

Teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs in Hong Kong: Differences perceived by secondary students

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Coming from different linguistic backgrounds, non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) and their native counterparts may exhibit different teaching behaviours in classrooms. Having a better understanding of these differences may assist teachers to reflect upon teaching and enable teacher educators to better prepare trainees for their professional life. This paper reports on a study which investigated students' perceptions of the teaching behaviour of local English teachers (LETs) and native English teachers (NETs) in Hong Kong. Data were collected through 196 completed questionnaires and 10 semi-structured group interviews with students. Results show remarkable perceived differences in classroom atmosphere, classroom language use, teacher attitudes towards discipline, teaching approaches, and teaching objectives. Results also show what elements constitute an interesting lesson to students. This paper concludes with recommendations for classroom teaching practices and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Teaching behaviour; native English speaking teachers; non-native English speaking teachers; student perceptions; teacher education

Introduction

About 75% of the English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) workforce worldwide are non-native speaker English teachers (NNESTs)¹ and they are the majority in the English language teaching (ELT) profession. Issues concerning NNESTs are important in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) but are not given sufficient attention (Cheung & Braine, 2007). In 1998, the Non-native English Speakers in TESOL (NNEST) Caucus was established by TESOL Inc. (an international professional association for teachers of English to speakers of other languages), and the research area of NNESTs began to gain wider attention. Since then, there has been significant growth in the literature on NNEST studies including four edited collections (Braine, 1999b; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005a; Mahboob, 2010), one monograph (Braine, 2010) and nearly 200 books and journal articles covering areas such as theoretical insights (e.g. Davies, 2003; Medgyes, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1990), autobiographies (Braine, 2005; J. Liu, 2001), narrative accounts (e.g. Braine, 1999a; de Oliveira & Richardson, 2004; I. Lee, 2000; Thomas, 1999) and opinion pieces (e.g. Lung, 1999). The research on NNESTs reveals how they are perceived by students (e.g. Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Cheung & Braine, 2007; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Mahboob, 2004; Moussu, 2006), program administrators (e.g. Mahboob, 2003; Moussu, 2006), practicum supervisors (e.g. Garvey & Murray, 2004; Llurda, 2005b; Nemtchinova, 2005, 2010), and NNESTs themselves (e.g. Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Moussu, 2006; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Some attention, although relatively less, has been given to the teaching behaviour of

NNESTs or to its comparison with that of NESTs (e.g. Árvá & Medgyes, 2000; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). In addition, the term 'teaching behaviour' has not been clearly defined.

This paper defines teaching behaviour as the style of teaching which may be characterised by elements such as language teaching approaches, selection of teaching materials, error correction strategies, target language use, classroom management, and attitudes towards teaching culture. Because NNESTs and NESTs are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, it is worth examining whether students perceive differences in their teaching behaviour. The findings may have some implications for teacher education and may assist teacher educators in designing curriculum that can cater to the specific needs of both native and non-native English teacher trainees. It is noteworthy that not many TESOL programmes offer tailor-made curricula for NEST and NNEST trainees (England & Roberts, 1989; D. Liu, 1999). Additionally, these findings may help teachers working within the context described here reflect upon their own teaching practices.

This paper begins by reviewing previous research into the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs and then focuses specifically on studies conducted in the Hong Kong context. After describing the methodology used, the paper discusses the findings of the research. Finally, the implications of the present study are discussed, followed by some suggestions for future research.

Researching the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs

Earlier research into the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs focused on teacher perspectives rather than student perspectives. Medgyes (1992), in a pioneering study of the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs, suggested that there are considerable differences between the classroom practices of NESTs and NNESTs although his study was based on respondents' perceptions rather than classroom observation. His results, obtained from a questionnaire completed by about 200 English teachers from 10 countries, showed that 68% of the respondents thought that the ways NNESTs and NESTs teach English are different. Based on the same survey, Reves and Medgyes (1994) categorised the self-perceived differences of the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs according to their: use of English, general teaching approach and specific language-teaching approach. They suggested that the differences in language proficiency between NNESTs and NESTs accounted for their different teaching behaviour. Similarly, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) found that most participants (88%) observed differences between NNESTs and NESTs, especially in their language competence, teaching methods and general characteristics. Conducting interviews with five pairs of NNESTs and NESTs, Árvá and Medgyes (2000) found the following differences: (a) NESTs were superior in English competence; (b) NNESTs were more confident about grammatical knowledge; (c) NESTs lacked competence in students' L1; and (d) NESTs adopted more flexible teaching approaches.

