Native and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers' Advantages and Disadvantages

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Abstract
The present study discusses the results of a case study conducted to explore how students perceive the advantages and disadvantages of having native and non-native English language teachers. The study also reports native and non-native teachers' perception of their own teaching qualities as well as employers' perception of both groups through student feedback. The study was carried out in two locations, a private university in Kabul Afghanistan and a government funded language school in Wales UK. Responding to the questionnaires and structured interviews, students named the following as their native teachers' advantages: teaching ability, grammaticality and idiomaticity, use of the standard English language accent, and their competence in dealing with spontaneous responses in the classroom. Non-native teachers, on the other hand, were perceived as role models, empathetic, better culturally aware and capable of delivering efficient instructions. A small number of the students were less satisfied with non-native teachers' command of the English language teaching in different social contexts. The results will be beneficial for native and non-native teachers in terms of realizing their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the results also reveal that native teachers are not always preferred by learners, despite their indisputable command of the target language. Similarly, non-native teachers, contrary to the popular belief, are preferred over native teachers for their possession of distinct advantages as far as cultural and language-learning problems are concerned.
Keywords: English as a Foreign language (EFL), English as a Second language (ESL), English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) Native English Speakers (NES), Non-native English Speakers (NNES)

Introduction
The primary purpose of the present study was to encourage employers both in native English speaking countries and around the world to re-evaluate the idea of predominantly employing native English speaking (NES) teachers in English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) professions. The majority of the employers around the world support the idea that NES teachers are undoubtedly better qualified, skilled and competent in comparison to the non-native speakers of the English language. The present study aimed at promoting opportunities of employment for non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers and the advantages they have over native speakers; the advantages, which have very little been considered and spoken of.

Very limited recent research have supported NNES teachers in relation to their advantages, their assets as well as bringing the experience of learning the target language into the classroom in spite of their potential linguistic barriers. In terms of the employment opportunities for NNES teachers around the world, the present study has specifically focused at employers in the UK and in Afghanistan. The study have also summarized what is essential and needed for NNES teachers which could promote them and help them become equal to NES teachers in terms of their teaching qualities. The secondary aim of the study was to compare both NES and NNES teachers' substantial advantages, lack of particular skills, teaching experiences/self-evaluation in native and non-native countries as well as English language students' perceptions of both groups of teachers in students' native and non-native countries.

This study has not aimed at specifying whether NES or NNES teachers are best teachers and particularizing one group's advantages and the other group's disadvantages. On the contrary the present study has individualized each group's advantages and lack of particular skills. It is generally viewed that, what is more important for a successful teacher to possess is; language proficiency, personality, longer teaching experience, knowing the cultural background of the learners as well as understanding their language needs and individual learning goals.

Research Questions
The present study has answered the following questions related to NES and NNES teachers' particular skills through different perspectives:

1. What are NES and NNES teachers' advantages and disadvantages through learners' perspective?
2. How do the NES and NNES teachers perceive themselves and weigh their own advantages and disadvantages?
3. How do employers in English and non-English speaking countries perceive both groups, NNES teachers in particular?

The first research question discusses students' perception of both groups' and their positive attitude towards each group. The second research question aims at eliciting both NES and NNES teachers' views and opinions about themselves; the pros and cons of belonging to the native or non-native group, as well as summarizing their own strengths and weaknesses. The third research question discusses whether employers both in the inner circles (English-speaking countries) and the outer circles (non-English speaking countries) feel open-minded in relation to employing NNES teachers alongside NES teachers or whether they are prejudiced against them.

Literature Review

The present literature reviews issues concerning NES teachers' superiority against NNES teachers in terms of their experience of using the language since early age or their nativeness (Llurda 2010), their native accent (Braine 2010; Butler, 2007; Llurda 2006), their qualifications (Butler, 2007; Nemtchinova, 2005), learners' preference towards NES teachers (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Nemtchinova, 2005) as well as NES teachers' disadvantages and lack of particular skills (Moussu & Llurda, 2008).

The subsequent part of this section discusses some of the known and well believed linguistic deficiencies of NNES teachers in terms of their non-native accent (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Butler, 2007; Bayyurt, 2006; Jenkins, 2005; Nemtchinova, 2005; Lindemann, 2003), their lack of linguistic skills and language proficiency (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Shin, 2008; Nemtchinova, 2005), their lack of confidence (Moussu & Llurda, 2008) and very briefly, their lack of knowledge of the English language culture (Nemtchinova, 2005; Jeannot, 2004).

