacher. This corroborates the findings of Kiczkowiak's (2019) study, which revealed that some students considered that knowledge of the English language was the most significant skill for an effective English teacher. Similarly, in a Thailand-based study that focused on EFL students, Mullock (2010) revealed that learners were especially appreciative of the teachers who had higher proficiency in the language. Although the results of Lamb and Wedell's (2013) study revealed that certain students were indeed inspired by teachers' advanced levels of language proficiency, other students were concerned that too great an emphasis had been assigned to native-like proficiency as a pre-determined criterion of effective English teachers, contributing to discriminatory hiring policies and the resulting intrenchment of native-speakerism ideology (Tweed, 2011). Put differently, native-like proficiency is an awkward necessity, not only because it recommends an ideal standard that a non-native speaker is required to adhere to as thoroughly as they can, but also since it supposes that there is a homogenous standard of native speaker proficiency. Consequently, the standard of language proficiency should not be measured in terms of its proximity to an idealized concept of a native speaker norm, but instead in terms of the ability to present a model of language that is comprehensible and possible (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Third, a significant number of research studies revealed that there is a strong consensus that the ability to motivate students when they are learning a language is considered a principal virtue of successful teachers (Brosh, 1996; Bell, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Borg, 2006; Jones, Llacer-Arrastia & Newbill, 2009; Lamb & Wedell, 2013; Kiczkowiak, 2019), and several researchers now highlight how teachers can influence student motivation positively or negatively through the use of different activities (Wu, 2003; Jones, Llacer-Arrastia & Newbill, 2009; Magid & Chan, 2012; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). Consequently, to be effective, an English teacher must be able to identify which of the activities may assist and motivate learners in learning the language. In

addition, creating a positive experience for foreign language students must be regarded as an important quality for the success of English teachers and a key attribute of their subject knowledge (Britten, 1985; Phillipson, 1992; Ellis, 2006). These skills might assist the teacher in becoming a role model, an important factor that can assist and encourage students (Cheng and Dörnyei, 2007). Besides having learnt an FL themselves, English teachers should also ideally have a good understanding of the L1 and culture of their students (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Thus, it is possible to argue that it is multicompetent teachers – in other words, teachers who are multilingual – who have the capacity to be the most effective in the classroom.

Another important quality of language teachers is their aptitude for establishing a good relationship, or a good rapport, between students and teachers; this ability is of particular importance in communicative language classes. A key study, conducted by Borg (2006), examined language teachers' distinctiveness, as defined and identified by a sample of more than 200 language teachers (in practice and in training, and working in different contexts), by seeking the views about language teachers among five different groups. Borg's (2006) study points out, 'In language teaching, there are more communication relationships between teacher and learners and more scope for learners to work on themes which are of personal relevance' (p. 24). Borg (2006) stressed the need for the teacher to be more approachable because language teachers teach 'communication, not facts' (p. 5). This might help teachers to become better acquainted with their students and construct an effective environment in the classroom in which they are comfortable sharing their views and attitudes, and what they like and dislike. However, it can be challenging for the teacher to learn how to create this kind of rapport.

According to Catt, Miller and Schallenkamp (2007), the ability or capability of a teacher to establish rapport and to develop relationships based on 'mutual trust and harmony' (p. 369) is very necessary for an effective English teacher. Furthermore, it is vital to give students the chance to build such relationships with their teachers because the students are interested in their teachers' personal experiences and want to know who their teachers are so that they might feel more comfortable opening up to them. The ability to establish rapport plays an important role in influencing students in terms of their motivation, participation, cognitive learning, and their relationships with their peers and teachers (Frisby & Myers, 2008; Frisby & Martin, 2010). It also increases student interest and how well students are able to perform in the classroom. Additionally, rapport helps students to feel confident to ask questions, request feedback and seek clarification, which might lead to more positive learning outcomes for them (Frymier & Houser, 2000).