It should be noted that the above studies about teaching behaviour only used data from teachers. Although teachers' perceptions are important, it is also important to explore students' perspectives because they have the opportunity to observe teachers' behaviour and may provide additional insights. The participants in the study reported in this paper were exposed to the teaching of both NNESTs and NESTs and thus are able to make comparative comments.

To date, there have been very few studies which investigated the teaching behaviour of NNESTs and NESTs from student perspectives. One exception is the work of Benke

and Medgyes (2005) which found that NNESTs and NESTs adopted distinctively different teaching attitudes/behaviour and teaching methods. In that study NESTs were perceived to focus on teaching speaking skills, provide extensive cultural information, use group work regularly, be interested in learners' opinions and be willing to improvise. NNESTs, on the other hand, were perceived to assign more homework, correct errors consistently, assess learners realistically, prepare lessons conscientiously and prepare learners well for examinations.

Most of the above-cited research was conducted in Hungary. Following the suggestion of Moussu and Llurda (2008) that NNEST-NEST differences should be studied in diverse contexts, the study reported here was undertaken in Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. It is considered to be an appropriate site for conducting studies regarding NESTs and NNESTs because the former, known in Hong Kong as Native English Teachers (NETs), are recruited from overseas to teach secondary school students alongside the latter, known in Hong Kong as local English teachers (LETs)². The LETs, like their students, speak Cantonese as their home language and learned English as an additional language formally at school. Since NETs and LETs are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, it seems likely that, as in the previously cited studies of NESTs and NNESTs, there will be differences in their teaching practices. The study reported here focuses on the perceptions of those differences from the perspective of the students.

Researching teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs in Hong Kong

Although the NETs Scheme has been in place for over 20 years in Hong Kong, there has been no systematic investigation of potential differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs. However, there are some noteworthy indications from the literature. Storey, Luk, Gray, Wang-Kho, and Lin (2001) reported that compared to NETs, LETs tended to use textbooks as their main teaching materials, assign more homework to students, revert to their mother tongue, and correct student errors more frequently. Carless and Walker (2006) found that LETs tended to spend more time on marking and testing, and were more form-focused in their teaching approach; whereas NETs focused on teaching speaking skills, tended to favour a more communicative and fluency-focused approach, did not use textbook-based or examination-oriented materials and provided a cognitively rich learning environment. Johnson and Tang (1993) found that NETs were perceived, by their local counterparts, to be less concerned about classroom discipline than LETs and their teaching approach was not serious because they put more emphasis on student interaction and communication games. Students' views of NETs in that study (Johnson & Tang, 1993) varied from positive, for example, "they are fun and entertaining", to negative such as "they are incompetent and can't teach" (p. 212). Although these studies document some differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs, they lack thoroughness because the comparison of the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs was not their main research focus.

Research aims

The study reported here investigates the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs through use of a questionnaire (Appendix 1) and interviews (Appendix 2) with students who have experienced both types of teacher. This research aims to answer the question: What are the differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs as perceived by students?

The study

The context

The study took place in two Band 1 English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) schools and two Band 2 Chinese as Medium of Instruction (CMI) schools³ and targeted only classes that were taught by both a LET and a NET, as either their main English teacher or oral English teacher, within the academic year of data collection. The experience of learning from both teachers is expected to facilitate the comparison of teaching behaviour.

The participants

The questionnaire was administered to 196 secondary students (41% males, 50% females, the remainder did not specify their gender) from six classes at various year levels (Table 1) and with varying learning experiences with NETs (Table 2). Almost all participants had been taught by more than one NET and about half had been taught by NETs for between 1 and 4 years although some had been taught by NETs for up to 13 years. It is reasonable to assume that all questionnaire respondents had sufficient experience of being taught by NETs and that they were able to comment on their teaching behaviour.

