The Validity of Hiring Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Instructors: Professional Observers', Learners', and Programme Administrators' Perceptions

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Abstract—In the recent past, considerable attention has been directed towards the issues relating to non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) and native English speaker teachers (NESTs) in English language teaching (ELT), especially their employability as English language teachers. This study aimed to investigate the hiring process for an English as a foreign language (EFL) instructor position. The study has adopted a mixed-design approach using a structured questionnaire on 212 students from the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at Princess Nora University (PNU) and the Common First Year (CFY) at King Saud University (KSU) and semi-structured interviews on six programme administrators and professional observers from the higher education language institutions in Saudi Arabia to achieve the study's objectives. Specifically, this study examined three areas: a) the programme administrators' perception of the hiring criteria of both NESTs and NNESTs; b) the professional observers' perception of the hiring criteria used, linking them to the performance of both NESTs and NNESTs in EFL classes and providing criteria that they deem necessary; and c) the learners' perception of the characteristics of an effective EFL instructor to support the latter's perception. The results revealed that being a native speaker was not important from the perception of programme administrators, professional observers, and learners. However, programme administrators, professional observers, and learners gave more importance to other criteria such as pedagogical skills, personal qualities, and the ability to teach.

Index Terms—teachers' perceptions, textbook, Saudi EFL teachers, quantitative research, qualitative research

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the late nineteenth century, English has been the world's dominant language (Al-Khasawneh, 2017), and it has spread widely to become the most-spoken language (Crystal, 2003). It occupies the status of an official or semi-official language in more than 60 countries (Alcaraz & Navarro, 2006; Medgyes, 2017). Moreover, it has become the dominant language of technology, science, and commerce (Kaplan, 1983). Therefore, English language teaching and learning have become major concerns for educators and students all over the world (Alsweed & Daif-Allah, 2012). Under these circumstances, in ELT (English language teaching), "native speakerism" became a debatable topic (Alsweed & Daif-Allah, 2012).

Robert (1992) and Peter (1994) were the pioneer researchers on this matter, but it took a decade to conduct the research regarding "native speakerism" (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). George Braine's book Non-native Educators in English Language Teaching (1999) paved the way for the researchers to conduct further studies on NESTs and NNESTs (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). These include, for example, Medgyes (1992); Reves and Medgyes (1994); Cook (1999); Srva and Medgyes (2000); Matsuda and Matsuda (2001); Davies (2003); Mahboob (2004); Ling and Braine (2007); Wu and Ke (2009); Alsweed and Daif-Allah (2012); Javid (2016); Rondonuwu et al. (2022).

The majority of professionally trained instructors are NNES (non-native English speakers), followed by a large number of NESTs (Braine, 1999; Liu, 1999; Graddol, 2006; Tsang, 2017). Accordingly, many arguments have been raised questioning whether NNESTs are capable of teaching English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) (Tsang, 2017). It has been believed that the "ideal language teachers" are NESTs (Moussu, 2010, p. 746). Clark and Paran (2007) asserted that mainly NNESTs are treated unfairly when applying for a language teaching job.

Moreover, this stereotyping has led most policymakers and administrators to recruit NESTs over NNESTs due to native speakership in their hiring criteria, decreasing the NNESTs' employability in the field (Braine, 1999; Moussu, 2006; Selvi, 2010; Li-Yi, 2011; Alsweed, 2012). Furthermore, ELT job offers were mostly directed to NESTs by requiring native English as an essential requirement for employment regardless of teaching ability (Selvi, 2010; Li-Yi, 2011; Alsweed, 2012). This discrimination was clearly expressed to the public by some EFL and ESL programme

administrators during professional conferences and job interviews when programme administrators acknowledged that they only hire NESTs (Braine, 1999).

II. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the employment process for an EFL instructor position. More precisely, it sought to assess the hiring requirements and attitudes of the people involved in the recruiting process, Program Administrators (PAs), towards NESTs and NNESTs at two governmental universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It also explored the professional observers' (POs) perception of the hiring criteria used by PAs. In other words, it investigated the performance of both NESTs and NNESTs according to POs who connected it to the hiring criteria used. Results will offer valuable suggestions for both policymakers and administrators to tailor their educational programmes accordingly.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Native and Non-Native English Speaker

One of the goals of English language teaching is to achieve a native-like mastery of the language in order to be able to communicate internationally (Garc á, 2013). According to Jenkins (2009), today's globalisation of English and the growing number of English speakers around the world have resulted in the majority of English users being bilingual or multilingual. The researchers argued that the language of the community into which a person is born is his or her native language. This gives them language competence, awareness, and creative usage of the language (Bloomfield, 1933; Chomsky, 1965; Medgyes, 1992, 1993, 1994; Cook, 1999). Contrary to that, some scholars view a native speaker as a person who has language competence that comes from training and practice (Davies, 1991; Paikeday, 1985). Thus, due to complex factors, there is no exclusive definition of the term "native speaker." However, this study is based on the term "ELT" as defined by Ellis (2002, p. 7) as an individual who speaks English as his or her first language and who belongs to either the inner circle or the outer circle.

