
THE IMPACT OF NATIVE ENGLISH INSTRUCTION ON THE SAUDI EFL STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY: APPRAISAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *The issue of including nativeness in teaching English has been controversial in arguments by the stakeholders in the EFL context. Native English-speaking teacher (NEST) is perceived to be an ideal linguistic model where EFL students can achieve the target-like competence. This paper reports the outcome of a study carried out in Jeddah's intensive English program with 46 Saudi male students to see whether NESTs have any effect on the students' linguistic achievement in CEPT test. The study is a quantitative - based that adopts pretest-posttest design in data collection. The data are statistically scrutinized by using SPSS. The major findings reveal that NESTs have significant impact on the Saudi EFL students' achievement. However, the nationality variable (being British or South African teacher) has no significant difference on the students. This study shows that low level students benefit more from native English instruction than upper intermediate. Besides the teacher's nativeness, there are several factors that could significantly influence native English instruction such as the quality of NESTs, students' quality and motivation, taught curriculum and class size. Based on the findings, this study recommends that variables such as qualification and experiences should be considered along with nativeness in staffing EFL programs. NESTs should not be hired according to their nativeness or nationality only.*

KEYWORDS: NEST; EFL; language proficiency; students' achievement

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is one of the crucial domains that both linguistics and educators are continuously investigating. The debate pertaining to the best EFL teaching practices is unsettled and still disputed among educational policy makers. Consequently, the issues of adopting bilingual education, immersion programs, intensive-native instructions and native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are currently arising in

most EFL countries. The definitive reason behind all these initiatives is to remedy language deficiency that most of the EFL students possess.

In the Saudi EFL context, the foundation year programs are primarily set to provide novice students with linguistic knowledge. According to Abu Laban (2018, p. 5) and Hussain, Albasher & Salam (2016, p. 3) the foundation programs started in the late 2000s and became mandatory in most universities' academic tracks. Staffing these programs with NESTs or Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) of English is also different from one site or institution to the other.

In Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC), where this research is conducted, there are currently 13 English programs (8 for boys and 5 for girls) that offer an intensive instruction by NESTs which lasts for 17 weeks and totals 510 hours of teaching (TVTC, 2021). Exposing Saudi EFL students to native English teaching is a new experience that is worth exploring especially with the rapid growth of a such type of instruction in the Saudi educational system.

Hussain, Albasher & Salam (2016) state that it is "the need of the hour to carry out the research activities" to help examine such programs in Saudi Arabia "through analysing several factors such as the quality of the students, curricula, teachers and the policies" (p. 3). A study carried out by Al-Shumaimeri (2013, p. 19) reveals that the EFL program designers should include NESTs in their foundation programs to teach EFL. In addition, Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) find out that numerous areas need further examination to develop a deeper understanding of the relation between teachers' nativeness and EFL students' learning" (p. 9).

It is to be noticed that the number of studies on the role of NESTs in the Saudi milieu is limited (Ismaiel, 2017; Alghofaili & Elyas, 2017; Hussain et al., 2016; McMullen, 2014). For instance, Al-Nawrasy (2013) states that although there are several studies which have been executed on the impact of the nativeness of the teachers in many countries, "there are fewer studies carried out in the Arab context" (p. 244). Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) argue that "very few studies" have been conducted on the influence of NESTs on EFL students in the Saudi setting (p. 2). Thus, the need to examine the implication of NESTs is highly crucial especially with a dearth of research in this issue in Saudi Arabia.

The significance of this study comes from the fact that such type of instruction is rarely examined in the EFL context in general, and in Saudi in particular. In addition, most of the research studies on this issue in the Saudi setting adopted a single survey questionnaire tool such as Alghofaili & Elyas (2017), Ismaiel (2017), Hussain et al., (2016), McMullen (2014), Al-Shumaimeri (2013) and Al-Omrani (2008). These studies primarily address the implication of NESTs by merely exploring the participants' perceptions rather than applying a deep quantitative or qualitative investigation. So, one of the major goals of the current study is to fill this gap by conducting a systemized quantitative analysis through Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) instrument.

It is worth mentioning that the intensity variable (the amount of exposure to English) goes in parallel with language nativeness variable (teaching English by NESTs) in most of the current English foundation programs in the Saudi educational system. So, researchers have looked at native English instruction from different angles. For instance, Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) and Ismaiel (2017) have discussed the issues pertaining to native and non-native English teaching, whereas Alseweed & Daif-Allah (2012), McMullen (2014), Al-Shumaimeri (2013) and Hussain et al., (2016) addressed how intensive English programs are perceived in the Saudi milieu.

Finally, this study is a response to the current mainstream towards adopting teaching English by NEST as well as to the scarcity of research studies that deeply examine the pros and cons of such practices from practical perspective (Barnawi & Al-hawsawi, 2017, p. 212). To this end, the present study endeavours to answer this broad question: what is the value of adopting NESTs for the Saudi EFL students, more precisely technical diploma students?

