

Investigating Views of “Nativeness” of English Teachers in a Multilingual,  
Multicultural Setting

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## Abstract

The native-/non-native-English-speaking teacher dichotomy has aroused much debate over the years. While many students and parents have assumed that native English speakers (NESs) are naturally the best choice for English language teachers, scholars have been proving that non-native-English-speaking teachers (NNESs) can be as effective, and perhaps more effective than NESs in some situations. For instance, NNESs may be better teachers of grammar since they have had to study it themselves in the course of learning the language, unlike NESs. NESs, on the other hand, are often considered better teachers of pronunciation since English is their mother tongue. This research investigated the views of undergraduate students at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the United Arab Emirates, to see if there is a preference for NES or NNES English teachers in this multilingual environment. It also documented the observations of English teachers (NESs and NNESs), using student and teacher surveys and interviews. Fourteen English teachers from the Department of Writing Studies were surveyed, and three of these also volunteered for individual interviews. 146 undergraduate students were surveyed, from three different levels of English writing classes, and three students also volunteered for individual interviews. The research revealed that more students preferred NESs to teach all aspects of the English language (grammar, writing, reading, pronunciation/speaking, listening, and vocabulary) except the social aspects. The teacher responses, however, predicted that the students would prefer to be taught grammar by NNESs and pronunciation/speaking by NESs. The findings also revealed that 38% of the 146 students preferred to be taught by NES English teachers in general, as opposed to 6% in favor of being taught by NNES English teachers, with the majority of students not expressing a preference. The student and teacher interviews suggested that AUS students did not choose their courses based on the nativeness of the teachers, but on the leniency of their grading systems.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

I became interested in the native-/non-native-English-speaking (NES/NNES) English teacher dichotomy when I realized that there was a difference in the way most AUS TESOL students treated NES and NNES English teachers. My observation prior to this research was that even with students in the MA TESOL program at the American University of Sharjah, who consist mostly of NNES English teachers furthering their education, there seemed to be a definite bias towards NES English teachers in informal conversations and in class discussions. When a required course is offered and we discover that it is to be taught by an NNES English teacher, the overgeneralization and complaining begins: NNESs are said to be stricter, or less knowledgeable, or biased towards students of their own cultures.

I am a bilingual native speaker of English and Arabic, so I have never felt this bias directed towards myself. I was curious, however, to see if there was a preference among the undergraduate students of the American University of Sharjah for NES or NNES teachers, especially the freshmen and sophomores, who have recently graduated from high school and have chosen to apply to an American university in a very multicultural setting. I was also curious to see if the English language teachers, both NES and NNES, had noticed such a preference.

The American University of Sharjah (AUS) is a multicultural setting in a multicultural country, the United Arab Emirates. According to the CIA World Factbook, less than 20% of the population of the country is comprised of UAE citizens; the majority of the population is South Asian, with other Arabs and Westerners making up the rest (The Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). It is not surprising, then, that while Arabic is the official language, English is more often used as a lingua franca and as the language of international business and communication.

In the spring semester of 2011, when this research was conducted, there were 5,259 students in AUS, with 4,644 undergraduates. The total number of nationalities represented on campus was 83. Appendix A is a table illustrating the wide variety of nationalities (and, consequently, native languages) represented at AUS.

These students use English as their first, second, or sometimes third language. Some use it only in class, where English is the language of instruction. Others use it

as a general lingua franca. For some students, trying to earn a degree, in what is for them a foreign language, is difficult. Others may have grown up in British or American institutions and thus find it easier to study in English. AUS is a great melting pot of nationalities, languages, cultures, and experiences, and as such it is an appropriate place to investigate views about having NES or NNES English language teachers.

### Focus of the Research

The language learning literature suggests that students will prefer certain types of teachers to teach them different areas of the English language (reading, writing, listening, pronunciation/speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and the social aspects). An indication of student and/or teacher preference for NES teachers of English existing in AUS, where the majority of students and a good number of the teachers are non-native speakers of English, would be revealing to discover and would add to the ongoing debate on the issue.

My research questions, therefore, are:

1. What characteristics do AUS students consider important for English teachers to have?
2. Do AUS students prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of English? Why?
3. Is an English teacher's native-speaker status important in the view of AUS students?
4. Are NES or NNES English teachers at AUS more effective at teaching specific aspects of English, in the views of AUS English teachers? Why?
5. What are the observations of English teachers at AUS (NESs/NNESs) concerning discrepancies (if any) in the way NES/NNES teachers are treated by the administration, their colleagues, and the students?

Since this research specifically investigated native and non-native English speakers in the context of the English language classroom, the acronyms "NES" and "NNES" are used. Using only the labels "native speaker" and "non-native speaker" is rather Anglo-centric, since everyone is a native speaker of some language.

## Overview of the Chapters

Chapter one presents the issue being addressed and the focus of the research. Chapter two, the literature review, examines the research written previously on the topic of NES and NNES English teachers. Chapter three, the research methodology, details the various data collection methods utilized in this research project, including the teacher surveys, the student surveys, and the teacher and student interviews. Chapter four, the data analysis, tabulates and presents the data collected from the surveys and interviews in answer to the research questions. Chapter five, the discussion of the research, draws conclusions from the data and answers the research questions in turn. It also offers conclusions about the significance of the research, as well as commenting on the limitations of the research and offering suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The English language plays a significant role in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman). In a region where the vast majority of the population is expatriate, English is used widely as the language of communication. Ali (2009) confirms that, though “the official language of the GCC is Arabic,” “English can be considered a truly international language used for communication amongst people from various cultures in the GCC, particularly as the expatriate population outnumbers the local population in most of the GCC countries” (p. 35).

In the United Arab Emirates, several factors help form a picture of a diverse nation, both traditional and modern. These include, as Findlow (2006) explains, The status of Arabic as a national language, Islam as the state religion, its broadly post-colonial mindset and close ideological and political links with other Arab countries, a small indigenous and traditionally conservative population and much larger expatriate communities (approximately 90% of the workforce), and the recent and rapid modernisation accompanying the acquisition of oil wealth and independence from British ‘protection’ in the late 1960s, and federal statehood in 1971. (p. 23)

These factors help explain the educational landscape of the UAE. As Syed (2003) points out about the country, “the pace and scope of expansion in education has been unprecedented. Seemingly in a single generation students have gone from small, ill-equipped huts to laptop universities” and “the number of students increased by 67.5% and the number of schools by 62.0% between 1985 and 1996” (p. 338). Findlow (2006) also notes that “with more than 30 universities and [Higher Education] colleges, the three state HE institutions (UAE University, the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University) together cater for over 23,000 students, about 60% of the country’s total student population” (p. 24). Ali (2009) reports on this expansion across the GCC:

In recent years, several major American and Canadian universities have opened branch campuses in Education City, Qatar. The cities of Sharjah and Dubai in the UAE each have university cities (Sharjah University City and Dubai Academic City) which house several colleges and national universities

(Dubai has a few branch campuses of international universities as well). In 2006, the Sorbonne opened its first campus outside France in Abu Dhabi while MIT is also entering into partnership to set up a college in the Emirate. (p. 36)

Besides the incredible growth in the field of education, the UAE shares a unique situation with the other GCC countries, in which there is a distinct difference in the way Arabic and English are used. Findlow (2006) explains,

Arabic is the language used in state primary and secondary schools, while the majority of private schools teach in English with compulsory Arabic lessons (although even in state schools the use of English appears to be increasing overall). At the tertiary level, a divided epistemological (subject-related) paradigm sees ‘cultural’ or locally focused subjects such as *Shari’a*, Islamic studies, arts/humanities, social sciences and education taught mostly in Arabic, while subjects with a global orientation, especially technologically or commercially oriented ones, or applied sciences, are taught in English. (p. 25)

This extends to the American University of Sharjah as well, where every student is required to complete three credits of Arabic Heritage (American University of Sharjah, 2010b, p. 37). For non-native speakers of Arabic, AUS provides Introduction to Arabic Heritage classes taught in English, the language of instruction at the university; however, native speakers of Arabic must take the class in Arabic.

In an area of the world where English is so widely used, and where the majority of its speakers are not native speakers, the question of whether NES English teachers are valued more than NNES English teachers is an important one. Moussu and Llurda (2008) note that since “the number of non-native English teachers is...increasing, greater attention is being placed on how those teachers are perceived and what they bring to the language classroom” (pp. 341-342). Research into this issue is becoming incredibly relevant as more and more people want to learn English, and as more and more English language teachers are, inherently, non-native speakers of the language. Moussu and Llurda encourage this type of research, especially in different regions of the world, stating that

In our quest to compile most of the writings related to [NNES] ESL/EFL teachers and student teachers, we have noted that the largest part of the literature discussed issues related to North American situations and the ESL context.... It is our hope that [we] will show the need for, and inspire new

projects in countries throughout the world and in particular in the context of English as an international lingua franca. (p. 342)

Judgments have been made over the past two decades about the differences between NESs and NNEs, and the various areas in which one group might be better than the other. Patterns have emerged in the studies of academics concerning the language teaching abilities of NESs and NNEs. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005), for instance, report that “those involved in the teaching profession coincide in emphasizing that [NESs] are more fluent and therefore better at pronunciation, vocabulary and speaking, whereas [NNEs] are more at ease with accuracy (grammar)” (p. 220). Benke and Medgyes (2005) and Mahboob (2004) also agree that NES English teachers are preferred as teachers of oral skills, while NNE English teachers are better at teaching grammar and writing. A more detailed comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of NES and NNE English teachers is provided below.

#### Advantages of NNE English Teachers

Non-native-English-speaking English teachers are not a new phenomenon. For as long as there have been second language learners of English, there have been men and women determined to teach this fast-spreading language, even if they have just learned it themselves. And, as Lazaraton (2003) remarks, “the relative benefits and drawbacks of the classroom teacher who is a nonnative speaker...in the language of instruction continue to be hotly debated in education today” (p. 213). Moussu and Llorca (2008) observe that “although the majority of English language teachers worldwide are non-native English speakers, no research was conducted on these teachers until recently” (p. 315).

In various research published over the years, certain qualities, both criticized and admired, have been noted as characteristic of NNE English teachers. Of their advantages, perhaps the most notable is their ability to empathize with their students. Harmer (2007) notes that they “have often had the same experience of learning English as their students are now having, and this gives them an instant (even if only subconscious) understanding of what their students are going through” (p. 119). Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010, p. 172) agree with Harmer’s observation, while Liu (2004) describes his experience as a NNE English teacher another way:

My students appreciate me because I provide them with examples of my struggles completing difficult writing tasks.... As a NNES professional, I empower my students through empathy, sailing with them to the shore instead of summoning them from the shore. (p. 32)

This point is especially true if the NNES teacher happens to come from the same linguistic background as the students. Kobayashi (1992) argues that teachers who share the same first language as their students will have an advantage over native-English-speaking teachers. If the NNES English teacher used the L1 in the classroom, it would be “especially helpful when the learner’s oral English proficiency or comprehension lags far behind writing skills” (p. 107). Pacek (2005) agrees, explaining that, aside from being more sympathetic towards their students, such NNES teachers “share their students’ first language and therefore can use it to their advantage when necessary...they can often anticipate their students’ language problems and empathize with their difficulties, since they went through the process of acquiring the foreign language themselves” (p. 244).

Tatar and Yildiz (2010) acknowledge that “prevailing language teaching methodologies attempt to minimize the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom,” but they insist that through “careful and planned use of L1 has numerous advantages – especially in lower level classes” (p. 121). Tatar and Yildiz conducted an extensive study with English teachers from Turkey, using interviews to discover what in-service teachers believed, and journals to gather the opinions of teacher candidates (p. 118). They go on to explain that “some in-service teachers...argued that communication in English poses a problem at the beginning stages of language learning since students are not able to comprehend the instructions and they do not possess any language skills in English to express themselves” (pp. 121-122). These students, Tatar and Yildiz remark, may even come to resent learning the English language if they are unable to successfully communicate their feelings to the teacher. Kobayashi (1992) concurs, noting that, in Japan, native-Japanese-speaking English teachers can “gain more precise information” if they speak to their students in the L1 (p. 108). They can also “elicit students’ intentions in Japanese and interpret them to the native-English-speaking teacher” (p. 108).

Tatar and Yildiz (2010) point out another advantage of sharing the students’ L1: “The [NNES] is able to detect the common mistakes of students with the same L1 background and develop strategies to deal with these errors” (p. 124). These

researchers provide an excerpt of an interview with a native-Turkish-speaking English teacher:

In teaching writing, sharing the L1 is very beneficial. If I didn't know Turkish, I wouldn't be able to make sense of some of the written work of my students because students sometimes think in Turkish and write accordingly, something that might seem completely nonsense to a [NES]. (p. 124)

NNES English teachers from the same language and cultural background as their students will also often have a better understanding of what the local society expects from the students and the teacher. Pacek (2005) acknowledges, "As they come from the same cultural and educational background, they have similar attitudes to student/teacher roles in the classroom" (p. 244). Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010, p. 172) agree with this comment, while Tatar and Yildiz (2010) explain,

Being educated in the local education system, [NNESs] could also be more aware of students' needs....This puts [NNESs] at an advantage in developing an understanding of their learners' needs and expectations and grasping their attention since they can effectively make use of the popular culture, T.V. shows, up-to-date news, and common jokes in creating classroom activities. (p. 122)

Tatar and Yildiz also believe that sharing a culture could help with class management, observing that "the body language, the looks or the gestures are culturally shared and learners are used to similar patterns of body language in the family with their caregivers, which create a similar impact on the learner" (p. 123). Benke and Medgyes (2005) acknowledge this advantage, explaining, "Thanks to their intimate familiarity with the local educational environment, [NNES] teachers can provide more thorough exam preparation and stand a better chance of detecting cheats" (p. 206).

Another often-observed advantage of NNES English teachers is that they are stronger teachers of grammar, since they have had to learn the rules of the English language in their course of study, unlike some native English speakers who have learned how to use the language but not the rules governing the usage. Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010, p. 172) confirm this perception, and Tatar and Yildiz (2010) observe, "The conscious knowledge of the language and the grammar helps the [NNES] to better explain and elaborate the language structures, often supporting their

explanations by the use of L1” (p. 122). Tatar and Yildiz also provide another quotation from a participant in their study, who stated,

I had a hard time learning the perfect tense since it does not exist in Turkish. I know my learners would feel the same so I spent more time teaching the structure and did more exercises to make it understood. (p. 122)

#### Disadvantages of NNES English Teachers

However, as often as NNESs’ explicit knowledge of grammar is praised, it is criticized. In Kobayashi’s (1992) case, this comes in the form of self-criticism. Worrying that his knowledge may not be enough, he writes, “I have occasionally encountered moments in which I have been wholly at a loss as to whether to accept a particular sentence that is grammatically correct but potentially awkward to native English speakers for other reasons” (p. 82). He attributes this experience to the fact that “whereas a native ESL instructor can judge the acceptability of certain expressions by intuition, drawing upon implicit knowledge, nonnative ESL instructors depend greatly on their explicit knowledge of prescriptive grammar” (p. 82). Noting that in some cases NNESs may have had “exposure sufficient to develop intuitions for written English,” he nonetheless decides, “ESL compositions, irrespective of the intended reader, should be proofread or edited by a native speaker of English before they are made public” (p. 82). It is worth noting that these comments pertain to NNES teachers who are well versed in grammar and its teaching. There are, of course, native and non-native teachers who do not have good grammar, but Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010), Tatar and Yildiz (2010), and Kobayashi (1992) are focusing on the different kinds of grammar knowledge: NESs’ implicit knowledge of grammar and NNESs’ explicit knowledge of grammar.

Another disadvantage NNESs may be seen to have is cultural. Lazaraton (2003) makes the case that when the NNES is teaching English in a Western country, where it is perfectly natural for the teacher to admit to not knowing the answer to a question, the NNES might face some difficulties culturally:

The [NNES] is more often than not at a disadvantage when it comes to cultural knowledge... Difficulty arises when the [NNES] comes from a teacher-as-source culture, where the teacher is expected to know everything. This teacher may find it nearly impossible to say ‘I don’t know,’ to adopt a teacher-as-

facilitator position in the class, and to exploit the situation as an opportunity to involve the class in co-constructing cultural knowledge. (p. 238)

Santos (1988) points out another problem, albeit one that existed more than twenty years ago: in a study which explored any differences in the scoring of essays by NES and NNES English teachers, he discovered that “the 32 [NNES] professors rated the acceptability of the language of the compositions significantly lower than did the 126 [NES] professors” (p. 81). Strictness may be easily explained in this case by Santos’s observation that “[NNES] professors have attained an extremely high level of proficiency in English and, because of their investment of effort in the language, judge the errors of other [NNESs] more severely than do [NES] professors” (p. 85).

