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Abstract

This study examines the presence of native-speakerism attitudes among the language students of The University of the West Indies, St Augustine and evaluates their perception of a competent language teacher in relation to the importance they place on whether the teacher is a native or non-native language speaker. The study was conducted by interviewing 5 students each from the three levels of the foreign language programmes at the university to understand their perception of the native and non-native speaker teacher, as well as characteristics that they think are essential for a highly competent language teacher. Findings show that the students preferred the native speaker and proved the existence of native-speakerism attitudes, however they assign traits to their ideal language teacher that do not place being a native speaker a priority. This demonstrates the lack of importance of being taught by a native speaker is in having an adequate language learning process. Additionally, the participants highlighted the benefits of having a mixture of both teachers in their language acquisition. They understood the benefit of being taught by both a native speaker and a non-native speaker in their language learning process. They also suggest the appointment of each type of teacher for particular components, which showed that one teacher may be stronger than the other in some areas.

Key Terms: native speaker, non-native speaker, nativeness, native-speakerism attitude.
Introduction

The concept of native-speakerism is a widespread topic in the English Language Teaching Journal and draws the attention of those who attempt to understand this notion and seek to evaluate its effect on the language teaching process. According to Holliday, native-speakerism is an ideology that maintains the belief that native speaker English teachers are the ideal and most competent teachers of English since they represent a ‘Western culture’ that produced the English language and the appropriate method of teaching it (385). The name of this investigation is “Native-Speakerism: Students’ Perception of Good Language Teaching” and it seeks to explore the existence of native-speakerism attitudes among the language students of The University of the West Indies, St Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago and the characteristics that students think are necessary for a competent language teacher. This study will determine whether being taught by a native speaker teacher is essential to the language learning process of the students. Previous studies about the treatment of native speakers compared to non-native teachers, the connection between native-speakerism and authority and the teacher preference of students were consulted in order to obtain a general understanding of the concept and to aid in the interpretation of the data collected. The investigation took place in the Center of Language Learning at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus, where the language students were available and willing to be interviewed. There were also empty classrooms readily available, which facilitated the interviews to be conducted privately. At this institution, all the teachers for each component of the foreign language degree programmes, mainly Spanish and French, are native speakers. Thus, the intended result of this study is that the participants will possess a native-speakerism attitude and they will suggest that being taught by a native speaker is essential for their adequate learning of a language.
Rationale

The topic of native-speakerism interests me since after excessive research, I learnt that I possessed a native-speakerism attitude on the account of holding the idea that native speaker language teachers were more competent in teaching a language than a non-native speaker teacher. This revelation was the foundation of this study as it encouraged me to investigate the presence of this attitude in other language students. Additionally, most of the previous investigations conducted on this topic focused on the treatment of both the native and non-native speaker teachers as well as the benefits that they offer to the language teaching profession (Lasagabaster 21). However, only few studies focused on the students’ personal perception and preference of these teachers, as well as the qualities that students associate to a competent language teacher (Lasagabaster 21). These studies are all based on the English language learning process, which suggests that this concept lacks the availability of research based on the learning processes of other foreign languages. Therefore, this study will open channels for further investigation to be conducted on the existence and treatment on native-speakerism attitudes in the teaching process of other languages.

Aim

This investigation seeks to examine if students contain a native-speakerism attitude towards their language teaching process of a foreign language at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. In doing this, the participants’ personal perception of the characteristics they value in a competent language teacher will be evaluated in order to assess if being taught by a native speaker plays an important role in effective language teaching. The main objective of this study is to answer the question, “Does the ideology that native-speakerism promotes play an important role in effective language teaching?”, thus adding to
the current body of literature about native-speakerism and providing a general understanding of what students consider a competent language teacher.
Literature Review

The native-speakerism attitude that a foreign language should be taught by a native speaker is widespread and has developed negative stereotypes of the competence of non-native language teachers (Lasagabaster 22). In order to comprehend this concept, previous literature about this topic were consulted with regards to understanding this ideology and the perceptions held by the English Language Teaching community (Selvi 187).

