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„Learners’ attitudes towards native English speaking and non-native English speaking teachers: a case study in an Austrian secondary school“

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Research interest**

The global spread of English is evident in the contemporary world. This development entails an increased interest in learning English as a foreign language in countries around the globe, as for instance in Austria. When studying English, L2 learners tend to follow rules and regulations, which are set by native speakers. Given that non-native speakers of English have numerically outnumbered native speakers already (Crystal 2003), more non-native English speaking teachers teach this particular language than native English speaking teachers (Liu 2009). However, native speakers seem to benefit from a professional supremacy in the English language teaching (hence ELT) world and non-native English speaking teachers suffer from what is commonly referred to as the so-called native speaker fallacy (Canagarajah 1999).

The present research study explores Austrian secondary school students' perceptions of native and non-native speaker teachers of English with regard to the existing dichotomy between them. As a matter of fact, the learners' attitudes towards their teachers are central to the general discussion of native versus non-native teachers. In contrast to examining the opinions of native English speaking teachers (hence NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (hence NNESTs) themselves, as carried out in previous studies, a research study focussing on the students offers a more objective perspective on the issue. In addition, it gives the learners a voice to express their own viewpoints and interests. Thus, new insights into the matter can be gained and in consequence, appropriate recommendations for ELT worldwide, but especially for the Austrian context, can be offered. These adaptations concern teacher training, continuous professional development and the quality of teaching.

### ***1.1.1 Research aim***

The aim of this research is to examine students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in Austrian secondary schools. Previous international case studies focussed on the students' perception (e.g. Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Benke & Medgyes

2005, Moussu 2006). In Austria, however, no previous research on secondary school students' perceptions of native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers has been carried out.

Therefore, evidence on how students in Austrian secondary schools perceive NESTs and NNESTs and whether they prefer to be taught by one of the two types does not exist. Previous studies regarding this issue in Austria focus on teachers' opinions (e.g. Seidlhofer 1996, Kaim 2004) or adult English as a second language (hence ESL) students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs of profit-oriented institutions (e.g. Tinkel 2013). Besides filling in gaps of previous studies conducted in the Austrian context, this research study aims at extending previous findings of international studies and at comparing and contrasting the obtained results with selected previous work (see chapter 5). The main goal of this thesis is to challenge the dominant status of NESTs in the ELT world. It should be noted that it is not attempted to devaluate NESTs, but rather to draw attention to the extensive strengths of NNESTs. This way, it is attempted to manifest the equal value of NESTs and NNESTs in the international world of ELT. As far as the specific context of this case study is concerned, the goal is to demonstrate that NNESTs are more valuable for the given target population in the areas of grammar teaching, learner support and teacher-student rapport. NESTs, on the other hand, are expected to be preferred when it comes to teaching and learning pronunciation.

### ***1.1.2 Research questions and hypotheses***

The fundamental hypotheses and questions to be examined in the present research study are:

Main research question: *What are the students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs?*

Sub research question 1: *What are the advantages of NESTs perceived by the students?*

Sub research question 2: *What are the advantages of NNESTs perceived by the students?*



In order to answer these research questions, the following hypotheses are tested with the help of the present research study.

*Main hypothesis: Overall, a NNEST is perceived as the ideal language teacher by 14-18 year olds learning English as a foreign language in Austria.*

*Sub-hypothesis 1: A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to studying grammar.*

*Sub-hypothesis 2: A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to supporting the learner (language learning history/use of L1).*

*Sub-hypothesis 3: A NEST is preferred over a NNEST when it comes to studying pronunciation.*

It is attempted to answer these research questions with the help of a quantitative research study. The employed data collection tool is a questionnaire with 37 items, using Likert scales as a scaling technique.

## **1.2 Chapter overview**

In this section, the structure of the research paper is described. Overall, this paper is divided into two main parts; the first concentrates on the theoretical framework (chapter 2 to 5) whereas the second presents the empirical case study (chapter 6 to 8). In chapter 2, the global spread of English and its significance in the contemporary world is illustrated. Given that the present study examines students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in the Austrian context, the role of English in this country is explained in detail. Chapter 3 investigates the concept of native speakers and develops a definition suited for the particular purpose of this research study. As native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers are central in this survey, their individual positions in the ELT world are discussed in chapter 4.

In chapter 5, the findings of previous studies that have investigated the perceptions of students towards NESTs and NNESTs are analysed.

In the first chapter of the empirical part of this paper, chapter 6, the design of the questionnaire, the setting, the participants and the procedure of data collection are presented. Chapter 7 presents the obtained data in illustrative tables and displays especially interesting results with bar graphs. The most extensive chapter of this paper, chapter 8, discusses the findings of this case study, exhibits its limitations, gives suggestions for future research and outlines its implications for the ELT world.

## **2 The English language and the world**

### **2.1 English as an international language**

The success of the English language in the international context is evident in today's world (e.g. Seidlhofer 2003). Already in 1994 Medgyes asserted that “English has become the primary language of international communication” (1994: 1). Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999: 127) even claim that English has become a lingua franca, as it is “the most widely learned foreign language in the world”. In consequence, the mere success of the language has developed into influential and forceful power. English can almost be regarded as a country's resource, since it can fuel the economy and facilitate political negotiations (Medgyes 1994). In addition, proficiency in the English language is considered indispensable in the contemporary world. Thus, pupils need to be familiarised with this fact in order to augment their motivation to study English as well as to reveal the importance of this particular language (Kaim 2004). Globalisation and computerisation have accelerated the worldwide spread of English immensely. Therefore, past predictions about the number of speakers are outdated (e.g. Kachru 1982). Medgyes (1994: 1) anticipated that “by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century people who speak English as a second or foreign language will outnumber those for whom it is the mother tongue”. Kachru (1996: 241) estimated that “there are now at least four non-native speakers of English for every native speaker”. A decade later, Crystal (2003) claimed that there are 1500 million speakers of English worldwide; thereof 400 million speakers have English as their first language (hence L1). According to Ahn (2013), this estimate is still regarded as relevant today.

An established way to visualise the considerable amount of speakers of English on a global scale is the model suggested by Kachru (1982) combined with the number of speakers suggested by Crystal (2003) in millions (see Figure 1, Appendix page I). The concentric circles model divides all speakers into three distinctive categories, namely the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. In the inner circle, English is the main native language by tradition, in countries such as the USA or the UK, for example.

The outer circle refers to countries where English is not the primary mother tongue, but has an important status as a second language, for instance in India or in Singapore. The expanding circle includes countries such as Austria, where English is used for international communication, but not for official governmental purposes. Today, the periphery and the outer circle have significantly outnumbered the inner circle already (Crystal 2003). According to the model, only 320 to 380 million speakers belong to the inner circle, 150 to 300 million people inhabit the outer circle and the expanding circle is estimated to encompass between 100 and 1000 million speakers. The differing estimates for the inner circle suggested by Kachru (1982) and Crystal (2003) is due to a general increase of the world population between the publication dates.

The spread of English as an international language and, more importantly, the steadily increasing number of speakers in the outer circle and the periphery have initiated discussions about the ownership of English (Widdowson 1994). Despite the fact that the outer and the expanding circle have numerically outnumbered the inner circle (Crystal 2003), its domination of the English language is apparent (Canagarajah 1999). By tradition, all learners of English follow rules and regulations set by the inner circle. This can be described as a standardisation of the English language according to an idealized form of the native speakers. However, it has already been observed that the inner circle consists of a comparatively small number of English speakers. Thus, it seems questionable why the considerable amount of speakers outside the centre is obliged to follow rules set by the comparatively small inner circle (see e.g. Seidlhofer 2012). It appears more logical to let the largest group of speakers decide upon the standard of a language. The prevailing dominance of the inner circle, and thus the native speakers, does not only affect linguistic norms, but also other areas. Canagarajah (1999) adds the danger of imposing political and cultural values onto the outer circle and the periphery. Moreover, the world of ELT is influenced by the superiority of native speakers. Since English teachers are frequently sent out from the inner circle to the periphery (see Medgyes 1994), an entire sociolinguistic construct is transferred to learners of this language in non-native regions.

In addition, most English language courses in the periphery follow the norms set by the inner circle, and thus the unrealistic, idealised model of native speakers (Kaim 2004). Before ending this chapter, the status of English in Austria, the target country of this study, needs to be considered.

## **2.2 English in Austria**

The demonstrated power of English as well as the dominance of the inner circle is equally noticeable in the Republic of Austria, as it is part of the expanding circle (Kachru 1982). The economy, the world of work and popular culture are only examples of fields that are substantially influenced by the lingua franca. International media such as newspapers and films are offered in their original version in Austria (Kaim 2004); nonetheless, the English language has a predominant status among foreign languages. According to the Eurobarometer report (2012), 73% of the Austrian population speak English as a foreign language, which makes it the most common foreign language in the target country (Dalton-Puffer et al 2011).

The dominance of English is particularly conspicuous in the Austrian school system. German is the official language of Austria, and thus also the language of instruction in Austrian schools. When it comes to foreign language learning, English is by far the most commonly taught foreign language in Austrian schools (LEPP 2008), even though it is not mandatory (Dalton-Puffer et al. 2011). The reason for this development might be the importance of English for international communication. Consequently, the motivation to learn the language is high, “all the more so since English mother-tongue countries (both in and out of Europe) are exceedingly hard to communicate with satisfactorily in any language other than English” (Fishman 1994: 71). At the end of primary school, 98,61% of students have learned English and after the mandatory lower secondary school, the percentage even increases to 98,82% (BMUKK/BMWF 2007: 41). Nonetheless, these figures need to be considered as generalised estimates, in particular concerning primary education. In fact, the curricular discontinuity between primary and secondary English language teaching is considered as a considerable weakness of Austria's language policy (LEPP 2008).

Dalton-Puffer et al. (2011: 193) report that primary English language teaching is insufficient, as the teachers' attitude is "non-committal" and the learning outcomes are poor. Therefore, the potential of early English language teaching to serve as profound preparation for continuative language learning is not exploited. In this respect, Spichtinger (2000: 82) notes that the insufficiency of English as a foreign language (hence EFL) in Austrian state schools is the source of the "flourishing business" of private institutions. In secondary English language teaching, however, Austria has succeeded in acknowledging the potential of this particular language in some cases. Austria's response to the growing power of English as a means of international communication is the emergence of international schools. Since the amended School Education Act of 1997, Austrian schools are allowed to employ a language different from German as the language of instruction (Kaim 2004). The *Linz International School Auhof* is one example of the successful implementation of English as the language of instruction in combination with an international curriculum. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Austrian secondary schools does not participate in these pilot projects, therefore the general regulations of teaching English as a foreign language will be presented.

In Austria, the curricular regulations and guidelines for all modern languages are the same and specifications regarding the English language do not exist. The Austrian curriculum of modern languages, and thus EFL, is closely related to the suggestions formulated by the Common European Framework of References (CEFR). Hence, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as the aspect of culture are taught (Kaim 2004). As part of the expanding circle (Kachru 1982), Austria follows the linguistic norms set by the inner circle when learning and teaching English. As far as the aspect of culture is concerned, the previously observed importance of English as a world language can be recognized in the curricular guidelines. Intercultural communication is one of the fundamental principles of the Austrian curriculum of modern languages (Lehrplan AHS Oberstufe); thus, cultural norms of the English circle, especially those of Great Britain (Kaim 2004), constitute an important part of EFL in Austria. This could be regarded as evidence for the previously expressed concern by Canagarajah (1999), as the inner circle imposes cultural values on the outer circle and the periphery.

The dominance of the inner circle, and thus the dominance of native speakers, is central to this case study. Before examining the alleged supremacy of native English speaking teachers over non-native English speaking teachers, the concept of the native speaker will be defined in the following chapter.

### **3 The native speaker**

The dominance of the inner circle, and thus native English speakers, has been illustrated in the previous chapter. In order to explore the dichotomy between native and non-native speaking English teachers, the notion of native and non-native speakers needs to be defined in general first, regardless of a particular language. The concept of a native speaker is generally understood and agreed upon in everyday discourse and non-professional fields. The prevailing view is that a native speaker of a given language is someone whose first language is that particular language (Bloomfield 1933). However, when it comes to an interpretation of this concept in modern academic discourses, such as applied linguistics and ELT, the definition appears to be more complex. Due to this complexity, a holistic understanding must be developed. After investigating whether native speakers exist, a list of distinctive qualities for this concept will be examined. The discussion of these aspects as well as the evaluation of their significance serve to develop a precise definition of different types of native speakers, suited for the particular purpose of this case study.

#### **3.1 Do native speakers exist?**

The importance and influence of native speakers in linguistics seem to be out of question, as Davies (2003: 1) asserts that “they are the stakeholders of the language, they control its maintenance and shape its direction”. However, a considerable amount of linguists (e.g. Ferguson 1982, Rampton 1990) believe that the distinction between native and non-native speakers is a myth. Paikeday (1985) even claims that the native speaker is “dead”, in other words non-existent. This would imply that a separation between the two definitions is not possible and a clear boundary between the two does also not exist. Selinker (1972) describes this belief with the help a scale named the interlanguage continuum. This continuum represents the learners' learning journey from the L1 to the additional foreign language (hence L2). Throughout this journey, the learners construct a linguistic system between these two languages called the interlanguage, which comprises L2 errors and predictions. Interlanguage is constantly modified and developed as the learning process advances and the learner approximates L2 proficiency.



The idea behind this scale is that learners of a language will remain learners throughout their entire life, as absolute proficiency is rarely attainable. Medgyes (1994: 12) develops this argument further and applies it to both first and second language acquisition, hence including both native and non-native speakers: “[...] every speaker can, metaphorically, be placed on the interlanguage continuum at any point of his/her learning process”. Similar to Selinker's theory (1972), this assumption implies that neither native nor non-native speakers can be defined as such, and their existence cannot be proven, as all learners move at their individual speed along the spectrum.

In order to testify the hypothesis, Medgyes (1994) examines the interlanguage continuum with the help of two assumptions, namely it being either absolute or relative. In the first case, the border between natives and non-natives becomes impermeable at a certain proficiency point on the spectrum. Thus, non-native speakers can never reach the absolute proficiency point. Consequently, this suggests a definite frontier between the two groups. Nevertheless, some learners of English appear to have managed to cross the border. Medgyes (1994), Thomas (1999) and Davies (2003) all report cases of outstanding individuals who have mastered to surpass native speakers in certain linguistic aspects. Therefore, the first hypothesis seems to be proven wrong. The second hypothesis discussed by Medgyes (1994) states that theoretically, every learner of English is able to reach a native-like level. This assumption involves the non-native speaker to accelerate their speed in a manner that allows them to progress with significant speed on the continuum. However, due to the necessity of exceptional factors, it is agreed upon (e.g. Davies 1991) that only a very limited number of learners can actually manage to permeate the frontier. This argumentation revisits the research observations concerning exceptional L2 learners made by Medgyes (1994), Thomas (1999) and Davies (2003).

Consequently, it could be assumed that non-native speakers are able to overcome the border in certain areas, but not in others. Even though native-like pronunciation is mastered, for example, deficits concerning other areas, such as pragmatics, might be noticeable.

At this point, it is of paramount importance to note that a distinction between native and non-native speakers does exist; yet, their precise definitions are presently unclear. For that reason, a different approach to characterise native speakers in detail has to be considered in the following section.

### **3.2 Characteristics of native speakers**

Even though it has been examined that the native speaker does coexist alongside with the non-native speaker and is not “dead” (Paikeday 1985), their particular characteristics still remain ambiguous and vague. Placing native and non-native speakers on a continuum as proposed in section 3.1 appears insufficient, as it does not offer insights into distinctive features of either type. Hence, an alternative way needs to be developed in this section.

In the past, it has been attempted to bypass the complexity of their characteristics by employing alternative technical terms, such as “English-using speech fellowship” (Kachru 1982) or “multicompetent speaker” (Cook 1999). However, these terms appear to simply rename the problem rather than to explain it more precisely. In fact, the difficulty lies in the definition of the concept as such and not in its nomination. Hence, none of the suggested terms has established itself in the fields of linguistics or ELT (Selvi 2011). Therefore, the investigation in the present study focuses on the original term, native speaker, in relation to its counterpart, the non-native speaker. The definition of a native speaker, or a non-native speaker, can be seen as circular, as Davies (1991: 213) argues that “to be a native speaker means not being a non-native speaker”. Given that their relationship is circular, the exemplification of one set of characteristics can suffice to deduct a definition for the other. In order to illuminate the complexity of the concept and to provide a more detailed explanation, it seems logical to describe native proficiency with a list of discriminatory characteristics. The development of checklists, comprising the substantial attributes of native speakers, serves to illustrate these characteristics (e.g. Stern 1983, Richards et al. 1985, Scovel 1988, Davies 1991, Medgyes 1994). Lee (2005: 154) proposes a combined list of six major points suggested by various linguists.

1. the individual acquired the language in early childhood (Davies, 1991; McArthur, 1992; Phillipson, 1992) and maintains the use of the language (Kubota, 2004; McArthur, 1992)
2. the individual has intuitive knowledge of the language (Davies, 1991; Stern, 1983)
3. the individual is able to produce fluent, spontaneous discourse (Davies, 1991; Maum, 2002; Medgyes, 1992)
4. the individual is communicatively competent (Davies, 1991; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992), able to communicate within different social settings (Stern, 1983)
5. the individual identifies with or is identified by a language community (Davies, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Nayar, 1994)
6. the individual does not have a foreign accent (Coulmas, 1981; Medgyes, 1992; Scovel, 1988)

In order to assess the value of this list for the present discussion, the analysis below considers the significance of each of the six qualities with regard to the opinions of other researchers.