#### Advantages of NES English Teachers

Though strides have been made in the field to acknowledge the many advantages of having an NNES English teacher, NESs are often still seen as the ideal. Tang (1997) conducted a survey in Hong Kong in which he asked 47 NNESs about “their perceptions of the proficiency and competency of native- and nonnative-speaking teachers of English” (p. 577). Specifically, he asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having an NNES and an NES teacher. The results indicated that “a very high percentage of respondents believed that [NESs] were superior to [NNESs] in speaking (100%), pronunciation (92%), listening (87%), vocabulary (79%), and reading (72%). In contrast, [NNESs] were felt to be associated with accuracy rather than fluency” (pp. 577-578).

Here, Tang makes the distinction between accuracy (grammar, spelling, etc.) and fluency (speed and ease of speech, pronunciation, etc.). “Some of the respondents,” Tang further revealed, “commented that the learners can learn... ‘correct,’ ‘natural’ English from [NESs] because they provide the need and opportunity to use English in the classroom setting” (p. 578). Thirteen years later, Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010) confirm these perceptions, stating that NESs are “usually praised for their oral skills (in particular their pronunciation and conversation) and knowledge of vocabulary (including slang and idioms)” (p. 171).

Besides their perceived abilities to teach these language skills better than NNESs, NESs may also be seen to be better at motivating their students to learn the English language. Braine (2004), for instance, proposes that “native speaker

teachers...are capable of creating an ‘English-rich’ environment in the classroom to enhance student motivation” (p. 21). And Harmer (2007) points out that NES English teachers “often have the advantage of a linguistic confidence about their language in the classroom which non-native-speaker teachers sometimes lack” (p. 119). This may be due to the fact that, as native speakers of English, they are sure of themselves and of their experience with the language, more so than a relatively newer user of the language, the non-native English speaker.

Another advantage of having an NES as an English language teacher, Braine (2004) believes, is that “native speaker teachers have been found to teach *the* language more than the *rules* of the language, and they have not been found to adhere to the textbook” (p. 21). This observation refers us back to the earlier discussion of the NNESSs’ explicit knowledge of how to use the language versus the NESs’ intuitive knowledge. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) call these, respectively, declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, explaining, “The difference between procedural knowledge and declarative knowledge can be summarized as knowing *how* versus knowing *about*” (p. 157, emphasis in original). This means, for the language learning classroom,

Procedural knowledge would include being able to carry on conversations in English. Other important kinds of procedural knowledge relate to teaching – for instance, knowing how to plan lessons, how to treat students’ oral errors, or how to conduct pair work. (p. 157)

Declarative knowledge, on the other hand, involves “knowledge (1) about the target language (e.g., its rules and their exceptions), (2) about the target culture (e.g., its norms and taboos), and (3) about teaching (e.g., knowing about content and formal schemata in teaching reading and listening)” (p. 157).

#### Disadvantages of NES English Teachers

While Braine (2004) believes that NESs’ intuitive, or procedural, knowledge of the English language is ideal, Pasternak and Bailey (2004) argue that “without the proper professional preparation and the experience of learning new languages themselves, [NESs] may lack both procedural and declarative knowledge about how to teach and declarative knowledge about the language itself” and that “it is not unusual to hear untrained [NESs] respond to students’ grammar questions by saying, ‘I don’t know why. That’s just the way we say it’” (p. 158).

It is important to point out that these are cases of untrained, unqualified English teachers, and there are plenty of both NESs and NNESs who fit that description. There are also cases of NESs who have both procedural and declarative knowledge of grammar, the intuitive knowledge of native speakers and explicit knowledge gained during their studies.

The mere fact of the “nativeness” of NESs does not, therefore, necessarily mean that they are the undisputed experts of the English language. Pacek (2005) remarks,

There has been a growing realization that [NESs] do not always have accurate insights into all aspects of English: they need access to English-English dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias of English and computer corpora in order to make reasonable generalizations about how English is used. (p. 244)

Barratt (2010) also argues that “not all native speakers can be called perfectly fluent. Most adults can probably remember listening to some speaker who frequently hesitated, used fillers, stumbled, didn’t finish sentences” and that “excluding slips of the tongue, many native speakers of English have trouble spelling or pronouncing certain words” (p. 185). Back in 1977, Schmidt and McCreary made the same argument, stating, “Probably every teacher, whether a native or non-native speaker of English, has been in the uncomfortable position of teaching grammatical norms from which his or her own speech ‘falls short’” (p. 415).

Aside from their lack of explicit grammatical knowledge of the English language and their sometimes inaccurate use of the language, NESs have been found to have other disadvantages. Pacek (2005) informs us that NES English teachers “often do not adapt sufficiently well to the host educational environment for pedagogic reasons, including teaching methods and materials” (p. 244). NES English teachers might, for instance, attempt a teaching method that requires the students to take on new, interactive roles, while the students might be used to a traditional classroom in which the teacher is the source of knowledge and the students merely listen and memorize when necessary.

Not all NESs are monolingual, but those who are unfamiliar with the L1 culture may face some problems, as Tatar and Yildiz (2010), working in Turkey, go on to explain:

One in-service teacher in [our] study stated that [NESs], at times, can overestimate learners’ ability and their language proficiency and therefore fail

to provide appropriate support and scaffolding to them. This participant also stated that as a local teacher, she realizes the importance of repetition and that she and other [NNEs] consistently use repetition in their classes. She argued that [NESs'] lack of experience of learning a foreign language may lead them to have unrealistic expectations of their learners, which may demotivate and frustrate the learners. (p. 123)

Tatar and Yildiz have also observed cases where “the [NESs] without at least some proficiency in the local language poses a good opportunity for learners to display disruptive behavior through use of L1” (p. 123). Using the L1 for classroom management was a strategy used by many of the in-service teachers participating in their study. According to Tatar and Yildiz, these teachers “observed that students often do not take seriously the commands or warnings in English; the same warning or command would be more likely to be effective if given in the native language” (p. 123). These comments address situations in which the NES teacher is either monolingual or does not speak the same L1 as the students. There are cases, of course, where the NES teacher does know the L1 of the students or at least has some experience learning a foreign or second language.

A final note before turning attention to the next section: A disparity may have been noticed in the examination of the advantages and disadvantages of NESs and NNEs, specifically that there have been more advantages presented for NNEs than NESs, and more disadvantages noted for NESs than NNEs. This literature review is a representation of the research that has been done on this topic, and because of the nature of this issue and the political correctness of the researchers concerned, more studies have been written in favor of NNEs than NESs. However, this does not necessarily make one group better than the other.

Different factors, as we have seen throughout this comparison, affect the perceived advantages and disadvantages of NESs and NNEs, including where they are teaching (whether NESs are teaching in a foreign or in a Western country, or whether NNEs are teaching in their home country or in a Western country), whether they speak the L1 of their students, to what extent they are qualified to teach or have experience teaching, and to what extent they have trained in or have studied the English language. For instance, many of the studies reviewed so far are presented as though all NNEs are better at teaching certain aspects (such as grammar) because they have been trained, whereas all NESs have not, which is of course not true. These

are all issues which may influence whether NNESs are hired as often or as equally as NESs.

#### Hiring Practices: “Nativeness” Status vs. Qualifications

We have already established that the perceived advantages and disadvantages of NES and NNES English teachers depend on a number of contributing factors, including their qualifications and experience teaching English. However, there are employment contexts in which the only quality that matters is whether one is being a native speaker. Moussu and Llorca (2008) state that “thousands of language teaching jobs, specifying that only [NESs] will be considered, are advertised in many different countries and educational institutions and contexts, addressing a hypothetical preference by L2 learners for [NES] rather than [NNES] teachers” (p. 316). Tatar and Yildiz (2010) also report that, in Turkey, the following are common sights:

We are looking for İngilizce öğretmeni/Native speaker English Teacher with university degree in a related field, preferably with a masters degree, has received teacher training, is a native speaker, has at least 5 years of professional experience in the field (Human resources insert of a daily newspaper)

We are teaching English to your kids with native speaker teachers, through 16 hours of English per week (Banner in front of a private school). (p. 114)

As Tatar and Yildiz explain, “The competition among schools to recruit more students leads administrators to pursue advertising tactics that they believe are attractive to potential students and/or their caregivers” (p. 114). Unfortunately, this marketing strategy includes hiring only native speakers, since “the competition for students has led administrators to exploit the common misperception that native speakers are better teachers than non-native speakers” (p. 114). In 1999, Thomas also remarked on this situation, noting, “To say that ‘Non-Native Speakers Need Not Apply’ is exclusionary, and any policy that blindly bars certain groups should be suspect” (p. 6). Liu (1999b) adds, “Many ads request that [NESs] only apply. A potential danger... is that labeling teachers as [NESs] or [NNESs] may further the common perception that more proficient native speakers of a language necessarily make better teachers of that language” (p. 98).

These tendencies to hire only native speakers sometimes occur regardless of whether or not the teacher is qualified to be in that position. Braine (2004), for example, informs us,

When nonnative speaker English teachers return to their countries after obtaining higher degrees and teacher qualifications in the West, they are not always able to find work. Some language program administrators – notably in Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong – sometimes prefer to hire unqualified native speakers of English instead of qualified locals. (p. 13)

Tatar and Yildiz (2010) have also observed that “it is not uncommon to come across unqualified [NESs] being hired by private schools in order to advertise the school and attract caregivers and students to the institution” (p. 115). Adding insult to injury, those teachers that are hired on the sole basis of their being native speakers are often given better benefits and larger salaries than the non-native speakers. As Tatar and Yildiz note, “[NESs] in Turkey (mostly in big cities like Istanbul or Ankara) are also usually offered several fringe benefits such as competitive and tax-free salary, airfare, furnished accommodation, private health insurance, and fewer working hours” (p. 115).

NESs are also often allowed to teach higher-level classes than NNESs in institutions, thus widening the gap even further. Moussu and Lurda (2008) have noticed this trend, and in a study in which they interviewed various practicum supervisors who had had experience with NNESs, they noted, “Although practicum supervisors agreed that their [NNES] student teachers had higher language awareness than [NESs], most of them also said that they would recommend [NNESs] to teach primarily low-level classes” (p. 320). This seems to be a contradiction of opinion: the supervisors appreciated having NNESs in their classrooms, and yet would only have them teaching classes that were lower-level than what NESs were teaching. Moussu and Lurda do not explain this point any further, and it is difficult to judge from that comment if the supervisors felt uncomfortable with the NNES students’ mastery of the language or if they were just uneasy with the idea of having NNESs teaching higher-level classes.

Braine (2004) appears to have noticed the same discrepancy, commenting, “While ESL students were praised and admired for the multiculturalism and diversity they bring into language classes, nonnative speaker English teachers, who could also contribute their rich multicultural, multilingual experiences, were often barred from

the same classes” (p. 13). Also, Tatar and Yildiz (2010), after interviewing several native-Turkish-speaking English teachers in Turkey, report that many of them felt “they were being assigned to preparation classes where they heavily focus on form rather than advanced level classes where communication skills gain more importance” and that, specifically, “while many qualified and experienced [NNEs]’ professional teaching skills are downgraded to teaching grammar, [NESs] are regarded more apt in teaching the usage of language...as well as speaking, listening, and writing skills” (p. 120).

On the other hand, in some situations hiring NNEs is more favorable in the view of the administration. Tang (1997), for instance, has discovered that

A Hong Kong Education Department Report (1989) on a government-funded Expatriate English Language Teachers Scheme indicated that the participating schools did not assign expatriate teachers to teach Form 7 classes because local teachers of English were more familiar with the local syllabus and examinations. The expatriate teachers were not allocated to teach Form 1 classes either, because the junior students could not understand the teachers’ language. (p. 579)

However, in the Middle East, hiring practices are more often in the favor of NESs. As Ali (2009) puts it, “In the GCC countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman) the English language classrooms/institutions/program can be seen as the locked office where only certain ‘privileged’ teachers can gain entry” (p. 35). Previously we discussed the various dynamics of the Gulf, and Syed (2003) now reminds us of some statistics, “Of the nearly 22 million people in the region, nearly half are expatriates – including nearly 70% of the labor force” (p. 338).

Wondering at the amount of native speakers brought to the GCC to teach, Syed notices that “generally speaking, English is taught by Egyptians, Palestinians, Jordanians, and other Arab nationals at the K-12 level while most teachers at the tertiary level are North Americans, Britons, and Australians, with some Arab nationals” (p. 338). Ali (2009) has noted the same patterns in the employment practices of Gulf institutions: “Whether it is a precondition of the local authorities or a wish of the outsourced management, English teachers from the Outer and Expanding Circles have never filled teaching positions in well-established private schools, colleges and universities in the GCC” (p. 36).

The concept of the inner, outer, and expanding circles of English speakers was first suggested by Kachru. “In terms of the users,” Kachru (2006) explains, “the inner circle refers to the traditional bases of English – the regions where it is the primary language – the USA...the UK...Canada...Australia...and New Zealand” (p. 242). Kachru goes on to explain that the outer circle “involves the earlier phases of the spread of English and its institutionalization in non-native contexts.... These regions have gone through extended periods of colonization, essentially by the users of the inner circle varieties” (p. 242). The third circle, the expanding circle, describes yet another group of English speakers: “The geographical regions characterized as the expanding circle,” Kachru explains, “do not necessarily have a history of colonization by the users of the inner circle... This circle is currently expanding rapidly and has resulted in numerous performance (or EFL) varieties of English” (p. 243).

As various researchers have already reported, NES teachers around the world often receive better benefits than NNES teachers in the same positions. Thomas (1999) takes serious exception to the employment situation worldwide, commenting that “although stories of unintelligible foreign teaching assistants abound, the fact remains that there are good teachers and ‘not-so-good’ teachers, and there are ‘not-so-good’ teachers among the ranks of [NESs] of English as well” (p. 6). Syed (2003) further remarks on the serious consequences of hiring practices that favor NESs, saying, “Differential treatment based on native speaker status and nationality, resulting in very different remuneration packages and working conditions....affect the quality of education” (p. 339). Braine (2004) offers his personal experience teaching in the Middle East:

I remember a teacher from Great Britain, whose only qualification was a teaching certificate from the British Council, being paid a salary twice that of mine and provided with luxurious housing and other perks. Was my honors degree in English, two years of training as an English teacher, and more than 10 years of teaching experience worth only half of his six-month teaching certificate? (p. 11)

Concluding this segment, Moussu and Lurda (2008) state that “thousands of language teaching jobs, specifying that only [NESs] will be considered, are advertised in many different countries and educational institutions and contexts, addressing a hypothetical preference by L2 learners for [NES] rather than [NNES] teachers,” despite recent studies showing that “many students can appreciate the value of

[NNESs] and do in fact prefer them to [NESs] in certain contexts and for certain classroom tasks” (p. 316).

The next section focuses on these reported student preferences, setting the stage for this research project.

### Student Preferences

The previous sections examined what NES and NNES teachers have had to say about themselves, or how the beliefs of parents and school administrators have influenced hiring practices. Moussu and Llurda (2008), however, make the point that “although native and non-native teachers can bring interesting and useful insights about their perceived differences, strengths, and weaknesses, they cannot always be objective judges of how their students perceive them” (p. 326). In that spirit, this section will explore the kind of English teacher students prefer. While Moussu and Llurda believe that “no study has demonstrated that ESL/EFL students see [NNES] teachers in a negative light” (p. 331), there have been studies conducted in which students have expressed explicit preferences for either NES or NNES English teachers with regards to different aspects of the English language.

