

Teacher well-being matters: The case of students' motivation on their own perceptions of native and non-native English speaker teachers

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ABSTRACT: English has become the most-widely used lingua franca in international communication, creating a demand for effective English teachers around the world. In reality, there is a surging demand for English teachers around the world and in China, with a greater inclination for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) over non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), a phenomenon commonly known as explicit or implicit advocacy of native-speakerism. Research has shown that Chinese students are affected by native-speakerism, harming Chinese English teachers' feelings and instructional practices. Even though research has shown that student characteristics play a role in students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness, few have examined more complex variables such as motivation and teacher well-being. To fill the research gap, we investigated 470 Chinese English-major students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in relation to NNESTs' psychological well-being. Results show that students perceived NESTs and NNESTs as having different strengths and weaknesses. Such perceptions had various effects on both groups' well-being. Students' motivation was found positively correlated to their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. We discuss these findings for the purpose of raising students' awareness of native-speakerism and identifying possible means for teachers to improve their teaching effectiveness by adopting motivational strategies so that teacher well-being is given sufficient attention.

Keywords: EFL teachers, teacher quality, native-speakerism, native English-speaking teachers, non-native English-speaking teachers

El bienestar de los docentes importa: el caso de la motivación de los estudiantes sobre sus propias percepciones de los docentes hablantes nativos y no nativos de inglés

RESUMEN: El inglés se ha convertido en la lingua franca más utilizada en la comunicación internacional, creando una demanda de profesores de inglés eficaces en todo el mundo. En realidad, existe una creciente demanda de profesores de inglés en todo el mundo y en China, con una mayor inclinación por los profesores nativos de habla inglesa (NEST) que por los profesores no nativos de habla inglesa (NNEST), un fenómeno comúnmente conocido como defensa explícita o implícita del hablante nativo. Las investigaciones han demostrado que los estudiantes chinos se ven afectados por el habla nativa, lo que daña los sentimientos y la enseñanza de los profesores de inglés chino. Aunque la investigación ha demostrado que las características de los estudiantes juegan un papel en las percepciones de los estudiantes, pocos han examinado variables más complejas como la motivación y el bienestar de los docentes. Para llenar el vacío de investigación, investigamos las percepciones de NEST y NNEST de 470 estudiantes chinos de inglés principal en relación con el bienestar psicológico de los NNEST. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes perciben que los NEST y los NNEST tienen diferentes fortalezas y debilidades. Tales percepciones tuvieron varios efectos en el bienestar de ambos grupos. Se encontró que la motivación de los estudiantes se correlacionó positivamente con sus percepciones de NEST y NNEST. Discutimos estos hallazgos con el propósito de aumentar la conciencia de los estudiantes sobre el habla nativa e identificar posibles medios para que los maestros mejoren su eficacia docente mediante la adopción de estrategias de motivación para que se preste suficiente atención al bienestar de los maestros. **Palabras clave:** profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, calidad docente, nativismo, profesores nativos de inglés, profesores no nativos de inglés.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become a global lingua franca, used among individuals with diverse linguistic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022; Taguchi, 2014). Consequently, more countries are making English fluency a national priority (Hennebry-Leung & Gao, 2022; Xu & Shan, 2022). This has possibly led to a substantial growth in the number of English learners around the world, estimated at 1.5 billion (Szimigiera, 2021). For example, China has made English a compulsory course from Primary Three (usually age nine or ten) onwards, and there are more than 400 million English learners in the country (Galloway, 2017).

The increased international English education market has led to an increased need for experienced teachers of English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). In English language teaching (ELT), the majority of teachers are those who learned English as a second or foreign language, the so-called “non-native English-speaking teachers” (NNESTs), which make up around 80% of the global ELT force (Moussu, 2018). However, institutions in many ESL/EFL contexts prefer hiring English teachers who speak English as a first language, often labeled “native English-speaking teachers” (NESTs), due to the unwarranted assumption that their “native speaker” identity naturally makes them better English instructors (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022).