Understanding the term “Native Speakerism”

According to Holliday, native-speakerism is the ideology that native speaker English teachers are more competent in their use and methods of teaching the English language because of their Western background (385). He also evaluates the terms ‘native’ and ‘non-native speaker’, which he says are not feasible on linguistic grounds but are important to the overall understanding of the language teaching profession. Holliday suggests that native-speakerism has impacted the lives of both teachers and students in relation to employment opportunities and language learning methods. The culture and teaching methods of the native speaker teachers are glorified while negative labels are placed on non-native speaker teachers (Holliday 386). These labels have created an unfavourable stereotype of the non-native speaker, which has imposed unto them the image of the ‘other’ (Holliday 386). Holliday implies that the promotion of native-speakerism is related to colonialism in that it tries to encourage a sense of superiority within the methods used in the language teaching and learning processes, while emphasizing the fact that non-native speakers are incapable of providing a proper understanding of the language Holliday (386). He proposes that the society needs to overcome this idea of native-speakerism by understanding the level of the prejudices present within the field of language acquisition and by relinquishing the negative stereotype on non-native speakers.
General Perception of Native and Non-Native Speaking Language Teachers

Most literature on the topic of native-speakerism explore the esteem in which native and non-native speaker teachers are held and evaluates the capabilities of the both types of teachers. It is evident that native speakers are glorified in the language teaching profession while non-native speakers are seen as unable to communicate effectively and are underdeveloped in their communication skills (Holliday 386, Selvi 187). Some researchers argue that non-native speakers do not hold the same level of authority and value as native speaker teachers since they are not considered to be ‘real’ speakers of the language (Llurda 105). This perception is apparent in Medgyes evaluation of non-native speaker teachers in which he says that they contain a ‘language deficit’ and are inferior to the native speakers who are suggested to be better suited to teach a language (Llurda 106). According to Holliday, these native-speakerism attitudes are born from the preconceived notion of the Western culture being superior, therefore giving in to the idea of native English speakers and their teaching methodology being ideal in teaching the English language (361). Selvi suggests that this negative stereotype contributes to the unethical preference of native speakers in the workplace and the employment discrimination against non-native speaker teachers, in which they attain lower professional status, even though they account for a large percentage of English language teachers worldwide (188).

On the other hand, other studies aimed to prove the worth of non-native speaker language teachers and the valuable contribution they make to the language teaching profession. In one of his previous studies, Llurda assessed the teaching ability of the non-native speaker as compared to that of the native speaker, in which he concluded that the non-native speaker contains “bilingual and bicultural” knowledge that is necessary to teach a language. This belief contrasts with Canagarajah’s understanding of the Chomskyan notion that implies that “the native speaker is the authority on the language” and “provides an
understandable advantage” to grammatical judgements (Canagarajah 78). However, Canagarajah counters this notion by suggesting that multilingual speakers may have a deeper understanding of English grammar as a result of their “complex language awareness” (80). He suggests that “language teaching is an art, a science and a skill that requires complex pedagogical preparation and practice” that can only be obtained by those who are qualified, native and non-native, to teach the language (Canagarajah 80). Non-native speaker teachers also appear to have empathy with the students since they experienced the process and difficulties of learning a language and as a result, they encourage the students by being role models (Llurda 108). Their patience and understanding of the students’ learning process gives them an advantage over native speaker teachers.

Students’ Perception of Native and Non-Native Speaking Language Teachers

Lasagabaster’s research paper examines the perspective of language students with regards to their preference in teacher, either native speaker, non-native speaker or both teachers in the team-teaching approach. This investigation takes into consideration previous studies that have suggested that the ideology of native-speakerism has promoted the preference of native speakers in the workplace, although they may lack the necessary qualifications required to teach a language. This question of qualifications relates to previous studies in China which show native English speakers being employed as language teachers with little to no qualifications such “an associate degree or as little as a US high school diploma” which demonstrates the native-speakerism attitude of nativeness as a synonym for being qualified (Jeon and Lee 54). Additionally, Thomas suggests the preconceived notion that being a native speaker of a language suggests that one is qualified to teach it (6). The results of Lasagabaster’s study show that the majority of the students prefer native speaker teachers, while the number of those who did not have a clear preference was also high and the
number of those preferring non-native speaker teachers being the lowest. However, a large number of students favoured the team-teaching approach of both native and non-native teachers when given the choice since the results showed that the students understood the value of both teachers. In examining their teacher preference throughout different educational levels, it was clear that the preference for native speaker teachers was greater at the higher educational levels. He implied that the results of the study were not based on students’ personal bias since majority of the participants are prospective language teachers and preferred the native speaker teacher instead of leaning towards the non-native speaker teacher who shares commonality in employment opportunities and status (Lasagabaster 33). The study shows that students believe that native speaker teachers are more valuable at the higher levels of education because of the linguistic competence required at these levels. According to the participants “the mastery of the foreign language has to be that of an educated native speaker”, therefore implying that non-native speakers do not possess sufficient proficiency in the language (Lasagabaster 33). Lasagabaster also examined the students’ teacher preference in each language component. For example, the students preferred native speakers for the components of listening, pronunciation and speaking whereas they preferred non-native speakers for the areas of learning strategies and grammar (Lasagabaster 32). The students’ teacher preference is a clear indication that they understood the strength of each teacher in specific components that will aid in their language acquisition, therefore the team-teaching would be ideal since they would be able to benefit from both types of teachers. Overall, the study showed students incline towards native speaker teachers and their overwhelming preference for team-teaching if they were awarded the opportunity.

