

Examining teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs in Hong Kong through classroom observations

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Previous research found differences in the perceived teaching behaviour of nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) and native English speaking teachers (NESTs). However, findings were mainly based on analysing teacher or student perceptions and very limited classroom-based research has been conducted to verify these findings. This paper reports on a study which examined the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs through classroom observations in three secondary schools in Hong Kong (where they are referred to as LETs and NETs respectively). Data were collected primarily from 13 video-recorded lessons and supplemented by 11 post-lesson teacher interviews and field notes. Participants were three pairs of NNESTs and NESTs who had the opportunity to co-teach a class in these schools. Interviews were fully transcribed and classroom observation data were analysed through open observation and close observation (Richards, 2003). The teaching behaviour was examined in terms of classroom atmosphere, examination preparation for students, examination-oriented teaching and classroom activities. Results show that the observed differences in the teaching behaviour between NNESTs and NESTs were not as clear cut as perceived. This study has important methodological contributions, indicating the need for examining teaching behaviour through classroom-based research. This study may help teachers to reflect upon their teaching practices and has practical implications for teacher duty allocation.

Key words: NNESTs; NET Scheme; teaching behaviour; Hong Kong

Introduction

Nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) and native English speaking teachers (NESTs) are from different linguistic backgrounds and may exhibit different teaching behaviours. Medgyes (1994) hypothesised that teaching style was determined by whether a teacher is a native or non-native English speaker and suggested that this distinction might play a crucial role in determining pedagogical practice. He argued that that NESTs and NNESTs “use English differently and, therefore, teach English differently” Medgyes (1992, p. 346). While teachers’ linguistic backgrounds may be a factor, other factors such as professional training, beliefs about language learning, and previous learning experiences may also impact on teaching behaviours.

Although many studies have examined NNESTs through their own self-perceptions (e.g., Amin, 1997; Llorca & Huguet, 2003; Ma, 2012c; Moussu, 2006; Reves & Medgyes, 1994) and through students’ perceptions (e.g., Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Cheung, 2002; Chun, 2014; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012a; Mahboob, 2004; Sung, 2014; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012), only a few studies have examined the differences in the teaching behaviours of NESTs and NNESTs. Medgyes’ (1992) pioneering study found that 68% of the teacher participants thought that NNESTs and NESTs had different teaching behaviours. Based on those results, Reves and Medgyes

(1994) categorised three main types of perceived differences: their use of English, general teaching approach and specific language-teaching approach, which they suggested were attributable to differences in language proficiency. Similarly, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) found a majority of teacher trainee participants (88%, N=17) reported differences in teacher linguistic competence, teaching methods and general characteristics. Ma (2012b) surveyed 53 NNESTs from 16 secondary schools in Hong Kong. They believed NNESTs' lessons were boring, strict and demanding; whereas NESTs were interesting, relaxed and creative. While NNESTs' lessons were thought to be traditional, examination-oriented, grammar-focused and used more controlled practice; NESTs' teaching was regarded as more communicative, interactive and emphasised speaking skills.

Several studies also investigated student perspectives. Benke and Medgyes (2005), surveyed 422 EFL learners in Hungary and found reports of distinctly different teaching behaviour between NESTs and NNESTs. NESTs were believed to concentrate on teaching speaking skills, provide extensive cultural information, and apply group work regularly. NNESTs were perceived to assign more homework, correct errors consistently, and assess learners realistically. Liu and Zhang (2007) compared perceptions of the teaching practices of NESTs and NNESTs through a questionnaire completed by 65 English majors in China. About 60% of participants reported that NESTs presented teaching materials differently. Ma (2015) administered questionnaires to 196 secondary school students and conducted 10 student group interviews in Hong Kong and found remarkable perceived differences in terms of classroom atmosphere, classroom language use, attitudes towards discipline, teaching approaches and teaching objectives. For example, NESTs' lessons were considered to be more relaxed and interesting while NNESTs were better in assisting students to prepare for examinations.

