

## **The Effective a Native Teacher of English Language in Saudi Arabia EFL Classroom**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research study attempts to find out the best practices that can make a Native English teacher an efficient and effective teacher in Saudi Arabia and the cultural difference that can effect students' learning process. English teaching by native English teachers is preferred due to their high fluency and proficiency on the language, however they bring their own set of cultural norms and perspectives in the classroom that they value the most. Cultural milieus must be given much attention, when a foreign language is taught, as children are still in the early stages of internalizing their own culture and values. A mixed approach was utilized for the study. A questionnaire on a 5-point scale was distributed to students to understand their perceptions on the effectiveness of native English teachers in the classroom. A semi-structured interview with open ended questions was also conducted with native English teachers to understand how they perform in classroom. Three themes were generally focused on teacher effectiveness, cultural difference, and preferred language in classroom. Overall, the students were satisfied with the teaching capabilities of NESTs having neutral opinions about cultural difference. Cultural barrier was considered as a hurdle by the teachers but at the same time teacher's nativity was reflected as significant in learning. Where students' preferred bilingual methods in the classroom, teachers considered the use of mother tongue an impedance in English learning and therefore should be avoided.*

**KEYWORDS:** Native English teachers, classroom effectiveness, etching strategies, cultural background, nativity, NESTs.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

English language has gained the status of Lingua Franca globally, with almost 1 billion 125 million people speaking the language whose native tongue is not English according to the British council. Students all around the globe are getting themselves enrolled language programs that focus on language learning entirely distinct from their mother language (Al Khresheh, 2020). The World Languages and Culture (2010), has stated the importance of English language as increasing employments prospects abroad, understanding culture, increasing opportunities to get admission in foreign universities, and expanding global understanding (Lin, 2010). This importance is further demonstrated by the fact that English

language tests like IELTS, TOEFL etc. are considered mandatory when applying for admission in foreign universities. In Saudi Arabia, the status of English language in educational system well-recognized as it is the only foreign language taught in a large number of educational institutions and policy makers and stakeholders consider the language a significant instrument in scientific and technological development and foreign relations enhancement (Alharbi, 2022). Companies and industries also regard English as a medium of communication in trade (Alruwaili, 2021). However, this recognition was not always like this. The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic and the Saudi government is quite sensitive in terms of their language, religion and identity (Aljohani and Nouf, 2016). When implementation of English Foreign Language (EFL) programs started, it received public unacceptance initially (Nouraldeen, 2014). Now, English has acquired the position of second semi-official language and a rise in demand has led the government to an increased investment.

English Foreign Language (EFL) programs in Saudi Arabia focus on reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar etc. but children who learn English as a foreign language face difficulty in these areas (Ahmad and Nazim, 2014). Saudi students misuse the rules and pronunciation of English due to an influence of the mother tongue (Al Hammadi, Alyami and Almaflehi, 2013). Therefore oral proficiency in the language is still lacking among the students (Al-Zahrani, 2010). It is evident by the fact that after learning English in Saudi schools, they still feel the need to enroll themselves in language programs provided by American universities (Al Zayid, 2012). Therefore, there is a need of qualified native English speakers for EFL programs in Saudi Arabia schools.

One aspect of this demand is the recruitment of qualified English teachers for EFL programs. Teachers play a very crucial role in the proficiency and learning of students in non-English speaking countries (Sahin, 2005). The expertise of native speakers in “the production of correct, idiomatic utterances, as well as providing the ability to recognize acceptable and unacceptable versions of language” (McNeill, 2005) makes them a favored choice of recruiters in educational institutions. Although many English teachers in educational institutions worldwide are non-native, yet it is a common perception that language can best be taught by native speakers (Lasagabaster, 2010). A native speaker is characterized by the first-learned language and the level of proficiency and grasp on the language (Boyle, 1997). Thus, native teachers have become ideal models of good language teachers due to their command and fluency in the language (Sahin, 2005). They have an additional responsibility of inculcating positive beliefs among learners as positive beliefs can lead to enhanced motivation (Al Malki and Javid, 2018). However, one potential problem that the native English teachers face in Saudi Arabia is the cultural barrier that exists between the English teachers and Saudi students. Language and culture is inseparable because language learning is different in various cultures (Al Seghayer). As language is the embodiment of cultural reality (Nouraldeen, 2014) and Saudi citizens have high regard for their culture, this can be an issue in the efficacy of native English teachers.

The goal of the research is to examine how Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) can be most effective in the classroom contributing to the learning and success of their students. Through students’ perceptions, practices employed by NESTs which are considered most

satisfactory by the students are observed, and any linguistic or cultural barriers in learning through NESTs are identified. Teachers' opinions regarding their performance in the classroom is also recorded and direct observations from the classrooms regarding the strategies employed are also included in the research. After a thorough literature review, results from the observations and interviews are combined and evaluated to derive the most significant findings. Moreover, recommendations and limitations have also been discussed.

### **Research Questions**

The study attempts to focus on

- (i) Students' and teacher's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of NESTs in students' learning.
- (ii) Any potential barrier or hurdle in the way of teaching for NESTs in the eyes of teachers or students.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To determine whether a person is native speaker of the language or not, following aspects are considered (Boyle, 1997) (1) proficiency in the language, (2) language used in one's home, (3) one's cultural identity, (4) affiliation with the language, (5) length of exposure of the language, and (6) age of language acquisition (Boyle, 1997).

