

Developing an identity as a teacher:

*Perceptions of nonnative speaker
teacher trainees on a TESOL
programme*

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“Half students in our class are non-native speakers. Many of us including me want to be an English teacher. However, as non-English native speakers, are we able to become a good English teacher here? What are the advantages and disadvantages of it? What should we do to achieve this goal?

I'd like to know about your opinions.”



Overview

- NS and NNS in ELT
- The research
- Findings
- Reflections

NS and NNS teachers in ELT

- 1961 Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language: The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.
- Differences between, and status of, NS and NNS teachers addressed in late 80s/early 90s.
- The ‘native speaker fallacy’ (Phillipson, 1992)

NNS teachers (NNESTs) in ELT

- More than 80% of ELT professionals internationally are non-native speakers.
- The number of NNESTs has been larger than the number of NESTs for some time.

(Canagarajah, 1999)



Unique strengths of NNESTs

- Can serve as imitable models of the successful learner of English
- Can teach language-learning strategies more effectively
- Can provide learners with more information about the English language
- Are more able to anticipate language difficulties of their students
- Can be more empathetic to the needs and problems of their learners
- Can benefit from sharing the learners' mother tongue.

(Medgyes, 1999)

Non-native speakers in ELT

- NNESTs suffer from:
 - Inferiority complex
 - Schizophrenia (Medgyes, 1999)
- “NNESTs struggle for equal treatment in the ELT profession” (Maum, 2002)
- A high percentage of NNS teachers believed that NS teachers were superior in all language skills areas: speaking (100%), pronunciation (92%), listening (87%), vocabulary (79%), and reading (72%). (Tang (1997)

The TESOL programme

- Introductory level TESOL qualification:
 - Cert in ELT (Level 5 NZQA)
 - Grad Cert TESOL (Level 6 NZQA)
- 1 semester (12/15 weeks) full-time
- Accept those with and without a degree
- Accept NS and NNS students
- Interview and selection task
- IELTS level 6 or equivalent required

The participants

- **15** out of 22 NNS trainees who had completed a TESOL programme in the previous 18 months (2006-2007)
- 9 different L1
- Previous Qualifications: Certificate to Masters
- Previous Teaching Experience: 12 of 15 (8 had used English as medium of instruction)



The Methodology:

■ Questionnaire:

- Qualitative items: Experiences (8)
- Quantitative items: Perceptions (4)

Aims

1

English
language
knowledge
and skills

2

Teaching
knowledge
and skills

4

Comparison
of NS and
NNS teachers
in general

3

Teaching
knowledge
and skills
compared to
NS teachers

Findings (1)