The studies reviewed above were all based on perceptions. Classroom-based research is scarce but vital because self-reported or perceived behaviour may be very different from reality. Medgyes (1992) admitted that relying solely on respondent perceptions is a limitation of his study. Classroom data will allow verification of previous findings. Moussu and Llurda (2008) state that classroom observation is urgent in the NNEST studies research agenda in order to analyse the actual teaching performance of NNESTs. Sung (2014) also suggests using class observations to investigate issues concerning NESTs and NNESTs.

It is noteworthy that the term "NNESTs" has been considered problematic by many researchers (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Garvey & Murray, 2004). The notion of "non-native" is problematic because it suggests a dichotomy between native speakers and non-native speakers, but such a dichotomy is too simplistic and not linguistically based. For example, many English speakers in countries such as Singapore, India and some African countries acquire English (as a first language) simultaneously with one or more other local languages. It is difficult to determine which is their first or second language and to categorise them as native or non-native English speakers. In fact, English native speakers do not form a homogeneous speech community. Kramsch (1997) argues that many native speakers do not always speak a national standard variety of the language. They use varieties of English related to geographical location or social status. Although a dichotomy vision of the native and non-native discussion is not linguistically sound, it is socially present (Luk & Lin, 2007; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). The distinction between who is native and who is not is very often linked with appearance and accent. Although the term "NNESTs" is problematic, it is used in this paper because it is the most widely used term in the literature and a generally accepted term is lacking. In this paper,

NNESTs refers to English teachers who use English as an additional language, and NESTs is defined as English teachers who speak English as a home language.

This paper examines the teaching behaviour of 3 pairs of NESTs and NNESTs teaching at secondary level in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, NESTs are known as Native English Teachers (NETs) and their local counterparts are called Local English Teachers (LETs). While these terms are used in some of the literature relating specifically to the Hong Kong context, the more internationally recognisable terms will be used here for consistency. This paper begins by reviewing previous classroom-based research on the teaching behaviour of NESTs and NNESTs. Next, it provides details of the research method. Then, it presents the current findings and discussions. Finally, it discusses the limitations and implications, and suggests future research directions.

Examining teaching behaviour through observations

Previous studies on comparing the teaching behaviour of NESTs and NNESTs were mainly conducted in Hungary and Hong Kong. The current study was inspired by Árvai and Medgyes (2000) who compare the perceived teaching behaviour found in Medgyes (1992, 1994) and Reves and Medgyes (1994) with the actual teaching behaviour of five NNESTs and five NESTs observed in Hungarian secondary schools. The classroom data found that NNESTs spoke English fluently, used communicative activities, and relied on course books. Compared with NESTs, they resorted more to error correction, checking student work, and homework assignments. However, variations were found in the classroom atmosphere among these five NNESTs. All the NESTs communicated effectively with students, provided rich cultural information, prepared lessons thoroughly, and created a relaxed learning atmosphere. Árvai and Medgyes concluded that it was advisable to allocate NESTs to teach conversation classes and assign NNESTs to teach grammar. However, this study did not provide a detailed description of data collection procedures and analysis methods. The current study aims to report detailed classroom data analysis methods for future replication.

Árvai and Medgyes (2000) made a significant contribution by examining NNESTs' teaching practice beyond solely perceptions and they called for the replication of their empirical study in different teaching contexts. This is because most NESTs in Hungary were untrained backpackers, unlike most NNESTs, including those working in Hong Kong, who are well-qualified and experienced English language teaching professionals. Additionally, there was no standardised system for NNEST and NEST collaborations in Árvai and Medgyes' (2000) study and this makes the comparison less reliable because teachers may not teach the same group of students. Variations in student language abilities, learning motivation levels and institutional constraints may impact on teaching behaviour. In the present study, each pair of NESTs and NNESTs co-taught a class and with the same group of students, thus, the effects of contextual factors on teaching may be minimised.

