

《論 文》

大学生のネイティブ・ノンネイティブ英語教師に対する意識調査

齊 藤 隆 春

Investigating Japanese College Student Preferences for
Native and Nonnative Speaker English Teachers

TAKAHARU SAITO

キーワード

NS (Native Speaker) English Teacher, NNS (Nonnative Speaker) English Teacher

1. Introduction

According to the British Council, English is spoken as a second language by about 375 million speakers and as a foreign language by about 750 million speakers. As a matter of course, the majority of English teachers worldwide, responsible for teaching English to such vast numbers of English language learners, are nonnative speakers (NNSs) of the English language.

Despite the pervasive presence of such NNS English teachers, however, issues concerning them have been overshadowed by the prominence of native speaker (NS) English teachers. Braine (2013), for example, notes that the very topic of NNS issues is sensitive and often considered politically incorrect, citing the commonly accepted view of language education, that NNS English teachers are inferior in knowledge and performance to NS English teachers. Phillipson (1992), too, questions this accepted view, highlighting what he calls the “native speaker fallacy,” -the belief that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.

However, the visibility of NNS English teachers has been gradually increasing in recent years, accelerated by two unprecedented events: first, the 2005 appointment of the first NNS editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*, the best known academic journal of ESL and EFL education worldwide; and second, the 2006 inauguration of the first NNS president of TESOL, the largest international organization in the world for teachers of English. At the same time, the NNS movement has generated various avenues of research on issues involving NNS English teachers, including their self-perceptions and personal histories, their construction of identity, student perceptions of them, administrative issues, the native/nonnative distinction in applied linguistics, and their socio-cultural and socio-political concerns (e.g., Braine, 2010; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Kubota, 2002; Liu, 1999, 2004; Medgyes, 1994; Tang, C, 1997). Medgyes' influential study (1994), for example, comprehensively outlines NNS English teacher issues, based on the assumption that NS and NNS teachers are “two different species”; differing as to language proficiency and teaching behavior, but both capable of complementing the other.

Among the recent studies on NNS issues, student perceptions of NNS teachers have begun to attract attention. Mahboob's notable study (2004), for example, concludes that ESL students do not have a clear preference for either native or nonnative English teachers, accepting the strengths and unique attributes of both types of teachers. Braine (2010) contends that many of the studies on student perceptions have been conducted in the "Inner Circle" countries (Kachru, 1985), including the United States and Canada (ESL contexts), or in the "Expanding Circle" countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea (EFL contexts).

Braine further reports that these student perception studies are fewer in number than those of other topics relating to NNS English teachers, and have yet to systematically investigate such perceptions, partly due to lack of comparison, noting that many students do not have the opportunity to learn from both NS and NNS English teachers, and thus are not in a position to evaluate these English teachers objectively. Llurda (2005) goes so far as to claim, regarding such studies, that "It was as though researchers felt they already knew what the result would be, and so there was no need to conduct such research" (p. 6).

In light of this, the present study aims to explore Japanese college student perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers, and reveal key factors influencing these perceptions.

2. Literature review

According to Braine (2010), one of the first studies on such student perceptions was conducted by Moussu (2002) in an ESL context (the USA). Employing data gathered through questionnaires, she investigated the perceptions of 84 ESL students from 21 different countries.

One of the interesting results of her study was that student attitudes toward NNS English teachers became more positive after being taught by such teachers, though Korean and Chinese students frequently expressed negative feelings toward them.

Kelch and Santana-Williamson (2002) investigated the extent to which English teachers' accents influenced ESL student attitudes toward NS and NNS English teachers in an ESL context (a community college in the United States). A total of 56 ESL students (Hispanic, Korean, and Vietnamese students) were asked to listen to audiotapes of NS and NNS English teachers' speech, and complete a questionnaire assessing their attitude toward the accents.