Barnes and Lock (2010) supported the importance of building rapport in language classes by examining the opinions of students regarding the key qualities of an effective English language lecturer. The study revealed that attributes relating to rapport were a primary focus of students' views and were seen as significant in university contexts in Korea, where student fear and anxiety over interactions in English can often prevent their learning of the language from taking place effectively. Frisby and Martin (2010) also suggested the significance of positive relationships in the classroom between instructor and student by showing that instructors who are able to build rapport with their students are most likely to experience teaching satisfaction and enhanced teaching effectiveness, and also develop an affective commitment to their institution. However, the rapport between instructor and student was not related to instructor morale. In addition, Faranda and Clarke (2004) conducted 28 interviews with nine student participants to explore the attributes

of outstanding professors, and the results revealed five predominant themes for teaching excellence, as perceived by the students. These were delivery, rapport, fairness, credibility and knowledge, and organization and preparation. However, teachers' views differed from the students' in the third category, as they stressed the need to give students experiences of being successful; whereas, students emphasized a need for all students to be treated fairly and equally, and focused on teachers' availability outside class hours. Similarly, a survey by Ghasemi and Hashemi (2011) of 200 university students in Iran, who were taking English language and literature majors, reported motivation and building relationships with students as the most beneficial traits of EFL teachers.

Phillipson (1992, p. 95) stated that 'a teacher is not adequately qualified to teach a language merely because it is his mother tongue', while Farrell (2015) contests that it is not the ethnicity of the teacher or their mother tongue that defines them as being an effective teacher. Indeed, it seems that the ELT profession is still influenced by the idea that an effective English teacher is judged by his mother tongue, not on his teaching skills. This is very clear in the majority of the advertisements of several websites in Asian countries that seek to recruit English teachers, as these websites are focused on recruiting NESTs only (Rivers, 2016). This phenomenon may threaten NNESTs' careers as they are suffering from the effects of native-speakerism ideology (Lowe & Kiczkowiak, 2016). The native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) dichotomy in the ELT context, as well as the empirical studies from the perspective of teachers, will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 Studies on Teachers' Self-perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs: Is the NEST or NNEST More Effective Based on Teachers' Self-perceptions?

Although existing research on NESTs and NNESTs provides a lot of data about their relative strengths and weaknesses, there is no data that reveals that the former is better than the latter. From the teachers' own perceptions, each group has strengths and weaknesses. For example, a significant number of studies showed that NNESTs experienced various language issues and difficulties, such as problems with vocabulary, listening comprehension, pronunciation, fluency, and speaking. NESTs may also lack knowledge of the local language, which is the mother tongue of their students; this lack of knowledge may in turn create a low level of empathy between NESTs and their students (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Pacek, 2006). In a similar vein, with a focus on teachers' perceptions, Jenkins (2005) states that all his participants (n=8 NNESTs) indicated a strong preference for an NS accent. However, Sifakis and Sougari (2005), focusing on teachers' perceptions while surveying 421 NNESTs from different levels in Greek schools, reported that teachers were satisfied with and proud of their accents.

In terms of teachers' accents and their impact on the ability of their students to comprehend, certain studies have demonstrated that accents did not influence the attitudes of participants towards NESTs or NNESTs, nor did they have a significant impact on their listening comprehension (Kelch & Santana-Willamson, 2002; Liang, 2002). In terms of teaching materials, in some contexts, studies have found that NNESTs using traditional textbooks were not as proficient as their NEST counterparts in managing a student-centered communicative classroom (Ma, 2016). However, Arva and Medgyes (2000) revealed that NNESTs not only tracked textbooks in their lessons but also prepared more professionally and were stricter teachers; thus, they had a feeling of responsibility. In contrast, NESTs did not commonly use textbooks, but preferred using teaching resources such as posters, videos, newspaper clippings, and recorded conversations. NNESTs have also been

praised for their ability to design teaching materials based on their students' needs and individual learning styles.

From another angle, studies that investigated teachers' perceptions towards NESTs and NNESTs have shown how the latter group can understand their students' needs and share their cultural background and their own experience of language learning by using the L1 in the classroom for explanation and clarification (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997; Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Moussu, 2002; Nemtchinova, 2005; Lin, 2007; Reynolds-Case, 2012).

