



Iranian English Learners' Perception of Native and Non-native English Teachers in New Zealand and Iran: A Multilingual Identity Perspective

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Abstract

This study is a longitudinal mixed method design investigating Iranian English learners' perception of native-speaker English teachers (NSETS) and non-native-speaker English teachers (NNSETS) in New Zealand and Iran within the conceptual framework of Kumaravadivelu (2003), Rudolf (2018), and Benson et al. (2013). A semi-structured interview and a questionnaire (consisting of 21 Likert items and 3 open-ended questions) were used twice ten months apart in each context. An online narrative interview was employed in 2022 to supplement the data. Non-parametric data analyses were run on the Likert items. Several coding schemes were developed and a thematic analysis was employed. Findings revealed that NNSETS in New Zealand and NSETS in Iran were perceived by the learners as more effective in guiding their students toward developing a multilingual identity. This is interpreted as the "cross-actional influence of context in language learners' perception of teachers regarding L2 identity development in students" in this research. The findings also showed a shift in students' perception from NSETS to NNSETS in both contexts over time due to the better instructional strategies of NNSETS for teaching reading, listening, grammar, and their deeper understanding of the student's needs. This study informs language teachers, teacher educators, and education authorities on 1) the cross-actional influence of context on students' perception of teachers regarding L2 identity development as a normal procedure, 2) the pattern of a shift from NSETS to NNSETS due to the qualifications of NNSETS should be considered in teacher training programs to make the most proficient language teachers accordingly.

Keywords: Cross-actional Influence of Context, Multilingual Identity, Thematic Analysis

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We are living in the post-method era nowadays (Richardson, 2016) in which the concept of global cultural consciousness should be the center of attention in language learning programs (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Global cultural consciousness encourages language teachers to adopt a multicultural perspective in their language teaching profession and recommends they guide their students toward developing a multilingual identity while acquiring a second language (L2) (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Rudolf, 2018). In this sense, the multilingual identity development model of Benson et al. (2013) is of importance as the model explains the stages through which L2 learners proceed to develop an L2 identity. L2 identity is broadly defined as how individuals understand their position in L2 contexts, how they relate themselves to the world in L2, and how this relationship is structured in their mind across time and space (Benson et al. 2013). To achieve a better understanding of the concept of L2 identity, having a clear definition of bilingualism and multilingualism seems essential. Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) defines bilingualism as the co-existence of two systems of linguistic knowledge which could be developed through a bilingual education system in places with an official language and an indigenous language; while multilingualism is defined as a person's knowledge of more than two linguistic systems of which one or two could become more dominant through the policies of the educational programs (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017). Even though Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) recognizes discrete definitions for bilingualism and multilingualism, the terms multilingual identity and L2 identity are used interchangeably in Benson et al.'s (2013) model. In this regard, Barkhuizen (2017) explains that in multilingual contexts it is normally unclear whether a person is learning a language as L2 or L3 or L4; thus, using L2 identity and multilingual identity synonymously in such contexts seems logically fair.

Developing a multilingual identity in language learners relies on the relationship that language teachers maintain with their students (Benson et al, 2013; Barkhuizen, 2017). Since the twenty-first century the number of NNSETs is drastically increasing (Richardson, 2016), a challenging issue is the extent to which NSETs and NNSETs are perceived by their students as proficient teachers who can facilitate the process of developing a multilingual identity in their language learners. The current literature is very narrow in this regard; so, this study is an attempt to enrich the literature by exploring Iranian learners of English perception of NSETs and NNSETs regarding their effectiveness in guiding the students toward developing L2 identity in two distinctive contexts of New Zealand and Iran. The reason for focusing on the Iranian population and two contexts of Iran and New Zealand in this study is that all authors of this paper are Persian native speakers who were born and raised in Iran; therefore, they were completely

familiar with the cultural issues and contextual structure of Iran to analyze the relevant dataset. Furthermore, the first author of this paper had lived, worked, and studied for several years in New Zealand; so, she was qualified enough to collect the required data in New Zealand and Iran and interpret them according to the cultural and contextual features of the two contexts. It also should be noted that, as Kachru (1985, 2016) describes, language learning conditions in three contexts of inner-circle countries (countries such as New Zealand where English is spoken as the mother tongue of the native population), outer-circle countries (countries such as India where English is used as the official language of the country; but, is not necessarily the mother tongue of the native population) and expanding circle countries (countries such as Iran in which English has no official place in the country) are significantly different. Considering these differences, the findings of this research reveal the dissimilarities of the language learners' attitudes toward their teachers in the inner circle of New Zealand and expanding circle of Iran.

Review of the Related Literature

Due to the importance of the concept of nativespeakerness in this study, first, a clear definition of what is meant by a native speaker from a modern perspective will be discussed. According to Cook (2016), native language acquisition includes the procedures through which a first language is acquired. So, from this point of view, a native speaker of a language is a person who acquired it as a first language in childhood (Dewaele, 2018). This modern perspective is a developed approach to the concept of nativespeakerness which was introduced for the first time by Chomsky (1965). To him, a native speaker of a language was an ideal speaker-listener who mastered the vocabulary and rules of a language to the point that s/he could creatively produce sentences that had never been produced and comprehend the statements that had never been heard. However, this definition was not helpful in research since it was not practical to identify such a native speaker in the real world (Paikeday, 1985); therefore, a more practical characteristic framework for a native speaker was offered by Davis (2003) as:

- Native speakers acquired the language in childhood.
- Native speakers benefit from the intuitive feeling of knowing whether a statement is grammatically accurate.
- Native speakers are capable of producing fluent spontaneous discourse
- Native speakers display extensive communicative competence in both productive and receptive skills

A supplementary approach to the above-mentioned framework of Davis is the approach of Cook (2008) in which she recognizes a close relationship between a language and the identity-related features of the native speakers of that language. In this sense, as Braine (2010) states, the speakers' race, ethnicity, and heritage to the language they speak as their mother tongue are the influential factors that determine if speakers can be regarded as legitimate members of a speech community and native speakers of a certain language. Due to these complications, in order to portray a clear picture of a native speaker, it is recommended to consider individuals as native speakers of a language if they acquired the language in their childhood as their first language (Dewaele, 2018).