Mahboob (2004), after surveying students extensively, discovered that “almost half of the ESL students (15 out of 32) in this study felt that [NNESs’] experience of learning English as a L2 makes them aware of the problems that ESL learners may face” (p. 135). NNESs’ experience of being L2 learners has led students to believe that NNESs are more aware of their needs as fellow learners and that they will also be more empathetic than NESs would. One of the students in Mahboob’s study explained,

Non-native teachers also have studied the language as foreigner, so, the teachers have many experiences about the language. During the teachers’ study they realized many problems that can’t be found by native teachers. (pp. 135-136)

Another of his students reported,

The non-native teacher who also might have same experience and situations as me. So they knew how I could feel. (p. 137)

Another advantage of having an NNES teacher, according to Mahboob’s student participants, is their ability to teach grammar. Mahboob provides a sample student comment:

So...they [NNESs] can be good grammar teachers like a TOEFL and TOEIC.  
(p. 130)

Here, the student demonstrates how important it is for a teacher to be able to prepare the students in the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), as well as the importance of grammar teaching. Mahboob notes that NNESs' experience in taking the TOEFL and other standardized exams in order to be admitted to universities may aid them in teaching (pp. 130-131). In contrast, Mahboob's student participants felt that NES teachers were not good teachers of grammar because they had not gone through the process of learning it themselves. One of the students remarked,

Sometimes native speakers are not structure teachers, because even though they speak the language perfectly, and understand the structure very well, they do not know what is the pain, because they did not have the pain. (p. 131, errors in original)

Mahboob has also pointed out that, while NESs have an intuitive understanding of how the English language works, they tend not to have an explicit knowledge of grammatical rules. This, according to Mahboob, "appears to be noticeable to the students. It is probably based on observing this inability of [NESs] to satisfactorily explain grammatical concepts that ESL students...labeled [NESs] as not being good teachers of grammar" (p. 131).

NESs were, however, coveted as good teachers of speaking and pronunciation. Mahboob received comments from his students which indicated that NESs "were preferred as teachers of oral skills because 'you can learn natural pronunciation from them'" (p. 126). On the other hand, Mahboob's students "felt that [NNESs] were not the best teachers for oral skills because they were themselves nonnative-like" (p. 127). He finds these beliefs "interesting," since "pronunciation is one of the linguistic skills that is the hardest to acquire at a native speaker level for adult ESL students" (p. 126), and thus it is quite unrealistic for students to expect their NNES teachers to have "native or native-like accents" or even to expect themselves to master English pronunciation perfectly as adults. This preference may, however, exist because the students want to have a more accurate model to learn pronunciation.

Another of Mahboob's student participants noted that, while NNESs are regarded as weak teachers of speaking and pronunciation, they are good at teaching other aspects of language:

Non-native speakers speak worse than native speakers. But pronunciation is just one part of language. Although non-native speakers cannot speak very well and they have a limit, on the contrary they can teach very well other parts of language; grammar, reading, writing and even listening. (p. 127, errors in original)

Beyond their perceived ability to teach certain aspects of the English language better than NESs, NNESs have also been found to be harder workers. Mahboob received comments from two different students on this topic, who said,

I felt that the people who study very hard for another language can be speaker without any problem....Non-native speaker can do...teaching easily....

I think non-natives can be a good teacher they try to study and practice hardily. (p. 137, errors in original)

However, Mahboob did note that there were no comments from his student participants describing NESs as hard workers. He cautions against reading too much into this fact, remarking, “The absence of comments may be interpreted as a factor of the category itself: native English speakers do not need to work hard to be good speakers of English” (p. 137).

Mahboob (2004) also found that his student participants preferred NESs to teach them pragmatics and cultural information. He offers an example that illustrates “that some students perceive that they can acquire an understanding of U.S. culture from [NESs]” (p. 132):

By the conversation with Americans, I can learn some pronunciation, slang and American culture. (p. 132)

Indirect factors may influence students’ opinions of their teachers, including confidence in their abilities. “Students’ faith in the native-speaker norm,” Jin (2005) remarks, “enhances their motivation to communicate with native speakers. This logically leads to their preference for native-speaker teachers who serve as transferors of more reliable linguistic knowledge and a better model of standard pronunciation” (p. 45). NNESs, on the other hand, may be seen as having little confidence in themselves. Amin (1997) has noted his own impressions of how his students view him, saying, “I am constantly being challenged on the rules of English grammar, and it seems to me that some of my students are waiting for me to make a mistake” (p. 581).

Other researchers have found that their students do not care about a teacher's "nativeness." Moussu and Llorca (2008) remark, "It appears that students...recognize that experience and professionalism are more important than native language backgrounds" (p. 328). Liu (1999a) has also concluded, as a result of his own studies into the matter, that "it really does not matter whether the teacher is an [NES] or an [NNES] of English, as having either as a teacher carries advantages as well as disadvantages. What matters is the teacher's professionalism" (p. 100).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions in this project, I utilized two data collection methods: surveys (see Appendices B and C) and interviews (see Appendix E). I surveyed 14 instructors in the Department of Writing Studies of AUS, both native-English-speaking (NES) and non-native-English-speaking (NNES), who all had the option of volunteering to be individually interviewed as well. The same data collection methods were used with 146 undergraduate AUS students: I first administered the surveys to them and gave them the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed.

Moussu and Llurda (2008) recommend using these methods in research on native- and non-native-English-speaking English teachers, noting that interviews “have proved very rich in providing insights into the minds of NNS teachers and related people” and that “they have yielded data that is more complex and deeper than simple responses to questionnaires, even when these may have included open-ended questions. The use of interviews...allows researchers to construct narratives based on the reports of participants” (p. 335). Surveys have also proved very useful, according to Moussu and Llurda, who believe that they “allow to report on very large numbers of participants...and therefore, they must be credited for providing the first empirical accounts on the nature and perceptions regarding non-native language teachers” (p. 334).

#### Data Collection

I introduced myself and my research project to available teachers in the Department of Writing Studies, and asked if they would consent to filling out the teacher survey. Some consented, and some did not. One instructor offered to pass along the survey in an email to the entire department. For anonymity purposes, I assigned each participating instructor a number ID (for example, T1 for Teacher 1, and so on). I did the same later on with the student participants, with S1 for Student 1, and so on. T1-T6 and T8-T14 all filled out a hard copy of the survey when I visited their offices. Only T7 sent along a soft copy of the survey as a reply to the email request.

While I was in their offices collecting surveys, I asked the instructors if they would allow me to visit their classes at a later time so that I could survey their students. These were selected based on convenience for both myself and the teachers. T1, who was teaching three sections of WRI 001 classes, allowed me to survey all 37 of her students. T9 was teaching WRI 101 classes and allowed me to survey one of the sections, which had 11 students. T3 was also teaching WRI 101 classes and let me survey two of the classes, for a total of 39 students from three sections of WRI 101. T13 was teaching WRI 102 classes and allowed me to survey three of her sections, a total of 59 students. Altogether 146 students participated in the survey.

The teacher survey (see Appendix B) was given to both NES and NNES English teachers in the Department of Writing Studies at AUS, based on their availability. The first few questions gathered demographic information about the teachers. The rest of the questions were designed to elicit information to answer the research questions. When the survey was distributed to the teachers, none of the concepts or terminology was explained. I simply introduced myself and the topic of my research and asked them if they had the time to fill out the surveys. This was so that my own opinions and definitions would not influence the feedback from the teachers.

The student survey (see Appendix C) explored how these AUS undergraduate students generally felt about having NES and NNES English teachers, and what areas of the English language they thought are best taught by which group. The first few questions gathered demographic information about the students. The rest of the questions were designed to elicit information to answer the research questions. Again, when the survey was distributed to the students, none of the concepts or terminology was explained. I introduced myself when I walked into the classrooms and explained briefly that this was part of my master's degree and had no effect on their grades. This was so that they did not feel pressured by their teachers to fill out the surveys if they did not want to, and so that my own opinions and definitions did not influence the feedback from the students.

Both the students and the teachers surveyed had the option of giving their contact information for future interviews (see Appendix D for the consent form). These student and teacher interviews (see Appendix E for the interview guidelines) served as qualitative data to complement the survey results, giving a more in-depth

picture of the experiences of both the students and the teachers and their views on the effectiveness of NES/NNES English teachers.

## Participants

### Teachers

At the time of data collection, there were 27 instructors in the Department of Writing Studies who teach general requirement English courses to all AUS students (WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102). They come from an array of backgrounds and have vastly different experiences. They have worked with one another and with the AUS students, and could give a clear idea of how they feel about the native-/non-native-English-speaking teacher dichotomy and if they think “nativeness” is an issue at AUS. Of these 27, only 14 answered the surveys. I interviewed three of the DWS teachers, T4, T13, and T14, who volunteered to be interviewed.

Table 1 illustrates the demographics of these teachers, including their genders, age ranges, nationalities, whether they consider English to be their first or second language, the other languages they speak, and their highest teaching credentials. Some of the teachers listed dual nationalities, and almost all of them listed two, three, or even four languages. Some, however, did not answer a few of the questions. Interestingly, even though T8 is Palestinian, she did not list Arabic as one of her languages.

Table 1  
DWS Teachers’ Demographics

T	Gender	Age	Nationality	English	Other languages spoken	Highest Credentials
1	Female	40+	American	L1	French	PhD
2	Male	40+	American	L1	Arabic, Spanish	Master's
3	Female	40+	American	L1	Italian, Arabic	Master's
4	Male	40+	American	L1	*	PhD
5	Female	26-30	*	L1	*	Master's
6	Female	40+	Indian	L2	Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam	Master's
7	Female	40+	British	L1	Arabic, French	PhD
8	Female	31-40	Palestinian	L2	Italian, French	Master's
9	Female	31-40	Malaysian	L2	Thai, Malay	Master's
10	Female	40+	*	L1	French	PhD
11	*	40+	*	L1	French	PhD
12	Female	40+	New Zealander	L1	French	Master's

T	Gender	Age	Nationality	English	Other languages spoken	Highest Credentials
13	Female	40+	South African/Polish	L1	German, Polish, Afrikaans	Master's
14	Female	26-30	*	L1	Urdu, German	Master's

\*No answers were provided.

## Students

With the students, I focused on AUS undergraduates, both NES and NNES students, who were enrolled in English courses at the time of data collection. I focused on this group of students because they had not yet started and been distracted by their major courses. They were still concentrating on their general requirement courses, including their English writing courses, and presumably could remember examples or express their preferences about English teachers more clearly. The American University of Sharjah requires students to take a minimum of 12 credits of English language competency courses. Which course the student begins with depends on his/her English writing proficiency, as determined by an English Placement Test taken upon admission to the university.

I surveyed students in three sections each of the WRI 001, 101 and 102 courses, for a total of 146 students. From this total, I interviewed the three students who volunteered to be interviewed: S30, S88, and S103.

A total of 37 students from three different sections of the WRI 001 course were surveyed, all freshmen. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of the WRI 001 students, including their genders, age intervals, nationalities, and native languages. Several of the students listed more than one native language. There were 27 males and 7 females who spoke languages other than English.

Table 2

### WRI 001 Students' Demographics

S	Gender	Age	Nationality	Native languages
1	Male	18-20	Iranian	Persian
2	Male	18-20	Turkish	Turkish, Arabic
3	Male	18-20	Syrian	Arabic
4	Male	18-20	Sudanese	Arabic
5	Female	15-17	Nigerian	Nupe, Hausa
6	Female	18-20	Emirati	Arabic
7	Male	18-20	Pakistani	Urdu, Kashmiri
8	Male	18-20	Jordanian	Arabic

S	Gender	Age	Nationality	Native languages
9	Male	18-20	Palestinian	Arabic
10	Male	18-20	Iraqi	Arabic
11	Male	18-20	Jordanian	Arabic
12	Male	18-20	Syrian	Arabic, English
13	Male	18-20	Indian	Malayalam
14	Male	18-20	Sudanese	Arabic
15	Male	18-20	Emirati	Arabic
16	Male	18-20	Emirati	English
17	Male	18-20	Emirati	*
18	Male	18-20	Emirati	Arabic
19	Male	18-20	Syrian	Arabic
20	Male	18-20	Saudi	Arabic
21	Male	18-20	Emirati	Arabic
22	Male	18-20	Saudi	Arabic
23	Male	18-20	Libyan	Arabic, English
24-25	Male	18-20	Emirati	Arabic, English
26	Male	18-20	Nigerian	Hausa
27	Female	15-17	Emirati	Arabic
28	Male	18-20	Bahraini	Arabic, English
29	Male	21-25	Egyptian	Arabic
30	Male	18-20	Italian	Italian
31	Female	18-20	Pakistani	Urdu
32	Female	18-20	Emirati	Arabic
33	Female	*	Emirati	Arabic, English
34	Female	18-20	Pakistani	Urdu
35	Male	18-20	Emirati	Arabic, English
36	Male	18-20	Iranian	Persian
37	Male	18-20	Emirati	English

\*No answers were provided

WRI 001 is the lowest level writing course at AUS, and any student taking the course would not have been at AUS for long, since they were all freshmen. The survey, however, asked about their previous experience with NESs. Eleven of the 37 had never been taught English by an NES before. The remaining 26 had had NES English teachers at various stages of their lives. The survey also asked about the students' experience with NNESs. Three of the 37 had never been taught English by an NNES before. The remaining 34 had had NNES English teachers at various stages of their lives. Table 3 illustrates their past experiences with NES and NNES English teachers.

Table 3

## WRI 001 Students' Past Experiences with NESs and NNESs

Educational Level	Number of Students Taught by NESs	Number of Students Taught by NNESs
Primary School	11	19
Middle School	15	20
Secondary School	15	24
University	13	7
Institute	1	0

I also surveyed three sections of the WRI 101 course, for a total of 50 students, some of whom were freshmen and some sophomores. Table 4 illustrates the demographics of the WRI 101 students, including their genders, age intervals, university level, nationalities, and native languages. Several of the students listed two or three native languages. There were 23 males and 26 females who spoke languages other than English.

Table 4

## WRI 101 Students' Demographics

S	Gender	Age	Level	Nationality	Native languages
38	Female	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian	English, Arabic
39	Male	21-25	Freshman	Indian	Malayalam
40	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Emirati	English
41	Female	18-20	Freshman	Egyptian	Arabic
42	Female	18-20	Freshman	Iraqi	Arabic, Kurdish
43	Female	18-20	Freshman	Zimbabwean	English, Persian
44	Female	18-20	Freshman	Algerian	Arabic
45	Female	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
46	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Palestinian	Arabic
47	Female	18-20	Freshman	Indian	Hindi
48	Female	18-20	Freshman	Djiboutian	French
49	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
50	Female	21-25	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
51	Male	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
52	Male	18-20	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
53	Male	18-20	Freshman	Iranian	Arabic
54	Male	18-20	Freshman	Libyan	Arabic
55	Male	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
56	Male	18-20	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
57	Male	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian	Arabic
58	Female	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
59	Female	18-20	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
60	Female	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic

S	Gender	Age	Level	Nationality	Native languages
61	Male	15-17	Freshman	Omani	Arabic
62	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	English, Arabic
63	Female	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
64	Female	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	Urdu
65	Male	18-20	Freshman	Iraqi	Arabic
66	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
67	Female	18-20	Freshman	Bahraini	Arabic
68	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
69	Male	18-20	Freshman	Iraqi	Arabic
70	Female	21-25	Freshman	Saudi	Arabic
71	Male	18-20	Freshman	Egyptian	Arabic
72	Female	18-20	Freshman	Yemeni	Arabic
73	Male	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
74	Male	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
75	Female	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
76	Male	15-17	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
77	Female	15-17	Freshman	Bangladeshi	Bengali
78	Female	18-20	Freshman	Omani	Arabic
79	Male	18-20	Freshman	American	English, Arabic
80	Male	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
81	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Egyptian	Arabic
82	Male	15-17	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
83	Male	18-20	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
84	Female	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
85	Male	15-17	Freshman	German	German, Arabic, English
86	Male	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
87	Male	18-20	Freshman	Morocco	Arabic

Of the 50 WRI 101 students, 20 had been placed directly into WRI 101 after taking the English Placement Test, thus bypassing the WRI 001 class. The other 30 had already been through the lower-level class.

The survey also identified their previous experience with NESs. Only 10 of the 50 had never been taught English by an NES before. The remaining 40 had had NES English teachers at various stages of their lives. The survey also asked about the students' experience with NNEs. Only five out of the 50 had never been taught English by an NNE before. The remaining 45 had had NNE English teachers at various stages of their lives. The following figure illustrates their past experiences with NES and NNE English teachers:

Table 5

## WRI 101 Students' Past Experiences with NESs and NNESs

Educational Level	Number of Students Taught by NESs	Number of Students Taught by NNESs
Primary School	16	22
Middle School	15	32
Secondary School	20	33
University	30	22

I also surveyed three sections of the WRI 102 course, for a total of 59 students, some of whom were freshmen, some sophomores, and some juniors. The higher the class level, the more students were in each section. Table 6 illustrates the demographics of the WRI 102 students, including their genders, age intervals, university level, nationalities, and native languages. Some of the students had dual nationalities and listed two or three native languages. There were 27 males and 29 females who spoke languages other than English.