In terms of teacher–student personal interaction as a pedagogical skill, Hadla's (2013) study explored the views of both teachers and students about NESTs and NNESTs. Both groups of participants agreed that NNESTs connected with their students in effective ways because of their shared L1 and culture. Yet Moussu (2006a) showed that NNESTs were less confident about their teaching methods and strengths compared to their counterpart NESTs, and they seemed to be more comfortable when they were teaching lower-level classes. However, a Hong Kong study (Andrews, 2008) found that NNESTs who taught in tertiary-level classrooms had more confidence than NESTs in understanding and applying the rules of grammar. Reves and Medgyes (1994) reported that, in order to improve NNESTs' confidence and self-esteem, they should be conscious of the benefits they provide students as language teachers. Being very aware of the techniques required for language use and acquisition, NNESTS are especially able to assess students' abilities and to empathize with them in order to support their learning difficulties (Medgyes, 2017; Copland, Mann & Garton, 2020).

There is a lack of research on the impact of NESTs and NNESTs in the Saudi context. The present study focuses on analyzing the teachers' perceptions of the experience of NESTs and NNESTs, and using the in-depth qualitative data generated to consider whether native status influences the teaching of English skills in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, this research study aimed to bridge the gap in the literature and define the specific abilities and qualities that are important for English teachers' efficacy in Saudi language schools. The study also attempted to determine how teachers perceived the relative importance of these abilities and qualities, as well as the significance of 'nativeness'.

The focus of the study has been influenced by the professional experience of the researcher as a lecturer at a Saudi university, with a specific interest in the attitudes of teachers teaching undergraduate students. This experience has raised the question of what makes an effective English teacher, and the research has been designed accordingly. Is teacher effectiveness related to the origins of the English teacher, in terms of whether he/she is a native speaker (NS) or non-native speaker (NNS)? Or is it related to how he/she teaches English, or develops relationships in the classrooms? Do NESTs' views on these issues converge with those of NNESTs? These questions provided a foundation for the aims and research questions which are outlined below.

1. What are the qualities that teachers find essential in effective English teachers?
2. To what extent is the 'nativeness' of teachers essential for attaining these defined qualities of effective English teachers?

3. Aims of the Research

1. To examine English teachers' (NESTs' and NNESTs') attitudes towards native-speakerism with regards to teaching effectiveness in the Saudi context.
2. To identify which skills and qualities these teachers consider and value in an effective English teacher.

4. Methodology

To answer the above questions, a qualitative research approach was used. According to Creswell (2014), in qualitative research, researchers focus on understanding the meanings that participants can bring to bear on an issue, not the meanings that the researcher brings to the research from the existing literature. Creswell also points out that the meanings produced by the participants will refer to multiple perspectives on a topic and diverse views and therefore cannot be quantitatively analyzed or measured. Qualitative research involves a researcher understanding the participants' context by collecting information him or herself and, often, by visiting this context (Crotty, 1998, 2003). In this regard, qualitative research focuses on natural settings, such as ordinary events, and generates rich descriptive data about the problem (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). While several studies in the Saudi educational context investigate perceptions of teachers, from the literature it would seem that they utilize quantitative or mixed-methods research (Al-Omrani, 2008; Alseweed, 2012; Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012; Alaleimi, 2013; Javid, 2016; Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019). By adopting a qualitative methodology, the participants taking part in this study were able to describe their own experiences of teaching and learning from a personal perspective.

5. Participants

The research was conducted in Jouf University in the Saudi context. The teachers (NESTs and NNESTs) were selected using purposive sampling (Given, 2008), as they were representative of the teaching demographic in the university and most likely to yield information that is relevant to the aims and objectives of the research. This sampling technique provides the researcher with 'information rich' data in response to the research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2013; 2017, p. 56), and improves the rigour and trustworthiness of the results. The sampling frame was the five NNESTs and four NESTs who participated in this study. In this qualitative study, the small and purposively selected sample was designed to increase the depth of understanding.

