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Beyond the Native and Non-Native Dichotomy: Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of English Teacher Effectiveness in Korea

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This study examines how 70 Korean pre-service English teachers perceived the effectiveness of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and Korean non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in an EFL context. A cross-sectional mixed-format questionnaire, adapted from Hertel and Sunderman (2009), combined 5-point Likert-scale items with two open-ended questions. Descriptive findings revealed domain-specific perceptions. NESTs were associated more strongly with pronunciation, oral communication, and cultural exposure, whereas Korean NNESTs were associated with explicit grammar instruction, first-language-mediated explanation, examination preparation, and familiarity with local learners. Open-ended responses similarly portrayed the two groups as possessing distinct but potentially complementary pedagogical resources rather than forming a simple hierarchy of effectiveness. However, participants' association of nativeness with authentic pronunciation and cultural authority indicated the continuing influence of native-speakerist assumptions. The findings suggest that Korean pre-service teachers negotiate inherited native-speaker norms while recognizing professional legitimacy grounded in pedagogical expertise, local knowledge, and context-sensitive learner support. Because the study addresses perceptions rather than observed teaching performance or learning outcomes, its implications concern teacher education and future research rather than causal differences between teacher groups. The study therefore supports teacher education that critically examines native-speakerism while valuing complementary professional strengths across diverse English teachers within contemporary Korean English education settings today.

[pre-service English teachers/native-speakerism/native and non-native English-speaking teachers/teacher effectiveness/Korean EFL context]

I. INTRODUCTION

Government-supported recruitment of native English-speaking assistant teachers has been a visible component of public English education in South Korea. Established in 1995 and affiliated with the Korean Ministry of Education, the English Program in Korea (EPIK) states that it recruits assistant language teachers to support practical English education, intercultural exchange, and the development of English-teaching methods (English Program in Korea [EPIK], n.d.-b; National Institute for International Education [NIIED], n.d.). Current EPIK eligibility normally limits applications to citizens of seven designated English-speaking countries, while specifying additional routes for Indian citizens under the Korea-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and for Korean citizens with qualifying residency and English-medium educational backgrounds (English Program in Korea [EPIK], n.d.-a). These policy categories make the labels native English-speaking teacher (NEST) and non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) institutionally consequential, even though their linguistic and professional boundaries remain contested.

The professional value attached to these labels has long been debated in English language teaching. Native-speakerism privileges an idealized native speaker as the natural model of linguistic authority and, by extension, as the preferred language teacher (Holliday, 2006; Phillipson, 1992). More recent scholarship, however, cautions that NEST and NNEST are not transparent descriptions of proficiency, race, nationality, multilingual repertoire, or pedagogical competence; rather, they are socially produced categories whose meanings vary across institutions and contexts (Selvi et al., 2024). Global Englishes and English as a lingua franca (ELF) scholarship similarly questions the exclusive use of Inner-Circle norms as the endpoint of instruction and emphasizes intelligibility, multilingual resources, and communication across diverse English users (Rose et al., 2021; Sifakis, 2019).

Empirical research does not support a simple hierarchy between the two teacher groups. Students often associate NESTs with pronunciation, spontaneous oral communication, and cultural knowledge, while associating NNESTs with explicit language explanation, shared learning experience, and sensitivity to local learners (Ma, 2012; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Wang & Fang, 2020). These patterns are perceptions rather than direct measures of teaching quality, and teacher background alone does not determine learner outcomes. For example, research on L2 pronunciation instruction has shown that both native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers can support learning when they possess relevant pedagogical expertise (Levis et al., 2016). Thus, the analytically important question is not which group is categorically better, but how particular competencies are attributed to each group and how those attributions are shaped by ideology and context.

Pre-service teachers constitute a particularly important population because their beliefs can become part of their emerging professional identities and future instructional decision-

making. International research has documented continued attachment to native norms alongside growing openness to ELF and diverse Englishes among teacher candidates (Curran & Chern, 2017). Korean research has likewise examined pre-service teachers' evaluations of NNESTs (Shin, 2016), their willingness to teach World Englishes (Sung, 2018, 2019), their acceptance of ELF-related features (Hwang, 2022), and their views on teaching listening through varied English accents (Lee, 2023). Recent work with Korean school teachers also indicates that awareness of World Englishes can coexist with practical uncertainty about classroom implementation (Shin & Walkinshaw, 2025).