Table 6

## WRI 102 Students' Demographics

S	Gender	Age	Level	Nationality	Native languages
88	Female	18-20	Freshman	Canadian	English, Arabic
89	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Saudi Arabian	Arabic
90	Male	15-17	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
91	Female	18-20	Freshman	Indian	Urdu
92	Female	18-20	Freshman	Indian	Tamil
93-94	Female	18-20	Freshman	Bangladeshi	Bengali
95	Male	18-20	Freshman	Egyptian	Arabic
96	Male	18-20	Junior	Syrian	*
97	Male	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
98	Female	18-20	Freshman	Iraqi	Arabic
99	Female	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
100	Female	15-17	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
101	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Egyptian	English
102	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
103	Female	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	Urdu
104	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Egyptian	Arabic
105-106	Female	18-20	Freshman	Egyptian	Arabic
107	Female	21-25	Sophomore	Egyptian	Arabic
108	Male	18-20	Freshman	Sudanese	Arabic, English
109	Female	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian/British	Arabic, English
110-111	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Palestinian	Arabic
112	Female	18-20	Freshman	Sudanese	Arabic

S	Gender	Age	Level	Nationality	Native languages
113	Male	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	Urdu
114	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Yemeni	Arabic
115	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Lebanese	Arabic
116	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Saudi Arabian	Arabic
117	Male	15-17	Freshman	Sri Lankan	Sinhalese, Tamil
118	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Egyptian	Arabic
119	Female	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	English, Urdu
120	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Iraqi	Arabic
121	Female	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian	Arabic
122	Male	21-25	Junior	Emirati	Arabic
123	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Egyptian	Arabic
124	Female	18-20	Freshman	American/Egyptian	Arabic, English
125	Male	15-17	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
126	Male	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
127	Male	18-20	Freshman	Sudanese	Arabic, English
128	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Emirati	Arabic
129	Female	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian	Arabic
130	Male	18-20	Freshman	Indian	English, Hindi, Malayalam
131	Female	18-20	Sophomore	Palestinian	Arabic
132	Male	18-20	Freshman	Syrian	Arabic
133	Male	15-17	Freshman	Sudanese	Arabic
134	Male	18-20	Freshman	Emirati	Arabic
135	Male	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
136	Female	18-20	Freshman	Palestinian	Arabic
137	Male	18-20	Freshman	Egyptian	English, French, German
138	Female	18-20	Freshman	Lebanese	Arabic
139	Male	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	Urdu
140	Female	18-20	Freshman	Jordanian	Arabic
141	Female	18-20	Freshman	American	English, Arabic, French
142	Male	18-20	Junior	Palestinian	Arabic
143	Male	18-20	Sophomore	Iraqi	Arabic
144	Female	18-20	Freshman	American/Egyptian	English, Arabic
145	Male	18-20	Freshman	Pakistani	Urdu
146	Male	18-20	Freshman	Sri Lankan	Sinhalese

\*No answer was provided

Of the 59 WRI 102 students, six had been placed directly into WRI 102 after taking the English Placement Test, bypassing the WRI 001 and 101 classes. The other 53 had already been through the two lower-level classes. Table 7 illustrates this distribution.

Table 7

WRI 102 Students' Experiences in Other Writing Courses at AUS

Experience	Those who have taken all three courses	Those who have taken WRI 101 and WRI 102	Those who have only taken WRI 102
Total	16	53	6
Percentage	27%	90%	10%

The survey also identified their previous experience with NESs. Only six out of the 59 had never been taught English by an NES before. The remaining 53 had had NES English teachers at various stages of their lives. The survey also asked about the students' experience with NNESs. Only six out of the 59 had never been taught English by an NNES before. The remaining 53 had had NNES English teachers at various stages of their lives. Table 8 illustrates their past experiences with NES and NNES English teachers.

Table 8

WRI 102 Students' Past Experiences with NESs and NNESs

Educational Level	Number of Students Taught by NESs	Number of Students Taught by NNESs
Primary School	21	33
Middle School	20	39
Secondary School	20	37
University	49	20

With these demographics in mind, the views of the participants, both the Writing Studies teachers and the WRI students, will be presented.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

To examine the role of English teachers' nativeness at the American University of Sharjah, 146 undergraduate students in nine different writing classes were surveyed, along with 14 English teachers in the Department of Writing Studies. Also, three students and three teachers were individually interviewed. Through analysis of the data gathered through the student and teacher surveys and interviews, each research question was answered separately. The research questions were:

1. What characteristics do AUS students consider important for English teachers to have?
2. Do AUS students prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of English? Why?
3. Is an English teacher's native-speaker status important in the view of AUS students?
4. Are NES or NNES English teachers at AUS more effective at teaching specific aspects of English, in the views of AUS English teachers? Why?
5. What are the observations of English teachers at AUS (NESs/NNESs) concerning discrepancies (if any) in the way NES/NNES teachers are treated by the administration, their colleagues, and the students?

The different tables and figures that follow represent the answers tabulated from the surveys, and the patterns identified from the open-ended answers of both the surveys and the interviews.

#### Teacher Characteristics Preferred by Students

To answer the first research question, "What characteristics do AUS students consider important for English teachers to have?" I surveyed the students and asked them, in the form of an open-ended question, "What characteristics do you think an English language teacher should have?" (Question 8 on the student surveys – see Appendix C). Because the question was open-ended, I categorized the responses into two groups: personal traits and professional traits. I also divided the answers according to the writing classes: WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102, as I was curious to see if there would be any differences between the proficiency levels. I did not explain the question when handing out the surveys, nor did I give examples of

characteristics. I wanted to receive honest, original answers. In addition, I interviewed three students and asked them all what qualities they thought were important for an English teacher to have.

#### The WRI 001 Students

To begin, Table 9 lists the personal traits the 37 WRI 001 students believed were important for English teachers to have. I categorized the (quoted) personal traits the WRI 001 students identified as important for English teachers to have into four different groupings. The categories of personal traits the WRI 001 students thought were most important in an English language teacher were “being entertaining” and “has a good personality,” each chosen by 24% of the students.

Table 9

Personal Traits WRI 001 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Categories	Personal traits	Frequency
Is entertaining	“Funny, fun, happy, lively, not dull/repetitive/boring”	9
Has a good personality	“Smart, easy going, confident, polite, open, cute, lovely”	9
Is a good leader	“Good leadership, motivating, responsible, strong, organized”	7
Treats students well	“Gets along with students, respectful of the students, helpful, understanding”	6

The WRI 001 students also indicated various professional traits they believed were essential in an English teacher. Table 10 illustrates these views in their words.

Table 10

Professional Traits WRI 001 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Professional traits	# Students describing each trait
“Pronunciation/accent”	12
“Has good teaching strategies”	6
“Knows the language”	5
“Fluent”	4
“Experience teaching”	1
“Differentiates between English varieties”	1
“Has good vocabulary”	1
“Gives a lot of examples”	1
“Speaks slowly”	1
“Well educated”	1
“Teaches expressions and idioms”	1

As shown in Table 10, 12 of the 37 WRI 001 students (32%) preferred an English language teacher with good pronunciation/accent. Six of them (16%) also preferred a teacher who has good teaching strategies. Five of them (14%) preferred a teacher who knows the language, and four (11%) wanted one who was fluent.

#### The WRI 101 Students

The 50 WRI 101 students chose similar personal traits they believed were important for English teachers to have, though they added further traits and ranked these traits differently. WRI 001 students put traits which were categorized as being entertaining and having a good personality first, while WRI 101 students put traits in the category treatment of students first, with having a good personality second. These students are also the first to mention the importance of grading.

I categorized the personal traits the WRI 101 students identified as important for English teachers to have into five different groupings. The most frequent response of the WRI 101 students indicated that they wanted an English language teacher who “treats students well,” chosen by 16 of them (32%). Table 11 illustrates these preferences (quoted) as categorized.

Table 11

#### Personal Traits WRI 101 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Categories	Personal traits	Frequency
Treats students well	“Helpful, patient, kind, understanding, considerate, treatment can connect with the students, understands students' accents, does not make fun of students, gives equal treatment”	16
Has a good personality	“Serious, friendly, confident, nice, polite, loud voice, easy going”	14
Grades well	“Merciful, lenient, fair with grades”	8
Is entertaining	“Fun, funny, creative, positive attitude”	5
Is a good leader	“Strict, organized, realistic”	5

The WRI 101 also mentioned many professional English language teaching qualifications they required in their English language teachers. These are illustrated in Table 12 as described by the students (quoted).

Table 12

Professional Traits WRI 101 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Professional traits	# Students describing each trait
“Pronunciation/accent”	21
“Fluent”	7
“Good vocabulary”	5
“Good grammar”	5
“Well educated”	4
“Experience teaching”	4
“Native speaker”	3
“Able to explain”	3
“Can improve students' abilities”	2
“Aware of material”	2
“Lived with native speakers”	1
“Starts from the basics”	1
“No spelling mistakes”	1
“Knows idioms and phrases”	1
“Widely knowledgeable”	1
“Gives examples”	1
“Has good techniques”	1
“Holds discussions”	1
“Gives balanced work”	1

As seen in Table 12, 21 of the 50 WRI 101 students (42%) preferred an English language teacher with good pronunciation/accent. These responses agree with those of the WRI 001 students, who also listed pronunciation first. Seven of the WRI 101 students (14%) also preferred a teacher who was fluent. Five of them (10%) preferred a teacher with good vocabulary, and five students (10%) preferred a teacher with good grammar, and four of them (8%) preferred a teacher who was well educated and had experience teaching. It is worth pointing out that only three students (6%) preferred a teacher who was a native speaker.

The WRI 102 Students

The 59 WRI 102 had mostly the same opinions as WRI 001 and WRI 101 students about what was important for their English teachers to have, though they included further traits. I categorized the personal traits the WRI 102 students identified as important for English teachers to have into five different groupings. By far the most frequent response of the WRI 102 students indicated that they wanted an

English language teacher who “had a good personality,” which was mentioned by 32 of them (54%). Table 13 illustrates these preferences.

Table 13

Personal Traits WRI 102 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Categories	Personal traits	Frequency
Has a good personality	“Friendly, confident, open-minded, energetic, intelligent, calm, comfortable, casual, verbose, easy going, social, female, explains clearly, expresses opinion, speaks slowly”	32
Treats students well	“Patient, considerate of lower-level students, helpful, not biased, kind, ready to answer questions, willing to listen, can communicate with students”	19
Is entertaining	“Funny, fun, not boring, active, has a good imagination, can charge class atmosphere, is interesting and engaging”	14
Is a good leader	“Responsible, encouraging, controls the class”	4
Grades well	“Lenient in grades”	4

The WRI 102 students also focused on the professional qualities they wanted their English teachers to have. The WRI 102 students listed pronunciation most frequently, with fluency coming second, similar to the WRI 101 student views. Table 14 illustrates these various characteristics described by the students (quoted).

Table 14

Professional Traits WRI 102 Students Considered Important for English Teachers

Professional traits	# Students describing trait
“Pronunciation/accent”	26
“Fluent”	11
“Strong English background”	6
“Able to teach English”	5
“Knows grammar”	5
“Good vocabulary”	4
“Knowledgeable about books”	3
“Passionate about English”	2
“Knowledgeable about other languages”	2
“Chooses good topics and articles”	2
“Encourages class discussions”	2
“Good approach”	2
“Doesn't use other languages in class”	2
“Lived in English-speaking country”	1
“Improves students’ abilities”	1
“Gives a lot of suggestions”	1
“Well educated”	1

Professional traits	# Students describing trait
“Good writer”	1
“Ability to relate to real life”	1

As seen in Table 14, 26 of the 59 WRI 102 students (44%) preferred their English language teachers to have good pronunciation/accent. Eleven of them (19%) preferred a teacher who was fluent, and six (10%) preferred a teacher who had a strong English background. Five of the students (8%) preferred a teacher who was able to teach English, and another five (8%) preferred a teacher who knows grammar.

And so, in answer to the first research question, “What characteristics do AUS students consider important for English teachers to have?” no two students said exactly the same thing in answer to survey question 8, and the three different writing classes had slightly different sets of preferred characteristics. The one quality the majority of the students agreed on, however, was the importance of a teacher’s pronunciation and accent. Despite this, only 3 students out of 146 specifically requested a native speaker. All three students mentioning NESs were from the WRI 101 classes. The open-ended responses indicated what the individual students really thought was important in an English teacher. If they had been given a list of qualities to choose from, the numbers for each trait might have differed.

During one of the three student interviews, when asked what qualities were important for an English teacher to have, S88 spoke about the importance of teaching credentials and exposure to the American education system (the students’ interview responses are presented here, unedited):

“Postgraduate degree, of course, and then, as well, a background. She doesn’t necessarily have to be...American or Canadian, but at least she should have lived there, or he should have lived there, or been in that education system, where they have been throughout their whole life, where they were taught by American teachers.”

S103 agreed in her interview that a postgraduate degree was important, but added other qualities she considered necessary:

“You really need someone you can talk to, be comfortable, whereas I didn’t feel that last semester when I had that [NNES] professor. She was sitting, and then to end the conversation she would get up while talking, walk to the door, and open it, like, okay, it’s time for you to leave.”

S103 believed that personality traits such as being relaxed, comfortable, and easy to talk to are tied to culture, and has noticed that her NES teachers tend to have these qualities, and that her NNES teachers tend not to.

S30 did not mention the education or qualifications of his teachers. When asked in his interview what qualities he considered important for an English language teacher to have, he answered,

“The focus of the English teacher is to teach the language to someone. The teacher should choose the easiest way to, because someone can get confused from his own language, the rules, the grammar rules. The point is also the guy or girl has to get interested in the language. Can depend on the way you put it.”

These observations from the student interviews add to the answers from the student surveys, indicating that students valued both professional and personal qualities. The trait that was considered most important by the students was having good pronunciation or a good accent, having been mentioned by 59 of the 146 students (40%). This is compared to the second most frequent response, fluency, which was mentioned by 22 of the 146 students (15%). Despite this emphasis on the importance of good pronunciation or a good accent, only three of the 146 students mentioned the importance of having a native speaker teacher. All three of these students were from the WRI 101 classes.

#### Student Preference about Teachers of Aspects of English

In order to answer the second research question, “Do AUS students prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of English? Why?” I added the following questions to the student surveys: “Of the following aspects of the English language, which do you prefer having a non-native speaker of English teach you?” and “Of the following aspects of the English language, which do you prefer having a native speaker of English teach you?” (Questions 6 and 7 on the student surveys – see Appendix C). In both cases, the students had to choose between grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/speaking, reading, writing, listening, and social aspects. None of these aspects were explained to the students when the surveys were distributed, allowing them to answer the questions based on what their own beliefs were. The interviews also provided relevant comments from the students on the topic.

## The WRI 001 Students

Figure 1 demonstrates what aspects of the English language the 37 WRI 001 students preferred to be taught by NESs and NNESs.

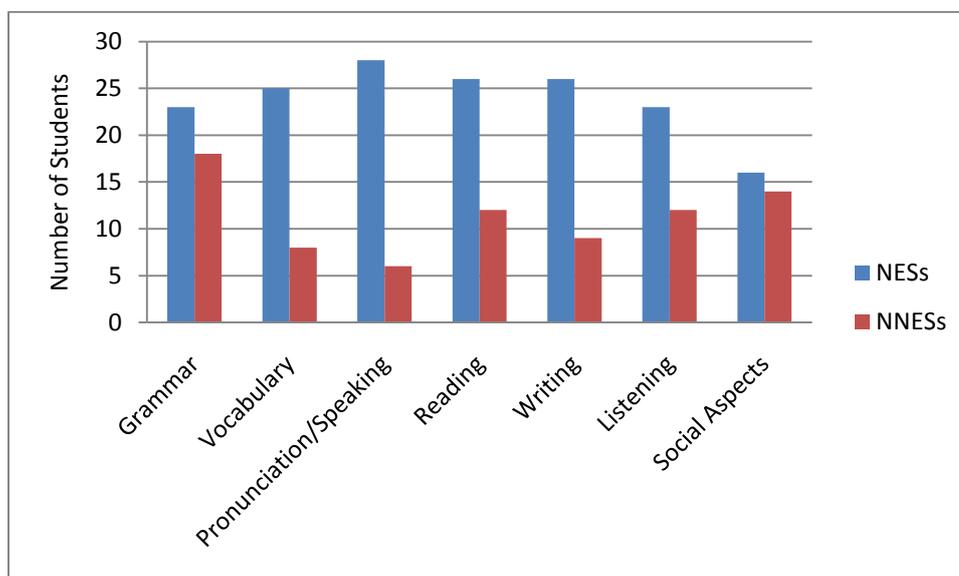


Figure 1. English Aspects WRI 001 Students Prefer to Be Taught by NESs and NNESs.

