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Trinidadian Native English Speakers Versus Venezuelan Non-Native English Speakers as  
Teachers of English as a Foreign/Second Language  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research paper explores the experiences of Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) as compared to that of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in the field of teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL). It aims to contribute perspectives of Trinidadian NESTs versus Venezuelan NNESTs in this field of work to the existing scholarship about teaching EFL/ESL worldwide. This project is meant to fill the gap in the literature with the specific Trinidadian and Venezuelan point of view. Three ESL NESTs in Trinidad and three EFL NNESTs in Venezuela were chosen to be interviewed for the creation of a case study. These individuals were chosen because the three NESTs completed similar teaching training and the three NNESTs work at the same language institution. The six of them were interviewed individually about their teaching practices and their self-perceptions in this context. The responses were compared to each other and they revealed a difference in the language in which each type of teacher teaches EFL/ESL, and a similarity in the skill they pay the most attention to in their lessons. The NESTs teach all their classes in English, whereas the NNESTs teach some of their classes in Spanish. Four of these six teachers also prioritize teaching conversation skills. The three NNESTs continuously work on developing their own English skills. Additionally, each type of EFL/ESL teacher sees value in the other. This paper could inspire more intensive research into the experiences of surrounding stakeholders of these teachers.

Key words: EFL, ESL, NEST, NNEST, perception

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## INTRODUCTION

“English is spoken more widely around the planet than any other language” (Gould and Rankin 218). Globalization has made the English language a global lingua franca, used as the official language in over 65 countries, the official language for large global entities like the United Nations (UN), and the language of the majority of the technological world, world mail and technical and scientific periodicals (Divine et al. 14).

This international dominance of the English language is increasing the numbers of worldwide learners of English very quickly. As such, the global demand for English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) teachers is high. English speaking Caribbean countries like Trinidad are not an exception. However, some educational institutions, as well as individual students themselves often prefer to have Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) over Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) (Elyas and Alghofaili 27). This is actually an impossible demand to meet, since eighty percent of the world’s English speakers are non-native speakers, so a lot of the same people who learned English as a second/foreign language make up the world population of EFL/ESL teachers (Javid).

Some research acknowledges NESTs as the superior choice in the EFL/ESL field, while other research argues against this preference (Calafato 4; Elyas and Alghofaili 27; Tatar 46). In foreign language learning, the major components to be taught are the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, in addition to the integrated skills of pronunciation and grammar. Each type of EFL/ESL teacher has their own self-perception with regards to their strengths and weaknesses. This tends to be reflected in various combinations of patterns in the teaching practices of NESTs and NNESTs.

## **Rationale**

There is a lack of research addressing the differences in these teaching practices and self-perceptions of NESTs versus NNESTs in the EFL/ESL environment in a Trinidadian and Venezuelan context. As such, this project explores this untapped data in order to enhance the literature with a Trinidadian and Venezuelan perspective of teaching EFL/ESL as an NEST or an NNEST.

## **Aim**

The aim of this research is to inform Trinidadian and Venezuelan academia of the case of NESTs' and NNESTs' abilities in their teaching practice in these regions. The availability of this information allows further research of this situation by future academics.

## **Objectives**

- Distinguish the trends in the EFL/ESL teaching practice of certified Trinidadian NESTs versus uncertified Venezuelan NNESTs by interviewing three of each of these types of teachers.
- Evaluate the ways in which the three Venezuelan and three Trinidadian EFL/ESL teachers perceive themselves and each other based on whether they are an NEST or an NNEST.
- Examine the ways in which the different teaching trends, the self-perceptions and any other background characteristics of six EFL/ESL teachers in Venezuela and Trinidad influence their actual teaching practice as NNESTs and NESTs.

## **Research Questions**

- How do the EFL/ESL teaching practices of certified NESTs in Trinidad and uncertified NNESTs in Venezuela differ from each other?
- How do three Venezuelan and three Trinidadian EFL/ESL teachers perceive themselves and each other based on whether they are NESTs or NNESTs?
- How do EFL/ESL teachers' trends, self-perceptions or personal background influence their actual teaching practice as NESTs versus as NNESTs?

## **Methodology**

This research project is a qualitative case study focused on different perceptions of the teaching experience of NESTs versus NNESTs and its effect on the actual outcome of their teaching practice. This primary data was collected through preliminary questionnaires and follow-up interviews, both conducted online with three certified ESL teachers in Trinidad and three uncertified EFL teachers in Venezuela. These six participants were chosen for this case study because of the similar teaching foundations of the three NESTs and the three NNESTs. The three ESL teachers are all NESTs who undertook similar teaching training and the three EFL teachers are NNESTs who work at the same language institution which also provided them with their own shared training experience. The questionnaire served as a brief introduction to where and for whom each teacher does their job. This introductory information allowed the researcher to enter each interview with an already established idea of the teacher's current professional status, which saved time in the interviewing process.

Upon completion of the questionnaire of closed-ended questions, an interview time was confirmed with each teacher and the interview was conducted via video conferencing. The

reason for the interviews was to allow the participants to respond freely with the guidance of the interviewer, since each teacher has their own personality. For each interview question, the researcher grouped the participants' responses together based on NEST versus NNEST point of view in order to categorically analyse the difference between the two types of EFL/ESL teachers.

Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous, and all steps of the process were facilitated by online video conferencing, in order to adhere to the country's current public safety regulations to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. All participants were presented with the same questionnaire (see Appendix A) and similar interview questions (see Appendix B) that were used to guide an open conversation about their experiences as ESL and EFL teachers who are NESTs and NNESTs respectively. Their responses were analysed in search of similarities and differences, then compiled to construct this case study. Since participation was low, a case study allows a deeper analysis of the six persons of interest. The personal nature of the field of teaching also makes this approach, with the questionnaire and the interview method, the best means of investigation. Each teacher has their own unique style which they were able to describe in their own words during the interviews.

## **Conclusion**

The dominance of the English language in today's world has called for more EFL/ESL teachers globally. However, there are more speakers of English as a Second and Foreign Language than there are native speakers of English. This makes it impossible for the demand for English teachers to be met only by NESTs. Employers and students still tend to prefer NESTs, causing some discrimination towards NNESTs. The following chapters directly explore the different experiences of NESTs versus NNESTs in Trinidad and Venezuela, respectively, to fill the gap in the related scholarship.

## CHAPTER ONE – Literature Review

In this chapter, the features of NESTs and NNESTs are explored with examples from around the world. Research shows differing views about the authenticity and ability of NESTs versus NNESTs with regards to teaching the speaking skill in particular, which influences the listening skill, and in turn learners' speaking abilities as well (Elyas and Alghofaili 28). NESTs may be authentic in their language production, but NNESTs produce better English. They usually both have contrasting experiences in the same field of work, whereby less job opportunities are offered to NNESTs (Elyas and Alghofaili 28; Tatar 47).

### **Defining 'Native Speaker'**

There is a variety of different characteristics defining a native speaker, such as how an individual functions in society with the language, or the intuitions that they have concerning the language (Ahmed 5-6). Many intricacies in this regard prevent the existence of one clear definition of a native speaker. Hence, depending on the measurements by which one defines a native speaker, that speaker's classification may change. This project is based on the 1999 Cook definition, which states that:

- a) Native speakers are not necessarily aware of their knowledge in a formal sense.
- b) Many native speakers are unaware of how their speech differs from the status form, i.e., the standard used by, for example, professional speakers such as news readers.
- c) Many native speakers are far from fluent in speech (e.g., Stephen Hawking and Helen Keller, having to communicate via alternative means).
- d) Some native speakers function poorly in social settings.

e) Creativity characterizes a small percentage of native speakers, such as poets and rap singers.

f) Only native speakers who have an L2— and not necessarily all of them— possess the ability to interpret from one language to another.

g) Native speakers (e.g., Karl Marx, Albert Einstein) are free to dissociate themselves completely from their L1 community, politically or socially, without giving up their native speaker status. (Ahmed 5-6)

The multifaceted idea of what defines a native speaker of a language, may be seen as even more complex when the concept of Creole is also introduced. There are different varieties of single languages around the world, but a Creole variety is different because of the way and extent to which it usually differs from the main language. The Creole form of a language is generally known as the largely developed linguistic outcome of different languages interacting with each other (Crystal 122). Some linguists disagree about creole exceptionalism, which revolves around the idea that all Creole varieties fall within their own category of languages that share the same structural features, which are different from those of non-Creoles (Francis). Some linguists think that a Creole variety is its own language, while others view it as a form of a language, i.e. a form of English in Trinidad's case of Trinidadian English Creole (TEC). This TEC is the main form of language used in Trinidad, although it is not officially recognized.

In this world of multiple varieties of single languages, where the number of English speakers continues to multiply, the Kachru Circles model of 1985 demonstrates the linguistic situation of English in different parts of the world, which includes its use as a native language, a second language and a foreign language (Gould and Rankin 227). This model begins in the

middle with the inner circle, which consists of countries where English is the first/native language (see figure 1). This means it is the main language used in daily operations. Surrounding this, is the outer circle, which consists of countries that use English as a Second Language (ESL), meaning that some of the more professional parts of their societies operate in English although another language functions as the first/native language. Finally, the external circle is known as the expanding circle, which contains the remaining countries, where they use English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it has no official place in these societies, but people still want to learn it mainly to connect with the rest of the world.