B. Native and Non-Native English Language Instructors in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

The most foreign language taught in Saudi Arabia is English (Al-Seghayer, 2017). All public and private higher education institutions have implemented the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) (Al-Seghayer, 2017). Among its various aims, the central focus is to strengthen learners' English proficiency. There is a very high demand for native instructors in these programmes in Saudi Arabia. Davies (2013) argued that the ability to teach is crucial in a language instructor, and mastery of the written form of the language is paramount among other features. Haque and Sharmin (2022) found that NESTs outstripped NNESTs in the four skills, while NNESTs were better at teaching grammar.

However, in many parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia, ELT job advertisements depict the preference for NESTs (Kirkpatrick, 2006; Selvi, 2010; Alshumaimeri, 2013). Hertel and Sunderman's (2009) findings affirm that ESL university learners had a positive attitude towards NESTs over NNESTs. However, learners in Cheung and Braine's (2007) study favoured the NNESTs and viewed them as just as effective as NESTs, adding the advantage of their capability of code-switching when facing complexity in explanation.

C. Empirical Studies Viewing Learners' Perception of Native and Non-Native Teaching

Learners act as the core and active part of the pedagogical process, and they are considered a rich source of information. Liang (2002) described those learners' preferences for NESTs and NNESTs did not depend on their nationality. Pacek's (2005, p. 254) study appreciated NNESTs' good rapport, linguistic awareness of the language, and pedagogical expertise; what mattered was "the teacher's personality, not nationality". However, in Benke and Medgyes's (2005) work, participants showed concern over the poor pronunciation of NNESTs and their frequent use of L1 in class. NESTs, on the other hand, were seen as ideal models for mimicking their speaking, had more "lively" lessons, and were more welcoming. Nevertheless, because of the different because of the different dialects, linguistics, and cultural backgrounds of most NESTs, L2 learners faced difficulties understanding them.

Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) found that learners are satisfied with NESTs for correct pronunciation and Western cultural knowledge. However, sometimes having a different culture causes tension. On the other hand, NNESTs had the privilege of code-switching, switching from L2 to L1, and having the same culture as the learners. Even though learners viewed NNESTs' pronunciation as worse than NESTs', it was easier for them to comprehend. Al-Omrani (2008) revealed that Saudi university learners perceived both NESTs and NNESTs as having positives and negatives. Wang and Fang's (2020) findings suggested that their experience, knowledge, and teaching skills should be more important than their nationalities. Moreover, NESTs and NNESTs should be viewed as collaborators for educational integration, not competitors.

D. Empirical Studies Viewing Program Administrators' and Professional Observers' Perception of Native and Non-Native Instructors

Mahboob (2003) explored the recruiting practices and attitudes of university PAs in an intensive English programme toward native speakership as a hiring criterion in the United States. The findings exposed the importance of native

speakership for EFL/ESL instructors. Moreover, 92.1% of employed teachers were NESTs, while NNESTs were only 7.9%. Thus, he stated that it might be that viewing "native speakership" as an important criterion by PAs could deeply affect the decision made when hiring (Mahboob, 2003).

Moussu (2006) examined PAs' perceptions and employment practices. The findings revealed that 95.2% of the responses included teaching experience, 81% included a master's degree in a related field, 28.5% included abroad experience, 23.8% mentioned job interview performance, 19% mentioned having native-like fluency, and 9.5% mentioned recommendation letters. Another very important declaration by all PAs surveyed is that NNESTs can teach just as well as NESTs (55% strongly agreed, while 45% agreed). Moussu's (2006) findings revealed the hiring criteria did not include discrimination practices between NESTs and NNESTs, unlike Mahboob's (2003) findings.

Clark and Paran (2007) conducted the study in the United Kingdom. The findings revealed that teaching qualifications were the most important criterion, followed by the applicant's performance in the interview, teaching experience, educational background, and native speakerism. The least important criteria were ethnicity, European Union citizenship, British nationality, accent, application materials, and teaching demonstration. Nonetheless, the native speakership criterion was considered important; consequently, when recruiters see the native speakership criterion as important, it might result in difficulties for NNESTs who might be qualified, experienced, and fluent when applying for an English language teaching job.