Figure 1 illustrates that 28 of the 37 WRI 001 students (76%) preferred to be taught pronunciation/speaking by NESs, the most frequent response for NESs. 18 of them (49%) preferred to be taught grammar by NNESs, the highest rating for NNESs. Overall, the WRI 001 students preferred NES teachers for all aspects of English, over NNES teachers.

Of the 37 WRI 001 students, 27 (73%) of them included a comment about the topic in response to the open-ended question, “How do you feel about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?” (Question 9 on the student survey – see Appendix C). Following are a few select quotes that best represent the responses of the 37 WRI 001 students (including their original errors) regarding preferences in specific aspects of English. S3 made a statement similar to those of four other students,

“It doesn’t really matter to me but in some aspects of english language I prefer a native teacher, and eseacally for pronunciation and speaking.”

S21 was alone in writing about a preference for NESs to teach writing, commenting,

“Native-english speaking teachers are usually good in some areas of english studies, like writing...”

These were the only open-ended responses from the 37 WRI 001 students mentioning preferences of specific aspects of the English language.

### The WRI 101 Students

The 50 WRI 101 students had slightly different opinions about preferences for NESs and NNEs. Figure 2 demonstrates what aspects of the English language WRI 101 students prefer to be taught by NESs and NNEs.

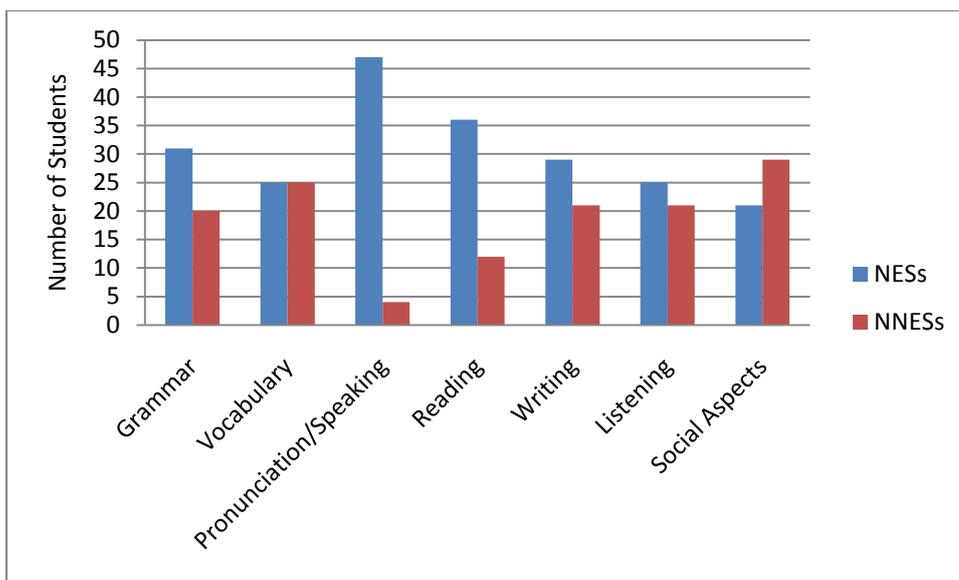


Figure 2. English Aspects WRI 101 Students Prefer to Be Taught by NESs and NNEs.

Figure 2 illustrates that 47 of the WRI 101 students (94%) chose to be taught pronunciation/speaking by NESs, making it the most frequently chosen aspect in favor of NESs, as with the WRI 001 students. 29 of them (58%) chose to be taught social aspects by NNEs, the highest ranking for NNEs. Responses about vocabulary were equal in number concerning preference for NESs or NNEs. Overall, more WRI 101 students selected NESs to teach everything but social aspects.

Of the 50 WRI 101 students, 41 (82%) of them included a comment about the topic, in response to the question, “How do you feel about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?” (Question 9 on the student survey – see Appendix C). Following are a few quotes that best represent

the WRI 101 students (including their original errors) regarding preferences in specific aspects of English. S52 made a statement reflecting a view similar to those of six other students,

“Non native eng teachers seem to have a couple of grammatical & pronunciation mistakes which may confuse the student. No one could ever master a natives speakers lang.”

S41 was alone in writing about a preference for NESs to teach vocabulary, commenting,

“I feel that the university/school should be all native teachers because it builds out vocabulary and builds the way we speak and write.”

These were the only responses from the 50 WRI 101 students mentioning preferences of specific aspects of the English language.

#### The WRI 102 Students

The 59 WRI 102 students had different preferences, although similar overall in preferring NESs for most aspects of English. Figure 3 demonstrates what aspects of the English language WRI 102 students prefer to be taught by NESs and NNESs.

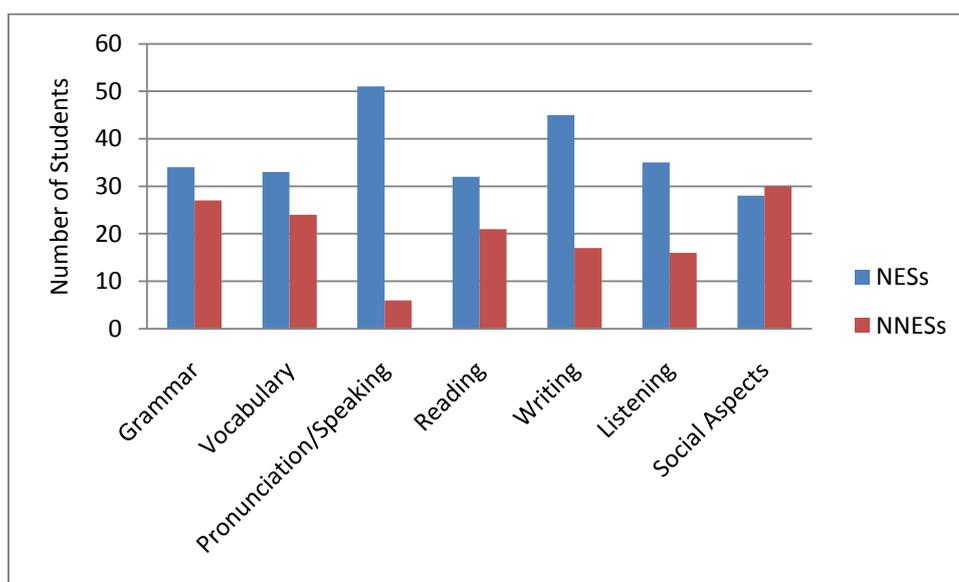


Figure 3. English Aspects WRI 102 Students Prefer to Be Taught by NESs and NNESs.

Similar to the WRI 101 students, more students preferred NESs to teach all aspects except social aspects. Figure 3 illustrates that 51 of the WRI 102 students

(86%) preferred to be taught pronunciation/speaking by NESs, making it the aspect most frequently chosen for NESs, as with the WRI 101 and WRI 001 students. 30 of the WRI 102 students (51%) preferred to be taught social aspects by NNEs, the highest ranking for NNEs, as with the WRI 101 students.

Of the 59 WRI 102 students, 54 (92%) of them included a comment about the topic, in response to the question, “How do you feel about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?” (Question 9 on the student survey – see Appendix C). Following are a few quotes that best represent views of the WRI 102 students (including their original errors) regarding preferences in specific aspects of English.

Concerning pronunciation and social aspects, S132, for instance, said,

“I think it’s better to have a native teacher not just for pronunciation or other educational issues, but because they will help us understand their culture and about the readings we read more than non-native because that belongs to their English culture.”

Twelve other WRI 102 students agreed that English pronunciation is better taught by NESs, but only two wrote that they preferred to be taught social aspects by NESs, which contradicts the results of the survey that suggested that the students preferred to be taught social aspects by NNEs. No student wrote if or why they would prefer to be taught social aspects by NNEs. These were the only responses from the 59 WRI 102 students mentioning preferences of specific aspects of the English language.

The preference of the students to be taught pronunciation by NESs was echoed in the student interviews. S88 said about the bad pronunciation of some NNEs,

“It could limit how the student will advance in their language, ‘cause they’re only going to reach the point of that one speaker, and at the same time they’ll start to pick up from what their instructor is. Like, for instance, in some Arab countries, the instructor will be [teaching] English but she has an accent, or he has an accent. And then if the student, it’s their first time learning English...they’ll catch on that accent themselves.”

S103, however, in her interview, suggested that pronunciation is more important at lower levels of a student’s schooling than it is in university,

“I feel like, at the university level, yeah, it’s fine, but at the school level, I think.... it matters, because the accent, everything, matters. Because you learn how to pronounce, it’s not just writing, it’s even speaking.”

The second research question, “Do AUS students prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of English?” can be answered simply: yes. The majority of the AUS student participants do prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of the English language, because the majority of the participants chose at least one aspect of language from the list when they were specifically asked to choose. The interview and survey responses demonstrated that more students preferred NESs to teach them all aspects of the English language, aside from social aspects.

### Student Views of Importance of Nativeness

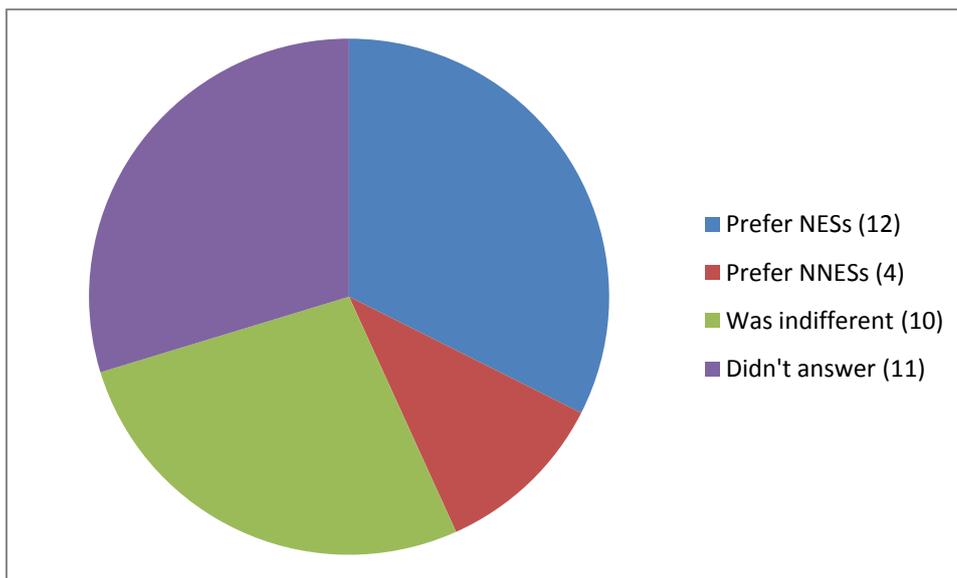
The third research question, “Is an English teacher’s native-speaker status important in the view of AUS students?” is answered by examining interview responses and the answers to one of the open-ended questions on the student surveys, “How do you feel about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?” (Question 9 on the student surveys – see Appendix C). The answers to these open-ended questions were divided according to the writing class of the students, counting the number of students that expressed a preference and thus indicated that they considered the teacher’s nativeness important, and the number of students that expressed indifference. The interviews with the teachers and the students also provided useful data to address the research question.

### The WRI 001 Students

Figure 4 illustrates to what extent the WRI 001 students care about their English teachers’ native-speaker status. Of the 37 WRI 001 students, 12 of them (32%) expressed a preference for NES teachers, 4 of them (11%) for NNES teachers, 10 of them (27%), in various terms, indicated that they did not care if their English teacher was native or non-native, and 11 of them (30%) did not answer the question.

It is difficult to say why so many of the students chose not to answer the question, but an instance in one of the classrooms may provide an explanation: when I had distributed the surveys to one of the WRI 001 sections and was waiting for them to finish filling it out, one student raised his hand and asked me if he was required to

answer all the questions. I told him that he could fill out as many of the questions as he was comfortable answering (not wanting to force him to give unnatural or untrue statements just to fill the page). His response was relief: he finished his selections for the multiple-choice questions and the fill-in-the-blank personal information, closed the survey and leaned back, unwilling to put in the effort to answer the open-ended questions. I suspect that many of the students felt this way when faced with the open-ended questions, electing to skip them since it was not compulsory to answer the survey.



*Figure 4.* The Importance of an English Teacher's Native-Speaker Status in the Views of the WRI 001 Students.

Following are representative examples of the answers the students provided on the surveys (including their original errors), indicating preferences for NESs, preferences for NNEs, or no preference at all. S17, along with 3 other students, preferred NNEs, saying,

“I think it is important because some people need translation for some English words to their own language and native teacher cannot provide that.”

S14, along with 11 other students, stated a very strong preference for NESs,

“I feel that non-native-English speaking English teachers are pretty much the reason why a lot of the younger arabs face a lot of problems with the english language, primarily at the beginning of their education, since non-native

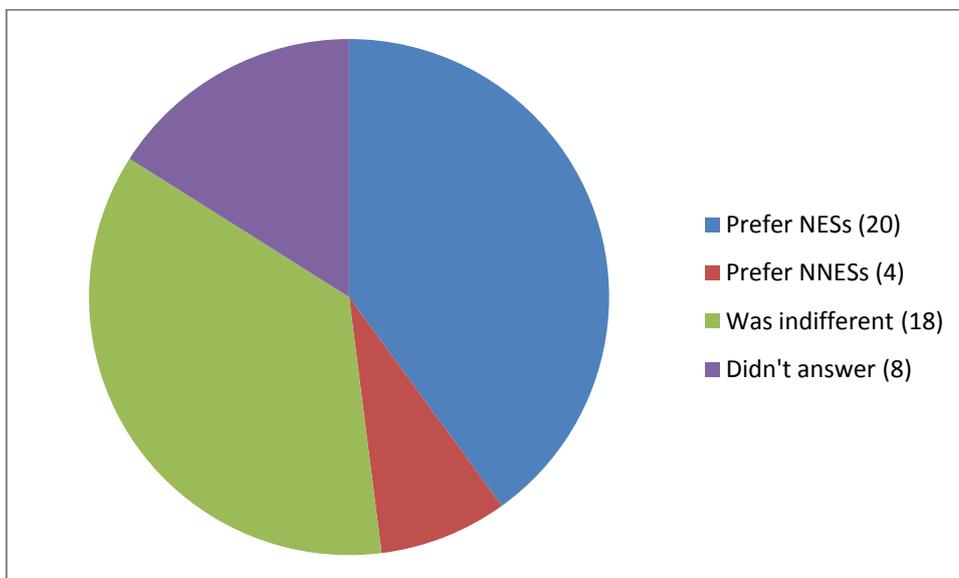
english speaking teachers might have an accent which they pass on to their pupils.”

Expressing complete indifference, along with 9 other students, S15 said,

“for myself it doesn’t differ I’m used to have teachers from many different nationalities.”

#### The WRI 101 Students

Figure 5 illustrates to what extent the WRI 101 students care about their English teachers’ native-speaker status. Of the 50 WRI 101 students, 20 of them (40%) expressed a preference for NES teachers, 4 of them (8%) for NNES teachers, 18 of them (36%) stated they did not care if their English teacher was native or non-native, and 8 of them (16%) did not answer the question.



*Figure 5.* The Importance of an English Teacher’s Native-Speaker Status in the Views of the WRI 101 Students.

Following are representative examples of the open-ended answers the students provided on the surveys (including their original errors). S66 said, along with three other students, that being taught by NNEs was more preferable:

“Being taught by a non-native speaker makes me feel more comfortable.”