In Hong Kong, NESTs have been recruited from overseas to teach at secondary schools under the Native English Teachers (NET) Scheme to raise students' English standards (Boyle, 1997; British Council, 1988; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Luk & Lin, 2007) and to improve English teaching quality (Tang & Johnson, 1993) since 1987. Despite the substantial government funding for the scheme, its effectiveness has not been proven (Luk, 2001), and whether NESTs and NNESTs in Hong Kong have different teaching practices is under-researched. Previous studies conducted in Hong Kong were small in scale and focused on one particular aspect of teaching behaviour only. Wong (2003) examined how differently NESTs and NNESTs taught grammar by

observing lessons delivered by two of each. Differences in teaching approach were found even within the NEST group and Wong concluded that being a NEST or a NNEST may not be a significant factor in determining their grammar teaching approach. Tsang (1994) analysed the classroom discourse of two NESTs and two NNESTs, and found that NESTs had more bound exchanges, which helped maintain a longer interaction. When students did not respond to a teacher's elicitation, NESTs tended to provide a clue and some wait time while NNESTs tended to nominate another student to respond. While conducted in a similar context to these studies, the current research aims to take a more comprehensive view of the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs rather than focusing on one specific aspect of it. The current study is guided by the following two research questions:

1. Are there any differences in the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs as shown in the observed classrooms?
2. To what extent do the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs observed in the classrooms in this study correspond to the perceived behaviour reported in previous studies?

Methods

Participants

The three participating schools were selected through convenience sampling. School A was a Band 2¹ Chinese medium school and Schools B and C were both Band 1 English medium schools. The classes observed were one Secondary 3 class (or Year 9) in School A with 42 students, two Secondary 2 half classes (or Year 8) in School B with 23 and 18 students respectively, and one Secondary 5 class (or Year 11) in School C with 36 students. Criteria for class selection were: (a) the class was co-taught by both a NNEST and a NEST in oral lessons, and (b) both teachers and students agreed to participate in the study. In total 13 lessons were observed: 3 in School A, 6 in School B and 4 in School C. Three pairs of NNESTs and NESTs, who co-taught a class either as the main teacher or oral English teacher, participated in this study (Table 1). This study was approved by the ethics committee in the author's institution.

Table 1. Profile of participants

School	Level	NEST/ NNEST	Name*	Teaching duties	Age	Country of origin	Teaching experience
A	3	NEST	Mr. Andrew Andersen	Main teacher	mid-40s	Britain	10 years
		NNEST	Ms. Anna Au	Oral English	mid-40s	Hong Kong	20 years
B	2	NEST	Mr Benjamin Brown	Oral English	late 50s	Britain	a NEST veteran for 20 years
		NNEST	Ms. Beth Bao	Main teacher	mid-40s	Hong Kong	20 years
C	5	NEST	Mr. Christian Cooper	Oral English	early 50s	Australia	10 years
		NNEST	Ms. Cathy Cheung	Main teacher	mid-30s	Hong Kong	9 years

* Pseudonyms are used for participant identity protection

Instruments

Thirteen speaking lessons, the only time when NNESTs and NESTs co-taught, were observed and video-recorded (see Appendix A for observation schedule). A lesson observation form (Appendix B) was designed to record teaching objectives, teaching materials, teacher activities, student activities, potential areas for analysis, and researcher's remarks. Data were also collected through field notes of school visits, lesson handouts and seating plans. Post-lesson teacher interviews, which focused mainly on points of interest found in the lessons and some prepared questions (see Appendix C), helped the researcher understand teachers' viewpoints and the rationale of their teaching practice.

Procedures

Lesson observations were conducted near the end of the first school term when students had gained some learning experience with their teachers. The researcher took a non-participating role as she was aware of the Observer's Paradox (Labov, 1972). Two video cameras were used to capture the movements and facial expressions of participants. Whenever possible, post-lesson interviews were conducted immediately after observations.