This literature means that the need for research on Korean pre-service teachers cannot be justified simply by claiming that the population has been neglected. A narrower gap remains. Existing Korean studies have primarily examined overall evaluations of NNESTs, orientations toward World Englishes or ELF, and willingness to teach diverse English varieties. Less attention has been given to how the same group of prospective English teachers distributes perceived teacher effectiveness across specific instructional domains, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture, while simultaneously explaining the strengths and limitations of NESTs and Korean NNESTs in their own words. Examining these judgments together can reveal whether native-speakerist authority is reproduced uniformly or negotiated differently across pedagogical domains.

Accordingly, this study makes three related contributions. First, it provides a domain-specific descriptive account of perceived teacher knowledge, teaching ability, and anticipated learning benefits. Second, it integrates these ratings with open-ended attributions to show how quantitative patterns are explained, qualified, or complicated by participants' own evaluations. Third, it interprets these perceptions from a professional-identity perspective: the participants are not only English learners but future Korean English teachers who are evaluating the legitimacy of a professional category they are likely to inhabit. The study therefore examines how inherited native-speaker norms coexist with recognition of pedagogical expertise, local knowledge, and learner support as alternative bases of teacher legitimacy.

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How do Korean pre-service English teachers evaluate the relative knowledge, teaching ability, and anticipated learning benefits of NESTs and Korean NNESTs across vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture?

RQ2. What strengths and limitations do they attribute to NESTs and Korean NNESTs in their open-ended responses?

RQ3. How do the quantitative patterns and qualitative attributions jointly reproduce, qualify, or challenge native-speakerist assumptions in participants' emerging professional identities?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Native-Speakerism and the Analytical Status of NEST/NNEST Labels

The native/non-native distinction has been criticized for treating a complex linguistic biography as a stable binary. Rampton (1990) proposed expertise, affiliation, and inheritance as more useful dimensions than birth-based ownership, while Holliday (2006) used native-speakerism to describe the cultural and professional privileging of the idealized native speaker. Contemporary reviews further demonstrate that the labels often bundle together language history, accent, nationality, race, employment status, and institutional power, despite the fact that none of these dimensions necessarily predicts pedagogical competence (Selvi et al., 2024).

The present study nevertheless retains the terms NEST and Korean NNEST for two reasons. First, the questionnaire from Hertel and Sunderman (2009) is explicitly comparative, and the labels reproduce the categories through which participants were asked to respond. Second, these categories remain meaningful in Korean policy and popular discourse. Their use here is therefore analytic rather than essentialist: the study investigates what competencies participants attach to the labels, not whether all members of either category objectively share those competencies. This distinction is central because perceived group attributes can influence professional identity and educational decisions even when the categories themselves are theoretically unstable.

Global Englishes and ELF perspectives provide an additional basis for questioning automatic native-speaker authority. Their pedagogical literature has emphasized exposure to varied Englishes, critical reflection on standard-language ideology, and preparation for communication among multilingual users (Rose et al., 2021; Sifakis, 2019). Such perspectives do not imply that pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, or cultural knowledge are irrelevant. Rather, they relocate these resources within a broader conception of communicative competence and challenge the assumption that they are possessed exclusively by one speaker group.

2. Context- and Domain-Specific Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness

Research comparing NESTs and NNESTs has repeatedly identified domain-specific rather than global preferences. Medgyes (1992, 1994) argued that the groups may draw on different linguistic histories and pedagogical resources, while rejecting the conclusion that one group is inherently superior. Later studies reported that NESTs were often valued for oral fluency, pronunciation, and cultural access, whereas NNESTs were valued for metalinguistic explanation, knowledge of learners' first language, and experience of learning English

themselves (Ma, 2012; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Wang and Fang (2020) similarly found that native-speakerist preferences could coexist with recognition of NNESTs' pedagogical strengths.

These perceptions are context-sensitive. Learner proficiency, instructional purpose, familiarity with a teacher's accent, and local assessment systems may shape how teacher effectiveness is judged (Moussu, 2010; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Shared first-language knowledge can support explanation and rapport, but L1 use is a pedagogical choice rather than an inherent property of NNEST identity. Reviews and experimental research suggest that strategically timed L1 use can facilitate particular learning processes, while also cautioning against rigid prescriptions for either English-only or L1-dominant instruction (Hall & Cook, 2012; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Tian & Macaro, 2012).