Table 1. Profiles of questionnaire respondents (N=196)

Gender		Medium of instruction		School banding		(Secondary) Year Level					
Male	Female	Chinese	English	Band 1	Band 2	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	
%	41.3	50.5	35.2	64.8	35.2	64.8	26.5	21.4	20.4	17.9	13.8

Note: 16 participants did not specify gender

Table 2. Respondent' learning experience with NETs

Number of NETs encountered						Number of years taught by NETs		
No. / Years	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-15	1-4	5-8	9-13
%	33.3	44.1	14.4	4.2	4.0	56.4	37.7	5.9

Following the questionnaire survey, 30 students participated in 10 semi-structured group interviews. Interviewees were from only three schools since permission was not granted to conduct interviews in one school (See Appendix 3 for demographic profiles of the interviewees). Interviews lasted between 9 and 18 minutes and were transcribed.

Data analysis

The demographic data from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. Open-ended questionnaire responses and the interview data were thematically analysed using NVivo. Themes and sub-themes were identified and coded using the function of 'nodes' and

‘tree nodes’. Once the coding frames were developed, sampled coded items were checked independently by a research assistant. Then, the researcher and the assistant met and compared coding. The inter-coder agreement for the open questionnaire responses was 82.8% and for the interview data was 78.9%.

Differences in teaching behaviour between LETs and NETs

Results from open questionnaire responses

Most respondents (81.7%) reported that there were differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs, although some (15.3%) thought there was no difference (missing item = 3%). In total, 287 cited differences were found, analysed and categorised (Table 3). The most frequently cited difference was in classroom atmosphere (23.7%). In general, NETs’ lessons were considered by the students to be more interesting, lively and relaxed than those of LETs, which were often described as boring, strict and demanding. However, it is noteworthy that not all respondents shared this view. Some thought that LETs’ lessons were more interesting and lively (3.5%) while NETs were boring (1.4%). The second most frequently cited perceived difference was in classroom language use (18.2%). While NETs could instruct only in English, LETs were able to use both English and the students’ L1. Participants also perceived a difference in teaching objectives (15%). LETs focused on teaching grammar and developing skills, while NETs emphasised speaking skills and usage. However, no respondents elaborated on what types of skills were involved and therefore this comment remains unclear. LETs and NETs were also considered to be different in their teaching approaches (12.6%). Participants said that NETs tended to use more activities and games, and emphasised classroom interaction and communication skills development, whereas LETs tended to adopt a more traditional approach and taught the knowledge in books.

Table 3. Differences in teaching behaviour (Open questionnaire responses) (N=287)

Differences in teaching behaviour	Total %	Characteristics of teaching behaviour			
		LETs	%	NETs	%
Classroom atmosphere	23.7	Boring, strict, demanding	6.3	Interesting, lively, relaxed	12.5
		Interesting, lively	3.5	Boring	1.4
Classroom language	18.2	Using L1	11.2	Using English only	7.0
Teaching objectives	15.0	Skills and grammar	8.0	Speaking skills and usage	7.0
Teaching approaches	12.6	Traditional	2.5	Activity (focus on interaction and communication)	10.1
Textbooks & syllabus	7.6	More use	3.8	Less use	3.8
Cultural knowledge*	2.5	Lacking information	0.3	Providing information	2.2
Other**	20.4				

Notes: *Refers to the understanding of the cultural values and behaviour of the English speaking communities.

**Refers to vague responses that cannot be categorised

Results from interviews⁴

Interviewees perceived a number of differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs (Table 4) which, as with the questionnaire responses, involve the atmosphere and discipline in the classroom, and the approaches and objectives of teaching. The interviews also identified differences in error correction and marking. The differences will be described in more detail below.

Table 4. Differences in teaching behaviour (Interview data)

Differences in teaching behaviour	Characteristics of teaching behaviour		No difference
	LETs	NETs	
Classroom atmosphere	Solemn, serious, strict, not so funny, boring (Int. 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10)	Interesting, relaxed (Int. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9)	(Int. 10)
Classroom discipline	Strict (Int. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9)	Discipline problem (Int. 4, 6)	(Int. 2)
Exam. preparation	Better than NETs in preparation (Int. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)	Helpful for oral exam. (Int. 1, 9)	(Int. 2, 8, 10)
Teaching approaches	Textbook-bound (Int. 5, 6, 8)	New method, activity approach (Int. 3, 5, 6)	(Int. 4)
Teaching objectives	Focus on grammar (Int. 7), clear grammar explanations (Int. 3, 4, 10)	Seldom teach grammar (Int. 6, 7), knowledgeable in grammar (Int. 3, 5)	(Int. 2)
Error correction	Always correct mistakes (Int. 3, 5)	No correction in speaking but in writing (Int. 3)	(Int. 7, 8)
Marking	More lenient (Int. 7)	More lenient (Int. 4, 8, 9)	(Int. 10)