Similar to the modern perspective toward the concept of nativespeakerness, a modern attitude toward the concept of non-nativespeakerness is proposed by Riordan (2018) as:

- Speakers of a language who did not acquire it from an early age
- Speakers of a language who may have lacunae in some areas of language proficiency
- Speakers of a language who would not designate themselves as legitimate members of the speech community due to their ethnicity, race, cultural background, ideological background, and so forth.

Empirical studies on language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS

Language learners in most expanding circles are found to perceive NSETS as better language teachers, especially with regard to oral communicative competence (Brown & Lee 2015; Guerra, 2017; Jieyin & Gajaseni, 2018; Kosar, 2018; Nushi Kochaksaraie & Makiabadi, 2018; Wang & Fang, 2020; Haque & Sharmin, 2022) and the cultural insights that they bring into their classrooms (Diaz, 2015; Wood, 2017; Jieyin & Gajaseni, 2018; Wang & Fang, 2020). Nevertheless, when NSETS teach in a foreign country where they are unfamiliar with the first language and cultural background of language learners, they are in a less accommodating position than their local colleagues in understanding the language produced by the L2 learners due to the influence of their L1 and L2 learning needs of the students (Luk & Lin, 2007). This point was confirmed in the study of Diaz (2015) on 78 French university students' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS. She showed that the participants preferred NSETS for teaching oral skills and NNSETS for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and cultural issues. A similar set of results were found in the study of Guerra (2017) who investigated Portuguese university students' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS. He found that university students preferred NSETS for communication skills and NNSETS for teaching grammar and pragmatics.

In the context of Malaysia, Fauzi and Hashim (2020) explored the attitude of 30 high school students toward NSETS and NNSETS in a qualitative research design and revealed that, in the participants' opinion, the best results could be achieved from the combination of NSETS and NNSETS. Similar findings were found in the study of Qadeer (2019) who explored the 136 Saudi EFL learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS. He showed that NSETS and NNSETS are perceived by Saudi EFL learners to have a number of strengths and weaknesses; therefore, a combination of NSETS and NNSETS was recommended to be the most successful EFL program in this study. In a similar study conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia, Haque & Sharmin (2022) investigated the university students' perception of NSETS and NNSETS and found that NSETS were perceived by the students as more proficient in teaching reading, speaking, and listening skills; while, NNSETS were perceived to be more qualified in teaching grammar.

In the context of Indonesia, Larasati et al. (2022) explored the attitude of 241 high school students toward NSETS and NNSETS and showed that 96% of the participants preferred NNSETS for using L1 while teaching English. Another relevant study performed in the context of Indonesia is the research of Zurrahmi and Triastuti (2022) in which they investigated the perception of 380 university students toward NNSETS. Their findings revealed that the participants perceived the NNSETS as more proficient in terms of sociopragmatic skills and understanding of the L2 learning needs.

In the expanding circle of Turkey, Meşincigiller and Akcan (2015) studied the attitude of 680 Turkish learners of English toward NSETS and NNSETS. Their findings displayed that the participants preferred to be taught by NSETS for oral skills, and preferred NNSETS for teaching grammar. Another study in this realm was conducted by Karakaş et al. (2016) in Turkey in which they investigated the changes in Turkish EFL learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS over time. They revealed that at the beginning of their enrolment in the EFL program, Turkish students held a neutral perception toward NSETS and NNSETS; however, with the passage of time, they started to develop a positive attitude toward NSETS for their linguistic knowledge and NNSETS for their teaching strategies. Two years later, in a similar study, Kosar (2018) explored the Turkish EFL students' perception of NSETS and NNSETS and illustrated that the participants preferred to be taught by NSETS for speaking skills and NNSETS for grammar. Similar findings were reported in the expanding circle of the Netherlands in the study of Huys (2017) in which Dutch learners of English were found to prefer NSETS for teaching oral skills and NNSETS for teaching grammar.

In the expanding circle of Korea, Chun (2014) explored the preferences of 125 Korean EFL university students for NSETS and NNSETS and showed that students preferred NSETS for their linguistic competence; while, NNSETS were perceived to be more proficient in helping students with psychological issues of language learning. Similar findings were reported in Liaw's (2012) study on 82 Taiwanese EFL students' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS. In this research, participants were found to prefer NSETS for teaching oral skills and NNSETS for teaching grammar and their psychological support. Seven years later a similar study was conducted in Taiwan by Tsou and Chen (2019) in which they showed that Taiwanese learners of English preferred NSETS over NNSETS even if they were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both groups.

In the expanding circle of China, Jiyein and Gajasen (2018) explored Chinese college students' perception of NSETS and NNSETS and reported that the participants preferred NSETS for teaching cultural issues, and speaking skills; while, they voted for NNSETS for teaching grammar, writing, and reading skills. Similarly, Wang and Fang (2020) studied Chinese university students' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS through a questionnaire and an interview. Their findings revealed that even though the first attitude of the participants was in favor of NSETS, the students were inclined toward NNSETS for their deeper understanding of the students' needs.

In the expanding circle of Palestine, Nafi et al. (2016) explored 120 Palestinian undergraduate students' perception of NSETS and NNSETS through a questionnaire and showed that the majority of the participants preferred NNSETS due to understanding the cross-cultural issues and L2 learning needs.

Conceptual Framework

In the post-method era, we are dealing with a concept named "global cultural consciousness" which considers language learners as cultural informants (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). From this perspective, we should not focus on the target language culture; rather, as Rudolph (2018) emphasized, the students should be engaged and encouraged to reflect on their own culture to develop a multilingual identity in L2 learning contexts. This point has been discussed in detail by Benson, et al. (2013) in their proposed model of L2 identity development for language learners. Their model consists of three interrelated dimensions of L2 identity development including:

- 1) Identity-related aspects of second language proficiency which include a person's ability to function and express a desired identity in L2 such as solving problems in L2, making friends, or speaking appropriately in L2 in various contexts.
- 2) Linguistic self-concept, a term used by Ellis (2004), relates to the sense of self as a learner and user of L2.
- 3) Second language-mediated aspects of personal development which contain features of enhanced personal growth, self-confidence, a high degree of independence, and more awareness and acceptance of cultural differences.

As it was discussed in the previous sections, a considerable amount of research studied language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS with regard to their language teaching performance; however, there is a shortage of knowledge in the current literature concerning the language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS with regard to the teacher's ability to encourage and leading the students toward developing a multilingual identity. Therefore, this study aims at enriching the literature by answering the following research questions.