The distinction between perceived competence and demonstrated effectiveness is equally important. Survey respondents may interpret an accent as authentic, a lesson as engaging, or an explanation as clear, but these evaluations do not establish actual gains in proficiency. Levis et al. (2016), for example, found that pronunciation instruction by both native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers could produce learning, underscoring the importance of training and instructional design. Studies of team teaching also show that collaboration is not automatically beneficial; productive partnerships depend on joint planning, role negotiation, professional parity, and institutional support (Carless, 2006; Rao & Chen, 2020).

3. Pre-Service Teacher Beliefs in Korean English Education

Pre-service teachers' beliefs occupy an intermediate position between learner attitudes and teacher cognition. They are informed by years of classroom experience as students, yet they are also being reorganized through disciplinary knowledge, practicum experience, and anticipated professional roles. Curran and Chern (2017) showed that pre-service teachers could recognize the relevance of ELF while retaining attachment to native norms, illustrating the potentially transitional character of such beliefs.

In Korea, Shin (2016) found that pre-service English teachers generally recognized NNESTs as qualified and contextually appropriate teachers, even while identifying group-based strengths and limitations. Research on World Englishes has documented broadly positive orientations among Korean pre-service teachers, but also limited prior exposure to diverse Englishes and uncertainty about classroom application (Hwang, 2022; Lee, 2023; Sung, 2018, 2019). Shin and Walkinshaw (2025) similarly reported a gap between awareness and implementation among Korean school teachers. Collectively, these studies suggest that changing beliefs about English do not necessarily erase native-speakerist associations; rather, older and newer evaluative frameworks may coexist.

The present study builds on this work by examining how prospective teachers distribute

effectiveness across four instructional domains and by placing those ratings alongside open-ended explanations. This design permits analysis of a potentially important tension: participants may reject a global hierarchy of teacher worth while continuing to associate nativeness with particular forms of linguistic and cultural authority. That tension, rather than a binary preference score alone, is the central object of analysis.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional mixed-format survey. The term mixed-format is used deliberately: the instrument combined closed-ended ratings and open-ended questions, but the study did not employ a fully developed mixed-methods design involving separate sampling, data-collection phases, or equal-status strands (see Mirhosseini, 2018). The Likert-scale responses provided a descriptive account of domain-specific evaluations for RQ1, and the open-ended responses identified attributed strengths and limitations for RQ2. Integration occurred at the interpretation stage for RQ3 through side-by-side comparison of areas of convergence, complementarity, and tension between the two forms of data. No causal claims about actual teaching effectiveness or learning outcomes were intended.

2. Participants and Ethical Procedures

The participants were 70 undergraduate students majoring in English Education at a university in Daejeon, South Korea (University A). They were treated as pre-service English teachers because their program provided formal preparation for prospective English-teaching roles. All participants were enrolled in a course taught by the researcher at the time of data collection.

Because participants were recruited from the researcher's own course, the study involved a potential power differential. The original manuscript described participation as voluntary and responses as anonymous. Further details regarding informed consent, separation of research participation from course evaluation, and institutional review must be verified against the study records.

3. Instrument

The questionnaire was adapted from Hertel and Sunderman (2009). It contained three closed-ended comparative statements addressing (a) perceived subject-matter knowledge, (b)

perceived teaching ability, and (c) anticipated learning benefit. For each statement, participants responded separately with respect to vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture. The response scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement of an advantage for NESTs relative to Korean English teachers.

The three closed-ended prompts were as follows:

1. Native English-speaking teachers have greater knowledge than Korean English teachers in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and English-speaking cultures.
2. Native English-speaking teachers demonstrate greater teaching ability than Korean English teachers in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture.
3. If I were taught by a native English-speaking teacher, I would learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture better than if I were taught by a Korean English teacher.

Two open-ended questions asked participants to describe the strengths and limitations of (a) native English-speaking teachers and (b) Korean English teachers. These questions were added to elicit evaluative reasoning that could not be captured by the ratings alone. Because each construct-by-domain combination was represented by a single rating rather than a multi-item scale, internal-consistency estimates were not calculated; the quantitative analysis is therefore descriptive. The parenthetical percentages reported by Hertel and Sunderman (2009) were not treated as numerically equivalent benchmarks because their response format and sample differed from those of the present study.