The connection between nativeness and language acquisition at a young age has been prominent in the native speaker debate since its beginning (see Bloomfield 1933). Davies (2003) argues that native-like competence can hardly be reached if the language learning process only starts after puberty. Crystal (2003: 18) reinforces this position by claiming that “in the ideal native English speaker, there is a chronologically based awareness, a continuum from birth to death where there are no gaps”. However, in today's globalised world this criterion might not apply to all native speakers of a language, as prolonged job placements abroad, for example, can cause gaps (see Kaim 2004). Likewise, Medgyes (1994) admits that numerous unpredictable influences, for instance moving to a non-English-speaking country after birth, reveal the insufficiency of this factor. Besides, the exact limitations of “early childhood” are not defined in Lee's (2005) list; therefore learners who benefit from total immersion during the preadolescent stage are ignored. The first quality is further specified by continuous usage of the particular language acquired in early childhood; however, minor importance can be attached to this factor as a distinctive feature of a native speaker, as other researchers in this field disregard it completely.

Intuition is a crucial indicator for native speakers, as it implies knowledge about correctness and appropriateness, particularly concerning grammaticality (Gass 1983). The native speakers' competence to employ the correct grammatical form, for instance, is based on a gut feeling rather than learned knowledge (Davies 2003). This familiarity is mastered from childhood onwards via the establishment of a valid grammar for the given language (Davies 2003), which non-native speakers can usually not resort to. Following Davies' (2003) idea that general intuition is acquired by being a member of a speech community that shares the same standard language and norms, intuition is in fact a form of security. This feeling of security enables native speakers to intuitively differentiate between correct and incorrect forms; in other words, to know 'what sounds right'. Given that these decisions stem from intuition, it seems probable that they are made subconsciously; however, Stern (1983) notes that native speakers can also identify faulty utterances consciously without necessarily having knowledge about the language as such. What is more, intuition is not exclusively reserved to native speakers. Gass' (1983) study has shown that non-native speakers might also be able to develop strategies similar to intuition with increasing proficiency and experience. A comparable development might be witnessed when spending a considerable amount of time in a country where the target language is spoken.

Experience is also an influential factor when it comes to fluency and communicative competence, as their development takes time (Haussamen et al. 2011). Mastering fluency in unplanned discourse is natural in native speakers, as they benefit from extensive and continued exposure to the given language. Hence, they do not only build confidence, but also acquire a repertoire of starters and fillers, which hinder speech disfluency (see Bosker 2014). Non-native speakers might feel overwhelmed and insecure in an unknown situation, especially when talking to a native speaker, and can thus not produce impromptu speech (Newcombe 2007). According to Davies (2003: 202), these feelings of insecurity can arise from deficiencies in pragmatic rather than linguistic knowledge, because "what the non-native speakers are missing is not the 'what' but the 'how' of ritual". This shortcoming, which is closely related to a lack of intuition, could be remedied by continuous interaction with the speech community.

Similarly, the rituals of diverse discourse settings can become familiar through experience. In these settings, performance and behaviour of individuals can aid to discriminate between a native and a non-native speaker. Non-native speakers might feel as if they are unable to express their idea adequately whereas native speakers generally assume that they are understood (Davies 2003). In this respect, pragmatics is essential to communicate appropriately in various discourse situations, for example by rephrasing an utterance. This competence is closely related to fluency as well as security. Moreover, Stern (1983) mentions the native speaker competence of successfully resorting to suitable register or style for a given social setting. Again, native speakers acquire this skill through continuous exposure to the target language; however it should be noted that this assumption cannot be overgeneralised. In fact, exposure to and experience with a wide range of social situations cannot be presumed for all members of the inner circle. Thus, not all native speakers communicate successfully in any given speech situation (Cook 1999).

Identification with the target culture as well as correct pronunciation can also be linked to constant interaction with a language. Developing a sense of membership in a language community can potentially be established without necessarily residing in the area (Morgan 2014); however, being accepted as a member of the language community involves active, on-going exchange with other native members (Patrick 2001). Johnson and Johnson (1998) argue that this feature is used to simply judge group membership rather than to evaluate linguistic proficiency. Davies (2003), however, attaches great importance to membership of a speech community. The author claims that sharing norms with a given culture is a significant feature of native speakers. The continuous exposure to and interaction with the target language does not only facilitate identification with the target culture, but can also assist pronunciation skills (Gilakjani 2011), as experienced by native speakers from birth onwards. Pronunciation as a distinctive feature between native and non-native speakers becomes problematic when taking countries from the outer circle (Kachru 1982) into consideration.

Learning English as a second language, as for example in Singapore, can imply pronunciation deviant from the standardised norm (Jenkins 1998); therefore, this characteristic cannot be regarded as applicable for the definition of a native speaker. In the light of the above discussion, the majority of factors compiled by Lee (2005) seem to be connected to experience and exposure. This assumption might imply that non-native speakers can become native speakers of a language when exposing themselves to the target language, culture and norms for a lengthy period of time. Medgyes (1994: 14) terms individuals undergoing this transition as “pseudo-native speakers”, thereby clearly distinguishing them from near-native speakers.

In my view, a near-native speaker is someone whose proficiency is very good but does not reach native-levels, whereas a pseudo-native speaker’s proficiency may even surpass the native’s in one or several aspects of proficiency. (Medgyes 1994: 17)

According to this theory, a full transformation is attainable; yet, the frequency of “pseudo-native speakers” (Medgyes 1994: 14) can be questioned. As outlined in section 3.1, the ability of surpassing a native speaker requires outstanding mastery of a language, evoked by exceptional circumstances. It should be noted that despite high proficiency, this type of speaker might suffer from various weaknesses, including non-native-like pronunciation, inappropriateness in conversational behaviour, the employment of less idioms as well as “gaps in conceptual knowledge” (Medgyes 1994: 14). Taking this into consideration, “pseudo-native speakers” (Medgyes 1994: 14) can be considered as a problematic case to define according to the checklist, as they might not fulfil criteria 1 and 6 of Lee’s (2005) list, for example. As a matter of fact, they can neither be regarded as non-native speakers, as they surpass some native speakers, nor as native speakers, due to possible deficiencies in the above mentioned areas.

The discussion of the characteristics proposed by Lee (2005) has shown that a checklist is insufficient for defining native speakers. Apart from language acquisition in childhood, not all qualities are necessarily present in all native speakers. Likewise, non-native speakers can potentially fulfil certain of these requirements, but not others. Therefore, another way of defining native speakers that is suited for the precise purpose of this case study needs to be developed.

### **3.3 Towards a definition of native speakers**

Despite the widespread criticism of the native speaker concept (see Kaim 2004), the findings of the previous sections serve as a justification for its relevance. Therefore, the existence of the concept as well as the distinction between native and non-native speakers is regarded as evident for this study. In consequence, a precise definition of both terms must be attainable.

So far, neither placing native, non-native or exceptional cases such as “pseudo-native speakers” (Medgyes 1994: 14) on a continuum, nor creating a checklist of distinctive features of native speakers have appeared sufficient. Both approaches adhere to an idealised form of native speakers rather than reality (Davies 2003). Hence, another manner to describe the concept needs to be developed. In today's globalised world, nativeness has become a complex concept. In this respect, definitions offered in the early stages of the native speaker debate, such as the suggestion by Bloomberg (1933) mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, seem to oversimplify the matter. Therefore, the pursued definition needs to encompass the notion of native speakers in a broader and more realistic sense. As observed in the previous section, the sole quality that non-native speakers cannot influence is being born into a language. In the past, “native-like English proficiency has long been framed as virtually unachievable after childhood” (Walkinshaw and Oanh 2014: 2); yet, other forms of native speakers seem to exist. The example of “pseudo-native speakers” (Medgyes 1994: 14) presented in the previous section can be considered representative for the existence of different types of nativeness, regardless of the speaker's L1. Hence, the various types of native speakers that exist in reality, apart from the idealised form of native speakers, need to be determined. Given the circular nature of the concept (Davies 2003), non-native speakers can subsequently be defined with the help of exclusion procedure. In this respect, Davies (2003: 214) identifies five different types of native speakers:

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

Davies' (2003) suggestion addresses a number of previously discussed assertions. It has been agreed that language acquisition in early years can be a quality of a native speaker, but is not an imperative quality (Kramsch 1997). All definitions following the first type are in fact “ways of compensating for not being definition 1” (Davies 2003: 214). However, this claim does not devalue the remaining five types. Davies (2003) notes their importance, as they serve to understand the wider scope of the concept of native speakers. As far as the case of English is concerned, the third definition includes speakers from the outer circle (Kachru 1982), where English is used as a language of instruction. Revisiting the importance of experience and exposure to the target language as illustrated in section 3.2, definition 5 proves that an L2 learner can in fact become a native speaker. Definition 2 and 4 complete the definition, as they include cases of high-achieving L2 learners as well as post-colonial countries where English is used for all purposes.

The list suggested by Davies (2003) has been selected as the approved definition for this study. Besides “early childhood exposure” (Davies 2003: 214), it also respects particular circumstances (definition 3 and 4) and life decisions of individuals (definition 2 and 5); thus, it has a wider, more detailed grasp of the concept of native speakers and does not exclude large groups, such as the outer circle (Kachru 1982). This in-depth approach towards the native speaker concept suits the specific purpose of this study best. As a matter of fact, neither the continuum nor the checklist has appeared sufficient when it was attempted to classify the teachers taking part in this survey. The five types specified by Davies (2003) have allowed a clear categorization of all participating individuals, especially in ambiguous cases.



Non-native speakers, on the other hand, were classified with the help of exclusion procedure. If the individual teachers could not be identified of being a member of any of the five types of native speakers, they were regarded as non-native teachers. A precise report on the outcome of the classification process will be given in chapter 6.

Davies (2003: 213) concludes that “the problem is that we cannot distinguish the non-native speaker from the native speaker except by autobiography”. Therefore, each case needs to be examined individually in order to decide whether a speaker is classified as native, as attempted in this study. It should be noted that the native speaker debate is ongoing and has by no means found an end. The establishment of an approved definition for this purpose, however, can be regarded as conclusive for this particular paper. After having provided the adopted definition, the concepts of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) need to be dealt with in great detail in the next chapter.

## **4 NEST versus NNEST**

The distinction between native English speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) is closely related to the general distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers (see chapter 3) and thus similarly controversial. Especially the question who is more qualified has been discussed in the research of ELT for more than two decades (e.g. Davies 1991; Widdowson 1994; Kachru and Nelson 1996; Liu 1999; Amin 2004; Kamhi-Stein 2004). Shin (2008: 58) even declares the distinction to be “one of the most difficult and elusive concepts to define in language teaching”. Today, the majority of English teachers worldwide are non-native speakers (see Graddol 2006, Liu 2009); however, native speakers still benefit from a professional supremacy. Due to the alleged power of native speakers, NNESTs might feel deficient when being compared to NESTs or even overpowered by them. Due to the significance of this divide, it has become a major influential factor for the job market of English teachers. NNESTs suffer from continuous discrimination towards their first language (e.g. Mahboob 2004) as well as from neglect of their beneficial characteristics by their own social circle, employers as well as students (Thomas 1999). As the focus of the present study is to examine attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs, their concepts need to be outlined. The status of both NESTs and NNESTs in ELT, their advantages and drawbacks as well as NNESTs’ struggles, particularly in teacher training and the hiring market are discussed in this chapter. In this respect, the value of NNESTs in the world of ELT and the benefit of both types of teachers for the representative sample of students in this case study are presented. At this point, it should be noted that several passages of text in this chapter were adapted from a previous research paper I have composed on the dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs in 2014.

### **4.1 Nativeness in ELT**

Researchers are aware of the existing dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs and have formulated arguments for either side (Kaim 2004). The arguments in favour of NESTs need to be discussed in detail before presenting the significance of NNESTs in teaching English as a foreign language, in particular regarding the setting of the present study.

The predominant status of NESTs is noticeable in the ELT world, as the belief that native speakers are preferred over non-native speakers is widespread (e.g. Thomas 1999). Both Braine (1999) and Kamhi-Stein (1999) report that nativeness is even regarded as an indispensable asset for some teaching positions. As a matter of fact, when analysing TESOL job advertisements (Braine 1999, Canagarajah 1999, Tinkel 2013), it becomes apparent that mere nativeness can suffice as qualification to teach English. The assumption that nativeness is pivotal for the ideal English language teacher is commonly referred to as the “native speaker fallacy” (Philippson 1992) or also the “inferiority complex” (Liu 2009) of non-native speakers.

Even though nativeness cannot be regarded as the sole decisive factor of a good language teacher (Braine 1999), it entails a number of advantageous qualities. Firstly, “non-NESTs are less proficient users of English than NESTs” (Medgyes 1994: 33) in all four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Tang's (1997) findings support this assertion. As these aforementioned areas are the main constituents of ELT, it could hence be deduced that a NEST is the ideal model for learners of the English language (Quirk 1990). It should be noted, however, that this form of idealisation can be questioned (Kaim 2004), as it does not reflect reality. Secondly, “native speakers of a language have a better command of fluent, idiomatically correct language forms” (Braine 1999: xiv). Similarly, Medgyes (1994) asserts that the amount of authentic language in the classroom is reduced when being taught by a NNEST; yet, it has been observed that this assumption cannot be overgeneralised for all non-native speaker teachers (see chapter 3). In fact, continuous exposure to the English language can allow non-native speakers to develop a similar competence (Davies 2003). Thirdly, excellent pronunciation is viewed as an advantage of a NEST (Medgyes 1994). Evidently, their way of speaking is perceived as the correct and proper way to communicate in the target language (Hadla 2013). As a result, native-like pronunciation is regarded as the pursued model by students (e.g. Walkinshaw and Oanh 2014) and being taught by a NEST with non-native-like pronunciation might be viewed as unsatisfactory by learners (Thomas 1999). Lastly, NESTs have a deeper understanding of cultural aspects surrounding the English language than NNESTs (Hadla 2013).

Therefore, native speakers are capable of sharing more cultural knowledge with their students (Arva and Medgyes 2000). Unless NNESTs benefit from continuous exposure to the target culture, it might be difficult for them to acquire similar authentic knowledge.

In spite of the aforementioned advantages, it should be emphasised once more that being a native speaker of a language does not necessarily imply being a good teacher (Maum 2002). This view does not only overrate and overgeneralise the linguistic competence of NESTs, but also neglects the valuable strengths of NNESTs completely. Since the 2000s, it seems that being a NNEST can be declared with more confidence and pride, as their valuableness in teaching English is recognized by both the ELT world as well as by students (Braine 2005). Their legitimate place in teaching English as a foreign language is also proven by the increasing number of published articles not only about but also by NNESTs (Braine 1999). Before exploring their strengths in great detail, the two main challenges that NNESTs encounter in the ELT world need to be illustrated.

## **4.2 Challenges of NNESTs**

The dominant status of NESTs in ELT contributes to the emergence of challenges that NNESTs have to encounter. Besides facing problems such as credibility (Thomas 1999, Maum 2002), NNESTs are primarily confronted with issues in two areas, namely in their teacher training and the subsequent job perspectives.

The successful adaption of a variety of teaching methods as well as continuing self-education regarding research and trends (Liu 2009) are substantial in the training of English language teachers in general, albeit natives or non-natives. The teacher training of NNESTs faces an additional complex of problems, due to the fact that they remain L2 learners of English throughout their lives. As shown in the previous section, the four advantages of NESTs are language proficiency, fluency and communicative competence, pronunciation as well as cultural background knowledge. The underlying common factor of all four strengths is linguistic expertise on a native level, acquired through years of experience and exposure to the English language. In contrast, non-native speakers can usually not resort to similar linguistic expertise on the same level (see chapter 3).

Non-native trainees might feel that their language proficiency and their pragmatic skills are insufficient for teaching English (Liu 2009, Nemtchinova et al. 2010), especially when being compared to native speakers on their course. In order to improve the situation for NNESTs, and subsequently for their learners, the teacher training of non-native speakers needs to be adapted so that its effectiveness is increased. In this respect, researchers propose different approaches. Maum (2002: 5) presents the implementation of curricular elements that address “issues of concern and interest to NNESTs”. Nemtchinova et al. (2010) suggest activities to improve NNESTs' language proficiency in order to achieve successful professional preparation. These strategies include engaging with colloquial and idiomatic language, practising useful meta-language for the classroom, acting out role plays of vocational situations as well as targeting individual linguistic problem areas with the help of online exercises (Nemtchinova et al. 2010). Revisiting the importance of exposure for mastering linguistic and pragmatic skills (see chapter 3), Liu (1999) suggests active interaction with the target environment in order to better the command of the English language. Likewise, Shin (2008: 62) suggests motivating NNEST trainees “to develop their English outside the classroom”. Kamhi-Stein (1999) advises to provide NNESTs with opportunities of pre-professional experience to overcome the lack of confidence regarding their language proficiency, thus facilitating the early stages of teaching.

Upon successful completion of the teacher training, the hiring practices of the ELT job market can represent a further challenge for novice NNESTs (Kaim 2004). The predominant status of native speakers in the ELT world results in a discrimination against non-native speakers (Braine 1999). Even though Medgyes (1994) claimed that NNESTs' value is getting more and more recognized on the job market, the findings of recent international studies do not confirm this assertion. The results of the survey conducted by Mahboob et al. (2004) show that being a non-native speaker of English is frequently a criterion for exclusion in the application procedure. Similarly, Clark et al. (2007: 423) report that the “lack of native speaker status will be viewed as an important consideration at over 70% of the institutions” participating in her research project.

Clearly, NNESTs are aware of these employment techniques and thus report feelings of anxiety when attempting to secure a job (Awan 2014). The minority status of NNESTs can especially be observed regarding private language institutions, as they “can charge more if they advertise that they have native English speakers as teachers” (McKay 2002: 42). As far as Austria is concerned, Tinkel's (2013) findings revealed that two out of three English language institutes hire both NESTs and NNESTs. Contrary to the prevailing discriminatory employment policies in ELT, Austrian public schools appear to favour hiring non-natives (Kaim 2004). This hiring strategy values the strengths of NNESTs and their advantages for the L2 learner, which will be presented in great detail in the following section.