Another study conducted in Vietnam examined the value that students placed on being taught by a native speaker teacher as compared to the characteristics that are considered essential in a competent teacher in general. Walkinshaw and Duong build on the results from
previous studies which concluded that students from foreign language institutions emphasise the value of learning English from a native speaker teacher instead of a non-native speaker (Native and Non-Native Speaker Teachers in Vietnam). This theory was investigated by evaluating the value that 50 language students of two universities in Vietnam placed on both native and non-native speaker English teachers. A Language Teacher Characteristic framework was developed with characteristics that are considered valuable in an English Language teacher in order to help collect data (Walkinshaw and Duong). A rating survey was then created from this framework to allow the sample to state the importance they placed on native speakerness in relation to other characteristics recorded in the framework. Walkinshaw and Duong also used open ended questionnaires in which the participants expressed their perceived advantages and disadvantages of being taught by both native and non-native speaker English teachers. The participants suggested that six of the seven characteristics mentioned in the framework such as teaching experience, suitable qualification, friendly personality, enthusiasm, informative class and an understanding of students’ culture were more important than the teacher’s native speakerness. However, the results show that native speaker teachers are mainly valued for their accurate pronunciation (Walkinshaw and Duong). Walkinshaw and Duong implied that the teacher’s understanding and devotion to their profession motivated the students to have a better learning experience. This study counters the popular perception of native speakers being the ideal language teachers by proving that students value the characteristics of a competent teacher more than their native speakerness.

The consulted studies and articles provided a general understanding of the native-speakerism ideology as well as the perceptions of both the native and non-native speaker teacher. A majority of the literature presented negative ideas about the non-native speakers as they were considered incompetent in their communication skills while only a few recognised
their contribution to the language teaching profession, such as being a role model to students by reason of experiencing the language learning process themselves. These elements aid in identifying the presence of the native-speakerism attitude in participants of this investigation. Additionally, students’ preference and the qualities they value in teachers were also evaluated in these studies. These ideas provided a foundation for the interpretation of the findings by comparing them to the results of this investigation.
Methodology

This study was conducted by consulting previous literature and studies on the topic of native-speakerism as well as interviewing 15 language students of The University of the West Indies selected through stratified random sampling in order to collect data to analyse the research question. This investigation is qualitative as it collects in-depth information that will aid in the understanding of the thoughts and personal perception of the students in relation to their idea of good language learning. The literature and studies consulted offered a general understanding of the concept of native-speakerism and its impact on the learning process of language students along with the general perception and treatment of both the native speaker and non-native speaker teachers. Additionally, the previous studies provided ideas for the direction of this investigation in relation to research questions and methods as well as a framework for analysing the data collected.

Primary investigations were conducted by means of interviewing 5 students based on availability from each level of the language programme. These students studied a foreign language and had experience being taught by both native and non-native speaker teachers throughout their language learning process, which is an average of 7 years. Thus, these students answered these questions based on their personal perception, since these interviews were done privately as to protect the identity of the participants and to ensure validity in their responses. The research method of using interviews to collect data was chosen with the intention of allowing the participants the ability to fully express their perception of the teachers and to provide the opportunity for further questions based on their responses to aid in the complete understanding of their viewpoint. The sample group was chosen based on
stratified random sampling in order to gather information from students of each level of the language programme and to account for variation in their personal perception throughout the different levels.

