

Native vs. Non-Native English Teachers: A Comparative Study of Student Attitudes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt

المعلمون الناطقون باللغة الإنجليزية كلغتهم الأم و الغير ناطقين بها:

دراسة مقارنة لمواقف الطلاب في المملكة العربية السعودية ومصر.

母语与非母语英语教师：沙特阿拉伯和埃及学生态度的比较研究

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مقارنه بين مواقف طلاب الجامعات في المملكة العربية السعودية و دولة مصر تجاه معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية سواء الناطقين بها كلغة أم أو غير الناطقين بها. وقد تم اعتماد منهج البحثي المختلط وشمّل استبياناً وتحليلاً إحصائياً مع التركيز على عوامل مثل: الفهم الثقافي، وأساليب التدريس، ووضوح اللمنه، والكفاءة اللغوية.

شمّلت عينة الدراسة 53 طالباً، منهم 30 طالباً من جامعة الجوف في المملكة العربية السعودية، و23 طالباً من الجامعة الأمريكية في القاهرة. وتم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال استبيان مكوّن من 14 بنداً تم التحقق من صدقه وثباته، وتحليلها باستخدام الأساليب الإحصائية الوصفية والاستدلالية، بما في ذلك اختبارات العينات المستقلة وتحليل التباين.

أشارت النتائج إلى أن كلاً المجموعتين من الطلاب يحملون مواقف إيجابية بشكل عام تجاه المعلمين من الفئتين، إلا أن هناك تفضيلاً ملحوظاً للمعلمين غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية كـلغة أم، لا سيما بين الطلاب المصريين والذكور. كما أظهرت النتائج أن مدة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية تؤثر في هذه المواقف، حيث يرتبط التعرض الأطول للغة بتصورات أكثر إيجابية تجاه المعلمين غير الناطقين بها كـلغة أم. تُسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء النقاش المستمر حول التحيز لصالح المعلمين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية كـلغة أم في تدريسها، وتوفر رؤى مهمة حول العوامل المعقدة التي تؤثر في مواقف الطلاب في سياقات ثقافية مختلفة.

الكلمات الدالة : التحيز للناطقين باللغة الانجليزية كـلغة أم، تصورات الطلاب، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية الناطقون بها كـلغة أم، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية غير الناطقين بها كـلغة أم.

Abstract

This study examines the attitudes of Saudi Arabian and Egyptian university students toward native and non-native English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors. A mixed methods approach was utilized, incorporating a questionnaire and statistical analysis. There was a focus on factors such as cultural understanding, teaching methods, accent clarity, and language proficiency. The investigation involved 53 students—30 from Jouf University in Saudi Arabia and 23 from the American University in Cairo. Quantitative data were gathered through a validated 14-item questionnaire and analyzed by employing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including independent samples t-tests and ANOVA. The findings indicate that both groups of students hold generally positive attitudes toward both types of teachers. However, a notable preference for non-native EFL teachers emerged, particularly among Egyptian students and male participants. Additionally, the duration of English language learning was found to influence attitudes, with longer exposure correlating with more favorable perceptions of non-native teachers. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding native speaker bias in English language instruction and provides insights into the complex factors influencing student attitudes across diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: native speakerism, students' perceptions, native EFL teachers, non-native EFL teachers

I Introduction

In an era of globalization and cross-cultural exchange, the English language has emerged as the fastest growing language globally, and consequently, a considerable increase has been observed in the demand for skilled English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. Alenazi (2012) stated that the number of individuals who speak English as a second or a foreign language surpasses that of native English speakers with over two billion learners. One of the reasons for this growth is the 'Englishization of higher education' in most non-Anglophone countries worldwide (Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023). A limited number of native English speakers, who are already outnumbered by non-native English speakers, choose to enter the language teaching profession after completing their undergraduate degrees (Alenazi, 2012). Indeed, Canagarajah (1999) and Freeman et al. (2015) stated that 80% of EFL instructors worldwide are non-native English speakers. Given the rising demand for EFL teachers and the shortage of native EFL teachers around the world, a critical question arises about the qualifications and experiences necessary for quality English language teaching. While native speaker status has long been considered a prerequisite for effective language teaching, recent research challenges this notion, suggesting that non-native EFL educators can be professional language teachers as well. Consequently, the different perceptions and stereotypes of native and non-native EFL instructors have generated a significant amount of research.

The most popular presumption when it comes to EFL teaching is that the responsibility for language instruction is most effectively entrusted to individuals with native speaker proficiency. Suarez (2000) contended that the coined phrase 'native speaker' is commonly linked with positive

attributes in the field of English language teaching, whereas the term ‘non-native speaker’ carries negative connotations and can have a negative effect on the self-esteem of non-native EFL teachers when compared to their native counterparts. Floris and Renandya (2020) explained that although the literature on English language teaching has debated and challenged the stereotypical idea that native language educators are inherently more qualified than their non-native peers, persistent adherence to this belief still exists. This stereotyping frequently manifests itself in discriminatory practices against teachers who are non-native speakers, because those teachers are perceived to have a ‘lower status’ when compared to English native speaker teachers (Mahboob, 2010). That is why Holliday (2005) created the term ‘Native speakerism,’ in reference to the pervasive ideology that characterizes so-called native speakers as the most proficient models and educators in English due to their origin from Western cultures, which are perceived as the source of ideals shaping ELT pedagogy and practice.