The results showed that the ESL students were not able to distinguish NS from NNS accents with a high degree of accuracy. In terms of the students' attitudes toward NS and NNS teachers, those considered to be NSs tended to be perceived as having a higher level of education and training than those perceived as NNSs. However, the results of an open-ended questionnaire indicated that the empathy factor, including NNS teachers' understanding of learners' problems, was recognized as being to the advantage of these NNS teachers.

Mahboob (2004) investigated student perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers in an ESL context (an intensive English program at a U.S. university), employing the discourse-analytic method, instead of conventional questionnaires, to survey the students. A total of 32 ESL students were asked to provide written comments about their opinions of NS and NNS English teachers, which were then categorized according to linguistic factors, teaching styles, and personal factors.

A mix of positive and negative comments was reported for both sorts of teacher. NS English

teachers received positive comments concerning oral skills, vocabulary, and culture, but negative comments concerning grammar, ability to answer questions, and experience as a language learner. NNS English teachers received positive comments concerning experience as a language learner, and were recognized as effective teachers, sympathetic to students, except in the teaching of speaking and pronunciation. Thus, Mahboob concluded that students considered both sorts of teacher to possess their own characteristic strengths, but had no decided preference for either sort.

Cheung and Braine (2007) investigated the attitudes of university students in Hong Kong (an EFL context) toward NS and NNS English teachers. They employed questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, for data triangulation. In general, the results of the data analysis displayed a positive attitude toward NNS English teachers. The interview data, for example, highlighted NNS English teachers' effective strategies for teaching English, their effective use of students' first language, and their skill in designing teaching materials according to student needs.

In addition, the study showed that students' positive attitudes towards NNS teachers tended to gradually increase from first-year students through to third-year students, though the teachers were seen as over-correcting student mistakes in English usage.

Benke and Medgyes (2005) investigated the most characteristic features, and aspects of teaching behavior, of NS and NNS English teachers in Hungary (an EFL context). A total of 422 Hungarian students of English were invited to complete a multi-item questionnaire, and the results indicated that NNS English teachers tended to assign a considerable amount of homework, prepare for lessons

conscientiously, correct errors consistently, and use eclectic teaching methods.

In comparison with NS teachers, NNS English teachers' main strengths were considered to be their ability to teach English grammar in a more structured way, and to provide exact Hungarian equivalents for English lexical items. Their weaknesses were considered to be the tendency to use more Hungarian in English classes, poor pronunciation, and the use of outdated language forms.

Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) surveyed 76 Basque university students in Spain (an EFL context) concerning their perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers. The results of a closed questionnaire showed that the students preferred NS to NNS English teachers, with increasing preference for NS English teachers as the educational level rose from primary to tertiary education. However, they also indicated that a combination of both teachers was more appealing. NNS English teachers were preferred as a resource for learning strategies and as teachers of English grammar.

Butler (2007) investigated the effects of elementary school teachers' accents on their students' listening comprehension in South Korea (an EFL context), by employing the matched-guise technique. Through the analysis of 312 students' performance of listening comprehension tasks (American- and Korean-accented English), Butler concluded that accent did not affect student listening comprehension to a significant degree. However, analysis of student attitudes revealed a strong preference for American-accented speakers, who were perceived as having better pronunciation and more confidence in the use of English than Korean-accented speakers.

Overall, our survey of pertinent research on student perceptions of NS and NNS English

teachers suggests that both sorts of teacher are seen as possessing their own characteristic strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes.

3. The study

The present study investigates Japanese college student perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching. In the study, the NNS English teachers' first language is Japanese. Following Benke and Medgyes (2005) and Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005), the study employs both closed and open questions, in order to investigate student preferences for either NS or NNS English teachers, and their views on potential advantages and disadvantages of both types of teacher.

The student preferences are revealed through the use of a traditional Likert scale in a closed question, which asks the students to determine their degree of (dis) agreement with the preferences; while three related open questions ask the students to freely explore their attitudes toward the respective English teachers, anticipating that the students' true perceptions would be best observed in the dynamics of their written expression, and that this may open up new areas for future research.