Questions of the study

The present study aims at investigating the statistical significant difference between students' pre and post CEPT scores. The purpose of this study is to analyze if students obtained higher CEPT scores at the end of a nine-week class by comparing pre and post CEPT test scores. This study also explores if there is a significant difference according to the nationality: British versus South Africa. The following are the research questions:

1. Are there significant differences between students' pre and post results in CEPT test?
2. Do low level students benefit more from native English instruction than intermediate students?
3. Are there significant differences of CEPT scores according to the nationality of NEST?

Limitation of the study

This study is limited in examine the impact of NESTs on the Saudi EFL student's language proficiency. As for the place of the study, it is in Jeddah city where the technical-diploma students are undertaking intensive English program that lasts for 17 weeks and is taught online due to the COVID-19 lockdown of schools. With respect to time, the current study is conducted during the second semester of 2020/2021 academic year. It is worth mentioning that the students are aged between 20-23 years. They already have diploma certificates in vocational and technical fields.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory behind nativeness

Native English instruction is notionally rooted in the theories of language acquisition (more precisely, innatism) before it is seen in the theories of learning or teaching. Innatism, as it

is elucidated by Lighbown and Spada (2011) is that all children are biologically programmed for the acquisition of language and that the language is developed from the other biological functions. In contrast to behaviourist theory which considers children's minds as "blank slates" that is to be filled by imitating the language which they are exposed to - innatists say that children are born with "innate ability" that help them to discover themselves and the underlying rules of the language (Lighbown and Spada, 2011, p. 15). So, to achieve this, learners just need intensive-native exposure to the target language and then they can subconsciously acquire that language (Chomsky,1986).

Nativism came from a linguistic theory that is suggested by Chomsky (1965) who considers NESTs as the reliable source of linguistic input. Chomsky (1965) states that linguistic theory is "concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, that knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying their knowledge of the language in actual performance" (p. 3). This perspective has also been supported lately by Stern (1983) who argues that NEST's competence, proficiency, or knowledge of the language rules is "a necessary point of reference for the second language proficiency concept used in language teaching theory" (p. 341).

In contrast, Hymes (1972) argues that mastering of the target language means that the learner acquires the knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical (as it believed by Chomsky's linguistic theory) but also how it is appropriate to the social context (p. 277). Accordingly, Hymes proposed the term 'communicative competence' to be used to explain how language fits with the social context.

We can argue that these two perspectives are significant and they represent the internal and external factors that determine and foster the ability of learning the target language, as suggested by Lighbown and Spada (2011, p. 54-74). For instance, linguistic competence is influenced by internal factors (such as age, personality, intrinsic motivation, experiences, cognition, native language) whilst sociolinguistic competence is affected by external factors (curriculum, instruction, culture, extrinsic motivation and the access to native speakers). In EFL learning, these factors are intersected in such a way that neither of them could by itself only assure language development without implying the other. For instance, EFL students may have access to NESTs but they probably possess low extrinsic motivation, bad experience in learning English or little cognitive capability that could impede their learning progression. This is also seen in the literature as EFL learners' success or failure may be attributed to linguistic or sociolinguistic factors or even a combination of both (see Al-Seghayer, 2014; Barnawi & Al-hawsawi, 2017).

Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs)

Linguistically speaking, Crystal (2003, p. 308) defines NEST as "someone for whom a particular language is a first language or mother tongue. Bussmann (2006) describes a

native speaker as "a person who learned a language as a child"... and seen as an "ideal speaker/listener of a linguistic community" (p. 785). In this research, NEST refers to the English-speaking teacher whose mother tongue is English. (i.e., from America, Canada, South Africa or Britain)

However, the issue of nativeness is a disputed phenomenon. Moussu (2006) has reviewed the literature on the differences between NEST and NNEST and concludes that "it is very difficult to decide who is a native speaker and who is a non-native speaker" as a result of the complexity of this debatable issue (p. 10). Also, Saniei (2011) states that "there is no room for defining an ideal native speaker" due to the implication of globalisation that urges English to be detached from what is called native speakers' countries and as well as the outnumber of NNESTs in comparison to NESTs (p. 77). Nevertheless, Medgyes (1992), the pioneer in the field of teachers' nativeness, argues that the ideal NST is the one who has reached a high degree of proficiency in the students' mother tongue; while the ideal NNEST is the one who has possessed "near-native proficiency" in English (p. 348-349).

Davies (2003) discusses the characterisation of being a native speaker from the linguistic and sociolinguistic standpoint. Davies concludes that it is hard to differentiate the non-native English speaker from the native speaker "except by autobiography" (p. 213). He sets out five categories of native speakers:

1. Native speaker by birth (that is, by early childhood exposure);
2. Native-speaker (or native-speaker-like) by being an exceptional learner;
3. Native speaker through education using the target-language medium (the lingua franca case);
4. Native speaker by virtue of being a native user (the post-colonial case);
5. Native speaker through long residence in the adopted country (Davies, 2003, p. 214).

Categories 2, 3 and 5 are commonly seen in EFL contexts. Teachers belong to these categories are marked as native English speakers while they are not purely native. Thus, they are best described as 'semi-native' speakers (non-born natives). From the researcher's experience as a director of an EFL foundation program at TVTC for four years, some semi-native English teachers who were not born in native English county and they just hold the passport of these countries pretend to be always native-like despite their actual linguistic deficiency that even low EFL students can notice.

