Investigating Japanese College Students' Perceptions of Native and Nonnative Speaker English Teachers: The Case of Advanced Students

Takaharu Saito

Introduction

The issue of nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) has attracted much theoretical and pedagogical attention in the field of applied linguistics and English teacher education in recent years. As a result, their presence has become more visible, accelerated by three unprecedented events: first, the 1998 establishment of the NNEST caucus within TESOL, the largest international organization for teachers of English, in order to deal with various issues related to NNESTs; second, the 2005 appointment of the first NNEST editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*, the best known academic journal for English education worldwide; and third, the 2006 inauguration of the first NNEST president of TESOL.

At the same time, researchers have been investigating various NNEST-related issues, including NNEST identity construction, self-perceptions and personal histories, student perceptions of NNESTs, teacher education for NNESTs, administrative issues, theoretical distinctions between native and nonnative speakers in applied linguistics, and NNESTs' socio-cultural and socio-political concerns (e.g., Braine, 2010; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Kubota, 2002; Liu, 1999, 2004; Ma, 2012; Medgyes, 1994; Saito, 2005, 2014a, 2014b).

In the literature on NNEST issues, positive and negative aspects of NESTs and NNESTs have been widely investigated. Phillipson (1992), for example, explored what he called the "native speaker fallacy," that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker of the language, and questioned whether native speakers are "intrinsically better qualified" to teach (p. 194) than nonnative speakers. At the same time, by its very existence, the copious TESOL literature offers ample evidence that linguistic competence in a language does not ensure effectiveness in teaching the language.

Medyges' influential study (1994), based on data obtained from questionnaire surveys, noted that though NNESTs are less proficient users of English than NESTs, and are typically unable to achieve native speaker competence, they are able to provide good learner models for imitation, teach language-learning strategies effectively, supply information about English, anticipate and prevent language difficulties, show empathy, and share the mother tongue with learners.

Mahboob's study (2004), complementing traditional research based on questionnaires, involved discourse analysis of written comments made by ESL (English as a second language) students in the United States, and examined student perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. The study concluded that ESL students did not have a clear preference for either native or nonnative English teachers, acknowledging the strengths and unique attributes of both types of teachers.

Replicating Mahboob's study in a Japanese context, Saito (2014a) investigated beginner-level Japanese college students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in an EFL (English as a foreign language) setting. This study also suggested that the subjects did not have a clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs, but perceived them as complementing one another in terms of linguistic factors, teaching skills and empathy factors. However, in notable contrast to Mahboob's results, Saito's study concluded that the use of the shared mother tongue in NNEST teaching played a crucial role in the effectiveness of teaching English in the EFL context.

Among its other conclusions, the study suggested using a broader range of research participants in future studies, arguing that exploring a wide range of student viewpoints, focusing on what does and does not work for them, is indispensable to improving the effectiveness of teaching English. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to investigate advanced Japanese college students' perceptions of both NESTs and NNESTs, and explore the factors influencing such perceptions.

The Study

The study's aim is to evaluate advanced Japanese college student attitudes toward NESTs and NNESTs in an EFL setting. Mahboob's (2004) questioned the validity and reliability of previous methods for researching language attitudes, such as the matched-guise approach, because such techniques tend to force subjects to respond along lines predetermined by researchers, instead of eliciting more nuanced and subject-centered responses.

To avoid this, Mahboob's study employed discourse analysis, asking its student participants to provide written responses to cues seeking their opinions on NESTs and NNESTs, after which their written responses were coded and categorized into linguistic factors, teaching styles, and personal factors. Mahboob's method, in coding the essay comments, allowed the categories to evolve out of the data obtained from the subjects, instead of categorizing the data based on researchers' predetermined formulations. In this sense, Mahboob's study relied on "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), emphasizing the importance of drawing categories out of data, rather than employing predefined categories. In addition, the development of data-based categories that stem from subjects' distinctive thoughts can lead to exploratory analysis capable of opening up new areas for future research.

Therefore, the current study has adopted the discourse-analytic technique in exploring advanced Japanese college students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in an EFL setting.