The principal difference between the present study and those surveyed in the previous section is that here the focus is on college students with low English proficiency, typically suffering from a sense of inferiority in learning English. Due to the decreasing number of school-age children in Japan, most Japanese colleges, except for highly prestigious academic institutions, have recently been facing serious enrollment problems, typically resulting in the acceptance of applicants with lower motivation and academic proficiency. As a result, college

teachers must increasingly struggle with a number of problematic student attitudes in class, representing a serious emerging problem in higher education in Japan.

In light of this, it is indispensable to investigate low-motivated college students' perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers, to critically assist in the design of optimal English education for such students. Tang (1997), for example, concludes that NNS English teachers "not only play a pedagogical role in their classrooms, but they also serve as empathetic listeners for beginning and weak students, needs analysts, agents of change, and coaches for public examinations in the local context" (p. 579). Though the current trend seems to be toward emphasis on oral English skills, as in English-only programs restricting the use of the students' local language, the present study hopes to discover effective means of encouraging and supporting low-motivated, weak college students in the learning of English, through greater understanding of their perceptions in this regard.

3.1 Participants

The author, as an NNS English teacher, taught three reregistration English classes at a middle-scale private university in the Kanto region of Japan, in Spring 2013. Reregistration English classes are for those who have failed in the previous semester, for reasons that may include obtaining bad grades on the English tests, long absence, or failure to establish a positive relationship with their English teachers.

At the end of the semester, the 61 students (17 economics, 8 law, 17 sports science, 11 sociology, and 8 logistics science students) enrolled in the author's reregistration English classes were invited to complete a questionnaire. Of the three English classes, two, called English E Reregistration, a preparation course for the

TOEIC Bridge test, were taken by second-through fourth-year students (32 students in total); and one, called English ABC Reregistration, a course in basic English literacy, was taken by second-through fourth-year students (29 students in total).

The fact of reregistration, combined with the author's own experience of teaching them, suggested that a majority of the students had a sense of inferiority in the learning of English, with their English-language proficiency evaluated at a beginner level, and with low motivation in general. The author was able, for example, to establish a relatively good relationship with some students who took the reregistration classes, had an opportunity to have lunch with three of them, and found that all had repeated a year in college, due to poor academic achievement and other personal issues.

Thus, the 61 students were asked to complete a questionnaire about their perceptions of NS and NNS English teachers, in their first language, Japanese, as this enabled them to express their thoughts more freely and smoothly than if forced to use their limited English. Biographical information was not collected, in order to maintain confidentiality.

3.2 Questionnaire

The data were collected through closed and open questions (for the Japanese version of the questionnaire, see Appendix A). First, students were asked to answer the following five-point Likert-scale closed question:

Question 1: Some students think that only native speakers can be good English teachers. Other students think that Japanese English teachers can also be good English teachers. Which English teachers do you prefer? Please circle one of the following sentence numbers.

1. I prefer native speaker English teachers.

2. I somewhat prefer native speaker English teachers.

3. It's hard to say, either way.

4. I somewhat prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers.

5. I prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers.

After this closed question (Question 1), they were asked an open question concerning their choice in Question 1:

Question 2: What was your reason(s) for your choice in Question 1? Please feel free to include any relevant experiences and examples.

The next question (Question 3) asked students to express their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of native speaker English teachers.

Question 3: Please feel free to offer your opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of native speaker English teachers, including any relevant experiences and examples.

The last question (Question 4) asked students to express their opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers:

Question 4: Please feel free to offer your opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers, including any relevant experiences and examples.

Note that the above-mentioned questions were presented in Japanese, and respondents were asked to answer in Japanese, so that they could most freely relate their own experiences and thoughts regarding NS and NNS English teachers; 10-15 minutes were provided for completing the questionnaire.

3.3 Procedure

The administration of the questionnaire was

conducted in class at the end of the spring semester, in July 2013. Of the 61 questionnaires collected, 10 were disqualified, with some students not having experience in taking lessons from NS English teachers, and others answering off topic or submitting blank comments. Therefore, a total of 51 questionnaires from Japanese college students were analyzed in the study.