All nine teachers who were interviewed for this research were women (see tables below) because of the policy of strict gender segregation (Alsubaie, 2014) practiced in Saudi society, including within educational settings. The four NESTs who participated in the study were from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), and their first language was English. Two of the NESTs held a Master's degree, in English and education. Two held a non-English Bachelor's degree (i.e. related to education) and a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). In contrast, four of the NNESTs had been awarded PhDs in English literature and education and one had a doctorate in TESOL. Tables 1 and 2 provide the demographic details of the NESTs and the NNESTs who participated in this study, including their first language, number of years of teaching experience, the institutions where they were working at the time that this study data was collected, gender, and nationality. The participants were selected for their

teaching experience and their availability, and they all had a minimum of two years' experience in teaching English.

Table 1 NEST participants for the qualitative study

Item	**Name**			
Pseudonyms	Sharon	Rose	Li	Lore
Nationality	UK	US	UK	US
First Language	English			
Years of teaching	3-8 years for all of the NEST participants			
University	A	B	C	D
Age	25	30	29	34
Academic qualification	B.A. in business and law Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course for 4 months	B.A. in Primary Education Certificate in TEFL for 140 hours.	B.A. in ART Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) for 3 months	B.A. in Business with journalism, media and culture. Certificate in CELTA for 4 weeks.

Table 2 NNEST participants for the qualitative study

Item	**Name**				
Pseudonyms	Norah	Ahlam	Reham	Hanaa	Sarah
Nationality	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Syria	Saudi Arabia	Jordan
Age	30	34	45	32	44
First Language	Arabic				
Years of teaching	2-18 years for all of the NNEST participants				
University	A	B	C	D	E
Academic qualification	PhD in English literature	PhD in English education	PhD in English literature	PhD education	PhD degree in TESOL

6. Data Collection and Instrument

In designing the interviews, the main aim was to obtain in-depth insight into English teachers' (NESTs' and NNESTs') attitudes towards native-speakerism with regards to teaching effectiveness in the Saudi context. Specific aspects of interest were the participants' views regarding which skills and qualities are more essential for an effective English teacher. Interviews were conducted with nine teachers lasting between 40–50 minutes. Interviewing was relatively informal and took place face-to-face in a quiet and comfortable room on the campus of Jouf University allowing participants to speak freely. To enhance reliability, a digital recorder was used to capture the interviews in their entirety and notes were taken to illuminate any potential issues that might arise in the transcript. Checking was employed to validate the accuracy of the transcriptions.

In terms of preparation, interview questions were given to each interviewee at least two days before the interview date. This helps the interviewees to gain an overall idea about the nature of these questions and gives them time to think about their answers, contributing towards the 'richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness, and honesty that were some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 278).

The questions were selected based on reading the relevant literature and the researcher's professional experience. For instance, to address the primary research questions, the interview questions covered the interviewees' own teaching experience as well as their perceptions regarding effective English teachers. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews and were followed

by more probing questions and prompts. The semi-structured interviews gathered information about the participant's professional background and teaching skills, linguistic and cultural background, nationality, first language, and their opinions on the qualities of an effective English teacher. These questions led the researcher to a better understanding of the participants' identities and how they viewed efficacy in an English teacher, and their view on the importance of 'nativeness' for teachers and for attaining the other traits of effective English teachers. In addition, these questions involve warm-up questions to create a relaxing atmosphere for participants to easily express their views. The follow-up questions include detailed questions about the participants' views to understand them in a more precise way.

7. Data Analysis

The process of this study's data analysis can be divided into the following six stages. The first stage was listening to the participants' recorded voices and transcribing the interviews. Each of the transcripts were thoroughly checked for accuracy and were then made anonymous, by replacing the participants' names with pseudonyms. The second stage involved manually interpreting and selecting descriptive codes by highlighting scripts. Third, data for the interviews was imported to NVivo software version 11. The fourth stage involved thinking about the NVivo codes and grouping them to establish connections between them. In the fifth stage, categories and themes were built up.