S72, along with 19 other students, stated a preference for NESs, saying,

“I think it is better to have a native-English-Speaking teacher teach since non-native english speakers might mess up the pronunciation of a word and then I as a student end up learning it wrong.”

S39, along with 17 other students, provided a reason why he/she doesn't care about the issue,

“I feel that there is no logical point to this issue at all, because all native, english speaking teachers ar'nt very good at teaching english and at the same time all non-native english speaking teachers an't completely bad at english either.”

### The WRI 102 Students

Figure 6 illustrates to what extent the WRI 102 students care about their English teachers' native-speaker status. Of the 59 WRI 102 students, 24 of them (40%) expressed a preference for NES teachers, 1 student (2%) preferred NNES teachers, 27 of them (46%) stated that they did not care if their English teacher was native or non-native, and 7 of them (12%) did not answer the question.

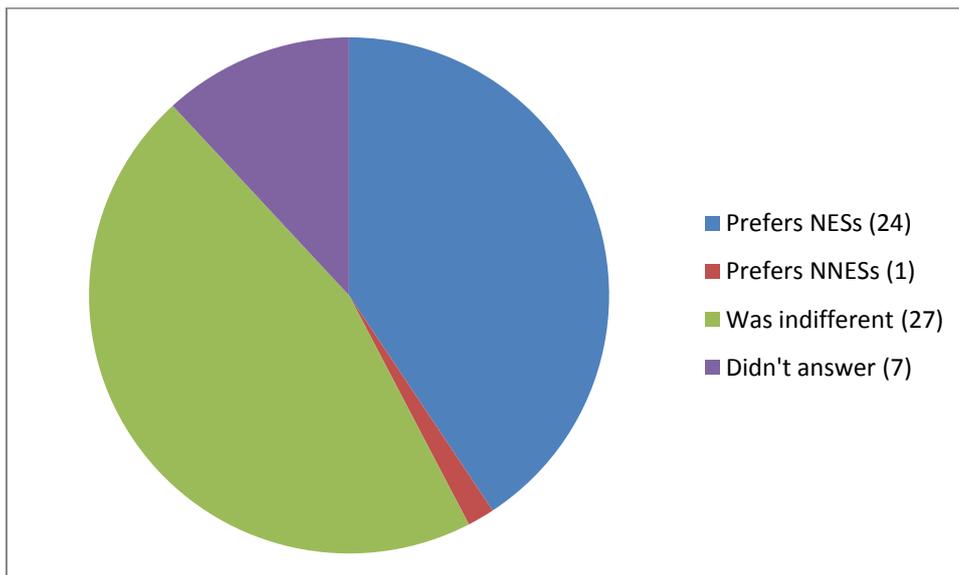


Figure 6. The importance of an English teacher's native-speaker status in the views of the WRI 102 students.

Following are representative examples of the answers the students provided on the surveys (including their original errors). S120, along with 23 other students, prefers NESs:

“I am neutral but I think being tutored by a native speaker is better. Even in other language like Arabic where I also prefer to be taught by a native speaker.”

S129, along with 26 other students, does not care if the teacher is an NES or an NNES, saying,

“I believe it doesn’t matter whether the English language is taught by a native or non-native speakers. I previously have been taught by a Russian teacher, yet she managed to increase my level of English language.”

S117 provided an interesting perspective:

“Can’t decide yet because she hadn’t handed over any of my submitted essays back.”

This reply by S117 is unique, the only one of its kind on the student surveys.

However, the idea that students at AUS care more about their grades than about the nativeness of their English teachers is a motif that ran through all of the teacher and student interviews. When asked if she thought AUS students chose their classes based on the nativeness of the teachers, S103 reported in her interview,

“I don’t feel like anyone chooses anyone over anything here, except, like, when you hear about, okay, they’re giving more grades...that’s the thing that influences us.”

When the teachers were asked if they thought AUS students chose their classes based on the nativeness of the teachers, T4 noted in his interview that, even if an NNES English teacher was hard to understand but was known for giving higher grades than other instructors, the students would flock to them just to get an easy A. T13 commented in her interview,

“Honestly, I think that students are more interested in who grades how.... They would be quite happy to sacrifice the nativeness for a good grade, rather than the other way around. I don’t think they choose the faculty, but they do differentiate. They’re aware of it. They’re aware of the levels that occur in speaking.”

T14 also observed in her interview,

“Here, with you guys, with the students, especially with the undergrads, it’s all about what they’ve heard from their friends about how she is or he is, and how he grades or how he doesn’t grade, how much work she does give or does not give. Whether they speak native or non-native, I think, is in the background.

Here at AUS it’s all about what their friends have told them about a particular teacher.”

The interviewed students were also asked if they thought the nativeness of an English teacher was important. S30 replied,

“I definitely do not care. I cannot even say if someone is native or not. I have my own English, but I cannot even understand [distinguish] if someone is English or American or from somewhere else.”

S88 maintained in her interview that whether her teachers were native or non-native did not really matter to her, as long as they were proficient and had strong backgrounds and their accents did not get in the way. S103, however, remarked that a teacher’s culture determined their teaching styles, and that she preferred the teaching styles of NESs, which she believes are more relaxed and encouraging of free thinking.

To summarize, Figure 7 demonstrates the combined preferences of the WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102 students regarding aspects of English to be taught by NESs.

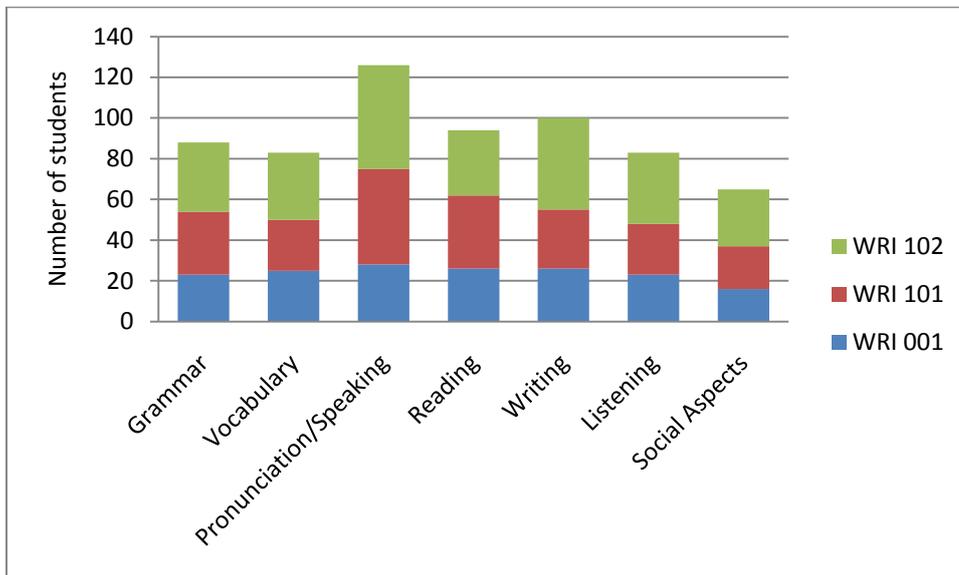


Figure 7. English Aspects the 146 Students Prefer to Be Taught by NESs.

126 of the 146 students (86%) preferred to be taught pronunciation/speaking by NESs. The second most frequent response from the students was that 100 of them (68%) preferred to be taught writing by NESs.

Figure 8 demonstrates the combined preferences from the WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102 students regarding aspects of English to be taught by NNESs.

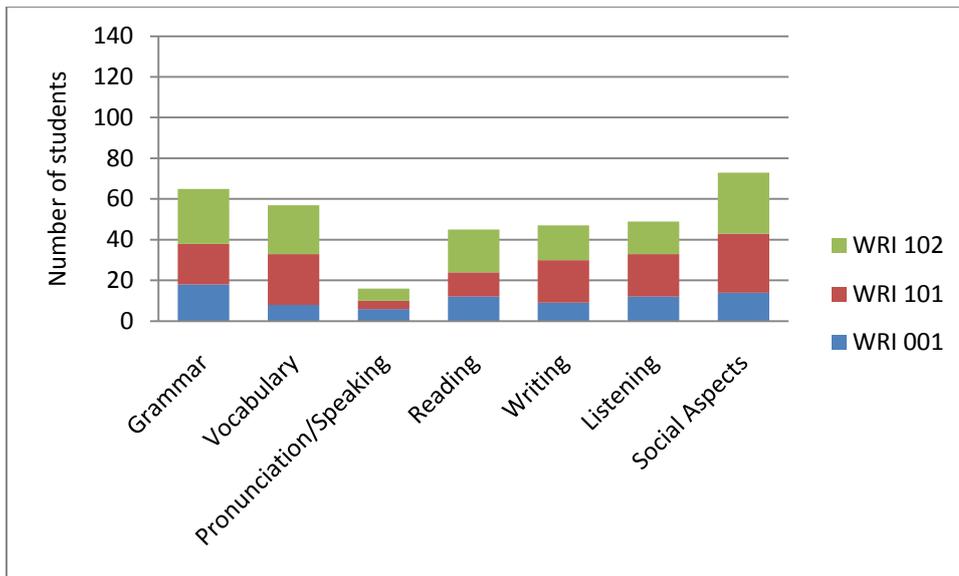


Figure 8. English Aspects the 146 Students Prefer to Be Taught by NNEs.

73 of the 146 students (50%) preferred to be taught social aspects by NNEs. The second most frequent response from the students was that 65 of them (45%) preferred to be taught grammar by NNEs. Studying Figures 7 and 8 together, however, it is evident that the students prefer NNEs to teach them all aspects of English except the social aspects.

Figure 9 combines the students' responses regarding whether they generally preferred NESs, preferred NNEs, expressed indifference, or did not answer.

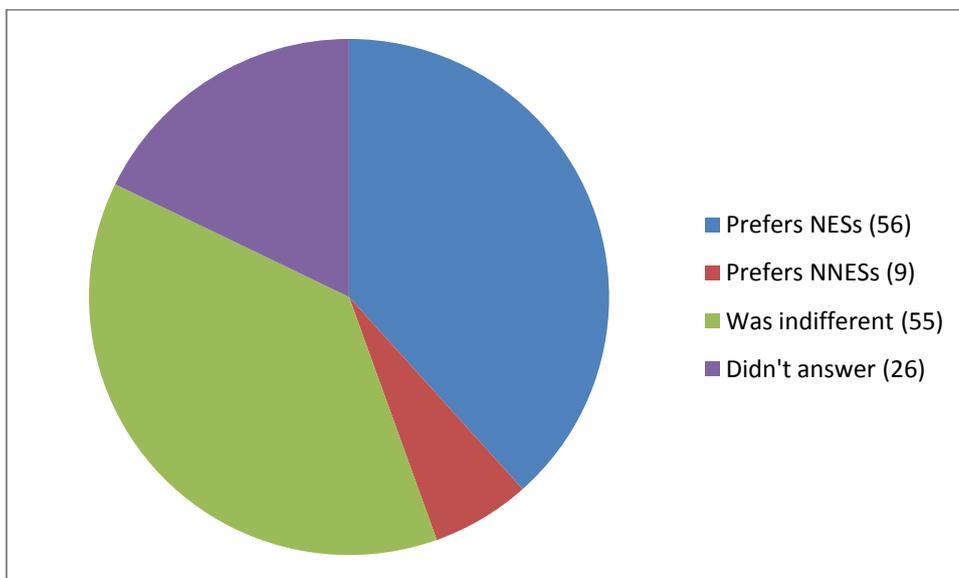


Figure 9. The Importance of an English Teacher's Native-Speaker Status in the Views of the 146 Students.

Of the 146 students, 56 of them (38%) preferred NESs, 9 of them (6%) preferred NNESs, 55 of them (38%) expressed indifference, and 26 of them (18%) did not answer the question.

Figure 9 confirms what Figures 7 and 8 demonstrated: of the students who indicated a preference, more students preferred to be taught by NESs. Here, 56 of the 146 students (38%) have commented that they prefer to be taught by NESs. It is relevant to point out, however, that 55 of the students (38%) expressed complete indifference and 26 (18%) did not answer. When asked to choose between NESs and NNESs to teach certain aspects of English, the WRI 001, WRI 101, and WRI 102 students overwhelmingly preferred NESs. When the students were given the chance to express their opinions on the matter freely in the open-ended questions and interviews, the amount of students who preferred NESs and those who did not mind where their teachers were from were almost equal in number.

#### Teacher Views of Nativeness in Teaching English

The fourth research question, “Are NES or NNES English teachers at AUS more effective at teaching specific aspects of English, in the views of AUS English teachers? Why?” is answered by examining the teacher interviews and their surveys, specifically the questions “Which of the following aspects of the English language do you think native speakers of English are more effective at teaching?” and “Which of the following aspects of the English language do you think non-native speakers of English are more effective at teaching?” (Questions 7 and 8 – see Appendix B). In both cases, the 14 teachers were asked to choose from a list of English language aspects: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/speaking, reading, writing, listening, and pragmatics (social aspects). The teacher interviews also provided useful data to answer the research question.

Three of the teachers did not choose any aspect of the English language they thought would be more effectively taught by NESs. Three other teachers did not choose any aspect they thought would be more effectively taught by NNESs. All of these six teachers were NESs. Figure 10 demonstrates what aspects these Department of Writing Studies English teachers think NESs and NNESs are more effective at teaching:

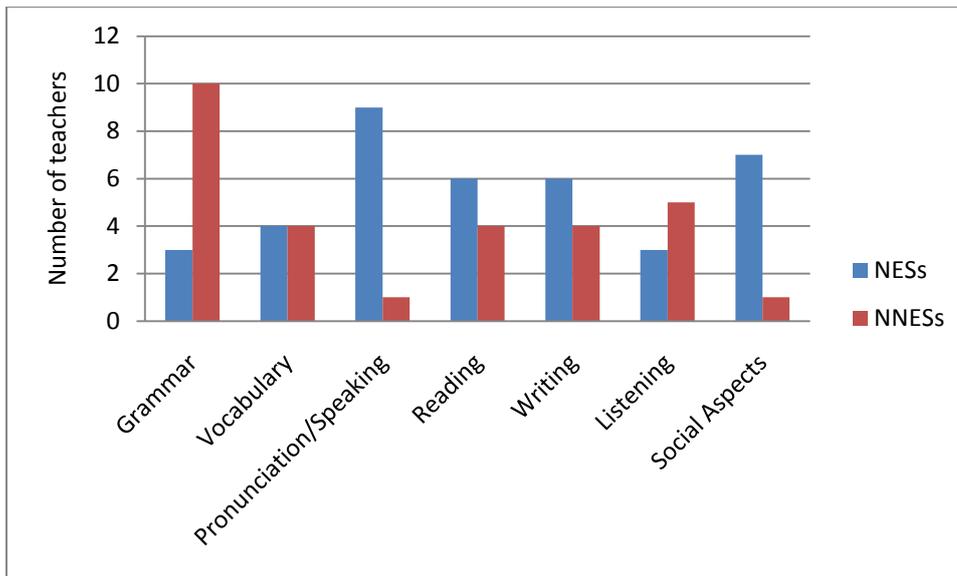


Figure 10. English Aspects 14 Department of Writing Studies Teachers Think NESs and NNESs Are More Effective at Teaching.

Examining these graphs and figures reveals teacher views. The most frequent aspects chosen by the teachers as the ones they believed NESs were more effective at teaching were pronunciation/speaking and social aspects, with 9 teachers (64%) selecting pronunciation/speaking and 7 of them (50%) selecting social aspects. Reading and writing were also selected by more teachers to be taught by NESs rather than NNESs. The aspect more teachers believed NNESs were effective at teaching was grammar, chosen by 10 of them (71%). Five teachers (36%) chose listening to be taught by NNESs than by NESs.

The fourth research question can also be addressed by looking at the open-ended answers the teachers provided on the surveys. T5 wrote (unedited), in a remark similar to those made by three other teachers,

“I think that it is important for students to have instructors who have correct pronunciation. Native speakers will be more likely to have correct pronunciation, but if a non-native speaker does too there should be equal instruction for pronunciation. I think non-native English speakers are more empathetic.”

On the other hand, T14 made a comment in her interview (reported here unedited), which was echoed later by T4 and T13 in their respective interviews,

“Non-native English teachers, or Writing teachers, who teach those classes [grammar] have such a strong grammatical background, it’s really

phenomenal. . . . They actually had to learn it, and they had to learn it in a very strict manner, and I think that that's something you lose out on if you do have a native English speaker.”