In terms of the open questions (Questions 2-4), the researcher first carefully read the student comments several times, and then coded these using different highlighting, to generate a pertinent list of categories, which were then labeled and sorted into major groups. The total number of comments in each category was counted. Thus, the categories emerged through the process of data analysis, expecting that students' true perceptions would be best observed in the uncategorized dynamics of the data itself.

4. Findings and discussion

The coming sections present and discuss the data analysis of the questionnaire.

As the student comments were written in Japanese, the cited passages from the open questions have been translated into English by the author.

4.1 Findings regarding the closed question

Regarding Question 1, of the 51 respondents, 1 student (2%) chose Number 1 (I prefer native speaker English teachers); 1 student (2%) chose Number 2 (I somewhat prefer native speaker English teachers); 8 students (16%) chose Number 3 (It's hard to say, either way); 19 students (37%) chose Number 4 (I somewhat prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers); and 22 students (43%) chose Number 5 (I prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers). The mean score of the five-point Likert-type scale question was 4.2. The fact that 41 students (80%) chose either Number 4 or 5 seems to indicate a general preference for nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers, although 8 students (16%) expressed no decided preference.

The following bar-chart (Figure 1) shows the distribution of student preferences for

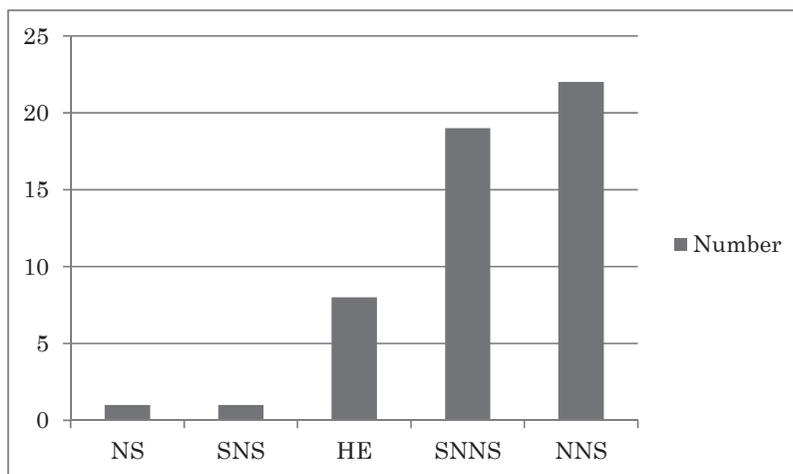


Figure 1. Distribution of student preferences for either NS or NNS English teachers (NS, SNS, HE, SNNS, and NNS: the number of students choosing Number 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively)

either NS or NNS English teachers.

The chart suggests that college students with low English proficiency tend to show a preference for NNS English teachers. The next section investigates the reasons for the preferences, by analyzing their written comments.

4.2 Findings regarding the open Question 2

In Question 2, students were asked to freely explain why they made the choice they did in Question 1. In this section, students' written comments concerning each of the five preference statements are examined.

4.2.1 Regarding the student who chose Number 1 (I prefer native speaker English teachers)

Of the 51 respondents, one showed a preference for NS English teachers and explained:

- It is a good idea to be in an environment where only English is available, with NS English teachers, as it is impossible to access such an English-speaking environment outside the class in Japan. (Student #19)

This student seems of the impression that NS English teachers can create a unique space where one has access to the valuable experience of learning real English, even in Japan.

4.2.2 Regarding the student who chose Number 2 (I somewhat prefer native speaker English teachers)

Of the 51 respondents, one chose this statement, explaining:

- English as it is spoken by its native speakers. I prefer native English speaker teachers with a good knowledge of Japanese and its culture. I think everyone tends to be attracted by foreigners and foreign countries. (Student #7)
- This student values overseas experience, and

favors having NS English teachers; stipulating, however, that they should have a good knowledge of Japanese and Japanese culture. Thus, the two students who chose either Number 1 or 2 seem to value the authenticity of NS English teachers, including authentic pronunciation and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries.