These students were asked questions such as the difficulties they have encountered during their language acquisition. They were also asked which type of teacher helped them overcome these problems, in which they explained certain characteristics these teachers possessed that were beneficial to the students in relation to the difficulties they experienced. These questions were asked in order for the participants to reflect on their language learning process and to gather information about the value of these teachers in relation to the adequate teaching of a language. They were also asked which teacher they preferred and their personal perception of each teacher. This question was asked in order to assess if the students possess a native-speakerism attitude with regard to how they view the native and non-native teacher. Furthermore, they were asked to describe their ideal foreign language teacher. As a result, this question gathered information on the characteristics that a language teacher should possess to enhance the learning process of the students. This question also explores the value that students place on being taught by a native speaker.

Furthermore, the information collected from the interviews were illustrated in the form of charts and graphs in order to represent the information, which were then analysed with the research question in mind to explore the students' perception. These results were then evaluated with regard to previous studies in order to identify patterns in the area of native-speakerism.

This study could have been improved by adopting a more structured method of collecting data instead of focusing on a small group that was chosen based on convenience. Having a larger sample group would ensure more accurate information since a variety of ideas and opinions would be presented. Additionally, it was difficult for students to compare
their experience with both teachers since they did not experience them at the same level. In Trinidad and Tobago, non-native speaker teachers usually teach at the secondary school level while native speaker teachers are usually introduced to the language teaching process at the tertiary level. Examining a group that experienced both teachers at the same time would promote validity in this study. However, the investigation is still valuable as it evaluates the students’ perception of good language teaching in-depth to provide a substantial understanding of the students’ language learning process.

This study evaluates the students’ perception of good language teaching and the importance they assign to whether their teachers are native or non-native speakers of the language. It explores the qualities that they believe are suitable for a highly competent foreign language teacher which would be beneficial to their learning of the language.
Findings

The data collected from the interviews helped to identify trends and patterns into the perceptions and language learning preferences of the participants with respect to their idea of a competent foreign language teacher.

When asked about their teacher preference, 6 students were in favour of native speakers, 6 other students were in favour of both native and non-native while only 3 students preferred non-native speakers. These results show an obvious equivalence in the participants’ preference for having a native speaker teacher and both teachers in their language learning process. Additionally, the results show that the students place a higher value on native speaker teachers as compared to the non-native speaker teachers, which is observed in the high number of participants leaning towards the native speakers, including those who preferred a mixture of the both. One student justified their preference for the native speaker by saying that “a non-native cannot be better than a native in his own language”, which can be considered a native-speakerism attitude since the participant suggests that the non-native speaker does not possess linguistic competence of the language. Another response in favour of the natives is “having natives as teachers, you are more exposed to their culture and how they would express certain phrases or words based on the country they are from.” However, like other students, this same participant also presents a benefit of non-native speakers, that is “their vocabulary is easier to understand since we had to learn Spanish, we would have learnt similar words and phrases so we would both use that.” This shows that the students understand the value of both types of teachers.
Table 1
Problems Students Encountered When Learning a Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical rules</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s accent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows some of the problems that students experienced while learning a foreign language. The results show that 7 participants come across problems with grammatical rules, while 6 students labelled the listening component as troublesome as well as 5 students who had difficulties understanding the phrases and vocabulary used by their teachers. These three components together make up the communicative aspects of learning a language, which proves to be difficult for the participants.

Table 2
Teacher that Assisted Students’ with Difficulties Encountered in their Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Non-Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows the students’ opinion of the teacher that helped them overcome the difficulties that they encountered when learning a language. When asked which teacher helped them address their language learning problems effectively, more than half of the participants expressed that the native speaker teachers were capable of helping them overcome the difficulties that they experienced. This shows that the native speaker teachers are competent in teaching the language since they aid the students in their language acquisition by helping them overcome the challenges that they face. However, students also expressed their teacher preference for each component, for example one participant suggested that a non-native speaker teacher would be ideal in the grammar component of language learning since” they would suggest tips and tricks that they used to help them remember the rules” as a result of their own experience in learning the language. Another student enforces this point by saying “Non-natives break it down for us because they had to go through the process themselves.” In addition to this, a student said that “Non-native teachers use examples from their shared culture with the students to explain concepts in order for us to understand.” This suggests that one type of teacher may not be adequate in teaching the language efficiently since each teacher possesses a characteristic that is valuable in a particular component.