A native speaker is characterized by the following virtues (Davies, 2004) (1) the use of mother language acquired in childhood, (2) fluency on the language, (3) ability to communicate flawlessly in a natural way, (4) talent to express creativity in the language while writing literature, (5) capacity to interpret and translate from and to the native language, and (6) awareness of the difference between the standard language and one's own mother tongue (Davies, 2004).

Therefore native English teachers are considered as ideals and models clear and intelligible accents, which is representative of the world's standards, thus were a preferred choice both for recruiters and students (Doan, 2016). Learners preferred NESTs for English learning because native teachers have high command over the subject and were much more fluent and proficient than NNESTs in the language (Benke, 2005).

A study (Alruwaili, 2021) conducted in Saudi Arabia to know female students' perceptions about NESTs and NNESTs revealed that language and pedagogical knowledge, and sociocultural skills both proved as strengths for native English teachers. Along with effective English skills, NESTs as a gateway for students to the western culture and many of its important beliefs and norms (Alruwaili, 2021).

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The survey was conducted in a big state university in Saudi Arabia. This study is an exploratory descriptive research studying the perceptions of teachers and students towards the effect of

teacher nativeness to student's English learning. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. In order to conduct this study, a mixed methodology was utilized including several modes of data collection techniques i.e. questionnaires, interviews and observations.

The respondent sample consisted of 250 students, their ages ranged between 18 to above 25 years who filled the questionnaires. A 5-point Likert scale was used to design the questionnaire involving 17 statements studying the perceptions about three aspects of native English teachers i.e. teacher effectiveness, cultural differences and preferred language in classroom. Students were asked to select one option between strongly agree to strongly disagree on the given questions where 1= "strongly disagree", 2= "agree", 3= "neutral", 4= "agree" and 5= "strongly agree". For the quantitative analysis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26.0) was used in which data was analyzed statistically i.e. mean scores and percentages were analyzed, variables were computed, and graphs and tables

Interviews were conducted from teachers i.e. two females and two males (native speaker F1, F2, M1, M4) from four skills classes i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The questions included teacher's perceptions regarding strategies of effective teaching, effect of cultural difference, preferred language in classroom and recruiter's choice to hire them. The qualitative analysis was done by the coding process by which the teachers' answers were transcribed into distinct patterns. This was done to reduce data in a manageable form and themes were formed to conclude the findings.

Direct observations from the classroom were also included in the research. Two classrooms were chosen, one consisted of 20 students and other of 7 students. Five major aspects were observed each for a period of 5-7 minutes. The aspects were teachers' attitudes in the classrooms, language used, teaching strategies employed, activities for student engagement and difficulties encountered by the students, if any. These observations were also recorded and related with answers from the questionnaires and interviews.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

Out of the 250 participants, 130 (52%) were males, and 120 (48%) were females. Majority of the participants were in the age group 18-24 years (n=231, 92.4%) whereas 19 respondents were above age 25 (7.6%). The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire statements are shown in Table1.

	Question	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The native English teacher is well educated and sophisticatedly trained	4	1	5	3	2.95	.928
2	The native English teacher speaks in an accent that we all can understand	3	2	5	5	3.97	1.175
3	The native English teacher is able to motivate us with his/her teaching techniques	2	3	5	4	4.04	.808
4	The native English teacher has a clear vision of his/her teaching objectives and learning outcomes	4	1	5	4	3.52	1.348
5	The native English teacher uses appropriate teaching strategies	4	1	5	3	3.03	.900
6	His/ Her classroom management skills are far better than other teachers	4	1	5	3	3.21	1.175
7	His/ Her cultural background (or his nativity) is a hurdle in our learning (R)	4	1	5	3	2.95	.928
8	He/ She understands the Saudi culture and uses appropriate examples to explain his/her points	3	2	5	5	3.98	1.175
9	It is not important for us even if he/she does not understand the Saudi culture, what we want is good learning form him/her	4	1	5	3	3.03	.900
10	It is also important for students to be aware of the foreign culture which the native teacher belongs to	2	3	5	4	4.04	.808
11	It is a learning experience if the native teacher shares his/her culture and traditions in classroom	4	1	5	3	2.94	.934
12	I enjoy listening to his/her narratives about his/her culture and tradition	4	1	5	4	3.50	1.345
13	If the native teacher knows Arabic, I still communicate with him/her in English and not in my mother tongue.	3	2	5	5	3.97	1.175
14	The use of students' mother tongue slows down the process of acquiring English	4	1	5	3	3.04	.906
15	It is important to use bilingual methods (combination of L1 and L2) in classrooms to learn the English language	3	2	5	5	3.97	1.175
16	The native English teacher uses updated resources and materials in the classroom	2	3	5	4	4.04	.808
17	The native English teacher answers English related questions in a professional and informative way	4	1	5	3	2.94	.934

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Likert scale statements.