However, in the final section of the literature review some of the major advantages of NNES teachers are discussed which eliminates the signs of inferiority when compared to NES teachers and in fact make NNES teachers better teachers (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Shin, 2008; Evrim, 2007; Nemtchinova, 2005; Carrier, 2003). The substantial and unbeatable advantage of a NNES teacher is discussed in detail as their empathy with learners and having experienced learning the target language (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Samimy, 2008; Shin, 2008; Bayyurt, 2006; Nemtchinova, 2005; Davies, 2003). Other perceived advantages are: their linguistic skills and qualifications that are assumed to be absent (Samimy, 2008), and their use of standard English (Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Shin, 2008; Butler, 2007; Davies, 2003).

Figure 1 *Summaries of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of both NES and NNES teachers:*

A: NES teachers' Advantages:	B: NES teachers' Disadvantages:
• 'Adult ESL learners could comprehend **standard** native speakers' **English** better than non-standard English'. Eisenstein & Berkowitz (1981, cited in Butler, 2007, p. 737)	• 'NES teachers tend to leave **problems unexplained**'. Benke & Medgyes (2005, cited in Llurda, 2006, p. 207)
• 'NES are **perfect models** for imitation'. Benke & Medgyes (2005)	• 'NES teachers are often **unable to empathize** with students going through the learning process'. Barrate & Kontra (2000, cited in Moussu and Llurda, 2008, p. 322)
• 'NES are **better qualified** as language teachers'. Phillipson (1992, cited in Buttler, 2007, p. 732)	• '**Native** speakers know the destination, but not the terrain that has to be crossed to get there; they themselves **have not travelled the same route**'. Seidlhofer (1999, p. 238, cited in Moussu and Llurda, 2008, p. 320)
• 'ESL **students prefer** to be taught by NES teachers'.Nemtchinova (2005, p. 235)	• '**Teachers who share** a common **language** with their students **are more**

	effective'. McNeill (2005, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 72)
C: NNES teachers' Disadvantages:	**D: NNES teachers' Advantages:**
• 'NNES English teachers had long being considered second rate, which in turn may have caused a certain **lack of self-confidence** among NNES teachers' Braine (2010, p. 5) • **Teaching Competence**: "NNES teachers are sometimes afraid that they are going to make a mistake when speaking." Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik, & Sasser (2004, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 23) • 'NNES teachers are "preoccupied" with accuracy and **more formal** features of English' Reves & Medgyes (1994, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 28) • 'Teachers with **foreign accents** are perceived by students to be less intelligent'. Nelson (1991; Solomon, 1991, cited in Butler, 2007, p. 734)	• 'The defining characteristic is their **experience** in learning English as a second language, a characteristic which no NES teacher can claim' Ellis (2002, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 22) • **Empathy and being a role model**: "The trait I had long given myself , as being sensitive and empathetic to the needs of my ESL learners, seemed fake and pretentious." A NES teacher; Olivia's Journal (April 19, 2002, cited in Samimy, 2008, p. 127) • 'Non-native teachers have the potentials to push the limits of **standard** norms of **language** use' Kramsch and Lam (1999, cited in Shin, 2008, p. 63) • 'NNES teachers are **serious teachers'**. Benke & Medgyes (2005)

I.   NES Teachers Advantages

According to Davies (2003, p. 197), standard English needs its 'members', those who uphold its norms by taking on the responsibility of being its native speakers. Native speakers represent standard languages: it is the standard language they are native speakers of. Native speakers' intuitions about their own language are supposed to result in production of correct, idiomatic utterances, as well as providing the ability to recognize acceptable and unacceptable versions of the language.

A study by Benke & Medgyes (2005), summarizes some of the substantial advantages of NES teachers, among which, one of them is the fact that NES teachers are very well capable of teaching conversation classes as well as serving perfect models for imitation.

In a study by Lasagabaster & Sierra (2002 cited in Braine, 2010, p. 34), the students preferred NES English at all educational levels - primary, secondary and university with an increased preference as the educational level rose. This must relate surely to the level of English becoming increasingly complex. In language skill areas - pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary, culture and civilization, the preference for NES teachers was stronger than for NNES teachers.

II.   NES Teachers' Disadvantages

Several respondents in Benke & Medgyes (2005) noted that NES teachers are occasionally hard to understand, especially at lower levels, nor is explaining of grammar considered to be one of their strengths.