Although there are several methods of analyzing qualitative data, this study employed thematic analysis, so as to focus on 'identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87), there are six main steps in thematic analysis: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for key themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes and, to conclude, producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The familiarisation stage begins immediately when listening to the participants' recorded voices. In terms of generating initial codes, the transcripts were imported to the NVivo software; the transcripts were then carefully coded line by line and descriptive codes were generated (the labels that summarize a data node in one word) as well as NVivo codes (the words spoken by participants extracted from the data) (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). These codes were assigned and reformulated to explore the range of patterns that could be traced within the data. For example, a NEST mentioned '…from my previous experience as a learner of the German language and the extent I faced challenges in learning this language, I am now aware of the challenges that Saudi learners face in learning English, and I know what students want and need….'. This data was given the coding: "positive advantages of NESTs". For the next step, the searching for themes, the coded data is examined to categorize any similarities between codes, which are then grouped into themes and subthemes. For example, the code "knowledge of language" was found in the two groups of teachers, NESTs and NNESTs, and formed part of the theme "qualities of an effective English teacher". The generated themes were then reviewed and further clarified, to ensure that they were accurate and related to the study aims, research questions and the issues raised in the literature review. In terms of defining and naming themes, the qualities of each theme were then revised and finalized. The final report is presented in the following sections. Producing the report involved analyzing and synthesizing the findings, and comparing and contrasting the views of the two participant groups. The implications and the limitations of the findings were also determined.

8. Findings and Discussion

In the process of coding, reviewing and clarifying the data, as outlined in the section above, the researcher must incorporate self-checks to ensure the validity of the data. During this recursive process, interpretations are checked to ensure they reflect the data and not any preexisting expectations. At the end of this process, some clear responses emerged to the two research questions:

1. What are the qualities that teachers find essential in effective English teachers?

The participants held a range of views regarding the qualities of an effective English teacher. While teachers viewed the effective English teacher in terms of the qualities they personally value, their views were based on their professional experiences of teaching. The findings showed that the English teachers' views (NESTs and NNESTs) are converged in terms of knowledge of pedagogy (such as using a repertoire of fun activities, group or pair work, and diverse materials, and knowledge of the subject); the importance of teacher–student relationships (such as building rapport with students); and the lack of importance of nativeness (i.e. status as native English speaker). By contrast NESTs diverged from NNESTs' views with regard to the knowledge of language as being important for an effective English teacher.

2. To what extent is the 'nativeness' of teachers essential for attaining these defined qualities of effective English teachers?

The findings revealed that ideas relating to native English speaker (NES) status were rarely mentioned, by either teacher group, as a quality that is more important for an effective English teacher. However, the NESTs referred to the knowledge of language as being essential for an effective English teacher.

Three key themes emerged from the data, and these are discussed in more detail below.

8.1 Teacher's Knowledge of Language and Pedagogy

The data showed that the majority of teachers (NESTs) considered the knowledge of language to be a primary skill for an English teacher. In terms of teachers' language proficiency, four of the NESTs appeared to believe that the effective English teacher should know the English language very well and their accent should be very clear. This is evident in the comments of one NEST informant (Rose):

> I think an effective English teacher should have a clear accent and also go the extra mile to teach students only the root of the word. He/she should know the language, and grammar which I consider as important and basic skills to be an effective English teacher. Without this knowledge, we cannot teach. (Rose)

In terms of teachers' language proficiency, two of the NESTs (Sharon and Li) appeared to believe that efficacy in an English teacher required a knowledge of the language beyond what is taught

inside of the books or classes. This knowledge is created from studies abroad, or having lived abroad which results in interaction with the culture:

> From my point of view, a teacher's knowledge of teaching does not come only from books but sometimes comes from several sources such as living or studying abroad, reading about other cultures, or interacting with native English speakers. (Li)

Knowledge of pedagogy was considered a critical quality for an effective English teacher. For example, all the surveyed teachers (NESTs and NNESTs) pointed out that lesson planning, using a repertoire of fun activities, and knowledge of teaching methods, are essential qualities for an effective English teacher.