As per the researcher's best knowledge, no investigation on the perception of POs to validate the hiring of native and non-native English-speaking instructors in Saudi higher education EFL institutions has hitherto been attempted. Moreover, findings from the previous studies are mainly focused on instructors' and learners' perceptions. Thus, the researcher chose this topic to investigate in depth.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

The following two research questions were the focus of this study:

1.   What are the requirements that should be met when employing an EFL instructor in a higher education institution?
- To what extent is teaching experience important in the hiring process?
- To what extent are academic qualifications important in the hiring process?
- To what extent is being a native English-speaking teacher or a non-native English- speaking teacher important in the hiring process?
2.   How do professional observers and learners perceive native and non-native speakers in EFL classes?

B. The Context of the Study

The context of the study is two governmental universities, CFY-KSU and PYP-PNU, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Specifically, this study examined the following three areas: the programme administrators' perception of the hiring criteria of both NESTs and NNESTs; the professional observers' perception of the hiring criteria used, linking them to the performance of both NESTs and NNESTs in EFL classes and providing criteria that they deem necessary; and the learners' perception of the characteristics of an effective EFL instructor to support the latter's perception.

C. Mixed-Method Research

To answer the research questions, the study involves a "mixed-methods approach." When a single method of data collection is used, the validity of the results is hard to validate. A mixed-methods approach means "adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research method" (Brannen, 2005, p. 4). This study was conducted using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods that applied two data collection procedures: 1) thematic analysis; and 2) a questionnaire. The qualitative data came from thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews, and the quantitative data in this study were generated via a questionnaire.

D. Thematic Analysis

The study presents the data by themes, and the researcher attempts to seek commonalities among the participants. An analysis of the data revealed various themes, including the following predominant ones: 1) the steps involved in hiring EFL instructors, 2) the hiring criteria, 3) the importance of academic qualification, 4) the importance of native English speakership, 5) the importance of teaching experience, 6) the importance of personal qualities, 7) the importance of pedagogical skill, 8) the hiring criteria that are not valuable to the teaching process when hiring EFL instructors, 9) the hiring criteria that are valuable to the teaching process when hiring EFL instructors, and 10) the teaching abilities of native and non-native speakers.
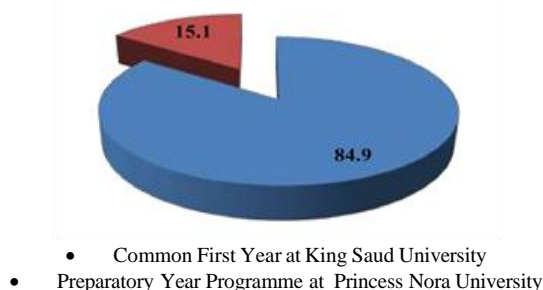
E. Questionnaire

Questionnaires have been popular and well-established (Bulmer, 2004). In this study, the researcher applied a questionnaire adapted from Moussu (2006) and Tood and Pojanapunya (2009) to suit the purpose of this research. The researcher also used Todd and Pojanapunya's (2009) questionnaire with adjustments.

F. Participants of the Study

Participants in this study were female PAs from CFY-KSU (N = 8), PAs from PYP-PNU (N = 2), POs from CFY-KSU (N = 7), POs from PYP-PNU (N = 2), and Saudi female learners from higher education language institutions (N = 213). However, not all participants agreed to participate. Only one PA from CFY-KSU agreed to be interviewed, as did four POs from CFY-KSU and two POs from PYP-PNU.

Sample distribution according to the participants' study level

- Common First Year at King Saud University
- Preparatory Year Programme at Princess Nora University

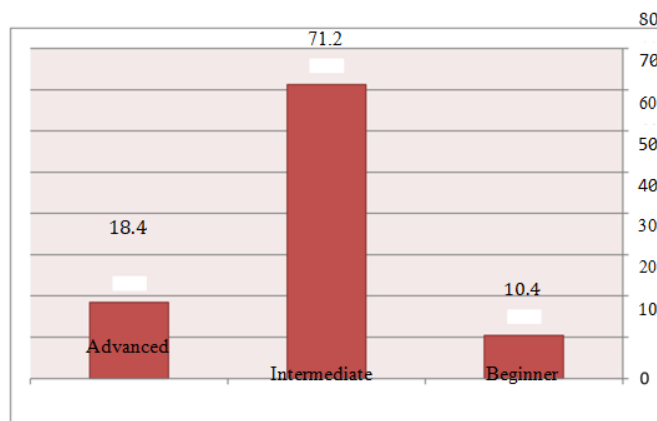Sample distribution according to the participants' English Language Level

Figure 2 shows the distribution of participants based on their English language class level.

G. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are the two most essential factors for research instruments. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Garrett, 1937). The validity of the instrument was ensured by employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. Thus, using more than one technique is necessary to confirm the results. Similarly, reliability refers to "the consistencies of the data, scores, or observations obtained using elicitation instruments." To maximize the validity of a study, one has to plan, design, and pilot the instruments used for the study well (Brown, 2004). Having that said, the researcher conducted a pilot study to increase the reliability of the research. The researcher found in the literature studies that there were instruments that were tested and validated.

V. FINDINGS

A. Results from Qualitative Data Analysis

This part is devoted to the results of the qualitative data. The findings included the major recurrent themes, which are reflective of all observations about EFL instructors and the hiring process. An analysis of the data revealed various themes, including the following predominant ones:

B. Theme 1: Steps Followed When Hiring EFL Instructors at This Institution

It is important to note EFL instructors' motivation to attend training courses. The researcher asked the participants about the steps followed when hiring EFL instructors at this institution. Two participants expressed that process starts from submitting of CV. After scrutiny the candidate is called for a two-part interview followed by 10-15 minutes' demo lesson.

One participant expressed that candidate is called for interview as a final step, importance of CV is marginal. Two other participants also supported the importance of interview as a main step for hiring; one of them said, *"We had a face-to-face interview, and the questions had to be done with the personal experience and cultural related questions. We*

also had scenarios in terms of like teaching questions. And then it would be followed by a model lesson".
One participant stressed that she was not familiar with the steps of hiring process.

C. Theme 2: The Hiring Criteria

The second theme that emerged from the interviews is the hiring criteria for EFL instructors is having at least two years of teaching experiences, a bachelor's degree, and a CELTA, TEFOL, or TESOL. There were no other answers regarding this theme.

D. Theme 3: Importance of Academic Qualifications in the Actual Class and Teaching Process

The third theme is the importance of academic qualifications in the actual class and teaching process. Four participants stated that the academic qualifications are very important one of them said, *"You can't be a high-school graduate and be teaching university students. For this level of college students, at least have that academic qualification, even if it's not in education. You need to show some intellect, and you need to have some knowledge. And you need to have gone through the university experience.* Academic qualifications are also important because a good instructor should have academic skill.

One of the participants expressed that academic qualifications are important in terms of teaching criteria which mainly based on the CELTA teaching techniques.

E. Theme 4: Importance of Native English Speakership in the Actual Class and Teaching Process

The fourth theme is the importance of native English speakership in the actual class and teaching process. Three participants stressed the significance of native English speaker in the actual class and teaching process. One participant said that *"A native speaker does have that fluency to be able to manipulate the language and also the writing skills and to be able to answer vocabulary questions on the spot, and definitely in terms of the accent as well".* However, one participant pointed out that the interest and willingness to teach are more important than being a native speaker.

F. Theme 5: Importance of Teaching Experience in the Actual Class and Teaching Process

The fifth theme is the importance of teaching experience in the actual class and teaching process. Four participants pointed out that teaching experience is very important, and two participants that it is moderately important; one of them expressed, *"with experience, instructors become better instructors".*

G. Theme 6: Importance of Personal Qualities in the Actual Class and Teaching Process

The sixth theme is personal qualities (e.g., friendly, enthusiastic, and responsible) in the actual class and teaching process. Five participants pointed out that it is very important, one participant that it is moderately important. Personal qualities that are necessary for teaching include intrinsic motivation, caring about the students, enthusiasm, friendliness, responsibility, efficiency, and being an effective listener.

H. Theme 7: Importance of Pedagogical Skill in the Actual Class and Teaching Process

The seventh theme is the significance of pedagogical skill (e.g., classroom management, correct pronunciation, knowledge about the subject matter) in the actual class and teaching process. Three participants pointed out that pedagogical skills are moderately important because some of these skills are seen during the interview or demo lesson, and some of them during the observations. One participant pointed out that *"they also have to know how to manage a class effectively."* That's why more than half of participants stressed that they are moderately important.

I. Theme 8: Hiring Criteria That Are not Valuable to the Teaching Process When Hiring EFL Instructors

The eighth theme is the hiring criteria that are not valuable to the teaching process when hiring EFL instructors. Three participants stressed that being a native speaker is not valuable to the teaching process, so it should not be considered when hiring EFL instructors. One of the three said, *"Knowledge and experience are more vital."* One participant pointed out the issue of having a master's degree, saying, *"It was valued when it came to recruiting; however, having a master's doesn't mean that the instructor is able to teach."* One participant also pointed out that hiring instructors from a certain group of countries is not valuable.