As evident in the table, the mean scores of the Likert scale questions are calculated which are read as “strongly disagree” (0.01-1.00), “disagree” (1.01-2.00), “neutral” (2.01-3.00), “agree” (3.01-4.00) and “strongly agree” (4.01-5.00). Three perceptions had the highest mean scores i.e. NESTs being able to motivate students by teaching skills, use of updated resources and materials by NESTs, and importance of learning teacher’s native culture by students.

To further clarify the information from questionnaires, Likert scale components were broken down into three distinct themes i.e. teacher effectiveness, cultural difference, and language used in classroom. The data was then related to the information from observations and interviews.

### Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness was demonstrated by native teacher's expertise and abilities, teaching techniques, classroom behavior and attitude, management skills, qualifications, training and experiences, cultural difference management, student engagement, and intelligible accent. Ten statements demonstrated the efficacy of native teachers in the classroom and were grouped together to find their frequencies and percentages as shown in Table 2.

	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The native English teacher is well educated and sophisticatedly trained	21 (8%)	10 (4%)	182 (73%)	9 (4%)	28 (11%)
2	The native English teacher speaks in an accent that we all can understand	125 (50%)	35 (14%)	47 (19%)	43 (17%)	0
3	The native English teacher is able to motivate us with his/her teaching techniques	86 (34%)	87 (35%)	77 (31%)	0	0
4	The native English teacher has a clear vision of his/her teaching objectives and learning outcomes	68 (27%)	85 (34%)	42 (17%)	19 (8%)	36 (14%)
5	The native English teacher uses appropriate teaching strategies	25 (10%)	12 (5%)	177 (71%)	18 (7%)	18 (7%)
6	His/ Her classroom management skills are far better than other teachers	44 (18%)	46 (18%)	105 (42%)	29 (12%)	26 (10%)
7	He/ She understands the Saudi culture and uses appropriate examples to explain his/her points	126 (50%)	35 (14%)	46 (18%)	43 (17%)	0
8	I enjoy listening to his/her narratives about his/her culture and tradition	65 (26%)	88 (35%)	42 (17%)	18 (7%)	37 (15%)
9	The native English teacher uses updated resources and materials in the classroom	86 (34%)	87 (35%)	77 (31%)	0	0
10	The native English teacher answers English related questions in a professional and informative way	21 (8%)	10 (4%)	182 (73%)	8 (3%)	29 (12%)

Table 2 frequency distribution showing students' perceptions to teacher effectiveness

According to the results, the beliefs and perceptions of individuals regarding the efficacy of native teachers were positive overall. 73% respondents were neutral regarding the education and training of native English teachers in Saudi Arabia. 61% individuals had positive perceptions of native teacher's clear and well-defined vision and objectives regarding learning outcomes of students. 71% students were neutral regarding the native teacher's teaching strategies but 69% respondents agreed/strongly agreed that native teachers were able to inculcate motivation among students through their teaching strategies. There were mixed opinions regarding the classroom management skills i.e. 42% were neutral and 36% agreed native English teacher's classroom management capability was better than other teachers. 69% respondents approved that the teacher uses new up-to-date teaching materials and resources, but 73% students showed a neutral response when asked if native English teachers answered language related questions in a more effective way or not. 64% students were in favor of the easily appreciable accent of the teacher. Regarding cultural difference management, 64%



students agreed that the native teacher understood the Saudi culture well and incorporated relatable examples to make her point clear. Also, when it came to introducing her own native culture and traditions, it was a fun and engaging experience for 61% individuals.

To evaluate the difference between male and female perceptions of native English teacher's effectiveness, Mann-Whitney U Test was utilized. The test revealed significant differences in the teacher's effectiveness perception of males (Median=3.1, n=130) and females (Median=3.7, n=120)  $U=4294$ ,  $z=6.152$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $r=0.39$ . Hence, it was statically proven that there was a significant relation of teacher effectiveness with gender although the effect size was small (figure 1). The graph shows that the males were more neutral regarding the overall efficacy of NESTs towards student learning whereas females had a more positive attitude towards teacher efficacy.

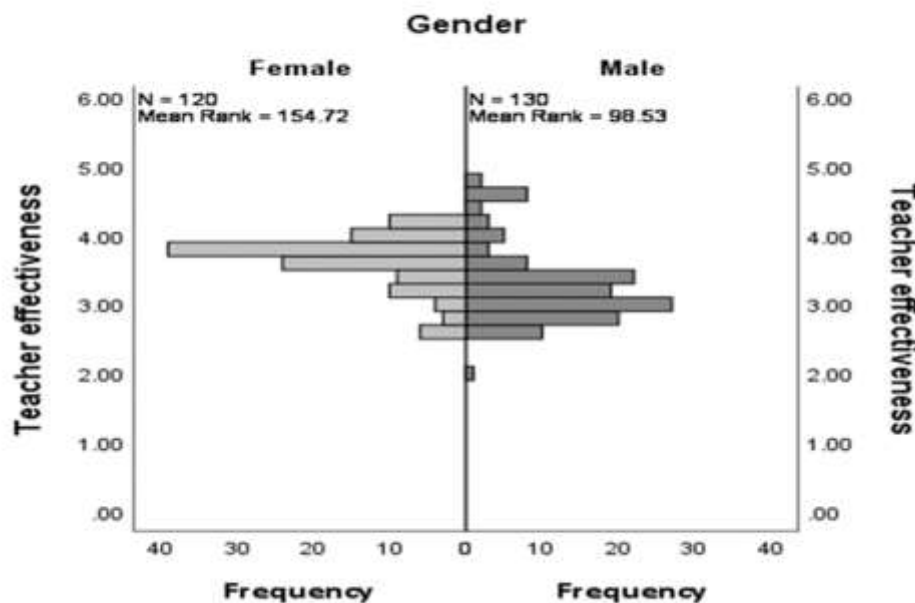


Fig 1. Mann-Whitney U test comparing teacher effectiveness between male and female genders