Participants

The author, as a full-time NNEST, taught English at a middle-scale private college located in the Kanto region of Japan, in the fall of 2014. Since the author did not have an opportunity to teach advanced students, he obtained permission from three instructors teaching advanced English classes to ask their students to write an essay. At the end of the students' respective semesters (October 27 and November 18 of 2014), the 85 students (from three classes) enrolled in advanced English classes were invited to write comments on the given topic. Of the three classes, one, called English D, was a course for basic English conversation, taken by second-year students (33 students in total). The other two, called English E, prepared second-year students for the TOEIC test (52 students in total).

These 85 second-year students were classified as advanced based on their examination results in the previous spring and fall semesters (their first-year as college students). Thus, in this private college, the students were regarded as advanced, with high motivation in general, though their English proficiency might be relatively low in comparison with that of students at highly prestigious academic institutions. The 85 students were asked to write their comments about NEST and NNEST issues in their first language, Japanese, as this enabled them to express their thoughts more freely, smoothly, and adroitly than if forced to use their limited English.

Procedure

In a slight modification of the stimulus topic in Mahboob's study (2004)[1], research participants were given the following topic and asked to write their responses:

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. What is your opinion about this issue? Please feel free to provide details, including your own experiences and examples.

The above topic was presented in Japanese[2], and participants were asked to answer in their first language, for the abovementioned reasons, in the 10-15 minutes provided for writing their comments. Of the 85 comments collected, 11 were disqualified, with some students only expressing their preference for NESTs or NNESTS without detailed exploration of the issue, and others only describing their difficulty in learning English. Therefore, a total of 74 comments from advanced Japanese college students were analyzed in the study.

Replicating Mahboob (2004), discourse analysis was employed in analyzing the student written comments. The researcher first carefully read the student comments several times, and then sorted them into four types: (1) positive or (2) negative comments about NESTs, and (3) positive or (4) negative comments about NNESTs. Next, the researcher coded the comments using different highlighters, and generated a relevant list of categories, which were then labeled and sorted into major groups. The total number of comments in each category was counted. Therefore, instead of using predetermined categories for the analysis, the categories emerged through the process of data analysis, anticipating that students' distinctive and animated perceptions would

be best displayed in the uncategorized dynamics of the data itself.

Findings and Discussion

Three expansive category groups, including nine individual categories, emerged from the data analysis. The first group, "linguistic factors," included "oral skills," "literacy skills," "grammar," "vocabulary," and "culture." The second group, "teaching styles," included "ability to use language intelligible to students" and "teaching methods." The third group, "empathy factors," included "experience as an FL (foreign language) learner" and "providing emotional support." As the student responses were written in Japanese, the extracts cited in this study were translated into English by the author.

Linguistic Factors

As noted above, five core linguistic factors emerged from student responses about NESTs and NNESTs. Table 1 shows the distribution of student comments across these factors, with 87 comments distributed over the five linguistic factor categories: 57 positive and 1 negative comment about NESTs, and 25 positive and 4 negative comments about NNESTs.

TABLE 1 . Distribution of Linguistic Factor Comments

Linguistic Factors	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)
Oral skills	51	1	6	4
Literacy skills	0	0	1	0
Grammar	2	0	14	0
Vocabulary	1	0	3	0
Culture	3	0	1	0
Total	57	1	25	4

The detailed results follow.

Oral skills: The oral skills category included student comments that dealt with the teaching of listening, speaking, and pronunciation, with a total of 62 comments recorded in this category: 51 positive and 1 negative regarding the oral skills teaching of NESTs, and 6 positive and 4 negative in the case of NNESTs.