Data analysis

The data analysis of video-recordings started with open observation (Richards, 2003) to obtain a general sense of the classroom setting and activities. In the first stage, a tape analysis was conducted by taking notes when viewing the recordings and identifying specific data for further analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). These notes recorded: (a) teacher activities, (b) student activities, and (c) researcher's comments. Six 30-minute lessons (one from each teacher) were selected for quantitative analysis, based on the criterion that each lesson contained both a procedural context and a task-oriented context. These lessons were fully transcribed, using classroom discourse transcription conventions modified from Allwright and Bailey (1991) (Appendix D). The focus of analysis was on main differences in teaching behaviour reported in previous studies conducted in Hong Kong (e.g., Ma, 2012b, 2015) such as classroom atmosphere and attitudes towards examination preparation. In the second stage, close observation was conducted with a checklist to count the frequency of coded behaviours such as jokes (see Appendix E). Categories of behaviour were tallied to create the quantitative observational data (Foster, 1996). This systematic way generates numerical data from observations to facilitate comparisons between classrooms. The transcripts of two lessons were coded independently by the researcher and a research assistant to ensure reliability, with the inter-coder agreement at 85.9%.

Results and discussions

Classroom atmosphere

Classroom atmosphere refers to the mood of the learning environment created by teachers. All NEST participants used humour quite often to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. For example, Andrew (NEST) demonstrated a very fast and a very slow pace of presentations to remind students not to feel nervous when presenting (L2=Lesson 2). The whole class burst into laughter when he spoke some Cantonese, his students' first language:

Extract 1

Andrew: Yeah be confident (...) You know, students will come ... *hou² giŋ¹* [=very frightened] Like that. <Walks nervously.> That's not good. You walk up, you walk up straight. <He walks straight.> You walk up straight, stand there. <Stands still.> And when you finish, some students go, "That's the end of my presentation, thank you for your time". <Says quickly and walks in a slouch.> And they're still speaking. <Ss laugh.> (Lesson 2)

This episode supported Andrew's self-report that making students laugh was his strategy to keep them awake and interested in his lessons (Andrew's interview).

Ben, another NEST, was also found to be humorous and used his knowledge of Chinese to crack jokes at times. When reminding students to use English to conduct a class survey, he said:

Extract 2

Ben: (...) If you look at the bottom of your form, er it says there, "use English all the time" and it has some example sentences. Number 1, "Where is Lee Tin Cho?" <Ss laugh.> If you're using somebody's name, you ask the sentence like that. <Ss laugh because "Lee Tin Cho" means "You've become crazy." in Chinese.> (Lesson 7)

In another lesson, he also used "chi sin" (which means "crazy" in Cantonese) as an example of "transliteration" to make students laugh.

The use of students' first language by NESTs seems to draw student attention to teacher instructions. Similarly, Christian (NEST) used humour regularly in his lessons (L10 & 13). When discussing why students should stay out of water in a school outing, he elicited the word "drown" from students:

Extract 3

Christian: (...) "The students must stay out of the water because ...?" What could be the reason?
S: Dangerous.
Christian: It's dangerous because ... what could happen with some students going into the water and blum blum blum blum ... <SS laugh.> What do you call that kind of thing? (...) <Draws a drowning stick figure on the board. SS laugh.> (Lesson 10)

In his lessons, students looked relaxed and even laughed at their own grammatical and pronunciation errors on several occasions (L10), which is quite unusual among secondary students in Hong Kong, who tend to feel anxious about making mistakes in class. The NEST participants used humour to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere and students appeared to have understood their jokes, enjoyed studying in their lessons and responded with a lot of laughter.