These answers, gathered from the teacher surveys and the teacher interviews, help to develop an answer to the fourth research question, “Are NES or NNES English teachers at AUS more effective at teaching specific aspects of English, in the views of AUS English teachers? Why?” The teachers did not indicate as strong an overall preference for NESs as did the students, but still, more teachers selected NESs to teach aspects of English than they did NNESs. NNESs were preferred by the majority of these Department of Writing Studies teachers to teach grammar, while NESs were preferred by the majority to teach pronunciation.

#### Teacher Views of Differential Treatment

The fifth research question, “What are the observations of English teachers at AUS (NESs/NNESs) concerning discrepancies (if any) in the way NES/NNES teachers are treated by the administration, their colleagues, and the students?” can be answered by examining teacher responses to interview questions and the surveys, specifically the qualitative answers to the open-ended questions, “Is there a difference in the way that native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers are perceived generally?” and “Is there a difference in the way that native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers are perceived at AUS?” (Questions 9 and 10 on the teacher surveys – see Appendix B).

Ten of the Writing Studies teachers have noticed a distinct preference by students, both at AUS and elsewhere, for NESs. T14, for instance, wrote about AUS students in her survey (repeated later on in her interview, and unedited here),

“I think they would prefer a native English speaker since they pay a lot for tuition and expect the ‘American’ education experience.”

T13 agreed with T14 in her survey, writing in response to the question about whether there is a perceived difference between NESs and NNESs (unedited),

“By students and other faculty. Generally in the UAE, native capability is preferred. . . . There is validity in that preference in that students are being groomed for an unforgiving world and want to take best advantage of the learning they are paying for.”

The idea that students at AUS expect Western, native-English-speaking English teachers is apparently a prevalent one; two other teachers remarked on this trend in the surveys. T5, for instance, wrote (unedited):

“Students seem to prefer native English speakers for several reasons. Some students have been taught incorrect pronunciation by non-native English speakers & that leads students to see them as incompetent. I think students prefer having native English speakers because they want someone who not only presents the language but also an authentic ‘American style’ university experience.”

Three of the teachers compared AUS to their previous teaching contexts, where the “nativeness” of the English teachers seemed to matter a lot more to the students. For instance, T10 wrote in her survey (unedited):

“In Korea, students valued native-English speakers more highly. I think it’s less of an issue in the UAE or Egypt.”

T6 echoed this observation in her survey response about students in Asian countries. T12 also noticed a difference in the way teachers are treated in various situations, writing in her survey (unedited):

“In my previous posts I have seen a marked preference for native speakers at ESL level but less marked at university level.”

In fact, three of the teachers have commented on the fact that NNESs are often treated rather well by AUS students. T5 wrote in her survey (unedited):

“I think students are more open to non-native English speaking teachers at AUS because they are used to dealing with many non-native speakers everyday – who prove to be well educated and articulate.”

T8, an NNES, wrote in her survey (unedited):

“My students seem to prefer me! From a social point, a non-native teacher could serve as a source of motivation for the students. Also, these teachers can relate to the students more!”

T1 also pointed out that some students may prefer having an NNES English teacher in some situations, writing in her survey that AUS students prefer

“Natives. However, a heavy New Zealand, British, New York, etc. accent is very difficult. Also, native American speakers may talk too fast.”

Three teachers, however, have heard their students criticize their NNEST teachers at AUS, though not specifically their English language teachers. T1 wrote about these complaints in her survey (unedited):

“In Business & Engineering, students complain they cannot even understand what the teacher is saying for many non-native teachers. Non-Arab students struggle when the teacher lapses into Arabic. Teachers from India sometimes feel their students distrust their fairness if the teacher is Hindu.”

T13 has noticed the same preferences among her students. She wrote in her survey (unedited):

“Students feel better taught by native speakers, do not like Arabic speakers as well as Indian teachers, feel that these do not communicate as effectively.”

As we can see from these unedited quotes from the teacher surveys, the Department of Writing Studies teachers have a variety of opinions about how NES and NNEST teachers are treated at AUS. When I interviewed three of them and asked them to talk in more detail about their experiences and observations, T13 explained,

“I think people who are perceived as potentially non-native speakers will encounter – possibly not face some antagonism, but students may feel taken aback by that [their non-nativeness]. Of course it gets dispelled when the person opens their mouth and proves them otherwise, but many students will think, coming from high schools where they were taught by non-native English speakers, do carry on a type of burden of having been through a point of disempowerment, because they know the pronunciation is not right, they know that the way they say certain things is not correct. And they’re aware of the fact this comes from high school.”

T13 appears native to her students, but English is her third language. Though she revealed that she speaks it fluently, and in fact better than her first two languages, she has an accent that others find hard to place. She explained in her interview that her students find it odd, but that they do not treat her discriminatorily:

“They’ll ask me if I’m Irish, because sometimes I roll my r’s. They cannot place the accent, because I don’t sound like anything in particular. So they’re interested, I think, for interest’s sake, and from the point of conversation rather than anything else.”

T14 has the opposite predicament: she appears non-native, but she was raised and educated in the United States and considers herself a native speaker of English.

When asked in her interview if students assume that she's non-native based on her appearance, she said,

“I think when I walk in the classroom, they might, but then when I open my mouth they know otherwise.... I taught for four years in the US, and I would ask students, like when we learned later on in the semester about representation, like, what were your thoughts when I first walked in? ‘Cause I’ve always worn a scarf and that’s where I was going. And it really shocked me, because they all said that they thought I was a non-native speaker of English, purely based on how I looked.”

To sum up, the fifth research question, “What are the observations of English teachers at AUS (NESs/NNESs) concerning discrepancies (if any) in the way NES/NNES teachers are treated by the administration, their colleagues, and the students?” is thus answered by examining the teacher surveys and the teacher interviews. While some teachers believed that the students at AUS prefer NESs because they expect an authentic Western education, others pointed out that this preference is not as strong as it is in other contexts, and that some students have positive things to say about their NNES teachers.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

Taking into consideration all the data gathered through the student and teacher surveys and the student and teacher interviews, the research questions can begin to be answered.

#### Teacher Characteristics Preferred by Students

The first research question, “What characteristics do AUS students consider important for English teachers to have?” is answered by examining the results of the student surveys, which included an open-ended question allowing the students to list whatever characteristics they could think of without being restricted to a specific list. These answers were tabulated and divided into two categories: personal traits and professional traits. They were supported by quotes from the student interviews.

With the personal traits, there was no clear “winner” as there was with the teaching qualifications. Instead, the students wrote down a wide variety of answers, ranging from “respectful of the students” and “can connect with students,” to “merciful” and “female.” These answers were not the same across WRI classes, and were barely the same within the same class of students. They obviously depended on the students’ needs and what they believed was necessary for them to be able to learn the language.

The answers of the WRI 001 students were classified into four categories: being entertaining, having a good personality, being a good leader, and treating students well. The answers of the WRI 101 students were much the same, though the ranking was different. The WRI 101 students also included answers that fell under a new category: grades well. The answers of the WRI 102 students fit into the same categories as those of the WRI 101 students, though again in a different order, and they also mentioned grades. The fact that the WRI 001 students did not mention grades in their responses may simply indicate that, because they were freshmen, likely in their first semester, they had not yet realized the importance of grades at AUS. The other answers have a similar theme: the ability of the English language teacher to interact effectively with the students is obviously valued.

With the professional traits, however, there was an obvious frontrunner across all the student groups. The teaching qualification the WRI 001 students considered

most important was the “pronunciation/accent,” which was the answer 12 of the students wrote down, 32% of the 37 WRI 001 students. The teaching qualification the WRI 101 students considered most important was the “pronunciation/accent,” which was the answer 21 of the students wrote down, 42% of the 50 WRI 101 students. The teaching qualification the WRI 102 students considered most important was the “pronunciation/accent,” which was the answer 26 of the students wrote down, 44% of the 59 WRI 102 students.

Evident from these answers is the high regard students pay to the accents of their English language teachers. Of the 146 students surveyed, 59 of them (40%), wrote “pronunciation/accent” in answer to the open-ended question, “What characteristics do you think an English language teacher should have?” However, only 3 of the 146 (2%) wrote “native speaker” in answer to this question, indicating that, though the student participants strongly believed that it was necessary to have an English language teacher whose pronunciation and accent were easy to understand, the teacher did not necessarily have to be a native speaker.

All three students who were interviewed were asked the same question verbally, and none of them expressed the need to have a native or a non-native speaker. S88 talked about the importance of a strong background in the English language and a postgraduate degree. S103 also spoke about a postgraduate degree, adding that it was important to her to have an English language teacher that was comfortable and easy to talk to. S30 focused on the teacher’s ability to make the language easy and enjoyable to learn.

The emphasis on pronunciation and accent, but not on the nativeness of the teacher, may be due to the setting; the American University of Sharjah, and the United Arab Emirates as a whole, is filled with people whose native language is not English, and yet speak English with native-like proficiency. These responses suggest that as long as the students are able to understand their English language teacher, they do not seem to mind where the teacher is actually from.

#### Student Preference about Teachers of Aspects of English

To answer the second research question, “Do AUS students prefer NES or NNES English teachers to teach them specific aspects of English? Why?” the surveys asked the students to choose from a list of different areas of English language teaching, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/speaking, reading, writing,

listening, and social aspects, to be taught by NESs or NNESs. The answers were tabulated and then divided according to the WRI classes. These were supported by the qualitative answers the students also provided on the surveys.

Overall, NESs were preferred by more WRI 001 students in all seven areas. The majority of the WRI 001 students, when asked to choose what aspect of the English language they would prefer to be taught by NESs, chose pronunciation/speaking most frequently, with reading and writing tying for the second most frequent response. When they were asked to choose what aspect of the English language they preferred to be taught by NNESs, grammar was the most frequent response and social aspects the second most frequent.

Overall, NESs were preferred by more WRI 101 students in all areas except the social aspects, where NNESs took the lead, and vocabulary, where NESs and NNESs tied. The majority of the WRI 101 students, when asked to choose what aspect of the English language they would prefer to be taught by NESs, chose pronunciation/speaking most frequently, and reading second most frequently, though there was a considerable gap between the two. However, when they were asked to choose what aspect of the English language they preferred to be taught by NNESs, social aspects was the most common response, with vocabulary the second most common.

Overall, NESs were preferred by more WRI 102 students in all areas except the social aspects, where NNESs were chosen more. The majority of the WRI 102 students, when asked to choose what aspect of the English language they would prefer to be taught by NESs, chose pronunciation/speaking most frequently, and writing was the second most frequent. However, when they were asked to choose what aspect of the English language they preferred to be taught by NNESs, social aspects was the most frequent response and grammar the second most frequent.

The student participants demonstrated that they do prefer to be taught specific aspects of the English language by NESs or NNESs. While pronunciation/speaking was consistently chosen first by the majority of the students to be taught by NESs, the rest of their preferences fluctuated. For NESs, reading and writing often came in second, although NESs were preferred by more students in all areas except social aspects.

The most surprising results, however, were those for NNESs. Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010), Tatar and Yildiz (2010), and Mahboob (2004) predicted that

grammar would be the one aspect the majority of the students preferred to be taught by NNEs, because they had explicit knowledge of it, having studied it themselves in the course of learning the language, unlike NESs, who had more of an intuitive knowledge. However, only the WRI 001 students chose grammar most frequently to be taught by NNEs. Grammar was the WRI 102 students' second most common choice, but the WRI 101 students chose social aspects, vocabulary, writing, and listening before grammar, relegating it to fifth place.

In total, 73 of the 146 students (50%) chose to be taught social aspects by NNEs, which contradicts the findings of earlier studies (Mahboob, 2004). The students included some comments in the answers to the open-ended survey questions; however, none of these help explain this phenomenon. In fact, two of the students indicated in their comments that they would prefer to be taught social aspects by NESs. S91 said,

“As long as they have an established knowledge on the subject & proper pronunciation, it does not matter. Native English speakers are more fluent and familiar with the details like common expressions, idioms, etc.”

S132 commented,

“I think it's better to have a native teacher not just for pronunciation or other educational issues, but because they will help us understand their culture and about the readings we read more than non-native because that belongs to their English culture.”

It is possible that these two students are the exception; after all, the preferences were not unanimous for either NESs or NNEs. Nothing else was written on the surveys that could possibly explain this trend. This preference to be taught the social aspects by NNEs is surprising since NESs would have greater insight into social nuances. One possible explanation is that NNEs might be better able to explain the cultural and social differences, if they share the students' cultural backgrounds. For instance, if faced with a particular idiom, the NNE teacher might be able to translate it or find an equivalent for the students, particularly if he/she shares the same L1. Another possible explanation is that the students did not understand what was meant by “social aspects” when faced with it on the survey. The two quotes above indicate that those students understood the meaning of “social aspects” to refer to culture and common expressions, but this may not have been true for the rest of the students.

Overall, the WRI 001 students preferred to be taught all aspects by NESs. The WRI 101 students preferred to be taught all aspects by NESs except social aspects and vocabulary. The WRI 102 students preferred to be taught all aspects by NESs except social aspects.

#### Student Views of Importance of Nativeness

To answer the third research question, “Is an English teacher’s native-speaker status important in the view of AUS students?” the students were asked in the survey about their general views on the topic. The answers to this open-ended question were divided according to whether the students expressed a preference for NESs or NNESs, or if the students expressed indifference.

In total, 56 of the 146 students surveyed (38%) expressed a preference for NESs, 9 (6%) expressed a preference for NNESs, 55 (38%) expressed indifference, and 24 (16%) did not answer the question. However, during the student and teacher interviews, when asked if a teacher’s native-speaker status affected the way the students selected their courses every semester, the answer was overwhelmingly negative. The students and teachers interviewed believed that the only factor the students at AUS kept in mind when they chose their courses was the teacher’s reputation for giving good grades. In fact, one student (S117) wrote in answer to the open-ended survey question,

“Can’t decide [if I prefer NESs or NNESs] yet because she hadn’t handed over any of my submitted essays back.”

These statements from the surveys and the interviews are revealing. Though the statistics gathered from the surveys indicate that more AUS students prefer NES English teachers than NNES English teachers for specific aspects of learning English, the student and teacher interviews indicate that they do not care about it enough to base their course selection on the teacher’s nativeness. These AUS students seem to care more about the teacher’s grading system or leniency. It is also worth noting that an almost equal amount of students (38%) indicated on their surveys that they did not care whether their English teacher was an NES or an NNES, and that a significant percentage (16%) did not answer the question at all. Taking these two groups together (those who were indifferent and those who did not answer), it is no longer clear that AUS students prefer NESs.

### Teacher Views of Nativeness in Teaching English

The fourth research question, “Are NES or NNES English teachers at AUS more effective at teaching specific aspects of English, in the views of AUS English teachers? Why?” is answered with the results of the teacher surveys, which asked the Department of Writing Studies teachers to choose from a list of different aspects of English language teaching, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/speaking, reading, writing, listening, and pragmatics (social aspects), for both NESs and NNESs. These answers are supported by quotes from the teacher interviews.

The DWS teacher participants believed NESs would be more effective at teaching every aspect except three: grammar, listening, and vocabulary. Vocabulary was chosen to be taught by NNESs as often as it was to be taught by NESs. Listening received more votes in favor of NNESs than NESs. However, the majority of the teachers overwhelmingly chose grammar as the aspect they believed NNESs were most effective at teaching.

Here lies the difference between what the students believed teachers were best at, and what the teachers believed they were best at. While students and teachers all agreed that NESs were best at teaching pronunciation/speaking, writing, and reading, grammar was never chosen by the students to be taught by NNESs rather than by NESs. The teachers, however, seem to strongly believe that NNESs are better at teaching grammar than NESs, which is what the literature (Lipovsky & Mahboob, 2010; Tatar & Yildiz, 2010; and Mahboob, 2004) had predicted.

During the interviews, the teachers were asked what they thought were the advantages and disadvantages of having an NES or NNES English teacher. Each one of them raised the same point: NNES English teachers are better at teaching grammar because they had to learn it themselves. T14 said,

“Non-native English teachers, or Writing teachers, who teach those classes [grammar] have such a strong grammatical background, it’s really phenomenal.... They actually had to learn it, and they had to learn it in a very strict manner, and I think that that’s something you lose out on if you do have a native English speaker.”