The teaching of oral skills was considered NESTs' greatest strength. This perceived advantage of NESTs' English proficiency, particularly their accurate pronunciation, corroborates the results reported in a number of other studies (e.g., Benke and Medgyes, 2005; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012; Mahboob, 2004; Saito, 2014a). The following three extracts are representative of student perceptions about NEST oral skills teaching:

- ・I gain good experience because NESTs use proper pronunciation in speaking. (Student 1)
- ・In terms of pronunciation, NESTs are overwhelmingly good. (Student 9)
- ・NESTs' pronunciation is authentic and useful for traveling abroad. (Student 17)

Students' frequent use of words like "real," "authentic," and "beautiful" in describing NESTs' English appears to illustrate a deeply ingrained notion of 'genuine English' as spoken by its native speakers, suggesting a tendency toward the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992), whereby the ideal teacher is a native speaker because they can serve as a model for learners. The only negative comment about the oral skills teaching of NESTs came from a student who was merely confused about the difference between British and American English pronunciations.

In comparison with these results for NEST oral skills teaching, a total of 10 comments were made about NNEST oral skills teaching: 6 positive and 4 negative. The positive comments valued highly NNESTs' ability to identify problems with learners' pronunciation, and to explain how to pronounce English words exactly:

- ・From NNESTs who share the local language with me, I can learn the important points I may find difficult in learning English, the different forms of English pronunciation, the proper manner of speaking English with consideration of cultural differences, and tips on how to live in English speaking countries. (Student 2)
- ・I think Japanese English teachers' (NNESTs') pronunciation is also good since they have overseas experience. (Student 45)
- ・NNESTs can flexibly illustrate English pronunciations from different regions, such as America, England, and Australia. (Student 58)

Though these positive comments were a minority in the area of oral skills teaching, they illustrate students' considerable respect for NNESTs as successful

English learners with rich learning experience, who can provide information about the English language, anticipate and prevent language difficulties better than NESTs, and make use of the learners' mother tongue, recalling the NNEST advantages noted by Medgyes (1994).

The negative comments focused primarily on NNESTs' nonstandard, nonnative-like pronunciation, and were typified by the following:

・I am working hard on English grammar with the NNESTs because it is useful. But NNESTs can only teach English grammar by using Japanese, and cannot teach authentic English. (Student 32)
・NESTs are not always good teachers. I have never been taught by NESTs with enough knowledge of Japanese culture and customs. On the other hand, I think Japanese English teachers (NNESTs) are useless if they do not have native-like English pronunciation. (Student 69)

Such comments demonstrate mixed feelings, describing both positive and negative aspects of NEST and NNEST teaching from the students' own experience, without, however, unequivocally disapproving of NNESTs' perceived nonstandard pronunciation. Mahboob (2004) quoted one student as admitting that "there is a prejudice within the student body against NNESTs' pronunciation" (p. 128), and emphasized the importance of overcoming this misconception by highlighting NNESTs who have "more zeal and wider knowledge than NESTs" (p128). In addition, Arva and Medgyes (2000) noted that a number of NNESTs in a secondary-school EFL setting (Hungary) felt they had a defective command of oral skills teaching because their own English, as a learnt language, lacked spontaneity. However, such strong, often seemingly prejudiced comments regarding NNESTs' faulty command of oral skills teaching was not observed in the current study, probably because the subjects of the study were advanced college students with high motivation, who were eager to learn English from both NESTs and NNESTs.

Literacy skills: Table 1 shows that literacy skills, here including reading and writing, received the fewest comments among the linguistic factors; a similar result to that obtained in Mahboob's study (2004). The only comment is shown below:

・It is easy to learn reading and writing from NNESTs. Since we both Japanese, NNESTs can teach us from the same point of view. (Student 10)

Literacy skills such as reading and writing are essentially different from oral skills such as listening and speaking. Both NESTs and NNESTs must school themselves in order to be literate, and must develop their reading and writing skills, a process that typically continues throughout their lifetime. Thus, the small number of literacy-skills comments was likely owing, at least in part, to students being unable to describe these skills in detail, due to the complexity of literacy acquisition, which exceeds the scope of typical NEST/NNEST issues.