Seidlhofer (1999, cited in Llurda, 2006, p. 218) considers that being a native speaker, and therefore having a very high command of the target language, does not automatically imply the ability to identify which language may turn out to be more pedagogically effective. It is obvious that a NNES has gone through the same learning experience as that of their students, which should help them to pinpoint those linguistic and non-linguistic issues that can become too high a hurdle for their students to overcome and lead them to strategies aimed at facilitating the learning process.

The results of a study by McNeill (2005) are also reported in another book by Llurda (2006, p. 123), which suggest that ESL teachers who speak the same first language as their students are generally more accurate in identifying sources of lexical difficulty in reading texts than teachers whose mother tongue is English and who are not familiar with the students' first language.

III.   NNES Teachers' disadvantages

In a comparative study on NES and NNES English teachers in Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik, & Sasser (2004, p. 92, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 23), listening was the highest self-rated skill, while pronunciation was the lowest rated. One respondent stated that NNES teachers are afraid that they will make mistakes when they speak. Vocabulary skills were the second area of difficulty.

Reves & Medgyes (1994, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 28 and Moussu and Llurda, 2008, p. 322) found that the NNES English teachers were sacrificing the communicative language teaching for the sake of accuracy and more formal features of English. Similar results were found in Samimy & Brutt-Griffler's (1999) subjects, who also perceived NNES English teachers as relying on textbooks, which suggests a lack of innovation and creativity in the classroom as well as preparation for examinations instead of learning for communication.

A growing number of studies on language attitudes have examined students' attitudes towards the non-native accents of foreign-born teachers and instructors. These studies have shown that teachers with foreign accents are perceived by parents and students to be less intelligent compared with teachers without foreign accents (Nelson, 1991; Solomon, 1991, cited in Butler, 2007, p. 734).

IV.   NNES Teachers' advantages

Ellis (2002) points out that the characteristic of 'learning experience' is only significant if the experience is accessible and useful to teachers to draw upon during their teaching. For instance, they have learned the grammar, unlike NES who may have acquired it unconsciously. Ellis further confirms that NES know what "sounds right", but maybe unable to explain it in the classroom. These abilities of NNES come under labels such as "language awareness," "meta linguistic awareness," and "sensitivity to the language." In her later study (2006, cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008), Ellis reiterates that a good language teacher in addition to mastering a combination of linguistic, pedagogical and methodological skills will need to have experienced the process of acquiring and using a new language in order to understand students' learning process and experiences.

Arva & Medgyes (2000) and Barratt & Kontra (2002) cited in (Moussu & Llurda, 2008, p. 322) confirm that a unique advantage NNES teachers have over NES teachers is that they can empathize very well with their students' learning difficulties and understand what is to be homesick and to experience culture shock. NNES teachers are also admired by their students because they are successful role models and are often very motivated.

A study by Modiano (1999, cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008, p. 318), argues that regarding English as an international language, it may even be claimed that many NNES of English are more communicatively efficient speakers of English in international contexts than a great deal of NES. In other words, many so-called NES can be far less intelligible in global settings than well-educated proficient speakers of a second language.

A study by Benke & Medgyes (2005, cited in Llurda, 2006; Braine, 2010) reaffirms the advantages of NNES teachers, as teaching and explaining the grammar through a more structural approach, can provide a more thorough exam preparation and stand a better chance of detecting cheats and most importantly are sincerely aimed at their job, by assigning a lot of homework, thoroughly planning their lessons and checking for errors constantly.

To conclude Benke & Medgyes (2005) admit, that the picture is far more complex than what has been discussed so far in the present section of the study. It has often occurred that a feature highly appreciated by one learner is seen as a weakness by another. It cannot be simply clarified and decided as to which group is the best, or superior, but to agree with what Phillipson (1992, cited in Braine, 2010, p. 3), who challenged the "Native Speaker Fallacy" has stated. In terms of deciding who is the ideal teacher, Medgyes (1992: 348f, cited in Moussu and Llurda, 2008, p. 321) states that: The **ideal NES teacher** is the one who has achieved a high degree of proficiency in **the learners' mother tongue**. The **ideal NNES teacher** is the one who 'has **achieved near-native proficiency'** in English.

Research Design and Methodology

The present study was conducted in 2010 in the native country of the English language (UK) and the non-native country (Afghanistan). The study was carried out comparatively in terms of identifying both NES and NNES teachers' teaching effectiveness in their native countries and in foreign countries (Evrim, 2007, p.01).