4.2.3 Regarding the students who chose Number 3 (It's hard to say, either way.)

Of the 51 respondents, 8 chose this statement. Some representative comments follow.

- I need both types of English teachers. It is better to have NS English teachers for pronunciation practice, and better to have NNS (Japanese) English teachers for knowing the meaning of English sentences. It may be better for NS and NNS English teachers to team-teach in class. (Student # 51)
- I can listen to real English and can expect to improve my English proficiency with NS English teachers. But when I have difficulty understanding English and want to use my Japanese, they may not be able to understand it. When this happens, I need NNS (Japanese) English teachers. (Student # 18)
- It depends on the content of English lessons. NNS (Japanese) English teachers are good at explaining the details of English grammar rules and vocabulary. On the other hand, NS English teachers are good at teaching English conversation. (Student # 17)

Such comments indicate that the students had no strong opinion either way, mainly because they acknowledged the unique attributes of both types of English teacher. Their written comments appear to support Medgyes' (1994) contention that the two sorts of teacher demonstrate numerous differences in basic aspects of teaching behavior, including

“their use of English, general attitude, attitude to teaching the language, and attitude to teaching culture” (pp. 58-59). For Benke and Medgyes (2005) too, learners appreciate both sorts of English teacher for what they can do in class, and feel that “in an ideal situation both NS and NNS teachers should be available to teach them, stressing that they would be ill-prepared to dispense with the services of either group” (p. 208). The neutral position here, regarding both NS and NNS English teachers, appears to imply no value judgment for either teacher type, accepting both teachers types’ strengths and weaknesses.

4.2.4 Regarding the students who chose Number 4 (I somewhat prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers)

Of the 51 respondents, 19 chose this statement, with 16 noting NS teacher intelligibility problems, as illustrated by these comments:

- I tried my best to understand what my NS English teacher was talking about, listening carefully with the use of my English dictionary. But my effort did not pay off. So I’d rather have an NNS (Japanese) English teacher. (Student # 3)
- I’d rather have NNS (Japanese) English teachers because they can teach English accurately by using precise Japanese. I acknowledge NS English teachers’ good pronunciation, but they sometimes used imperfect and halting Japanese when I asked questions. (Student # 13)
- I’d like to have lessons from an NS English teacher. But it is difficult to ask questions without using Japanese in class. (Student # 16)
- I know it may be better to have NS English teachers because the globalization of society requires us to learn English and only English is used in some Japanese companies. However, it

is easy to understand an NNS (Japanese) English teacher with a Japanese way of thinking and Japanese accent. (Student # 21)

- Since I am not good at English, I would like to have lessons slowly from an NNS (Japanese) English teacher. (Student # 49)

These comments show that the students had difficulty understanding what NS English teachers were talking about in class, although they acknowledged the importance of the authenticity of NS English teachers’ use of English. Beginner-level students seem to benefit from NNS (Japanese) English teachers’ use of their mother tongue, which can function as an effective teaching device for explaining grammar rules, giving instructions, creating a friendly atmosphere, and reducing anxiety.

One student explained:

- NNS (Japanese) English teachers can understand difficulty in understanding English, while NS English teachers probably cannot. (Student # 33)

This claim appears to echo that of Medgyes (1994), that one of the benefits of being a nonnative teacher is the ability to anticipate and minimize learners’ language difficulties. Medgyes contends that NNS English teachers are intrinsically more sensitive to student difficulties than their NS English counterparts, discovering their trouble spots with little energy and time, due to the fact that both NNS English teachers and their students traveled the same road, in a linguistic and cultural sense.