Classroom atmosphere

Consistent with the results from open responses, differences in classroom atmosphere were noted by interviewees. While LETs' lessons were considered solemn, serious, strict, less amusing and less open to games, NETs' lessons were regarded as interesting and relaxed because of the frequent use of jokes, language activities or games, and sharing of teachers' life experiences in other countries. Student (S2), for example, said:

- S2: Yes, I think there are differences. I personally think that Mr. Andersen (a NET) is better. His lessons are interesting. He may tell some jokes, use English to tell some stories, like his own experiences during his holidays ... His oral lessons are really interesting (long pause) All the oral lessons are really interesting but the local English teacher Mrs. Au (a LET), I think she looks solemn, I think her oral lessons are more serious. (Int. 1, translated)

Some students also found that the attempt of their NET to speak Cantonese to be very funny because of his incorrect pronunciation (Int. 2). The use of jokes, language games or story telling by NETs as strategies to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere were reported in eight out of 10 interviews. In contrast, LETs' textbook-bound teaching behaviour was regarded as boring and not what students preferred (Int. 3, 5 and 6). More importantly, textbook-driven teaching style was perceived to have resulted in students' unwillingness to raise questions in class (Int. 6). However, it should be noted that one interview group did not find any difference in classroom atmosphere at all (Int.

10). On the whole, most interviewees agreed that there were differences in classroom atmosphere.

Classroom discipline

Remarkable differences were reported in how LETs and NETs maintain classroom discipline. This refers to the classroom management styles of teachers. Although it was an uncommon theme in the questionnaire open-ended responses, almost all the interview groups found that LETs were stricter in discipline and this was attributed to the differences in the first language, culture and previous learning experiences between LETs and NETs. LETs were regarded as more in control because of their shared L1 with students. In contrast, students were perceived to be less well-behaved in NETs' lessons because of NETs' lack of proficiency in students' L1. One student found that cultural differences may also play an important role:

S22: They [LETs] consider classroom discipline very important. Actually, I don't know if it is because Chinese are usually very quiet. (Int. 8)

Another student suggested that LETs were stricter because they were educated in Hong Kong and therefore they knew how to maintain discipline in class. He thought that school life in Hong Kong was stricter than in schools overseas:

S19: because local teacher, I think most of them also studied in HK, they also have experienced the school life in Hong Kong, I think HK school life is more stricter than the erm yes, the overseas schools. (Int. 7)

Another student also agreed that LETs were stricter and attributed this to their familiarity with students and clear understanding of the boundaries (Int. 9). It is possible that the difference is not only caused by the different linguistic backgrounds of LETs and NETs but also by their previous learning experience because LETs studied in the same educational system as their students.

Examination preparation

Another difference reported by interviewees, but not frequently acknowledged in the questionnaire, was in examination preparation. This refers to providing practice with examination papers or tips for examination preparation. Some interviewees considered LETs to be better in preparing students for examinations because: (a) they thought that LETs rather than NETs had designed the examination papers (Int. 3); (b) LETs could use their L1 to enhance understanding in lessons (Int. 5); (c) LETs assigned more exercises to help them prepare for examinations (Int. 4); and (d) LETs adopted a more examination-focused teaching goal because of their main concerns about examination results (Int. 7). However, not all the interviewees thought that LETs were better in examination preparation. For example, S26 found that both LETs and NETs were helpful but in different ways. While LETs equipped students with examination skills, NETs were helpful in correcting their pronunciation errors (Int. 9) and in the provision of English speaking opportunities (Int. 1).