However, the use of humour among the three NNESTs varied. Cathy used a lot of humour and laughter was frequently heard in her lessons. In a lesson about career talks, her elicitation of future career led to a lot of laughter:

Extract 4

Cathy: Oh, you would like to be an accountant. Do you like Principles of Accounting very much.
S1: No. <T and Ss laugh.>
Cathy: Why do you want to be an accountant?
S1: Maybe much money.
Cathy: Oh, you want to handle mon ... money? Okay. Really? So do you think she is money- oriented as well? <SS laugh.> (Lesson 12)

As a result, her class atmosphere was very lively and relaxed. By contrast, Beth's lessons were more serious and demanding. For example, even when a student finished his test more quickly than others, she commented:

Extract 5

Beth: (...) Finished? Good. Chan Tin Fai, you did very well. But I'm not sure? Even though you are quick, it doesn't mean you got all of them correct. So revise again.
(Lesson 8)

Instead of praising the student's efficiency, Beth warned him to review his test paper, showing her high expectations of efficiency and accuracy. She also stopped students from being playful or speaking Cantonese by warning them seriously that they would be "arrested" and sent to the detention class. Very little laughter and few jokes were found in her lessons. The classroom atmosphere in Anna's lessons was also quite serious with no laughter or jokes.

The incidences of laughter and jokes were tallied in each lesson (Table 2). This structured observation scheme reduces the complexity of classroom reality by focusing on some key elements for comparison but it does not intend to equate jokes and laughter with a relaxed learning atmosphere. Laughter and jokes were found in all the NESTs' lessons but the frequency of laughter and jokes varied among NNESTs' lessons. Cathy's lesson had the highest amount of laughter, Beth's lesson had very little and Anna's lesson contained none. On the whole, NESTs tended to use more humour in lessons than NNESTs. This strongly corroborates the findings of Árvá and Medgyes (2000), Law (1999), Tang and Johnson (1993), and (Ma, 2012b) where NESTs' lessons were considered to be more interesting and relaxed. As in Árvá and Medgyes (2000), variations were also found in the classroom atmosphere among NNESTs. Interestingly, Cathy was quite an atypical NNEST who could create a relaxed learning atmosphere. It may be due to her close relationship with students as the class teacher. This finding contradicts Ma (2012b) who found NNESTs' lessons were perceived as stricter, less fun and more demanding.

Table 2. Incidences jokes and laughter

		NNEST lessons			NEST lessons		
		Anna	Beth	Cathy	Andrew	Ben	Christian
Laughter	Student	0	2	32	6	11	19
	Teacher	0	1	12	1	0	1
	Total	0	3	44	7	11	20
Jokes		0	4	10	7	5	11

Examination preparation

In Schools A and C, no remarkable difference was found between how NNESTs and NESTs helped students prepare for examinations. In School A, Anna and Andrew worked as a team on designing the teaching schedule (Interview 2) and assessment tasks (field notes), and they both followed the schedule closely during the observed lessons. Anna arranged a group discussion practice for students to practise the skills required in the examination (Lesson 1) while Andrew provided opportunities for students to do

individual presentations, which was also a component in the examination (Lesson 3). Their team-taught lesson aimed to help students revise the speaking skills before the examination.

Similarly in School C, no great difference was found between the NNEST and NEST. Both Cathy and Christian helped their students prepare for an upcoming public examination. The textbook and the organisation of the lessons all followed the public examination format. In the observed lessons, both teachers provided time for students to practise and develop the skills needed for individual presentations and group discussions, which were components of their speaking assessment. Interestingly, it was the NEST, Christian, who initiated several Inter-school Oral Examination Practice sessions for students to prepare for public examinations (field notes), contrary to the common belief that NESTs are less examination-oriented.

However, in School B, Beth devoted more time for examination preparation than her native counterpart. She designed a short test especially for her students to prepare for the oral examination and spent two of the three observed lessons on revising consonants, an examination item, instead of following the teaching schedule. She explained that students “need to revise the consonants for exam.” and “they can’t manage it if they do not do that kind of exercise” (Interview 7). She was the only NNEST who did special preparation and she warned students, “If you do not revise it, you will fail.” (L8). Her native counterpart, Ben, on the other hand adopted a more relaxed attitude and told students, “It will be up to you to look over the list (of consonants) on page 2 (of the handout).” (L9). These findings are partly consistent with Ma (2012b) who found NNESTs were perceived to be more devoted to examination preparation than NESTs.