Two other students noted:

- Since I am not good at English, I cannot have small talk with NS English teachers. On the other hand, I can talk with NNS (Japanese) English teachers easily. (Student # 8)
- I feel familiar and easy in talking with NNS

(Japanese) English teachers. (Student # 14)

These comments suggest that NNS English teachers' use of the local language can increase the level of familiarity and reduce the level of anxiety in communicative interaction.

4.2.5 Regarding the students who chose Number 5 (I prefer nonnative (Japanese) speaker English teachers)

Of the 51 respondents, 22 chose this statement. A majority of the students (18) mentioned the intelligibility problem cited by some who chose Number 4 (above), with slightly greater emphasis being noted here, in phrases such as "easy to ask a question of NNS (Japanese) English teachers," and "not easy to ask a question of NS English teachers":

- It is easy for me to ask NNS (Japanese) English teachers questions. I know some NS English teachers can use Japanese, but I have a greater feeling of security with NNS (Japanese) English teachers. Furthermore, NNS (Japanese) English teachers can teach English intelligibly. NNS (Japanese) English teachers can teach English on the assumption that I am not good at English. On the other hand, NS English teachers teach English on the assumption that I have a certain level of English proficiency. It is hard to say that I am not good at English in front of NS English teachers. (Student # 50)
- NNS (Japanese) English teachers have become English teachers because they studied English very hard. They know English and also understand us Japanese. So it is easy to ask them questions. (Student # 47)
- We can easily learn the basic structure of English through NNS English teachers' use of Japanese. On the other hand, we can improve skills like listening comprehension

through NS English teachers' real English. But it is difficult to understand NS English teachers' in English-only classes, and to learn the basic structure of English from NS English teachers. (Student # 23)

- Though NS English teachers' pronunciation is beautiful, it is difficult to ask them questions. It is easy to ask questions of NNS (Japanese) English teachers when I have some questions. (Student # 38)

These comments also seem to indicate that these beginner-level students have difficulty understanding NS teachers' English instruction, though they admire the authenticity of their English. On the other hand, the students feel comfortable with NNS English teachers because it is easy to ask them questions in class. Their ease in asking questions of NNS English teachers stems from their sharing the local language, Japanese, and this common first language also creates a high level of empathy. Overall, NNS English teachers can empathize with their students and appreciate their difficulty in learning, based on their own learning experiences.

Recently, a monolingual approach has been increasingly adopted in ESL and EFL education. Medgyes (1994) notes that eminent scholars have suggested that "the target language should be the sole medium of communication, with the underlying rationale that a focus on L2 would maximize the effectiveness of learning" (p.65). None would deny this suggestion. However, the beginner-level student comments above demonstrate the crucial role that local language plays in such English education, particularly in increasing intelligibility and engendering comfort in asking questions. At the same time, NS English teachers' professionalism should be taken into consideration; in addition to teaching oral skills, they should be specialists in pedagogy and

psychology in order to understand their students' needs.

The other four students commented as follows:

- I feel tense in front of NS English teachers, but relaxed with NNS English teachers. (Student # 1)
- It is easy to talk with NNS English teachers. In addition, they give me some advice. (Student # 9)
- It is difficult to deal with foreign teachers due to cultural barriers. (Student # 10)
- NS English teachers taught some English classes when I was in elementary and junior high school. But I had a bad impression in these classes because students were noisy and the class was often on the verge of being disrupted. (Student # 28)

These comments suggest that NNS English teachers' level of empathy seems to be higher than that of their NS counterparts, as the former share the same cultural, educational, and linguistic background as their students. NNS English teachers familiar with the teaching and

learning context of their students may be better equipped to meet students' actual needs, reduce student anxiety, give advice to students, and manage the classroom.

4.3 Findings regarding the advantages and disadvantages of native/nonnative speaker English teachers.

Questions 3 and 4 asked students to express their opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of native speaker and nonnative speaker English teachers, respectively. Following Mahboob's study (2004), the student comments were analyzed using discourse-analytic technique. Three major categories, comprising eight sub-categories, emerged from analysis of the student comments.