Table 3

Characteristics of an Ideal Language Teacher
The table above shows the characteristics that the participants think are necessary for an ideal language teacher. These characteristics were derived from the personal opinions of the participants and are necessary to this study in order to assess how important being a native speaker is to the effective teaching of a foreign language according to the participants. The participants stated characteristics such as having a general cultural understanding of the students and that of the language they teach, having sufficient communication skills in the language they teach and the native language of the students, being a native language teacher, having adequate teaching qualification, being unbiased towards the students, empathising with the students’ learning process, simplifying the lesson content and making the learning process interesting for the students.

The students suggest that the ability to empathise with them and their learning process is the most important trait since it makes it easier to approach teachers with questions about the difficulties they encounter. They also label simplifying the lesson content, being fluent in both languages and qualified as desirable qualities since they will ensure a better comprehension of the language through adequate explanation. One student stated “If I don’t
understand what you are trying to say in Spanish and you cannot explain it in English if need be, then the meaning would be lost” which suggests the importance of a teacher being able to communicate in both languages. Another student said “my grammar teacher in year 1 and 2 was really good and grammar in year 1 and 2 were very difficult and because of his teaching skills, he made me understand the grammar much more.” Additionally, a participant that preferred native speaker teachers said, “Even if they are non-naive, it depends on their skills and their ability to teach the language to the students” which emphasised the need to be qualified. Although less than half of the participants stated being fair, interesting and immersed in the culture of both languages as important traits, they are still consider essential for their language learning process. The nativeness factor was the least mentioned trait, however when they were asked if it was important, the participants suggested that it was not necessary for the effective teaching of a language. According to a participant, “Once the teacher is able to sit with and help you reach success, it does not matter if they are native speakers.”

These results prove that students do not place emphasis on the nativeness factor when learning a language. Instead, the students value qualities that can be found in both native and non-native speaker teachers.

The results showed that the students preferred being taught by a native speaker teacher as compared to a non-native speaker teacher. However, when they were asked to describe their ideal language teacher, only a few mentioned the native speaker trait and when it was brought to the attention of those who did not, they suggested that it was not important. This shows that the participants valued characteristics of a competent teacher in general as compared to being taught by a native speaker.
**Discussion**

The results demonstrate that some participants preferred being taught by native speaker teachers of the cultural exposure to the language while other prefers them because of an expressed native-speakerism attitude. Their experience of being taught by both native and non-native speakers encouraged them to evaluate how the both teachers enhance their learning process. Furthermore, the students do not take the native speaker factor into consideration when describing their ideal teacher, which shows that this quality is not significant for the adequate teaching of a language.

The participants justified their preference of the native speaker teacher based on their personal perception and experience of being taught by both teachers. Some students questioned the credibility and linguistic competence of the non-native speakers which relates to the belief that non-natives do not possess the same level of authority as the native speakers (Llurda 105). This proposal is seen in the assumption put forward by Llurda which states the undisputed belief that “you cannot teach a language unless it is ‘your’ language” (105). Although these assumptions were made with regard to English teachers while this study focused on teachers of other foreign languages, it shows some presence of a native-speakerism attitude since it appeals the low status that non-native speaker teachers hold in the language teaching profession. Other respondents also imply that native speakers have stronger linguistic skills since they are able to “pick up on mistakes faster”. This perception also displays a native-speakerism attitude as it relates to the bias results gathered from Lasagabaster’s study which suggests that native speakers have a greater linguistic competence (24).

On the other hand, some participants counter these positions by implying that “speaking a language does not mean you can teach it” and “even natives themselves don’t know everything and people think that just because they are native, they would automatically
be able to teach”. These perceptions relate to the qualification characteristic examined by Walkinshaw and Duong in their study, in which their sample group labelled as more valuable than being a native speaker. These students show that they value language teachers with sufficient qualifications, which counters the preconceived notion that being a native speaker of a language suggests that one is qualified to teach it (Thomas 6).

Additionally, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus is observed to be showing preference for native speaker language teachers, which is evident since the native speakers outnumber the non-native speaker teachers in the foreign language programmes. The preference of native speaker teachers in the university relates to Lasagabaster’s observation of native speakers being more valuable at the higher educational level (29). The lack of non-native speaker teachers in the foreign languages programmes lead one student to say that it is difficult to measure his teacher preference since he “cannot compare them because of the different levels of education” in which they were experienced. This statement is valid since in Trinidad and Tobago, non-native speakers are usually experienced at the secondary school level while native speakers are experienced at the tertiary level, therefore preventing the students from being taught by both types of teachers at the same educational level. As a result, it difficult to compare their value since they were not experienced under similar circumstances.