Two sets of case studies on NNES and NES teachers were conducted through questionnaires and structured interviews. Regarding the participants in Afghanistan, 30 university students studying **ESL**, 5 NNES teachers, 5 NES teachers and 5 employers running English language schools, were sent requests for participation. Similarly in the UK, 30 language school students studying **ESOL**, 5 NES and 5 NNES teachers and 5 employers were asked for their participation.

The student participants were first asked category questions in relation to their age, language level, qualification aims and experience of being taught by NES and NNES teachers, where they were required to tick the appropriate category. In the second part of the questionnaire, students were asked five-point scales questions, from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree. This part of the questionnaire, asked the students about the teaching qualities of both NES and NNES teachers. The third and final part of the questionnaire included open-ended questions. The native and non-native teacher participants were asked closed questions, and category questions in the first half of the questionnaire, regarding their educational background, levels at which they were teaching and institutions where they were teaching. The second half of the questionnaire

consisted of dichotomous questions, followed by an open-ended question 'why', where the participants had the opportunity to further elaborate on their answers.

The questionnaires designed for employers included a mixture of category questions (size of the company, number of teachers, the type of company), 5 point scale questions, from 5=very satisfied to 1=very unsatisfied (teaching qualities of both NES and NNES teachers), closed rating questions, (excellent to very poor) and another set of 5 point scale questions based on the extent to which they agree and disagree with the statements about both NES and NNES teachers' qualifications and linguistic competence. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were offered the opportunity to express their opinions further on both groups of teachers through open-ended questions.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate, the number of participants, to whom the request for participation was sent and the number of respondents, who actually participated and responded to the questionnaires both in UK and in Afghanistan.

Table: 1 *Number of participants in the UK (initial number and number of participants who responded*

Location: United Kingdom	**Number of Participants: 45**		**Responses received: 45**
Total number of Student participants:	30	Responses received from Student participants:	30
Total number of Employer participants:	5	Responses received from Employer participants:	5
Total number of NES teacher participants:	5	Responses received from NES teacher participants:	5
Total number of NNES teacher participants:	5	Responses received from NNES teacher participants:	5

Table: 2 *Number of participants in Afghanistan (initial number and number of participants who responded*

Location: Afghanistan	**Number of Participants: 45**		**Responses received: 41**
Total number of Student participants:	30	Responses received from Student participants:	30
Total number of Employer participants:	5	Responses received from Employer participants:	1
Total number of NES teacher participants:	5	Responses received from NES teacher participants:	5
Total number of NNES teacher participants:	5	Responses received from NNES teacher participants:	5

The tables below (table 3,4,5,6) illustrate student participants' responses; their attitudes towards NES and NNES teachers and how they perceive both groups' advantages and disadvantages. The qualitative findings elaborate on quantitative findings.

Native Teachers' Advantages:
Table: 3 *Advantages of native teachers in the UK and in Afghanistan*

	Statements:	**No of Participants agreed out of 30:**
Country: UK	*NES teachers use standard English*	**Participants agreed: 21 / 30**
	NES teachers are more competent and do not make errors while teaching	**Participants agreed: 19 / 30**
	NES teachers have better speaking/writing skills	**Participants agreed: 19 / 30**
	Students prefer NES teachers	**Participants agreed: 22 / 30**
	Statements:	**No of Participants agreed out of 30:**
Country: Afghanistan	*NES teachers use standard English*	**Participants agreed: 23 / 30**
	NES teachers are more competent and do not make errors while teaching	**Participants agreed: 18 / 30**
	NES teachers have better speaking and writing skills	**Participants agreed: 20 / 30**
	Students prefer NES teachers	**Participants agreed: 26 / 30**

The participants in table 3 have equally supported the advantages that the NES teachers possess. Advantages in terms of their use of standard English, their competence and committing less errors while teaching, and they are preferred by the learners. The only variation that could be noticed is; students' preference towards NES teachers. In the UK 73% of the student participants have agreed to have NES as their English language teachers. In Afghanistan, however, 86% of the students, which is the highest figure throughout the study, have stated their preference for NES teachers. The student participants in Afghanistan have perceived the advantages of their NES teachers' as; appropriate teaching, better teaching/grammar/speaking and writing skills, their familiarity with the English language, better pronunciation/accent and fluency, having the right skills and qualifications to teach better, and they can teach new words used in different social contexts. The highest figure (86%) basically confirms what has been predicted in the

present study, the fact that NES are perceived to be more competent and preferred by the learners.