### **4.3 The relevance of NNESTs in TESOL**

Despite the linguistic disadvantage, being a non-native speaker of English can entail a number of advantages for teachers (Mahboob 2004). In fact, it can be regarded as the source of NNESTs' valuableness in ELT, especially when it comes to teaching English to speakers of other languages (hence TESOL) (Mullock 2010). Researchers have observed that the qualities of NNESTs include sharing their students' L1 and thus comprehending their learning process (Cook 2005), understanding their cultural background, representing a realistic learner model (Lee 2000), mastering meta-linguistic knowledge as well as instructing language learning strategies (Medgyes 1994; Braine 2006). In this section, these advantages will be examined in great depth.

Sharing a mutual background with non-native learners can be beneficial for teachers in various aspects. Even though the exchange with an authentic native English culture, as rendered possible by NESTs, might be perceived as appealing by students, studies have shown that it can result in misunderstandings (Walkinshaw and Oanh 2014). Potentially, cultural discrepancies might impede or even hinder the learning process (Hadla 2013). In fact, NESTs might not be familiarised with prevalent discourses or attitudes in their students' country (Mullock 2010); thus, native English speaking teachers might be unsuitable for the particular foreign context.

NNESTs, on the other hand, are acquainted with their students' culture (Hadla 2013), as well as the entailed norms and values, because they were born in the target country. Kaim (2004: 92) emphasises the value of NNESTs and describes them as “double agents” in the classroom, as “they are insiders of the language they teach and similarly insiders of the culture in which they teach”. In this respect, teachers can exploit the shared cultural background, for instance to establish close teacher-student rapport (Rabidge and Chappell 2014). Consequently, this prerequisite might even result in augmented confidence of teachers (Seidlhofer 1999).

An additional strength of NNESTs is that they can serve as an attainable learning model for their students (Nemtchinova et al 2010). Contrary to the dominance of the native speaker model as the pursued goal in EFL (Wang 2012), Cook (2005: 51) asserted that “the proper goal for an L2 user is believed to be speaking the second language like an L2 user”. In her recent publication (2016: 186), Cook emphasises NNESTs' importance of serving as role models by stating that “teaching should concentrate on producing successful L2 users, not imitation native speakers”. Even though pronunciation might be regarded as NNESTs' handicap, it offers the opportunity to retain their cultural identity and represent a realistic L2 learning model for their students (Medgyes 1994). Furthermore, Medgyes (1994: 12) looks upon the characteristics of NNESTs favourably by stating that “[t]hey are role models, they are success stories, they are real images of what students can aspire to be”. In this respect, the focus is shifted away from the idealised, unrealistic model of native speakers towards a more realistic and attainable L2 learner model. Likewise, Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010) observe that students value NNESTs' success and use their teachers' achievements as inspiration for their personal language learning process.

Their language learning history does not only empower NNESTs to relate to and understand their students, but also effects teaching quality positively (Medgyes 1994). Drawing on previous personal experience with English language acquisition can help to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching as well as the proposed learning strategies (Arva & Medgyes 2000).

Macaro (2005: 65) supports this argument by stating that “the match between the bilingual teacher's brain and that of the L2 learner is much closer than that of the monolingual teacher and the L2 learner”. Given that their brains are structured in a similar manner and NNESTs have mastered the identical L2 learning process already, selecting and consequently teaching efficient language learning strategies is more successful (Mahboob 2004). The mutual language learning history between NNESTs and their students also makes understanding their learners' concerns easier (Tang 1997). In this respect, NNESTs can manage to predict language difficulties and arising complications (Hadla 2013), potentially even before they have been made. Medgyes (1994: 62) labels this ability the “non-native speaker's intuition”. It describes the expertise which enables experienced NNESTs to predict learners' mistakes before they have started to speak, especially those induced by language transfer (Arva & Medgyes 2000). A shared L1 can facilitate the development of this process immensely. The absence of language proficiency in the learners' L1 does not allow NESTs to interpret the mistakes appropriately (Arva and Medgyes 2000). Consequently, the lack of a shared language learning history can be viewed as a drawback of NESTs, as they cannot relate as well to their students' needs and the arising complications during foreign language processing (McNeill 2005).

NNESTs acquire profound knowledge about the system of as well as rules for correct English grammar throughout their language learning process (Walkinshaw & Oanh 2014). Even though Medgyes (1994: 37) asserts that “unless they come into everyday contact with native speakers, their grammatical knowledge remains ‘bookish’”, studies have shown different results. Libovsky and Mahboob (2010) found that grammatical skills of NNESTs might even outperform those of NESTs. Therefore, NNESTs are possibly more capable of supporting their students with comprehensible explanations and more metalinguistic knowledge (Seidlhofer 1996). Learners value the extensive grammatical knowledge of NNESTs and rate it as their most powerful advantage, as observed by Mahboob (2004). As far as native speakers are concerned, Arva and Medgyes (2000) report that inconsistent grammatical knowledge is NESTs' strongest disadvantage, as they can employ the correct form but fail to explain it appropriately.



In addition to NNESTs' conscious knowledge of grammar, sharing the mutual L1 with their students is regarded as a valuable quality when teaching complex grammatical structures (Cook 2005). Macaro (2005) agrees that the employment of a shared L1 through code switching can serve as a communication and learning strategy. Besides being able to explain difficult grammatical items, competence in the students' L1 can be useful to facilitate classroom discourse in general (Tinkel 2013), for example when giving a quick translation for an English word.

#### **4.4 Collaboration between NESTs and NNESTs**

The discussion in the previous sections has shown that NESTs and NNESTs both have their individual advantages. NESTs' strengths include their linguistic expertise as well as their idiomatic and fluent speech, their pronunciation as well as their extensive knowledge about the culture surrounding the English language. NNESTs, on the other hand, distinguish themselves due to their outstanding grammatical knowledge as well as the similarities with their students with respect to the cultural background, the L1 and the language learning history. In light of the individual advantages, learners can appreciate either type of teacher and benefit from the particular strengths. Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) add that NESTs are more suitable for students when desiring to achieve fluency and communicative competence, rather than thorough exam preparation. In contrast, NNESTs remain L2 learners of English themselves and can make use of the differences between English and their L1 as well as the psychological aspects of foreign language learning. In addition, serving as a realistic learning model for the students can result in increased empathy towards arising difficulties. In consequence, it can be deduced that different types of learners entail different needs and thus different teachers.

In this respect, Canagarajah (1999) distinguishes between two different situations and, thus, two different needs for two different English teachers. The author claims that areas where English is used as a second language, as in the outer circle, a teacher from the outer circle or periphery is suitable. In regions where English is taught and used as a foreign language, however, teachers from the inner circle seem to be the better choice.

According to Canagarajah (1999), the second group is more likely to use English within the context of the centre; hence, the acquisition of their predominant rules and norms seems appropriate.

In contrast to Canagarajah's (1999) assumption, Medgyes (1994) claims that NESTs and NNESTs are completely different and should thus be regarded as two separate entities. Therefore, Medgyes (1994: 27) puts forward the following four arguments:

1. They differ in terms of their language proficiency,
2. they differ in terms of their teaching behaviour,
3. the discrepancy in language proficiency accounts for most of the differences found in their teaching behaviour; and
4. they can be equally good teachers in their own terms.

As a consequence, Medgyes' (1992) past debate whether NESTs or NNESTs are "worth more" can be regarded as insignificant, because both types of teachers are equally valuable in their own respects. Likewise, the approach demonstrated by Canagarajah (1999) is therefore not considered as relevant as it contrasts native speakers and non-native speakers rather than recognizing their individual strengths. In general, the ELT world might need to acknowledge the valuableness of NNESTs, rather than overestimating the expertise of NESTs.

In the ideal English language teacher, the knowledge in all areas presented in the beginning of section is balanced so that the best possible education is ensured.

Owing to the fact that such an idealisation is not realistic, a different approach to overcome and eventually even abolish the dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs needs to be developed. In this regard, it has been suggested to introduce collaborations between native speakers and non-native speakers (e.g. Boecher 2005). Collaborations can assist to create the most beneficial outcome for the learners, by "sharing their areas of expertise and learning to relate to one another" (Shin 2008: 62). For the target sample of this study, collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs are regarded as the most productive way of learning. It should be noted, however, that especially the strengths of NNESTs need to be valued to a greater extent.

## **5 Previous studies on students' attitudes**

Whereas the discussion in chapter 4 concentrated on the strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs in theory, this chapter focuses on empirical evidence from previous research studies. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to serve as a link between the previously presented theory and the empirical part of this paper. Research studies examining the self-perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs and their students' attitudes towards them are viewed as "a fairly recent phenomenon" (Hadla 2013: 72). In 1992, Medgyes (1992) was a pioneer of investigating the differences between NESTs and NNESTs (Hadla 2013). Since then, various similar research studies have been conducted (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler 1999, Arva & Medgyes 2000, Maum 2003, Butler 2007). Research studying only the self-perceptions of NESTs or NNESTs cannot be regarded as fully objective (Hadla 2013) as they do not allow insights into the teachers' effects on their students. Learners of English should, however, be the main focus of attention in this debate, as the present case study examines students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. Similar to the present study, previous empirical studies have examined the learners' perspective. In this section, these studies will be critically analysed regarding their research questions, the employed methodology as well as their outcomes. It has been decided to present studies involving both adolescent and adult ESL/EFL learners in primary, secondary and tertiary education in their chronological order, so that an extensive overview over the current state of research can be given.

Ten years after Medgyes' (1992) gate-opening work, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) examined the learners' view of differences between NESTs and NNESTs in the Basque Autonomous Community. The hypothesis stated that the EFL learners would not show a clear preference for either type and that different levels of education would not influence their preferences (primary, secondary, university). Furthermore, NESTs were expected to be preferred regarding "vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, culture and civilisation, attitudes and assessment", NNESTs were expected to be favoured concerning "grammar, listening, reading, and learning strategies" (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002: 134). 76 undergraduate students from different subject areas filled out the questionnaire (Likert scales). Overall, the respondents favoured NESTs at all three educational levels.

It should be noted that this preference augmented as “educational levels rise” (Lasagabaster and Sierra 2002: 134). NESTs were favoured in the areas of pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary, assessment, listening, reading and culture and civilisation. In contrast, NNESTs were preferred in the fields of learning strategies and grammar. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) noted that qualitative data allows a deeper understanding of the results and thus presented the findings of their open-ended questions three years later (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2005). To my best knowledge, the analysis of these results has not been published in their research paper.

The results of Torres' (2004) study also indicate students' overall preference for NESTs. Torres (2004) investigated the attitudes of adult ESL learners towards NESTs and NNESTs in the US. The research goal was to determine whether learners prefer NESTs on the whole, whether the preference is connected to a specific language skill (e.g. pronunciation) and whether the fact of being either an immigrant or a refugee influenced the participants' responses. In order to collect data concerning the aforementioned issues, 102 learners of one community college and several ESL programs were questioned with the help of a questionnaire (Likert scales). 32 of the respondents participated in subsequent group interviews. It was found that NESTs are favoured in respect to pronunciation and writing. Moreover, the responses did not differ significantly between immigrant or refugee students. In the light of these findings, Torres (2004) suggested that both NESTs and NNESTs should continually improve their linguistic skills and engage in professional development.

Benke and Medgyes (2005) conducted a similar study in Hungary. The three research questions considered NESTs' and NNESTs' “most characteristic features”, differences in their teaching behaviour as well as the conformity of ESL/EFL student and teacher opinions on the issue (Benke & Medgyes 2005: 197). In total, 422 students from secondary schools, bilingual secondary schools, colleges, universities and private language schools participated in the study. The selected data collection tool was a four-page questionnaire with 57 items (Likert scales) on NESTs and NNESTs, eight personal questions regarding the respondents' background and two open questions.

The results of the study conducted by Benke and Medgyes (2005: 206) showed that the biggest strength of NNESTs is “teaching and explaining grammar”. Comprehensible organisation of grammatical items and sharing the students' language learning history were the observed reasons. In addition, the participants rated NNESTs' familiarity with the local culture and exam practices as an advantage. The fact of sharing the L1 with their students was perceived as a strength (vocabulary and translation skills) as well as a weakness (extensive use of Hungarian). As far as NESTs are concerned, the findings indicate that their conversation skills, their importance as a learning model and their ability to motivate their learners are their strengths. Even though some learners noted native speakers to be “more friendly”, (Benke & Medgyes 2005: 207) several drawbacks were observed. These included difficulty in comprehending a NEST, failure to explain grammatical concepts and the absence of language proficiency in Hungarian. As a result, “a communication gap between them is often created” (Benke & Medgyes 2005: 207). In light of these findings, Benke and Medgyes (2005) suggest both NESTs and NNESTs to teach together, so that learners' can benefit from their individual strengths.

In 2002, Moussu (2002) administered a survey on students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in the US. In 2006, the study was repeated (Moussu 2006) on a greater scale, as not only students' views, but also teachers' and administrators' opinions were examined. The goal was to observe the initial attitudes of learners towards NESTs and NNESTs at the beginning of the semester as well as the influence of factors such as time of exposure to teachers and gender on these attitudes. Moreover, the research questions investigated whether the students' views are in accordance with the opinions of teachers and administrators. In total, 1040 ESL students of Intensive English programs in the US were questioned with the help of questionnaires. In addition to the employment of Likert scales (see Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Benke & Medgyes 2005) Moussu (2006) also included multiple choice and short answer questions. Overall, Moussu (2006) observed a preference for NESTs, however, the students' general attitudes towards NNESTs were positive as well. Especially non-native learners and learners taught by NNESTs had a tendency to perceive NNESTs as positive.

Moussu's (2006) findings show that several factors influence these perceptions, in particular the shared L1 between learners and teachers, the class subject and the students' expected grades. Furthermore, it was discovered that students' perceptions change as time of exposure increases throughout the semester. Similar to Benke and Medgyes (2005), Moussu (2006) recommended collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs so that they can learn from each other.

The study conducted by Cakir and Demir (2013) in Turkey offered new insights into the matter. The research goal was to investigate the overall attitudes of 96 University students of preparation classes towards the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs. Similar to the previously presented studies, participants were delivered a questionnaire (Likert scale). The perceived advantages of NESTs included the teaching of speaking, listening, vocabulary and pronunciation. More interestingly, especially NESTs were regarded as a source of motivation. As far as grammar teaching is concerned, the findings showed that students preferred NNESTs. It was also found that NNESTs managed to build communication better with their learners than NESTs. Taking these results into consideration, Cakir and Demir (2013) recommended authorities to employ both NESTs and NNESTs.

A more recent study administered by Sung (2014) analysed qualitative data gathered solely by interviews. Sung (2014) conducted an exploratory study concerning students' perception towards either NESTs or NNESTs at a secondary school in Hong Kong. The employed data collection tool was an individual interview with 100 students from four different institutions. Sung (2014) did not investigate specific research questions, but observed students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in general. The findings of the study illustrate strengths and weaknesses of both NESTs and NNESTs. As far as native English speaking teachers are concerned, students valued "their interactive teaching styles and their accurate pronunciation" as well as their oral communication skills and their cultural knowledge (Sung 2013: 32). The participants reported that NESTs' drawbacks include the failure of establishing rapport and insufficient grammar teaching and exam preparation. The perceived strengths of NNESTs are thorough exam preparation, profound conceptual knowledge of English grammar, the employment of the shared L1 as well as relating to students' needs due to the common language learning history.

The results show that linguistic deficiency, especially regarding pronunciation and grammar, and exam-oriented, uncommunicative teaching strategies are NNESTs' weaknesses. Consequently, Sung (2014) suggests professional development for both NESTs and NNESTs, in order to deal with their weaknesses. As these individual drawbacks are complementary, collaboration between native speakers and non-native speakers seems beneficial for the learners (Sung 2013), as already asserted by Benke and Medgyes (2005) and Moussu (2006).

Overall, the results of the six studies do not suggest an explicit favouritism towards NESTs or NNESTs. In fact, only two studies reported a clear preference for NESTs (Torres 2004, Moussu 2006) and the four remaining studies did not obtain distinct results for either type (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Benke & Medgyes 2005, Cakir & Demir 2013, Sung 2014). As far as NESTs are concerned, pronunciation, teaching speaking and listening as well as extensive knowledge of the target culture were frequently perceived as the strengths. The commonly identified advantages of NNESTs for learners were teaching grammar as well as sharing the L1, the cultural background and the language learning history. If the employed quantitative data collection tool was a questionnaire, Likert scales were always used as scaling techniques. Benke and Medgyes (2005) and Moussu (2006) recommended collaboration between NESTs and NNESTs so that students can benefit from their particular assets.

As far as Austria is concerned, research studies regarding the self-perception of NNESTs have been conducted (e.g. Seidlhofer 1996, Kaim 2004). To my best knowledge, the only study focussing on learners' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in the Austrian context is the one administered by Tinkel (2013). This empirical study focussed on course participants' (76 individuals) and trainers' (22 individuals) beliefs in courses offered by private language institutes in Vienna. Tinkel (2013) used questionnaires with multiple choice and short-answer questions in order to gather data. It was observed that overall, learners prefer NESTs; however, NNESTs succeed in "understanding the learners' position and mistakes" and "offering suitable explanations" (Tinkel 2013: XXXI). As this study investigated students' perceptions in private institutions, no prior study has examined students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in a public Austrian secondary school.

## 6 Methodology of empirical study

### 6.1 Research design

Before illustrating the setting, characterising the participants and describing the data collection tool in this section, the hypotheses of the present study need to be restated.