J. Theme 9: Hiring Criteria That Are Valuable to the Teaching Process When Hiring EFL Instructors

The ninth theme is the hiring criteria that are valuable to the teaching process. One participant stressed five important criteria: a deep-rooted passion and interest for teaching, pronunciation accuracy, at least two years' teaching experience, excellent time management, and effective organizational skills. The issue of personality was stressed by one of the POs; he wanted to add a personality test to the hiring criteria, stressing that the instructors needed to be flexible because *"the education here in Saudi is constantly changing, improving, evolving, and developing; instructors need to be able to adapt and adopt this change and be flexible and aware of this reality."* Moreover, the criterion of having a teaching qualification was expressed by three of the interviewed POs.

K. Theme 10: Teaching Abilities in Native and Non-Native Speakers

The ninth theme is the teaching abilities of native and non-native speakers. Three participants expressed their strong

agreement about the similarity of teaching abilities between native and non-native speakers. Two POs disagreed on this issue: One of them said, *"Instructors differ in teaching styles and abilities, regardless of whether they are native or not. "One* of the participants expressed his objection by saying, *"We had natives who didn't take it seriously—for them, it was a trip to make some money and then travel back home. And we had natives who were the opposite and were committed. However, non-natives would always work really hard just to prove themselves".*

L. The Questionnaire

In developing it, the researcher drew heavily on part-two items (i.e., 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26) from Moussu's (2006) dissertation. However, some of these statements were integrated into one statement. For instance, statements 20, 21, and 22 were integrated into *"I can easily understand what my English language instructor is saying because her pronunciation of words is clear."* The researcher also used Todd and Pojanapunya's (2009) questionnaire with adjustments, relying on the first part of it. Moreover, the researcher used both Moussu's (2006) and Todd and Pojanapunya's (2009) questionnaires with adjustments to provide general information about the participants. This questionnaire was translated into Arabic for learners to fully understand it, as its main aim is to obtain information about their perception of an effective EFL instructor. In order to make sure that the questionnaire questions were not affected by the adaptations made or by translation, a pilot study was conducted.

TABLE 1
LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS IN EFL CLASSES

Overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs	Native		Non-native	
	Mean	Mean%	Mean	Mean%
1. I learnt more vocabulary	4.06	81.2	3.61	72.2
2. Pronunciation of English words became better	4.17	83.4	3.42	68.4
3. Became fluent in speaking	3.94	78.8	3.38	67.6
4. Writing skills in English improved	4.02	80.4	3.65	73
5. Listening skills in English improved	4.13	82.6	3.48	69.6
6. Reading skills in English improved	3.76	75.2	3.49	69.8
Total	4.01	80.2	3.50	70

Table 1 shows the overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs. The table shows that students' perception of "pronunciation" was 83.4% for native and 68.4% for non-native English teachers. Furthermore, 82.6% of the students perceived improved listening skills with native English teachers and 69.6% with non-native English teachers. Similarly, perception of vocabulary learning shows 81.2% satisfaction with native and 72.2% with non-native English teachers.

TABLE 2
LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF NESTs AND NNESTs

Perceived strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs	Native		Non-native	
	Mean	Mean%	Mean	Mean%
7. English language instructor explains difficult concepts in a way that is easily understood	3.86	77.2	4.02	80.4
8. English language instructor explains English grammatical rules in an easy and clear way	3.83	76.6	3.99	79.8
9. My English language instructor motivates me to do my best to learn English (answer about both NESTs- NNESTs)	3.92	78.4	3.71	74.2
10 English language instructor rarely makes grammatical or spelling mistakes when writing or speaking	3.97	79.4	3.60	70
11 It's easy to understand what English language instructor is saying	4.00	80	4.10	82
12 English language instructor can both predict and solve the problems that we face as English language learners	3.73	74.6	3.80	76
13 English language instructor can sympathize with and understands our needs as English language learners	4.08	81.6	3.97	79.4
14 English language instructor was highly qualified and confident when using English language	4.49	89.8	4.11	82.2
15 English language instructor taught me in a way that provoked self-learning	3.86	77.2	3.73	74.6
16 English language instructor focused on preparing the student for the exam more than enabling him/her to use the language for communication	2.94	58.8	2.94	58.8
Total	3.86	77.2	3.79	75.8

Table 2 shows the perception of the students concerning the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs, 89.8% and 82.2%, respectively. Additionally, the table shows that 80% and 82% of the students agreed that they felt it was easy to understand the sayings of NESTs and NNESTs, respectively. Further, 58.8% of the students showed consensus that the native and non-native English language instructors focused more on preparing the students for the exam than on enabling them to use the language for communication. The overall mean percentage for the students' perception of strengths and weaknesses for native English instructors is 77.2[%], and 75.8% for non-native ones.