4. Data Collection

Before completing the questionnaire, participants took part in a brief classroom discussion about their prior experiences with NESTs and Korean NNESTs. They first discussed perceived strengths and limitations in groups of four to five and then shared selected points with the class. The discussion was intended to activate relevant experience and clarify the topic; the present study does not treat it as a source of analyzed data. Participants subsequently completed the questionnaire individually and were instructed to report their own views rather than a group position.

This sequence is methodologically consequential. Exposure to peer views immediately before the survey may have primed particular categories, increased the accessibility of shared examples, or encouraged convergence in the open-ended responses. The qualitative categories are therefore interpreted as perceptions produced after a common discussion context, not as fully independent or spontaneous accounts. This issue is revisited as a

limitation in Section 4.5.

5. Data Analysis and Integration

For the closed-ended responses, mean scores were calculated for each of the three prompts within each instructional domain. Domain means and reported row means were then summarized in Table 1. Because the study did not use probability sampling, test a priori model, or conduct inferential analyses, the results are presented as sample-specific descriptive patterns. No direct statistical comparison with Hertel and Sunderman's (2009) percentages was made.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Mean Scores by Item and Language Domain

Question	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Culture	Mean
Question 1	3.8 (72%)	2.4 (43%)	4.8 (70%)	5.0 (58%)	4.0
Question 2	3.2[a]	2.0 (25%)	4.2 (55%)	3.6 (66%)	3.2
Question 3	3.4 (43%)	2.2 (43%)	4.4 (67%)	3.8 (64%)	3.4
Mean	3.4	2.2	4.4	4.1	

Note. Values in parentheses are drawn from Hertel and Sunderman (2009) and are reported for comparison only.
[a]No comparable value is reported in Hertel and Sunderman (2009).

For the open-ended responses, the proposed analytic unit was a meaning unit, defined as a phrase or sentence expressing one evaluative idea. Responses were read repeatedly, segmented into meaning units, and assigned concise semantic codes. Related codes were then grouped inductively into higher-order categories representing perceived strengths or limitations of each teacher group, following principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Category boundaries were checked against the full responses, and discrepant or qualifying statements were retained where they complicated the dominant interpretation. Table 2 summarizes the range of categories rather than their prevalence because category frequencies were not included in the original analysis.

TABLE 2
Strengths and Weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs

Strength of NEST	Weakness of NEST
practical language use, activity-based learning, improvement in listening skills, teacher leadership, pronunciation, learner engagement, cultural knowledge, authenticity, meaning negotiation, and real-world communication	lack of structure, distracting classroom environments, limited learning outcomes, communication difficulties, variation in comprehension across proficiency levels, limited L1 support, failure to address learners' needs, overemphasis on entertainment, learner anxiety, and limited relevance to the Korean examination system

Strength of Korean NNEST	Weakness of NNEST
explicit grammar explanation, effective communication, use of diverse examples, reading comprehension instruction, alignment with the Korean examination system, effective instructional strategies, responsiveness to learners' needs, reduction of learner anxiety, L1-based feedback, and emotional rapport with students	lack of teacher leadership, teacher-centered and lecture-based instruction, monotonous and unengaging classes, lack of enthusiasm, limited pronunciation proficiency, overemphasis on grammar, limited communicative competence, and an overly theoretical approach

Integration was conducted after the separate descriptive analyses. The domain means were compared with the qualitative categories to identify convergence (e.g., high pronunciation ratings alongside references to pronunciation and authenticity), complementarity (e.g., open-ended explanations of why grammar instruction was associated with Korean NNESTs), and tension (e.g., valuing NEST-led engagement while criticizing insufficient structure). This integrated comparison formed the basis for the interpretation of native-speakerism and professional identity in RQ3.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Descriptive Quantitative Patterns (RQ1)

Table 1 reports the mean ratings for the three comparative prompts. Across the reported domain means, endorsement of a NEST advantage was highest for pronunciation (M = 4.4) and culture (M = 4.1), followed by vocabulary (M = 3.4), while grammar was below the scale midpoint (M = 2.2). The knowledge prompt showed the same differentiation, with high ratings for culture (M = 5.0) and pronunciation (M = 4.8) but a lower rating for grammar (M = 2.4). The teaching-ability and anticipated-learning prompts likewise produced higher ratings for pronunciation than for grammar.