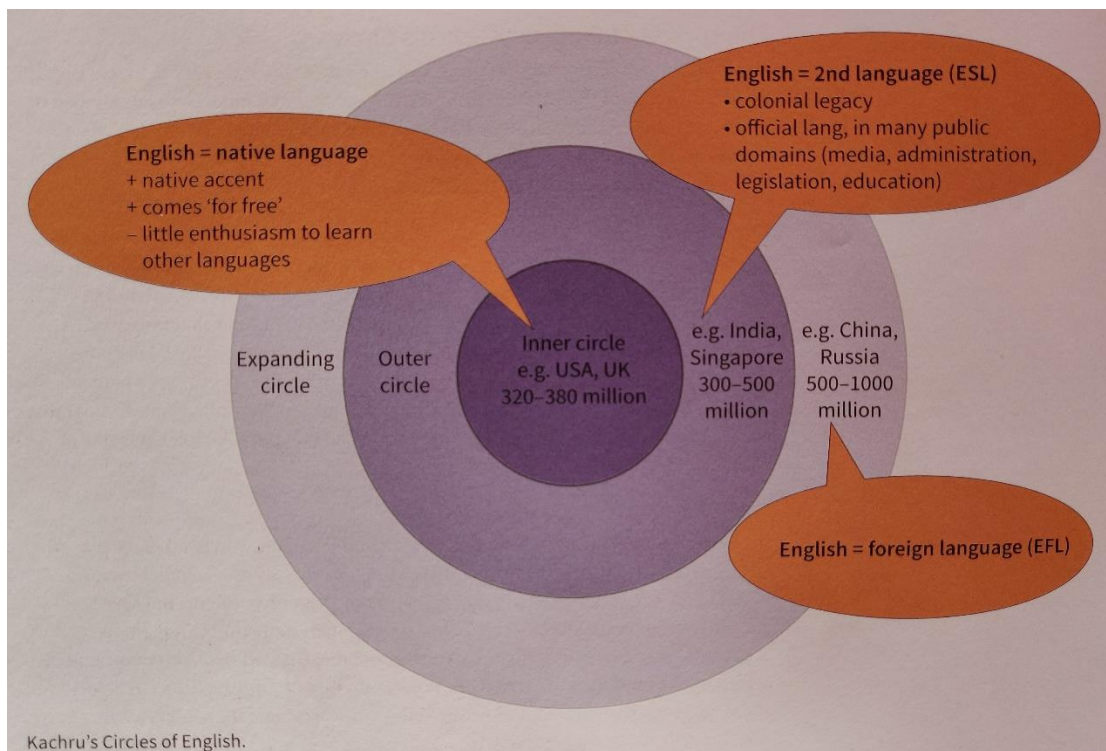


Figure 1. Kachru's Circles of English from Mike Gould and Marilyn Rankin. *Cambridge International AS and A Level English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

When people think of native speakers, they think of citizens of the countries from the inner circle of Kachru's Circles model: The United States of America (USA), the United

Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada and New Zealand. When speakers of other languages learn English in these and other inner circle countries, it is said that they are learning ESL. These countries are some of the sources of the top picks for employers of ESL teachers, as illustrated by previous research gathered from the administrators of English programs in the USA and the UK showing that NESTs are prioritized in the hiring process (Tatar 47). This limits the amount of “preferred” EFL/ESL teachers available in the world, by neglecting those teachers from the countries that may not fit strictly into the inner or outer circle of Kachru’s model, which Kachru himself has criticized for oversimplifying global linguistic situations (Al-Mutairi 86). Hence, the English speaking Caribbean countries, like Trinidad, do not have a concrete position on this model, because of the uncertainty of the particular type of English spoken in these countries.

Even when NNESTs are confident in their teaching abilities, fear still exists about the impact of their accent on their employability and perceived legitimacy (Calafato 13). In a review of a Trinidadian novelist’s piece of literature, the writer mentions how some Caribbean persons change more of their pronunciations than grammar or word choices when they switch between English and Creole (Pollard 98). This does not declare them as non-native speakers of English, but it shows that Trinidadians are capable of controlling their speech in order to be comprehensible. This supports the idea that no EFL/ESL teacher is comparable to another based on whether they are an NEST or NNEST, but rather based on their level of training and experience (Putri 64).

### **EFL/ESL Teacher Preferences based on NEST versus NNEST Strengths**

NNESTs, or those perceived as such, have been neglected since the beginning of the vast spread of the English language around the world (Braine 10). This is due to the overall preference for NESTs, mainly for their intuitive ability to recognize right from wrong in their

own language. There is an idea that native speakers have the advantage of this “native intuition”, which has been described as a power (Teng 2). However, it has also been seen that NNESTs are more attentive to errors (Teng 30). This presents the idea of gaining different benefits from both types of teachers, not just NESTs.

On the other hand, Taiwanese parents blame their lack of faith in NNESTs on the idea that those teachers have limited international exposure, making them less appropriate for the job even if they are qualified teachers (Elyas and Alghofaili 27). However, Pollard also described the Trinidadian ability to code switch as being “natural to most educated Trinidadians”, which highlights the importance of being educated in today’s English speaking world (94).

### **Communicative Approach**

When training to Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), those aspiring teachers are taught about the communicative approach to teaching the language. One TEFL textbook describes the communicative approach as a highly regarded philosophy that states that all English, or foreign language, classroom activities should be done completely in English, or whichever specific foreign language, both on the part of the teacher and the students (Divine 77-78). This is said to promote natural language use and learning through trial and error. This communicative approach stemmed from the natural approach, and is now the most popular teaching approach, specifically for the foreign/second language classroom context.

A similar term is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which involves the same practices, but has a more specific focus on communicative competence than linguistic competence (“The Communicative Language Approach”). This approach realizes that it is

possible to learn a new language in that language itself (intralingually, as opposed to interlingually) (Lee and Macaro 888).

On the other hand, the direct translation method of teaching EFL/ESL is one that causes a heavy reliance on the native language, facilitating linguistic associations, rather than realistic/functional ones, i.e. understanding the meaning of words because of knowledge of the word in one's own language, instead of relating the word to its corresponding item/action/concept (Lee and Macaro 889). Language learners often cling to the comfort of their native language, preventing full exploration and acquisition of the target language.

Most teachers lean more towards the strictly English class, but other more experienced teachers see value in using the students' native language (Calafato 10). Although no theory exists to disprove the usefulness of students' native language in the EFL/ESL classroom, it undermines the English-only rule in the common CLT approach (Lee and Macaro 888). Policies in favour of CLT have been emerging globally since the end of the twentieth century (Lee and Macaro 888). In the UK, both the government and linguistic stakeholders have been insisting on using the target language "from the onset" and the Korean Ministry of Education has implemented a "Teaching English in English (TEE)" initiative.