- What are the Iranian English learners' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS in New Zealand and Iran over time?
- Which group of NSETS or NNSETS was perceived by the Iranian learners in Iran and New Zealand as more effective in helping the students with developing a multilingual identity?

Method

In this longitudinal mixed method design, two sets of qualitative and quantitative data were collected systematically from February 2015 until September 2016 in New Zealand and from May 2017 until December 2018 in Iran. Also, online narrative interviewing was conducted from June 2022 until September 2022 to supplement the previous datasets.

Recruitment and ethical consideration

The potential participants were selected by checking the profiles of the students in five language schools in Auckland city -New Zealand (2015-2016) and two language schools in Kermanshah city -Iran (2017-2018). The names of the language schools are kept confidential due to the requests of their main authorities. The selected participants were approached via email or phone calls to be given some general information about the

purpose of this research and the data collection procedure. Due to the longitudinal nature of this research, the participants were informed of the level of commitment they were expected to deliver. They were also informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time before the end of the data collection procedure. They were also assured about the anonymity and confidentiality of their data. The participants were limited to those who provided us with a letter of consent to participate in this study.

Participants

A total of 193 (71 women, 122 men) individuals in New Zealand and 178 (96 women and 82 men) individuals in Iran remained committed until the end of the data collection procedure. All participants spoke Persian fluently as the official language of Iran. Some had acquired Persian as their first language and some had learned it as the official language of literacy in Iran. In this sense, it should be added that Iran is a multilingual country and all citizens are required to learn Persian as the official language of the country; however, the majority of the Iranian people speak other languages such as Kurdish, Arabic, Azari/Turki, and Balouchi as their first language.

The participants were in B1, B2, and C1 levels of English language proficiency (scaled by the institution) at the beginning of this research. They were of various educational backgrounds ranging from high school diplomas to Ph.D. degrees aged from 21 to 58. All of the participants in Iran attended the classrooms run by a female Canadian native English teacher for at least 12 sessions during the data collection procedure. For collecting the supplementary dataset, among the whole previous participants, 63 individuals in New Zealand and 71 individuals in Iran were available and showed interest to participate in an online narrative interview with the first author.

Procedures

The data for this research were collected through three methods 1) semi-structured interviewing (Appendix 1), 2) a questionnaire (Appendix 2), and 3) online narrative interviewing. The questions used for the semi-structured interviews were designed based on the conceptual framework of this study revolving around: a) participants' sense of identity, b) perception of teachers' language proficiency and c) perception of teachers' cultural awareness which could lead them toward developing a multilingual identity during L2 learning. In line with the content of the semi-structured interview questions were the items of the questionnaire which comprised a) 20 Likert items and b) 3 open-ended questions. The Likert items of the questionnaire were validated through

exploratory factor analysis to increase the reliability and internal validity of the results. At first, the questionnaire included 26 Likert items which explored the participants' perception of 5 factors in language teachers including 1) language proficiency, 2) teaching behavior, 3) cross-cultural issues in language teaching, 4) guiding learners toward developing a multilingual identity, and 5) teachers' approachability through a 5-point scale survey ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. An exploratory factor analysis was employed to validate the questionnaire for the datasets of New Zealand and Iran separately. This procedure resulted in removing 3 items from the questionnaire which had the lowest factor loading scores (factor loading < 0.3). Furthermore, in order to check for the consistency of the responses to the Likert items, a reliability coefficient analysis was performed which resulted in removing 2 more items with the lowest correlations. Consequently, the final version of the questionnaire, shown in Appendix 2, was left with 21 Likert items with a reliability coefficient of 0.72. Table 1 illustrates the structure of the questionnaire.

Table1

The construct of the questionnaire

Factors	The number of the items
Language proficiency	1,2,4,5,6,7,17,
Teaching behavior	10,12,113, 19,20,21
Cultural knowledge	5,11,16,
Approachability	11, 15,
Helping learners with developing a multilingual identity	8,9,14, 15,18,

The questionnaire was administered to each of the participants before the interview session on the same day. Ten months later, the same procedure was repeated for each of the participants in Iran and New Zealand. It means that ten months after the first interview and administration of the questionnaire to each participant they were invited to have the second interview and answer the questionnaire for the second time. No change was applied to the questions of the interview or the content of the questionnaire for the second administration. This procedure was conducted in person in New Zealand (2015-2016) and in Iran (2017-2018) for every single one of the participants.

To supplement the whole dataset, an online narrative interview was designed and performed in 2022 through WhatsApp or Face time or Google meet for around 20 minutes with the same participants who were available. The interview data were recorded, transcribed, and coded based on the coding procedure that is explained in detail in the

following section. The same coding procedure was applied to the data collected from the open-ended items of the questionnaire.

Coding Procedure and Coding Scheme

First, we started with initial coding. At this stage, the transcriptions of the interview data and the answers to the open-ended items of the questionnaire were coded based on a preliminary coding scheme which was designed based on the features, related to our research questions, found in the reviewed literature and the salient features found in our datasets. The preliminary codes included: 1) teachers' sensitivity to the students' needs, 2) teachers' behavior and feedback, 3) teachers' linguistic competence, 4) teachers' instructional strategies, 5) teachers' classroom management, 6) serving as imitable models, 7) teachers' understanding of cultural issues in L2 learning, and 8) teachers' proficiency in helping L2 learners with developing a multicultural identity. Then we moved to focused coding to extract more detailed information about the participants' perception of teachers with regard to L2 identity development. At this stage, a more specific coding system was developed relying on Benson et al.'s (2013) model of multilingual identity development. The codes, at this stage, included: 1) helping the students with functioning and expressing their desired identities in L2, 2) helping the language learners with making communication in L2 confidently, 3) teaching the students how to solve problems in L2, 4) showing the learners how to initiate a communication in L2, 5) teaching the students how to adjust with cultural differences during L2 learning, 6) helping the language learners develop self-confidence and a sense of independence in L2 communications, 7) helping the learners develop a broader world view and acceptance of cultural differences. After the coding procedure, a thematic analysis based on the guideline of Clarke and Braun (2013) was employed.