The effectiveness of teachers was then compared between different age groups i.e. 18-24 and 25 or above. The Mann-Whitney U Test revealed insignificant differences between the two age groups regarding teacher effectiveness perceptions.

When teachers were interviewed about they can make be more effective in the learning of their pupils, different strategies were mentioned by the teachers i.e. (1) engaging students in a fun and interactive way, (2) use of natural and intelligible accent, (3) have a kind and empathetic behavior towards pupils irrespective of their performance in classroom, (4) practical application of the bookish concepts in the form of group activities and games, (5) use of

audiovisual aids, (6) a healthy bonding with the pupils etc. Some of the statements given by teachers in interview are:

“Be empathetic. It’s important to understand the need of the students. The high achievers and the low achievers. Be open to positive change.” (Native speaker F1)

“The following can make teaching more interesting for students: (1) some background knowledge of the culture. (2) Involving students in the learning process by relating it to their experiences. (3) Audio-visual aids. (4) Humor and role- play. When students are involved, they learn better. If they learn better, they produce good results.” (Native speaker F2)

“By incorporating different styles of learning in each lesson such as playing games, doing role plays different methods of teaching and providing lifelike scenarios.” (Native speaker M4)

During class observations of different teachers, teachers were actively interacting and engaging with the students. The decorum of the class was effectively maintained and rules were strictly followed like prohibition to use cell phones in classroom. Teachers made sure that anything taught in class is understood by all the pupils, that they repeated instructions and audio clips multiple times to make the pupil understand. Quiz and activities were used that engaged students in learning. Presentations were also given by the pupils. Also, breaks were given during the lecture to prevent exhaustion and fatigue of students.

### Cultural Differences

Four statements in the questionnaire directed towards perceptions regarding cultural differences that existed between NESTs and non-English speaking students, the descriptive analysis of which is shown in Table 3.

	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	His/ Her cultural background (or his nativity) is a hurdle in our learning	21 (8%)	10 (4%)	182 (73%)	9 (4%)	28 (11%)
2.	It is not important for us even if he/she does not understand the Saudi culture, what we want is good learning form him/her	25 (10%)	12 (5%)	177 (71%)	18 (7%)	18 (7%)
3.	It is also important for students to be aware of the foreign culture which the native teacher belongs to	86 (34%)	87 (35%)	77 (31%)	0	0
4.	It is a learning experience if the native teacher shares his/her culture and traditions in classroom	21 (8%)	10 (4%)	182 (73%)	8 (3%)	29 (12%)

Table 3. Students’ perceptions regarding cultural difference between students and NESTs

Regarding the cultural differences, the students’ perceptions were overall unclear and neutral. 73% respondents were not regarding cultural difference being a hurdle in the learning process or being a learning experience when the teacher shares his/her traditions and culture in the classroom. 71% were neutral when asked if understanding of Saudi culture is crucial for NESTs



or only good skills are required of them. However, 69% students believed that native teachers' culture understanding is important for the students.

When compared the attitudes of students' who were favor of the influence of culture on students' learning processes i.e. whether cultural difference was a hindrance or facilitator in the overall learning process or it has no significant effect, findings were observed that is compiled in figure 2. It is seen that majority of students' considered that NESTs belonging to a different culture had no effect on the learning process, as long as teacher possess effectual capabilities for successful learning.