The ideal English teacher

The debate about who is an ideal native speaker (as discussed above) also occurs when we ask about who is the ideal teacher of English (NEST or NNEST). The literature addresses this issue theoretically and practically, and so far, there is no consensus on this controversial issue. The reason is that researchers have investigated this dilemma from

different angles such as pedagogical, linguistic or sociolinguistic. So, what seems to be linguistically preferable (say NEST) may not be necessarily the same when it comes to teaching. For instance, NEST can be a perfect linguistic model for most EFL students but they might lack some essential pedagogical or sociolinguistic skills.

Phillipson (1992) claims that the ideal teacher has near native-speaker proficiency in the target language, and "comes from the same linguistic and cultural background as the learners" (p. 15). Similarly, Mullock (2010) argues that a good English teacher does not have to be NEST. Mullock, however, states that the ideal EFL teacher is the one who possesses adequate knowledge of English and its culture, teaches the subject matter content effectively and completely, and respects the cultural norms and beliefs (p. 109). In their review of the research addressing the issue of 'who is best qualified to teach English', Park and Shin (2010, p. 100) conclude that NEST is assumed to be superior in linguistic competence as compared to NNEST and is considered a holder of authentic English, whereas NNESTs have better awareness of grammar knowledge, language learning experiences that they can share with the students.

Some authors have argued that linguistic competency of English teachers, based on their nativeness, should not be overestimated at the expense of other qualities of a good teacher. These qualities according to Medgyes (1992) are motivation, aptitude, perseverance, experience, and education (p. 342). In the same vein, Mullock (2010, p. 89) claims that a quality English teacher is the one who possesses "superior content knowledge and superior pedagogical knowledge" regardless of their nativeness.

Astor (2000) suggests that there are at least three specific areas of competencies that a qualified English teacher should be professional in: knowledge of "pedagogy, methodology, and psycho and applied linguistics" (p. 18). He (Astor, 2000) asserts that it is not sufficient for the English language teacher to be only competent in one of these areas. Likewise, Moussu (2006, p. 30) also assumes that both NESTs and NNESTs should possess abundant of knowledge in linguistics, methodology, pedagogy and grammar. With these views, we cannot monopolise the ideal English teacher in a such dichotomy (being a NEST or NNEST) as this is somewhat unclear.

It is to be realised that very little research has deeply investigated the implications of having NESTs to see whether (or not) they can remedy the weaknesses that most in EFL context suffer from. Also, the relevant research has also shown inconsistent findings about how the nativeness of EFL teachers is perceived in EFL instruction. The review of Moussu & Llurda (2008) reveals that EFL students recognize that experience and professionalism are more significant than native language backgrounds, and research shows that different teaching contexts and other sociolinguistic variables could affect EFL students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs (p. 328).

In Mahboob's (2004) study, the strongest finding for NESTs shows that they are seen to be the best in teaching speaking skills, vocabulary and culture. Likewise, Tae-Il (2017) examines the effects of the differences between NESTs and NNESTs on students' attitudes

and motivation toward learning English, and shows that NESTs outperform NNESTs in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and Western cultures (p. 163). Alike, Barany & Zebari (2018, p. 167) propose that NESTs are better in teaching speaking, pronunciation, listening and culture.

Mahboob & Lipovsky (2010) scrutinize the perceptions of nineteen Japanese high school students attending four-month English orientation program by conducting a linguistic analysis of their texts about their NESTs and NNESTs. The main findings of the study are that NESTs are generally praised for their spoken skills (specifically their pronunciation and conversation) and knowledge of vocabulary (including slang and idioms) (p. 171). Seemingly, the Saudi EFL students have a strong belief in learning English by NESTs as it found in Elyas & Nouraldeen (2014, p. 57).

Therefore, at least so far, we might be able to claim that there is no agreement among researchers regarding the superiority of NESTs over NNESTs. In Phillipson's latest review about this issue, he asserts that being a NEST of English in many European countries play almost no role in recruitment as possessing relevant qualifications is what is important "irrespective of nationality or mother tongue" (Phillipson, 2016, p. 83). In addition, McMullen (2014) recommends that the top-management should "make sure that they attract and retain the best educators in the world whether they are found locally or overseas" (p. 138).

In brief, the good English teacher seems to be the one who has effective linguistic and pedagogical competences regardless of their nativeness or mother tongue. However, the ideal English teacher is preferably a well-qualified NEST, or NNEST but with advanced linguistic competency that could help them to provide EFL students with authentic English.

Native English instruction in Saudi Arabia

Historically, due to the massive shortage of qualified Saudi English teachers in the old educational system (Barnawi & Al-hawsawi, 2017, p. 203), English was taught by neighboring Arabic-speaking countries such as Egypt, Sudan and Jordan. During that time, reading and lexical comprehension were the ultimate learning goals. Now, with the contemporary shift towards comprehending verbal communication and language fluency, NESTs are brought in to achieve this goal instead of NNESTs (either Saudis or Arabic native tongue). In theory, mastering oral English depends "on practicing and repeating the patterns produced by a native speaker" (Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens, 1984 p. 16 cited in Ashraf, 2018, p. 136).