Teaching approaches

Interviewees perceived differences in the overall language teaching methodology of LETs and NETs. Similar to questionnaire responses, the interviewees characterised the teaching behaviour of NETs by the adoption of an activity-based teaching approach. Six

(out of 10) interview groups (Int. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9) reported that NETs often used language activities or games in their teaching. Unlike in the questionnaire responses, interviewees did not report a particular emphasis on interaction and communication among NETs. For LETs, one-way communication was pointed out as a teaching characteristic. It was suggested by one student that “usually it’s the teacher [LET] who says something and then you [students] receive the message” (Int. 8).

Teaching objectives

Participants perceived a difference between NETs and LETs in the emphasis they placed on teaching language skills. As in the questionnaire open-ended responses, participants felt LETs focused more on teaching grammar and assigning grammar exercises (Int. 6 and 7). An important finding was that LETs and NETs were perceived to possess different qualities in grammar teaching. While NETs were considered to be knowledgeable in grammar (Int. 3 and 5), LETs were regarded as having the ability to provide clearer explanations with easy vocabulary (Int. 3, 4 and 10). However, it should be noted that the duties allocated to a teacher might also influence the emphasis placed on grammar teaching. For example, in one school students reported that the NET taught a lot of grammar in lessons because he was the main teacher, unlike many other NETs who were generally allocated to teach oral lessons only. Thus, differences in teaching objectives may be attributable to contextual factors rather than factors specifically related to NETS or LETS.

Error correction and marking

Differences in error correction and in marking style were reported in interviews but not in the questionnaire open-ended responses. Three interviewees suggested that LETs usually pointed out students’ errors in speaking while NETs did not (Int. 3 and 5). However, this point was not universally agreed and interviewees S19 and S22 thought there were no differences in error correction behaviour. Interviewees’ views were also divided about teachers’ styles of marking. While interview groups 4, 8 and 9 reported that NETs were more lenient in marking than LETs (and they attributed it to a lower expectations of students), group 10 found no difference.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that there are perceived differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs in terms of classroom atmosphere, attitudes towards classroom discipline, examination preparation, teaching approaches, teaching objectives, error correction and marking. The image of LETs in most students’ minds is that they are strict and they are serious during the lessons. They may switch to L1 when explaining difficult vocabulary, concepts, and grammar rules. They tend to rely heavily on textbooks in their teaching, and this is considered to be boring and dull by participants. The image of NETs in most students’ minds is that they are more relaxed with disciplinary issues and they create an interesting and relaxed classroom atmosphere. They use English in lessons all the time and adopt an activity-based teaching approach by using a lot of language games and activities. On the whole, the teaching behaviours of LETs and NETs are regarded by their students as considerably different.

It is noteworthy that there is some discrepancy between participants in their perceptions about classroom atmosphere. Consistent with previous findings, most

participants in this study thought that NETs were able to create a lively and relaxed learning atmosphere (Law, 1999; Luk & Lin, 2007; Tang & Johnson, 1993). However, some participants in the study thought that LETs' lessons were also interesting. It is not surprising to find such a discrepancy because the judgement of whether a lesson is interesting is highly subjective. Moreover, being humorous, which is a crucial factor in creating an interesting atmosphere, is idiosyncratic and personal, rather than cultural (J. J. Lee, 2010). Irrespective of cultural background, learners and teachers may have different preferred learning and teaching styles. Regardless of who conducted the lessons, a common theme that appears frequently in the data is that students prefer lessons that are interesting, lively and relaxed but dislike textbook driven teaching. This suggests that teachers should consider creating more enjoyable English lessons through the appropriate use of language games and activities, and improving the classroom atmosphere by the addition of elements such as stories, jokes, and personal life experiences. Students are unhappy if their expectations are violated and therefore teachers should use methods that meet their expectations (McCargar, 1993).

Surprisingly, the difference between LETs and NETs in textbook use was not a common theme found in this study. In fact, NNESTs' heavy reliance on textbooks has been reported repeatedly in previous empirical studies conducted in Hungary and the U.S. (e.g. Árvai & Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999) and LETs have long been reported as being textbook-driven in studies based in Hong Kong (Cheung & Braine, 2007; Holliday, 2005; I. Lee, 2005; Lin, 1999; Luk & Lin, 2007; Richards & Mahoney, 1996; Storey et al., 2001). It is possible that NETs have no choice but to follow the trend and use textbooks to meet the expectations of students or other stakeholders such as parents and school administrators. Lin (1999) reported that two NETs adopted a textbook-driven approach in their teaching, similar to the practice of their local counterparts. The attitudes of NETs towards using textbooks would be an interesting area of further investigation. Participants in the present study did not favour textbook-bound teaching, which characterised LETs' teaching behaviour. This suggests that teachers should consider using textbooks more thoughtfully and supplement them with authentic teaching materials and up-dated topics that are relevant to student interests and needs rather than relying heavily on textbook materials, which may be out-dated or culturally irrelevant to students.