Holliday (2018) used the concept of “native-speakerism” to describe this widespread ideology in ELT. This ideology affects the public, especially English students, educators, and administrators. It creates a biased and dichotomous view of the linguistic and cultural differences between NESTs and NNESTs (Zhang, 2012, 2013). Despite the debate, native-speakerism is still an issue in many ELT contexts, including China, where many institutions discriminate against NNESTs (Liu, 1999, 20025, 2022; Moussu, 2018; Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

Recently, Chinese universities have recruited more English teachers (especially NESTs) due to their internationalization strategy of higher education; they have also increased the demand for English as an important skill, and as a result, degree programs in English have become the biggest undergraduate program in Chinese universities (He, 2020). However, research has shown that native-speakerism is still prevalent in China, which results in the marginalization and self-marginalization of NNESTs, and affects their teaching effectiveness and psychological well-being. For example, Liu (2022) conducted a large-scale study with 926 Chinese students, teachers, and administrators in six universities in China. Liu concluded that the participants gave more respect for and value to “native speakers” products (teacher, language, culture, and teaching methodology) than they gave to the NNS equivalents, and they also failed to recognize the linguistic, cultural, and knowledge-based inequalities between the English-speaking countries and traditional non-native English-speaking countries, such as China.

Studies have shown that many factors influence students’ preferences and opinions of teachers, such as their native language, accent, race, age, and gender (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Moussu & Llorca, 2008; Rámila, 2015). A few studies have examined how student factors, such as gender and proficiency, influenced their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. However, more complex variables, such as motivation, have been largely neglected. Motivation is an important factor in both L2 theories and positive psychology. L2 theories highlight motivation’s role in language learning outcomes and processes (Csizér, 2020). Positive psychology studies both positive and negative aspects of human life and how they affect happiness, well-being, strengths, and resilience (Wang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023a). Motivation is also a key concept in positive psychology, as it relates to the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling goals, the development of personal strengths, and the enhancement of well-being (McInerney, 2019; Sun & Zhang, 2023, Zhang, et al., 2023b). Since motivation is a modifiable factor, a better understanding of this construct would help deconstruct native-speakerism, enhance teacher-student relationships, and improve teacher well-being and teaching effectiveness (Zhang, 2004). However, most studies in China have focused on the students’ perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of NESTs and NNESTs (Cheng & Zhang, 2022; Huang, 2017; Ma, 2012; Rao, 2010; Wang & Fang, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). The student participants in these studies were usually non-English majors. Therefore, this study explores the impact of motivation on the perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs among Chinese English majors. It seeks to understand the relationships between students’ motivation and their perceptions and provides useful insights for teachers to adjust their teaching using strategies-based instruction, and ultimately improve their teaching effectiveness and well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of NESTs and NNESTs

Traditionally, a native speaker of a language has been defined as someone exposed to the language from an early age, and therefore naturally acquires it as their first language (Chomsky, 1965). This person is assumed to have complete command of the language that he or she teaches. Conversely, a non-native speaker is presumed to acquire the language as their second or foreign language. This binary categorization has recently faced criticism due

to its racially linguistic implications (Braine, 2010; Cheng et al., 2021). For instance, Braine (2010) argues that the label “native speaker” conveys positive associations such as innate ability, fluency, cultural awareness, and sociolinguistic competence. Conversely, the notion of “non-native speaker” implies negative connotations such as minority status, marginalization, and stigma. Nevertheless, some researchers argue that the NNEST label is a double-edged sword (Brady, 2009; Selvi, 2014; Selvi et al., 2023). Despite potential negative implications, such as belittling and othering NNESTs and referring to an untrue benchmark (i.e., native-speakerism), there are also advantages. These advantages include acknowledging the peripheral voices, prejudices, and leveraging existing categorizations in research. This helps to advance the profession by acknowledging pedagogy and skill (Brady, 2009; Selvi, 2014).

In the Chinese context, the NNEST/NEST dichotomy has been adopted without much challenge. Most Chinese EFL institutions employ Kachru et al.’s (2006) labeling. They regard individuals born and raised in the “inner-circle countries”, such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and certain “outer-circle countries” such as South Africa and Singapore, as native English speakers. Thus, expatriate English teachers within this category are regarded as NESTs. This also holds true for certain expatriates categorized as “NNESTs”, even when they are certified EFL educators. Chinese institutions generally hire NESTs or locally-raised Chinese English-speaking teachers. We acknowledge and recognize racial linguistic implications in this division, yet we employ these terms in this paper due to their clarity while addressing the research questions, especially in the Chinese context. The study presented here aims to compare students’ perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in Chinese universities.