Main hypothesis: *Overall, a NNEST is perceived as the ideal language teacher by 14-18 year olds learning English as a foreign language in Austria.*

Sub-hypothesis 1: *A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to studying grammar.*

Sub-hypothesis 2: *A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to supporting the learner (language learning history/use of L1).*

Sub-hypothesis 3: *A NEST is preferred over a NNEST when it comes to studying pronunciation.*

#### 6.1.1 Context and participants

For this study, an Austrian secondary school in Upper Austria was selected. As outlined in section 2.2, a small number of secondary schools in Austria have implemented English as the main language of instruction, as well as an international curriculum in addition to the Austrian curriculum. English is the language of tuition in all subjects, which can be regarded as exceptional in the Austrian context. After 8 years, the school leaving examination of the selected school consists of the general Austrian qualification for university entrance, which follows the general Austrian curriculum, and the International Baccalaureate, which follows a particular international curriculum. Due to this specific regulation and the employment of English as the language of instruction, the selected school employs both NESTs and NNESTs. As outlined in section 4.2, the Austrian secondary schools generally favour hiring non-native speaking English teachers. Therefore, these hiring practices can be regarded as a special feature of the selected school.



From this school, 132 students were selected to participate in the present research study. As the students had been previously informed and the questionnaire was distributed during regular lessons, all 132 learners responded to the questionnaire. Out of these 132 questionnaires, 7 (5,30%) had to be removed from the sample, because they were unusable. Therefore, the data of 125 questionnaires was processed. In total, 82 females (65,60%) and 42 males (33,60%) filled out the questionnaire. One learner did not indicate their gender. The learners' age varied between 14 and 18 years and they were either in grade 9, 10 or 12. Most participants were aged 15 (37 individuals, 29,84%), 27 individuals (21,77%) were aged 16, 21 respondents were aged 14 (16,94%), 16,13% of the learners were aged 16 (16,13%) and the students aged 18 formed the smallest group (19 individuals, 15,32%). One student did not specify their age. As far as the years of English studies are concerned, the responses varied between 5 and 16 years. 35,6% of the participants (47 students) indicated that they had studied English for ten or more years. This suggests intensive engagement with the target language, which is exceptional for the Austrian context. Nonetheless, some of the learners' answers might have included English education in primary school, which is generally not very intensive (see section 2.2). All of the 125 respondents have had experience with both NESTs and NNESTs. The majority of students studied the English language with a NEST (58,33%) and the remaining 41,67% were instructed by a non-native speaking English teacher.

In addition to the 132 students who were questioned with the help of the questionnaire, five teachers agreed to participate in informal interviews. These interviews were not taped and did not follow an interview guideline. Hence, these conversations are not regarded as an empirical data collection tool for the present study. The findings of these interviews and some relevant comments made by individual NESTs and NNESTs will serve primarily to support the argumentation in chapter 8. Among these five teachers, three individuals were labelled as NESTs and two individuals were labelled as NNESTs. For this classification process, the definition of a native speaker according to the five different types (Davies 2003) presented in section 3.3, served as a guideline.

In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the teachers are referred to as T1 to T5 in the following passage. T1 was born in the US; therefore she is a native speaker by birth and was exposed to the English language throughout her life. Consequently, native speaker type 1 applies to her situation. She moved to Austria in 2010 and has started working at the selected school in September 2015. T3 was born, raised and educated in South Korea. The teacher regards himself as a bilingual; however, according to the definition of a native speaker of the present study, he is classified as a native speaker. Owing to the fact that English was the only language of instruction throughout his school career as a lingua franca, he is an example for the third type of native speakers. T3 moved to Austria in 1992 and has been teaching at the selected school for 16 years. Similar to T3, T5 does not label herself as a native speaker. Taking into account that she lived and taught in the US for more than ten years, it becomes evident that she corresponds to the fifth type of native speaker. As described in section 3.3, long residence in the target country can be an indicator for nativeness. Therefore, she serves as an example for an L2 learner who became a native speaker. T5 moved back to Austria in 2008 and taught at another Austrian school, which also implemented English as the main language of instruction. She has been working at the selected school for four years. T2 and T4 were both labelled as NNESTs, as they do not correspond to any of the five types suggested by Davies (2003).

### ***6.1.2 Data collection tool: questionnaire***

As the present research made use of one method of data collection, one data collection tool was employed, namely a questionnaire. This section presents the questionnaire (see Appendix page II-V), describes its construction as well as the field-testing carried out prior to the main study.

The decision to interrogate the learners with the help on questionnaires was primarily made due to previous research studies about students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. In chapter 5, it was illustrated that most of the studies portrayed used questionnaires to collect quantitative data (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Torres 2004, Benke & Medgyes 2005, Moussu 2006, Cakir & Demir 2013).

The frequent employment of questionnaires for L2 research is due to their advantageous nature. Dörnyei (2003: 9) asserts that questionnaires are efficient in three respects, namely regarding “a) researcher time, b) researcher effort, and c) financial resources”. In fact, administering and processing a questionnaire allows the researcher to collect a big amount of data in a short amount of time with little expenses (Dörnyei 2003).

Following the guidelines suggested by Dörnyei (2003), the questionnaire for the respondents was constructed. In total, it consisted of 37 items, which included 31 Likert scale items, five multiple-choice items and one close-ended question. These 37 items were printed on 4 individual pages. The first page presented the context of the study, explained the purpose of the questionnaire, illustrated the goal of the research and assured anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. In addition, the concepts of both NESTs and NNESTs were explained with the help of a definition. On the remaining three pages, the questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section asked students about to scale their attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs on a six-point Likert scale, the second section asked the learners to reveal personal background information. In the first section, 31 items were developed to elicit the relevant information. The Likert scale was used as a rating scale, because it is “simple, versatile and reliable” (Dörnyei 2003: 36). Even though the original Likert scale included five steps, it was decided to include six response options. This way, the possibility to answer neutrally, as for example “neither agree or disagree”, and “to avoid making a real choice” (Dörnyei 2003: 37) is eliminated. The 31 statements were grouped into five different sections.

1. Attributes of the ideal English language teacher
2. Perceptions of teaching and learning pronunciation
3. Perceptions of teaching and learning grammar
4. Perceptions of learner support
5. Perceptions of the significance of a shared L1

Instead of including these titles on the printed questionnaire, it was decided to leave a blank line in between the individual sections, because it was assumed that the use of these titles might confuse the participants. In order to collect demographic as well as background information of the participants, the second part of the questionnaire consisted of five questions concerning age, gender, years of English studies and the number of NESTs and NNESTs they had had. The very first question included in the questionnaire asked students whether they were currently taught by a native or non-native English speaking teacher. This item was deliberately placed at the very beginning of the questionnaire in order to serve as an additional explanation for the important concepts of NESTs and NNESTs.

In order to increase the quality and quantity of responses (Dörnyei 2003), the questionnaire was designed in a visually attractive manner. The layout of the questionnaire is essential in the research process, as the hard copy is “the main interface between the researcher and the respondent” (Dörnyei 2003: 19). An A3 format, folded into a 4-page booklet was chosen for the questionnaire, which does not only make the questionnaire appear shorter, but also allowed the researcher to keep the individual booklets in order. The first page included the title of the questionnaire *Perception of my English teacher*, the definitions of the two key concepts, NEST and NNEST, and the instructions. On the following page, a summary of the instructions was given alongside an explanation of the six-scale Likert scale, ranging from 1, indicating strong agreement, to 6, indicating strong disagreement. The individual categories were *Strongly agree* (1), *Agree* (2), *Partly Agree* (3), *Partly disagree* (4), *Disagree* (5) and *Strongly disagree* (6). This way, it was attempted to facilitate the completion of the questionnaire for the participants. The 37 questionnaire items were numbered and printed on high-quality paper in a visually attractive, respondent-friendly, organised white and grey colour scheme. In view of all these arrangements, the factors “appropriate density”, “orderly layout”, “paper quality” and “sequence marking” were respected (Dörnyei 2003: 21).

After analysing questionnaires of previous research studies, 26 relevant items (Table 1) were modified and adopted for the present study. The majority of the statements used in this questionnaire were borrowed from previous studies and one position paper addressing the issue (Medgyes 1992, Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Torres 2004, Benke & Medgyes 2005, Moussu 2006 and Cakir & Demir 2013). They were partly modified for the questionnaire of the present study. This way, the majority of items have been tested not only in pilot studies, but also in the respective research studies already. An overview of the adopted items is given in table 1 below.

**Table 1 Questionnaire items borrowed and adopted from previous research**

	<i>Number of questionnaire items</i>
<b>Section I Student Questionnaire (Likert Scale)</b>	
Research article by Medgyes (1992)	(3), (25), (30)
Research study by Lasagabaster & Sierra (2002)	(4), (5), (7), (8), (13), (20)
Research study by Torres (2004)	(10), (23), (24), (27), (28)
Research study by Moussu (2006)	(6), (12), (31)
Research study by Benke & Medgyes (2005)	(9)
Research study by Cakir & Demir (2013)	(2), (11)
<b>Section II Student Questionnaire (Background information)</b>	
Research study by Benke & Medgyes (2005)	(33), (34), (35), (36), (37)
Research study by Moussu (2006)	(1)

In the first section of the student questionnaire, questions 2 and 11 were adopted from Cakir and Demir's (2013) study titled *A comparative analysis between NESTs and NNESTs based on perceptions of students in preparation classes*. Items 3, 25 and 30 were borrowed from Medgyes' (1992) research article titled *Native or non-native: who's worth more?*.

Items 4, 5, 7, 8, 13 and 20 were adopted from a research study titled *What do students think about the pros and cons of having a native speaker teacher?* conducted by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002). Moussu's (2006) study titled *Native and non-native English-speaking English as a second language teachers: student attitudes, teacher self-perceptions, and intensive English administrator beliefs and practices* served as a model for questions 6, 12 and 31. Statement 9 was adopted from Benke and Medgyes' (2005) survey titled *Differences in teaching behaviour between native and non-native speaker teachers: As seen by the learners*. Statements 10, 23, 24, 27 and 28 were borrowed from Torres' (2004) study titled *Speaking up! ESL students' perceptions of native and non-native English speaking teachers*. As far as the statements concerning background information are concerned, item 1 was borrowed from Moussu (2006) and items 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 were modified from questions involved in Benke and Medgyes' (2005) study.

In these previous studies, it was frequently observed that teaching grammar and psycho-pedagogical understanding are strengths of NNESTs, whereas pronunciation is a strength of NESTs (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Torres 2004, Benke & Medgyes 2005, Moussu 2006, Cakir & Demir 2013). Nonetheless, the data collection tools of these studies did not include detailed questions concerning the areas that were found to be strengths of NNESTs, but rather asked about general preferences. In this respect, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002: 140f.) asked "In general a non-native teacher is better at explaining grammar" and "In general a native speaker would give me more strategies/ideas to learn better", Benke and Medgyes (2005) asked "NEST/NNEST puts more emphasis on grammar rules" and Moussu (2006: 203) asked "My English teacher explains grammar rules very clearly". In order to explain the fields of grammar teaching and psycho-pedagogical awareness in greater depths, more specific statements were developed. The eleven remaining items (14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 29, 32) of the questionnaire were created by the researcher of this study herself. Three statements (14, 15, 16) asked about the pronunciation of NNESTs as well as the perceived feelings when making errors with a NNEST. Items 17, 18 and 19 all investigated the relevance of the L1 in grammar teaching.

The findings of previous studies (e.g. Benke & Medgyes 2005) revealed that understanding the language learning process of their students is a strength of NNESTs; therefore, items 21, 22, and 26 examined this assumption in greater detail. Question 29 asked about the significance of a shared L1 for asking general as well as learning-related questions.

### ***6.1.3 The pilot study***

A research study is usually piloted so that possible weaknesses of the research outline can be detected and the usefulness of the research instrument is tested (Hadla 2013). The pilot study of the present study was mainly carried out in order to test the validity of the individual 37 items of the questionnaire.

In total, two males and three females participated in the field testing of the present study; however, only two of them fulfilled all criteria of the target population. The remaining three respondents did not fulfill all characteristics. They were native speakers of German, have learned English as an L2 and attended an Austrian upper secondary school in the past; however, the three individuals were University students and between 19 and 21 years old.

After completing the questionnaire, the participants were given a feedback form (see Appendix page VI). In a first step, this evaluation sheet was filled out in written form. Subsequently, the respondents' opinions were discussed verbally. This way, more precise information about their impressions could be elicited.

The results of the pilot study revealed that four Likert items were perceived as unclear or irrelevant for the present research. In other words, the participants did not know which answer to choose, because they did not have an opinion about the following statements.

- A NEST is better teaching advanced students.
- A NNEST is better teaching beginners.
- A NNEST is best suited for my personal learning needs.
- A NNEST knows which language areas need more attention.

Furthermore, it was found that open-ended questions were unsuitable for the present research context and the target population. The first version of the research instrument included the following two open-ended questions:

- In your opinion, what is the biggest strength of a NEST?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest strength of a NNEST?

When analysing the completed questionnaires, it became evident that the participating individuals felt overwhelmed with these items. Besides, the responses given by the individuals participating in the pilot study were neither meaningful nor significant.

.In the light of these observations, it was decided not to include the four Likert items and the two open-ended questions in the final version of the questionnaire. On a positive note, the individuals noted the clear structure of the questionnaire booklet and the understandable wording most items.

## **6.2 Research procedure**

The previous section has demonstrated the context, the participants and the questionnaire of the present study. This section details the sampling procedure and describes the procedure of data collection that has been carried out for this case study.

### **6.2.1 Sample selection**

The target population of this research study is EFL learners in Austrian upper secondary schools. The actual sample involved seven different classes of one secondary school in Upper Austria. According to Dörnyei (2003: 71), “a good sample is very similar to the target population in its most important general characteristics”. As the 132 participants in this survey share all relevant characteristics, that is age, gender, L2 instruction and learning background with the target population, it can be considered as representative. An Austrian upper secondary school (*Oberstufe*) includes grades 9 to 12, however the actual sample only included grades 9, 10 and 12. For the present study, convenience sampling was used, which is “the most common sample type in L2 research” (Dörnyei 2003: 72). As a matter of fact, this specific secondary school was selected because the researcher had good contacts with the headmaster.



### **6.2.2 Data collection**

The data for this research study was collected with the help of a student questionnaire. In pursuance of a high rate of response (Dörnyei 2003), the selected school was given notice two months prior to the survey.

The headmaster agreed to inform the students in order to ensure consent of the minors and their parents. As the survey was administered in an institutional context, group administration seemed the most suitable method to have the questionnaires completed. The questionnaire booklets were distributed to seven different classes from grades 9, 10 and 12 during regular school lessons from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2016. The headmaster introduced the researcher to the respective classes and their teachers. Then, the researcher described the purpose and the significance of the survey, emphasised confidentiality, clarified the two crucial concepts, namely NEST and NNEST, and asked whether a student did not want to participate. All of the 132 students agreed to participate. Owing to the fact that the survey was conducted during regular school lessons, the time frame for questionnaire completion was set to ten minutes. In total, 125 useable questionnaires were obtained. Seven questionnaires had to be eliminated because they were not useable.

The goal of this research study is to answer the main research question, namely *What are the students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs?*. Therefore, chapter 7 presents the results of the 125 questionnaires administered to the students. The raw data can be found in the appendix (page VII-IX). The relative frequency, the percentages, the mean as well as the standard deviation of each item were calculated from the learners' perceptions marked on the 6-scale Likert scale. These values will be displayed with the help of illustrative tables. In addition, bar graphs will be used to demonstrate specifically interesting data. The questionnaire consisted of five individual sections dealing with differing issues underlying the present debate. Each section of this chapter will focus on one of the following sections: attributes of the ideal English language teacher, pronunciation, teaching grammar, learner support and the mutual L1.

## 7 Findings

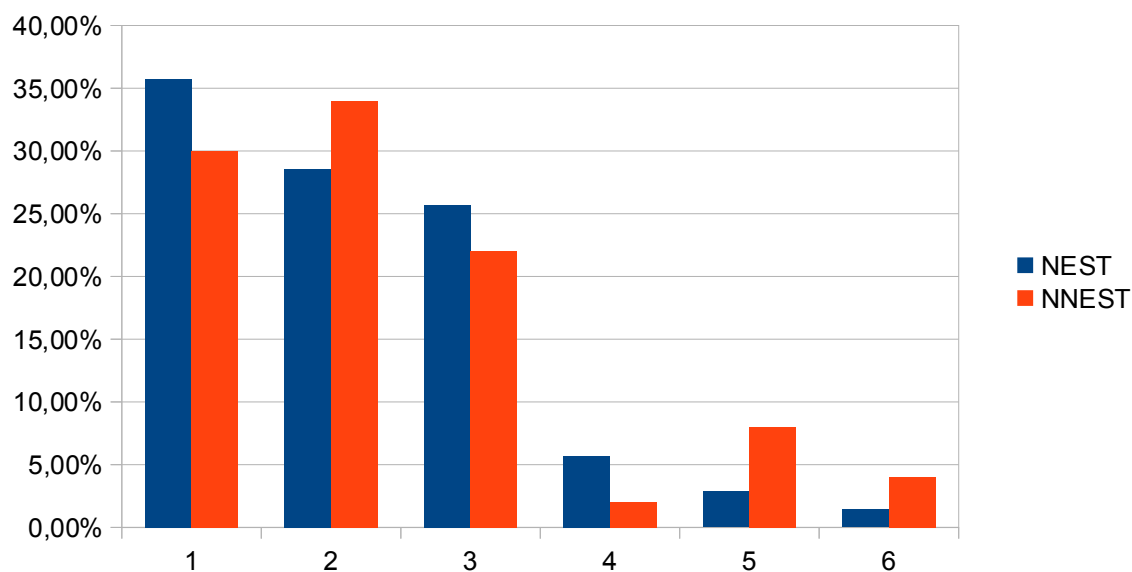
### 7.1 The ideal English language teacher

Table 2 displays learners' responses regarding the attributes of the ideal English language teacher. As far as their level of interest is concerned, 88,8% of the participants showed a clear preference for NESTs and 43 students (34,4%) even strongly agreed to statement 2. The vast majority of respondents (86%) agreed (40% strongly) that NESTs are more competent users of the English language than NNESTs. Nativeness seemed to be an important attribute of the ideal English language teacher, as 90,4% of learners agreed (42,4% strongly) to statement 4, whereas only 12 respondents disagreed. Nonetheless, a mere third (8% strongly agree and 22,4% agree) of the participants perceived nativeness as a crucial factor for providing authentic information about the culture surrounding the English language. More than half of the respondents (62,4%) agreed that they can learn English as well from NNESTs as from NESTs. When students were asked whether NNESTs provide a better learning model, the vast majority (76,61%) disagreed with statement 7 (22,58% strongly). With regard to collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs, more than half of the learners (65,2%) stated that native and non-native speakers should teach together. Participants clearly agreed (86,4%, thereof 26,4% strongly) that the teacher's L1 is of minor importance if he or she provides high quality teaching.