Results

Thematic Analysis

The coded data were analyzed based on the guideline of thematic analysis informed by Clarke and Braun (2013). Table 2 illustrates what has been done at each stage throughout the thematic analysis in this study.

Table 2

Six phases of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Phase	What to do
Familiarization with the data	At this stage the data were read over and over again; so, a clear picture of the datasets became visible to the researchers.
Coding	Initial coding and focused coding were generated and employed as discussed in detail in the previous section.
Searching for themes	A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the dataset relevant to the research questions. At this stage, the coded data were compared for common features. This stage included coding the coded data for finding more inclusive codes which are called themes.
Reviewing themes	Finding a cohesive story among the found themes.
Defining themes	Identifying the 'essence' of each theme.
Writing up	Telling the story of the dataset.

After conducting the thematic analysis for the datasets of New Zealand and Iran, the frequency of each theme in each dataset was counted to achieve an overall percentage of the found themes in each context. This way, the story behind each set of data emerged as explained in the following sections.

Thematic analysis of the data collected in New Zealand

Table 3 presents the frequency of occurrence of each theme found in the first and second administration of the questionnaire and interview data in New Zealand. In the first dataset, the participants in New Zealand mainly were inclined toward NSETS for their oral skills and reliability as role models (176+182+173 out of 1331 themes ~40%). The participants also believed that NSETS could help them with defining their identity in L2 contexts, speaking appropriately in L2, making effectual communications in L2, and acceptance of cultural differences (171+127+119+118 out of 1331 themes~ 39.5%). With regard to NNSETS, the participants voted for them for grammar teaching methods (84 out of 1331 themes ~ 6.5%), providing the learners with explicit feedback (118 out of 1331 themes ~ 8.9%) and helping them with developing a multilingual identity (27+36 out of 1331 themes ~ 5%). However, after ten months, the New Zealand participants mainly preferred NNSETS due to their sensitivity to the students' needs and helping them with developing a multilingual identity. This included themes of helping them with speaking appropriately in L2, expressing their identity in the L2 context, negotiating their identity in L2 communications, developing cultural awareness, and serving as an imitable

model in the coded data (183+129+163+181+119+127 out of 2305 themes ~ 39%). Moreover, NNSETS were perceived by the New Zealand participants in the second dataset to provide better instructional methods in teaching grammar, listening, and reading skills, and have better classroom management methods (167+182+151+178 out of 2305 themes ~ 29.5%).

Table 3
The frequency of each theme found in the New Zealand qualitative data.

First dataset Total number of found themes=1331		Second dataset (after ten months) Total number of found themes=2305	
NSETS	NNSETS	NSETS	NNSETS
Better instructional strategies in oral skills and classroom activities # 176	Teaching grammar better (using L1) #84	Better oral communicative competence#182	Sensitivity to the students' needs # 183
Better oral communicative competence#182	Providing satisfactory explicit feedback # 118	Having problems with understanding the cultural issues of multilinguals # 154	Better instructional strategies in reading and listening skills#167
Serving as imitable model #173	Defining L2 identity in the classroom # 27	Unsatisfied with recast feedback # 141	Teaching appropriateness in L2 # 129
Defining their identity better with a NSET#171	Helping learners with negotiating their identities in L2 # 36	Not feeling comfortable with their identity in a class run by NSET # 185	Developing a broader world view and acceptance of cultural differences # 163
Teaching appropriateness in L2 # 127		Helping learners with making efficient communications in L2 # 47	Teaching grammar better #182
Making efficient communications in L2 # 119		Features of self-confidence, maturity, a higher degree of independence# 16	Satisfied with Explicit corrective feedback #178
acceptance of cultural differences # 118			Serving as imitable model # 119
			Defining L2 identity in the classroom #181
			Negotiating their identities in L2 # 127
			Better classroom management through making connection between L1 and L2#151

Thematic Analysis of the Data Collected in Iran

As is shown in Table 4, in the first dataset, the participants in Iran believed that NSETS were more proficient in language knowledge, providing a role model, and teaching strategies for all language skills (170+169+179 out of 1344 themes ~ 38.5%).

Also, NSETS were found to be perceived by the participants as leaders who taught them how to express their identity in L2 in various contexts (171+114+142 out of 1344 themes ~ 32%). NNSETS, on the other hand, were found to be perceived as more proficient in teaching grammar, providing explicit feedback through L1, and sensitivity to the L2 learners' needs (166+93+147 out of 1344 themes ~ 30%). However, after ten months, the participants in Iran stated that NSETS noticeably helped them with developing a multilingual identity through understanding cross-cultural issues (161+162+169+151 out of 1663 themes ~ 39%). In the second dataset, the participants expressed that NSETS were more proficient in teaching speaking and writing skills while they preferred NNSETS for teaching listening and reading skills (148+159 themes out of 1663 ~ 18.5%). Similar to the first dataset, NNSETS were perceived to be more proficient in teaching grammar and more sensitive to the learners' needs in the second set of data (141+92+168 out of 1663 themes ~ 24%).

Table 4

The frequency of each code found in Iran's qualitative dataset.

First data set Total number of found themes= 1344		Second data set (after ten months) Total number of found themes=1663	
NSETS	NNSETS	NSETS	NNSETS
Learning all skills better with NSETS # 169	Teaching grammar better # 166	Better oral communicative competence#174	Sensitivity to the students' needs # 141
More proficient in all skills# 172	Providing explicit feedback # 93	More proficient in teaching speaking and writing # 148	Better instructional strategies in teaching reading and listening #159
Serving as imitable role model #170	Sensitivity to the students' needs # 147	Better understanding of the cultural issues # 161	Teaching grammar better #168
Defining their identity better with NSET#171		Cultural awareness and acceptance of cultural differences # 162	Better classroom management through L1#138
A better sense of self-identification in L2 with NSETS # 114		Defining their identity better with NSET #169	Satisfying Explicit feedback #92
Teaching appropriateness in L2 in various contexts # 142		negotiate their L2 identities better with NSETS # 151	

Since the questionnaire of this study included 21 Likert items, a set of non-parametric data analyses was run to complement the qualitative findings.