2.2. Misalignments between NESTs, NNESTs, and students on effective teaching

Cohen (1987) proposed the concept of “instructional alignment” emphasizing the importance of consistency among instructional processes, anticipated outcomes, and assessments for effective learning. In this context, “alignment” implies that the teachers' instructional processes, expected results, and assessments match students' needs and interests. Misalignments between teachers and students can cause issues such as disappointment, poor learning outcomes, negative teacher evaluations, and lower teacher well-being (Cheng & Zhang, 2022; Rao, 2010; Yang, 2018).

In recent years, teachers in Chinese EFL classrooms have diversified due to the increased number of NESTs. While the myth persists that NESTs are superior teachers (Wang & Fang, 2020), research has demonstrated that they often find themselves misaligned with Chinese EFL teachers and students in regard to perceptions of effective teaching. Rao (2010) interviewed 20 Chinese university students and found that NESTs' teaching styles were misaligned with Chinese EFL students' learning styles. For instance, the students were unused to NESTs' “hands-on, open, intuitive-random, and global teaching styles”. They also expressed concerns about NESTs' inattention to their language difficulties and the lack of local examples. The findings suggested that NESTs need to adapt their teaching to fit the language and cultural background of the students when teaching in China.

Misalignments between NNESTs and students regarding their beliefs, attitudes towards teaching, and teachers' own practices have also been examined (Saleem et al., 2022; Yang, 2018). Yang (2018), for example, highlighted a mismatch between NNESTs and Chinese

EFL students' preferred approaches to reading instruction. While the former advocated for a bottom-up, teacher-centered model, the students were inclined towards a top-down approach emphasizing more independent learning. Similarly, discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices can also induce misalignments (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Zhang & Sun, 2022).

Misalignments also arise between students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. While some studies have shown that students viewed both equally, others have suggested that students favored one or the other, with the majority leaning toward NESTs (Cruz & Auman, 2018; Kiczkowiak, 2019; Levis et al., 2016; Nomura & Mochizuki, 2018). In the Chinese context, for instance, Liu (2022) investigated how Chinese ELT stakeholders (students, teachers, and administrators) perceived native-speakerism, and found a prevalent bias favoring native English speaker products over non-native English speaker products counterparts. This bias ignored the linguistic, cultural, and epistemological differences between English-speaking countries and traditional non-native English-speaking countries, including China (see also Liu, 1999, 2005).

Such instructional misalignments between teachers and students can cause problems such as poor performance, dissatisfaction, and low well-being (Meissel et al., 2017; Ranjit, 2022). Moreover, the perpetuation of native-speakerism contributes to the marginalization and self-marginalization of NNESTs (Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Widodo et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to understand and address these misalignments to ensure more effective learning.

2.3. Effect of individual factors on students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs

Studies have explored students' perceptions of teachers, revealing the impacts these perceptions can have on teacher-student relationships, teaching effectiveness, and native-speakerism. The empirical evidence shows that native-speakerism is complex and multi-faceted. Teachers' native language, accent, race, age, gender, and teaching techniques, as well as the course they taught, can influence students' preferences and opinions (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Shakki, 2022; Zhang & Sun, 2022). For example, Ma (2012) found that some EFL students in Hong Kong favored NESTs' accents and attributes, whereas they expressed disdain for the Hong Kong accents of NNESTs.

Certain student factors can also shape students' opinions. Moussu (2006) found that students' native language, proficiency, and class subjects can all affect their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. For example, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Thai students were less positive about NNESTs and reported comprehension difficulties. High proficiency-level students gave more favorable reviews, whereas lower-level students were more critical of both types of teachers. Rámila (2015) conducted a study at a university in French Brittany involving 78 students, and found a general preference for NESTs, though older students exhibited more appreciation for both types of teachers. These findings are intriguing. However, more complex and modifiable variables related to NESTs and NNESTs are important for L2 learning. For example, students' motivation has been under-explored.

2.4. Motivation

Positive psychology is concerned with the well-being and flourishing of individuals and groups, such as students and teachers, in various contexts and domains (Wang et al., 2021).