**Table 2 Students' responses to "Perceptions of the ideal English language teacher"**

Items	Mean	SD	Strongly agree ----- strongly disagree					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am more interested when learning with a NEST than a NNEST.	2,21	1,23	43 (34,4%)	39 (31,2%)	29 (23,20%)	5 (4,00%)	6 (4,80%)	3 (2,40%)
3. A NEST is more competent in using the English language than a NNEST.	1,22	0,67	50 (40,00%)	35 (26,00%)	25 (20,00%)	4 (3,20%)	9 (7,20%)	2 (1,60%)
4. I prefer to be taught by NESTs.	2,10	1,19	53 (42,40%)	29 (23,20%)	31 (24,80%)	4 (3,20%)	7 (5,60%)	1 (0,80%)
5. Only a NEST can provide authentic information about the culture surrounding the English language.	3,40	1,42	10 (8,00%)	28 (22,40%)	34 (27,20%)	20 (16,00%)	23 (18,40%)	10 (8,00%)
6. In my opinion, a student can learn English just as well from a NNEST as he or she can from a NEST.	3,18	1,26	12 (9,60%)	26 (20,80%)	40 (32,00%)	26 (20,80%)	17 (13,60%)	4 (3,20%)
7. For me, a NNEST provides a better learning model than a NEST.	4,43	1,35	3 (2,42%)	8 (6,45%)	18 (14,52%)	31 (25%)	36 (29,03%)	28 (22,58%)
8. I think NESTs and NNESTs should teach together.	3,50	1,49	10 (8%)	26 (20,8%)	33 (26,4%)	19 (15,2%)	22 (17,6%)	15 (12%)
9. It does not matter what the teacher's native language is, as long as they are a good teacher.	2,27	1,08	33 (26,4%)	47 (37,6%)	28 (22,4%)	13 (10,4%)	3 (2,4%)	1 (0,8%)

The results obtained from item 2 (I am more interested when learning with a NEST than a NNEST) are shown in Figure 2. Figure 2 displays these findings in combination with the type of teacher that instructed the respondent. Consequently, it can be observed that more learners who are instructed by NEST agreed strongly with statement 2 than learners who are instructed by NNESTs. As far as disagreement regarding item 2 is concerned, Figure 2 reveals that more participants taught by NNESTs disagreed than participants taught by NESTs.



**Figure 2 I am more interested when learning with a NEST than a NNEST.**

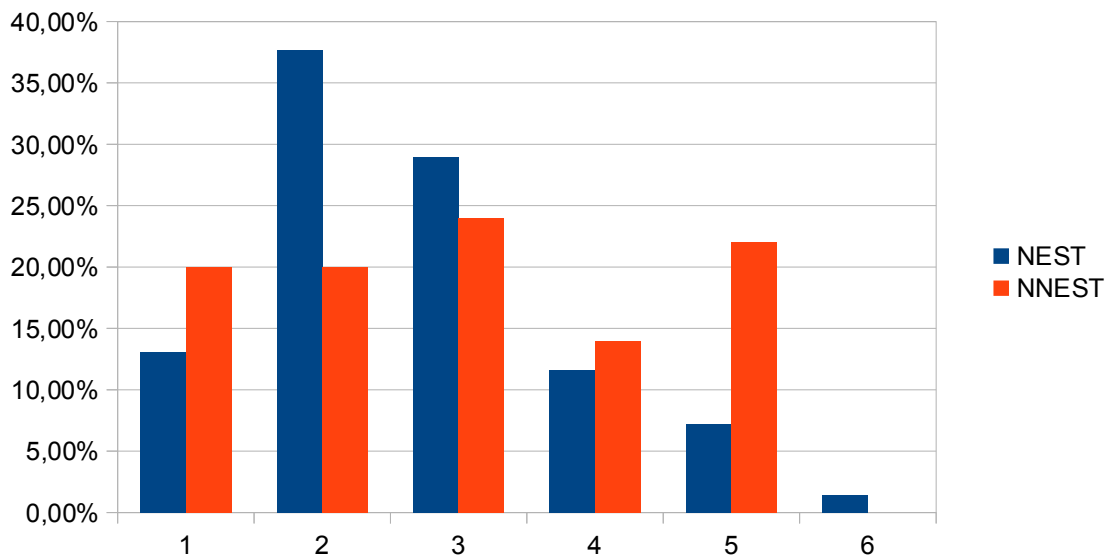
## 7.2 Pronunciation

As far as pronunciation is concerned, the findings show a clear preference for NESTs. The participants clearly favoured to study pronunciation with a NEST, as 95,17% agreed (64,52% strongly) with statement 10. Similarly, 95,20% of the respondents agreed (52,80% strongly) that NESTs are a better role model for pronunciation than NNESTs. In this respect, the vast majority of learners (92%) agreed that their own pronunciation would improve more when being taught by a NEST (statement 13). A native-like accent, however, was not viewed as a crucial indicator for a good English language teacher. As a matter of fact, 23,20% only agreed partly and 37,6% of the students disagreed with statement 12. More than half of the respondents (55,20%) disagreed with item 14, stating that NNESTs' pronunciation is never native-like. Most of the learners (72,58%) responded that NNESTs are more likely to know which word they meant if they made a pronunciation mistake. Overall, the participants do not feel more comfortable making pronunciation errors with NNESTs, as 60,8 % disagreed (16% strongly) with statement 16.

**Table 3 Students' responses to "Perceptions of studying pronunciation"**

Items	Mean	SD	Strongly agree ----- strongly disagree					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I prefer to study pronunciation with a NEST.	1,62	1,15	80 (64,52%)	29 (23,39%)	9 (7,26%)	3 (2,42%)	2 (1,61%)	1 (0,8%)
11. A NEST is a better role model for pronunciation than a NNEST.	1,79	1,11	66 (52,8%)	34 (27,2%)	19 (15,2%)	0 (0%)	3 (2,4%)	3 (2,4%)
12. The accent of a NEST makes him/her a better English language teacher than a NNEST.	3,15	1,51	18 (14,4%)	31 (24,8%)	29 (23,20%)	18 (14,4%)	19 (15,2%)	10 (8,00%)
13. My pronunciation will improve more when studying with a NEST rather than a NNEST.	2,02	1,16	54 (43,2%)	33 (26,4%)	28 (22,4%)	5 (4,00%)	2 (1,60%)	3 (2,4%)
14. The pronunciation of a NNEST is never native-like.	3,57	1,44	11 (8,8%)	23 (18,4%)	22 (17,6%)	34 (27,2%)	23 (18,40%)	12 (9,6%)
15. If I make a pronunciation mistake, a NNEST knows which word I meant.	2,89	1,41	19 (15,32%)	37 (29,84%)	34 (27,42%)	15 (12,1%)	17 (13,71%)	2 (1,61%)
16. I feel more comfortable making pronunciation errors with a NNEST.	3,86	1,56	11 (8,8%)	19 (15,2%)	19 (15,2%)	23 (18,4%)	33 (26,4%)	20 (16%)

Figure 3 allows a deeper insight into the findings from statement 15, as it shows the difference between answers given by learners taught by NESTs and learners taught by NNESTs. At this point, it is necessary to repeat the exact wording of item 15, namely If I make a pronunciation mistake, a NNEST knows which word I meant. Overall, the results showed that 72,58% of the respondents agreed with the statement. When examining this result more closely, as shown in Figure 3, it becomes evident that especially students instructed by NESTs agreed with statement 15 and a small number of respondents disagreed. As far as students instructed by NNESTs are concerned, the range of given answers is clearly more balanced.



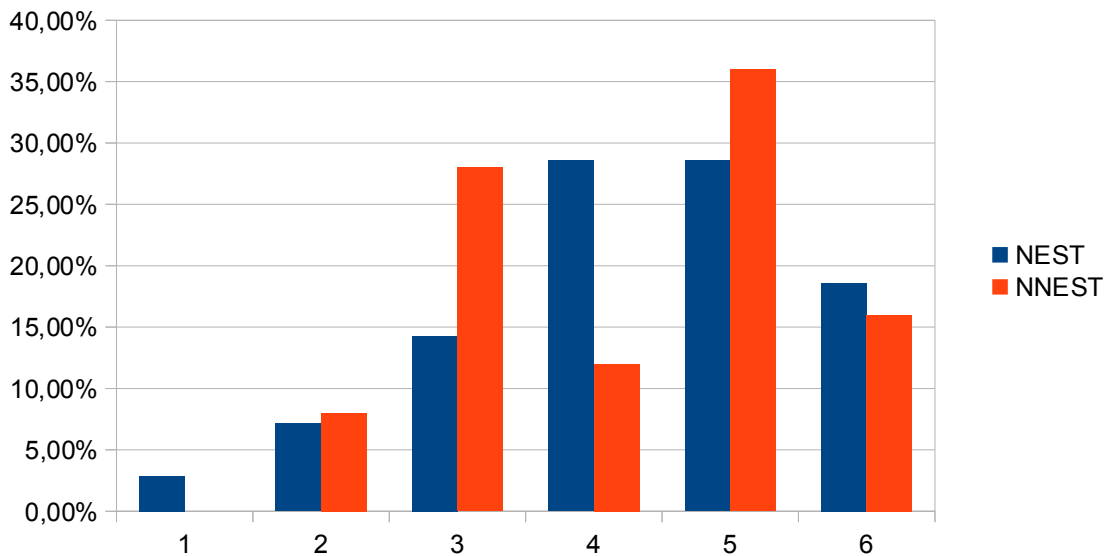
**Figure 3** If I make a pronunciation mistake, a NNEST knows which word I meant.

### 7.3 Grammar

When the students were asked to give their opinion on learning grammar, it became obvious that most of the participants (69,8%) preferred to be taught by a NEST. 73,6% of the respondents did not agree (24% of them strongly) that they find it useful to discuss grammar-related problems in German (statement 18). Likewise, data revealed that the predominant part of learners (68,8%) do not prefer NNESTs because they can relate similar grammar in English to German concepts. On the whole, 63,2% of the students (thereof 19,2% strongly) agreed that they could develop grammatical skills better when they are taught by a native speaker rather than by a non-native speaker.

**Table 4 Students' responses to "Teaching and Learning Grammar"**

Items	Mean	SD	Strongly agree ----- strongly disagree					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German, if necessary.	4,23	1,25	2 (1,6%)	9 (7,2%)	27 (21,6%)	28 (22,4%)	38 (30,4%)	21 (16,8%)
18. I find it useful to discuss grammar-related problems in German.	4,37	1,35	3 (2,4%)	11 (8,8%)	19 (15,2%)	26 (20,80%)	36 (28,8%)	30 (24%)
19. I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can relate similar grammar in English to similar grammar in German.	4,16	1,21	2 (1,6%)	8 (6,4%)	29 (23,20%)	33 (26,4%)	35 (28%)	18 (14,40%)
20. I can develop grammatical skills better when I am taught by a NEST rather than a NNEST.	3,04	1,49	24 (19,2%)	24 (19,2%)	31 (24,80%)	24 (19,2%)	13 (10,4%)	9 (7,2%)



**Figure 4 I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German, if necessary.**

When it comes to teaching grammar, it is especially interesting to analyse statement 17 (I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German, if necessary) in greater detail. Figure 4 shows the students' responses to question 17 with regard to their respective type of teacher. In total, 69,8% of all participants disagreed with the statement. As far as the learners instructed by NESTs are concerned, the majority clearly expressed their disagreement. The answers given from learners taught by NNESTs, however, are not as explicit. Interestingly, no respondents strongly agreed, but 36% of all learners instructed by NNESTs agreed or partly agreed with the item. Out of the 64% of participants taught by NNESTs who did not agree with statement 17, 36% chose to answer with disagree, which is hence the most common answer of this group of students.

#### **7.4 Learner support**

Regarding section 4 of the questionnaire, the results of this research revealed that students do not consider the similar language-learning journey of NNESTs as a valuable asset. The findings showed that learners do not feel embarrassed if they need to tell a NEST they do not understand. The vast majority of respondents did not agree with statement 21 (82,4%, 34,4% of them strongly). The obtained data is even more explicit concerning NNESTs, as 87,2% of the participants disagreed with item 22 (36% of them strongly). When students were asked whether they feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way they are learning English, 77,6% disagreed (21,6% of them strongly). With regard to statement 24, there was a strong view (81,45%) that NNESTs are not more sensitive to the learners' personal problems when learning this particular language than NESTs. Similar attitudes were observed regarding the teaching of language learning strategies, as 74,19% of the participants disagreed that NNESTs can teach these strategies more effectively (item 25).

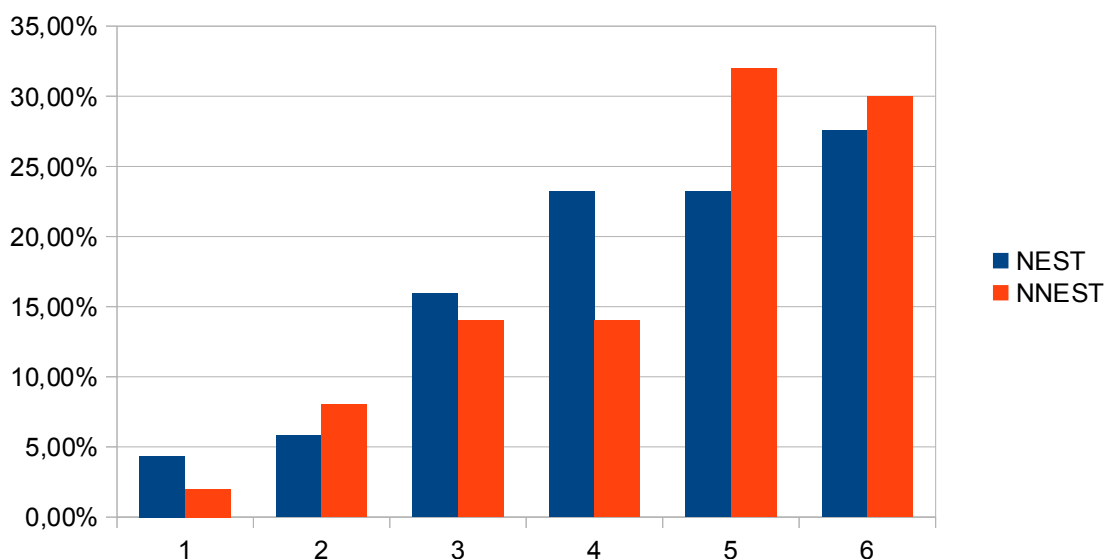
More than half of the students' agreed (58,4%) that their non-native teacher knows how they feel about learning a new language. The vast majority of respondents disagreed (80,8%, 36% of them strongly) with item 27, stating that their questions are understood better by NNESTs than by NESTs.



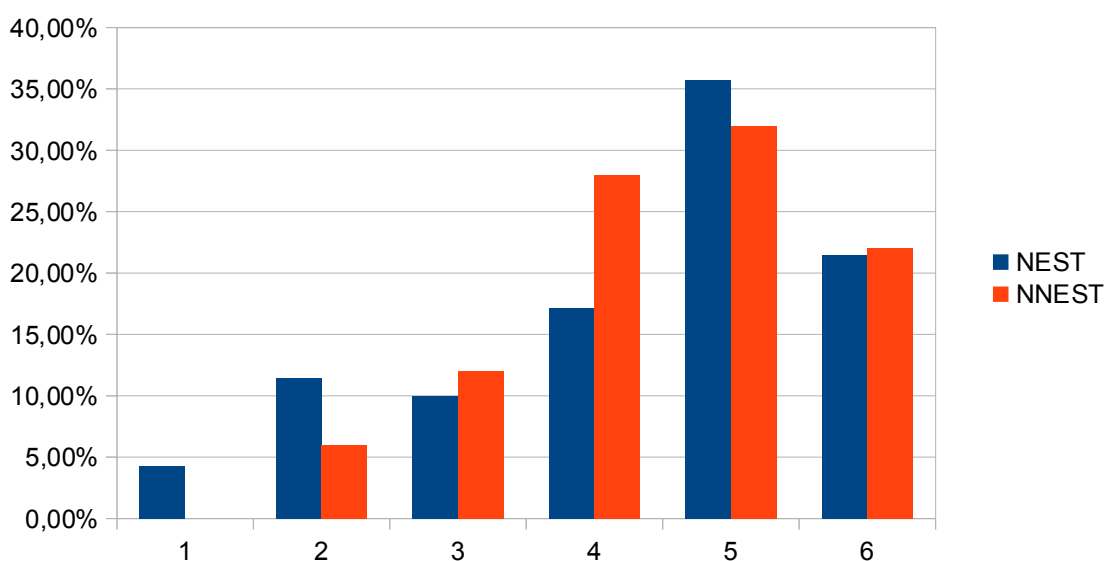
**Table 5 Students' responses to "Perceptions of learner support"**

Items	Mean	SD	Strongly agree ----- strongly disagree					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I feel embarrassed to tell a NEST I do not understand.	4,72	1,27	2 (1,6%)	7 (5,6%)	13 (10,4%)	23 (18,4%)	37 (29,6%)	43 (34,4%)
22. I feel embarrassed to tell a NNEST I do not understand.	4,90	1,14	3 (2,4%)	0 (0%)	13 (10,4%)	20 (16,00%)	44 (35,2%)	45 (36%)
23. I feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way I am learning English.	4,42	1,31	1 (2,4%)	11 (8,8%)	14 (11,2%)	27 (21,6%)	43 (34,4%)	27 (21,6%)
24. A NNEST is more sensitive to my personal problems when learning English than a NEST.	4,77	1,25	0 (0%)	6 (4,84%)	17 (13,71%)	22 (17,74%)	38 (30,65%)	41 (33,06%)
25. A NNEST can teach learning strategies more effectively.	4,46	1,44	4 (3,23%)	9 (7,26%)	19 (15,32%)	25 (20,16%)	33 (26,61%)	34 (27,42%)
26. A NNEST knows how I feel about learning a new language.	3,56	1,51	8 (6,4%)	24 (19,2%)	41 (32,8%)	15 (12%)	16 (12,8%)	21 (16,8%)
27. A NNEST understands my questions better than a NEST.	4,66	1,32	2 (1,6%)	8 (6,4%)	14 (11,2%)	28 (22,4%)	28 (22,4%)	45 (36%)

Figure 5 depicts the students' responses to question 25, which asked about their preferences regarding the teaching of language learning strategies. The overall result showed that the vast majority (74,19%) did not agree with the statement that NNESTs can teach language learning strategies more effectively. As far as disagreement is concerned, the responses given by students taught by NESTs are quite balanced. When examining the answers given by learners instructed by NNESTs, it becomes apparent that especially disagree (32%) and disagree strongly (30%) were frequently chosen.