Native Teachers' Disadvantages:
Table: 4 *Disadvantages of Native teachers in the UK and in Afghanistan*

	Statements:	No of Participants agreed out of 30:
Country: UK	*NES teachers are not serious teachers*	**Participants agreed: 4 / 30**
	NES teachers' language is hard to understand	**Participants agreed: 3 / 30**
	NES teachers do not understand my language problems	**Participants agreed: 6 / 30**
	NES teachers do not understand my culture	**Participants agreed: 10 / 30**
Country: Afghanistan	Statements:	No of Participants agreed out of 30:
	NES teachers are not serious teachers	**Participants agreed: 2 / 30**
	NES teachers' language is hard to understand	**Participants agreed: 4 / 30**
	NES teachers do not understand my language problems	**Participants agreed: 6 / 30**
	NES teachers do not understand my culture	**Participants agreed: 18 / 30**

Variations could be seen clearly, between the student participants in the UK and student participants in Afghanistan in relation to their views about their culture and how advantageous and disadvantageous it is for their teachers to be aware of their culture. 33% student participants in the UK have agreed that it is a disadvantage that their NES teachers are not familiar with their students' culture. In Afghanistan however, 60% of the student participants have not only ticked the closed questions and revealed their negative feelings towards their NES teachers' lack of cultural awareness, but they have further elaborated in the open-ended questions and have stated clearly and vividly how important their cultural values are to them and what a big disadvantage it is for their NES teachers to be less aware of it.

One reason that students in the UK are less concerned by the lack of cultural awareness of their NES teachers' could be the fact that they have already been mixed with many other different cultures in the ESOL classrooms as well as outside the classrooms. Culture plays a crucial role in the lives of the students in Afghanistan. They are all Afghans and come from one cultural background. To the Afghan people, culture is everything related to the lives of people, such as their ways of living, beliefs, values, norms and daily cultural activities. In their views, the

English language and culture are not interrelated, where there is a reciprocal relationship between language and culture and the fact that they influence one another.

Teachers' verbal language as well as their body language, their appearance and dress codes, topics and materials brought into the EFL classrooms in Afghanistan must be culturally appropriate.

Non-Native Teachers' Disadvantages:

Table: 5 *Disadvantages of Non-native teachers in the UK and in Afghanistan*

	Statements:	No of Participants agreed out of 30:
Country: UK	*NNES teachers are not competent and make errors while teaching*	**Participants agreed: 5 / 30**
	NNES teachers usually get nervous when teaching	**Participants agreed: 9 / 30**
	NNES teachers are less friendly / more formal	**Participants agreed: 1 / 30**
	NNES teachers have foreign accents	**Participants agreed: 5 / 30**
	Statements:	No of Participants agreed out of 30:
Country: Afghanistan	*NNES teachers are not competent and make errors while teaching*	**Participants agreed: 8 / 30**
	NNES teachers usually get nervous when teaching	**Participants agreed: 15 / 30**
	NNES teachers are less friendly / more formal	**Participants agreed: 6 / 30**
	NNES teachers have foreign accents	**Participants agreed: 9 / 30**

Table 5 confirms that most NNES teachers are highly competent speakers of English language who nonetheless have some limitations in their command of English, especially if we compare them to their NES counterparts. (16 %) of the student participants in the UK and (26%) of the student participants in Afghanistan perceive the NNES teachers to be less competent and committing errors during their teaching. This figure has proven to be much lower than initially predicted and used as the central point of the present study (NNES teachers are less competent). Their lack of confidence is the biggest problem compared to the lack of competence. (30%) of the participants in the UK and (50%) of the participants in Afghanistan have agreed that the NNES teachers feel nervous and lack confidence when teaching. The second disadvantage, though not the biggest, of NNES teachers through learners' perspective is their foreign accent

and pronunciation. (16%) of the participants in the UK and (30%) of the participants in Afghanistan have agreed on the non-standard quality of NNES teachers' accent. The lowest disadvantage however, is NNES teachers' formal attitude and lack of friendliness, which is agreed by (3%) of the participants in the UK and (20%) of the participants in Afghanistan.

In relation to NNES teachers' accent, the student participants both in the UK and in Afghanistan revealed ambivalence. Out of the 60 participants in both countries, 46 of them responded positively. One of the participants has stated that it is best to speak clearly and succinctly, in order to convey messages across, rather than working on improving accent. According to this participant, NNES teachers could rarely be able to sound exactly as NES teachers, regardless of their effort of imitating. The remaining 14 participants were negative or uncertain. One student participant has stated that teachers with good accent and standard English accent indicate that they have a good command of the English language.