Examination-oriented teaching

In School A, the NNEST and NEST worked as a team to develop teaching materials and the syllabus (Interview 1). In School B, Beth’s adopted an examination-oriented teaching approach illustrated below by her detailed explanation of the oral examination marking criteria:

Extract 6

Beth: (...) So first, before you read (the poem), you need to make sure you read out all the words clearly, right? Er. Shh. Because the marking scheme, shh, accuracy. <Writes on board.> Do you know what’s the meaning of accuracy. (...) You need to read it correctly. (...) Second one is clarity. (...) Third, you should pay attention to your audibility. (Lesson 8)

Ben spent about half of Lesson 5 on teaching vowels and diphthongs, items in the school examination. In the other two lessons, his objective was to develop students’ skills in conducting a survey and group presentation skills. When asked if the objective of teaching presentation skills was for examination, he said,

Extract 7

Ben: I mean we’ve been doing it for a long time (...) being able to do a presentation is a pretty basic skill. (...) [I] concentrate more on general communicative activities and that’s an important form of communication in the school, so that’s the reason for including it.’ (Interview 4)

In School C, Christian's teaching was quite examination-focused and he devoted two whole lessons to group discussion and individual responses tasks (L10 and L13), which are required in public examinations, and his teaching materials strictly followed the public examination format. By contrast, his local counterpart organised additional communicative language activities for general development in fluency in her observed lessons. Christian also admitted in his interview that his selection of "plastic bags" as a class discussion topic was on the basis of it being a hot issue that might appear in the public examination:

Extract 8

Christian: If you look at the papers in the last couple of days, it (plastic bags) is quite a hot issue. Another thing is that we're trying to predict what's in the public exam. And the timing now it's probably not bad because probably it's around the time that they could be writing the exam questions. (T. Int. 9)

Cathy also thought that Christian was examination-oriented:

Extract 9

Cathy: But the NET in this school, I think, to a certain extent, he's also examination-oriented. When teaching oral practice, he also puts emphasis on the examination format because he wants students to get used to the examination format. (T. Int. 11)

In Lesson 13, he reminded students that "the examiner may think that this (plastic bag) is an important topic". His choice of classroom formality was also examination-driven. Sometimes he required students to stand up when answering his questions. In the post-lesson interview, he said that he hoped students could relate activities in lessons with public examination format.

In summary, no difference was observed in the teaching approach of the NNEST and NEST participants in terms of examination-oriented teaching in Schools A and C. Compared with other participants, Beth and Christian tended to put more emphasis on the examination than others. Previously, Ma (2012b) found that NNESTs were perceived to adopt a more examination-oriented teaching than NESTs, and to use materials that follow the public examination format and procedures, and provided tips and skills for examinations. The findings in this current study suggest NESTs can also be examination-oriented. This is probably because all English teachers in Hong Kong are expected by stakeholders such as students, parents and school administrators, to assist students in examination preparation. Hong Kong has a heavily examination-oriented curriculum (Pong & Chow, as cited in Carless, 2005). English, a core subject in public examinations, is a gate-keeping subject to higher education. It is a tool to pass examinations and enter university (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Lee, 2005). Due to the examination backwash effect, teachers concentrate on covering the syllabus and preparing students for public examinations through exercises and practice (Cheung Yin & Braine, 2007; Lee, 2005).

To survive in the local education system, NESTs may have to meet the same expectations as NNESTs. Contrary to common perceptions, this study shows that some NESTs are familiar with the local public examination system and can teach examination classes. Currently many NESTs are assigned to speaking classes only and this is consistent with the conclusions of Árvai and Medgyes (2000) in Hungary; however, in Hong Kong this arrangement may raise socio-political concerns among NNESTs about the distribution of workload. More research is needed on the allocation of teaching duties.

Classroom grouping and communicative activities

Lessons were also analysed in terms of the time allocated to four types of classroom activities: teacher-fronted teaching, group work, individual work and student presentation (Table 3). Teacher-fronted teaching usually occurs in a procedural context when a teacher dominates the topic, allocates turns and monitors the direction of the interaction. It is characterised by a teacher's monologue or questions, followed by students' solo or choral responses and is a dominant element in traditional classrooms. Group work occurs when students are asked to complete a task or discuss a topic in groups. Since no teaching was involved during individual preparation/work and student presentation time, only teacher-fronted teaching and group work were analysed in the present study.