The comment distribution in Table 1 demonstrates that the respective perceived advantages and disadvantages of NS and NNS English teachers complement one another.

In terms of linguistic factors, the teaching of oral skills is the obvious forte of NS English teachers, with 41 comments indicating that

Table 1. Distribution of Advantages and Disadvantages Regarding NS and NNS English Teachers

Category	NS English Teachers		NNS English Teachers	
	Advantages (N)	Disadvantages (N)	Advantages (N)	Disadvantages (N)
1 Linguistic Factors				
Oral Skills	41	0	2	31
Grammar	0	1	2	1
Culture	5	0	0	0
2 Teaching Skills				
Ability to receive and answer questions	0	23	20	0
Teaching methods	2	22	15	8
3 Empathy Factors				
Experience as an FL learner	0	0	10	1
Understanding/Friendliness	0	3	8	1
Passion	0	0	1	0
Total	48	49	58	42

NSs can provide an optimal and practical model of English pronunciation used by native speakers. Student expressions such as “real English,” “good pronunciation,” “correct pronunciation,” and “genuine English” reflect NSs’ advantages in teaching oral skills. On the other hand, 31 comments suggest NNSs’ disadvantages in teaching oral skills, due to their nonnative pronunciation, with expressions such as “improper pronunciation,” and “unclear pronunciation.” The results of the present study also support a number of studies on the negative perception of NNSs’ oral skills-teaching in ESL and EFL settings, in which the research subjects favored native varieties of English over local nonnative models (e.g., Chiba, Matsuura, and Yamamoto, 1995; Forde, 1996; Dalton-Puffer et al, 1997; Lippi-Green, 1994).

The word “grammar” was rarely observed in the linguistic factor comments in the present study, though some research contends that the teaching of grammar is a strength of NNS English teachers. However, considering the numerous positive comments regarding NNS English teacher teaching skills, such as “NNS can teach English in plain words (Student # 44),” one may assume that among their teaching skills may be included the teaching of grammar. In addition, five comments support the idea that NS English teachers have a heightened ability to teach foreign culture:

· I can learn of foreign cultures through NS English teachers, and have become more interested in learning about foreign countries. (Student # 13)

While NS English teachers are perceived to possess advantages in teaching oral skills and culture, among the linguistic factors, NNS English teachers are seen as having advantages both in teaching skills and in empathy factors;

for example, 35 comments alluded to the advantage of NNS English teachers in teaching skills, with the following comment seeming representative of NNS English teachers’ perceived strengths both in the ability to receive and answer questions and in teaching method:

· I can learn clear and real English through NS English teachers. But I once had difficulty understanding them, due to a lack of mutual understanding, and this intelligibility problem eventually impeded the process of effective learning. I think they should improve their teaching skills. On the other hand, it is easy to understand NNS English teachers because we share the same first language. So English lessons proceed smoothly and effectively, even though they have pronunciation problems. (Student # 3)

This suggests that NNS English teachers’ explanations are considered more satisfactory than those of their NS counterparts, and this satisfaction stems from the linguistic, cultural, and educational background that NNS teachers share with their students. In particular, the use of shared local language, Japanese, benefited the students enormously. These shared attributes can enhance NNS English teachers’ ability to receive and answer questions, and the effectiveness of their teaching method. At the same time, eight comments note NNS English teachers’ disadvantages in teaching method while two comments note NS English teachers’ advantages in this respect:

· I get easily tired of NNS English teachers’ formal teaching because they tend to focus on grammar rules and vocabulary. (Student # 23)

· NNS English teachers tend to rely on a single textbook without real communication practice. (Student # 29)

· I can enjoy NS English teachers’ flexible

teaching. (Student # 38)

These comments suggest that some students appreciate NS English teachers' more casual, flexible, and free approach, in contrast to the more formal approach of their NNS counterparts.