Participants' rating of their own English language knowledge and skills



Participants' rating of their own English language knowledge and skills

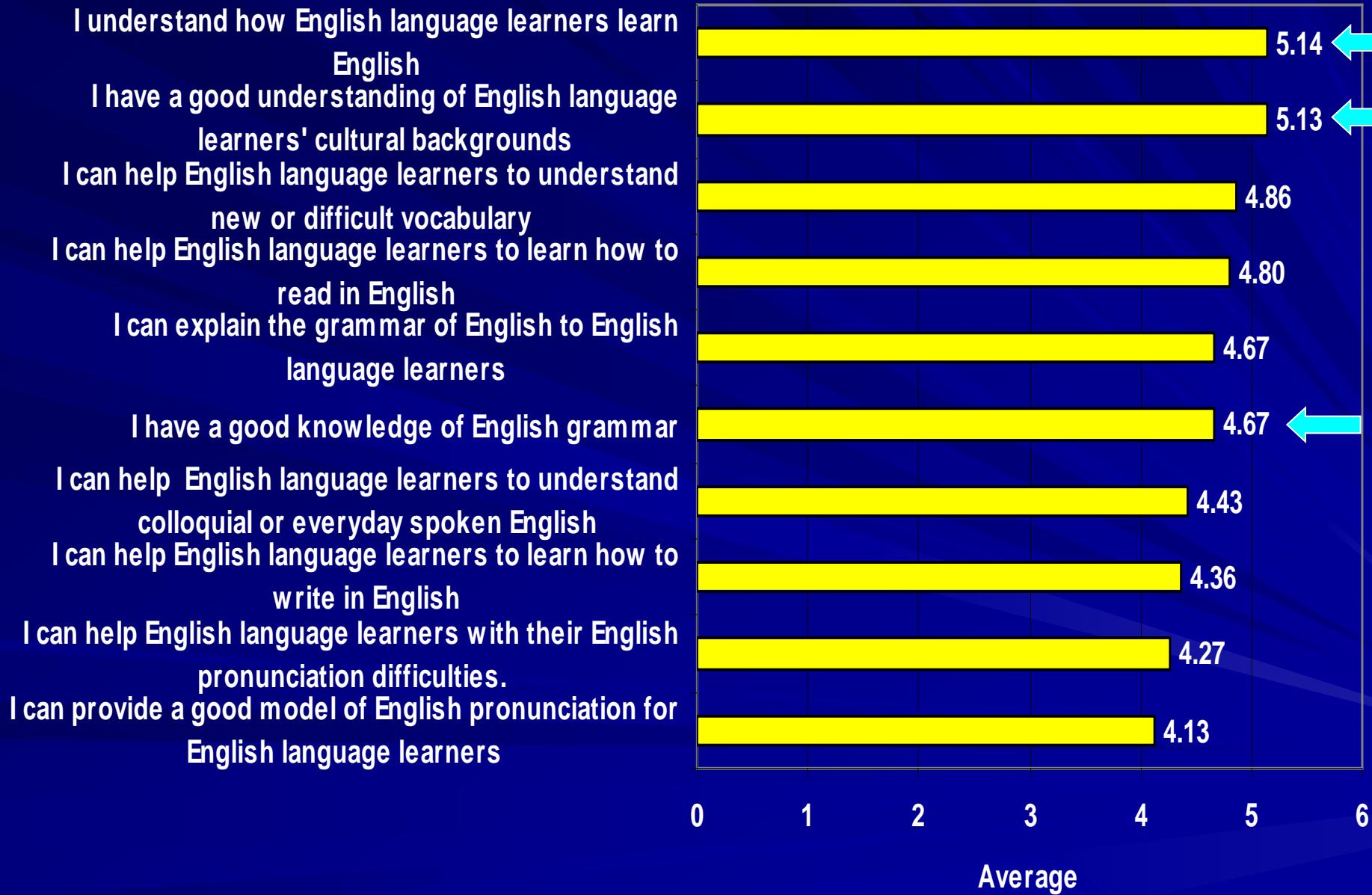


Findings (2)

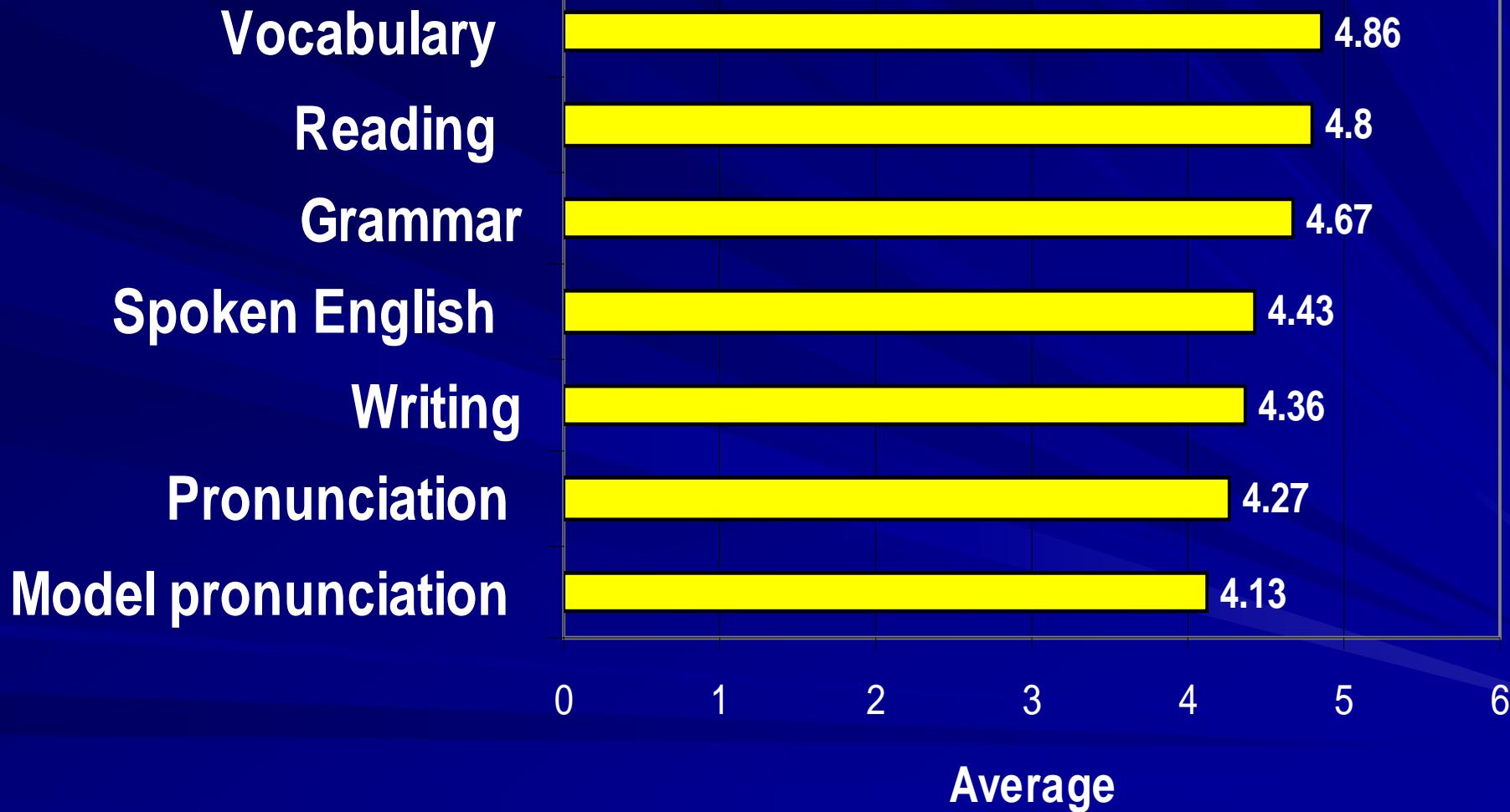
Participants' rating of their own teaching knowledge and skills