The pervasive notion that native EFL teachers excel in teaching their native language has led to a hierarchy in the ELT field, often marginalizing and discriminating against non-native speakers (Bebars, 2024). This discriminatory practice is rooted in a deep-seated cultural bias that privileges Western cultures and their linguistic norms. As a result, non-native speakers are frequently subjected to lower wages, fewer opportunities for professional development, and limited job security. Furthermore, according to Canagarajah (1999), this bias can lead to a narrow view of language teaching methodology, often prioritizing traditional grammar translation approaches over more communicative and learner-centered methods. This can limit the effectiveness of language instruction and hinder the development of students’ language skills. Additionally, the emphasis on native speaker models can create unrealistic expectations for language learners, leading to frustration and demotivation. By disproving the myth of native instructors’ superiority and

recognizing the diverse range of skills and experiences that non-native speakers bring to the classroom, we can create a more inclusive and effective ELT field.

Recent research has deconstructed the ideological construct of nativeness, demonstrating that it is influenced by various factors, including race, accent, nationality, and cultural familiarity, in addition to linguistic competence (Aneja, 2016). Similarly, a panel of non-native educators has asserted that the English language serves as a means of communication, and it has become a global lingua franca (Tajeddin et al., 2019); as a consequence, non-nativeness should not impact students' perceptions of their teachers' competence or their own employability.

1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing diversity of native and non-native EFL teachers in universities and colleges in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, a significant knowledge gap remains regarding how university students perceive and evaluate these different teacher groups. While non-native English teachers have gained global recognition for their competence in English language teaching, a persistent bias often favors native speaker teachers. The aim of this study is to investigate what influences students' views, attitudes, and preferences concerning native and non-native EFL teachers, with the goal of identifying potential biases, stereotypes, and preferences that may impact the efficacy of English education and student educational outcomes.

2 Rationale of the Study

This study examines Saudi Arabian and Egyptian university students' attitudes toward native and non-native EFL instructors, focusing on two culturally similar yet educationally distinct contexts. Saudi Arabia, through its Vision 2030 reforms, has emphasized English language education to enhance global competitiveness, while Egypt has a long-established tradition of English-medium instruction, particularly in private and international institutions. These differences provide a unique

opportunity to explore how cultural and institutional factors shape student perceptions. Although the sample sizes are unequal (30 Saudi and 23 Egyptian participants), this reflects practical constraints such as participant availability and institutional restrictions. The study employs robust statistical methods to ensure meaningful comparisons, focusing on specific contexts rather than generalizing findings. In addition, while the groups were not perfectly equal, inferential tests (independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA) were conducted after confirming homogeneity of variances using Levene's test ($p > 0.05$), ensuring that the difference in sample size did not bias the results.

While the study does not validate participants' English proficiency levels, it assumes that students in English-medium institutions like Jouf University and the American University in Cairo possess sufficient proficiency for academic purposes. The study incorporated years of English learning experience as an indicator of proficiency, categorizing participants into three groups (1-3 years, 4-6 years, and more than 6 years). This was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA, which revealed a significant effect of English learning duration on attitudes toward non-native EFL instructors ($p = 0.03$). This approach provides an empirical justification for proficiency levels.

This allows the research to prioritize accessibility and focus on perceptions rather than language outcomes. By addressing the pervasive bias favoring native speakers (native speakerism), this study highlights the value of non-native teachers' pedagogical strengths, such as cultural understanding and empathy. The findings aim to inform teacher training, recruitment practices, and policies, promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to EFL education in diverse settings.

3 Aim of the Study

Despite the numerous research in the context of EFL teaching, many countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, still believe that EFL should only be taught by English speaking native speakers. As a result, they hire more native English speakers, a practice that Phillipson (1992) describes as the ‘native speaker fallacy.’ This study aims to explore Saudi and Egyptian students’ views on native speaker English teachers, considering factors such as understanding of students’ difficulties, teaching methods, accent clarity, cultural understanding, and creativity in teaching. It also aims to compare the perception of Saudi and Egyptian university students regarding native or non-native EFL instructors to gain insights into how cultural differences, educational systems, or other factors may influence students’ perceptions in each country. By exploring these perceptions, this study seeks to examine how teacher characteristics influence student learning and classroom interactions in Saudi and Egyptian English language classrooms, and to compare the educational experiences of students in these two contexts.