Grammar: In contrast to the results for oral skills, teaching grammar was regarded as a NNEST strength, with only 2 of the 16 total positive comments focusing on the grammar teaching of NESTs, and 14 focusing on that of NNESTs. The following comments illustrate NESTs' perceived advantage in this respect:

・NESTs' instruction is useful for learning pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. (Student 41)
・NESTs are superior to Japanese teachers (NNESTs) in terms of grammar and pronunciation since NESTs' English is their mother tongue. (Student 52)

These two comments were the only ones to use the word "grammar" in describing NESTs' strengths as teachers; moreover, since the two commenting students had both taken lessons from the same experienced NEST, who had resided in Japan for a long time, this specific NEST may have especially well understood their difficulty in learning grammar. It should be noted that the two students also highly valued NESTs' teaching of pronunciation and vocabulary, as attested by their comments above.

On the other hand, 14 comments focused on the positive aspects of NNESTs in grammar teaching; among them:

・NNESTs are good in terms of learning English grammar. Since it is very important to understand grammar, it should be learned in Japanese. (Student 8)
・NNESTs can explain English grammar carefully, which is useful for learning English. (Student 16)
・It is easy to understand the content of TOEIC and grammar from NNESTs because they can explain it in Japanese. (Student 31)
・I think the rules of English grammar should be taught in Japanese. Through the use of Japanese, sensitive and deep expressions are possible. Easy and shallow

expressions in plain English will not lead to acquiring deeper knowledge of English. (Student 48)

These extracts suggest a crucial role for NNESTs' use of L1 (Japanese) in the teaching of English grammar. Through the use of the mother tongue in grammar instruction, students may better and more thoroughly learn the complex rules of grammar. The results thus confirm one of the advantages of being a non-native speaker suggested by Medgyes (1994): use of the mother tongue.

The results also support previous empirical studies conducted in EFL contexts (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012), but do not support those conducted in ESL contexts, such as Mahboob's study (2004), in which NNESTs again received the strongest positive comments for English grammar instruction, but there it was attributed to their having learned English grammar explicitly. This is probably because, in EFL contexts, NNESTs usually share the same linguistic background as their learners, whereas, in ESL contexts, such as in the United States, students with multiple mother tongues often take the same class in ESL.

Vocabulary: A total of four comments were recorded in this category; with one positive comment regarding the vocabulary teaching of NESTs, and three positive regarding the vocabulary teaching of NNESTs. No negative comments were recorded in the category. The following is the only comment describing NESTs as good vocabulary teachers:

・NESTs' instruction is useful for learning pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. (Student 41)

The positive comments describing NNESTs as good vocabulary teachers are shown below:

・I think it is easy to learn grammar and vocabulary from Japanese (NNESTs) teachers. (Student 6)
・When I was in high school, NNESTs carefully taught us grammar, vocabulary, and idioms. (Student 9)
・NNESTs can explain vocabulary slowly and it is useful for my learning. (Student 46)

Since no negative comments were observed in this category, both NESTs

and NNESTs appear to have been considered to be effective vocabulary teachers. However, NNESTs may be somewhat better at teaching vocabulary because they can carefully explain vocabulary definitions in Japanese.

Culture: A few students commented on the teaching of culture in relation to NESTs and NNESTs, with three comments being positive toward NESTs and one positive toward NNESTs. One student (Student 2) described positive aspects for both:

· I can learn English expressions from NESTs, in terms of both American and British culture, such as how to give a tip in the United States.

and

· From NNESTs who share the local language with me, I can learn the important points I may find difficult in learning English, the different forms of English pronunciation, the proper manner of speaking English with consideration of cultural differences, and tips on how to live in English speaking countries. (Student 2)

The other positive comments are shown below:

· NESTs know the details of foreign culture and life, and their English pronunciation and intonation are beautiful. (Student 12)
· NESTs know the details of real-life English, and I can learn a different set of values. (Student 51)

These extracts suggest that some students believe that they can learn English expressions related to British and U.S. culture, and understand the different cultural values between Japan and English speaking countries; and they perceive NESTs (or NNESTs) to be a source of cultural knowledge.

Teaching Styles

This second category group included two categories: ability to use language intelligible to students, and teaching methods. Table 2 shows the distribution of student comments, with 81 comments distributed over the two categories: 2 positive and 32 negative comments about NESTs, and 47 positive comments about NNESTs.