Using a repertoire of fun activities, group or pair work, and diverse materials is considered essential by the majority of the English teachers surveyed (NESTs and NNESTs). For example, two of the NNESTs (Sarah and Ahlam) stated that the effective English teacher should create a stimulating environment by including fun activities and games that are different from those in the textbook. In addition, Lore stated that an effective English teacher is one who presents her English classes through meaningful, fun and enjoyable activities including group work, games, and oral presentations and discussions. Likewise, Rose pointed out that short films could also be utilized to provide stimulating foci for discussion in the class and she also believed that songs could provide an opportunity to learn a wider range of expressions.

In addition, English teachers believe that the knowledge of the subject and how to teach it is an exceptionally important trait for an effective English teacher. For example, Ahlam stated that 'an effective English teacher is a person who has some knowledge about the subject and how to teach it'. Sarah stated that there is a connection between the confidence of the teacher and their knowledge of the subject matter in teaching students in the classroom. Interestingly, only Rose emphasized a specific approach, communicative language teaching (CLT), though not explicitly. Three NESTs (Sharon, Li, and Lore) discussed the value in creating an environment in which the focus is on learner-centered principles, developing EFL skills, and students having an active role within the classroom, which are all features of the CLT approach.

All in all, it seems that both sets of English teachers are in agreement that knowledge of the subject and pedagogy, which includes English-language knowledge and using a repertoire of fun activities, diverse materials, and group or pair work, are key elements for an effective English teacher. This finding is supported by other studies conducted by Bell (2005), Borg (2006), Lamb and Wedell (2013), Muijs and Reynolds (2017), Alzobiani (2020), Alzubi (2021) and Altheyab (2023). However, only NESTs considered knowledge of the language itself to be a critical element for achieving effectiveness as an English teacher. This finding is in agreement with other studies (Pettis, 1997; Kalebic, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Kiczkowiak, 2019) which proved that competent English teachers are knowledgeable about the language, and teachers themselves stated that high English proficiency is essential for an effective English teacher (Park & Lee, 2006). It could be inferred that accent and language proficiency are associated with NES, leading to the hiring of teachers based on their pronunciation, something that has been described as a discriminatory practice in previous studies (Buckingham, 2014; Tatar, 2019, Alshammary, 2023). In fact, the value

placed on high language proficiency could be seen as a major challenge to the NNESTs being employed as EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, especially those teachers who have had limited opportunity to work on their English. However, in practice, highly proficient NNESTs, like those in this study (see Table 2), still stand a good chance of being hired by EFL programs, especially where the specification values the experience and professionalism of the applicants rather than simply their linguistics status. Although the importance of language proficiency is important to NESTs, in this study the participants placed greater emphasis on the knowledge of pedagogy as an essential requirement for an effective English teacher. However, whether or not the teacher is a native speaker (NS) is irrelevant.

8.2 The Importance of Good Rapport with Students

In general, the NESTs had similar ideas to the NNESTs concerning the specific traits of effective English teachers. NESTs placed greater emphasis on affective traits as well as the importance of teacher–student relationships, such as building rapport with students which included 'being friendly', 'kind' and 'caring' and being sensitive to students' learning needs. For example, Sharon noted that an effective English teacher is someone who is able to build good rapport with her/his students and communicate with them in an effective way. Likewise, two of the NESTs (Lore and Li) added that, from their point of view, effectual English teachers prefer a situation in which their students can relate to them and feel comfortable coming to them to ask for help if they did not understand something in class.