Table 3. Allocated time for classroom activities

Activity type	NNEST lessons			NEST lessons		
	Anna	Beth	Cathy	Andrew	Ben	Christian
Teacher-fronted teaching	64	86	47	60	74	63
Group work	18	0	20	0	26	20
Individual preparation / work	18	14	20	40	0	17
Student presentation	0	0	13	0	0	0
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Beth allocated the highest percentage of time to teacher-fronted teaching per lesson (86%, see Table 3). Her lessons were traditional with knowledge transmitted mainly through engaging students in listening to the teacher talk or in answering questions. The average time allocated to teacher-fronted teaching per lesson was 65%, the same for both NNESTs and NESTs. This is contrary to the perception that NNESTs' teaching is more traditional (Ma, 2015).

Group work usually consisted of periods when students were engaged in a group discussion (L1, 12 & 10) or a communicative language activity (L8). The talking time per student increased because they could talk simultaneously in different groups. Group work occurred in the lessons of NNESTs (e.g., Anna and Cathy) and NESTs (e.g., Ben and Christian) with most teachers adopting an activity approach in teaching.

It was found from lesson observations that one NEST (Ben) and one NNEST (Cathy) placed more emphasis on developing students' communicative skills. Ben organised a communicative activity in all his observed lessons (L5, 7 & 9). In Lesson 5, he asked students to work out the pronunciations of unfamiliar words in groups and he allocated about a quarter of Lesson 8 (see Table 3) to a communicative language activity in which students had to complete a class survey on eating habits. Similarly, Cathy arranged communicative language activities in all her observed lessons ("Dictionary game" in Lesson 10 and "Three-item story" in Lesson 11) so students had to ask for information, clarify ideas and negotiate meaning. On the whole, Ben and Cathy adopted a stronger form of communicative language teaching than other teachers.

Ma (2012b) reported that NESTs were perceived to have adopted a more communicative approach and organised more interactive activities, whereas NNESTs' were regarded as more traditional. A clear gap exists between these perceptions and the

findings of this study. Not all NNESTs adopted traditional teacher-fronted teaching and the NESTs were not alone in adopting an activity approach and emphasising the development of communicative skills. The decision on classroom activities may not only depend on teachers' linguistic backgrounds but personal preference or socio-cultural factors such as teachers' language learning experiences and beliefs, professional preparation and educational philosophy as well as institutional contextual factors. This may explain the mismatch between perceptions and observations. Contrary to Medgyes' (1994) hypothesis that the difference in language proficiency accounts for most of the differences in teaching behaviour, differences in socio-cultural factors may play a significant role.

Conclusion

Results show that differences in the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs were not clear cut. While all NESTs tried to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, there was variation among NNESTs. Clear differences in examination preparation were found only in one pair of teachers. Generally NNESTs and NESTs may adopt an examination-oriented teaching or use communicative activities. This suggests that perceptions alone are insufficient to investigate teaching behaviour. The micro-level quantitative data analysis of this study can counter-balance subjective qualitative analysis.

The small sample size of this study makes generalisation difficult so future research should observe more participants and more lessons over an extended period of time. The implications of this study may extend beyond Hong Kong to similar NEST schemes elsewhere in Asia, for example the Japan Exchange and Teaching, the English Program in Korea, and other schemes in Taiwan and China, although the recruitment criteria and expected teaching responsibilities vary in those contexts (Forrester & Lok, 2008).

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Note

1. Secondary schools in Hong Kong are classified into Bands 1, 2 and 3 according to the academic ability of students, with Band 1 as the highest level and Band 3 the lowest.