Although majority of the students preferred the native speaker teacher when they were asked, they still presented the advantages and disadvantages of being taught by both teachers. This proves that the students may not have been bias in their preference since they recognize the value of each teacher. This idea is similar to Llurda’s observation of students not conforming to preconceived stereotypes about native-speakerism and appreciating the virtues of both teachers (107).
In order to further evaluate the importance that native-speakerism attitudes contain in their language learning process, the participants were asked to describe their ideal language teacher. The students emphasized qualities such as qualifications, their understanding nature towards students and their language learning process and their ability to make the content simple for students to understand. These characteristics are considered more important than the native speaker factor since they allow the teacher to understand the lesson content in a way that will allow them to explain it to the students through the best methods possible to avoid complications and difficulties while learning the language. According to Canagarajah, “language teaching is an art, a science and a skill that requires complex pedagogical preparation and practice” that can only be obtained by those who are qualified, native and non-native, to teach the language (80). This perception of the students’ ideal language teacher is consistent with the study conducted by Walkinshaw and Duong in which they observed that the main characteristics of a competent teacher in general are more important than being a native speaker. Many students did not consider the native speaker factor when describing their ideal language teacher, which suggests that it is not a necessity in the language teaching profession. According to the participants, what is necessary, however, is the ability to teach the lesson content in a manner that engages the students and promotes their complete understanding.

Nonetheless, the participants took the native speaker factor into consideration when describing the teacher that helped them overcome the difficulties that they encountered while learning a language. The participants appointed the native and non-native speaker teachers to the different components of language learning that they think are suitable for the particular qualities that they offer to the language teaching profession. This mixture of both teachers is similar to the team-teaching approach desired by the participants of Lasagabaster’s study, especially since the participants of both studies showed a preference for a non-native speaker
teacher for the Grammar component (28). One participant suggested that students share a common background with non-native speaker teachers in that they both have to learn the language, therefore “they teach you from their learning experience to make it easier for you to understand.” Llurda also mentions this idea of “shared learning experience” as a benefit of non-native speaker teachers (106). This shared experience allow the students to feel comfortable with the teachers since, according to a participant, “They showed me that you need to start somewhere in order to reach up there. They were on our level at some point in time.” Furthermore, Thomas highlights this benefit of non-native teachers in that they offer a “unique perspective” since they have experience in struggling to acquire a language, therefore they can not only “empathize with the students’ struggles but also share stories as well (12). This implies that patience and the ability to explain the lesson content from experience in learning the language are also qualities that are seen as valuable in the language learning process. These observations show that a mixture of both native and non-native teachers in the team-teaching approach are ideal for the students’ learning process.

It is observed that the participants understand the value of both native and non-native speaker teachers. While having their personal preference, the students indicate that being taught by a native speaker is not necessary in their learning process, although it will be beneficial in some components, since other characteristics take precedence.
Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the presence of native-speakerism attitudes in the language students that attend The University of the West Indies, St Augustine and to examine whether they believed being taught by a native speaker was essential to their language acquisition. Through evaluating the participants personal perception of both the native and non-native speaker teacher, the status that they ascribe to each teacher was revealed, as well as the benefits that each teacher offered to the students’ learning process.

Furthermore, analysing the students’ description of their ideal language teacher facilitated a general understanding of the qualities that are required for a competent language teacher as well as determining if being a native speaker plays a vital role in effective language learning. After analysing the results, it is observed that a level of native-speakerism attitudes are present in the perception of the students since the explanations for their teacher preference relate to those from previous literature that suggests stereotypes about the competence and abilities of both teachers. However, the participants also acknowledged the value of the non-native speaker teacher, the most popular being the commonality of going through the process of learning the language.

Additionally, it is observed that the participants understood the values that each type of teacher offer in the adequate learning of a language since the students overlooked the nativeness factor and prioritized qualities such as being qualified, understanding and easily understood as characteristics that are necessary for an effective language teacher. Students also highlighted the benefit of being taught by a mixture of both teachers in a team-teaching approach which will consist of each teacher being specialized in a particular component, such as non-native teachers for Grammar and the native teachers for the Listening and Conversation components. The results of this study can be used to assess the requirements of language teachers in relation to the qualities that the students think are necessary to enhance
their learning process. It can also be used to promote the team-teaching approach, which will be highly beneficial to the students’ complete understanding of the language.
Work Cited

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Appendix

Sample interview 1

Interviewer: Which foreign language do you study?