However, no study indicates 100% usage of the target language, because the students' native language is useful for highlighting specific differences in grammatical forms, direct word/phrase translations, explanations, instructions, prompting students to respond, providing social asides and managing behaviour (Lee and Macaro 888). When the students' native language is vastly different in terms of phonology, syntax, etc., it can also be helpful to use their native language to teach the English language. This is reflected in the case of Thailand, where university EFL students are motivated to learn the language, but they experience a lot of

difficulty because of the very different phonology, grammar and lexicon between English and the Thai language (Putri 64). In a Saudi Arabian university EFL context, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was used in an investigative attempt to aid in the process of learning EFL as a native speaker of Arabic, where the Arabic language has a different phonetic system to English (Rajab 655). Other languages with this similar issue of having a unique phonetic system include: Mandarin Chinese, Greek and Hindi.

### **Benefits of Multilingual EFL/ESL Teachers**

A Korean study introduced the potential usefulness of code-switching between English and the students' native language in the EFL classroom, through a process called Consecutive Bilingual Instruction (CBI) (Kim 506). Kim describes this as an effective replacement for the current TEE policy and the English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy in Korea since these policies have not been successfully fulfilled by the NNESTs themselves due to the lack of their own English skills (507-508). NNESTs who studied abroad and NESTs have proven to be better understood in this English-only classroom because of their greater exposure and more advanced linguistic abilities, respectively.

The Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) defends that multilingual people are equipped with special cognitive and linguistic skills that monolingual people do not have, which helps the multilingual persons in the EFL/ESL classroom context (Calafato 3). NNESTs have "explicit knowledge about and conscious perception of language, its structure and vocabulary, its teaching and learning, as well as its use in social and cultural contexts" (Calafato 4).

## **Trends in the Teaching Practices of NESTs versus NNESTs**

NNESTs are sometimes from a different culture than their students and colleagues. Indonesian NNESTs in Thailand expressed some difficulties with respect to culture clash with other Thai teachers (Putri 71). NNESTs are otherwise usually from the same culture as their students, giving them the opportunity to closely relate with their positive and negative experiences. However, foreign language textbooks, which are the main source of the target language for learners, do not typically teach pragmatics, which means that NESTs are the better option in this regard due to their lifelong experience of actually living through the culture (Çetinavcı 334). In a Canadian study, ESL students were found to be appreciative of the ability of NESTs to teach culture, customs and idioms (Ahmed 68).

NNESTs are also specifically more aware of the intricacies of English grammar than NESTs since NNESTs learned English in a classroom, like their students, so there is a trend of NNESTs focusing on grammar in their lessons, while NESTs focus more on content (Teng 35). Hence, students normally prefer NNESTs for grammar lessons, since NESTs tend to lack sufficient knowledge in this component (Ahmed 71).

Furthermore, the English language has more than four hundred thousand words, of which native speakers do not know all, and non-native English speakers know even less, so NESTs are the better option when it comes to teaching vocabulary to EFL/ESL students (Javid). However, lacking knowledge in the classroom can be a shared experience between NNESTs and their students, where the NNEST can sympathize with their students since they too learned the English language in a classroom, rather than through natural acquisition like NESTs (Javid). This opportunity to connect on a different level to English learners is enhanced by teachers who are not just NNESTs, but also native speakers of their students' first language. NNESTs with the

same first language as their students are better prepared for potential learning difficulties and errors (Javid). These teachers can sympathetically make cross linguistic references to help facilitate understanding (Calafato 4).

### **NESTs' and NNESTs' Impact on Students**

The anxiety associated with learning a new language can negatively affect the learning process, but the reality is that foreign/second language teachers impact their student's enjoyment of the language more than their anxiety in the classroom (Dewaele et al. 413). Hence, since anxiety is generally not associated with the teacher's performance, teachers are "encouraged to spark interest, provide low-anxiety environments, and bolster learners' self-esteem", to focus on enhancing the enjoyment of the lessons. The results from a survey conducted in Saudi Arabia with English students in their Preparatory Year Programme of University showed that although students prefer NESTs, they also specifically prefer the innovativeness of NNESTs' lessons (Javid).

### **Students' Preferences for NESTs or NNESTs**

From the perspective of some ESL students in Toronto, NESTs seem more fluent than NNESTs, with better pronunciation and accents, making the NESTs the better option for teaching the speaking skill (Ahmed 68). These students want to avoid teachers who translate lessons from the students' first language into English; they want "the raw English mind" according to an advanced level student (Ahmed 69). At the intermediate level, students also expressed their admiration of "perfect" English from NESTs. The Bangladeshi EFL students from this study contrastingly stated that they struggle to understand NESTs' accent and

pronunciation, which is likely due to their limited exposure to English in their country as compared to those in the English speaking context from Canada (Ahmed 70).

EFL/ESL learners place a high value on achieving a native-like accent of English (Dewaele et al. 416). This is why NESTs represent the preferred EFL/ESL teacher. They are associated with more prestige (Tatar 46). NNESTs prefer to avoid using English in class because of their low confidence levels regarding their own foreign accent (Dewaele et al. 422). They are the preferred option of EFL/ESL teachers for the reception skills of listening and reading, in addition to grammar mentioned earlier (Elyas and Alghofaili 37).

### **Being a Native Speaker Versus Being a Proficient Speaker in the Hiring Process**

English language learning, just as with learning any other language, is all about peer relationships, the classroom environment and the skills and personality of the teacher (Dewaele et al. 417). As such, the teacher, who is the one with the most control over these variables, is the most important part of the EFL/ESL learning process. However, other factors are prioritized when hiring these teachers. In Canada, hiring professionals who have a certain level of language proficiency is more important to the ESL administrators than it is for those in the UK and the US who maintain the mentality of prioritizing NESTs in the hiring process (Tatar 47-48).