This mainstream approach is also highly valued by EFL learners as asserted by Al-Nawrasy (2013, p. 252) and Elyas & Nouraldeen (2014, p. 57). Pedagogically speaking, Richards & Rodgers (2014) argue that theories put more focus on the teaching methods such as Content, Task and Communicative-based that follow the bottom-up process rather than on Grammar or Structural methods that follow the top-down process. This owes to the present

transformation to orally grasp language learning instead of grammatical or written comprehension.

The review of the literature reveals that adapting native English instruction intensely in Saudi EFL programs could be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the current trend towards the 'internalization' of Saudi's educational system as suggested by Phan and Barnawi, (2015, p. 4) makes the Ministry of Education adopt native English companies along with their native speakers. Secondly, there have been ongoing efforts by policy makers to address the gap of language proficiency among the Saudi graduates, as confirmed by Barnawi & Al-hawsawi (2017, p. 208). So, having NESTs or native English instruction is seen as an endeavour to remedy this weakness that Saudi students possess. It becomes a 'fashionable trend' not only in the Saudi milieu but also in some other EFL countries to meet this shift in language teaching especially in the intensive preparatory EFL programs. For instance, Al-Nawrasy (2013) conducts a study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to measure the effects of the NESTs (6 teachers) on students' achievement in speaking skills (196 students). The results show that NESTs of English are better than the NNESTs in "teaching speaking" (p. 252), and that they are "best suited to teach English, in particular, the speaking skill, whether in EFL or ESL-English as a second language contexts" (p.244). Likewise, Alhawsawi (2013) states that many universities in the Gulf countries see NESTs as "perfect teachers" (p. 148). In theory, lack of the exposure to the target language as articulated by its native speakers could be a "reason for the English majors' weakness in communication (Rabab'ah, 2003, p. 188).

Generally, the research findings in the Saudi EFL context reveal two opposite readings about NEST. They either support the notion of having NESTs (Alseweed, 2012; Al-Shumaimeri 2013; and Ismaiel, 2017) or do not follow this mainstream viewpoint (Alshehri, 2016 and Alghofaili & Elyas, 2017 and Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019).

For instance, Alseweed (2012) carries out a study at Qassim University with 169 Saudi male novice university students about their views of NESTs and discovers that there is a statistically significant difference in the respondents' perceptions in favour of NESTs (p. 42). Al-Shumaimeri (2013) investigates the impact of an intensive English language program on EFL students' motivation in the preparatory year program at King Saud University. The study reveals that exposing students to NESTs and authentic materials for a long period of time "offers them an opportunity to cope with and understand new terms, expressions, and native speaker's styles of writing and EFL ways of social and cultural behaviour" (p. 30). This study also shows that teaching EFL students by NESTs has advantages if students are given appropriate time as this would increase their motivation and their desire to learn. Ismaiel (2017) evaluates the differences between NESTs and NNESTs working at Taif University. The sample is 609 Saudi men and women EFL students in English language preparatory year and 51 teachers (20 males and 31 females). The results show that "there exist notable discrepancies between native and foreign English-speaking instructors in the EFL Saudi students' achievement in favour of NESTs" (p. 156).

On the other hand, Alshehri (2016) implements a longitudinal study that focused on examining the implications of native English program for technical college students. The survey's sample is 42 teachers and 241 students, and the test sample is 1,414 students. The main findings of this study reveal that the number of graduates in three years is 439 (31%). This failure has been ascribed to some factors such as "large class sizes (43 students per class), unqualified NESTs, and a very low level of students" (Alshehri, 2016, p. 433). Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) examines the effect of NESTs and NNESTs on 18 EFL university students at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. The study explores how teachers' background and accents influence the students' achievement in EFL skills. The main findings of this study are: a) teachers' nativeness and backgrounds have no significant effects on the EFL Saudi students' learning processes, b) teachers' competence and experience are the things that make the teachers qualified, regardless of their nationalities, c) the teacher's accent has an effect on students (p. 1-8). Finally, Elyas & Alghofaili (2019) conducts an experimental study aimed to investigate whether NESTs or NNESTs have any impact on the EFL learners' language proficiency in the Saudi EFL situation by adopting pretest-posttest design. One group is taught by a NEST and the other by a NNEST. The findings indicate that teachers' nativeness and backgrounds have no significant influence on the Saudi EFL learners' speaking skills. NESTs have no influence on students' achievements in listening skill. Also, Saudi EFL students "can equally perform in classes taught by NESTs or NNESTs" (p. 27).

Research Paradigm

Sample of the study

The population of this research is represented in the students of the intensive English language program at TVTC, as there are 13 programs in different regions of the Kingdom (8 males and 5 female's sites). The selection of the sample follows the cluster sampling approach. This type of sampling is ideal when it is "impossible or impractical to compile a list of the elements composing the target population" (Babbie, 2007, p. 218). There are 175 students in Jeddah's site distributed in seven classes. Selecting the participants, afterwards, is randomly executed: 25 students from the evening shift and 21 from the morning. In total, the sample of the test is 46 students representing 26% of the total number.