A central theme in this field is motivation, which is the psychological mechanism that activates, regulates, and sustains our behavior toward our valued goals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Motivation can significantly influence both students' and teachers' learning outcomes, behaviors, and attitudes in the classroom (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Moreover, positive psychology also examines how students' perceptions of teachers can influence their motivation, engagement, and achievement in learning (Vu et al., 2022). These perceptions can be shaped by various factors, such as teachers' personality, competence, feedback, and rapport (Wang et al., 2021). In this study, we aim to explore how motivation influences students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in a Chinese EFL context from a positive psychology perspective. We use Schunk and DiBenedetto's (2020) definition of motivation which "refers to the processes that instigate and sustain goal-directed activities" (p. 1).

2.4.1. L2 motivational self-system

We also draw on Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS), which incorporates certain aspects that are relevant to positive psychology, such as the L2 self, which can generate positive emotions and enhance learners' self-esteem and confidence. The L2MSS underscores the significance of positive relations and experiential learning in L2 acquisition, emphasizing the role of supportive teachers, peers, communities, and participation in meaningful and enjoyable activities. Dörnyei (2019) proposed using a student engagement-specific perspective to assess the L2 learning experience, which involves the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and agentic aspects of students' participation in academic tasks and school-related activities. We choose this comprehensive and dynamic framework for understanding how motivation contributes to students' perceptions of teachers. This framework consists of the following eight components:

- 1) The ideal L2 self, which is what the L2 learner would like to become.
- 2) Ought-to L2 self, which refers to the qualities that the L2 learner believes she/he needs to have in order to prevent undesirable outcomes.
- 3) L2 learning experience, which considers the immediate learning environment and experience that shape the learner's particular motives.
- 4) Attitudes to learning English, which inspects situation-specific motivations associated with the immediate learning environment and experience.
- 5) Attitudes to L2 community, which looks at the learner's attitude towards the language community.
- 6) Family influence, which concerns active and passive parental roles and influences.
- 7) Cultural interest, which pertains to learners' interests in the products of the target language culture such as music, TV shows, movies, and magazines.
- 8) Integrativeness, which deals with learners' attitudes toward the target language, its culture, and native speakers of the language (Dörnyei, 2005).

We hypothesized that most of the L2MSS (e.g., ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience, cultural interest, and attitudes toward L2 speakers) would impact students' views on NESTs and NNESTs' teaching effectiveness, given the relation of these constructs to students' emotions and interactions with teachers.

2.4.2. L2 motivational self-system

Initial research into motivation used Gardner's social-educational model (Gardner et al., 1985), focusing on both integrative and instrumental orientations of learners. However, the model was regarded as insufficient for fully accounting for motivation in terms of psychological concepts such as self-concepts, and had limited applicability in ESL/EFL contexts (Dörnyei, 2009).

To reassess integrative motivation, Dörnyei (2009) put forward the Language Learning Motivational Self System (L2MSS) that encompassed learners' self-concepts such as the ideal self and ought-to self. This model has been validated through numerous studies (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013), and research has indicated a positive correlation between learner motivation and achievement (Moskovsky et al., 2016). Notably, affective variables also significantly impacted students' ideal self.

Teachers play an instrumental role in students' L2 learning. Positive teacher-student relationships, effective classroom teaching behaviors, and a better alignment of student-teacher teaching goals could enhance students' motivation (Hasan, 2018; Henry & Thorsen, 2018; Wang et al., 2021, 2023; Wang & Derakhshan, 2023; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Zhi & Wang, 2023). For instance, the study by Henry and Thorsen (2018), among English teachers and students in Sweden established that positive teacher-student relationships boosted student L2 motivation and engagement. Pan et al. (2023) similarly found that teachers' affective scaffolding markedly influenced student academic engagement and psychological well-being in a Chinese EFL context. These studies suggest teachers can enhance student motivation by enriching learning experiences (Mercer, 2015).

Several gaps in existing research concerning student perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs and student motivation have been identified. Firstly, only a few studies have considered the effects of students' characteristics such as age, gender, and native language as influential factors in shaping their perceptions (Boonsuk, 2016; Moussu, 2006). Secondly, most motivation research has focused on how student motivation impacts performance and how teachers can bolster this motivation, with less emphasis on how student motivation shapes perceptions of teachers (Feng & Mohd Rawian, 2023; Momenzadeh et al., 2023; Moskovsky et al., 2016; Wang, 2023). This study seeks to fill these gaps by exploring how students' motivation shapes their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is Chinese students' motivation in L2 learning?
- 2) How do Chinese students perceive the teaching effectiveness of NESTs and NNESTs?
- 3) What are the relationships between Chinese students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs?