4 Significance of the Study

By delving into the perceptions of Saudi and Egyptian college students regarding native and non-native EFL instructors, this research has significant potential to reshape educational practices and elevate language learning experiences in diverse academic settings.

Firstly, this study will contribute valuable insights for the benefit of EFL learners. The findings can serve as a crucial reference point by providing a deeper understanding of students’ awareness regarding the diverse strengths and pedagogical approaches offered by the two types of EFL instructors, native and non-native. This understanding can empower learners to be in charge of their own learning, which ultimately results in improved engagement and academic achievement.

Secondly, the research outcomes have the potential to inform educational policies related to teacher recruitment and training. By understanding the factors influencing student evaluations, policymakers can create more targeted recruitment strategies and tailor professional development programs for EFL instructors. This can lead to the fostering of a teaching force that caters more effectively to the needs and expectations of students, ultimately enhancing teaching practices and student learning outcomes across the board.

Furthermore, this research can provide valuable insights for professional development initiatives aimed at EFL instructors. Highlighting the aspects of teaching that are most valued by students, such as specific approaches or communication styles, can equip teachers with the tools to improve student-teacher interactions and foster a positive and stimulating learning atmosphere.

Finally, this study has the potential to break new ground by serving as the first empirical comparison of the views of Saudi and Egyptian undergraduate students on their native and non-native EFL teachers. Identifying variances in these attitudes may shed light on potential differences in pedagogical approaches, teaching methods, or even campus cultures between the two countries. This comparative analysis can provide educators with invaluable insights into effective teaching strategies that foster inclusivity, cross-cultural awareness and ultimately elevate the quality of the learning experience for all students.

5 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer three key questions:

1. How do Saudi undergraduate students at Jouf University view the language teaching effectiveness of native vs non-native EFL instructors?

2. How do Egyptian undergraduate students at the American University in Cairo view the language teaching effectiveness of native vs non-native EFL instructors?
3. Are there significant differences in the views of Saudi and Egyptian university students concerning the effectiveness of native vs non-native EFL teachers?

II Review of the Literature

2.1 Students' Perceptions toward Native and Non-native Language Instructors

Significant research has explored how students view their native and non-native EFL educators across diverse language environments, revealing insights into various aspects of how foreign language instructors are perceived. For example, a study by Hertel and Sunderman (2009) examined students' views regarding native and non-native Spanish tutors. A quantitative questionnaire was distributed to 292 students across three undergraduate levels of Spanish classes at a university located in the United States. The questionnaire included Likert scale items to assess students' attitudes toward native versus non-native instructors' knowledge, teaching abilities, and the students' learning capacity under those teachers. The findings indicated that students generally perceived native speaking instructors as having a better grasp of pronunciation and cultural awareness compared to their non-native counterparts. Nevertheless, no substantial distinctions were noticed between the instructors of the two groups concerning their teaching competence of grammar or vocabulary.

Similar students' perception results were obtained when the target language being taught was English. For example, Xiaoru (2008) investigated Chinese university students' views of their native and non-native EFL instructors. This study, which involved 75 male and female learners, revealed strengths in both groups of teachers. While native teachers were recognized for their high language proficiency, cultural awareness, and functional use of English, non-native instructors

were praised for their empathy, shared culture, and focus on grammar and learning strategies. This outcome aligns with similar findings made by Park (2009) who also found a preference for native speaking teachers; they were perceived as more fluent and accurate, particularly in pronunciation and language awareness.

In addition to the previous studies, Chang (2016) found that Taiwanese university students hold positive perceptions of non-native English instructors, viewing them as competent instructors. Similarly, Barany and Zebari (2018) investigated Kurdish English language learners' perceptions toward native and non-native instructors, aiming to identify which teacher group the students found to be more beneficial in terms of advancing their own linguistic competence. The hypothesis of the study was that Kurdish students would hold favorable views of native EFL teachers in comparison to Kurdish EFL instructors (non-native). To test the hypotheses, a survey was distributed among 100 learners enrolled in English programs at four Kurdish universities. The questionnaire focused on teaching different language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, reading, and speaking. The findings showed that, overall, learners significantly favored native EFL teachers over non-native instructors. On the other hand, in teaching grammar, there was a significant preference for non-native EFL teachers. Therefore, while the study hypothesized a preference for native teachers, the results revealed a more significant and nuanced finding. Overall, students favored native teachers, particularly in speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills. However, they preferred non-native teachers for grammar instruction, suggesting their effectiveness as language teachers, especially in areas where language nativeness is not the primary focus.

While Chang (2016) and Barany and Zebari (2018) each found varying degrees of bias toward native and non-native EFL instructors among different student populations, Wulandari et al. (2021)

provided further insight by examining perceptions in a distinct educational context. Chang's (2016) study revealed that Taiwanese university students regarded non-native English instructors positively, whereas Barany and Zebari's (2018) research indicated a stronger preference for native teachers, particularly in speaking and pronunciation skills, although non-native teachers were favored for grammar instruction. In contrast, Wulandari et al. (2021) explored the perceptions of students in a non-formal educational setting in Indonesia, which uncovered a more favorable view for native English EFL instructors, often at the expense of recognizing the qualifications and teaching abilities of non-native instructors. This contrast illustrates the complex landscape of language instruction preferences across different cultural and educational contexts.