TABLE 3
LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF INSTRUCTORS' CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR AND RESPONSIBILITY

Instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility	Native		Non-native	
	Mean	Mean%	Mean	Mean%
17 Excited and sincere when teaching	4.19	83.8	3.88	77.6
18 Aware and knowledgeable about the English language	4.35	87	4.03	80.6
19 Has excellent classroom management skills	3.96	79.2	3.82	76.4
20 Uses a variety of methods and tools to convey the meaning	4.10	82	3.81	76.2
21 English language instructor's lessons feature a set of clear objectives and lively lessons and make the learning environment fun and comfortable	4.02	80.4	3.76	75.2
22 Prepares lessons beforehand carefully	3.88	77.6	3.68	73.6
Total	4.08	81.6	3.83	76.6

Table 3 illustrates the perceived behaviour and responsibility of the instructor in the classroom. The ratios for knowledge and awareness of NESTs and NNESTs are 87% and 80.6%, respectively. The percentage level of excitement and sincerity is 83.8% NESTs and 77.6% NNESTs, respectively. According to students' perceptions, 82% of NESTs use various methods and tools, while 76.2% of NNESTs do. The overall mean percentage of students' opinions is 81.6% NESTs and 76.6% NNESTs.

TABLE 4
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE EFL INSTRUCTOR

Students' perception of the qualities of an effective EFL instructor	Mean	Mean%
23 A NEST is a better English language instructor than NNEST because she does not use the students' first language in the class.	3.67	73.4
24 I care about the personal qualities of the English language instructor (such as being friendly, enthusiastic, and responsible) for her to be an effective language instructor.	4.71	94.2
25 To be an effective English language instructor, her mother tongue has to be English.	2.65	53
26 I prefer that an English language instructor be aware and knowledgeable about my first language and culture.	3.79	75.8
Total	3.70	74

Table 4 shows the perceived qualities of an effective EFL instructor. It shows that the students cared 94.2% about the personal qualities and 75.8% preferred the awareness and knowledgeable qualities of instructors about their first language and culture. A native English speaker was preferred by 53% of students as an effective English language instructor.

TABLE 5
DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NATIVE EFL INSTRUCTORS BETWEEN DIFFERENT STUDENTS' STUDY LEVELS

Variable	Category	Nb	Mean (SD)	t statistics (df)	P value"
Learners' perception of native EFL classes	CFY-KSU	180	4.09 (0.91)	1.793 (34.63)	0.082
	PYP-PNU	32	3.65 (1.61)		
Perceived strengths and weaknesses	CFY-KSU	180	3.92 (0.86)	1.372 (34.89)	0.179
	PYPPNU	32	3.55 (1.47)		
Perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility	CFY-KSU	180	4.16 (0.97)	1.832 (35.39)	0.075
	PYP-PNU	32	3.64 (1.56)		

a. Number of participants, b. independent sample t-test

Table 5 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the learners' perception of native EFL classes, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility between the students who are studying at CFY-KSU or studying at PYP-PNU (p>0.05).

TABLE 6
DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NON-NATIVE EFL INSTRUCTORS BETWEEN DIFFERENT STUDENTS' STUDY LEVELS

Variable	Category	Nb	Mean (SD)	t statistics (df)	p value"
Learners' Perception of non-native EFL classes	CFY-KSU	180	3.53 (1.34)	0.804 (210)	0.423
	PYP-PNU	32	3.32 (1.48)		
Perceived strengths and weaknesses	CFY-KSU	180	3.81 (1.25)	0.617 (210)	0.538
	PYP-PNU	32	3.67 (1.18)		
Perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility	CFY-KSU	180	3.87 (1.30)	1.225 (210)	0.222
	PYP-PNU	32	3.56 (1.31)		

a. Number of participants, b. independent sample t-test

Table 6 illustrated no statistically significant difference in the learners' perception of non-native EFL classes, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility between the students of both universities (p>0.05).