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

This study was conducted at 4 middle-level universities in China to determine the motivation and attitudes of English majors towards NESTs and NNESTs. A total of 470 students from these four universities participated in the investigation.

The study employed convenience sampling due to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on our potential participant outreach and their general availability. The universities involved in this study adopted the National English Syllabus for English Majors for English major education, and the students were enrolled in four-year degree programs. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the student participants of the quantitative study including students' gender, age, year of study, high school, and university.

Table 1. *General Information of Student Participants in the Quantitative Study*

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Gender	Male	44	9.4
	Female	426	90.6
Age	19-21	269	57.2
	22-24	201	42.8
Year of study	Third Year	317	67.4
	Fourth Year	153	32.6
High school	Rural Area	19	4
	Township	227	48.3
	City	194	41.3
	Provincial	30	6.4
University	1	121	25.7
	2	225	47.9
	3	43	9.1
	4	81	17.2

3.2. Instruments and Procedures

The study used a quantitative design by utilizing three questionnaires for assessing students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs' and NNESTs' effectiveness. The Learners' Motivation Questionnaire (LMQ) was adapted from Taguchi et al.'s (2009) study, which was based on the L2 Motivational Self System framework. It had been implemented in various EFL/ESL contexts, including China. The LMQ had 26 items, covering six motivation factors (Dörnyei, 2014): ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, attitudes toward learning English, attitudes towards the L2 community, cultural interest, and integrativeness. The Learners' Perceptions

of NESTs Questionnaire (LPNQ) and the Learners' Perceptions of NNESTs Questionnaire (LPNNQ) were used to measure students' views on NESTs and NNESTs respectively. Each questionnaire contained the same 28 items adapted from the Teacher Behaviors Checklist (Keeley et al., 2006). These items represent various teacher qualities and behaviors, and were rated on a 5-point scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) (see Appendixes). Some items were adjusted to suit the Chinese university environment. The specifics of the items, as well as their Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients from the original questionnaire, can be found in Table 2. Table 2 reveals that the majority of the constructs had high internal consistency, and their α values were between .63 and .84.

Table 2. *Attitudinal/Motivational variables with Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Questionnaire*

CONSTRUCTS	ITEM NO.	α
Ideal L2 self	7-11	.83
Ought-to L2 self	12-18	.78
Family influence	19-23	.70
Instrumentality – promotion	24-31	.78
Instrumentality – prevention	32-36	.84
Attitudes to learning English	37-40	.81
Cultural interest	41-43	.67
Attitudes to L2 community	44-47	.76
Integrativeness	48-50	.63

3.3. Data analysis

Quantitative data were collected using three questionnaires (the LPNQ, LPNNQ, and LMQ) that measured Chinese EFL learners' L2 motivations and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs, and. The data were analyzed with SPSS 22.0. First, exploratory factor analysis was performed to validate the instruments. Then, descriptive statistics were used to provide a summary of the data. Finally, multivariate analysis, independent samples *t*-tests, and regression analysis were employed to analyze the relationships between the variables.

The participants were selected from four Chinese universities with the consent of the Faculty Deans. Recruitment notices and Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms were posted and handed out by the Department Secretary. Four teachers assisted with printing and delivering the questionnaires and Consent Forms, which were collected in a locked box.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Students' motivation

The LMQ was analyzed using descriptive statistics for the constructs and the individual items of students' motivation. Table displays the means and standard deviations for the LMQ and its constructs in ascending order, with the mean of the questionnaire at the end.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of the LMQ and its Constructs

	Mean	SD
Ought-to self	2.89	.82
Ideal L2 self	3.45	.78
Attitudes to learning English	3.59	.71
Attitudes to L2 community	3.68	.72
Integrativeness	3.81	.66
Cultural interest	3.91	.74
LMQ	3.45	.52

Table 3 illustrates that the mean of all items in the LMQ was 3.45, indicating that the students had a high motivation for English. The motivation was particularly high for students' views of English and L2 community, with mean scores over 3.40, and the highest mean score being for students' cultural interests (3.91). The low ought-to self (2.89) suggests that the students' English learning was not greatly affected by parents and friends.