Similarly, this complexity is evident in Rasyid et al.'s (2023) study, which investigated students' attitudes regarding the pedagogical methods utilized by native versus non-native EFL tutors in Indonesia. The participants were 58 EFL students, comprising 30 females and 20 males, who received instruction from native and non-native EFL instructors. Surveys were administered to collect quantitative data, while qualitative data was collected using focus group discussions to understand the reasons behind the students' attitudes. While the quantitative survey results indicated a slight preference for native teachers, there was no significant difference in overall perceptions which indicates that learners perceived their native and non-native instructors similarly. These findings were further explored by the researchers in the focus group discussions. Five key themes emerged: teacher explanations, classroom interactions, teaching strategies, improvisation skills, and ideal teacher qualities. Students expressed similar opinions on these themes regardless of the instructor's first language. Overall, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies suggest that native and non-native EFL instructors possess equivalent capabilities. Learners' views and experiences with both groups exhibit significant similarities.

Arguing in the same vein, Deng, Zhang, and Mohamed (2023) investigated the attitudes toward EFL pedagogy at four mid-tier Chinese institutions, canvassing the views of undergraduate Chinese students majoring in English and both native and non-native EFL instructors. The findings from 16 student interviews revealed that non-native EFL instructors and Chinese English majors held similar views on essential qualifications for English educators, emphasizing the importance of knowledge, language skills, professionalism, and teaching skills. In contrast, native English teachers were also recognized for additional qualities such as engagement, empathy, patience, adaptability, and understanding of students' needs. These differences in perception are likely attributed to variations in language, culture, and educational backgrounds. To enhance instructional alignment and improve teaching effectiveness, the study highlighted that both instructors and learners should be more aware of the diverse advantages associated with different teacher attributes.

Taking a slightly different approach to the previous studies described above, Sheorey (1986) examined how native and non-native EFL instructors from India and the USA perceived mistakes. The participants were each assigned 20 phrases with eight typical error categories; these errors had been detected in 97 scripts by university EFL students and the participants were asked to evaluate and assess them. The findings indicated that, when compared to non-native teachers, native teachers were more forgiving of mistakes.

Most of these findings challenge the long-held notion of native speaker superiority and highlight the importance of teacher quality and pedagogical expertise, regardless of native speaker status. Expanding on these findings, it is evident that students' perceptions of non-native instructors are influenced by diverse factors, including their own language learning experiences, cultural backgrounds, and educational contexts. While native speaker status may still hold some prestige

in certain contexts, the growing recognition of non-native teacher competence and effectiveness is a significant shift in the English language teaching context. The evidence indicates that a more diverse approach to teacher training and recruitment is crucial to guarantee that learners receive effective language instruction, regardless of the teacher's nativeness.

2.1.1 Perception of Saudi Students toward Native and Non-native EFL Teachers

Various studies have explored how Saudi students perceived their EFL teachers. For instance, Alseweed and Daif-Allah (2012) examined the opinions of 169 Saudi male freshman university students regarding their native and non-native EFL educators in the EFL classrooms at Qassim University. The objective was to gain a better awareness of the attitudes of the students about the impact of native versus non-native EFL teachers. The study utilized triangulation by employing quantitative and qualitative data, including surveys and student interviews. In addition, the classrooms of both instructor groups were observed. There were significant differences between native and non-native instructors in their teaching of specific language skills. Saudi students tended to prefer native teachers over non-native ones as they progressed from pre-university to university levels. While native teachers were preferred overall, there was moderate acceptance of non-native EFL instructors who created a serious learning atmosphere and responded well to learners' needs. The study concluded that the focus should be on how professional and effective the teacher is rather than whether s/he is a native English speaker or not, and that a blended approach incorporating native and non-native EFL educators would be beneficial in creating a conducive learning environment for EFL students in Saudi Arabia.

In the same vein, Haque and Sharmin (2022) explored the perceptions of Saudi students at Jazan University concerning native versus non-native EFL instructors. Teaching abilities in language

skills and grammar were the focal points of this study. The views of 50 native and 50 non-native EFL instructors were collected from their students. The findings indicated that native instructors excelled in teaching reading, listening, and speaking, while non-native EFL teachers demonstrated proficiency in the instruction of grammar, reading, and writing skills. The findings from this study aligned with the finding of Alseweed and Daif-Allah (2012), which suggests both native and non-native language teachers have merits and can be assigned to teach various language skills based on their background. This provides valuable insights for recruiters as it informs decision-making in teacher recruitment and assignment in Saudi Arabia.