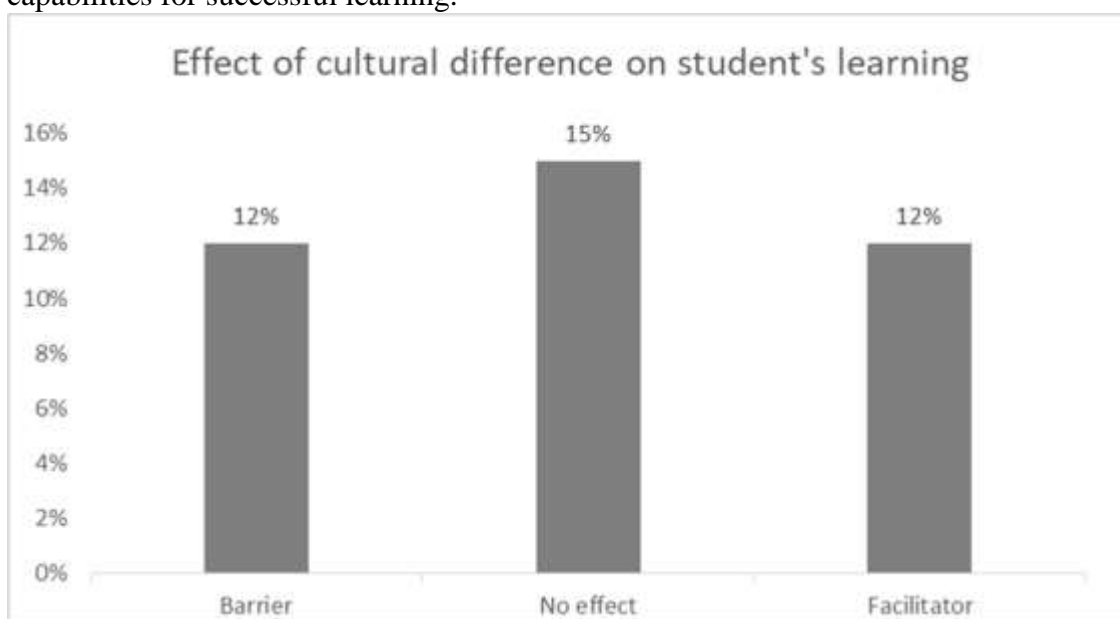


Fig 2. Students' perceptions regarding NESTs cultural influence on students' learning

In order to study the effect of demographic factors on cultural difference perception, Pearson Chi Square tests were conducted for both age and gender. For the effect of gender, significant relationship was found at 5% significance level between gender and cultural difference perception of respondents ( $\chi^2=45.36$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) This showed that gender and cultural difference had significant correlations. Thus, it was statistically proved that both males and females were neutral on the point that cultural difference of NESTs and students is a hurdle in students' learning (figure 3).

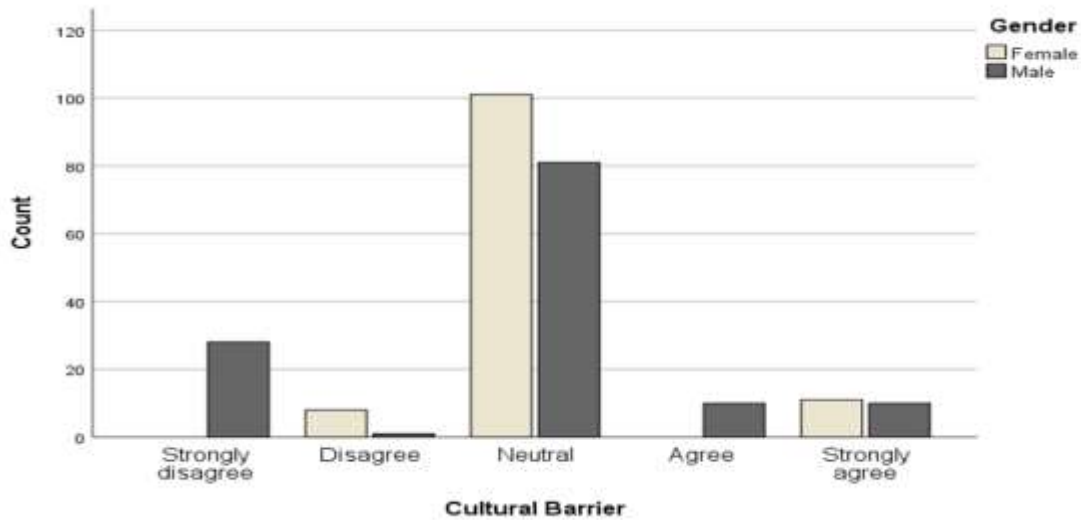


Fig 3. Male and female students' perceptions on cultural barrier

To test the influence of age on students' perceptions on cultural discrimination, Pearson Chi-Square tests yielded significant relationship at 5% significance level between the two age groups 18-24 and 25 or above, and cultural difference perception of respondents ( $\chi^2=151.90$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). It was seen that 18-24 age group were on the neutral side, but respondents with 25 age or strongly agreed that cultural difference was a barrier in the learning process (figure 4).