4.2. Students' perceptions of NESTs

This section presents the statistical results for the LPNQ and the LPNNQ, with a comparison of the means between the individual items.

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the single items in descending order of the means, as well as the mean for all items in the LPNQ.

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation for Single Items and All Items in the LPNQ

Items	Mean	SD
18. Promotes Class Discussion	4.37	0.69
24. Respectful	4.32	0.68
4. Confident	4.31	0.69
2. Approachable/Personable	4.26	0.70
11. Good Listener	4.26	0.71
8. Enthusiastic About Teaching and About Topic	4.23	0.71
19. Promotes Critical Thinking/Intellectually Stimulating	4.23	0.71
21. Punctuality/Manages Class Time	4.22	0.73
12. Happy/Positive Attitude/Humorous	4.19	0.76
22. Rapport	4.19	0.76
5. Creative and Interesting	4.16	0.77
6. Effective Communicator	4.16	0.76
7. Encourages and Cares for Students	4.16	0.75

17. Professional	4.14	0.77
9. Establishes Daily and Academic Term Goals	4.13	0.75
10. Flexible/Open-Minded	4.11	0.76
15. Prepared	4.10	0.78
23. Realistic Expectations of Students/Fair Testing and Grading	4.09	0.77
13. Humble	4.08	0.76
27. Technologically Competent	4.06	0.77
28. Understanding	4.06	0.77
20. Provides Constructive Feedback	4.02	0.85
16. Presents Current Information	4.00	0.82
14. Knowledgeable About Subject Matter	3.96	0.84
26. Strives to Be a Better Teacher	3.95	0.77
3. Authoritative	3.91	0.82
1. Accessible	3.80	0.98
25. Sensitive and Persistent	3.64	0.92
LPNQ	4.11	0.56

Table 4 displays that the mean of all items in the LPNQ was 4.11, suggesting the students had positive perceptions of NESTs. Items 18, 24, and 4 received the most favorable ratings, implying that NESTs were most highly evaluated on Item 18, “Promotes class discussion, being respectful, and being confident”. Table 5 provides the mean and standard deviations for each item of the LPNNQ in descending order according to the mean.

4.3. Students’ perceptions of NNESTs

Table 5 shows that the mean of all the items in the LPNQ was 4.11, indicating the students held a positive attitude towards NESTs. Items 18, 24, and 4 were rated the highest, suggesting that NESTs were most appreciated for promoting class discussion, respect, and confidence. Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation for all the items included in the LPNNQ with the highest mean being at the top.

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation of Single Items and All Items in the LPNNQ

Items	Mean	SD
17. Professional	4.29	0.68
4. Confident	4.23	0.71
3. Authoritative	4.22	0.70
14. Knowledgeable About Subject Matter	4.20	0.75
9. Establishes Daily and Academic Term Goals	4.19	0.76

15. Prepared	4.19	0.72
24. Respectful	4.19	0.72
1. Accessible	4.17	0.76
7. Encourages and Cares for Students	4.16	0.75
27. Technologically Competent	4.16	0.74
11. Good Listener	4.14	0.74
2. Approachable/Personable	4.13	0.74
6. Effective Communicator	4.13	0.75
26. Strives to Be a Better Teacher	4.13	0.75
28. Understanding	4.10	0.77
22. Rapport	4.09	0.77
13. Humble	4.08	0.74
8. Enthusiastic About Teaching and About Topic	4.05	0.77
23. Realistic Expectations of Students/Fair Testing and Grading	4.05	0.79
10. Flexible/Open-Minded	4.04	0.80
16. Presents Current Information	4.03	0.83
18. Promotes Class Discussion	4.02	0.80
21. Punctuality/Manages Class Time	4.02	0.80
20. Provides Constructive Feedback	4.01	0.81
19. Promotes Critical Thinking/Intellectually Stimulating	3.97	0.82
12. Happy/Positive Attitude/Humorous	3.96	0.81
5. Creative and Interesting	3.94	0.82
25. Sensitive and Persistent	3.84	0.92
LPNNQ	4.10	0.56

Table 5 indicates that the mean of all the items in the questionnaire was 4.10 implying that students had a favorable opinion of NNESTs. The top three items were Items 17, 4, and 3, demonstrating that NNESTs were perceived most favorably for being professional, confident, and authoritative.