The analysis results are discussed below.

TABLE 2. Distribution of Teaching Styles Comments

Teaching Styles	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)
Ability to use language intelligible to students	1	26	29	0
Teaching methods	1	6	18	0
Total	2	32	47	0

Ability to use language intelligible to students: This category refers to teachers' ability to use English or L1 (Japanese) appropriately in order to meet the needs of students in the teaching of English, and 56 comments were recorded, with striking differences in student attitudes to the two types of teacher: 1 positive and 26 negative comments regarding NESTs, and 29 positive comments, with none negative, regarding NNESTs. In fact, the only positive comment about NESTs:

· NESTs can sometimes explain in Japanese when I have difficulty in listening. So it is easy to understand their lessons. (Student 19)

may be seen as an even more positive comment about NNESTs in this regard, since they can *always* offer such explanations in the students' native tongue. The negative comments in relation to NESTs are typified by the following extracts:

· I prefer to have Japanese teachers (NNESTs), because I have difficulty in understanding the teaching of NESTs who can only speak English. (Student 27)
· I prefer to have NESTs with some knowledge of Japanese. I cannot make progress in learning English without the explanations in Japanese when I have difficulty in understanding the teaching of NESTs. (Student 33)
· I sometimes have difficulty in understanding the important point of the lesson. (Student 43)
· Since NESTs speak English too fast, I have difficulty in understanding the teaching of NESTs. As a result, my motivation sometimes diminishes. (Student 45)

Though classified as advanced by the school, these students sometimes had

difficulty understanding the teaching of NESTs, and wished to learn the important part of lessons in their mother tongue, Japanese. The results suggest that NESTs should possess some ability to switch from English to Japanese if needed, at least in explaining difficult concepts; or should at least make adjustments in their speech rate and choice of vocabulary, according to their students' level.

In addition to the aforementioned problem of difficulty in understanding, some negative comments focused on difficulties in communicating with NESTs:

· It is good to have NESTs. Since they cannot use Japanese much in class, I can improve my English through learning English conversation and pronunciation. At the same time, it is hard to have NESTs because I cannot respond in Japanese to their difficult English words. (Student 27)
· My listening comprehension ability is gradually improving due to NESTs' teaching. But I have difficulty in communicating with NESTs, which leads to difficulty in understanding their questions and assignments (Student 46)

It would appear, then, that NESTs' relative inability to use their students' mother tongue causes pedagogical difficulties, both in communicating and understanding, even for advanced students.

In contrast to the overwhelming negativity of student attitudes to NEST teaching in this regard, all 29 comments regarding NNESTs were positive, with the following extracts being typical:

· It is easy to understand NNESTs' lessons because they can teach difficult concepts in Japanese. (Student 7)
· It is easy to communicate with NNESTs, which eventually enhances my understanding. (Student 46)
· It is possible to learn English through communication with NNESTs who speak Japanese. (Student 51)
· NNESTs can also speak Japanese. So when I have difficulty in understanding, they can explain difficult points carefully to us Japanese. (Student 66)

Such comments clearly suggest that the subject students found it easier to understand and communicate with NNESTs than NESTs, and that their ease was

closely related to NNESTs' appropriate use of L1 (Japanese) in lessons, such as in explaining difficult concepts in Japanese. Such appropriate use of L1, the students suggest, can enhance students' understanding in lessons, and facilitate communication, because both NNESTs and their students can switch to Japanese if communication in English fails. These results corroborate those of Ma's study (2012), in term of NNESTs' strength in this category.