Participants' rating of their own teaching knowledge and skills

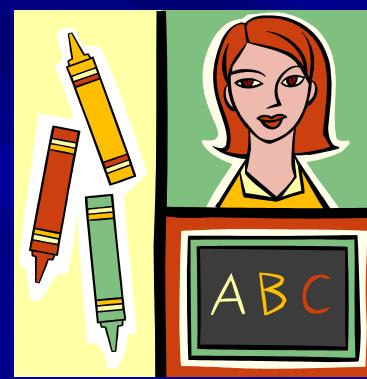
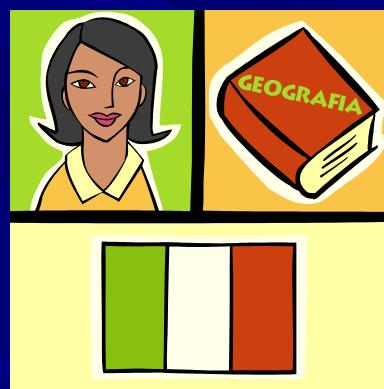


Participants' rating of teaching skills



Findings (3)

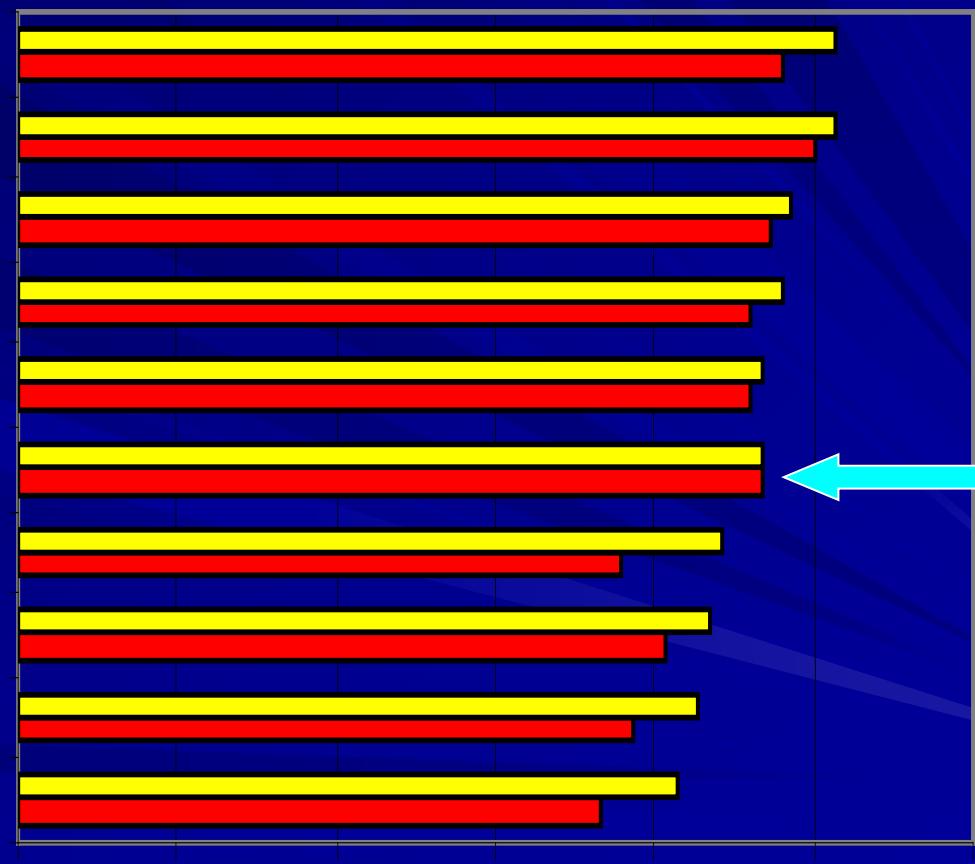
Participants' rating of their own teaching knowledge and skills compared to NS teachers



Comparison with NS teachers

■ Comparison with NS teachers ■ Participants' rating of themselves

Understand how learners learn English



Help learners to understand everyday spoken English