4.4. Students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs

Pearson's correlation was conducted to determine the relationships the Learners' Motivation Questionnaire (LMQ), the Learners' Perceptions of NESTs Questionnaire (LPNQ), and Learners' Perceptions of NNESTs Questionnaire (LPNNQ). The results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. *Pearson's Correlation Test Results for the LMQ, the LPNQ, and the LPNNQ*

	Mean	LPNQ	LPNNQ
MQ	Pearson Correlation	.385	.279
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

$p < .01$

The results showed a moderate positive correlation between LMQ-LPNQ ($r = .385$) and LMQ-LPNNQ ($r = .279$) which were proven to be statistically significant ($p = .000$). This suggests that there is an overall positive relationship between the students' motivation and their views of the NESTs and the NNESTs.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs

This study investigated the Chinese English learners' motivation, their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs, and how their motivation contribute to their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. The findings indicate a high motivation among students, with a marked interest in English culture, and a low level of ought-to self. This observation aligns with past studies including Wang and Zheng (2021), as they found that non-English majors with a high appreciation for English culture and low ought-to self for learning English, even though it deviates from the findings of Dörnyei and Chan (2013). Cultural interest is often seen as a factor of integrativeness, which contributes to the development of the ideal self (Dörnyei, 2009). The students' significant cultural interest which extends to English-based products such as movies, music, and series, as noted by Zheng et al. (2018), is a vital aspect of students' future career success, and should thus be encouraged and given priority.

The low "ought-to self" is related to students' negative resistance to learning English (Dörnyei, 2009). This can partially be explained by the sociolinguistic landscape of China, where English is not used in everyday conversations, but is limited to specific domains, such as education (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). This lack of necessity for English use in students' daily lives may lead to a lack of parental support for selecting English as a major. Instead, they would advocate more "practical" majors, such as those in the STEM fields (He, 2020). Although the ought-to self may affect learners' motivation, its effect is insufficient to markedly alter the way learners approach their studies (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Students with a lower level of "ought-to self" experience fewer external pressures, such as those from parents or peers, to learn English. Instead, they often exhibit a high level of self-motivation (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). A large proportion of students undertake English as a major, motivated more by an inherent interest in the language, past academic successes in English, and career goals, even in the face of limited exposure to English in the family setting (You & Dörnyei, 2016). As many occupational fields in the local area do not demand high English proficiency, it could lead parents to refrain from encouraging their children to take up English as a major.

5.2. Students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs

The findings indicated that students consider NESTs and NNESTs as equally effective, although in distinct ways. Generally, NESTs scored higher on affective factors, whereas NNESTs received higher ratings in aspects valued in the conventional, teacher-focused Chinese educational settings, which echoes Zhang and Zhang's (2021) stance. It is crucial to avoid viewing these characteristics as fixed or unalterable attributes of NESTs and NNESTs; they are more accurately common strengths and potential areas for enhancement that can be improved through professional development. In line with Huang's (2017) suggestions, both NESTs and NNESTs can hone and refine their pedagogical skills by acquiring the strengths of the other through rigorous professional learning.

5.3. Students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs

The study showed a moderate positive correlation between students' motivation and their views of NESTs and NNETs. Most motivational constructs, including the ideal L2 self, attitudes to English learning, cultural interest, attitudes to L2 community, and integrativeness, showed positive correlations. The correlations between students' motivation and their view of NESTs were discernibly stronger than it was the case with NNETs.

A possible explanation for the correlation between motivation and students' perceptions of NESTs/NNESTs may reside in factors such as the ideal self and L2 learning experience contributing to students' participation in the class (Zhang et al., 2020). These factors facilitate active student participation in class, leading to heightened involvement and reduced apprehension. Moreover, students' ideal self had a positive influence on their willingness to communicate, as noted by Lee and Lee (2020), which is in line with the positive correlation observed between students' motivation and their perceptions of teachers. Aubrey (2014) indicated that students are more likely to communicate with teachers when they are involved in activities and responding to questions.