Teaching methods: Here NESTs received 1 positive and 6 negative comments, while all 18 comments regarding NNESTs were positive, suggesting that in this respect also, NNESTs had a significant advantage. The only positive comment about NESTs stated:

· There are many NNESTs who can teach us the knack of how to study English. NESTs can also teach us ways to study English that only NESTs know. (Student 15)

This student values highly both NESTs and NNESTs in terms of their teaching methods; however, other comments were not so equable:

· I suppose NESTs do not know how to teach English effectively, since their mother tongue is English. (Student 9)
· I have difficulty in grasping how to be taught and be graded by NESTs. (Student 41)
· There are different ways of teaching in different countries. So I think there is a way of teaching and grading students that are suited for the Japanese. Since I am not good at listening, I may have difficulty in understanding NESTs' English-only lessons, which will eventually cause an antipathy toward learning English. (Student 50)
· I do not like NEST's lessons much. I know I can learn proper pronunciation and English conversation. But I have difficulty in understanding their lessons as a whole. In addition, I feel their lessons are devoid of substance. (Student 53)
· NEST teaching varies with the teacher. Some NESTs are enjoyable, for example in teaching English conversation. But other NESTs are very strict, with high-level demands, for example in learning the history of English pronunciation. (Student 60)

In contrast to these negative comments about NESTs' teaching methods, the following examples focus on positive aspects of NNEST's teaching methods:

· Since NNESTs understand the difference between Japanese and English, they can teach English from their students' perspectives. (Student 1)
· NNESTs' lessons are easier to understand than NESTs'. NNESTs can teach us English in detail. (Student 3)
· It is easy to understand NNESTs' lessons because they can explain the content of lessons in Japanese. They can also teach us how to prepare for the TOEIC test. (Student 11)
· NNESTs are thoughtful and can teach us English from our Japanese point of view. (Student 13)
· NNESTs can teach difficult concepts of English from a Japanese point of view. (Student 18)
· NNESTs can anticipate difficult aspects of learning English for Japanese, and can teach us how to overcome the difficulty. (Student 25)

The contrast between the negative comments about NESTs and the positive comments about NNESTs suggests that NNESTs' teaching methods are perceived to better meet their students' needs in learning English; and the students' frequent use of expressions such as "can teach from our point of view" indicates a perception of NNESTs' deeper sensitivity to their students. Reves and Medgyes (1994) also note that NNESTs possess deeper sensitivity, which enables them to "estimate the learners' potential needs, read their students' minds, and predict their difficulty" (p.361). This NNEST strength would appear to derive from the linguistic, cultural, and educational experiences they share with their students, as suggested by a number of studies (e.g., Ellis, 2002; Samimy and Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Furthermore, as other comments in the present study suggest, NNESTs' use of the local language may also play an important role in teaching English effectively, and enhance students' motivation for learning English.

Empathy Factors

Two categories, experience as an FL (foreign language) learner, and providing emotional support, were grouped together as empathy factors.

TABLE 3 . Distribution of Empathy Factor Comments

Empathy Factors	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)
Experience as an FL learner	0	0	1	0
Providing emotional support	0	0	5	0
Total	0	0	6	0

Table 3 shows the distribution of student comments, with 6 comments (less than in the other category groups) distributed over the two categories, and all of them positive toward NNESTs.

Experience as an FL learner: This category received one comment about NNESTs, which described them as better teachers because they have themselves had the experience of learning English as a foreign language:

・NNESTs (Japanese) are also good English teachers, because they have had various kinds of learning experience and passed exams, in order to become English teachers. In addition, it is easy to become familiar with NNESTs because we are both Japanese. (Student 65)

Echoing this thought, Reves and Medgyes (1994) describe NNESTs' "deeper insights into the English language," because of the knowledge they have acquired about the language through the process of learning it, and their metacognition concerning the ways of language learning; while NESTs are not aware of the internal mechanisms involved in the acquisition of language because their informal language acquisition is largely unconscious.

Providing emotional support: This category received five positive comments, solely regarding NNESTs, with the following being illustrative:

・It is easy to talk with NNESTs, even about things that are not related to lessons. (Student 9)
・I have sympathy with NNESTs, because we are the same users of English in Japan. (Student 15)
・I feel easy with NNESTs because it is easy to communicate with them. On the other hand, I feel uneasy and tense with NESTs because communication may fail. (Student46)

These students' satisfaction with NNESTs is clearly related to the aforementioned linguistic, cultural, and educational background, and language-learning experience, shared by NNESTs and their students. Supporting this, Mahboob (2004) states that "[s]ome students felt that NNESTs could empathize with them and provide them emotional support because they had gone through the process themselves and knew how it felt" (p. 137).