TABLE 7
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE EFL INSTRUCTOR BETWEEN DIFFERENT STUDENTS' STUDY LEVELS

Variable	Category	Nb	Mean (SD)	t statistics(df)	P value*
Perceived qualities of an effective EFL instructor	CFY- KSU	180	3.64 (0.69)	3.650	0.001
	PYP- PNU	32	4.04 (0.55)	(50.01)	0.001

a　　　　　Number of participants, independent sample t-test

Table 7 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceived qualities of an effective EFL instructor between the students at CFY-KSU and the students at PYP-PNU ($p < 0.05$). The table shows that the students at CFY-KSU have significantly higher mean scores for perceiving qualities of an effective EFL instructor. Differences in learners' perceptions of native EFL instructors between different students' levels of English are shown.

TABLE 8
DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NATIVE EFL INSTRUCTORS BETWEEN DIFFERENT STUDENTS' LEVEL OF ENGLISH

Variable	Nb	Mean (SD)	F statistics (df)	P value[a]
Learners' perception of EFL instructor			0 340 (2, 209)	0.712
Beginner	22	4.07 (0.90)		
Intermediate	151	4.03 (1.10)		
Advanced	39	3.88 (0.98)		
Learners' perception of native EFL instructors			0.018 (2, 209)	0.982
Beginner	22	3.88 (0.66)		
Intermediate	151	3.87 (1.06)		
Advanced	39	3.84 (0.86)		
Learners' perception of native EFL instructors			0.110 (2, 209)	0.896
Beginner	22	4.03 (0.82)		
Intermediate	151	4.07 (1.17)		
Advanced	39	4.15 (0.92)		

a.　　　　One-way ANOVA,　b.　　　　number of participants

Table 8 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the learners' perceptions of native EFL classes, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility depending on their level of English language proficiency ($p > 0.05$).

TABLE 9
DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NON-NATIVE EFL INSTRUCTORS BETWEEN DIFFERENT STUDENTS' LEVEL OF ENGLISH

Variable	Nb	Mean (SD)	F statistics (df)	P value[a]
Learners' perception of EFL instructors			12.943 (2, 209)	<0.001
Beginner	22	3.73 (0.98)		
Intermediate	151	3.71 (0.09)		
Advanced	39	2.54 (1.75)		
Learners' perception of native EFL instructors			6.955 (2, 209)	0.001
Beginner	22	4.02 (0.81)		
Intermediate	151	3.93 (1.09)		
Advanced	39	3.14 (1.70)		
Learners' perception of native EFL instructors			5.301 (2, 209)	0.007
Beginner	22	3.81 (0.90)		
Intermediate	151	3.98 (1.16)		
Advanced	39	3.24 (1.81)		

a.　　　　One-way ANOVA,　b.　　　　number of participants

Table 9 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the learners' perception of EFL instructors depending on the students' English level ($p<0.05$). A post hoc test analysis was performed and revealed that there is a difference between beginners and advanced students. Also, there are statistically significant differences in the perceived strengths and weaknesses of non-native English instructors based on the students' English level ($p < 0.05$); post hoc test analysis confirms the difference between beginners and advanced students. Moreover, there are statistically significant differences in the perceived instructors' classroom behaviour and responsibility of non-native English instructors between the students' English levels ($p < 0.05$), post hoc test analysis highlights the difference between intermediate and advanced students.

TABLE 10
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE EFL INSTRUCTOR BETWEEN DIFFERENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEVELS OF THE STUDENTS

Variable	Nb	Mean (SD)	F statistics (df)	P value[a]
Perceived qualities of and effective Instructor			0.703 (2, 209)	0.496
Beginner	22	3.60 (0.77)		
Intermediate	151	3.69 (0.67)		
Advanced	39	3.80 (0.68)		

a.   One-way ANOVA,   b.   number of participants

Table 10 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the perceived qualities of an effective EFL instructors based on the students' English level ($p > 0.05$).

VI. DISCUSSION

The main aim of the study was to investigate the employment process for an EFL instructor position as well as assess the hiring requirements and attitudes of the people involved in the recruiting process towards NESTs and NNESTs at two governmental universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It also explored the POs' perception of the hiring criteria used by PAs.

A. Hiring Criteria

Based on the results obtained from the interviewed POs, the minimum hiring criteria to be an EFL instructor at Saudi higher education EFL institutions are having at least two years of teaching experience, a bachelor's degree, and a CELTA, TEFOL, or TESOL. Moreover, the POs stated, which concurs with Wang and Fang's (2020) findings, that knowledge and experience are more vital in selecting EFL instructors, and that the issue of having a master's degree is not important based on the POs' perception. In Clark and Paran's (2007) work, results revealed that the hiring criteria at the UK included teaching qualifications, followed by the instructor's performance in the interview, which also supports the findings of the current study. Moreover, the issues of culturally effective pedagogy, experience in teaching EFL students, and knowledge about effective instructional methods took centre stage during the interview with POs. This could be attributed to the fact that the issue of pedagogy is important in the learning process for both instructors and students, as well as to the importance of instructional methods in English teaching. Helal (2008) revealed that NNESTs did not face discrimination. Also, the study revealed that the reason for having a small number of NNESTs was, as the PAs of the institutions claimed, a lower rate of NNESTs applying to teach at their institutions. More importantly, the issue of personality was stressed during interviews with the POs, which was claimed by Medgyes (1996): that teaching experience, training, skills, age, personality, and motivation are all factors that can be applied equally to both native and non-native instructors.