The considerably stronger influence of motivation on students' perceptions of NESTs compared to NNESTs could potentially be attributed to differential levels of exposure. The majority of Chinese EFL educators are NNESTs and, having been taught by such teachers from primary school, students have a greater familiarity with these teachers (Bolton & Craddol, 2012; You & Dörnyei, 2016). As such, their attitudes are less affected by their motivations. Meanwhile, students have limited exposure to NESTs, with some never having experienced their teaching until university. Additionally, NESTs are often teachers of L2 groups in inner-circle countries, and L2 motivation is linked to openness to the L2 group (Dörnyei, 2009). Studies have shown that students' perceptions of English speakers are a manifestation of implicit motivation and are positively correlated with their desired L2 self (Taguchi et al., 2009). Consequently, those exhibiting higher motivational levels are likely to harbor more favorable attitudes towards NESTs. Furthermore, the prevalent native-speakerism within China may have affected students' perceptions of NNESTs, subsequently reducing the correlations between student motivation and their perceptions. This dynamic might also induce teacher anxiety, which ultimately harms teachers' well-being.

6. CONCLUSION

This investigation explored the effect of motivation on Chinese English majors' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in China, with implications for teacher well-being. Statistical analysis was performed on questionnaire data collected from 470 students, revealing NNESTs were perceived as more knowledgeable, skilled, and professional, while NESTs seen as more caring, flexible, and engaging. Students' motivation exhibited a positive correlation with their perceptions both of NESTs and NNESTs, albeit the effect was less pronounced for NNESTs, possibly partially due to the influence of native-speakerism. The results shed light on the significance of students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in the Chinese EFL context and the pivotal role of motivation in shaping these views. They provide a basis for raising results as such cannot aim to do anything, raise awareness of the harm of native-speakerism on teacher-student relationships and teacher well-being. Furthermore, these findings offer pedagogical guidance that could assist educators in employing motivational strategies, thereby optimizing alignment in teaching and enhancing its effectiveness. These results could prove invaluable to the stakeholders (teachers, students, and administrative officials), helping to improve students' motivation, their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs, and ultimately, teacher effectiveness.

This study revealed that NESTs and NNESTs are perceived by students as equally effective but have different strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, NESTs and NNESTs should recognize the synergistic nature of various effective teacher characteristics in teaching, and improve weaknesses to make instruction more effective. For instance, NNESTs could improve their affective qualities, nurturing a more compassionate, respectful, and impartial stance towards students, as well as learning about student-centered teaching methodologies (Wang & Fang, 2020).

On the other hand, NNESTs could strive to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese culture and educational system, adjust their teaching materials and class activities accordingly, and ensure thorough preparedness for class. Furthermore, the adoption of co-teaching models, where NESTs and NNESTs teach collaboratively, could foster knowledge exchange and provide students with more personalized attention (Gbenakpon, 2018; Rao & Yu, 2021; Sanders-Smith & Dávila, 2021).

Positive correlations were found between students' motivation and their perception of teachers. Thus, the application of motivational strategies could serve to boost students' motivation and their perspective of teachers. Motivation influenced students' perceptions of NESTs more than NNESTs, likely due to prevailing native-speakerism. This issue requires significant attention, as it could distort students' perceptions of NNESTs and thereby affect the quality of teacher-student dynamics, teaching effectiveness, and teachers' well-being.

The study suffers from several limitations. It was conducted in a Chinese EFL environment, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other ELT settings. Additionally, the sample mainly consisted of Chinese university English majors, which might overlook variations among English language learners with different proficiency levels. Constraints related to Covid-19 necessitated a narrower scope, leading to the exclusion of certain qualitative approaches, such as classroom observation. This study used a geopolitical distinction between the two groups (Kachru et al., 2006) and considered English teachers from Inner Circle countries as NESTs, while this distinction may not be applicable to other contexts.

Lastly, the participating students from four mid-level universities are not wholly representative of the Chinese English major population, so findings might be largely relevant in similar contexts. Future research could explore the impact of motivation on non-English majors' perceptions of teachers and investigate strategies for teachers to motivate students in enhancing their perceptions. Further studies should also examine other factors influencing student motivation, teaching effectiveness, native-speakerism, and NNEST well-being to further enrich our understanding of these complex dynamics.

7. REFERENCES

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