### **Self-Perception and Development of EFL/ESL Teachers**

In addition to the impact that school administrators can have on the potential employment positions of some EFL/ESL teachers, these teachers themselves can also influence their own success and confidence levels by the way they perceive themselves. In a study conducted in a Saudi Arabian EFL context, the importance of teachers engaging in self-directed Teacher Professional Development (TPD) has proven to be more common and effective than relying on

the institution to provide developmental training (Alshaikhi 1366). Those NNEST participants accomplished their TPD by: “learning from practice, using the internet, learning from colleagues, reading, social networks, postgraduate studies and paid formal courses. (Alshaikhi 1364)”

This effectiveness may be due to the general preference that people have for their individual selves out of the three selves they possess, whereby the other two in the self-perception hierarchy are the relational self and the collective self (Nehrllich et al. 212). This means that most people prefer working on their own unique characteristics that add to their personality than working on their traits that are concerned with connecting with others in their personal lives and in their other communities. Hence, the EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia pay more attention to themselves as English speakers than to how they fit into their unique EFL classroom as the teacher.

### **Other Factors Contributing to Student Preferences for NESTs or NNESTs**

Apart from the teachers’ own individual skills, perceptions, level of proficiency and experience, no other characteristics, neither professional nor demographic, have proven to substantially influence English language learners’ performance. Additional student preferences are related to the ages of EFL/ESL teachers. Students perceive older teachers to be stricter, hence more unfriendly, increasing their foreign language anxiety (Dewaele 421). Furthermore, some EFL/ESL students considered a teacher to be friendly if they used more English and did not have a foreign accent, as a foreign accent has proven to reduce their enjoyment of the language learning process (Dewaele et al. 419-420).

## **The Value of Trained NESTs and NNESTs**

EFL/ESL teaching skills do not depend on being a native speaker, as all speakers, including all teachers, have varying proficiency levels in the different language components (Dewaele 413). Hence, NESTs are not intrinsically better than NNESTs, since fluency and knowledge of idiomatic expressions and culture can all be accomplished through training (Phillipson 194). It has been found that although the preference is for NESTs, student performance has not been seen to differ with the two types of teachers, so it appears that the influence of pronunciation, accents, and specific skills of NESTs versus NNESTs are not dramatic (Elyas and Alghofaili 29; Calafato 8). “Teachers... are made rather than born” (Phillipson 194). One study in Thailand suggested combining NESTs and NNESTs in EFL/ESL classrooms as a means of allowing students to benefit from the strengths of both types of trained teachers (Putri 65).

## **Conclusion**

Defining a native English speaker may not always be a simple thing to do because of the vast expansion of the English language around the world. However, the most important part of being a teacher is being qualified as someone with the necessary skills to convey knowledge to students, despite how these teachers themselves learned the language. NESTs and NNESTs may have different strengths and weaknesses, but in a world of trained professionals, these weaknesses do not significantly impact student learning. These ideas are explored further in a Trinidadian ESL context compared to a Venezuelan EFL context in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER TWO – Findings**

The feedback collected from the three Trinidadian NESTs (N1, N2 and N3 henceforth) and the three Venezuelan NNESTs (NN1, NN2 and NN3 henceforth) represents a fraction of the relevant first-hand ideas about this topic in this immediate Caribbean region between Trinidad and Venezuela. The input given by these six teachers in their interviews presents some of the different experiences of an EFL/ESL teacher from an NEST point of view and an NNEST point of view. All participants expressed their opinions of teaching the English language in their specific situations, based on their location, preferences and past experiences.

### **Teachers' Background**

Before analysing the findings of the interviews about the participants' teaching practice and perceptions, their background information is summarized in table 1 on the next page. All six teachers in this study have varying levels of experience teaching, from one to twelve years. The NESTs are certified to teach EFL/ESL, but the NNESTs have no such certification. The three Trinidadian NESTs currently teach ESL online in Trinidad and the three Venezuelan NNESTs teach both online and in person in Venezuela. In this paper, the ages of both the teachers and their respective students are categorized as follows:

- Younger than 13: child
- 13 – 18: teenager
- 19 – 25: young adult
- 26 – 30: adult
- 31 – 50: middle-aged
- Older than 50: mature

One major commonality among all six teachers is that they all teach native Spanish speaking students. The only other type of foreign language speakers taught by the teachers in this study are an Afrikaans speaker (taught by N1) and a Japanese speaker (taught by N2).

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Teaching Background

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teacher's Age</b>	<b>Teacher's Place of Work</b>	<b>Teaching Experience up to the Time of this Study</b>	<b>Type of Students Taught by Teacher at the Time of this Study</b>
N1	Young adult	Online, privately	1 year	Beginner and advanced Spanish speaking and Afrikaans speaking adults
N2	Middle-aged	Online, at a language institution	6 years	Intermediate and advanced Spanish and Japanese speakers; teenagers, young adults, adults, middle aged students and mature students
N3	Middle-aged	Online, at a language institution	12 years	Beginner and intermediate Spanish speaking children, teenagers, young adults and adults
NN1	Young adult	Online and in person, both at a language institution	3 years	Beginner and advanced Spanish speaking children, teenagers, young adults and middle aged students
NN2	Adult	In person, at a language institution	3 years	Spanish speakers of all ages and all levels
NN3	Adult	In person, at a language institution	2 years	Spanish speaking children of all levels

In the interviews, the teachers expressed the ease of finding their jobs as they were all in Spanish speaking countries, where they claim the demand for EFL teachers is high, when they began teaching English, except for N1, who advertised offers for English classes on social media in Trinidad and got two students. Since the pandemic, N2 and N3 have returned to Trinidad to teach ESL online. The three NNESTs are teaching EFL online and in person in Venezuela.