Help learners to write in English

Help with English pronunciation difficulties.

Provide a good model of English pronunciation

Discussion: Rating of teaching skills compared to NS teachers

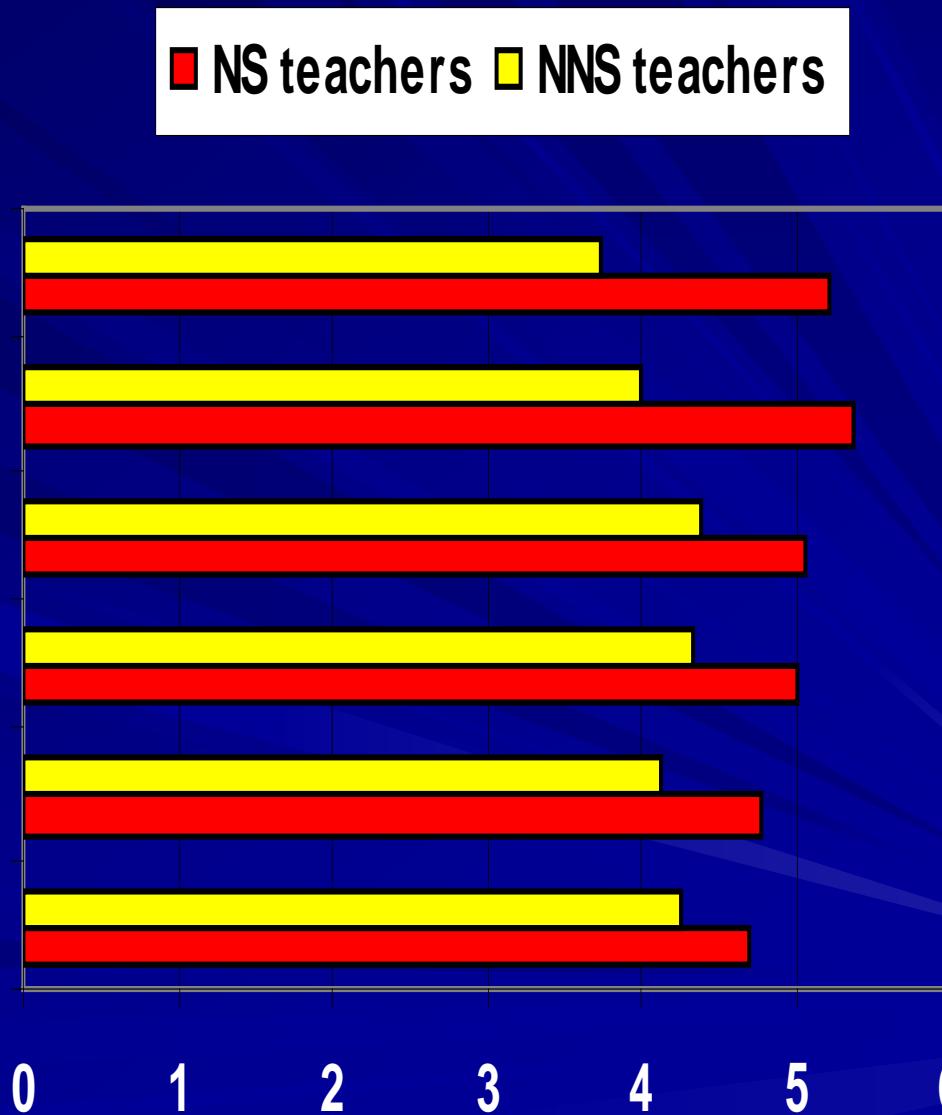
Own teaching skills	Comparison with NS
1) Vocabulary	1) Vocabulary
2) Reading	2) Grammar
3) Grammar	3) Reading
4) Everyday spoken English	4) Writing
5) Writing	5) Pronunciation
6) Pronunciation	6) Everyday spoken English
7) Providing a good model of English pronunciation	7) Providing a good model of English pronunciation