Quantitative data analysis and results

As the questionnaire was administered twice in New Zealand and twice in Iran, with a time difference of ten months in each context, 4 Chi-square tests were employed overall, one for each administration, to analyze the quantitative datasets. Considering the score of 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree in the Chi-square analysis, the items with the mean score below 2.5 were considered as disagreed and the items with the mean score above 2.5 were considered as agreed in this analysis. In the next step, a Wilcoxon test was run on the data of the first and second administrations in New Zealand and Iran to investigate the statistical differences between the first and second administrations of the questionnaire.

The first administration of the questionnaire in New Zealand

The descriptive statistical analysis of the first administration of the questionnaire in New Zealand (Table 5) showed that the participants disagreed with items number 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, and 19 (mean < 2.5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the first administration in New Zealand

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Q1	193	4.5078	.58736	3.00	5.00
Q2	193	3.9585	.66013	1.00	5.00
Q3	193	4.5078	.58736	3.00	5.00
Q4	193	4.6321	.72486	2.00	5.00
Q5	193	3.4145	.59002	2.00	4.00
Q6	193	4.3990	.58754	3.00	5.00
Q7	193	4.2850	.57430	3.00	5.00
Q8	193	2.4663	.62095	1.00	4.00
Q9	193	2.4870	.57833	2.00	4.00
Q10	193	2.3886	.56759	2.00	4.00
Q11	193	1.6269	.58247	1.00	3.00
Q12	193	2.4974	.58741	2.00	4.00
Q13	193	4.5026	.59621	3.00	5.00
Q14	193	3.8394	.46782	2.00	4.00
Q15	193	4.2332	.67895	2.00	5.00
Q16	193	4.4093	.56210	3.00	5.00
Q17	193	4.8342	.46038	3.00	5.00

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Q18	193	1.7098	.52911	1.00	3.00
Q19	193	1.6943	.53504	1.00	3.00
Q20	193	4.3005	.54280	3.00	5.00
Q21	193	4.5078	.56013	3.00	5.00

The second administration of the questionnaire in New Zealand

As Table 6 illustrates, in the second administration of the questionnaire in New Zealand, items number 1,3,5,7,8,9,10,11,12,15,16,18, 19, and 21 were found to be disagreed by the participants (mean<2.5).

Table6.

Descriptive Statistics of the second administration in New Zealand

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Q1	193	1.8290	.65890	1.00	4.00
Q2	193	4.6684	.53413	3.00	5.00
Q3	193	2.3316	.53413	2.00	4.00
Q4	193	4.5699	.71918	2.00	5.00
Q5	193	1.4197	.61663	1.00	3.00
Q6	193	4.6528	.55781	3.00	5.00
Q7	193	1.7461	.52321	1.00	3.00
Q8	193	1.1710	.45275	1.00	3.00
Q9	193	1.5026	.56940	1.00	3.00
Q10	193	2.0518	.50766	1.00	4.00
Q11	193	1.1554	.47509	1.00	3.00
Q12	193	2.0415	.41876	1.00	3.00
Q13	193	3.6477	.55921	2.00	4.00
Q14	193	4.2073	.71338	2.00	5.00
Q15	193	1.4974	.77811	1.00	4.00
Q16	193	1.3627	.60644	1.00	3.00
Q17	193	4.6943	.56349	3.00	5.00
Q18	193	1.3575	.57884	1.00	3.00
Q19	193	1.7772	.69754	1.00	4.00
Q20	193	2.7513	.53064	2.00	4.00
Q21	193	2.1606	.52052	1.00	3.00

In order to check for the significance of the differences between the results of the first and second administration of the Likert items to the participants in New Zealand, a Wilcoxon test was run (Table 7). The results showed that except for items 4 and 19, the participants' responses to the other items were significantly different in the first and second administrations.

Table 7

Wilcoxon test for the first and second administration in NZ

Item	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1s - Q1	-12.232 ^b	.000
Q2s - Q2	-9.555 ^c	.000
Q3s - Q3	-12.068 ^b	.000
Q4s - Q4	-.859 ^b	.391
Q5s - Q5	-12.124 ^b	.000
Q6s - Q6	-4.254 ^c	.000
Q7s - Q7	-12.268 ^b	.000
Q8s - Q8	-11.532 ^b	.000
Q9s - Q9	-10.180 ^b	.000
Q10s - Q10	-5.238 ^b	.000
Q11s - Q11	-7.453 ^b	.000
Q12s - Q12	-7.455 ^b	.000
Q13s - Q13	-9.914 ^b	.000
Q14s - Q14	-5.561 ^c	.000
Q15s - Q15	-12.005 ^b	.000
Q16s - Q16	-12.243 ^b	.000
Q17s - Q17	-2.520 ^b	.012
Q18s - Q18	-5.946 ^b	.000
Q19s - Q19	-1.335 ^c	.182
Q20s - Q20	-11.933 ^b	.000
Q21s - Q21	-12.229 ^b	.000

The results of the first and second administration of the Likert items in New Zealand showed that the participants were not satisfied with NSETS in terms of 1) presenting L2 identity in the classroom, 2) feeling comfortable with making mistakes, 3) approachability of the teacher, 4) receiving assistance in expressing themselves in L2 during classroom activities. Furthermore, the results of the second administration revealed that the participants in New Zealand indicated that they learn grammar, listening skill, reading skill, and cultural issues better with an Iranian teacher compared to a native teacher.

The first administration of the questionnaire in Iran

The descriptive statistical analysis of the first administration of the Likert items in Iran (Table 8) illustrated that the participants disagreed (mean < 2.5) with questions number 10 and 11. These items related to expressing their L2 identity with NSETS and the approachability of NSETS.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of the first administration in Iran

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Q1	178	4.3202	.91672	1.00	5.00
Q2	178	4.3820	.91449	1.00	5.00
Q3	178	4.4551	.96884	1.00	5.00
Q4	178	4.2303	.88156	1.00	5.00
Q5	178	4.5787	.71069	2.00	5.00
Q6	178	4.4438	.72851	2.00	5.00
Q7	178	4.6573	.54252	3.00	5.00
Q8	178	3.7753	.50428	2.00	4.00
Q9	178	3.8933	2.32764	2.00	34.00
Q10	178	2.3371	.55119	2.00	4.00
Q11	178	1.5337	.74522	1.00	3.00
Q12	178	4.5112	.57479	3.00	5.00
Q13	178	4.5843	.67747	3.00	5.00
Q14	178	4.5056	.59420	3.00	5.00
Q15	178	3.6854	.56440	3.00	5.00
Q16	178	3.7472	.64494	2.00	5.00
Q17	178	4.7303	.51561	3.00	5.00
Q18	178	3.8539	.51091	3.00	5.00
Q19	178	4.1292	.61995	3.00	5.00
Q20	178	4.5562	.72071	3.00	5.00
Q21	178	4.5056	.63109	3.00	5.00