**Figure 5 A NNEST can teach learning strategies more effectively.**



**Figure 6 I feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way I am learning English.**

Figure 6 shows the students' responses to item 23 with regard to the type of teacher they had. None of the learners who were instructed by a NNEST at the time of the survey strongly agreed with the statement and only 18% agreed or partly agreed.

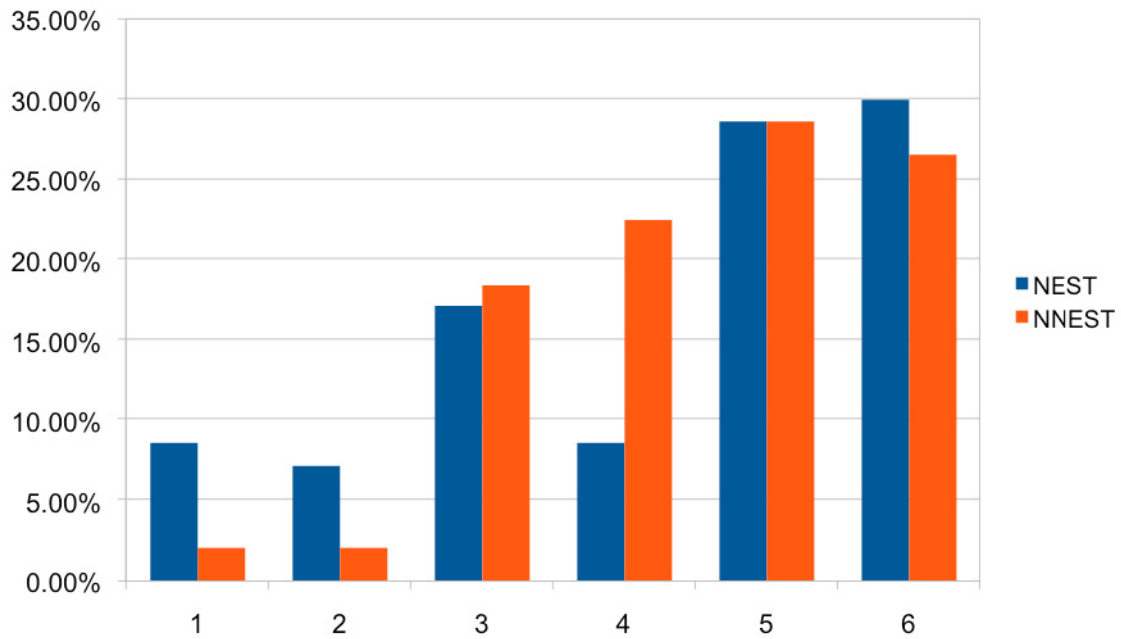
On the other hand, 25,72% of the respondents who were instructed by a NEST strongly agreed, agreed or partly agreed that they feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way as themselves.

## 7.5 Shared L1

The data of students' responses to "Perceptions about the significance of a shared L1" are displayed in table 6: The findings of this study revealed that overall, students do not view a shared L1 as a crucial factor for an English language teacher. The greater number of participants disagreed (71,78%) to prefer to study this particular language with a teacher who speaks their first language. Students did not perceive the possibility to ask a NNEST questions in their L1 as important, as 77,42% (29,03% disagree and 29,84% strongly disagree) did not agree with statement 29. The data obtained from item 30 showed that the majority of learners did not agree that NNESTs who speak their first language are more capable of predicting their learning difficulties than NESTs. When they were asked whether a NNEST who speaks their L1 knows more about their culture than a NEST, approximately half of the respondents agreed (48,78%) whereas the other half (51,23%) disagreed. The majority of participants disagreed (63,88%) with item 32, stating that they feel more comfortable discussing learning-related problems in their L1.

**Table 6 Students' responses to "Perceptions about the significance of a shared L1"**

Items	Mean	SD	Strongly agree ----- strongly disagree					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I prefer to study English with a teacher who speaks my first language.	4,42	1,53	8 (6,45%)	6 (4,84%)	21 (16,94%)	18 (14,52%)	37 (29,84%)	34 (27,42%)
29. I prefer a NNEST, because I can ask questions in my first language.	4,58	1,40	4 (3,23%)	6 (4,84%)	18 (14,52%)	23 (18,55%)	36 (29,03%)	37 (29,84%)
30. A NNEST who speaks my first language is more capable of predicting my learning difficulties than a NEST.	3,99	1,60	6 (4,84%)	24 (19,35%)	20 (16,12%)	16 (12,9%)	36 (29,03%)	22 (17,74%)
31. A NNEST who speaks my first language knows more about my culture than a NEST.	3,82	1,60	7 (5,69%)	18 (14,63%)	35 (28,46%)	25 (20,33%)	16 (13,01%)	22 (17,89%)
32. I feel more comfortable discussing learning related problems in my first language.	3,98	1,57	12 (9,68%)	10 (8,06%)	23 (18,55%)	27 (21,77%)	32 (25,81%)	20 (16,3%)



**Figure 7 I prefer to study English with a teacher who speaks my first language.**

Figure 7 reveals the findings of statement 28 in greater depth, as it distinguishes the answers of students taught by NESTs and students taught by NNESTs. Overall, the majority of students (71,78%) disagreed with item 28 (I prefer to study English with a teacher who speaks my first language.) More learners who are instructed by NESTs expressed agreement with the item (32,85%) than students taught by NNESTs (22,45%).

## **8 Discussion, Limitations and Implications**

In this chapter, the findings of the present research study will be discussed and interpreted. Each section focuses on one of the areas covered in the questionnaire, namely attributes of the ideal English language teacher, pronunciation, teaching grammar, learner support and the mutual L1.

### **8.1 Discussion of results**

#### ***8.1.1 The ideal English language teacher***

Overall, the results of the first section revealed that students perceived a native English-speaking teacher as the ideal English language teacher. In the light of these findings, the main hypothesis (*Overall, a NNEST is perceived as the ideal language teacher by 14-18 year olds learning English as a foreign language in Austria*) has been disproved. The findings of statement 4 (*I prefer to be taught by NESTs*) indicated the learners' clear preference for NESTs. This result correlates with the findings of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002). In their study, the researchers also observed that the students' desire for a NEST rises steadily as the educational level augments. The present case study cannot confirm this observation, as the preference for NESTs decreased in grade 12. The underlying reason for this finding could be the approaching final exam. As NNESTs are more familiarised with the specific exam procedures, students might value their exam preparations more than those of NESTs, who have not taken this final exam themselves. Tinkel (2013) found a similar tendency in favour of NESTs among adult EFL learners in Austria. Potentially, the reasons for the overall preference for NESTs in the present study might be the respondents' higher interest (statement 2) when being taught by NESTs and their perceived linguistic competence, which is superior to that of NNESTs (statement 3). Both of these factors might suggest that general language learning motivation is higher when the teacher is a native speaker of English, as observed by Benke and Medgyes (2005). This interpretation of the result is not in accordance with outcomes of previous studies. Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010), for example, have reported that students' viewed the language learning history of their NNESTs as an inspiration and motivation.

When the participants were questioned about their own learning interest (statement 2), the majority of students stated that they are more attentive when learning with a NEST than a NNEST (mean 2.21, standard deviation 1.23). When examining the answers to question 2 (*I am more interested when learning with a NEST than a NNEST*) in greater detail (see Figure 2), it becomes apparent that the responses depend on whether the participants were taught by a NEST or by a NNEST. At this point it should be restated that all participants had had experience with both NESTs and NNESTs at some point in their education. Interestingly, more students who were instructed by a NNEST at the time of the survey disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement (12%) than students who were instructed by a NEST (4,29%). In contrast, more learners instructed by NESTs agreed strongly with the item than learners instructed by NNESTs. Hence, the result of item 2 might suggest that the students' current experiences lead to perceiving either NNESTs' or NESTs' way of teaching as especially valuable. Potential reasons for the perception of the latter might include the native speakers' language proficiency as well as a deeper understanding of the cultural background surrounding the English language (statement 5) when being compared to NNESTs.

However, nativeness was not regarded as a crucial factor for the ideal language teacher when learning about cultural knowledge. A mere third (30,40%) of the participants agreed strongly or agreed that only a NEST can provide authentic information. Again, the explanation for this result might be connected to their exposure to both NESTs and NNESTs. Possibly, the learners have experienced teaching of authentic cultural background knowledge by a NNEST already. It should be noted that NNESTs employed at the selected school have all benefitted from experiences in English speaking countries, which cannot be generally assumed for all English language teachers in Austria. As outlined in section 4.2, exposure to and interaction with the target culture is crucial in the teacher training of non-native speakers (Liu 1999, Shin 2008). It allows intense engagement with the English language, helps NNESTs to overcome potential deficits and, most importantly, enables them to convey authentic cultural knowledge in the classroom.

This assumption was also confirmed by T5, who claimed that English language teachers should have lived in the target country in order to teach cultural aspects in a lively and effective way. According to T5, the cultural knowledge surrounding the English language presented in textbooks is insufficient. Hence, teaching and learning authentic cultural background knowledge can become problematic. Similarly, T4 stresses the importance of authentic cultural experience in a target country. She claimed that NNESTs who have never resided in an English speaking country suffer from a lack of cultural awareness and cannot teach cultural aspects as successfully. Besides learning about culture, students appeared to have made other positive language learning experiences with NNESTs in general, as more than half agreed that they can learn English just as well from a NNEST than from a NEST (item 6). This result might indicate that even though NESTs were perceived as being more proficient (statement 3), learners seemed to value particular strengths of non-native teacher just as much. These strengths will be analysed in the following sections.

With regard to collaborative teaching, it is interesting to note that more than half of the learners (65,2%) were in favour of this suggestion. It could be deduced that participants valued and, more importantly, actively perceived the strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs. This assumption is also linked to the students' possibility to learn with both types of teachers in the selected school. Similarly, Benke and Medgyes (2005) observed a desire to be taught by both NESTs and NNESTs in order to benefit from high quality teaching. All interviewed teachers stated that they were in favour of collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs. T1, T2 and T4 even regard team-teaching between native speakers and non-native speakers as the ideal solution for teaching EFL. T5, however, noted that the success of these collaborations depends on the individual team of teachers. In this respect, she explained that she has made both positive as well as negative experiences. T2 emphasised the fact that two teachers are always better, as they can support learners more effectively. Regarding the quality of teaching, it was found that more than half of the students (55,20%) did not perceive nativeness as an imperative characteristic for a good English language teacher (statement 9).

### **8.1.2 Pronunciation**

The findings of statements 10 to 16 revealed that the participants also seemed to favour NESTs when learning pronunciation. Therefore, the third sub-hypothesis (*A NEST is preferred over a NNEST when it comes to studying pronunciation*) was supported. This result coincides with observations of previous studies (e.g. Cakir & Demir 2013). Moreover, the students stated that their own pronunciation would improve more when they study with a native speaker teacher (statement 13). Therefore, it could be deduced that learners perceived NESTs as more valuable when pursuing a native-like accent, as observed by Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014). In this respect, the learners regarded NESTs as a better role model for pronunciation than NNESTs (statement 11), as already observed by Benke and Medgyes (2005). Similarly, T2 stated that NESTs are better role models for pronunciation, because their way of speaking is more authentic and more natural. Potentially, students might fear that they will not have the possibility to produce native-like pronunciation when being taught by a NNEST or that they might adopt pronunciation errors made by their non-native teachers. Consequently, this might imply that NNESTs fall short of teaching pronunciation as effectively as NESTs. NNESTs could compensate their deficit with improving their own accent, for instance through active interaction with the target language in the respective country, in order to serve as an equally valuable imitation model for their students. The participants' attitude towards learning pronunciation does not correlate with the suggestions made by Medgyes (1994) and Cook (2005, 2016), who claim that as a realistic goal, L2 learners should pursue an L2 model of a non-native speaker rather than a native speaker. A potential explanation for the students' preference for NESTs regarding teaching pronunciation is the particularity of the selected school. As the language of instruction is English, the learners are confronted with the English language in every subject, not only in English language classes. Therefore, they could be regarded as exceptional L2 learners who benefit from a profound immersion into this particular language; thus, their pursued goal regarding pronunciation might differ from students who visit ordinary Austrian secondary schools.



Nonetheless, having a native-speaker accent was not perceived as a crucial factor for a good English language teacher (statement 12). This result indicates that the prevalent hiring practices in ELT (see section 4.2), and especially discriminatory job advertisements, do not correspond to the students' attitudes. It could also be deduced that learners have made negative experiences with NESTs in the past and were therefore of the opinion that a native-speaker accent is not an imperative quality of a good English language teacher. The result of item 12 can be viewed as one constituent of the students' agreement to item 6, stating that they can learn English just as well from a NNEST as from a NEST. In consequence, it could be interpreted that even though learning pronunciation with a native speaker was regarded as beneficial, learning it with a NNEST is equally acceptable. The findings of statement 12 do not correlate with the experiences described by Thomas (1999), who reported that students had perceived her non-native accent as a deficient aspect of her teaching. The statements given by T3, on the other hand, are in accordance with the results obtained from item 12. In his opinion, a non-native speaker accent is an advantageous quality of a NNEST, because it challenges students to understand a variety of different accents. In this respect, he emphasises the importance of comprehending not only members of the inner circle, but also ESL and EFL speakers of the outer circle and the periphery. Moreover, he regarded a non-native accent as a connection to the real life outside the classroom as well as to a NNEST's native country. This observation correlates with Medgyes' (1994) findings, who claims that NNESTs' accents offers the opportunity to retain their cultural identity and represent a realistic learning model for L2 learners.

To some extent, the non-nativeness of NNESTs could also be regarded as an advantageous quality when it comes to teaching and learning pronunciation. The vast majority of participants (72,58%) stated that if they made a mistake, NNESTs knew which word they meant (item 15). The reason for this perception might be the shared L1 of the students and their teachers. As they have undergone the same English language learning process, a NNEST might relate to and detect frequent pronunciation errors more easily than a NEST who does not speak German.

Therefore, a NNEST might provide the learners with more appropriate pronunciation exercises and training than a NEST. T5 confirmed the importance of a shared L1 with regard to pronunciation mistakes and instances of mispronunciation. She illustrated this advantage of non-native speakers with the help of the quasi-minimal pair *chess* and *jazz*. Whereas non-native speakers could guess from the context which word was meant, she experienced that native speakers in the US found it difficult to understand the utterance.

When examining the results of statement 15 according to the students' type of teacher at the time of the survey (see Figure 3), a deeper insight into the matter is gained. The results revealed that more learners who were taught by a NEST agreed strongly or agreed with item 15 (50,72%) than learners who were taught by a NNEST (40%). This might indicate that students who were instructed by a NEST at the time of the survey found that their teacher could not understand their utterances in case they made a pronunciation mistake. As all participants had received instruction by both NESTs and NNESTs, it could be assumed that they had made more positive experiences with non-native teachers regarding this matter. In addition, the range of responses differed greatly between the two groups.

The most common answers by learners taught by NESTs were 2 (agree, 37,68%) or 3 (partly agree, 28,99%). In contrast, the responses of learners taught by NNESTs were almost balanced in categories 1 to 5 (mean 2,98, standard deviation 1,44). Interestingly, none of the participants of this group disagreed strongly with statement 12. This might illustrate that learners taught by a NNEST felt understood when making a pronunciation mistake and valued the shared L1 between them and their teacher. In section 8.5, the students' attitude towards a mutual L1 will be examined in greater detail.

### **8.1.3 Grammar**

The results obtained from the questions regarding grammar teaching are especially interesting, as they differ greatly from findings of previous studies. It has been frequently observed that NNESTs are preferred over NESTs when learning grammar (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2002, Benke & Medgyes 2005, Cakir & Demir 2013, Sung 2014).

The present study, however, has found that students do not favour NNESTs when it comes to teaching grammar. Hence, the first sub-hypothesis (*A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to studying grammar*) is not supported by the present data. The majority of participants (63,2%) stated that they believe to develop grammatical skills better when being taught by NESTs (statement 20) than when they are taught by NNESTs. This result might indicate that students trusted the linguistic expertise, particularly concerning the meta-linguistic knowledge, of native speakers more than that of non-native speakers. Potentially, it could also be deduced that the learners did not find the grammatical knowledge and the involved explanations of NESTs as insufficient, as commonly asserted in this research field. In this respect, Arva and Medgyes (2000) reported that the grammatical skills of native speaker teachers were perceived as inconsistent by students in many cases. The results of the present study are not in accordance with these findings. Possibly, the native-speaker teachers in the selected school have mastered to explain grammatical concepts appropriately either with targeted training in this problem area or through teaching experience. As a result, NESTs of the selected school seem to have managed to supply their students not only with extensive knowledge of English grammar, but also with sufficient explanations.