2. 1. 2 Perception of Egyptian Students toward Native and Non-Native EFL Teachers

The perception of native versus non-native EFL instructors has been a topic of ongoing discourse in the EFL context. Schmidt et al. (1996) investigated the perceptions of 1500 adult Egyptian EFL learners toward native and non-native teachers. The findings underscored the fact that students generally had positive perception toward both types of teachers; however, they often preferred native speakers for pronunciation and fluency. As many previous studies suggested, they valued the cultural knowledge and communicative competence of non-native teachers.

Pursuing a parallel argument, El-Sawah (2020) investigated the attitudes of Egyptian university students in an Academic English intensive program toward their native and non-native EFL instructors, as well as the methods used by each type of teacher to impact students' motivation. Qualitative and quantitative design was used for data analyses. The study included 82 Egyptian freshmen studying an intensive Academic English course in the English Language Institute (ELI) at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Each class is taught by one native English speaking instructor and one non-native instructor. A questionnaire was administered to learners to assess their views of the teaching methods and the motivational techniques employed by the native and

the non-native English teachers. Another data collection tool employed was a classroom observation scheme, which documented the motivational strategies utilized by teachers on a minute-by-minute basis. The final data collection method included semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher to enhance the analysis. The findings indicated that students generally held more positive views toward the teaching methods and motivational practices employed by non-native instructors. Additionally, the study identified distinct differences in the strategies used by both types of teachers to motivate students during the instruction.

Overall, while the phenomenon of native speakerism continues to exist in Egypt, there is a growing acknowledgment of the skills and contributions of non-native teachers. Learners' views of native and non-native teachers are complex and influenced by various factors, including cultural stereotypes, language proficiency, teaching methodologies, and personal experiences. Future research could further investigate the specific factors that shape students' perceptions and explore strategies to challenge and dismantle native speakerism within the Egyptian EFL context.

2.2 Employability of Native and Non-native EFL Instructors

In the realm of EFL, there is significant demand for native English speakers, as they are often perceived to provide the most effective examples for speaking and instruction (Clark & Paran, 2007). However, non-native EFL instructors often face discrimination and are considered less important when applying for teaching positions. According to Floris and Renandya (2020), there is a misconception that language teaching is most effective when carried out by native speakers. This idea was emphasized by Thomas (1999, p. 6) who said "One thing that we do when we recruit is that we tell students that they will only be taught by [native speakers]. After all, these students do not come so far to be taught by someone who doesn't speak English."

Despite challenges to this belief in the professional ELT literature, many still cling to it, leading to discriminatory treatment of non-native speaking teachers. For instance, Norton (1995) offered a critical perspective on the concept of the ‘native speaker,’ contending that it is an identity shaped by social influences that often reinforces power imbalances and marginalizes non-native speakers. She emphasized the need to challenge this dominant discourse and to acknowledge the diverse linguistic and cultural identities of EFL teachers.

Similarly, Clark and Paran (2007) examined this issue in private language schools and universities in the United Kingdom. Questionnaires were administered to recruitment staff at English language institutions across the United Kingdom to assess the degree to which native English speaker identity is prioritized in the hiring process. The findings highlighted that 72.3% of the 90 learners who responded to the questionnaire considered the ‘native English speaker criterion’ to be very or highly essential. In other words, highly qualified EFL instructors who are non-native speakers are excluded from being considered during the recruitment process. This finding suggested potential for bias and discrimination against non-native teachers, even when they possess advanced language proficiency and relevant teaching qualifications.

Other studies further illuminated the complex factors shaping the employment landscape in various countries for non-native EFL instructors. In the United States, Kubota (1999) explored the impact of dominant discourses on the identity and professional development of non-native EFL instructors. She argued that the persistent valorization of native English speaking instructors’ norms can result in feelings of inferiority and marginalization among non-native English teachers. In Australia, Lo Bianco (2001) examined the evolving demographics of the English teaching workforce and the increasing diversity of teacher backgrounds. He highlighted the difficulties and opportunities for non-native EFL instructors in a globalized context.

2.2.1 Employability of Native and Non-native EFL Instructors in Saudi Arabia

The employability of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia has garnered significant attention, particularly regarding the perceptions and biases surrounding native and non-native instructors. Understanding these dynamics is crucial, as they directly influence hiring practices and opportunities within the educational sector. Alenazi (2012) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the hiring processes for EFL teachers, focusing on the criteria that impact the selection of candidates. His study examined the applicant's likelihood of being hired based on native versus non-native English speaker identity, and how this status influences their opportunities, revealing important insights into the recruitment landscape in Saudi Arabia. In this study, 56 recruiters in Saudi Arabia were presented with voice messages from five job applicants. They were then asked to evaluate these applicants for teaching positions. Data analysis revealed that recruiters considered factors such as academic qualifications, teaching experience, native speaker status, nationality, and accent to be significant in their hiring decisions. Furthermore, the study found that recruiters who placed greater emphasis on an applicant's native or non-native speaker status, nationality, and accent were more likely to perceive non-native speakers as less qualified, potentially limiting their employment prospects.