B. Learners' Perception of Native and Non-Native EFL Instructors

The results showed that 83.4% of the students agreed that "pronunciation of English words became better" with native English instructors, while 68.4% supported the non-native English instructors. These findings confirm the results of Benke and Medgyes (2005), which showed that NNESTs had poor pronunciation. This result could be attributed to the fact that native English speakers are better at pronunciation than non-natives, from the students' point of view. Also, 82.6% of students prefer NESTs for listening skills, while 69.6% support the non-natives. According to the researcher's experience, Arab students' lack of listening skills, which can be addressed through NESTs because their pronunciation differs significantly from that of non-native students, may have an impact on the students' listening skills.

Regarding the vocabulary, 81.2% of the students prefer NESTs, and 72.2% of them support NNESTs. This result could be attributed to the amount of vocabulary that NEST were exposed to when acquiring English. Benke and Medgyes' (2005) findings show that NESTs are perceived by the students as ideal models for imitating their speaking, while NNESTs are perceived as having poor pronunciation and using a lot of LI in class.

C. Learners' Perception of Strengths and Weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs

89.8% of students thought their native English language instructor was highly qualified and confident when speaking English, while 82.2% thought the same about their non-native English language instructor. Additionally, 80% of the students perceived that it was easy to understand what the native English language instructor was saying, and 82% of them, perceived the same in terms of what their non-native English language instructors were saying. The results obtained from the POs depict that the native speakers' fluency is helpful in manipulating the language as well as their writing skills. Moreover, Medgyes (1992) revealed that the native English instructors are language models, having the advantage of target language proficiency.

D. Learners' Perception of Instructors' Classroom Behaviour and Responsibility

The awareness and knowledge percentage perceptions of learners in terms of NESTs and NNESTs revealed 87% and

80.6%, respectively. Furthermore, excitement and sincerity perception about NESTs and NNESTs is 83% and 77.6%. Arva and Medgyes (2000) revealed that native and non-native instructors' teaching behaviours differed in their teaching styles. Arva and Medgyes's (2000) results described that the native instructors lacked classroom management skills, while the non-native instructors were perceived as good explainers of the grammatical rules and served as good learning models.

E. Students' Perception of the Qualities of an Effective EFL Instructor

The study results showed that 75.8% of the students preferred that an English language instructor should be aware and knowledgeable about their first language and culture. On the other hand, 53% of the students perceived that the mother tongue has to be English to be an effective English language instructor. The culture is a very important factor in the learning and education process—it enhances the transmission of the educational values and the basics that are intended to be implanted within the students. The results of the qualitative part support these results: The majority of POs pointed out that the presence of educational qualities such as intrinsic motivation, caring about the students, enthusiasm, friendliness, responsibility, efficiency, and being an effective listener is considered very important; they are all crucial to making an excellent instructor.

VII. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that students preferred native instructors for seeking skills like pronunciation, listening, awareness, and knowledge about the English language. Moreover, students were in favour of the instructors who had appropriate personal qualities and adequate knowledge of their L1 and culture. The dominant role of native English instructors is palpable, as per the perception of the students and hiring authorities. The teaching skills, delivery and knowledge of relevant subject in classroom stand paramount as compare to academic qualification of the instructor but still academic qualification considered mandatory for instructorship. Further, hiring criteria and the perception of hiring authorities prefer the native instructor and depict discrimination amongst the non-native instructors. Applying rate of non-native instructors for EFL job in the Saudi context is neglect able.

This study might have an effective implication for the instructors themselves and for Saudi higher education. This research provides the insights needed to hire EFL instructors in higher education and examines their effects on students' wellbeing and the educational system. The study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the hiring criteria that are followed by the PAs in the Kingdom and EFL instructors' needs quantitatively and qualitatively. The study might also have a significant contribution to the future concerns, aspirations, and hopes of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education and Vision 2030.

Finally, further research on other textbooks used in Saudi schools in general is recommended. Also, future research could include a larger sample and compare the textbooks used in secondary schools.

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