The second administration of the questionnaire in Iran

The descriptive statistical analysis of the second administration of the Likert items in Iran (Table 9) showed that the participants' perception of teachers noticeably changed after ten months. They disagreed with items 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 19, 20, and 21 (mean < 2.5) which surprisingly were items that they agreed on within the first administration.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of the second administration in Iran

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Q1	178	1.4270	.53967	1.00	3.00
Q2	178	4.5506	.59206	3.00	5.00
Q3	178	1.7247	.77936	1.00	3.00
Q4	178	4.5730	.58004	3.00	5.00
Q5	178	4.4438	.65500	3.00	5.00
Q6	178	4.6910	.57246	3.00	5.00
Q7	178	2.1742	.47301	2.00	4.00
Q8	178	2.4270	.58004	2.00	4.00
Q9	178	2.2697	.55772	2.00	4.00
Q10	178	2.2753	.54984	2.00	4.00
Q11	178	1.6348	.54857	1.00	3.00
Q12	178	1.8258	.74258	1.00	3.00
Q13	178	4.5843	.55863	3.00	5.00
Q14	178	3.8933	.43160	3.00	5.00
Q15	178	2.4213	.56946	2.00	4.00
Q16	178	3.7472	.51871	2.00	4.00
Q17	178	4.5225	.58421	3.00	5.00
Q18	178	3.5899	.58735	2.00	4.00
Q19	178	2.0787	.56698	1.00	3.00
Q20	178	1.7921	.74904	1.00	3.00
Q21	178	1.6348	.54857	1.00	3.00

To check for the differences between the results of the first and second administration of the questionnaire in Iran, a Wilcoxon test was run (Table 10). The results showed that the participants' answers to items number 2, 10, 11, 13, and 16, in the first and second administrations, were not statistically significant; however, their answers to the other items showed a statistically significant difference. This means that there was a major shift in the participants' perception of NSETS and NNSETS in Iran after ten months. At first, the participants in Iran showed a high level of enthusiasm to learn the whole language skills with NSETS; however, after ten months, they preferred learning listening and reading skills with NNSETS. Moreover, their perception of teachers regarding developing a multilingual identity also changed drastically over time; meaning that, first, they believed they could develop L2 identity more efficiently with NSETS; while, their answers to the Likert items after ten months revealed that they perceived NNSETS as more effectual in helping them with developing a multilingual identity.

Table 10

Wilcoxon test for the first and second administrations in Iran

Item	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1s - Q1	-11.510 ^b	.000
Q2s - Q2	-1.539 ^c	.124
Q3s - Q3	-11.366 ^b	.000
Q4s - Q4	-4.179 ^c	.000
Q5s - Q5	-2.199 ^b	.028
Q6s - Q6	-3.417 ^c	.001
Q7s - Q7	-11.864 ^b	.000
Q8s - Q8	-10.954 ^b	.000
Q9s - Q9	-11.259 ^b	.000
Q10s - Q10	-.992 ^b	.321
Q11s - Q11	-1.364 ^c	.172
Q12s - Q12	-11.681 ^b	.000
Q13s - Q13	-.059 ^c	.953
Q14s - Q14	-8.725 ^b	.000
Q15s - Q15	-10.933 ^b	.000
Q16s - Q16	-.072 ^c	.942
Q17s - Q17	-3.715 ^b	.000
Q18s - Q18	-4.065 ^b	.000
Q19s - Q19	-11.634 ^b	.000
Q20s - Q20	-11.597 ^b	.000
Q21s - Q21	-11.745 ^b	.000

The prominent point about the findings of this paper is the changes that were observed in the language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS over ten months in both contexts of New Zealand and Iran (illustrated in Figure 1). The analysis of the New Zealand dataset showed that, at first, the majority of the participants chose NSETS over NNSETS for their oral skills and ability to help the students with developing a multilingual identity. However, after ten months, the same participants in New Zealand voted for NNSETS as more influential teachers in guiding them toward developing a multilingual identity. In this step, the language learners in New Zealand found themselves not satisfied with NSETS for not feeling comfortable with presenting their L2 identity in the classrooms run by NSETS. It needs to be added that part of this shift in the context of New Zealand was related to the language learners' perception of NNSETS as more proficient for teaching reading, listening, and grammar.

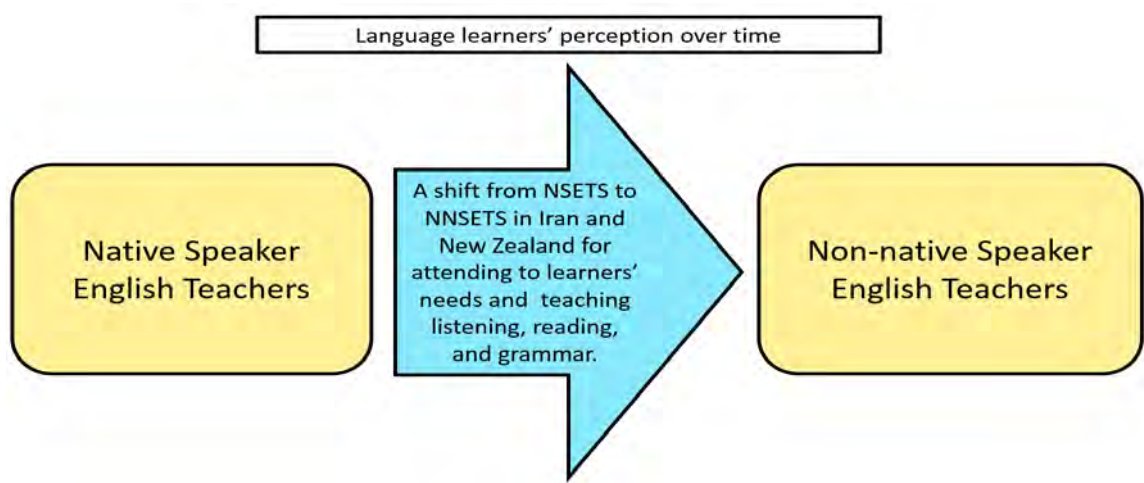


Figure1. *The perception pattern of the language learners observed in ten months*

A similar pattern of shift was observed in the context of Iran regarding the language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS in the period of ten months. At first, the participants believed that NSETS were more proficient for teaching all skills; however, after ten months, a major shift from NSETS to NNSETS was observed in the data as the participants voted for NSETS just for teaching oral skills; while, they preferred NNSETS for teaching reading, grammar, and listening skills and attending to the students' needs.