Arva and Medgyes (2000) observed that NNESTs asserted to have profound knowledge about the English language and rated it as their predominant advantage. In contrast to these findings, T4 reported that she frequently encountered difficulties regarding grammar. Moreover, she asserted that she felt inferior when comparing her own grammatical knowledge to that of NESTs. With regard to item 20, a close analysis of the respective teacher of the respondents reveals that a higher percentage of those instructed by a NNEST disagreed or disagreed strongly (22%) than those instructed by a NEST (14,8%). This result implies that students learning grammar with a NNEST at the time of the survey had either made more positive experiences with NESTs regarding the matter or did not perceive a difference between NESTs and NNESTs when learning grammar. The most common response amongst learners taught by a NNEST was *partly agree* (26%), which could be read as an indicator for uncertainty about the issue. Possibly, this might signify that the students prefer learning grammar with a NEST, but also value doing so with a NNEST.

The remaining three statements (item 17, 18, 19) of the section all asked about the relevance of a shared L1 when learning grammar, which has commonly been found as an advantage of NNESTs in previous research (e.g. Mahboob 2004). In general, two thirds of the participants did not perceive German as particularly helpful for explaining difficult concepts (statement 17), discussing grammar-related problems (statement 18) or relating English grammar to German grammar (statement 19). As far as statement 19 is concerned, 31,2% of the participants agreed that they prefer learning with a NNEST, because they perceived the possibility to relate similar grammar in the two languages as useful. Similarly, 30,4% of the learners agreed that they prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German. Regarding item 18, only 26,4% of the respondents found it useful to discuss grammar-related problems in German. These findings indicate that the students did not perceive the lack of a shared L1 with a NEST as a weakness, as learners do not choose to resort to the possibility to clarify difficulties in German. In consequence, it could be assumed that most learners prefer studying English grammar in the English language, without switching to their L1. These findings do not correlate with the outcomes of previous studies (e.g. Mahboob 2004). Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002), for instance, found that teaching grammar was a perceived strength of NNESTs; whereas NESTs, on the other hand, were judged as not being able to teach this language area effectively. Similarly, Benke and Medgyes (2005) observed that NNESTs were not only able to teach grammatical concepts in a more structured way, but were also more competent in assisting the students in case of grammatical problems. In her study, Cook (2005) observed that students regard the mutual L1 with their teacher as a valuable quality when learning complex grammatical structures. In contrast, the results of the present study revealed that participants did not value German as a useful tool for the clarification of grammatical problem areas. Interestingly, T2 stated that she regards the shared L1 between her and her students as an advantage. In fact, she explained that she uses German, in combination with English, to explain rules and difficult grammatical concepts.

It is interesting to examine the answers to item 17 (*I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German, if necessary*) more closely according to the type of teacher that instructed the learners at the time of the survey.

The answers of students instructed by a NNEST seem to be especially unbalanced. As displayed in Figure 4, no respondent chose to answer with *strongly agree*, however, 36% of all learners instructed by NNESTs agreed or partly agreed with the item. This result suggests a partial demand for the employment of German for clarification purposes in the case of difficulties. Nonetheless, the most frequent answer among this group was *disagree*. Potentially, this indicates that the majority of learners were not in favour of using German in the EFL classroom. Overall, it seems probable that the students' responses are unbalanced due to their personal preferences. Therefore, it can be deduced that the usefulness of the German language depends on the learners' individual needs. The perceived significance of a shared L1 between teachers and students will be examined in section 8.1.5.

Possibly, the reason for the divergence of these findings compared to other studies is the particularity of the selected school. Owing to the fact that English is the main language of instruction in all subjects, students might find it unfamiliar to use their L1 when learning grammar and addressing grammar-related problems. In addition, the target sample attended grades 9 to 12, which indicates that they are intermediary, upper-intermediary or even advanced learners of English. Therefore, their grammatical knowledge might already be developed to a high degree and explicit grammar teaching might not occur frequently. In this respect, T3 argued that he excludes grammar teaching at high levels, as he does not regard it as relevant.

#### **8.1.4 Learner support**

Similar to the previously presented results, the findings concerning the areas of learner support, teacher-student rapport and psycho-pedagogical abilities of English teachers revealed that respondents tended to favour NESTs. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported by the results of this study (*A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to supporting the learner (language learning history/use of L1)*).

Even though sharing the same language learning history was found to be an advantage of NNESTs themselves in previous studies (Medgyes 1994), the vast majority of participants of this study (77,6%) did not seem to agree to item 23 (*I feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way I am learning English*). With regard to this statement, it is especially interesting to analyse the students' responses according to the type of teacher they had (see Figure 5). More than a quarter of the learners taught by a NEST agreed with item 23 (25,72%), whereas only 18% of the learners taught by a NNEST agreed. Hence, it might be deduced that students learning with a native speaker desired to be taught by a NNEST, because they perceived their way of teaching, and therefore the classroom atmosphere, as more convenient. On the other hand, none of the students instructed by NNESTs agreed strongly with item 23. This observation might imply either that students felt equally comfortable with both types of teachers or that they did not attach great importance to a shared language learning history. In contrast, T2 explained that her personal experiences as an L2 learner of English help her to identify with the students' problems, especially concerning vocabulary and false friends.

Researchers claim that NNESTs' language learning history results in valuable and effective teaching of language learning strategies, which native speakers cannot develop to the same extent (e.g. Mahboob 2004). Nonetheless, the result of item 25 (*A NNEST can teach learning strategies more effectively*) does not support this assertion. Overall, 74,19% of all participants did not agree with statement 25. This finding indicates that students either found NESTs to be better instructors of learning strategies or rated both teachers as equally valuable. It could also be assumed that NNESTs did not exploit their full potential regarding knowledge about language learning; thus, they could not share relevant methods with their students. However, it is more probable that the reason behind the participants' responses is that both NESTs and NNESTs are perceived as sharing the equal ability of teaching language-learning strategies. In fact, the selected school is located in Upper Austria and all native speakers reside within the local speech community.

Therefore, it could be assumed that they are either proficient in German or that they have at least enough knowledge to master their everyday lives in the Austrian speech community. In both cases, NESTs have learned German as an L2 to a certain proficiency level, whether very low or very advanced. As a consequence, NESTs employed in the selected school have undergone the process of learning a foreign language learning themselves and have developed language learning strategies as well. Hence, they are also able to share their knowledge about language learning effectively with their students. T1 and T5 shared a similar view about the matter and explained that as an EFL teacher, knowing how to learn a language is always of paramount importance. According to T5, the instructor needs to teach language-learning strategies explicitly as well as implicitly, so that the language learning process is facilitated. When being questioned about the effect of a shared language learning history on teaching strategies, T4 asserted that NNESTs could teach these strategies more successfully. In her opinion, NNESTs remain L2 learners throughout their lives; therefore, it is easier to select appropriate teaching and learning methods.

When analysing the students' responses to item 25 with regard to the type of teacher they had, it becomes evident that those instructed by a NNEST felt particularly strong about the issue. In fact, Figure 6 displays that 64% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement, whereas only 50,72% of those instructed by a NEST disagreed or disagreed strongly. Consequently, participants who were taught by a non-native speaker at the time of the survey rated NESTs as more competent when learning about language learning. This inference would also tie in with the assumption that NESTs in the selected school have mastered an L2 learning process themselves, as they live in a foreign country, and are thus competent to select appropriate and effective language learning strategies for their students.

As far as teacher-student rapport is concerned, participants reported that they did not feel embarrassed when telling their teacher they do not understand, whether native (mean 4.72, standard deviation 1.27) or non-native (mean 4.90, standard deviation 1.14). This indicates that nativeness was not viewed as an influential factor in case of a lack of understanding, as students felt equally comfortable.

Potentially, it could also be implied that the teachers established a positive rapport between themselves and their students in the past; therefore, the class atmosphere was perceived as constructive by the respondents.

With regard to the students' emotional world when learning a new language, more than half of the respondents (59,17%) agreed that NNESTs are aware of their feelings. Even though most students did not associate feelings of ease and comfort with a shared language learning history between them and their teacher (see item 23), students seemed to be conscious about NNESTs' ability to support them. In addition to the students' perceptions, T2 also reported that she could relate to her students' concerns when learning a new language, because she has mastered the identical language learning process. Similarly, T3 asserted that sharing one's personal language learning history could serve as guidance for the learners, no matter if the teacher is a native speaker or a non-native speaker. In light of the findings of this section, it appears as if NNESTs did not exploit their full potential regarding the shared linguistic background. Students seem to have been aware of the similarities between them and their teachers as foreign language learners; however, NESTs were still preferred when it comes to learner support and teacher-student rapport. Possibly, NNESTs feared to emphasise the common features between them and their students, because they regard their lack of nativeness as a weakness.

### **8.1.5 Shared L1**

The final section of the questionnaire asked the students to report on their perceptions regarding the shared L1, German, between them and their non-native teachers. The results of items 28 to 32 continue to suggest a preference for NESTs as observed in the previous sections; yet, it is not as explicit. In consequence, the third hypothesis was, once again, refuted (*A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to supporting the learner (language learning history/use of L1)*). When students were questioned whether they agree with statement 28 (*I prefer to study with a teacher who speaks my first language*), the vast majority (71,43%) disagreed. Therefore, the participants did not seem to rate a shared first language as a valuable quality of their English teacher.



Figure 7 shows the differences between the answers given to item 28 by students who were taught by a NEST and students who were taught by a NNEST at the time of the survey. Clearly, the frequency of answering with 1 (*strongly agree*) or 2 (*agree*) is the most apparent discrepancy between the two groups. 15,71% of participants taught by a NEST agreed strongly or agreed with statement 28, whereas only 4,08% of participants who learned with a NNEST agreed strongly or agreed. This result implies that especially students who were instructed by a NNEST did not attach great importance to a shared L1. In addition, it might be deduced that these students prefer being taught by a native speaker. In contrast, some of the students instructed by a native speaker (15,71%) agreed strongly or agreed with item 28, which might indicate a desire to learn with a teacher who speaks their first language. It is possible that students who were taught by a NEST felt a need to use German in certain classroom situations, but could not do so, as their teacher was not a native German speaker. However, it cannot be inferred that a teacher who speaks German is automatically a NNEST, as it could also be a NEST who is an L2 learner of German.

Overall, the respondents seemed to attach even less importance to a shared L1 between them and their teacher when it comes to asking questions and to discussing language learning difficulties. 77,42% of the participants did not agree with item 29, stating that *I prefer a NNEST, because I ask questions in my first language*. The reason for the students' clear position might be related to the peculiarity of the selected school. As the main language of instruction is English from the first year (grade 5) onwards, learners accustom themselves to speak this particular language in all subjects at all times. Hence, it might be odd or seem unfamiliar to ask questions in German, especially in English language classes. Nonetheless, T1 stated that she perceived her inability to speak German as her weakness when comparing herself to NNESTs. She claimed that especially with beginners, she frequently encountered what she described as a language barrier. Therefore, T1 wished to speak German, so that she could explain exercises in the learners' L1, if necessary. As far as the use of German in the case of language learning difficulties is concerned (item 32), most of the students (63,71%) did not seem to prefer to discuss learning-related problems in their L1.

The ability to predict their students' language learning difficulties has been observed to be a quality of NNESTs in previous studies that focussed on teachers' self-perception (e.g. Medgyes 1994). Likewise, Arva and Medgyes (2000) reported that predicting learners' mistakes, in particular those caused by language transfer between the L1 and English, is NNESTs' strength. The findings of the present study, which investigated the students' point of view on the matter, do not correlate with Arva and Medgyes' (2000) results. The majority of respondents (59,68%) of the present study did not rate a NNEST who speaks their L1 as more capable of predicting linguistic problem areas than a NEST. This result might indicate that the NESTs employed in the selected school can predict their students' mistakes equally or even better. As previously presented, some of the NESTs have taught in the particular context for some years already, namely T3 and T5. As a result, they have become accustomed to the needs and potential learning difficulties of native German speaking learners. Another possible explanation for the obtained result is that NNESTs have not developed appropriate skills to predict their learners' difficulties and were therefore not perceived of being more capable.

The participants of the present study seemed to differ greatly when they were questioned whether a NNEST knows more about their students' culture than a NEST (item 31). Almost half of the learners (48,78%) agreed with statement 31, whereas 51,22% expressed their disagreement. It should also be noted that the mean of this item was 3,82 (standard deviation 1,60) and that most responses were either 3 (28,46%, *partly agree*) or 4 (20,33%, *partly disagree*). In light of these findings, it appears that the learners felt indecisive about the statement. Potentially, the cause for this feeling is that the learners did not attach great value to their teachers' cultural awareness and hence, they had never reflected on the matter before. Another possible explanation is that the cultural background of the students and their native or non-native English speaking teachers is not remarkably dissimilar in the first place. Owing to the fact that NESTs employed at the selected school mostly come from the UK, the US or Canada, the prevalent cultural norms and values of their native countries are comparable to those in Austria.

Therefore, the danger of not being familiarised with discourses in their students' country (see Mullock 2010) is not applicable for the particular setting of this study. Even though T3 is from South Korea, he has resided in Austria for more than twenty years. As a result, he is acquainted with the country's culture and the prevalent norms. Furthermore, the results of previous research studies have indicated that NNESTs' familiarity with the local curriculum and exam practises is advantageous (e.g. Benke & Medgyes 2005). The selected school does not only follow the Austrian curriculum for upper secondary schools, but also an international curriculum in pursuance of the International Baccalaureate. In consequence, NNESTs and NESTs are almost equally acquainted with the school's curriculum.

## **8.2 Limitations**

After having discussed the findings of the research study, this section describes its limitations and proposes suggestions for future research studies in this field.

The major limitation of this case study concerns the particularity of the selected school. Due to the implementation of English as the language of instruction and an International Baccalaureate curriculum, the school is not representative of Austrian secondary schools. In fact, ordinary Austrian schools usually do not employ NESTs for full teaching positions. Native speakers commonly serve as teaching assistants, in order to augment authentic contact and interaction with the target language; however, their scope of action is limited. Therefore, this case study might rather be regarded as representative of the specific cases of Austrian secondary schools that participate in the same pilot project. Future research studies should investigate students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in different Austrian schools that have implemented English as the main language of instruction. This way, the sample size is bigger and a more extensive overview can be assured.

The second limitation that has potentially influenced the outcome of this study is that more than 20 participants were in fact native speakers of English or did not have German as their first language. Even though they did not fulfil the necessary characteristics of the target population, they were still included in the target sample. Items 17, 18 and 19 asked about the perceived importance of German when learning grammar, which was not applicable for these types of students.

As far as native speakers of English are concerned, the statements in the last section of the questionnaire caused difficulties. Due to the fact that English was their L1, the items were nonsensical and not answerable. In future research, the items should be constructed in a way so that all respondents can answer all questions, regardless of their L1. Another possibility would be to separate the questionnaires completed by native speakers or students with a L1 different to German prior to data analysis. This way, a separate target sample with individual characteristics is created. The questionnaires of this target sample should be processed separately, so that their attitudes can be discussed on their own.

Thirdly, the research study aimed at investigating upper secondary school students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. The target sample, however, only consisted of learners from grade 9, 10 and 12. As a matter of fact, no students from grade 7 were questioned, as the two classes were absent due to an external project on the day the students were questioned. Therefore, the target sample lacks a quarter of the individuals of the target population and can thus not be regarded as fully representative. Future research studies should ensure that the biggest possible number of students of all grades complete the questionnaire, so that the target sample is representing a complete upper secondary school.

As far as the questionnaire design is concerned, the learners repeatedly evaluated three statements as being ambiguous. Item 21 and 22, which asked about a feeling of embarrassment when making a mistake were perceived as superfluous. After having completed the questionnaire, a considerable amount of participants reported that did not actually have an opinion on the matter and that they did not know what answer to choose. In addition, item 24 was not designed in a straightforward manner. As soon as they had answered all the questions, several respondents asserted that they did not understand the statement. For the students, the phrasing seemed to suggest personal problems in general, rather than issues related to language learning. Besides, the wording of the item was too similar to statement 32 and should have been excluded from the questionnaire. Interestingly, these difficulties did not arise in the pilot study carried out prior to this research study. The questionnaires of future research studies should be tested in a pilot study with a greater number of participants than in this study.

Consequently, ambiguous statements can be eliminated or modified prior to the conduction of the actual survey.

### **8.3 Implications**

The findings of this research study have shown that even though Austrian learners recognize a number of NNESTs' strengths, NESTs are still preferred by students in the majority of the examined areas. In order to ensure the best education possible in the future, both types of teachers should work together and NNESTs need to overcome their perceived weaknesses. The advantages of NNESTs need to be acknowledged not only by themselves, but also by their students. In this chapter, the implications for future teaching practices are presented and discussed.

The teacher training of non-native speakers should be taken as a starting point for improving the current situation. Responding to their particular concerns (Maum 2002) and raising awareness for potential difficulties in their job are essential for NNEST trainees in order to control their negative self-perception. The Austrian curriculum needs to be adapted and transformed so that novice NNESTs are adequately prepared for their future career. Besides purposeful pedagogic skills, a successful English language teacher needs to be highly proficient in the language and develop meta-linguistic knowledge. NNESTs cannot resort to the same linguistic expertise as native speakers (Medgyes 1994); thus, their teacher training should incorporate a range of exercises to improve their language and pragmatic skills (Nemtchinova et al. 2010) in combination with profound pedagogical content knowledge. This way, NNESTs can provide their learners with a high level of linguistic expertise and their common self-image of inferiority (Liu 1999) can be reduced.

NNEST in training and especially those who are actively teaching need to continuously interact with the target environment. Teaching English successfully involves mastering language skills to a very high degree and comprehending the culture surrounding the English language (Hadla 2013). As a matter of fact, non-native speakers are usually not equipped with authentic knowledge of one of the manifold cultures sets of norms surrounding the English language (Arva and Medgyes 2000).