Non-Native Teachers' Advantages:

Table: 6 *Advantages of Non-native teachers in the UK and in Afghanistan*

	Statements:	**No of Participants agreed out of 30:**
Country: UK	*NNESTs are serious teachers*	**Participants agreed: 17 / 30**
	NNESTs understand my language problems	**Participants agreed: 18 / 30**
	NNESTs speak standard non-idiomatic language	**Participants agreed: 19 / 30**
	Students prefer NNESTs, based on the fact that NNESTs understand their culture	**Participants agreed: 14 / 30**
Country: Afghanistan	**Statements:**	**No of Participants agreed out of 30:**
	NNESTs are serious teachers	**Participants agreed: 13 / 30**
	NNESTs understand my language problems	**Participants agreed: 17 / 30**
	NNESTs speak standard non-idiomatic language	**Participants agreed: 12 / 30**
	Students prefer NNESTs, based on the fact that NNESTs understand their culture	**Participants agreed: 24 / 30**

Table 6, is believed to hold the greatest significance throughout the study, which summarizes NNES teachers' advantages. Table 6 is evidence to the contrary and clearly shows that not only

in one country, but in both countries, they are believed to be serious teachers by 43%(Afghanistan) to 56% (UK) student participants. 56% (Afghanistan) to 60% (UK) of the student participants agree that NNES teachers are capable of understanding their students' learning problems. It is obvious that NNES teachers have gone through the same learning experience.

63% of the student participants in UK agree that NNES teachers possess a standard, non-idiomatic language. This figure is based on the fact that most of the ESOL teachers at the institution that participated in the present study come from Wales. The Welsh accent can sometimes be found slightly difficult to understand, compared to the standard English accent, which comes from England. Similarly, 40% of the student participants in Afghanistan have confirmed that NNES speak non-idiomatic language, compared to their NES teachers who come from different linguistic backgrounds, with different accents, particularly the north of the UK.

The last and the most important issue for which the NNES teachers have been admired to a great extent, is the cultural awareness. 46% of the ESOL students in the UK prefer NNES for their cultural awareness. In Afghanistan however, 80% of the participants admire their NNES teachers and have agreed that it is their biggest advantage that NNES understand their students' cultural background.

To summarize, based on students' perception of their NES and NNES teachers in both countries, they identified NES teachers as informal, fluent, accurate, owners of standard English accent, using different techniques, methods and approaches, being flexible, being serious, using conversational English, knowing subtleties of the language, mostly prepared to answer students' questions, using authentic English, and providing positive feedback to the students. NNES teachers on the other hand were perceived as relying on textbooks, being sensitive to the needs of students, being aware of the students' culture and knowing the students' background, understanding students' language problems, having the experience of learning the target language, being more efficient in terms of delivering their lesson, and having exam preparation as the goal of their teaching.

NES and NNES Teachers' Perception of Themselves
The 2 tables below, (table 7 and table 8) illustrate both NES and NNES teachers' responses; how they perceive themselves, how they report their students' attitudes towards them and their overall teaching experience.

Table: 7 *NES and NNES teachers' perception of themselves in the UK*

Location: UK			
Native Teachers		**Non-native Teachers**	
Masters level qualifications	2/5	Masters level qualifications	3/5
Knowledge of languages other than English	3/5	Knowledge of languages other than English	5/5
Teaching at higher levels	3/5	Teaching at higher levels	2/5
Feeling nervous at the beginning of	4/5	Feeling nervous at the beginning of	2/5

career		career	
Still feeling nervous	0/5	Still feeling nervous	0/5
Advantages of being a NES teacher reported	5/5	Advantages of being a NNES teacher reported	5/5
Disadvantages of being a NES teacher reported	3/5	Disadvantages of being a NNES teacher reported	4/5
Students' positive attitudes reported	5/5	Students' positive attitudes reported	5/5
Students' negative attitudes reported	0/5	Students' negative attitudes reported	0/5
Good classroom memories reported	5/5	Good classroom memories reported	5/5
Bad classroom memories reported	5/5	Bad classroom memories reported	5/5
Strengths reported	4/5	Strengths reported	5 / 5
Weaknesses reported	5/5	Weaknesses reported	5/5
Errors made during teaching	5/5	Errors made during teaching	5/5
Challenges faced	3/5	Challenges faced	5/5
Any contributions reported	5/5	Any contributions reported	2/5