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Appendix A: Schedule of lesson observations

Lesson	School	Level (Group)	Teacher	Duration (minutes)	Main Activities
1	A	3 (1)	Anna	35	Group discussion practice
2		Whole class	Andrew & Anna	35	Round-up session for presentation & discussion
3		3 (2)	Andrew	35	Student individual presentations
4	B	2 (1)	Beth	40	Word stress, Mini-drama role play
5		2 (2)	Ben	40	Vowels, diphthongs, presentation skills revision
6		2 (1)	Beth	40	Revision on consonants
7		2 (2)	Ben	40	Eating habits survey
8		2 (1)	Beth	40	Revision on consonants, poems
9		2 (2)	Ben	40	Student group presentations
10	C	5 (1)	Christian	60	Student individual presentations, 'school outing' group discussion
11		5 (2)	Cathy	60	Student individual presentations, 'Three-item stories' activity, group discussion on 3 topics.
12		5 (2)	Cathy	60	Student individual presentations, word game, 'career talks' group discussion
13		5 (1)	Christian	60	'plastic bags' group discussion, responding to opinions and suggestions

Appendix B: Lesson Observation Form

School	
Class	
Date	
Time	
Lesson objectives	
Topic	
Teaching materials & aids	Sources: Scripted / Authentic
Pronunciation	Sounds / Word stress / Rhythm / Intonation
Speaking activities	Explanation and description / Role play and dramatisation / Discussion and conversation / Games and problem-solving / Drills

Classroom interaction patterns		Duration	Remarks
Individual work			
Pair work			
Group work			
Teacher activities		Student activities	
Correction techniques			
Strategies to get students to talk			
Use of L1			
Teacher & student communication gap			
Focus on	Form		
	Content		
	Accuracy		
	Fluency		
Homework			
Researcher's remarks			
Questions for post-lesson interviews			

Appendix C: Post-lesson observations interview questions

1. To what extent is this lesson a typical speaking lesson?
2. What kind of speaking activities/ tasks are useful for improving students' speaking skills?
3. How do you motivate students to speak English in class?
4. When a student makes a pronunciation mistake, what correction techniques would you use?
5. What are the difficulties facing Hong Kong students in learning to speak English?
6. Which is more important to your students, fluency or accuracy?
7. Do you arrange group work or pair work regularly? Why / Why not?
8. Do you have any rationale in designing or choosing your teaching materials?
9. Apart from classroom teaching, what other projects/activities do you use to improve students' speaking skills outside classrooms?

Appendix D: Video-recorded lesson transcription conventions

Symbols to identify who is speaking:

T	teacher
MS	unidentified male student
FS	unidentified female student
MS1	male student (MS1, MS2 etc.)
FS1	female student (MS1, MS2 etc.)
S	student, gender unidentified
SS	subgroup speaking in chorus
SSS	whole class speaking in chorus

Symbols to use in text:

(1.5)	pause for one minute and 5 seconds
[28:00]	time reference
{	simultaneous speech
< >	use of commentary of any kind (e.g. to indicate point in discourse where T writes on blackboard)
[=]	translation of speech
/ /	phonemic transcription
X	incomprehensible item, probably one word only
XX	incomprehensible item of phrase length
XXX	incomprehensible item beyond phrase length
.	an utterance ends with a full stop means it is spoken with a falling intonation
?	An utterance ends with a question marks signals a rising intonation
...	unfinished speech
<u>Very</u>	word or phrase being stressed

Appendix E: Classroom data analysis checklist

Lesson: _____

Teacher: _____

Coder: _____

Date of coding: _____

		NNEST lessons			NEST lessons		
Lessons		Anna	Beth	Cathy	Andrew	Ben	Christian
		(Frequency)					
Laughter	Student						
	Teacher						
	Total						
Jokes	Student or Teacher						
		(Minutes)					
Classroom activities	Teacher-fronted teaching						
	Group work						
	Individual preparation						
	Student presentation						
	Total time						

Terms	Description for coder
Incidences of jokes	Intentional or unintentional joking, kidding, making puns, attempting to be humorous
Laughter	Laughing, giggling by the class, individuals, and/or the teacher.