These values should be interpreted descriptively. Standard deviations and inferential tests were not reported, and the sample was drawn from a single program. In addition, the percentages reported in Hertel and Sunderman (2009) were based on a different response format and sample. The present findings can therefore be compared with that study only at the level of broad pattern—for example, the relative association of native-speaker status with pronunciation rather than grammar—not at the level of magnitude.

2. Open-Ended Attributions (RQ2)

The open-ended responses presented a similarly differentiated picture. Participants

associated NESTs with practical or idiomatic language use, pronunciation and listening exposure, interactive activities, cultural knowledge, and real-world communication. They also identified limitations involving lesson structure, comprehensibility, limited Korean or L1 support, insufficient responsiveness to local examination demands, and learner anxiety. Korean NNESTs were associated with explicit grammar and reading explanation, clear communication, L1-mediated feedback, familiarity with the Korean curriculum and examination system, learning strategies, and emotional rapport. Their perceived limitations included lecture-dominated instruction, reduced engagement, overemphasis on grammar and theory, and less confidence in pronunciation or spontaneous communication.

Table 2 should not be read as a frequency ranking. In the absence of coded counts, it records the breadth of ideas identified in the responses. Terms such as most, frequently, or overwhelmingly are therefore avoided. The categories also describe participants' perceptions of socially constructed teacher groups, not verified characteristics of individual NESTs or NNESTs.

3. Integrated Interpretation: Native-Speakerism and Professional Legitimacy (RQ3)

The quantitative and qualitative results converge most clearly in pronunciation and culture. High ratings in these domains were accompanied by references to authenticity, listening exposure, idiomatic language, and cultural access. This pattern reproduces a familiar native-speakerist association between nativeness and linguistic-cultural authority (Holliday, 2006; Wang & Fang, 2020). It does not, however, demonstrate that NESTs objectively provide more intelligible pronunciation instruction or more effective cultural learning. The association is best interpreted as an ideological and experiential expectation held by this sample.

The grammar pattern qualifies that authority. Low ratings for a NEST advantage in grammar, together with open-ended references to explicit explanation, L1-mediated feedback, local examinations, and anticipation of learner difficulty, indicate that participants did not equate nativeness with universal pedagogical superiority. This interpretation is consistent with research in which NNESTs have been valued for metalinguistic knowledge and contextual familiarity (Ma, 2012; Shin, 2016). Importantly, these are pedagogical resources that can be learned or shared; they should not be treated as fixed properties of all NNESTs.

The results also reveal tensions within each positive evaluation. NEST-associated interaction was valued as engaging but criticized when it appeared insufficiently structured or difficult to understand. Korean-NNEST-associated explanation was valued as clear and examination-relevant but criticized when it became lecture-based or overly theoretical.

These paired evaluations suggest that participants were not simply choosing between two teacher types. They were evaluating competing dimensions of instruction —fluency and accuracy, engagement and structure, global communication and local assessment— and mapping those dimensions onto socially familiar teacher categories.

The study's principal contribution lies in showing that these apparently contradictory beliefs coexist within the emerging professional identity of the same prospective teachers. Participants could reproduce native-speakerist assumptions in pronunciation and culture while simultaneously grounding Korean NNEST legitimacy in pedagogical expertise, learner knowledge, and contextual responsiveness. The findings therefore move beyond an overall preference comparison: they identify the domains in which native-speaker authority remains resilient and the alternative criteria through which future Korean teachers construct professional value.

4. Cautious Implications for Teacher Education

Because this study measured perceptions rather than observed practice or learning outcomes, its implications are propositions for teacher education, not evidence that teachers should be assigned roles according to native-speaker status. The results first support making beliefs about teacher legitimacy an explicit object of reflection. Global Englishes- and ELF-informed activities can invite pre-service teachers to examine how accent, nationality, race, multilingualism, and pedagogical expertise become conflated in evaluations of teachers (Rose et al., 2021; Sifakis, 2019). The aim should be critical awareness, not the replacement of one idealized teacher category with another.

Second, professional preparation should be competence-based. Pronunciation pedagogy, interactional scaffolding, explicit language explanation, assessment literacy, and responsiveness to learner diversity are relevant to all teachers. Evidence that both NESTs and NNESTs can support pronunciation learning when appropriately prepared further cautions against using speaker background as a proxy for instructional competence (Levis et al., 2016). Teacher-education curricula can therefore use the present patterns diagnostically —as beliefs to interrogate and competencies to develop—rather than as a blueprint for dividing labor by identity.