Another prominent finding of this study is related to the participants' perception of teachers with regard to the support that they received from the teachers in developing a multilingual identity during their L2 learning procedure. In the expanding circle of Iran, the language learners perceived NSETS to be more influential in guiding them toward developing L2 identity. While, in the inner circle of New Zealand, NNSETS were perceived by the language learners as more effective in leading them toward developing L2 identity (see Figure 2). This finding clearly illuminates the counter-influence of context in language learners' perceptions since in the follow-up interviews, conducted online in 2022 as the supplementary dataset, the participants strongly declared that each group of teachers who did not speak the dominant language of the society as their mother tongue in each context was more efficient in guiding the students toward expressing their identity in L2, making communications in L2, and considering the cultural differences. This finding is interpreted in this research as: "cross-actional influence of context on language learners' perception of teachers regarding developing a multilingual identity in students".

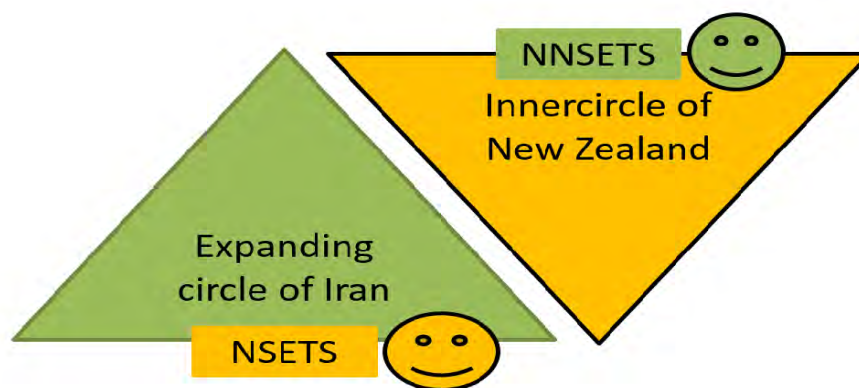


Figure 2. *Cross-sectional influence of context on language learners' perception of teachers concerning students' L2 identity development*

Discussion

The findings of the expanding circle of Iran in this study are in line with the results of the previous studies conducted in various expanding circles in the world that explored language learners' perceptions of NSETS and NNSETS (Brown & Lee 2015; Diaz, 2015; Guerra, 2017; Jieyin & Gajaseni, 2018; Kosar, 2018; Wang&Fang, 2020; Haque & Sharmin, 2022; Zurrahmi & Triastuti, 2022) in that, students in expanding circles were found to perceive NSETS as more proficient in oral skills and communication abilities. However, there is a contrast between the results of Diaz (2015), Jieyin and Gajaseni (2018), and Wang and Fang (2020) with the findings of this paper as they claimed that language learners perceived NSETS as more proficient due to the cultural insights that they bring to the classrooms; whereas, the findings of this paper revealed that the language learners perceive NNSETS as more insightful due to the cultural awareness that they bring to the classroom.

Concerning the language learners' perception of NNSETS, the findings of this paper agrees with the study of Diaz (2015), Karakas et al (2016), Guerra (2017), Jieyin and Gajaseni(2018), Kosar, (2018), Wang and Fang (2020), Haque and Sharmin (2022), and Zurrahmi and Triastuti (2022) since in all of these studies NNSETS were perceived by the language learners to be more proficient in teaching grammar, listening, and reading skills. The very same finding was strongly emphasized in this paper as the participants in both contexts of Iran and New Zealand presented a noticeable shift from NSETS to NNSETS for better teaching methods in reading skill, listening skill, and grammar.

An important point that is worth mentioning here is that in the majority of the studies in the existing literature, the pattern of change in the perception of language learners is not considered. In this regard, we only found two well-designed studies that explored the pattern of change in the language learners' perception of NSETS and NNSETS over time which are described in the literature review section of this paper. The first one is the research of Karakaş et al. (2016) in which they reported that the pattern of perception in language learners' shifted from neutral to positive about NSETS for teaching oral skills and from neutral to positive about NNSETS for their instructional strategies. This finding does not agree with the pattern of perception change found in our study since we found a shift in the language learners' perception from NSETS for teaching all skills to NNSETS for teaching grammar, reading, and listening skills in both contexts of Iran and New Zealand. The second study is the research of Wang and Fang (2020) whose findings agreed with the findings of our paper since they found a shift in the participants' perception from NSETS to NNSETS due to more effectual instructional strategies in NNSETS.

Among the studies that did not have a longitudinal design, the results of Chun (2014) are in line with the findings of our research as she showed that the language learners in the expanding circle of Korea were inclined toward NNSETS due to the psychological support that they provided to their students. However, in the expanding circle of china, the findings of Jieyin and Gajaseni (2018) contradict the findings of our study as they claimed that Chinese students perceived NSETS as more proficient in teaching all skills and cultural issues. Another disagreement with our findings is observed in the study of Qadeer (2019) and Fauzi and Hashim (2020) where they found language learners vote for an EFL program which is a combination of NSETS and NNSETS; while, the language learners in our research were found to clearly lean toward NNSETS in both contexts.

Comparing the structure of our study with the previous studies in the literature revealed a prominent feature of our paper which is having two parallel datasets collected in the two contexts of New Zealand and Iran. These parallel datasets were collected to provide the opportunity of comparing the findings of an inner circle (New Zealand) with an expanding circle (Iran). Unfortunately, the current literature is very short in this regard and no other studies were found, by the time of writing this paper, to compare the language learners' perception of teachers in two different contexts. Juxtaposing the findings of Iran with New Zealand originated the main theoretical contribution of this research which is interpreted as the "cross-actional influence of context on language learners' perception of teachers regarding developing a multilingual identity" (Figure 3).