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The following table briefly summarizes the findings of the present study.

TABLE 4 . Distribution of Positive and Negative Comments about NESTs and NNESTs

Categories	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)	Positive Comments (N)	Negative Comments (N)
1 . Linguistic factors				
· Oral skills	51	1	6	4
· Literacy skills	0	0	1	0
· Grammar	2	0	14	0
· Vocabulary	1	0	3	0
· Culture	3	0	1	0
2 . Teaching styles				
· Ability to use language intelligible to students	1	26	29	0
· Teaching methods	1	6	18	0
3 . Empathy factors				
· Experience as an FL learner	0	0	1	0
· Providing emotional support	0	0	5	0
Total	59	33	78	4

The comment distributed in Table 4 suggests that the respective perceived strengths of NESTs and NNESTs complement one another, generally corroborating the conclusions of Mahboob (2004) and Saito (2014a). Notably, many expressions such as "We need both types of teacher" (Student 5) and "Both types of teacher are good" (Student 7) were observed in the students' comments, perhaps indicative of their positive attitude toward learning English, as advanced students with high motivation. While NESTs were generally seen as especially good at teaching oral skills, NNESTs were perceived as particularly strong in teaching grammar; and NNESTs' comparative strength in the category groups of teaching styles and empathy factors was clearly

evident.

Echoing the tenor of the oral skills comments here, a number of studies have reported on the perception of NESTs' superior English proficiency, and in particular their accurate English pronunciation (Arva and Medgyes, 2000; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Ma 2012). In the present study, the students' frequent use of "real" and "authentic" in describing NESTs' oral skills would seem to suggest a strong conception of the naïve speaker as an ideal linguistic model. However, this conception must not be uncritically endorsed, given that the goal of learning English for the majority of people is to use the language internationally as a kind of lingua franca, a widely used language of communication, rather than to conform to the native speaker model.

NNESTs' strength in teaching grammar, and in the category groups of teaching styles and empathy factors, would appear to derive from the linguistic, cultural, educational, and language-learning background they share with their students. Use of the shared local language (Japanese) appears to play a particularly crucial role in meeting students' needs in learning English; a conclusion supported by the work of Medgyes (1994) and Ma (2012), which was also conducted in EFL contexts (Hungary and Hong Kong, respectively), but not by that of Mahboobs (2004), in which students with multiple mother tongues were taking the same lessons in an ESL context (the United States).

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that advanced Japanese college students do not have a clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs, recognizing the important roles of both types of teacher. The students' conception of NESTs as ideal linguistic models is evident in their admiration for NESTs' typically greater English proficiency. However, NESTs may need to adjust their speech level, in terms of both rate and complexity, in the face of student discomfort with communicational difficulties. On the other hand, NNEST's shared linguistic, cultural, educational, and language-learning background plays an especially crucial role in satisfying student needs in the learning of English. However, NNESTs should not rely solely on this shared background, but should also offer their students ample opportunity to practice English in their lessons.

Ideally, both types of teacher should recognize their own strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes, in order to increase their effectiveness as English teachers. To

this end, a future study should include a broader range of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews with research participants and classroom observation of both types of teacher lessons. Such a study will contribute to the construction of an optimal collaborative model for English education in an era characterized by global spread of English.

Notes

1   The following is the stimulus topic used in Mahboob's study (2004):

"Some think students that only native speakers can be good language teachers. Others think that nonnatives can also be efficient teachers. What is your opinion about this issue? Please feel free to provide details and examples."

2   The following is a Japanese translation of the stimulus topic, used in the present study.

「ある学生たちはネイティブ・スピーカーの英語の先生だけが、よい先生だと思っています。また他の学生たちは、日本人の英語の先生もよい先生だと思っています。この問題について、あなたはどう思いますか。あなた自身の経験や実例も含めて、自由にくわしく述べてくだい。」

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