The EFL NNESTs were EFL students themselves less than ten years prior to the time of this study. They all see the importance of the English language in today's global community, especially NN2 who specializes in international affairs and NN3 who values interacting with other cultures. NN1 stated that English is supposed to be taught in the secondary schools in Venezuela. However, all three NNESTs admitted that this was not always the reality, so they enrolled in a separate language school to improve their English education alongside their other high school studies. Since then, they have continued to enhance their skills on their own, by making the English language a part of their daily lives in different ways such as watching television in English or interacting regularly with English speaking friends.

None of these NNESTs planned to become teachers. However, due to the increasing demand for EFL teachers in Venezuela, combined with their need for a job and their freshly acquired skills, this is the field in which they found themselves. They all expressed a newfound passion for TEFL. Similarly, the NESTs did not originally plan to become ESL teachers, but they all came across this career path and recognized its importance in today's globalized world, along with their native-speaker value to the field, so they made the decision to pursue TEFL.

N1 and N3 are products of the same TEFL training school, whereas N2 is a product of the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) training programme. All three NESTs were exposed to practice teaching before gaining their certification. On the other hand,

the NNESTs are not certified teachers. They did, however, have to pass an English proficiency test before gaining employment in this field of work. They continuously work on improving their English at a personal level. According to NN1, “Even though I am a tutor, I still consider that I have a lot to learn, because English is a second language to me”.

Although the NNESTs in this study are not certified EFL teachers, they did receive one month of training, similar to that of the NESTs. The NNEST training was a form of induction training completed when they got their current teaching job. This pedagogical training introduced them to the institution’s teaching methodology, which involves teaching beginner students through the use of translations from Spanish to English. When the students’ English proficiency is more developed at the advanced level, the teachers are required to deliver their lessons in only English. The intermediate level students at this language institution are exposed to a combination of the translation method and the English-only method.

### **Teaching Practice**

The six participants structure their EFL/ESL lessons differently. N2, NN1, NN2 and NN3 focus more on conversation skills, especially through games, when teaching their young learners (children). The three NNESTs also follow textbooks as a basis for the structure of their lessons and the NESTs stated that they tend to teach according to the specific needs and/or wants of their particular students. The NNESTs find great value in the ability to effectively communicate and form new relationships with the English speaking world, so their favourite language skills to teach are speaking, listening and grammar. The NESTs recognize that the ability to speak in English is a valuable skill, but they tend to balance it more with the other language skills. So, whereas the NNESTs highlighted their preference for teaching speaking, listening and grammar,

the NESTs suggested that lessons involve as much of all of the language skills as possible at a time.

N3 specifically stated her dislike for teaching pronunciation, which is a disdain she believes she could counteract by means of using videos on the internet as an additional resource. All three NNESTs admitted to using internet resources, including videos and social media content, as extra reference points when preparing their lessons. NN1 also invites a native English speaking friend to her classes to help facilitate pragmatic and cultural learning. The other NESTs in this study also mentioned their need for help, but not regarding their specific class content like N3 and the NNESTs. While the others are facing the challenge of finding additional resources, N2 is struggling with low energy levels at this point of the pandemic, which she hopes to improve by taking a break from the teaching practice altogether for a while. Additionally, N1 is working towards improving her English grammar explanations by going through different EFL/ESL textbooks to improve her own understanding, as a sort of personal development.

The quantity of English being used to teach in the EFL/ESL classes are dependent on the class level of the NNESTs' students, whereas the NESTs use English the majority of the time with all of their students. The NNESTs use Spanish to clarify explanations when beginner students are unsure and NESTs almost never stray from standard English, despite knowing some Spanish. N1 and N2 confirmed that they do not know any Afrikaans or Japanese, yet they are each still able to teach those advanced students of theirs. They attribute this teaching ability to the existing linguistic competence of these students who have made it to the advanced level of learning English. In the event that these students do not understand something in the ESL lessons, these NESTs try to explain "by using different words" and "by being a lot more physically expressive" (N1, N2).

## **Student-Teacher Rapport**

The participants all agreed that they have a good relationship with their students. Teacher NN2 commented on different types of relationships she has with students of different ages, stating that she gets along the best with children, compared to young adults and older learners. She explained that the young adults are hard to connect with while maintaining an authoritative role and that older students do not tend to take her seriously since she is younger than them. However, a prominent characteristic highlighted by all of the participants in this study is the interpersonal relationships that are gained between teachers and students in the TEFL context. These teachers described those relationships they have with their students as an enriching factor of the teaching experience.

## **Teachers' Self-Perceptions**

In terms of how the different types of teachers perceive themselves, the NN1 and NN2 are of the opinion that teaching EFL/ESL as an NEST is easier than doing so as an NNEST. NN2 wishes she could understand more of the English language in the same way that a native speaker does. NN3 does not see any extra value in being an NEST, because she loves languages in general and would enjoy helping others regardless of her status as an English speaker. On the other hand, N2 sees value in being a NNEST who has “gone through all the technicalities of the language” when they learned English themselves (N2).