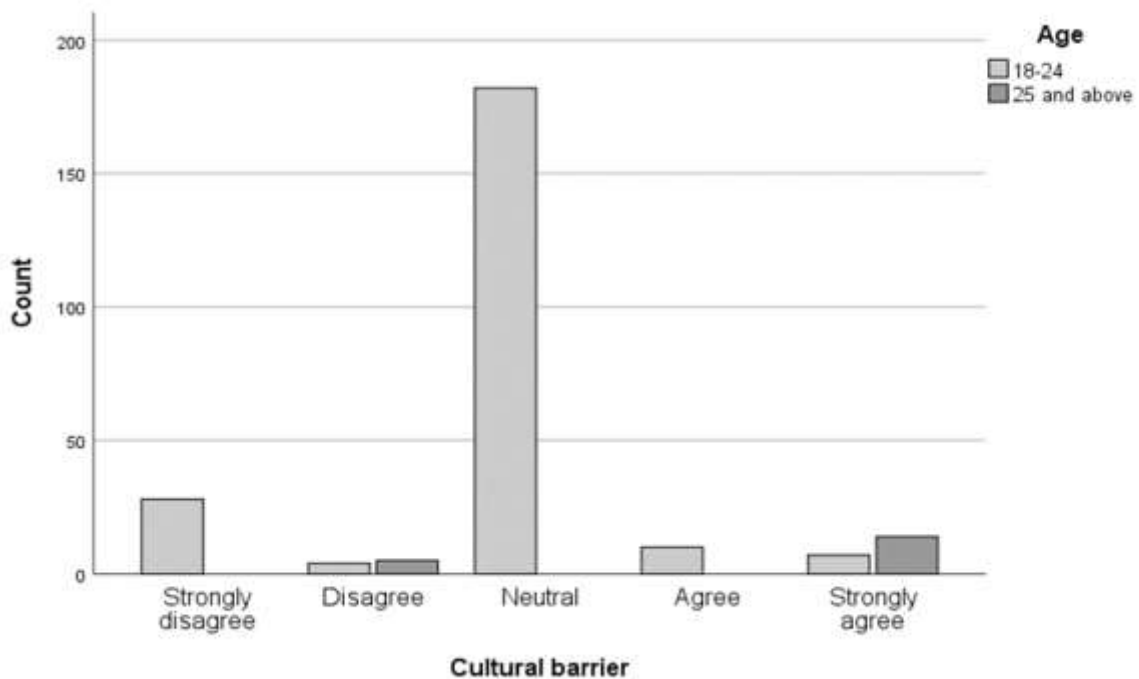


Fig 4. Perceptions of students of different age groups about cultural difference

NESTs were asked about their point of view on the cultural difference that exists between students and native English teachers. They were of the view that usually English teachers are hired after assessing their qualifications and expertise on the subject which is a reason for their recruitment too. However, the main reason for hiring NESTs is due to the cultural aspect they bring with them because teachers thorough that there is a significant relationship between the teacher's nativity and background to the English learning skills of the students.

“In my opinion, a teacher's background and culture is quite important if you are learning a language. This helps provide an environment for that target language.” (Native speaker M4)  
However, experience and proficiency over the language is equally important as stated when asked that what makes naïve teachers

“Definitely. An experienced and well-prepared teacher will definitely provide the optimal learning environment for her students—irrespective of nationality.” (Native speaker F1)

The majority of teachers suggested that new native teachers coming to Saudi Arabia should keep the sensitivity of the Saudi culture in mind, and try to incorporate techniques that are friendly to the Saudi culture as one teacher answered:

“Be prepared for the cultural difference. Saudi Arabia is still new in the ‘rules implementation’ game. Don't try to enforce your ‘non-Arab’ rules and regulations—it might clash.” (Native speaker F1)

The teachers mentioned that they try to be as empathetic and understanding towards the students' culture to fill in this gap in cultural difference, so that it does not become a hurdle in the learning process. The teachers mentioned that there are certain aspects of Saudi culture that they like and will incorporate in their teaching strategies like the freedom of speech and a little autonomy to students in projects can be given to bring out their creativity.

### **Language used in the classroom**

When students were asked that which language they preferred to be used in the classroom that can increase their English learning skills, students had mixed opinions about the preferred language (table 4). 64% students agreed/strongly agreed that even if Teacher knows Arabic, they used only English language as mode of communication, however they also suggested that the use of bilingual methods (both English and Arabic) should be considered significant. Regarding the students' perceptions if the use of mother tongue can hamper the learning of English language skills, students showed a neutral response.

	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	If the native teacher knows Arabic, I still communicate with him/her in English and not in my mother tongue	125 (50%)	35 (14%)	47 (19%)	43 (17%)	0
2.	The use of students' mother tongue slows down the process of acquiring English	25 (10%)	15 (6%)	174 (70%)	18 (7%)	18 (7%)
3.	It is important to use bilingual methods (combination of L1 and L2) in classrooms to learn the English language	125 (50%)	35 (14%)	47 (19%)	43 (17%)	0

Table 4. Students' perceptions regarding the use of language in classroom

When teachers were asked about their perceptions regarding the preferred language used in the classroom, all of them were of the view that the use of mother tongue impeded the acquiring of English skills, therefore bilingual approach was highly condemned by the teachers, except in the cases of academically weak students.

“Better to give instruction and exercise in English—use Arabic only as the last resort to explain a concept/terminology.” (Native speaker F1)

“In my personal opinion, the use L1 should be minimal. In the communication, instruction, and exercises should be in English. The extremely weak students only should be facilitated by the use of Arabic in the classroom.” (Native speaker F2)

“The use of the mother tongue may contribute to language learning process in various occasions in the learning-teaching process; however, the excessive use of it may result in too much dependence on it, which is, less desired outcome. The use of L1 should not be exaggerated because the more the students are exposed to the target language, the better they will learn it. Using the mother tongue in the classroom reduces the amount of input and the opportunity to practice.” (Native speaker M4)

One teacher mentioned that the most important thing in making pupils understand the foreign language is not the accent, but the pronunciation as below:

“I think accents are cool. I disagree with this statement because not everyone has to talk the same. The problem is not the accent; the problem is clear pronunciation. For example, “I” sounds can vary among accents. These are the phonemes (sounds) that cause the greatest differences between accents of English. For example, if you can't pronounce a /f/, /p/, or /V/, it's a problem with your pronunciation, not with your accent. Stress and intonation are important for good pronunciation, and their rules do not change from accent to accent. So as long as you're being understood, your accent shouldn't matter. In fact, why not take pride in it?” (Native speaker M4).