Design of the study

This study adopts standardized test (CEPT) method to investigate the amount of progress that has been made from the native instruction after a certain period of time of study. Sopha & Nanni (2019) argue that standardized tests are normally used to "evaluate the success of educational programs, including language programs" (p. 1361). They can also maximize the validity and quality of the evaluation (Stufflebeam and Zhang, 2017, p. 9-10). The current study adopts a standardized test in two different occasions of the programme (at the beginning and after two months of students' study).

CEPT is one of the Cambridge English tests. It is developed by University of Cambridge (www.cambridgeenglish.org). According to this official website, CEPT is an online

adaptive test of general English, testing the skills of reading, listening and language knowledge (grammar and vocabulary). The test lasts for almost thirty minutes and it is auto-marked. The results are made available instantly for the candidates. Additionally, the results are reported as an overall score on a scale of 0-50, with referencing to the CEFR level from Pre-A1–C2. Also, CEPT as among other Cambridge English Tests that considered to be the only certificated tests referred to in the CEFR as being definitely aligned to it by a long-term research programme and developed using the framework as a benchmark (Cambridge English for life, 2020). The candidates are assessed against particular target knowledge skills and abilities of what they candidate can or cannot do.

The data are statistically scrutinized via SPSS (paired samples t-test: 2-tailed) to determine if there are any significant differences between the mean scores of the same group on the (pre-post) test. Eta Squared equation " η^2 " is also used to measure the effect size. To protect anonymity and confidentiality, the students were given certain codes in both pre and post-tests. These codes are used to identify each student instead of his personal information.

Validity of CEPT

The validity of the test is statistically checked through discriminative validity (high and low groups validity). It is done by using independent samples 't' test for separate equal two samples, the pilot study subjects are assigned to high and low groups according to their scores (Al-Bana'a, 2017, p. 175).

The details are given in the following table:

Table (1) T test details for the initial difference between high and low groups

Group	N	Mean	S.D	Df	T value	Sig
High	15	26.06	4.60	28	5.59	0.000
Low	15	14.80	6.30			

Sig \leq 0.05

As it is shown in Table (1), the obtained T value of the test is significant at 0.05 level because its significance value is less than significance level (0.05). Consequently, this result indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of high and low groups in the test. Hence, we can say that the CEPT has high discriminative validity.

Reliability of CEPT

To measure the reliability of the CEPT, Cronbach's Alpha method is used as in the following table. It is statistically applied to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of test items to see how are they consistent by correlating the score for each scale item with the total score for each test (Cortina, 1993, p. 99).

Table (2) The reliability of the of the CEPT using Cronbach's Alpha method

No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
35	0.801

As shown above, the value of the reliability coefficient of CEPT is found 0.801 which indicates that the test is very good reliable according to DeVellis (1991, p. 85).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first question to be answered here: *Are there significant differences between students' pre and post results in CEPT test?*

The following table reveals the students' scores in CEPT (pre and post) along with the equivalent to CEFR scale.

Table (3) Students' pre and post test results in CEPT

Pre-Test Results				Post-Test Results		
Serial	Entry Codes	Score	CEFR level	Entry Codes	Score	CEFR level
1	DR58L-N2NFP	44	B2	1UQ5S-JDBKS	50	C1
2	W18C1-1BPKP	25	A2	4TWCV-XVDBX	32	B1
3	71DUV-HNEVV	41	B2	7ULML-WQXBS	46	B2
4	CXKY6-Z5LKJ	22	A2	fE73YK-M4UAB	22	A2
5	57X12-JZ7CN	28	A2	6V41B-HD826	35	B1
6	8LLA3-WW2BX	22	A2	WN16S-3A7CS	50	C1
7	VLM85-TJDPN	38	B1	ZHC3Q-RE81F	40	B2
8	WALL5-BE5EP	38	B1	2TLTL-E7GNK	39	B1
9	434R4-CGA74	12	A1	8RBTM-B4WBZ	46	B2
10	2T55S-V14WB	25	A2	CPH8Y-388RX	50	C1
11	BR8G7-D45K8	34	B1	QA5QV-K3H66	36	B1
12	CK8VE-WMDTK	30	B1	Z6GEV-ZLC58	41	B2
13	HL6TM-ZNFW2	30	B1	AB7MV-17X84	41	B2
14	JXBR6-MXRVP	21	A2	QRZ75-27BHQ	38	B1