## **Conclusion**

The experiences of each of the six EFL/ESL teachers differ from each other, regardless of whether they are an NEST or an NNEST or whether they are certified or uncertified. In the next

chapter, this group of six EFL/ESL teachers is compared to other NESTs and NNESTs in this field of work around the world.

## **CHAPTER THREE - Discussion**

The responses from the NESTs were compared to those of the NNESTs, then related to the literature about NESTs and NNESTs in EFL/ESL teaching to see if there was any correlation between the Trinidadian and Venezuelan EFL/ESL context as compared to other countries worldwide.

### **Certified NESTs and Uncertified NNESTs**

Despite the fact that none of the participants originally planned to become EFL/ESL teachers, they all obtained teaching training. As an outcome of their training, N1 and N3 gained their TEFL certification, while N2 gained her CELTA certification; and the three NNESTs had induction training without certification, but rather with the outcome of their successful employment. Also, the NNESTs accomplished their English language proficiency through their own professional acquisition of the language itself, whereas the NESTs learned the English language naturally after being born, then gained training in the practice of teaching the language. So, the NNESTs in this study are certified English speakers, whereas the NESTs are certified English teachers. This data confirms the existence of employers who are more concerned with EFL/ESL teachers' level of proficiency in the English language than with their certification status (Tatar 47-48). This does not only happen in the inner circle countries like Canada, but also in expanding circle countries like Venezuela, as proven by the employment of this study's NNESTs.

### **Impact of Self-Perception on EFL/ESL Teachers**

Continuous self-development seems to be a common practice among the Venezuelan NNESTs, just like the self-directed TPD in Alshaikhi's Saudi Arabian study (1366). Although

the Venezuelan NNESTs have already established themselves as EFL teachers, they continuously work towards their own improvement as English speakers. This reflects the fact that in self-perception, people tend to value their individual self more than their relational self or their collective self (Nehrlich et al. 212). The NNESTs are more concerned about their proficiency than NESTs. Since NESTs do not know the more than four hundred thousand words of the English language, NNESTs know less than them due to the NNESTs acquiring the language later in life, so NNESTs have more work to do to catch up to the knowledge of native English speakers and continue in their personal linguistic development (Javid). Sustained development also improves confidence.

### **Sympathetic NNESTs and Student-Teacher Rapport**

Due to the experience of the NNESTs having undertaken their own English language acquisition journey earlier in their lives, they are now able to sympathize with their students who are going through the same learning experience their teachers once did (Calafato 4; Javid). NESTs are not as familiar with the actual first-hand learning experience of English as are their non-native counterparts. The sympathy in the NNESTs' EFL classes is not only reflected in the more frequent use of Spanish in the EFL lessons of NNESTs, but also in the good teacher-student rapport they all claim to have. This good rapport also helps with student enjoyment of the learning experience (Dewaele et al. 413).

### **Teaching Practices**

The literature indicates the usefulness of EFL/ESL students' native language in the EFL/ESL class, which the NNESTs of this study take advantage of, especially with their beginner level students (Lee and Macaro 888). As much as this may be a reflection of their own

confidence, or lack thereof, in using English, since it is also a foreign language to them, their Spanish usage can also be beneficial to the students (Dewaele et al. 422). CBI makes teaching easier for NNESTs and helps to maintain student engagement (Kim 507-508). These NNESTs are also able to, and encouraged by their employers, to compare English and Spanish as a teaching method, similar to the direct translation method (Calafato 4; Lee and Macaro 889).

On the other hand, the NESTs did not mention any issues concerning TEC, because they do not use it while teaching. This reflects Pollard's note about the ability of educated Trinidadians to effectively switch between English and TEC (98). Their clear speech and level of training facilitates their EFL/ESL teaching. However, the NESTs' reliance on the communicative approach in their ESL classes does not allow the same opportunities for understanding as the code-switching done by the NNESTs (Lee and Macaro 888).

In terms of the specific linguistic components to which the different types of teachers pay more attention, the teaching practices of the participants in this study are similar to the international trends identified in the literature. According to Teng, NNESTs usually focus on grammar and NESTs prefer to teach more general content (35). The NNESTs in this study also have a preference for teaching grammar along with conversation and listening, while the three NESTs mentioned their more all-inclusive approach, whereby all of the language skills are balanced in the lessons. Although the literature gave additional teaching preferences for each type of teacher, no other specific preferences were stated by the participants in this study. These participants also generally did not complain about teaching any of the language skills in particular, except for N3 who dislikes teaching pronunciation.

The similarities between the literature and this specific case study also extend to the occasional occurrence of cultural misunderstandings, like in Thailand, but in Trinidad and

Venezuela, these misunderstandings have not been reported as affecting the teaching process (Putri 71). In addition to being qualified teachers, the NESTs also have the different cultural experiences that only a native English speaker is likely to have. In this case, the NESTs bring with them to their classes a Caribbean identity, a culture with which their students may not necessarily be familiar. This gives the NESTs the opportunity to teach authentic contextual knowledge about an English speaking part of the world, from a first-hand perspective.

Since language textbooks do not typically cover the pragmatics component of languages, which usually aligns with culture, EFL students rely on their teachers for this aspect of their learning (Çetinavcı 334). This often leaves NNESTs relying on additional resources and research to teach culture and pragmatics, such as NN1 who has a native English speaker visit her class often to help with adding some native influence to her classes.