From this perspective, NSETS in the expanding circle of Iran were found to be perceived by their students as more attentive to the features that could lead to developing a multilingual identity in language learners. These features included: a) providing effectual hints on how to speak appropriately in L2, b) how to express their identity in L2 contexts, c) how to negotiate their identity during L2 communications, d) and how to develop a cultural awareness when learning L2 (Benson et al, 2013). On the other hand, NNSETS in the inner circle of New Zealand were perceived by their language learners to be more attentive to the features that were related to L2 identity development in the students. Looking at this finding, the counter-effect of context shows off; in that, language teachers in the context where they do not speak the dominant language of the society as their mother tongue were perceived by their students to act more responsibly in assisting and facilitating the L2 identity development procedure of their language learners.

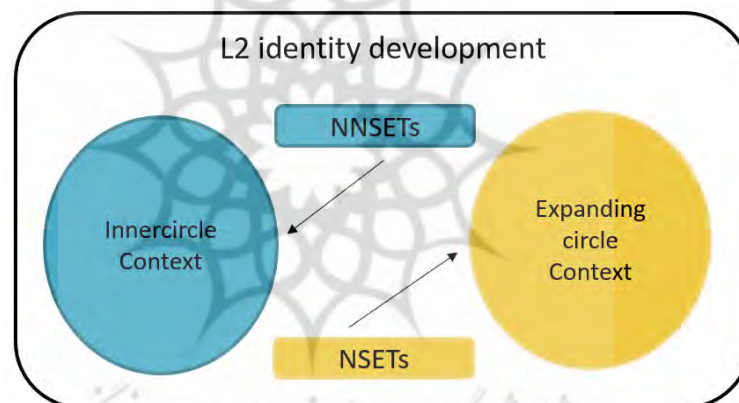


Figure 3. *Cross-actional influence of context on learners' perception of teachers regarding L2 identity development*

As mentioned earlier, the current literature is very shallow in this regard and more studies in various contexts are required to confirm or contrast the findings of this research.

Conclusion

The main finding of this research is the notion of the "cross-actional influence of context on language learners' perception of teachers regarding L2 identity development". This finding states that NNSETS in the inner circle of New Zealand and NSETS in the expanding circle of Iran are perceived by the language learners to be more influential in guiding the students toward developing a multilingual identity.

In terms of language learners' perception of the strengths and weaknesses of NSETS and NNSETS, a major shift from NSETS to NNSETS in the participants' perception was observed over time in both contexts of Iran and New Zealand. At first, the language learners perceived NSETS as more proficient for teaching all main skills; however, with the passage of time, they voted for NNSETS as better teachers for teaching reading, listening, and grammar and having a deeper understanding of the language learners' needs.

The findings of this study provide insight to language teachers, teacher educators, education authorities, and syllabus designers who assign NSETS and NNSETS to various classrooms, on the grounds of three implications:

First, a shift in the language learners' perception over time seems to be a normal pattern since in both contexts of New Zealand and Iran, a similar pattern of a shift from NSETS to NNSETS was reported.

Second, since the main perception shift in the language learners was found to be from NSETs to NNSETs in both contexts, and as this shift was found to be chiefly due to the better instructional strategies of NNSETS for teaching reading skill, listening skill, grammar, and their deeper understanding of the students' needs, these issues are recommended to be considered by teacher educators to make their teaching training programs the most efficient accordingly.

Third, with regard to facilitating the procedure of L2 identity development in language learners, as NSETS were found to be the most influential in the expanding circle of Iran and NNSETS were perceived to be the most efficient in the inner circle of New Zealand, language teachers, language educators, and education authorities could be informed on what group of NSETS or NNSETS could benefit the students the most in each context.

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Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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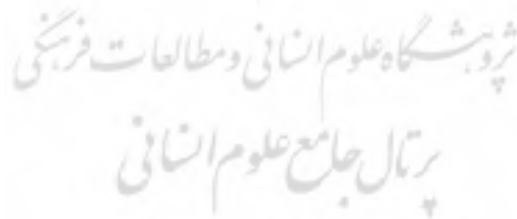
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Appendix 1

The semi-structured interview questions

1. Are you happy with a native English teacher or an Iranian teacher in terms of their teaching style, professional manner, linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge and communicational issues in the classroom?
2. Which teacher is better at helping you with defining your identity in L2?
3. Which teacher helps you respect your own culture and identity during L2 learning?
4. If you have any problem in the classroom, which teacher is more approachable?
5. Which teacher would understand your language learning needs better?

Appendix 2

The questionnaire

Part 1. Please elaborate on your answers as much as possible.

1. Do you prefer a native English teacher or an Iranian English teacher regarding defending yourself and defining your identity in L2? Why?
2. What strength and weaknesses can you think of when you want to describe a native teacher and an Iranian teacher?
3. In terms of your identity (the way you describe yourself), do you feel more secure in a classroom run by an Iranian English teacher or by a native teacher? Why?

Part 2. The Likert items

In the following items please check options that matches your opinion the most.

No	Items	scales				
1	You learn grammar better with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
2	You learn pronunciation better with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
3	You learn the listening skill better with a native teacher	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
4	You learn writing skills better with a native teacher	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
5	A native teacher can help you compare your own culture with the target speech community better than an Iranian teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
6	You learn speaking skills better with a native teacher	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
7	You learn reading skills better with a native teacher	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
8	You feel more connected to the classroom context which is run by a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree

IRANIAN ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE

No	Items	scales				
		Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
9	You can express your real-self more comfortably with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
10	You feel more comfortable making mistakes in a classroom run by a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
11	If you have any problem with the teaching method you can more easily communicate it to a native teacher	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
12	You participate in classroom activities more comfortably with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
13	You study harder when you take an English class with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
14	You feel embarrassed to ask questions in a class run by a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
15	You can easily talk about your learning needs with a native teacher.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
16	A native teacher can understand your cultural issues better	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
17	A native teacher has higher language knowledge	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
18	A native teacher understands the pressure of learning a second language better	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
19	When you do not know how to say a certain statement in English a native teacher could help you better	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
20	A native teacher uses better teaching methods.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
21	A native teacher is more capable of running an active and friendly classroom.	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree

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