The direct observation of classes revealed that all communication between the teacher and student was in English. Teachers gave instructions and delivered the lecture in English, and students asked questions from teachers in English also. All forms of class activities, quizzes, presentations, group works was done in English. However, the peer-to-peer communication was based on the use of Arabic language. Students talked and discussed with fellows in Arabic and also took notes in Arabic. Students faced some difficulties during the pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, understanding and explaining ideas in English. For that, teachers used audiovisual aids like audio and video clips, PowerPoint slides, whiteboards, smart boards, etc. to combat this difficulty by providing such instructional aide to students that they can easily understand English concepts.

## **DISCUSSION**

Learning of a foreign language is an extremely crucial task as besides giving motivation, it can also inculcate stress and anxiety if difficulties are not overcome (Aida, 1994). The study was conducted to determine how effective can native English teachers be in the classroom environment and to help students overcome the difficulties of a foreign language. For this, a survey found out the perceptions of students and teachers on the popular practices employed by NESTs and their efficacy and major hurdles which are faced by them. Majority of the respondents were males and the participants most commonly belonged to the ages 18-24. The questionnaire revealed satisfaction of participants regarding the teacher's effectiveness and their teaching techniques. The most satisfactory answers were found regarding the vision and objectives of native English teachers, the ability of teachers to inculcate motivation by teaching strategies, use of most recent and advance education resources in the classroom, teachers' intelligible accents, active engagement of students by the teachers and ability of teachers to understand the students' Saudi culture. This was in accordance to the teachers' beliefs what they think are important for inculcating a positive learning environment. An important aspect is pronunciation is the intelligible pronunciation that makes them indistinguishable from the native speakers (Al Saidat, 2010). The observation in the classroom also showed the same attitudes of teachers as stated by the pupils and teachers themselves. For instance, engaging students into group tasks, activities, presentations, and quizzes for an active and fun learning experience. This aspect of fun learning is always popular among the students and is reshaping the conventional modes of only text-oriented education as teachers' and students feel more relaxed and motivated in a fun-learning environment by the use of activities and games (Lin, 2010). However, majority of the students held a neutral perspective to the qualification and training of native English teachers, their teaching strategies, ability to answer pupils' queries in an informative way, and their classroom management skills. The teachers' suggested an empathetic attitude towards children regardless of their performance. The gender had significant relationship to the teacher effectiveness, where more males were neutral regarding teacher efficacy, but females held a more positive attitude. However, the effect of age on teacher efficacy was not statistically proven.

In the light of cultural difference, the students had a neutral opinion regarding any effect of cultural difference on the students' learning capabilities. Majority of respondents were of the

view that students should learn the native teachers' culture to learn the language better. The teachers were also opinionated that cultural difference exists between the students and teachers and it should be understood properly with a kind and empathetic approach. Culture and language are interrelated and culture is the embodiment of language (Nouraldeen, 2014). Especially Saudi culture which is very sensitive regarding their beliefs and traditions, so teachers recommended to not use any tool that will the Saudi's cultural esteem. Also, they were of the view that native teachers' are hired because of their proficiency and command on the subject, but an aspect of culture also becomes a reason for their recruitment as there is a strong relationship between language and culture. Learning a foreign language without considering the background culture proves ineffectual as culture plays a crucial role in teaching and learning language (Nouraldeen, 2014). Students were able to learn the language more effectively and quickly when a native teacher teaches them by amalgamating his own experiences and cultural aspects with the language course. When the effect of gender and age on culture perception was statistically proven, significant relationships between the age and gender was found, with a higher age group considering cultural difference a barrier as compared to a younger age.

While studying the mode of language used in classroom, students stated that although they used English as mode of communication in the classroom irrespective of the teacher knowing their mother tongue or not but the use of bilingual methods in class is important as they can easily overcome the communication barrier as native language and background difference makes it more difficult for teachers to understand pupils' queries complicating effective communication with the teacher (Lin, 2010). By using bilingual methods, teachers can understand pupils' queries and can solve them more effectively. This was contradictory to teachers' point of view as they held a strong belief that use of mother tongue can greatly hamper the students' learning of the language by preventing the practice of English speaking skills in routine. The lion's share of classroom communication is contributed by teacher and effective learning of a language is dependent on the classroom environment that provides numerous prospects for the students' to practice language (Kim and Cathie, 2008). The classroom is the only place to develop motivation among students to practice English speaking, the opportunities of which are almost nil elsewhere (Alrabai and Fakieh, 2018). As vocabulary and pronunciation both are key aspects to English speaking and listening, and right structures of grammar can only be practiced while speaking verbally, therefore the use of mother language should be lessened and can be used only if clarification to a concept is required to make the students understand properly. Therefore, bilingual approach is strongly criticized by the native English teachers. The teachers' opinions were in accordance with the practices employed in classroom where teachers communicated with students entirely in English and all the presentations and group work was done in English. However, the peer-to-peer communication was done in students' mother tongue.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study holds the significance of being the first in its kind to determine how effectively native English teachers in Saudi Arabia can contribute to the learning and education of English



language by their pupils. For this reason, a mixed approach of study was adopted which has not been used before in any research conducted with respect to Saudi Arabia. The aim was to maximize the efficiency of the research by collecting data from various sources. Three important themes were studied in the survey i.e. teacher effectiveness, cultural barrier and language used in classroom. The research concludes that the proficiency of native teachers make them ideal candidates as students' mentors in the learning process. The techniques employed by them in the classroom was much effective in combating the problems students faced while learning English. Cultural difference has a significant effect on the students' learning abilities. The more immersed they are in the cultural background of the language; the better prospects they have to acquire command over the language. However, this barrier can be a tough thing for the teachers i.e. blending their own cultural norms with the students' culture while teaching. Bilingual mode of communicant should be avoided, but only be used while explaining a concept or for very weak students.