15	JVRC8-S8XYT	22	A2	1QLWA-ARYD4	26	A2
16	SSIT5-26SJP	48	B2	XDEWT-H1AB1	50	C1
17	4U1X2-PTAHM	38	B1	NU5NL-5KQ3C	37	B1
18	WVMJ4-31SKS	39	B1	13MPG-A2WLJ	41	B2
19	CEEKE-WAACA	23	A2	JMSVH-4NDG6	22	A2
20	42GUQ-KNPDT	23	A2	3SJN4-WBW8T	40	B2
21	7MAQV-CLQ2X	43	B2	XCZ8F-7JXEB	45	B2
22	Z2PEG-N2CWJ	23	A2	Y1NJF-7H6N8	26	A2
23	KKZSD-AP326	10	A1	Y6BAX-S3QJN	21	A2
24	AEWMT-VRVCA	35	B1	NUUWK-C5G55	34	B1
25	KRJBZ-ZN53A	37	B1	X4M8M-LVQMY	41	B2
26	QVU68-RUFLD	37	B1	U3467-FEC6E	44	B2
27	K4VTH-ZBN54	50	C1	HYL16-WEB58	50	C1
28	U55WV-YP6YD	30	B1	MX5KH-HPTD6	30	B1
29	BT61U-HBP2P	46	B2	BPXWQ-QYL3H	48	B2
30	FMHZ3-Z1XVJ	11	A1	YERNV-TZNRH	14	A1
31	FVU6N-FW7ZP	31	B1	NAMHP-APQGP	33	B1
32	L57CX-UADLC	32	B1	Z3JB2-VVU14	40	B2
33	1YAG8-JBLYG	25	A2	ABBF2-M1L7K	35	B1
34	N4UQU-58RQQ	39	B1	N33GG-UGUQC	43	B2
35	1AGAR-WGERX	31	B1	T1P62-21MNX	36	B1
36	6PWYW-1XALZ	16	A1	ESK7P-S84NN	43	B2
37	GUY2J-YN6TB	11	A1	4F4UN-KP287	39	B1
38	1NCL3-R6ZBV	30	B1	87W1Y-YXART	36	B1
39	E4VLF-87S6Q	25	A2	5WJGU-TZCZ7	32	B1
40	81FMZ-W3T4Z	22	A2	11ZQP-WQK2S	37	B1
41	ZFSLB-GU543	39	B1	CGARA-3SFT3	48	B2
42	7MHP8-1HLRT	37	B1	VTR68-HBX1K	38	B1
43	FQMLZ-W8GEG	28	A2	Q6QBY-V7J2C	33	B1

44	F5ESM-MLHU4	10	A1	76UYJ-FX1NL	19	A1
45	4LM88-BK31E	50	C1	RZRQ7-81QHD	50	C1
46	GZH7L-NA2UJ	32	B1	YSLL1-3CAUC	37	B1

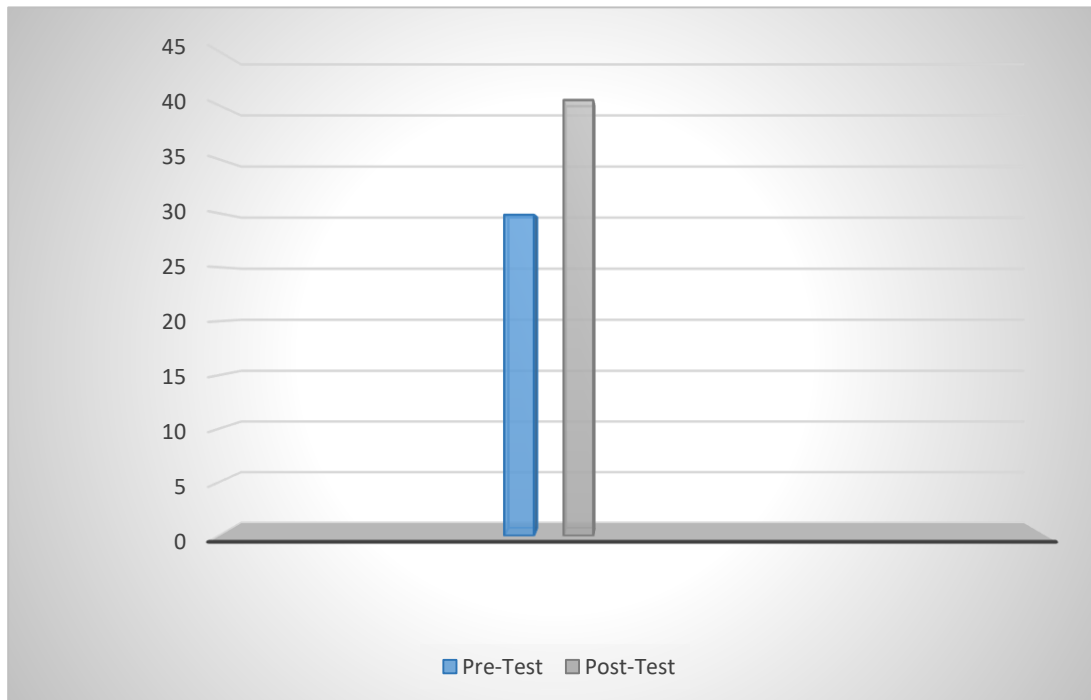
The codes are auto-generated at CEPT portal: <https://www.metritests.com/metrica/default.aspx>

To statistically answer this question, the paired sample T-test is used. The details are given in the following table:

Table (4) The paired samples t-test of CEPT according to the pre and post application

Application	No	Mean	S.D	Df	T value	Sig
Pre-test	46	29.85	11.18	45	8.25	0.000
Post-test	46	40.48	7.34			

According to Table (4), it can be noticed that there are statistical significant differences between pre-test and post-test where is the value of significance = 0.000 which is less than $\alpha=0.05$ in favor of the post-test. The mean of the post-test (40.48) is higher than the mean of the pre-test (29.85). The same details are presented in the following graph.