T4 agreed, and made a comment that NESs may simply say, “Because it’s right,” in answer to a student’s grammar question, whereas NNESs may be able to give examples or explicit reasons for something, because they had to learn the subject themselves. T13 explained,

“I think the non-native speakers are excellent at teaching grammar and teaching the technicalities of a language, which the native speakers, I think, are often not that interested in. Especially the Writing Department, the English Department, most of us are literature majors, teaching whatever we teach, and, you know, grammar is, okay, grammar is there but as a native speaker you don't really focus on grammar because it's something that comes instinctively, and depending what background, which, you know, part of the world they come from, they might have done grammar in grade school, not even in high school. So it's not ever really a focus unless you specifically go to study it, and in the English-speaking world, few people purposefully go to study grammar to teach it in university.”

It should be mentioned that many applied linguists, who often teach university-level courses in linguistics and rhetoric and may also teach English literature, have in fact studied grammar extensively. Also, those teachers who studied English literature and then went on to teach university-level courses in linguistics and rhetoric may not be well versed in grammar but are able to draw on their knowledge of the nuances of language use.

Despite these reasons given by the teachers, not all of the student participants seemed to believe that NNEs are the best at teaching grammar. Answers on the surveys illustrated that students in the three WRI levels could not agree on what they preferred to be taught by NNEs, and it is now evident that the teachers also have different opinions. The only aspects all the students and teachers agreed on were pronunciation/speaking, writing, and reading, all to be taught by NESs.

#### Teacher Views of Differential Treatment

The fifth research question “What are the observations of English teachers at AUS (NESs/NNEs) concerning discrepancies (if any) in the way NES/NNE teachers are treated by the administration, their colleagues, and the students?” is answered with the answers the teachers provided on their surveys to several open-ended questions, and with quotes from the teacher interviews.

The teacher participants from the Writing Studies Department at AUS had several different reactions to the survey questions. Their answers can be summarized in the following points. These teachers observed that:

1. There is a preference for NESs at AUS, since it is an American-style university and the students expect an American education with Western teachers.
2. The teacher participants with experience in Far East Asian countries perceived a much stronger preference there for NESs than at AUS.
3. The teacher participants with experience in lower levels of education perceived a much stronger preference there for NESs than at AUS.
4. The students at AUS may sometimes prefer NNES English teachers, since they are more used to interacting with NNESs in their day-to-day lives, they may not understand some Western accents or be able to understand the speed with which a Westerner speaks, and they may see their NNES English teachers as motivating and inspiring.
5. The students at AUS have complained to the teacher participants about teachers in other departments, such as Business or Engineering, who lapse into Arabic in the classroom or have incomprehensible accents. These tendencies restrict the learning process for the students. There have been few complaints about the NNESs in the Department of Writing Studies, since they had to earn higher degrees in the language and are much more proficient than teachers in other departments.

These observations of the teacher participants are not at all in alignment with student preferences. After all, when asked to choose between the seven indicated English aspects, more of the students favored NESs, and 38% of the students indicated that they preferred to be taught English by NESs when filling in an open-ended question. Though it is worth noting that 38% also expressed indifference as to the nativeness status of their English teachers, in such a multicultural setting, it is surprising to see that the nativeness of the English language teachers is so important.

### Significance of the Research

The American University of Sharjah is a community of students and teachers from more than 80 different countries. Most of the students are non-native speakers of English, and most have been exposed to NES and NNES teachers before or since attending AUS. The English teachers of the Department of Writing Studies are professionally well qualified, whether NES or NNES. Some of the teachers, as

revealed through this research project, may physically appear to be NNEs but can actually speak English better than their other languages.

In such a setting, to discover that the students prefer to be taught specific aspects of English by NESs is surprising. At least, it was surprising for me. AUS recently published a pamphlet to advertise their new Achievement Academy Bridge Program. Under “Teachers,” it states (errors included in original), “Bridge Program teachers are highly qualified with a minimum of a master’s degree, along with extensive experience in the region. The majority of are from the USA and Canada” (American University of Sharjah, 2010a). The university apparently knows that students and/or parents prefer NES English teachers, and that the way to attract students to the program is to advertise their NES teachers.

During this research project, this preference for NESs by the students was qualified several times in the answers to the open-ended survey questions and during the student interviews: the NNEs teachers in the Department of Writing Studies were very good at speaking and teaching the English language, as they have earned several higher education degrees in English and are very proficient. However, the students did complain about the standard of English used in other departments, like Engineering or Business. Oftentimes, according to the student participants and some of the teacher participants, the teachers in other departments lapse into Arabic in class, and not all of the students (as shown in the demographic information collected from the surveys) speak Arabic. This is an important complaint: AUS prides itself on offering students an American-style education, with English as the language of instruction. If students from all over the globe, many of whom do not speak Arabic, come to AUS in search of that education and are confronted with a content-course teacher who does not speak English well, it will negatively affect their educational experiences and hinder their learning processes.

This research also revealed that, though the students valued NESs more than NNEs, this had no effect on what courses the students ultimately chose to register in. Other factors may have more of an influence on the students, particularly the teacher’s reputation for giving students better grades. Why are grades considered so important to AUS students, to the point that they may be willing to sacrifice actual understanding and learning in the classroom? Grades are often considered as gate-keeping devices or status symbols, but are these qualities so prized by AUS students that education itself is thrown by the wayside? How important are grades among AUS

students? It is possible that it was only this sampling of AUS students that cared so much about their grades that they brushed off the teachers' nativeness.

This study is an interesting addition to the language education literature, especially in the UAE, as it shed further light on the global NES/NNES English teacher dichotomy and revealed reasons why the AUS students participating in the investigation prefer one type of English teacher over the other. The study examined how both NES and NNES teachers of English feel in this context and the kinds of experiences they have had.

### Limitations of the Research

There are of course limitations to this research project. Due to time constraints, only 146 students of the 4,644 undergraduate students at AUS could be surveyed, 3% of the undergraduate population. This sample was also selected because of convenience. If future research into this topic is conducted at AUS, a larger, more random pool of student participants should be included. Also, only 14 of the 27 Writing Studies Department teachers (52%) participated in the research project. With more participating teachers, more varied opinions and experiences could have been included.

Another limitation was in the methodology. This research depended almost entirely on the self-reporting of the teachers and students, without utilizing any observation techniques to note the behavior of the students towards different NES and NNES teachers, or the behavior of the teachers towards their colleagues. This research is also missing the views of the administration of the American University of Sharjah, especially regarding the hiring practices regarding NESs or NNESs.

The survey only asked the students to choose from a list of English aspects to be taught by NESs or NNESs. There was no open-ended question asking for an explanation for their choices. The interviews were conducted while the surveys were still being gathered. They had not yet been processed, and so the somewhat inconsistent answers on the student surveys (specifically regarding preferences for NNESs to teach social aspects) went unnoticed until all the data was gathered and processed. Also, no definitions were given to the students to explain important concepts (nativeness, social aspects, etc.). For example, it was difficult to assess whether the students really knew what social aspects were and whether they really did prefer to be taught social aspects by NNESs.

Another important limitation was the sensitivity of the topic and some participants' reluctance to respond freely, either on the surveys or during the interviews. This hesitation may have prevented them from responding honestly and openly, and perhaps from including new and revealing information.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

Because of the results of the student and teacher surveys and interviews, an interesting belief was revealed: that AUS students cared much more about their grades than about the nativeness of their English language teachers. In future research, a question should be added to the student surveys, one along the lines of "Which do you think is more important, a teacher's nativeness or their reputation for giving good grades?" Adding "Why?" to the end of that question may also be helpful, so that we might discover the reasons behind their preferences. Also, the personal and professional traits mentioned by the students in the open-ended responses in this research project could be further investigated in a large-scale survey to determine which of these traits are viewed as more important.

Another suggestion would be to ask the interviewed students about their preferences regarding teachers of specific aspects of English, and why they chose to be taught specific aspects by a specific type of teacher. For instance, why did so many students chose to be taught social aspects by NNEs? Why did the majority of them not choose grammar to be taught by NNEs? These results completely contradict the literature on the topic.

What about student preferences for NES/NNEs in other disciplines, such as engineering or business? This study focused on NES/NNEs English teachers, but it would be worth examining the students' reactions to different teachers in other courses. Getting feedback on these questions from all the students would be interesting and relevant to the research on the importance of nativeness in a multicultural setting such as AUS.

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## Appendix A

### The Nationalities of the AUS Students in Spring, 2011

Nationality	Achievement Academy Bridge Program	Undergraduates	Graduates	Total
United Arab Emirates	88	835	68	991
Jordan	10	557	50	617
Egypt	7	399	25	431
Pakistan		357	33	390
Syria	9	344	37	390
Palestine	7	333	38	378
India	2	272	10	284
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	24	175	19	218
Iran	18	159	38	215
Iraq	5	162	15	182
Lebanon	1	153	16	170
United States of America	2	159	3	164
Sudan	5	104	9	118
Canada		80	5	85
Yemen	7	50	5	62
Bahrain		60	1	61
Nigeria	4	57		61
United Kingdom		51	2	53
Bangladesh		41	4	45
Oman	4	23	2	29
Kuwait		20	4	24
Algeria	1	16	3	20
Russia	7	8	2	17
Tunisia	1	11	5	17
Morocco	1	14		15
Afghanistan		12	1	13
Australia		12		12
France		9	1	10
Tanzania		9	1	10
China	2	7		9
Germany		8	1	9
Sri Lanka		9		9
Kazakhstan		8		8
Libya		8		8
Philippines		8		8
Somalia	1	7		8
Azerbaijan		6	1	7
Kenya		6		6
Qatar	1	5		6
Turkey		6		6
Bosnia and Herzegiwina		5		5
Greece		5		5
New Zealand		5		5
Uzbekistan		5		5
Austria		4		4

Nationality	Achievement Academy Bridge Program	Undergraduates	Graduates	Total
Ethiopia		4		4
Ireland		4		4
Netherlands	1	3		4
Sweden		4		4
Ukraine		4		4
Indonesia			3	3
Macedonia		3		3
Poland		2	1	3
Belgium	1	1		2
Brazil		2		2
Djibouti	1	1		2
Italy		2		2
Mexico		2		2
Senegal		2		2
Singapore		2		2
Venezuela		2		2
Zimbabwe		2		2
Benin		1		1
Bulgaria		1		1
Cameroon		1		1
Chechnia		1		1
Denmark		1		1
Eritrea		1		1
Ghana			1	1
Japan		1		1
Korea		1		1
Malawi		1		1
Malaysia		1		1
Mauritius		1		1
Mozambique		1		1
Norway		1		1
Republic of Croatia		1		1
Serbia		1		1
Seychelles		1		1
South Africa		1		1
Switzerland		1		1
Yugoslavia		1		1
Zambia		1		1
N/A	1			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>4,644</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>5,259</b>

Appendix B  
Survey for Teachers

Gender:      Male                                      Female

Age:          21-25        26-30        31-40        40+

Nationality: .....

Courses you teach at AUS (Check all that apply):

WRI 001                      WRI 101                      WRI 102

Other:.....

1. Is English your first, second, third, or foreign language?  
 First    Second    Third    Foreign    Other:.....

2. Do you speak any other languages?  
 Yes                                      No

3. If yes, what are they?  
.....

4. Which one do you consider to be your first language, if not English?  
.....

5. Do you consider yourself a **native** or a **non-native** speaker of English?  
 Native English speaker                                      Non-native English speaker

6. What are your teaching credentials? (Check all that apply.)  
 Certificate or diploma in teaching English  
 BA in English  
 MA in English/TESOL/Curriculum & Instruction  
 PhD in English literature/linguistics/composition  
 Other:.....

7. Which of the following aspects of the English language do you think **native** speakers of English are more effective at teaching? (Check all that apply.)  
 Grammar                      Vocabulary                      Pronunciation/Speaking  
 Reading                      Writing                      Listening  
 Pragmatics (social aspects)

8. Which of the following aspects of the English language do you think **non-native** speakers of English are more effective at teaching? (Check all that apply.)  
 Grammar                      Vocabulary                      Pronunciation/Speaking  
 Reading                      Writing                      Listening  
 Pragmatics (social aspects)

9. Is there a difference in the way that native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers are perceived **generally**? Please explain.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

10. Is there a difference in the way that native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers are perceived **at AUS**? Please explain.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. Do AUS students prefer having a **native** or a **non-native** English speaker teacher? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. How do you feel generally about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Would you be available for an interview? If so, please provide your email address here:

.....

Completion of this survey signifies consent for responses to be used in MA TESOL research about native-/non-native-English-speaking teachers of English.

Appendix C  
Survey for Students

Gender:      Male                                    Female

Age:          15-17        18-20        21-25        26-30        31+

University Level:

Freshman            Sophomore            Junior                Senior

Nationality:.....

Native language/s:.....

1. Which WRI courses have you taken at AUS so far? (Check all that apply.)  
 WRI 001                    WRI 101                    WRI 102

2. Have you ever had **native** speakers of English teach you English?  
 Yes                                    No

3. If yes, where? (Check all that apply.)  
 Primary school    Middle school        Secondary school    University

4. Have you ever had **non-native** speakers of English teach you English (anyone who is NOT American, British, Australian, Canadian, or a New Zealander)?  
 Yes                                    No

5. If yes, where? (Check all that apply.)  
 Primary school    Middle school        Secondary school    University

6. Of the following aspects of the English language, which do you prefer having a **non-native** speaker of English teach you? (Check all that apply.)  
 Grammar                    Vocabulary                Pronunciation/Speaking  
 Reading                    Writing                    Listening  
 Social Aspects

7. Of the following aspects of the English language, which do you prefer having a **native** speaker of English teach you? (Check all that apply.)  
 Grammar                    Vocabulary                Pronunciation/Speaking  
 Reading                    Writing                    Listening  
 Social Aspects

8. What characteristics do you think an English language teacher should have?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. How do you feel about this native-English-speaking/non-native-English-speaking English teacher issue? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Would you be available for an interview? If so, please provide your email address here:

.....

Completion of this survey signifies consent for responses to be used in MA TESOL research about native-/non-native-English-speaking teachers of English.

Appendix D  
Consent Form for Interviews

For questions about the study, contact: Dr. Betty Lanteigne (Phone number: 06-515-2523. Email address: blanteigne@aus.edu) or Sarah Al-Shammari (Phone number: 050-875-1860. Email address: g00016074@aus.edu).

Description: You are invited to participate in a research study on the role AUS instructors' "native English speaker" status plays on students' and other teachers' attitudes by participating in an oral interview. This research study will hopefully shed some light on the "native English speaker" issue in this multicultural, multilingual setting.

You will be asked to answer questions about your observations of native-English-speaking and non-native-English-speaking teachers of English. The interview may be audio taped. If it is, the tape will only be used to record information for use in the research.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks associated with this study. We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study. Your decision of whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your employment, medical care, grade, standing at the university, etc.

Time Involvement: Your participation in this interview will take approximately half an hour.

Your rights: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish—the Office of Research, American University of Sharjah, Main Building, Mezzanine Floor, P.O. Box 26666, Sharjah, UAE; Tel: +(971) 6 515 2208.

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Protocol Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Protocol Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E  
Interview Guidelines for Students and Teachers

(These questions may change depending on the respondents' answers in the survey)

1. What are the advantages of having NES English teachers? NNES English teachers?
2. What are the disadvantages of having NES English teachers? NNES English teachers?
3. Have you ever seen discrimination against NES English teachers at AUS? NNES English teachers?
4. What experiences have you had with NES English teachers? NNES English teachers?
5. Have these experiences changed the way you think about or treat these groups?
6. What characteristics do you think are necessary to teach English at a university such as AUS?

## Vita

Sarah Al-Shammari was born on December 2, 1986, in Kuwait, to an American mother and a Kuwaiti father. She grew up in Kuwaiti government schools, but eventually graduated from the American Academy for Girls in 2004. She moved to the United Arab Emirates to attend the American University of Sharjah, where she earned a BA in English Literature in 2008.

After graduating from university, Ms. Al-Shammari moved back to Kuwait and found a temporary job at her alma mater, the American Academy for Girls, as a high school Kuwait History teacher. Once the semester was over, she applied to the American University of Sharjah's MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages program. She was awarded the MA in TESOL degree in 2011.