In a similar study, Murtada and Alsuhaibani (2023) explored the hiring practices for native and non-native applicants for positions as EFL instructors. The study utilized a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. A structured questionnaire was administered to 212 students from Princess Nora University and King Saud University, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with six program administrators and professional observers from Saudi higher education language institutions. The research aimed to investigate three key areas: a) the hiring criteria for native and non-native English teachers as perceived by program

administrators; b) the perspectives of professional observers on these criteria and their correlation with teacher performance; and c) the characteristics of effective EFL instructors as viewed by students, informed by the insights of administrators and observers. The findings revealed that native speaker status was not considered a primary factor in assessing EFL instructor qualifications. Instead, factors such as teaching ability, personal qualities, and pedagogical knowledge were deemed more crucial.

Together, these studies indicate a shifting landscape in the recruitment practices for EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia, where the emphasis is gradually moving toward a more holistic evaluation of teacher qualifications. This synthesis of findings suggests an increasing acknowledgment of the positive role that non-native English teachers can play in the educational landscape, which may lead to hiring practices that are more inclusive and unbiased.

2.2.2 Employability of Native and Non-native EFL Teachers in Egypt

The employability of native and non-native EFL instructors in Egypt has been the focus of several studies. One of the most recent is the study of Bebars (2024), which investigated the biased hiring procedures toward non-native EFL educators in the EFL context. The aim was to determine Cairo's English language teacher recruiting standards, with a particular emphasis on the weight of native status and its effects on administrators, parents, and teachers. A mixed methods approach was employed, using parent questionnaires, interviews, correspondence testing, and content analysis of job webpages. The results show prejudices against native speakers in relation to cultural competency and accent preferences, as well as neutral views toward non-native EFL teachers. When non-native EFL instructors were compared to their native English speaking co-workers, they reported a belief that they were treated differently and felt an inferiority complex.

In addressing these biases, it is crucial to implement intercultural training in teacher education programs. Research by Houghton and Rivers (2013) suggested that integrating intercultural competence into English language teacher education can help dismantle stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Their study found that when teacher candidates engage in intercultural learning, they develop a deeper appreciation for diverse teaching backgrounds, which can positively influence hiring practices.

In summary, the literature reveals a persistent bias toward native speaker teachers in Egypt and similar contexts, emphasizing the need for systemic changes in hiring practices and teacher training programs to foster a more equitable environment for all English language teachers.

III Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine university students' perceptions of native and non-native English teachers in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The primary goal is to identify which type of teacher students prefer, understand the reasons behind their preference, and pinpoint specific language learning areas where these perceptions are highlighted. Furthermore, the study seeks to compare the attitudes of students from both countries and explore how these attitudes impact the hiring policies for English language instructors.

III.1 Research Design

This study follows a mixed methods approach through incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This design facilitates a strong analysis of student perceptions while accommodating the linguistic diversity within the participant group. The rationale for employing both methodologies lies in the complexity of the topic, wherein numerical

data from questionnaires can be enriched by qualitative responses, providing a clearer understanding of student attitudes.

III.2 Participants

This study included 53 university students, with 30 from Jouf University in Saudi Arabia and 23 from the American University in Cairo. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. The selection of Saudi and Egyptian participants was based on their cultural and linguistic differences in EFL learning environments, as well as their exposure to both native and non-native English instructors. This comparison provides insights into how regional differences influence attitudes toward EFL instructors.

The two universities were purposefully selected, as English is the language of instruction in both cases, and they each employ a diverse faculty of native and non-native instructors. This enabled a comparative analysis of student perceptions within a similar academic environment. The choice to compare Saudi Arabia and Egypt in this study is driven by several important factors that make this comparison significant in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching and AI integration in education. Although both countries are situated in the Middle East and have certain cultural and linguistic similarities—such as sharing Arabic as the primary language and having comparable educational traditions—they also differ in their educational systems, socio-political environments, and strategies for incorporating technology into education.

III.3 Data Collection Procedures: Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire, designed specifically to capture student views concerning native and non-native English teachers, is the quantitative data collection tool. The questionnaire comprised

15 items, with the first section collecting demographic data and the next three sections collecting perceptions and preferences towards native teachers, non-native teachers, and comparative analysis of both teacher types. The items were adapted from established research, notably from Alseweed and Daif-Allah (2012). The decision to utilize a questionnaire was influenced by the participants' varying levels of English proficiency. As noted by Moussu (2006), the proficiency of students can significantly impact their ability to engage in qualitative interviews. Questionnaires can be translated and simplified, ensuring that all participants can comprehend and respond to the items effectively.