Among the empathy factors, which include experience as an FL learner, understanding/friendliness, and passion, 19 comments note NNS teacher strengths:

- NNS English teachers can understand my difficulties in learning English. (Student # 34)
- I can talk with NNS English teachers about all kinds of issues at school. (Student # 38)
- I can relax and concentrate in class with NNS English teachers because we are Japanese. (Student # 1)
- NNS English teachers know how to study English because they went through the same process as Japanese learners of English. (Student # 16)
- NNS English teachers never give up teaching, right to the end. (Student # 27)

In general, the students of the study found NNS English teachers to be more understanding and empathetic, an impression apparently stemming from the linguistic, cultural, and educational background, and the foreign-language experience, which such teachers share with their students.

This section investigated the perceived advantages and disadvantages of NS/NNS English teachers through students' written comments, which acknowledged that both types of teacher complemented the other and possessed unique attributes, with NS English teacher strengths centered in linguistic factors, and NNS English teacher strengths centered in teaching skills and empathy factors.

5. Conclusion

The present study focused on beginner-level Japanese college students, a majority of whom had a sense of inferiority in the learning of English, with low motivation in general. The clear finding of the study is that such students tend to prefer NNS (Japanese) English teachers, though they acknowledge both the authenticity of English taught by NS English teachers, and the fact that both types of teacher have their own strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes. Their general preference appear to stem primarily from intelligibility problems with NS teachers; it is easy for the students to understand lessons given by NNS English teachers, because such teachers can provide effective support for the learning of English, due to the linguistic, cultural, and educational background they share with their students. In particular, the use of the shared mother tongue provides an effective teaching device for explaining grammar rules, giving instructions, creating a friendly atmosphere, and reducing anxiety.

The findings of the study support the contention of Tang's study (1997), that NNS English teachers can serve as "empathetic listeners for beginning and weak students, needs analysts, agents of change, and coaches for public examinations in the local context" (p. 579), besides their pedagogical role. The study's findings also support Medgyes' (1994) conclusion that NNS English teachers can "teach their students effective language learning strategies, supply them with information about the English language, anticipate and minimize their language difficulties, show empathy, and benefit from the shared mother tongue" (p.69).

Thus, NNS English teachers should be confident about their teaching skills and

empathy support, though they may suffer from attitudinal issues summarized by Medgyes (1994) as “schizophrenia and inferiority complex” (p.49). At the same time, though possessed of authentic of English, NS English teachers may need to explore a variety of teaching skills that can improve their students’ understanding of English.

Given the results of the study, caution should be exercised to avoid too great an emphasis on oral English at the exclusion of use of the shared mother tongue. The results also support Phillipson’s (1992) emphasis on the “native speaker fallacy,” that only native speakers can be good language teachers. Given the complementarity of the respective strengths of the two sorts of teacher, collaboration is needed to support low-motivated, weak college students in the learning of English in Japan. Both NS and NNS English teachers may want to consider team-teaching, exchanging teaching experiences, and discussing the effective use of oral and teaching skills. Such collaboration would be beneficial for the development of college English education in Japan. Future related studies should include a broader range of research participants, from beginner to intermediate and advanced students. Such studies will contribute to the construction of an optimal collaborative model for the teaching of English as a foreign language in Japan.

6. References

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Appendix A

- 質問 1. ネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の先生だけがよいと思う学生もいれば、日本人の英語の先生もよいと思う学生もいると思います。あなたはどちらを好みますか。次の 1～5 の番号に一つだけ○をつけて答えてください。
1. ネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の先生がよい。
 2. どちらかと言えば、ネイティブ・スピーカーの先生がよい。
 3. どちらとも言えない。
 4. どちらかと言えば、日本人の英語の先生がよい。
 5. 日本人の英語の先生がよい。
- 質問 2. 上記の番号の一つを選んだ理由は何ですか。あなた自身の経験や実例を含めて自由に述べてください。
- 質問 3. ネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の先生の長所と短所を、あなた自身の経験や実例を含めて、自由に述べてください。
- 質問 4. 日本人の英語の先生の長所と短所を、あなた自身の経験や実例を含めて、自由に述べてください。