Graph (1) The mean scores between pre and post results in the CEPT

To find out the effect size of native instruction on students' linguistic progress, the Eta squared equation is used. It is indicated that if the computed value is equal or less than (0.01) that means the effect size is simple, if the computed value is equal or higher than (0.06) that means the effect size is moderate and if the computed value is equal or higher than (0.14) that means the effect size is large (Cohen, 1988 cited in Lakens, 2013, p. 7).

The details are given in the following table:

Table (5) The effect size of native instruction on students' linguistic progress

T Value	Df	Effect Size	Interpretation
8.25	45	0.60	Large

It can be seen from the above table that there is a large positive effect size of adopting native instruction on students' linguistic progress since the value of effect size (0.60) is higher than (0.14).

This statistical significance of this type of instruction on students' performance is in line with some research studies that do value NESTs' instruction in the Saudi EFL context such as Alseweed (2012), Al-Shumaimeri (2013), Hussain et al., (2016) and Ismaiel, (2017).

Nevertheless, this positive finding of this study contradicts with other studies that reveal that NESTs' instruction has no statistical significance on the achievement of the Saudi EFL students such as Alshehri (2016), Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) and Elyas & Alghofaili (2019). Similarly, Al-Nawrasy (2013) and Li & Zhang (2016) find out that NEST instruction has no significant difference over NNEST on EFL students as a result of the nativeness of the teacher.

To answer the second question: ***Do low level students benefit more from native English instruction than intermediate students?***

This study discloses that low level students (A1) make more improvement than intermediate (B2); as it shown in Table (3). Out of five B2 students, there are only two students who perform significantly in the post-test (become C1). On the other hand, there are four A1 students (out of 6) who perform significantly in the post-test (become A2, B1 or B2). Relatively, Serrano (2011) finds out that intermediate EFL students benefit from intensive English instruction than advanced students do.

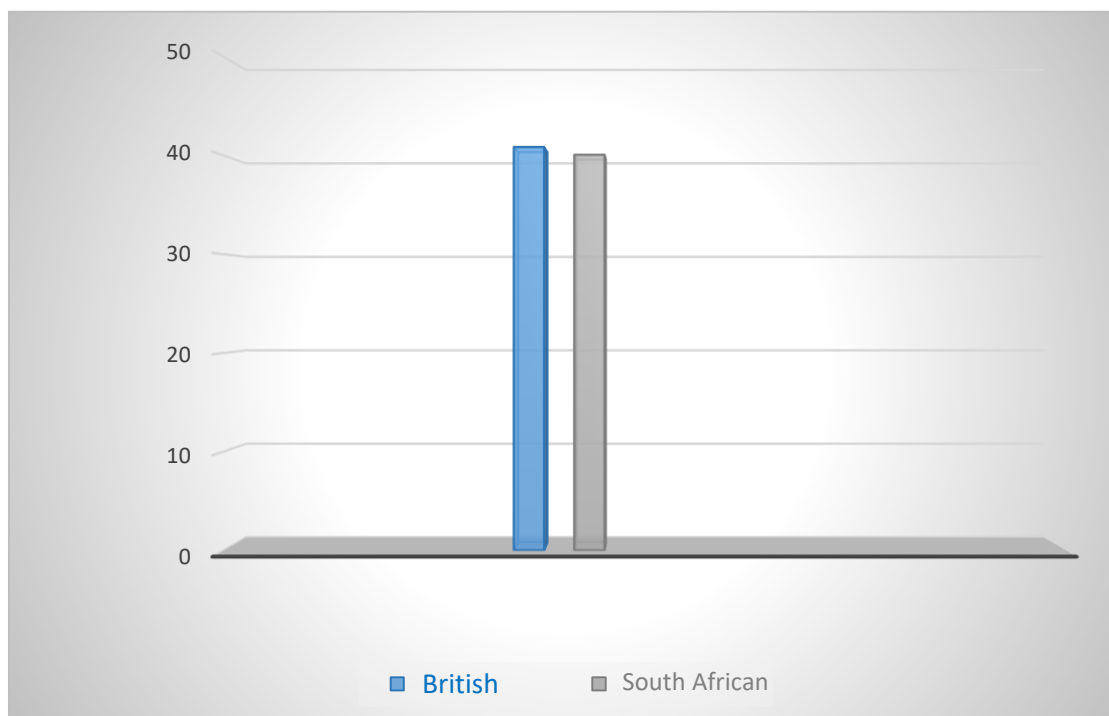
To answer the third question: ***Are there significant differences of CEPT scores according to the nationality of NEST?***

To answer this question, the independent sample T-test is used. The details are presented in the following table:

Table (6) The independent sample T-test according to the nationality of NEST

Nationality	No. of students	Mean	S.D	Df	T Value	Sig
British	25	40.84	7.30	44	0.361	0.720
South Africa	21	40.05	7.56			

The above results indicate that there is no statistical difference in the mean scores of students in the CEPT post-test according to the nationality variable of NEST where the significance value = 0.720 which is more than $\alpha=0.05$. The mean scores of the group taught by a British teacher is 40.84 while in the South African group's teacher is 40.05. The same details are presented in the following graph.