In addition, it needs to be noted that usually, native speakers themselves are only extensively familiarised with the English culture of their native country. Therefore, the training of both NESTs and NNESTs needs to teach knowledge of a variety of English cultures.

Moreover, colloquial speech and idiomatic expressions cannot be acquired extensively in Austria, due to a lack of exposure to this type of speech. In order to eliminate these deficits, NNEST trainees and active NNESTs need to repeatedly expose themselves to the English speech community in a target country. In consequence, they can supply their students with up-to-date information about the development of the English language, for instance concerning slang and teen language. As these expressions are subject to change over time, learners need to continuously update them in order to avoid obsolete expressions. Furthermore, experience in the target environment renders the teaching of cultural background knowledge more lively and authentic and thus more interesting for the learners.

The negative self-perceptions associated with non-nativeness need to come to an end, so that NNESTs can exploit their full potential as English language teachers and assert themselves in the world of ELT. Owing to the fact that they have mastered the identical language learning process (Macaro 2005), NNESTs can relate to feelings and arising difficulties of their students. Instead of perceiving their Austrian origin as a weakness, non-native teachers should make use of the similarities between them and the learners in a productive way. NNESTs should actively serve as a role model of an L2 learner and provide their learners with relevant activities for the difficulties that stem from their L1. Presenting their own language learning history and sharing obstacles they have come across can illustrate that feeling frustrated or overwhelmed is common in foreign language learning, especially when encountering difficulties. Consequently, NNESTs can demonstrate their valuableness for their students and serve as double agents in the EFL classroom (Kaim 2004).

Results of this study have revealed that students would appreciate collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs; hence, this teaching style should be implemented in Austrian EFL classrooms in a meaningful way. Instead of contrasting NESTs and NNESTs and evaluating who is the better English language teacher, their individual strengths should be combined.

A combination of their advantages is the ideal solution for EFL learners, because the weaknesses are complementary and balance each other out (Medgyes 1994). Ideally, a NEST and a NNEST instruct learners at the same time. As far as teaching and learning pronunciation is concerned, for example, a native speaker serves as a better role model whereas a non-native speaker is more capable of understanding the students' utterances in case of mispronunciation. This way, students receive the best teaching quality possible, if NESTs and NNESTs work together by their joint efforts (Shin 2008). Given that Austrian secondary schools usually do not employ native speakers, the number as well as the scope of action of English language assistants should be increased.

## 9 Conclusion

This empirical research study has investigated Austrian upper secondary school students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. A quantitative case study that was conducted in a selected school in Upper Austria constituted the central part of this research paper. The employed data collection tool was a four-page questionnaire with 37 items, which was completed by 125 EFL learners. The empirical study attempted to test the following hypotheses:

*Main hypothesis: Overall, a NNEST is perceived as the ideal language teacher by 14-18 year olds learning English as a foreign language in Austria.*

*Sub-hypothesis 1: A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to studying grammar.*

*Sub-hypothesis 2: A NNEST is preferred over a NEST when it comes to supporting the learner (language learning history/use of L1).*

*Sub-hypothesis 3: A NEST is preferred over a NNEST when it comes to studying pronunciation.*

The discussion of the results obtained in this study has shown that overall, Austrian secondary school students favoured to be taught by NESTs. Therefore, the main hypothesis was proven wrong. The participants appeared to be more motivated and seemed more interested in learning English when being instructed by a native speaker. As far as teaching pronunciation and grammar is concerned, NESTs were also favoured over NNESTs. Consequently, the third sub-hypothesis was proven true and the first sub-hypothesis was proven wrong. Even though the ability to comprehend the learners' emotional world when learning a new language was partly regarded as a strength of non-native speakers, learners did not attach great importance to a shared language learning history between them and their teachers. Thus, the second sub-hypothesis was proven wrong.



Furthermore, the findings of this research study have revealed that nativeness and a native-like accent were not regarded as necessary characteristics of a good English language teacher by the target sample. Moreover, the respondents stated that they could learn about the culture surrounding the English language just as well from a NNEST than from a NEST. Understanding utterances in case of mispronunciation was perceived as an advantage of NNESTs. Collaboration between both NESTs and NNESTs was considered as a good solution for more than half of the students.

In light of these findings, several implications for future teaching practices have been discussed. First of all, the training of NNEST trainees needs to be modified in order to successfully prepare them for their profession, as their language proficiency needs to receive special attention. Moreover, both NNEST trainees as well as active NNESTs should continuously engage in professional development. In this regard, experience in an English speaking country is essential and should be repeated as often as possible so that their exposure to the target language is maximised. Furthermore, NNESTs should appreciate their non-nativeness and actively make use of their quality in the EFL classroom. Finally, collaborations between NESTs and NNESTs should be implemented in Austrian secondary schools, as it was widely appreciated by the participants of this research study.

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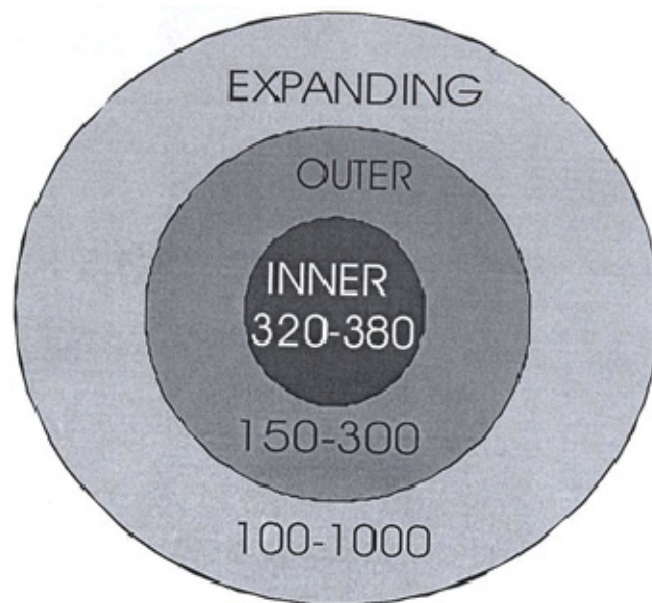
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## 11 Appendix

**Figure 1 The three circles of English**



## PERCEPTION OF MY ENGLISH TEACHER

This questionnaire asks about your perceptions towards native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers. This research is being conducted by an educational diploma student at the University of Vienna. Your participation is entirely anonymous and voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your teachers will NOT see your answers and your answers will NOT affect your grades. The return of this questionnaire implies your consent to participate in this research. Two important terms used in this survey are NEST and NNEST.

<b>NEST</b>	native English speaking teachers are those whose first (native) language is English
<b>NNEST</b>	non-native English speaking teachers are those who have learned English in addition to their first language

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!**

Please tick a box:

1. Your teacher is a  NEST  NNEST  not sure

I would like to know your opinion about the issue of native versus non-native English language teachers. Below are some statements about the issue. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements. Please be as honest as possible. Confidentiality will be strictly observed in this survey.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Partly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am more interested when learning with a NEST than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. A NEST is more competent in using the English language than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I prefer to be taught by NESTs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Only a NEST can provide authentic information about the culture surrounding the English language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In my opinion, a student can learn English just as well from a NNEST as he or she can from a NEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. For me, a NNEST provides a better learning model than a NEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I think NESTs and NNESTs should teach together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. It does not matter what the teacher's native language is, as long as they are a good teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I prefer to study pronunciation with a NEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. A NEST is a better role model for pronunciation than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The accent of a NEST makes him/her a better English language teacher than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My pronunciation will improve more when studying with a NEST rather than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The pronunciation of a NNEST is never native-like.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. If I make a pronunciation mistake, a NNEST knows which word I meant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I feel more comfortable making pronunciation errors with a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can explain difficult concepts in German, if necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I find it useful to discuss grammar-related problems in German.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I prefer a NNEST, because the teacher can relate similar grammar in English to similar grammar in German.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I can develop grammatical skills better when I am taught by a NEST rather than a NNEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I feel embarrassed to tell a NEST I do not understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I feel embarrassed to tell a NNEST I do not understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I feel more comfortable with a teacher who learned English the same way I am learning English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. A NNEST is more sensitive to my personal problems when learning English than a NEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. A NNEST can teach learning strategies more effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. A NNEST knows how I feel about learning a new language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. A NNEST understands my questions better than a NEST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Thank you very much for completing the survey! Please complete the questions below and critically assess the design of the questionnaire.

1. Were the explanations of the key terms NEST/NNEST clear?
2. Were instructions easy to understand? If not, what was unclear and needed clarification?
3. Did you encounter unfamiliar words?
4. Did you find the different fonts of instructions and questions helpful?
5. Did you have any difficulties with the question format (rating from 1 to 6)?
6. Did you find the questionnaire too long? Did you feel bored?
7. Did you feel the space provided for the open questions was sufficient?
8. Do you think the wording of a particular question should be revised? If yes, which one?
9. Overall, what would you change?
10. Any further suggestions/recommendations/comments?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!



## Raw data

items	1- Strongly agree	2 - Agree	3 - Partly agree	4 - Partly disagree	5 - Disagree	6 - Strongly disagree	
Q2 interested	43 (34,40%)	39 (31,20%)	29 (23,20%)	5 (4,00%)	6 (4,80%)	3 (2,40%)	
Q3 comp	50 (40,00%)	35 (26,00%)	25 (20,00%)	4 (3,20%)	9 (7,20%)	2 (1,60%)	
Q4 prefer	53 (42,40%)	29 (23,20%)	31 (24,80%)	4 (3,20%)	7 (5,60%)	1 (0,80%)	
Q5 culture	10 (8,00%)	28 (22,40%)	34 (27,20%)	20 (16,00%)	23 (18,40%)	10 (8,00%)	
Q6 well	12 (9,60%)	26 (20,80%)	40 (32,00%)	26 (20,80%)	17 (13,60%)	4 (3,20%)	
Q7 model	3 (2,42%)	8 (6,45%)	18 (14,52%)	31 (25%)	36 (29,03%)	28 (22,58%)	
Q8 together	10 (8%)	26 (20,8%)	33 (26,4%)	19 (15,2%)	22 (17,6%)	15 (12%)	
Q9 good	33 (26,4%)	47 (37,6%)	28 (22,4%)	13 (10,4%)	3 (2,4%)	1 (0,8%)	
Q10 pronun	80 (64, 52%)	29 (23,39%)	9 (7,26%)	3 (2,42%)	2 (1,61%)	1 (0,8%)	
Q11 promod	66 (52,8%)	34 (27,2%)	19 (15,2%)	0 (0%)	3 (2,4%)	3 (2,4%)	
Q12 accent	18 (14,4%)	31 (24,8%)	29 (23,20%)	18 (14,4%)	19 (15,2%)	10 (8,00%)	
Q13 mypro	54 (43,2%)	33 (26,4%)	28 (22,4%)	5 (4,00%)	2 (1,60%)	3 (2,4%)	
Q14 never pro	11 (8,8%)	23 (18,4%)	22 (17,6%)	34 (27,2%)	23 (18,40%)	12 (9,6%)	
Q15 promis	19 (15,32%)	37 (29,84%)	34 (27,42%)	15 (12,1%)	17 (13,71%)	2 (1,61%)	
Q16 procom	11 (8,8%)	19 (15,2%)	19 (15,2%)	23 (18,4%)	33 (26,4%)	20 (16%)	
Q17 diffGer	2 (1,6%)	9 (7,2%)	27 (21,6%)	28 (22,4%)	38 (30,4%)	21 (16,8%)	
Q18 gramGer	3 (2,4%)	11 (8,8%)	19 (15,2%)	26 (20,80%)	36 (28,8%)	30 (24%)	
Q19 simgram	2 (1,6%)	8 (6,4%)	29 (23,20%)	33 (26,4%)	35 (28%)	18 (14,40%)	
Q20 graskil	24 (19,2%)	24 (19,2%)	31 (24,80%)	24 (19,2%)	13 (10,4%)	9 (7,2%)	
Q21 Nemb	2 (1,6%)	7 (5,6%)	13 (10,4%)	23 (18,4%)	37 (29,6%)	43 (34,4%)	
Q22 Nnemb	3 (2,4%)	0 (0%)	13 (10,4%)	20 (16,00%)	44 (35,2%)	45 (36%)	

Q23 LLHcom	1 (2,4%)	11 (8,8%)	14 (11,2%)	27 (21,6%)	43 (34,4%)	27 (21,6%)	
Q24 persprob	0 (0%)	6 (4,84%)	17 (13,71%)	22 (17,74%)	38 (30,65%)	41 (33,06%)	
Q25 LLS	4 (3,23%)	9 (7,26%)	19 (15,32%)	25 (20,16%)	33 (26,61%)	34 (27,42%)	
Q26 feel	8 (6,4%)	24 (19,2%)	41 (32,8%)	15 (12%)	16 (12,8%)	21 (16,8%)	
Q27 question	2 (1,6%)	8 (6,4%)	14 (11,2%)	28 (22,4%)	28 (22,4%)	45 (36%)	
Q28 myL1	8 (6,45%)	6 (4,84%)	21 (16,94%)	18 (14,52%)	37 (29,84%)	34 (27,42%)	
Q29 questL1	4 (3,23%)	6 (4,84%)	18 (14,52%)	23 (18,55%)	36 (29,03%)	37 (29,84%)	
Q30 diffL1	6 (4,84%)	24 (19,35%)	20 (16,12%)	16 (12,9%)	36 (29,03%)	22 (17,74%)	
Q31 mycult	7 (5,69%)	18 (14,63%)	35 (28,46%)	25 (20,33%)	16 (13,01%)	22 (17,89%)	
Q32 probL1	12 (9,68%)	10 (8,06%)	23 (18,55%)	27 (21,77%)	32 (25,81%)	20 (16,3%)	
Q33 age							
	14	15	16	17	18		
	21	37	20	27	19		
	16,94%	29,84%	16,13%	21,77%	15,32%		
Q34 gender							
	1	2	9				
	82	42	1				
	65,60%	33,60%	0,80%				
Q35 years							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	2	5	9	15	19	13	15
	1,60%	4,00%	7,20%	12,00%	15,20%	10,40%	12,00%
							9,60%

11	12	13	14	15	16	99	Grand Total
5	7	3	4	6	2	8	125
4,00%	5,60%	2,40%	3,20%	4,80%	1,60%	6,40%	100,00 %
Q36 NEST							
1	2	3	4	5	9		
33	42	20	9	19	2		
26,40%	33,60%	16,00%	7,20%	15,20%	1,60%		
Q37 NNEST							
1	2	3	4	5	9		
10	40	32	20	19	4		
8,00%	32,00%	25,60%	16,00%	15,20%	3,20%		



## **Abstract (English version)**

The power of English in today's globalised world is especially noticeable in the context of ELT. The prevailing superiority of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) in this field discriminates non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs). This research study investigates the dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs with regard to learners' attitudes towards them. In the ELT world, the predominant status of native speakers, who are commonly the pursued model of L2 learners, is no longer considered as justified. The legitimate place of NNESTs in this field is illustrated by their manifold strengths. A quantitative study was carried out with 125 students in an upper secondary school in Austria. The present study administered a questionnaire with 31 Likert scale items, five multiple-choice questions and one close-ended question. Overall, NNESTs were expected to be preferred by Austrian secondary school students. The findings revealed that the students favoured NESTs in the areas of pronunciation and grammar. The learners' interest and motivation was found to be higher when being taught by a NEST. The results showed that the students valued NNESTs' understanding of psychological aspects when learning a new language. The ability to understand mispronounced utterances was also perceived as a strength of NNESTs. It was observed that students can learn about English culture equally well from NESTs and NNESTs. Nativeness, a native-like accent and a shared language learning history were not perceived as important characteristics of the ideal English language teacher. Collaboration between both NESTs and NNESTs was approved by more than half of the respondents. NNESTs need to appreciate their nativeness and make use of their advantage. Their teacher training needs to be modified so that their language proficiency improves and their exposure to the target environment needs to be maximised. Both NESTs and NNESTs need to engage in continuous professional development.



## **Abstract (deutsche Version)**

Die englische Sprache hat sich in den letzten Jahren weltweit zu einem einflussreichen Gut entwickelt. Die Lehre diese Sprache ist besonders von der angeblichen Überlegenheit der Lehrer mit Englisch als Muttersprache bestimmt. Englischlehrer die Nicht-Muttersprachler sind werden auf Grund dieses Defizits diskriminiert, obwohl ihr Zugang zu der Fremdsprache einige Vorteile mit sich bringt. Diese Studie untersuchte die differenzierte Wahrnehmung der Schüler von Muttersprachlern und Nicht-Muttersprachlern im Englischunterricht. Dazu wurden 125 Oberstufenschüler mit Hilfe eines Fragebogens an einem oberösterreichischen Gymnasium befragt. Insgesamt wurde erwartet, dass die Schüler einen Nicht-Muttersprachler als Englischlehrer bevorzugen würden. Die Auswertung der Fragebögen ergab, dass die Schüler Grammatik und Aussprache lieber mit einem Muttersprachler lernen. Außerdem gaben die Schüler an, mit diesen motivierter und interessierter im Unterricht zu sein. Die Fähigkeit von Nicht-Muttersprachlern, den psychologischen Lernprozess während des Fremdsprachenerwerbs zu verstehen, wurde als positiv wahrgenommen. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass Nicht-Muttersprachler falsch ausgesprochene Äußerungen besser verstehen als Muttersprachler. Die Lernenden gaben an, Wissen über die englische Kultur gleich gut von Muttersprachlern als auch von Nicht-Muttersprachlern lernen zu können. Die Tatsache, Muttersprachler zu sein und die Aussprache perfekt zu beherrschen, sowie dieselbe Sprachlerngeschichte mit den Schülern zu teilen, werden nicht als wichtige Eigenschaften eines Englischlehrers angesehen. Mehr als die Hälfte der Schüler befürwortete den gemeinsamen Unterricht durch Muttersprachler und Nicht-Muttersprachler.