Interviewee: French and Spanish.

Interviewer: How long have you been studying these languages?

Interviewee: In university or in life?

Interviewer: In life?

Interviewee: More than 10 years. Approximately 11 years.

Interviewer: Do you have any difficulties with learning these foreign languages?

Interviewee: Yes, I think everyone has.

Interviewer: Can you expand on them?

Interviewee: Well French, for example, poses some problems because it’s not as accessible as Spanish and my experience in Colombia as an English Language assistant did not really help me with regards to the French so it was like a year without the French. And even though I tried to attend some classes there, their teachers are not native French speakers although their teachers are Colombians who teach French. They do not have anybody from France or anything like that.

Interviewer: Have you experienced both native and non-native speaker teachers with regard to these languages?

Interviewee: At university, no. All were natives, all have been natives for language, but in secondary school, they were locals, Trinidadians.

Interviewer: Which teacher do you think addressed your problems with learning a language better?

Interviewee: I think it’s difficult to compare the natives and the non-natives because it’s two different levels, high school and university, but if you want my opinion on how the two go
about their ways. The thing is sometimes natives themselves don’t know everything and people think just because they are natives they would automatically be able to teach something or say this and say that. And I think I have experienced that here in university because with regards to non-natives, one thing for sure is that they actually learn everything because they know it’s not their language, so they can actually, I think, explain things better because natives just know that they use it just because and if you have to explain it, even they might be thinking they just know that it’s right. But the non-native teaches understand the necessity for us to understand it, so they would want to break it down in a way that we would understand because they at the moment had to understand it too.

Interviewer: What effect did each teacher have on your foreign language learning process?

Interviewee: It’s the same answer.

Interviewer: Do you think that your perception of these teachers are based on a personal bias?

Interviewee: No, because there are native teachers who know their thing. And they actually studied in the universities and have their degree in the teaching of language. But there are some who have their degree in English and because they came to Trinidad, they would teach Spanish because they can’t really teach English here so having an English degree may not necessarily help them. Probably the ones who have the English degree are the ones who would have more problem explaining:

Interviewer: Describe characteristics of your ideal language teacher?

Interviewee: Doesn’t matter if they are native or not, although it would be nice to have a mix. Fair. Judge you for the level that you’re supposed to be at and not judge you like you’re supposed to be perfect. Understanding and hopefully that they would, like I always say, be the person that you needed in life. So they need to be they person they needed when they were studying the language and a lot of the time they don’t because they act like they never went through the process.
Sample interview 2

Interviewer: Which foreign language do you study?

Interviewee: I study Spanish. I used to study Portuguese but I dropped it.

Interviewer: How long have you been studying these languages?

Interviewee: Since form 1 so that’s 10 years now.

Interviewer: Do you have any difficulties with learning this foreign languages?

Interviewee: Yes, I think my major problem is my orals because I’m only exposed to the language in school and because I don’t live in a country that speaks Spanish, it is more difficult to learn a foreign language.

Interviewer: Have you experienced both native and non-native language teachers?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Which teacher do you think addressed your problems with learning a language better?

Interviewee: My grammar teacher in year 1 and 2, I think he was really good and Spanish grammar was really difficult and because of his teaching skills, he made me understand the grammar much more.

Interviewer: What effect did both teachers have on your language learning process?

Interviewee: Having native speakers as teachers, we are more exposed to their culture and how they would express certain phrases of words based on the country them ae from. We have teachers from Colombia and Spain so they expose us to those cultures, which is very interesting because I like to learn about cultures when I am learning a language as well. And having non-native speakers are helpful as well, because we have a common background and hearing how they would find certain ways to express certain things, I would listen for that to hear how they would express certain phrases because we speak the same language. How we
think might be similar to the way they think because we both think in English. And it’s interesting to see what kind of accent they develop.

Interviewer: What is your personal perception of native speaker teachers and their ability to teach a foreign language efficiently?

Interviewee: I think it’s really good, especially for conversation I think it’s better to have a native speaker because, like I said, they would expose us to the different phrases from the different countries.