Findings (4)

- Participants' rating of the teaching knowledge and skills of NS and NNS teachers in general

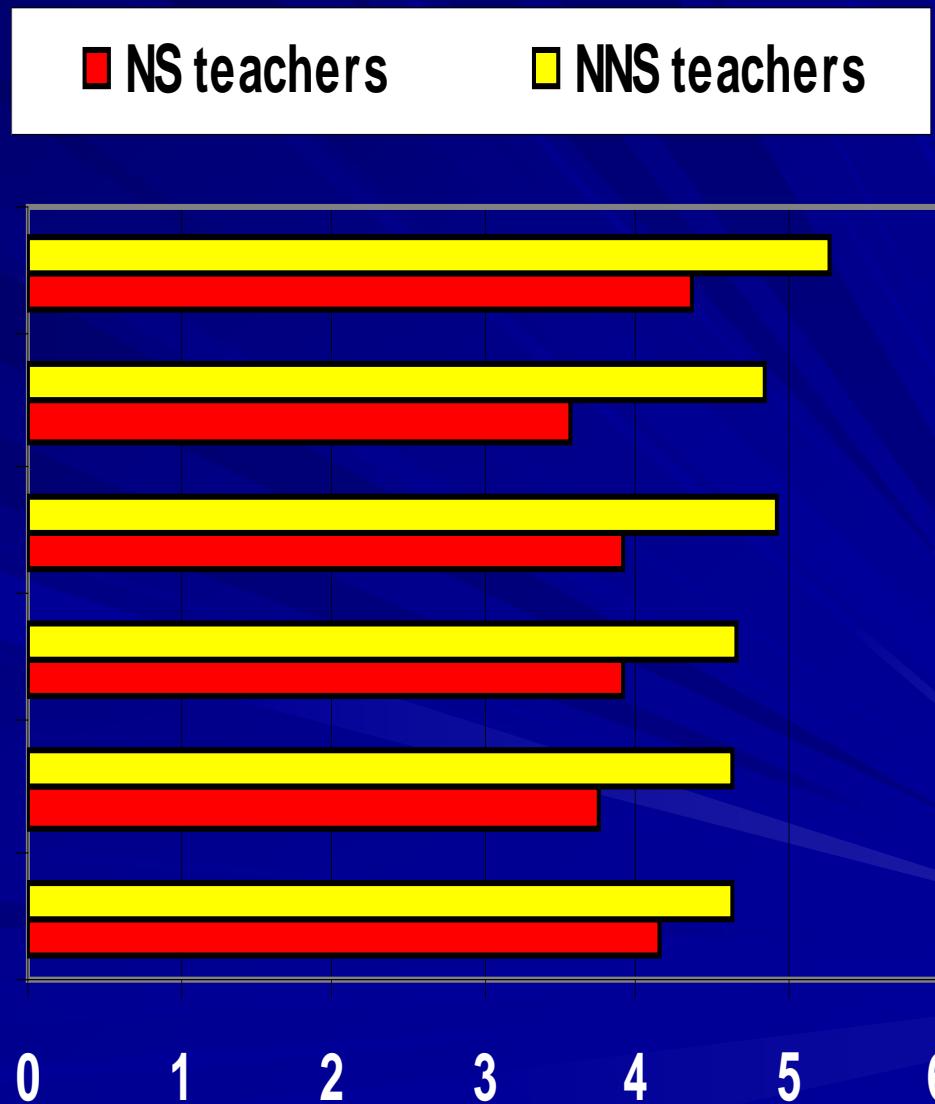
NS teachers rated more highly

- Providing a good model of English pronunciation for learners
- Teaching learners about everyday spoken English
- Helping learners to correct errors when speaking English
- Helping learners to correct errors when writing English
- Teaching learners how to write in English
- Helping learners with pronunciation difficulties

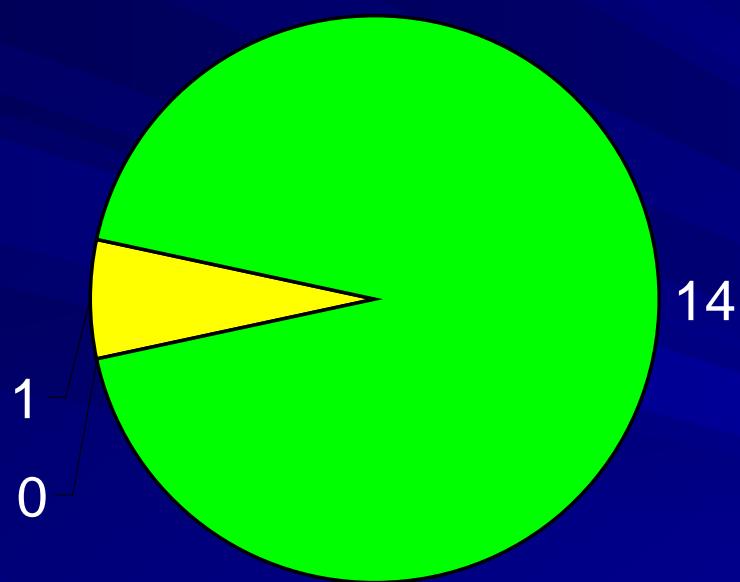


NNS teachers rated more highly

- Teaching new or difficult vocabulary
- Understanding how English language learners learn English
- Understanding learners' cultural backgrounds
- Explanation of English grammar to English language learners
- Knowledge of English grammar
- Teaching learners how to read in English



Who is the better teacher – NS or NNS?



- A native speaker of English will generally be better at teaching English
- A non-native speaker of English will generally be better at teaching English
- It is difficult to predict who will make the best English language teacher

Themes emerging from the results

- A fairly high degree of confidence in their ability to do the job of an ESOL/EL teacher
- Clear areas where participants feel that NNSs are more proficient than NSs, and others where they feel they are less proficient
- They do not see NS teachers as being automatically better than NNS teachers.

Reflections

- How many NNS teachers work in your institution?
- What is the proportion of NS/NNS teachers?
- Do NNS teachers experience discrimination from employers in NZ?
- How do NS teachers view NNS teachers?
- What are the attitudes of NS teachers towards NNS teachers?

Recommendations from previous research regarding the training of NNS teachers (cont.)

- Provide English language training for NNS trainees. "...for NNS English teachers to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals, first, we have to be near-native speakers of English" (Medgyes, 1999)
- Provide NNS trainees with instruction and support in key areas (Liu, D., 1999)
- Provide a separate course for NNS trainees, focussing on EFL teaching in non-Western/their home country settings
(Carrier, 2003)
- Provide a forum to discuss issues and concerns relating to ELT professionals from diverse backgrounds (Samimy and Brutt-Gifler, 1999)

■ Are we drawing on “the unique insights Periphery professionals can provide from their experience and background” ?

(Canagarajah, 1999, p. 87)

Recommendations regarding the training of NNS teachers

- Offer classes that would increase the confidence NNS have of their language and teaching skills
(Berry, 1990)
- Both NS and NNS could benefit from courses in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and culture
(Cullen, 1994)
- Teach the value of collaboration between NS and NNS teachers
- Show NS and NNS how to take advantage of their respective strengths and weaknesses (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004)
- Integrate instruction on issues related to NNS across the whole teacher training curriculum. Kamhi-Stein, 2004)