'Kindness' was also stated by some of the NESTs as giving students the chance to develop their performance in the class. For example, Rose views kindness as one of the key attributes of an effective English teacher, enabling them to be helpful and supportive to students, and to recognize that there are individual learning differences between students. As expressed by two NESTs (Sharon and Lore), a sense of humor helps maintain good teacher–student relationships. They said that an effective English teacher should have the ability to create a positive learning environment using humor and identified several ways through which effective English teachers use their sense of humor. For example, Li expressed her view from her personal experience to explain how she used a sense of humor when she joked with her students; for example, she said 'if I say their names with a mistake and a giggle, they laugh with me'. Another NEST (Sharon) stated that humor and body movements are helpful: 'funny comments and making special movements create a good atmosphere in class and help in holding the attention of students'. Some NESTs placed a particular emphasis on patience. For example, Lore defined an English teacher must be 'patient because students are not all the same in terms of learning and pace as they have different styles in learning'. Li defined efficacy in similar terms: teachers should 'be patient and have a good grasp of English in general'. This finding is echoed by previous studies by Borg (2006), Alzobiani (2020), and Alzubi (2021), stressing the importance of good rapport with students in the learning environment.

In general, NNESTs had similar views to NESTs about what made an effective English teacher. However, there were some significant differences. For example, NESTs valued affective qualities, such as building rapport with students, while NNESTs favored more educational ones, emphasizing pedagogical aspects instead of affective features. Although this finding doesn't appear in the previous research in the Saudi context, this finding corresponds to prior investigations conducted in an Asian context setting in China (Ma, 2016; Sarwal & Lamb, 2018) which showed that NNESTs assigned more value to certain principal qualities such as the knowledge of language and pedagogy.

The reason behind NESTs' views towards affective qualities of building a good rapport with students could be related to the sociocultural background of these teachers. These teachers are hired from countries where English is used as the dominant language and they have received a Western education. NEST participants, for example, have educational degrees from the UK and USA, and their education has shifted from a teacher-centered education to a student-centered model (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Waddington, and Pickup, 2019). Student-centered education theory places emphasis on encouraging students for participation in the class, recognizing learners' needs and being flexible in explaining the subject (Wright, 2011). For that reason, NESTs might be influenced by their student-centered education and conduct themselves accordingly when they teach students in Saudi contexts. In other words, NESTs believe in affective qualities such as building rapport and caring that fit in with a student-centered educational model. All in all, this difference in the views between NESTs and NNESTs with regard to this quality may have been influenced by their historical background, educational background, cultural background, and previous experience as learners in another language, which can help to explain why there is support for the conventional thinking around the pros and cons of NESTs and NNESTs.

As the above discussion shows, the participants in this study recognized the importance of the rapport between the effective English teacher and her/his students. However, it seems that the consequences of a good rapport in this context are not the same as in communicative and post-method language classes. Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 66) has described in detail the kind of interactions that should take place in a communicative class or any classroom learning and teaching operation, proposing three interrelated dimensions of interaction, one of them being 'interaction as an ideational activity', which operates by authorizing learners to construct their individual identity. Indeed, 'it focuses on ideas and emotions the participants bring with them, and its outcome is measured primarily in terms of pragmatic knowledge/ability' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 66). In communicative classes this rapport involves the teacher encouraging learners to use the target language as a means of communication and interaction. Creating a positive classroom climate is also crucial in the learning process where students interact with friendly teachers to help them and to inspire them to use the L2 to share their personal experiences. As the target language is not the means of communication in most Saudi public schools and universities, rapport and friendliness do not necessarily lead to using English for communication in these classes. Therefore, while a friendly classroom climate may be desirable to develop communicative language ability, it does not automatically ensure better outcomes in tests or examinations, as these may be more grammar based or test writing rather than communicative competence in the four skills.

8.3 The Importance of Nativeness

The findings revealed that ideas relating to native English speaker status were rarely mentioned, by either teacher group, as a quality that is more important for an effective English teacher. Indeed, the participants put more emphasis on the fact that a teacher's status as a native English speaker does not automatically mean they will be a more effective English teacher: what is more essential are qualifications, teaching abilities and professionalism. Both NESTs and NNESTs placed great importance on these effective qualities, and downplayed nativeness. For example, Sharon and Reham stated:

> I think you are an American or a British person, but this does not mean that you are a good English teacher. (Sharon)
>
> It is not necessary that you have a red passport to teach the English language effectively, NO, NO, the issue is bigger than you can imagine. (Reham)

All in all, the findings in this study indicate that the participants do not believe that nativeness is the most essential qualification for effectiveness as an English teacher and this finding is echoed by Kiczkowiak (2019).