It was evident from the data that LETs placed more emphasis on grammar teaching while NETs emphasised teaching speaking skills. As mentioned before, this difference may be attributable to the allocation of teaching duties rather than any difference in the linguistic background of teachers. NETs are usually assigned to teach oral lessons and therefore are not responsible for teaching grammar. Moreover, this difference in teaching focus may be shaped by teacher cognition, which is under the influence of teachers' own language learning experiences (Borg, 2003). If grammar learning plays an important role in teachers' own learning experiences, this may shape their teacher cognition as well as their teaching behaviour. This is because teachers' learning experiences inform their teaching beliefs, which in turn influence their teaching practices (Borg, 1999, 2003; Cothran et al., 2005; Ellis, 2002).

The collection of data from two different sources proved to be useful in cross-checking research data. Although the open-ended questionnaire responses yielded data from a larger sample size, the respondents did not always elaborate their ideas and thus it was difficult to interpret their meaning. Collecting data from interviews greatly assisted in confirming differences. For example, the interview data helped explain what students meant by general statements like "an interesting lesson" (they meant a lesson

full of jokes, humour, language activities, storytelling and sharing of teachers' life experiences, but not one which is teaching to the textbooks). Furthermore, the interview data helped link initially disconnected categories in the questionnaire responses. For example, the textbook-driven teaching behaviour of LETs was found to be associated with the classroom atmosphere they created because it was regarded as a contributing factor to boredom in lessons. Moreover, the interview data provided a greater variety of reported differences in teaching behaviour than the questionnaire responses. For instance, differences in classroom discipline, examination preparation, error corrections and marking were reported in the interviews but not in the questionnaire.

Implications

Medgyes (1994) suggests that "the discrepancy in language proficiency accounts for most of the differences found in the teaching behaviour" of native and non-native speaker teachers (pp. 27, 59). However, there is very little evidence suggesting that the differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs identified in the current study are caused mainly by the discrepancy in their English proficiency. Rather, it is possible that the differences are attributable to cultural, experiential, contextual and cognitive factors, such as the cultural knowledge of teachers, the cultural and learning experiences of teachers, teachers' own understanding of their teaching environment, and teacher cognition. For example, LETs and NETs have different cultural knowledge because of their different cultural backgrounds and experiences. While LETs have ample knowledge of the local cultures, NETs tend to have a wider exposure to other cultures through their experiences in living and teaching in various countries. Moreover, LETs' and NETs' different attitudes towards classroom discipline may be attributable to their different classroom experiences in different contexts, which may lead to divergence in their expectations of student behaviour during lessons. LETs' own learning experience in local schools would have subjected them to specific expectations in line with local culture which they now impose on their students. Previous studies also report cultural differences in expectations of classroom interaction patterns (Hofstede, 1986) and in preferred styles of discipline (Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz, 2005).

Future research

The results of this study show that students' perceived differences in the teaching behaviour of LETs and NETs may not be related solely to teachers' linguistic differences. Further research to explore other causes of these differences is necessary. It seems likely that research into the role of teacher cognition (as defined by Borg, 2003) in determining teacher behaviour of LETs and NETs would be enlightening. Additionally, research that goes beyond perceptions of teaching behaviour, as reported here, by observing teacher behaviour may be more rewarding although it is potentially more challenging. Finally, two thirds of the participants in this study were from EMI schools, which does not reflect the proportion of students in CMI and EMI education in Hong Kong. Thus, a study incorporating a larger proportion of CMI participants is likely to yield results that can be generalised to the wider Hong Kong population and probably beyond.