Table 7 clearly indicates that NES and NNES teachers are equally qualified, and capable of teaching at higher levels. Both groups have an equal number of weaknesses in relation to their teaching and an almost equal number of strengths. Students' attitudes towards both groups are positive and no negative attitude has been reported. Both teachers have reported bad classroom memories. Responding to their questionnaires, 1 out of 10 NNES teachers has reported facing a rude student in the classroom. Similarly only one NES teacher has reported a particular learner's prejudice towards her for being a female teacher. The remaining 8 teachers from both groups have reported their bad classroom memories as learners not aimed at learning and therefore not making progress. It can also be noticed that the number of NES feeling nervous at the beginning of their teaching career is higher than the NNES teachers. However, both groups seem to have built their confidence in subsequent years.

As mentioned in our literature review, NES teachers are believed to be immune from linguistic deficiency, and therefore preferred by the majority of students as well, (see table 3), in Table 7, however number of NES and NNES teachers, who have made language errors during their teaching, is equally similar. NES teachers have reported a spelling error as a trivial issue and have stated that they were feeling comfortable and trusted by the learners. The NNES teachers' responses when they made language errors in the classroom in the UK, has surprisingly been moderate and less humiliating, as they believe NES could also commit errors while teaching.

Table: 8 *NES and NNES teachers' perception of themselves in Afghanistan*

Location: Afghanistan				
Native Teachers		**Non-native Teachers**		
Masters level qualifications	3/5	Masters level qualifications	1/5
Knowledge of languages other than English	2/5	Knowledge of languages other than English	5/5
Teaching at higher levels	3/5	Teaching at higher levels	3/5
Feeling nervous at the beginning of career	1/5	Feeling nervous at the beginning of career	4/5
Still feeling nervous	0/5	Still feeling nervous	3/5
Advantages of being a NES teacher reported	5/5	Advantages of being a NNES teacher reported	3/5
Disadvantages of being a NES teacher reported	5/5	Disadvantages of being a NNES teacher reported	4/5
Students' positive attitudes reported	4/5	Students' positive attitudes reported	3/5
Students' negative attitudes reported	1/5	Students' negative attitudes reported	2/5
Good classroom memories reported	5/5	Good classroom memories reported	5/5
Bad classroom memories reported	4/5	Bad classroom memories reported	4/5
Strengths reported	5/5	Strengths reported	5/5
Weaknesses reported	5/5	Weaknesses reported	4/5
Errors made during teaching	4/5	Errors made during teaching	4/5
Challenges faced	3/5	Challenges faced	4/5
Any contributions reported	3/5	Any contributions reported	4/5

In Table 8 we can see that there is a lot of similarity among NNES teacher participants in Afghanistan and in the UK, in terms of their responses towards the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to the non-native group, their strengths and weaknesses as well as good and bad classroom memories. However, variations could be noticed in the areas such as higher qualifications, number of challenges faced during their teaching career, confidence, students' attitudes towards them, and their feelings after committing a language error in the classroom.
We can see that the number of NNES teachers feeling nervous at the beginning of their career is higher than the NES teachers in Afghanistan. One of the NNES teachers in UK has stated: *"despite knowing about the language quite well, errors and inaccuracies in the use of language*

especially where a spontaneous response is required" as one of the disadvantages of being a NNES teacher.

There is also evidence through the literature review and findings from the present study that not all NES and NNES teachers are equally qualified to teach in different contexts and at different levels. There is some ground to believe that NNES teachers with a high language proficiency level will be far better prepared to teach EFL in a university than NNES with so called 'weak' or 'problematic' language skills. Therefore, the above results appear to respond affirmatively the strengths and weaknesses of the two groups. Language proficiency is a necessary condition for NNES language teachers, and a high level of proficiency and communicative skills are necessary for those who plan to teach in EFL/ESL/University contexts or at advanced levels. Once this condition is met, there will be no need to look differently at NES and NNES teachers, as both will still need a set of pedagogical skills, as well as a fair amount of energy, will, and resources, in order to become effective language teachers.

In relation to the question of challenges faced during their career, the NNES participants' responses in Afghanistan are more severe than those in the UK. 3 out of 5 have suffered from stress and anxiety during their careers as English language teachers, either because of a lack of confidence or receiving a negative feedback from their learners. One participant has even experienced an unfair dismissal from a previous employer. This action underlines the serious consequences that can arise because of the issue of negative attitude towards NNES teachers. Similarly, when asked about their feelings experienced after committing a teaching error in the classroom, 4 out of 5 participants reported embarrassing feelings and receiving a peculiar look from their learners. 2participants reported themselves as extremely embarrassed and mortified.