9. Conclusion

This research was conducted in the Saudi context and examined the qualities of NESTs and NNESTs that are considered important for efficacy in English teaching. Furthermore, this research aimed to explore how essential nativeness and the teacher's first language were in relation to these qualities. This study revealed that NESTs and NNESTs believe that knowledge of pedagogy and language is critical to become effective as an English teacher. These qualities, which are identified in this research, align to a great extent with those that are observed in the literature. Although both groups of teachers are in agreement regarding some abilities and skills of effectual English teachers, their responses are different in some ways. For example, NESTs place greater weight on personal traits such as engagement with students, a caring demeanor, and building rapport with students. These differences in the participants' views could have arisen due to the participants' different views of educational models, with NNESTs being more conversant with the teacher-centered model whereas NESTs are better acquainted with the student-centered educational model. Another finding showed that nativeness and the teacher's first language are not deemed to be significant for determining an effective English teacher. This study revealed that it does not matter who you are but it does matter how you teach and what you know.

The findings of this study might have significant implications for administrators and teachers. Although the teachers who participated in this study agree on some views, they differ on others. This difference is an outcome of their varied backgrounds: cultural, linguistic, and educational. This study recommends the establishment of a process of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which helps to enable the effectiveness of teachers and develops a collaborative process between NESTs and NNESTs through team teaching and training EFL teachers through training courses (Huang, 2017). For example, the administrators could deliver a training course designed to make NESTs and NNESTs collaborate with each other. One such training course could help raise the NESTs' awareness of the Saudi culture and educational system. Furthermore, NNESTs could be trained on how to use student-centered teaching methodologies, to enhance their care for students, improve their flexibility, and to help build a good rapport with students.

CPD might also incorporate training on classroom language. This would involve analyzing and practicing in detail the various forms of English that are used by teachers during interaction with their students. Such a course might include guidance on how to encourage student participation in class, directly and indirectly, and provide tips and techniques to help in establishing rules and boundaries for misbehavior, as well as various ways of offering encouragement and praise to students in the classroom (Liu, 1999). Further, CPD could include sensitizing NNESTs to the qualities students appreciate in their NESTs, thereby changing the nature of interactions in the

classroom. CPD may also support the NESTs' and NNESTs' professional growth by enhancing their teaching abilities through learning from their colleagues and benefiting from mutual emotional support through team teaching with their colleagues (Zhang, Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2023).

This research study has certain key limitations. The main limitation is that it is small in scale. However, the purposive selection of participants has been successful in terms of fulfilling the objectives of this qualitative study. The total number of teachers (9) surveyed was sufficient to gather detailed and relevant data. To corroborate these findings, a wider study of the teacher population could be implemented, using a Likert scale survey or ranking questions; this would provide quantitative data on the key issues as perceived by NESTs and NNESTs in ELT. Another limitation is geographical: the research was completed in a Saudi EFL context, which means that findings are specific to this ELT setting and are potentially limited in terms of their generalizability. In addition, the gender of the participants was restricted and only females were approached due to the segregated educational system in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, no claim can be made regarding male English teachers (either NESTs or NNESTs) and their views about the qualities and skills of effective English teachers. This is another area worth exploring in future studies.

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Dr. Areej Radhi Alruwaili is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English, College of Art, Jouf University, Saudi Arabia. Dr. Alruwaili received her PhD degree in Applied Linguistics in 2021 from East Anglia University, UK. Her research interests include the intersection of language and society, and the impact of technology on language learning.

معلومات عن الباحث

د.أريج راضي الرويلي، أستاذ مساعد في (اللغويات التطبيقية) في (قسم اللغة الإنجليزية (بكلية الآداب) في جامعة الجوف (المملكة العربية السعودية). حاصلة على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية واللغويات التطبيقية من جامعة ايست انجليا من المملكة المتحدة عام2021. تدور اهتماماتها البحثية حول اكتساب اللغة وسياسة اللغة وأثر التقنية على اللغة في عصرنا الحالي.

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