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Notes

1. It should be noted that the notion of 'non-native speaker' is considered to be problematic because it suggests a dichotomy between native speakers and non-native speakers. Rampton (1990) proposes using the term 'language expertise' to describe language proficiency rather than 'native' or 'non-native' since 'language expertise' is not necessarily inborn but can be achieved to reach different levels of expertise. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) suggest that the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers is overly simplistic. Such a dichotomy is not linguistically based because many English speakers in postcolonial communities such as Singapore, India and some African countries acquire English (as a first language) simultaneously with one or more other local languages. In such contexts, it is very difficult to determine which a person's first language (L1) is and which a person's second language (L2) is (Jenkins, 2000).
2. NNESTs and NESTs are well-established terms in the literature. However, the terms LETs and NETs are also widely used by educators and researchers in Hong Kong. Therefore, NNESTs and NESTs are used as generic terms in this paper whereas LETs and NETs are used to refer to the NNESTs and NESTs in Hong Kong.
3. Secondary schools in Hong Kong are classified according to the medium of instructions and student academic ability. About 25% of schools use English as the medium of instructions while others use Chinese. Schools are categorised into three bandings: Bands 1, 2 and 3 according to the academic ability of students, with Band 1 as the highest level and Band 3 the lowest. However, no Band 3 students participated in this study.
4. Pseudonyms are used to refer to participants throughout this paper.

About the author

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire 問卷

Password 密碼*: ____ (4 digits 位數)

1. Year level 班別: _____

2. Gender 性別: Male 男 / Female 女

3. Medium of instruction: CMI / EMI

4. School band: 1 / 2 / 3

5. How many native English teachers have you ever had? _____
你一共跟多少位以英語為母語的英語老師學習過英語?

6. How long have you been taught by native English teachers? _____ year (s) / 年
你跟以英語為母語的英語老師學習英語有多長時間了?

7. What are the differences in the teaching methods adopted by native and local English teachers? 以英語為母語的英語老師及本地英語老師的教學法有什麼分別?

*Enter a 4-digit password. Please remember it as this is for retrieving your questionnaire in case you would like to withdraw later. 請填寫及緊記四位數字密碼, 方便日后如退出時作提取問卷用。

Appendix 2: Semi-structured group interview questions

A. Learning experience with NETs

1. How many native speaker English teachers have you ever had?

2. How long have you been learning English with NETs?

B. Teaching methods

1. What are the differences in the teaching methods used by native and local English teachers? Why are there such differences?

2. Is there any difference in the way they explain English vocabulary?

3. Which category of teachers do you find easier to understand?

4. Do native and local English teachers use different or similar methods in teaching grammar?

5. Is there any difference in the ways these two categories of teaching handle classroom discipline issues?

6. Is the classroom atmosphere similar or different?

7. Is there any difference in the way teachers correct students' mistakes in terms of both written and verbal feedback?

8. Do native and local English teacher assigned similar or different amount of homework?

9. Who offers more help in examination preparation, native English teachers or local English teachers?

Appendix 3: Profiles of interviewees

Schools (Band, MOI*)	Year Levels	Groups	Student (S)	Gender	English levels	No. of NETs encountered	Language used in interview
A (Band 2 CMI)	9	1	S1	M	Not provided	2	Cantonese
			S2	M		3	
			S3	M		2	
		2	S4	F		2	Cantonese
			S5	F		2	
			S6	F		2	
B (Band 1 EMI)	8	3	S7	F	Low	4	English
			S8	F	Average	4	
			S9	M	Low	4	
		4	S10	F	High	5	English
			S11	M	High	3	
			S12	M	Average	6	
		5	S13	F	High	5	Cantonese
			S14	F	Average	14	
			S15	M	Low	4	
		6	S16	M	High	4	Cantonese
			S17	M	Average	4	
			S18	F	Low	3	
C (Band 1 EMI)	11	7	S19	M	High	4	English
			S20	F	High	3	
			S21	M	Average	3	
		8	S22	F	Average	2	English
			S23	M	Low	3	
			S24	F	Low	4	
		9	S25	M	High	4	English
			S26	F	High	3	
			S27	F	Average	3	
		10	S28	M	Average	3	English
			S29	M	Low	4	
			S30	F	Low	3	

*MOI= Medium of Instruction, CMI=Chinese medium of instruction, EMI=English medium of instruction