Interviewer: And your personal perception of a non-native speaker teacher and their ability to teach a foreign language?

Interviewee: I think it’s good as well. If I can just go back to the native speakers, sometimes it is a little difficult to understand them because of their accent or certain words that they may use, but non-native speakers, like I said, we both…because we had to learn Spanish we would have learnt similar things, similar words and phrases so we would both use that. It’s easier to understand them when they speak because they don’t have the strong accent so you can understand them easier.

Interviewer: Do you think that your perception of these teachers are based on a personal bias?

Interviewee: No, I don’t think so.

Interviewer: Describe characteristics of your ideal language teacher?

Interviewee: I want a teacher who is understanding, who can understand certain challenges that I am facing and try to work with me to better those problems and not get frustrated if I take more time than usual to understand a specific topic. One who is easy to understand because I don’t like having teachers that I cannot understand because it is very difficult to pay attention in class so one with a simple accent that is easily understandable and one who knows how to convey what they want to teach to students who are now learning the language, especially to us as English students.
Interviewer: Does it matter if they are native or non-native?

Interviewee: To me, it does matter sometimes because for grammar, I think it would be better to have a non-native speaker because grammar is very difficult to understand and I think to make the comparison, we need examples in English to be able to compare it in Spanish so I will know what I want to say when I’m speaking in Spanish. I will know how to form a certain phrase or how to say a certain sentence because sometimes I think in English so I would have to translate it so I think that should be taught by a non-native speaker. And the non-native speaker would also have similar understandings so the person be better able to convey the information to us. For speaking, I think native speakers are very helpful because they teach us about the culture and different synonyms and to get accustomed to the different accents and different ways of saying things.
Sample interview 3

Interviewer: Which foreign language do you study?

Interviewee: Spanish.

Interviewer: How long have you been studying these languages?

Interviewee: Since I was in secondary school.

Interviewer: Do you have any difficulties with learning this foreign languages?

Interviewee: Not really just some components like for exams I would realise that I have a challenge, but it’s not really difficult to learn the language.

Interviewer: Have you experienced both native and non-native language teachers?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Which teacher do you think addressed your problems with learning a language better?

Interviewee: The native speakers.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Interviewee: Because the native speakers, they will be able to quicker pick up on the grammatical errors. They tend to have a different spirit so they tend to be more engaging and have the class more fun. It make me more interactive and motivated to learn and get more into the language.

Interviewer: What effect did both teachers have on your language learning process?

Interviewee: The non-native, firstly, help me to see that no body’s perfect, there’s always a beginning. You must start somewhere in order to reach up there. So they would understand the kind of struggles we have to go through because they were on our level at some point in time. So the helped me to feel more confident even if I make mistakes because it’s part of learning the language. Whereas the natives, they will know the difference between a student that is struggling and a student that is right there, especially in the way you speak and the way
you write. They also speak to you in the language because most of the time the non-natives are not fluent in the language, so you get to practice more, your fluency.

Interviewer: What is your personal perception of native speaker teachers and their ability to teach a foreign language efficiently?

Interviewee: I honestly prefer a native speaker to teach me any language because they will have more knowledge, they will be more immersed in the language, it’s part of them, part of their culture so they are the best people to actually teach it, to actually give out information about. A non-native speaker could never be better than them in their own language so they would quicker have the advantage of teaching students.

Interviewer: And your personal perception of a non-native speaker teacher and their ability to teach a foreign language?

Interviewee: My personal perspective is that some are capable. I have had a teacher, she’s really good. She is a non-native speaker but again, she was immersed into the culture so it comes like she is a native speaker because she speaks so fluently and I tend to find that teachers like this tend to be the best teachers. Even if they are non-native, it depends on their skill and their ability to teach and how they present the language to the students could have a more positive effect on students’ learning.

Interviewer: Do you think that your perception of these teachers are based on a personal bias?

Interviewee: It could, but I basically based it on my experiences, I can’t speak for all in general but that’s just my experience.

Interviewer: Describe characteristics of your ideal language teacher?

Interviewee: Energetic, willing to teach, not bothered by many questions, funny and one that does not make time an issue. If has to take some time to get you to understand something or to finish off something, he would sit out the time.

Interviewer: Does it matter if they are native or non-native?
Interviewee: No, it does not really matter, once the teacher is able to help you and sit with you and help you to reach success it does not matter to me.
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