Table 9 is an illustration of employers' responses in both countries; how they perceive both NES and NNES teachers, how they report their students' attitudes towards both groups and the advantages each group own.

Table: 9 *Employers' responses towards NES and NNES teachers in the UK and in Afghanistan*

Employers responses			
UK		**Afghanistan ***	
More NES employed than NNES	3/5	More NES employed than NNES	1/1
More NNES employed than NES	0/5	More NNES employed than NES	0/1
Satisfied with NES teachers	5/5	Satisfied with NES teachers	1/1
Satisfied with NNES teachers	4/5	Satisfied with NNES teachers	1/1
Leaners satisfied with NES teachers	5/5	Leaners satisfied with NES teachers	1/1
Leaners satisfied with NNES teachers	4/5	Leaners satisfied with NNES teachers	1/1
Employers agree that NES and NNES teachers are equal in their level of competence	2/5	Employers agree that NES and NNES teachers are equal in their level of competence	1/1
Employers agree that NNES require more training	3/5	Employers agree that NNES require more training	1/1
Employers agree that NNES should	4/5	Employers agree that NNES should	0/1

start teaching lower level classes first		start teaching lower level classes first	
NES teachers have certain advantages	5/5	NES teachers have certain advantages	1/1
NNES teachers have certain advantages	4/5	NNES teachers have certain advantages	1/1
* 1 out of 5 employers participated in the study. The reason was stated as lack of financial support and security in the country, where NES are strongly preferred but employers could not afford to hire them.			

The one and only employer in Afghanistan, has provided us with somewhat mixed and ambiguous results. In relation to NES and NNES teachers' advantages, positive feedback from the learners and the employer's overall satisfaction of both groups' teaching quality, have been responded positively. Confusion rises, where the employer agrees that NES and NNES teachers' level of competence is equal and at the same time, the employer agrees that NNES require more training. In the UK however, 2 out of 5 employers agree that NNES and NES are equal in their level of competence and 3 out 5 agree that NNES require more training. These 3 employers have not only recommended further training for the NNES teachers, but their number of NNES teachers is below 5 in their institution. They also agree that NNES teachers should start teaching at lower levels and subsequently move on to teaching higher-level classes. Nevertheless, they have admitted that NNES teachers have certain advantages and have reported their overall satisfaction based on NNES teachers' teaching quality and feedback received from their learners. To conclude, according to Samimy (2008, p.129), when both groups collaborate and work together for a common purpose, the English language teaching profession makes strides in terms of promoting strengths on both sides and begins to see 'the other' as a resource rather than as a deficit model or representation of unattainable standard.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is hoped that the present study has eliminated most of the false beliefs and fallacious judgments made against NNES teachers. In addition, it is also hoped that the present study subsequently helps non-native teachers increase their confidence by believing in themselves. By believing that when compared to native teachers, they are not the only ones who lack linguistic and/or pedagogical skills, and most importantly by believing that they are still preferred by a considerable percentage of English language students.

The majority of the students have shown preference towards qualified, dedicated and teachers with excellent communication skills both oral and written. At the same time, teachers who are empathetic, and understand their learners' language problems are also preferred. But, most importantly, a strong preference is shown towards teachers who are extensively aware of the cultural background of their learners. Native teachers will never be able to gain the experience of learning the English language, despite the fact that they may have experienced learning another language. Non-native teachers on the other hand will always be viewed as the second hand speakers of the target language. Moreover, it is often impossible for an individual teacher to possess all of the valuable qualities, albeit not always impossible.

In addition to these qualities, the crucial requirement for all NNES teachers, according to the results obtained from the present study, is to gain an excellent command of the target language. NNES teachers need to further familiarize themselves with the culture of the target language. Becoming a near-native speaker of a language is not impossible, but requires time, effort and determination.

My recommendation for further research would be to explore possible answers to the following questions: what other necessary training could the NNES teacher trainees be provided during their 'teacher training course' to nurture and develop their linguistic and communicative skills? What possible approaches could be implemented to help NNES teachers become near-native? What are NNES teachers' own responsibilities for improving their linguistic skills alongside other pedagogical skills? As a final remark, it is absolutely necessary to increase NES teachers' cultural awareness of their students' culture, specifically in Afghanistan and increase NNES teachers' competence in teaching the English language in different social contexts.

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