### **Other Contributing Factors of Teaching Practices**

Additional factors, such as the teachers' amount of pedagogical experience, did not arise as influential constituents in the teaching practice or self-perception of the participants in this study. The most experienced teacher in this study, N3, follows the communicative approach to teaching ESL. So, Calafato's mention of the more experienced language teachers valuing the use of the students' native language in class was not reflected by the NNESTs in this study (10).

### **Conclusion**

Although the NESTs have the natural intuition about the English language, they also require help from additional resources like textbooks and internet videos, but NNESTs do more work on themselves to try to improve their English abilities not only as a teacher, but also as a learner themselves. This is expected to improve their confidence and effectiveness in the EFL

classroom. The teaching practices of the NESTs and NNESTs in this study match some aspects of the literature that addressed international situations. Other practices, like Venezuelan employers hiring unqualified EFL teachers, were contrary to some other parts of the world. The following chapter provides a possible conclusion to refine the field of teaching EFL/ESL in Trinidad and Venezuela.

## CONCLUSION

The compilation of the three NESTs' and three NNESTs' perceptions and experiences in the field of EFL/ESL allowed this paper to help fill the void in the documentation about EFL/ESL teachers in Trinidad and in Venezuela. This case study was developed from the responses in the interviews with the six participants. It could open up an opportunity for further investigation into the stakeholders of the field of EFL/ESL in Trinidad and Venezuela. This case study acts as the basis for more research.

In this paper, it was discovered that the three NESTs and three NNESTs in this case study presented similar trends in their teaching practices. The speaking skill appeared to gain the most attention in these participants' EFL/ESL lessons, especially with young learners, regardless of whether the teacher was an NEST or an NNEST. Since English is now a global language, the value that these teachers placed on the speaking skill highlights the language's prominence in society. These EFL/ESL teachers are preparing their students to be able to interact with the greater English speaking world. The NESTs are also strict followers of the communicative approach, whereas the NNESTs use Spanish to teach their beginner and intermediate EFL students. Although all six of these teachers have been trained to do these things, only the three NESTs gained certification for their teaching practice. The NNESTs, on the other hand, continuously engage in TPD, which makes them more confident teachers. They all have different perceptions of themselves based on their status as a native or a non-native English speaker. However, due to high demand for EFL/ESL teachers worldwide, all six participants are established EFL/ESL teachers, with and without their certification.

The limited number of participants in proportion to the larger number of appropriate candidates for this study in society was a limitation of this research, as that prevented this project

from reflecting a well-rounded analysis of a variety of persons in the EFL/ESL field in Venezuela and Trinidad.

This study was limited to participants who have gone through the process of learning a foreign language, whether it was the language in question (English) or another language. Hence, they all know what it is like to learn a language that is not their native language, which would have given them some sympathetic advantage in their classrooms that perhaps other NESTs outside of this study may not have. Thus, future research could explore a comparison of EFL/ESL teachers with this level of linguistic experience and those without it.

Future research could also investigate the perceptions of the students of these EFL/ESL teachers. This could reveal various ways EFL/ESL teachers and students interact with each other and the effects of their interactions and perceptions on their performance. This could help to enhance the relevant scholarship.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

#### Teaching EFL/ESL as a Native Speaker versus as a Non-native Speaker of English

1. Your age \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 18 years or younger
- 19- 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 50
- older than  
50

2. What is your first language? \*

---

3. Your student(s) age(s) \*

*Check all that apply.*

- younger than 13
- 13 - 18
- 19 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31-50
- older than  
50

4. What is the first language of your student(s)? \*

---

5. Please select all that apply to you. \*

*Check all that apply.*

- I teach online with an institution
- I teach online privately
- I teach in person at an institution
- I teach in person privately
- I tutor one student
- I tutor more than one student, separately
- I teach a class of multiple students
- I teach multiple classes of multiple students
- I teach beginners
- I teach intermediate learners
- I teach advanced learners
- I teach in English only
- I teach in both English and my students' native language
- I use my students' native language to do most of my teaching

6. When would you would be available for an interview on Zoom? The exact twenty minute time slot of your scheduled interview will be communicated to you after completion of this form. \* *Mark only one oval.*

- 
- Tue 15 Feb: 7 - 8am
  - Tue 15 Feb: 8 - 9am
  - Tue 15 Feb: 10 - 11am
  - Tue 15 Feb: 11 - 12am
  - Tue 15 Feb: 5 - 6pm
  - Tue 15 Feb: 6 - 7pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 7 - 8am
  - Wed 16 Feb: 8 - 9am
  - Wed 16 Feb: 9 - 10am
  - Wed 16 Feb: 10 - 11am
  - Wed 16 Feb: 11am - 12pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 12 - 1pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 1 - 2pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 2 - 3pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 3 - 4pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 4 - 5pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 5 - 6pm
  - Wed 16 Feb: 6 - 7pm
  - Thurs 17 Feb: 7 - 8am
  - Thurs 17 Feb: 8 - 9am
  - Thurs 17 Feb: 9 - 10am
  - Thurs 17 Feb: 10 - 11am
  - Thurs 17 Feb: 11 - 12pm
  - Other:

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been teaching EFL/ESL?
2. (to NNESTs): a) When, how and why did you learn English?  
b) What was your favourite part about learning EFL?
3. What is your favourite part about teaching EFL/ESL?
4. How did you end up teaching English?
5. a) How do you structure your lessons?  
b) How much of your students' native language do you use in class?
6. a) What are some potential improvements for yourself in your EFL/ESL classroom?  
b) How do you work towards improving?