However, the study has a few limitations. The survey only focused on perceptions of students and teachers regarding native English teachers and there was no way to test the actual efficacy of NESTs in student's learning. Therefore, future researches should focus on whether native English teachers have actual efficacy on student's progress and success or not by testing the grades and achievements of students. Further, the data was collected from only one university in Saudi Arabia. For studies focused on Saudi Arabia, English learning is divided into four classes i.e. writing, speaking, reading, and listening so students from different classes should be incorporated and asked about their difficulties in each of the classes separately. Different aspects of English language like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation etc. should be surveyed individually and separately to compare and contrast between different aspects.

The research provides indications to the policy makers and educational institutions, whether native English speakers are effective teachers in classroom or not and to look for the most important factors according to students, while hiring native English teachers. It also provides information to native speakers in English aiming for a prosperous career in English teaching to consider the cultural barrier between the pupils and teachers and to use effective techniques and strategies to include an aspect of their own culture in teaching while respecting students' norms and beliefs. The teachers will get familiar with the aspects that students consider the most crucial in teaching. Further, management in institutions will employ the necessary equipment and materials for effective learning in the classroom like audiovisual aids and the most advanced technologies to combat with students' difficulties.

#### **Declaration of interest's statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## Appendix

### Part A: Likert scale statements for students' perceptions

	Question
1	The native English teacher is well educated and sophisticatedly trained
2	The native English teacher speaks in an accent that we all can understand
3	The native English teacher is able to motivate us with his/her teaching techniques
4	The native English teacher has a clear vision of his/her teaching objectives and learning outcomes
5	The native English teacher uses appropriate teaching strategies
6	His/Her classroom management skills are far better than other teachers
7	His/Her cultural background (or his nativity) is a hurdle in our learning
8	He/She understands the Saudi culture and uses appropriate examples to explain his/her points
9	It is not important for us even if he/she does not understand the Saudi culture, what we want is good learning form him/her
10	It is also important for students to be aware of the foreign culture which the native teacher belongs to
11	It is a learning experience if the native teacher shares his/her culture and traditions in classroom
12	I enjoy listening to his/her narratives about his/her culture and tradition
13	If the native teacher knows Arabic, I still communicate with him/her in English and not in my mother tongue.
14	The use of students' mother tongue slows down the process of acquiring English
15	It is important to use bilingual methods (combination of L1 and L2) in classrooms to learn the English language
16	The native English teacher uses updated resources and materials in the classroom
17	The native English teacher answers English related questions in a professional and informative way

**Part B: Interview questions for teachers**

<b>1.</b>	How can you make teaching more interesting, and learning Yields expected results?
<b>2.</b>	Does your nativity or background have any significant effect on the Saudi (EEL) students' learning processes? If yes, how. If no, why do you think so?
<b>3.</b>	Do you think it is teachers' competence and experience that makes the teachers qualified, regardless of his / her nationality/ nativity?
<b>4.</b>	How do you manage your accent? Often it is seen that the teacher's accent has a negative effect on students, which might hinder the learning process (if it sounds very unfamiliar accent)
<b>5.</b>	The teacher's personality is more involved in the classroom communications and interactions than is the teacher's nativity. What do you think?
<b>6.</b>	Do you any relationship between a native teachers' background, and the students' achievements in terms of their language skills?
<b>7.</b>	What do you think the natives are hired for? Their experience? Pedagogical milieus? Qualifications? Are all these not present in non —natives?
<b>8.</b>	What is your advice for the new Native EFL teacher who plan to teach in Saudi?
<b>9.</b>	What thin in your culture / Saudi culture do you like you would like to blend with your teaching?
<b>10.</b>	It is known that the use of students' mother tongue slows down the process of acquiring English. If you know Arabic, what do you think, students learn better using bilingual material, especially with the use of mother tongue , e.g. instruction in Arabic and exercises written in English'?

**Part C: classroom behavior observations (instructional activities)**

A) Note the approximate percentage of time given over activity - Approximately 5-7 minutes.	
B)	Note the language use (English/Arabic)
-	In Lecture
-	In Discussion (student to students)
-	In Instructions
-	In Students questioning students
-	In Small group discussions
-	In Small group work
-	In Presentations
-	In Students working with who =
-	Other =
Instructional aids	
-	Overheads
-	Handouts
-	Video
-	Computer
-	Blackboard text
-	Tools
-	Other
Students Activities	
-	Taking notes
-	Asking questions
-	Interactions
-	Asking for clarification
-	Giving comments
Student difficulties and other observations	