III.4 Data Analysis

This study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were employed to summarize the data for each demographic group, considering factors like nationality, age, gender, and years of English language experience. To examine the differences in participants' perceptions of native and non-native EFL instructors, inferential statistical tests analyses were conducted. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare attitudes based on nationality (Saudi vs. Egyptian) and gender (male vs. female). Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate whether different levels of English language learning experience influenced attitudes toward native and non-native EFL instructors. The effect size was calculated for significant results to determine the magnitude of the observed differences.

IV Results

This study aims to examine the attitudes of Saudi and Egyptian college students regarding native and non-native EFL teachers. A total of 53 participants took part in the study, comprising 30 Saudi students and 23 Egyptian students. The sample consisted of 83% female and 16% male

participants. Most participants were aged 18 to 25 (83%), with 16.9% being older than 25. Additionally, 56% of participants had been learning EFL for more than six years, 28% for four to six years, and 15% for three years or less.

To assess student perceptions, a Likert-scale questionnaire was employed, measuring six key factors influencing attitudes toward native and non-native EFL instructors: Understanding of Students' Difficulties, Teaching Methods, Accent Clarity (for native EFL instructors), Language Proficiency (for non-native EFL instructors), Cultural Understanding, and Creativity in Teaching. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (0.72), indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Taber, 2018). To assess the normality of the data, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted for attitudes toward native and non-native EFL teachers. The results indicated normality distribution, $W=0.98$, $p=0.58$, Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted before performing independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA. Since Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met ($p > 0.05$), the standard independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were used for analysis.

IV.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for each factor.

Means and Standard Deviations of Attitudes towards Native and Non-Native EFL Teachers

Variables	Native EFL teachers		Non-native EFL teachers	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Understanding of Students Difficulties	3.85	0.89	4.34	0.98
Teaching Methods	4.06	0.77	4.13	0.86
Accent Clarity (NT)/	4.38	0.88	3.87	0.98

language proficiency (NNT)

Cultural Understanding	3.43	0.99	4.34	0.98
Creativity in teaching	3.98	0.93	4.11	0.82

Overall, participants exhibited generally positive attitudes toward both native and non-native EFL instructors. However, participants displayed slightly more favorable perceptions toward non-native EFL instructors compared to native EFL instructors ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.70$) compared to native EFL instructors ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.60$).

IV.2 Inferential Statistics

IV.2.1 Comparison of Attitudes between Saudi and Egyptian Participants

To compare attitudes between Saudi and Egyptian participants, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Levene's test indicated that equal variances could be assumed, $F=0.18$, $p=0.67$; thus, the standard t-test was used. Results indicated no significant difference in attitudes toward native EFL teachers between Saudi and Egyptian participants. However, a statistically significant difference was found in attitudes toward non-native EFL instructors, with Saudi participants reporting significantly lower mean scores ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.76$) compared to Egyptian participants ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.48$); $t(51) = -3.01$, $p=.004$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was between -0.91 and -0.18 , suggesting that the Egyptian participants have more favorable attitudes toward non-native English teachers compared to the Saudi participants. The negative t-value indicates that Saudi participants have a significantly lower mean rating for non-native EFL teachers compared to Egyptian participants, suggesting less favorable attitudes among Saudis.

IV.2.2 Effect of Gender and Age on Attitudes

Further analysis revealed no significant impact of gender or age on attitudes toward native EFL teachers. However, gender significantly impacted attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers, with male participants showing a more positive attitude than female participants. Specifically, male participants ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 0.31$) had significantly higher mean scores than female participants ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.73$); $t(51) = 2.18$, $p = .034$. When equal variances were not assumed, the difference remained significant; $t(28.86) = 3.57$, $p = .001$. The mean difference between the two groups was 0.54, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.04 to 1.04. This indicates that male participants have significantly more favorable attitudes toward non-native English teachers compared to female participants. However, age did not significantly influence attitudes toward either group of instructors.

IV.2.3 Effect of Duration of Learning English

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of the duration of learning English on perceptions toward native and non-native EFL instructors. Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, $F = 0.01$, $p = 0.99$. Results revealed no significant effect of duration of learning English on attitudes toward native EFL teachers. However, there was a significant difference on attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers, $F(2, 50) = 3.65$, $p = 0.03$, suggesting that the duration of learning English has an effect on attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers. The effect size, measured by partial eta squared, was 0.13, indicating that 12.75% of the variability in attitudes can be attributed to the duration of learning English. Participants who have been learning English for a period over six years showed more favorable perceptions toward non-native EFL instructors compared to those with fewer years of learning English. In summary, the results suggest that the longer participants have been learning English, the more favorable their

attitudes are toward non-native English teachers, especially when comparing those with more than six years of learning experience to those with fewer years.

V Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate varied student attitudes toward native and non-native EFL instructors among Saudi and Egyptian university students, highlighting the complexity of factors that influence these attitudes. While participants generally exhibited positive attitudes toward both native and non-native EFL instructors, the results reveal a preference for non-native instructors, particularly among certain demographic groups. The significant difference in attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers between Saudi and Egyptian participants is particularly noteworthy. The negative t-value suggests that Saudi participants have less favorable attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers compared to their Egyptian counterparts. This could be attributed to cultural or educational factors that may influence how students perceive the effectiveness of language teachers. For example, Saudi students might place a higher value on native teachers' accent clarity, viewing it as a marker of language authenticity, while Egyptian students may prioritize other aspects such as cultural understanding and teaching methods. Gender also played a role in shaping attitudes, with males exhibiting more positive attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers than females. This difference could be linked to gender-specific educational experiences or societal expectations regarding language learning in these cultural contexts. The absence of a significant gender effect on attitudes toward native EFL teachers suggests that the gender differences may be more pronounced when evaluating non-native instructors.

The impact of the duration of learning English on attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers is another key finding. Participants who have been learning English for more than six years demonstrated more appreciative attitudes toward non-native teachers. This could indicate that as

students become more proficient in English, they are more likely to appreciate the pedagogical strengths of non-native instructors, such as their capability to understand and address common learner difficulties. The lack of a significant effect of the duration of learning English on attitudes toward native EFL teachers suggests that students' attitudes toward native teachers may be more stable and less influenced by their language learning journey.

V.1 Implications

These findings have several implications for language education policies and teacher development programs. First, the preference toward non-native EFL instructors among students with more extensive English learning experience underscores the value of non-native teachers' insights into the language learning process. Teacher training programs should underscore the unique strengths of non-native teachers, including their ability to relate to students' difficulties and offer effective approaches to overcome them.

Second, the cultural differences in attitudes between Saudi and Egyptian students suggest that language teaching approaches should be tailored to the specific needs and expectations of different student populations. For example, in Saudi Arabia, where students may prioritize accent clarity, language programs could incorporate training that enhances non-native teachers' pronunciation skills to align with students' preferences.

Lastly, the gender differences in attitudes toward non-native EFL teachers highlight the need for gender-sensitive teaching strategies. Educators should be aware of these differences and consider how their teaching methods might be perceived differently by male and female students. Further research could explore the underlying reasons for these gender differences and how they can be addressed to create a more inclusive learning environment.

In conclusion, this study offers significant insights into the factors shaping student preferences for native and non-native EFL instructors, enabling the development of more targeted and effective teaching approaches.

IV Conclusion

This study examined the views of Saudi and Egyptian university students about native and non-native English language teachers. The findings revealed a tendency among students, particularly those with more advanced English proficiency, to favour non-native instructors. This preference was influenced by various factors, including cultural background, gender, and the duration of language learning.

While native EFL teachers were generally perceived positively, non-native teachers were favored due to their perceived cultural understanding, teaching methods, and language proficiency. Notably, Egyptian students expressed stronger positive attitudes toward non-native teachers compared to Saudi students, suggesting potential cultural differences in language teacher preferences.

The study also revealed gender disparities in attitudes, with male students exhibiting more positive views toward non-native teachers than female students. This finding shows the importance of considering gender dynamics in language education.

Furthermore, the duration of English language learning emerged as a significant factor influencing attitudes. Students with longer learning experiences demonstrated a stronger preference for non-native teachers, likely due to their ability to empathize with learners' challenges and provide effective pedagogical strategies.

These findings have important implications for language education policies, teacher development programs, and instructional strategies. Recognizing the importance of non-native teachers, it is crucial to provide them with adequate support and training to improve their teaching effectiveness. Moreover, language programs should be customized to cater to the unique needs and preferences of various student groups, considering cultural factors, gender differences, and the duration of language study.

By understanding the multifaceted factors that influence students' attitudes, educators and policymakers can develop more inclusive and effective language learning environments that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of learners.

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Appendix

Perceptions towards Native and Non-Native Teachers of English: Comparative Analysis

Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. Age:

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46 and above

3. Nationality:

4. How long have you been learning English?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

Section 2: Perceptions towards Native English Teachers

5. Have you ever had a native English teacher?

- Yes
- No

6. Rate the following characteristics of native English teachers on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree):

- a) Accent clarity
- b) Cultural understanding
- c) Teaching effectiveness
- d) Approachability

7. What do you think are the main advantages of having a native English teacher?

8. What do you think are the main disadvantages of having a native English teacher?

Section 3: Perceptions towards Non-Native English Teachers

9. Have you ever had a non-native English teacher?

- Yes
- No

10. Rate the following characteristics of non-native English teachers on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree):

- a) Language proficiency
- b) Understanding of students' difficulties
- c) Teaching methodology

d) Cultural sensitivity

11. What do you think are the main advantages of having a non-native English teacher?

12. What do you think are the main disadvantages of having a non-native English teacher?

Section 4: Comparative Analysis

13. In your opinion, which type of teacher (native or non-native) is more effective in helping students improve their English skills? Why?

14. Do you believe that the nationality of an English teacher affects the quality of language instruction? Why or why not?

15. Would you prefer to have a native or non-native English teacher for your language learning? Why?