Third, co-teaching may provide opportunities for professional exchange, but only under appropriate conditions. Research from East Asian settings indicates that collaboration can be constrained by unequal status, unclear responsibilities, limited planning time, and communication difficulties (Carless, 2006; Rao & Chen, 2020). Programs considering NEST-NNEST collaboration should therefore establish shared planning, negotiated roles, reciprocal observation, and institutional recognition of both teachers' expertise. The current study offers no outcome evidence that team teaching is superior; it merely identifies

complementary resources that could be explored through future intervention research.

Fourth, the perceived value of Korean-mediated explanation warrants a strategic rather than categorical approach to L1 use. Research suggests that planned codeswitching can support selected learning goals and may be evaluated differently according to learner age and context (Hall & Cook, 2012; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Tian & Macaro, 2012). Bilingual explanation should therefore be treated as part of a flexible pedagogical repertoire available to suitably proficient teachers, not as an exclusive NNEST trait or a general justification for L1-dominant instruction.

Finally, the data do not justify assigning lower-proficiency learners to NNESTs and higher-proficiency learners to NESTs. Comprehensibility and support were salient in participants' comments, but speaker background alone cannot establish which individual teacher can adjust input, scaffold interaction, or meet a learner's needs. Such placement recommendations would require direct comparisons of classroom practice and learning outcomes across proficiency levels.

5. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

Several limitations delimit the claims. First, the sample consisted of 70 students from one English Education program and was recruited from a course taught by the researcher. The findings cannot be generalized to Korean pre-service teachers as a whole, and the instructor-student relationship may have affected participation or response framing.

Second, the pre-survey small-group and whole-class discussion may have primed common categories and encouraged convergence, particularly in the open-ended responses. The qualitative findings should therefore be understood as post-discussion accounts. A future design could administer an initial survey before any discussion, randomize discussion exposure, or compare pre- and post-discussion responses.

Third, the quantitative component was descriptive and relied on single ratings for each construct-domain combination. The study did not report dispersion, test measurement properties, or conduct inferential analysis. Future work should use validated multi-item scales, report reliability and uncertainty, and examine how background variables predict perceptions across a larger multi-site sample.

Fourth, brief open-ended responses provide less depth than interviews, stimulated recall, or longitudinal reflection. The credibility of the qualitative analysis also depends on a transparent record of coding, coder involvement, category revision, and discrepant cases. Future studies should preserve an audit trail, report category frequencies where appropriate, and include anonymized excerpts.

Fifth, the study examined perceptions, not teachers' actual language proficiency, instructional practice, or effects on learning. Classroom observation, teacher interviews,

learner assessments, and intervention studies are needed before drawing causal conclusions about teacher effectiveness, co-teaching, or the instructional use of L1.

Finally, NEST and NNEST are internally diverse and theoretically contested categories. Treating them as homogeneous risks reproducing the binary that the study seeks to critique. Future research should examine specific dimensions —such as multilingual repertoire, pedagogical preparation, accent familiarity, race, nationality, and local teaching experience—rather than using nativeness as a composite explanation.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined how Korean pre-service English teachers evaluated NESTs and Korean NNESTs across vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture and how they explained each group's perceived strengths and limitations. The descriptive ratings associated NESTs most strongly with pronunciation and culture and least strongly with grammar. The open-ended responses linked NESTs to communicative exposure and engagement but also to comprehensibility and structural concerns, while linking Korean NNESTs to explicit explanation, L1-mediated support, and local assessment knowledge but also to lecture-centered and less communicative instruction.

The central finding is not that the groups possess a fixed, complementary division of labor. Rather, the same prospective teachers simultaneously reproduced native-speakerist associations and rejected a global hierarchy of teacher value. Their evaluations located professional legitimacy not only in nativeness, but also in pedagogical clarity, knowledge of learners, multilingual resources, and responsiveness to the Korean educational context. This domain-specific coexistence of inherited ideology and alternative professional criteria constitutes the study's original contribution.

The findings should remain bounded by the study's design. They represent perceptions from one post-discussion survey sample and cannot establish actual effectiveness or learning outcomes. Nevertheless, they identify beliefs that English teacher education in Korea can productively examine. Future multi-site, longitudinal, observational, and intervention research should investigate how such beliefs change through coursework and practicum experience and whether particular teacher competencies, rather than native-speaker labels, predict effective classroom practice.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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