Graph (2) The mean scores of students in the CEPT post-test according to nationality

This finding support Alghofaili & Elyas (2017) who find out that “teachers’ competence and experience are the things that make the teachers qualified, regardless of their nationalities”. Walkinshaw & Oanh (2012) also confirm that qualifications, experience, or enthusiasm are important than teachers’ nativeness. Likewise, as it discussed earlier in the literature, Phillipson (2016) states that nationality play no significant role in recruitment in many European countries as holding relevant qualifications. This study, therefore, adopts Elyas & Alghofaili (2019) recommendation that asserts that policy makers should hire qualified EFL teachers regardless of their nationality or mother tongue.

This statistical significance of students' achievement in this program is primarily attributed to good quality of the teachers besides their nativeness. For instance:

- Four teachers (out of 7) are either holding Bachelor degree or Master in Education/teaching.
- All of the seven teachers have adequate experience in teaching English (e.g., 4, 7, 10,11,13, 20, 21 years).
- Five teachers have previous context experience in Saudi (e.g., 2, 2, 3, 4, and 4 years). One teacher has 8 years in UAE.
- Two teachers have specialized preparation in EFL teaching. One has CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and the other has TEFL (Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language).

Having well-qualified and experienced NESTs is resulted in boosting students' achievement in such native instruction programs as it argued by Medgyes (1992) Moussu & Llurda, (2008) and Alghofaili & Elyas (2017).

Since each EFL context has its own distinctive characteristics, there are several contextual factors that could positively affect students' achievement along with good quality of NESTs. These are students' motivation, the quality of the students, the adopted curriculum and the small class size

Firstly, we can argue that the students possess high level of motivation in this program. It is not part of any compulsory course of their study. The students are deliberately and willingly registered for the purpose of developing their English proficiency. They are not even paid (get monthly grant) as it is taken place in all other preparatory programs in Saudi Arabia. Hence, they have the strong desire to learn. This may not be encountered at many learning contexts at the Saudi EFL. For instance, having low motivated students is seen as a major hindrance in preparatory English programs (Alshehri, 2016). However, exposing students to such programs may result in increasing their motivation to learn as it found out in Shumaimeri's (2013) study.

Secondly, the good quality of the students is also perceived to be among the main contributors of their significant success in this program. For instance, almost 70% of the examined sample is B1 level and above in CEFR taxonomy at pre-test (see Table 3). Of these, there are 10.8% upper-intermediate level and 4.3% advanced. In addition, these students are admitted in this program based on the GPA (grade point average) as they are the highest academic achievers in their diploma certificate from TVTC. So, this program is different from other preparatory programs that have low level input of students. For example, Alseweed & Daif-Allah's (2012) study reveals that 60-80% of the accepted students at intensive preparatory program in Qassim University are at the beginner or false beginner level of English language achievement.

Thirdly, the adopted curriculum *Let's Talk! English* is designed based on CEFR levels and this could result in product-oriented learning through mastering each level. It is to be mentioned here that CEPT is also adhere to CEFR taxonomy.

The last factor to be consider in this regard is the class size. It is ranged between 21 to 25 students in one class of this program. This helps students to benefit from the class time to participate, do class and online work and receive feedback. I have also observed this active learning environment during my class visits. Having large class size is a great challenge for EFL student achievement as it is shown in the literature, for example, Liton's (2013) study -100 students- and Alshehri (2016) 43 students per class. Shah, Hussain, & Nasseef, (2013) assert that large class sizes have a negative impact on students' learning.

CONCLUSION

This appraisal study sheds some light on the implications of native English instruction in the Saudi EFL context. It explores if there is a significant difference on the students' achievement according to the teachers' nativeness and nationality through implementing standardized test (CEPT) method: pre and post design. The main findings reveal that teaching English by NESTs in the Saudi EFL milieu has a statistical significance on the improvement of the students' achievement. The effect size of applying native English instruction is, moreover, considered to be positively high. This study discloses that low level students (A1) make more improvement than upper intermediate (B2). However, this significance has not encountered when it comes to teachers' nationality. For instance, there is no statistical difference in the mean scores of students in the CEPT post-test according to the nationality of NEST (British versus South African).

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- NESTs should not be employed for simply being native. There are also some variables such as qualification and experience that need be considered in recruitment.
- Applying standardized benchmarks (e.g., CEPT) in evaluation studies need to be adopted for more valid judgments.

Future Research

Further research is highly needed to evaluate the definite role of language intensity and language nativeness in EFL instruction. For instance, shall we attribute students' success or failure in such a program to the amount of exposure (intensity) or to the type of exposure (NEST) or to the combination of both?

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