

NOTIONS OF NON-NATIVE TEACHERS  
IN COSTA RICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS<sup>1</sup>

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**Resumen.** Se hace un análisis detallado de las percepciones hacia los docentes nativos y no nativos de diferentes idiomas. Se examinan las actitudes asumidas por los coordinadores académicos, profesores y estudiantes de algunas escuelas de idiomas costarricenses, las cuales ofrecen clases de español, inglés, francés, portugués e italiano. Estas opiniones se recolectaron mediante una encuesta que completaron 272 personas en Intercultura, Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, Intensa, Instituto San Joaquín de Flores, Alianza Francesa, Dante Alighieri y la Fundación de Cultura, Difusión y Estudios Brasileños. En estos institutos hay variedad de profesores: nativos, no-nativos, o ambos. Sin embargo, no todos poseen los títulos necesarios para ser profesores de idiomas. En general, la noción de la falacia del hablante nativo existe en la población de estas escuelas dado que la mayoría de los coordinadores, profesores y estudiantes creen que lo ideal es que el profesor de que enseñe un idioma sea nativo-hablante de este. Por lo tanto, es necesario crear conciencia acerca de este tema para que haya más justicia en cuanto a la contratación y el trato de los profesores no-nativos de varios idiomas.

**Palabras clave:** docentes nativos (NTs), docentes no nativos (NNTs), la falacia del hablante nativo, discriminación.

**Abstract.** A detailed analysis is provided here of the perceptions towards native and non-native teachers of different languages. The attitudes from academic coordinators, teachers and students of some Costa Rican language schools offering Spanish, English, French, Portuguese and Italian classes are examined. These insights were gathered through a survey completed by 272 people at Intercultura, Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, Intensa, Instituto San Joaquín de Flores, Alianza Francesa, Dante Alighieri and the Fundación de Cultura, Difusión y Estudios Brasileños. In these institutes there is a variety of teachers: native, non-native, or both. However, not all of them hold the necessary credentials to be language teachers. In general, the native speaker fallacy notion exists in these schools' population since most coordinators, teachers and students believe the ideal language teacher is a native speaker of that language. Therefore, it becomes necessary to create awareness regarding this issue so there is more justice in hiring practices and the treatment towards non-native teachers of various languages.

**Keywords:** native teachers (NTs), non-native teachers (NNTs), the native speaker fallacy, discrimination.

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## 1 Introduction

In an increasingly connected world, the learning of foreign languages has become a real need. Nowadays, the job market is more complex than it was some years ago; therefore, it demands highly educated and trained workers. Being able to communicate effectively, to comprehend and express oneself in other languages are some of the necessary skills in the globalized world of today. English has become the most useful language for international communication and the lingua franca in fields such as marketing, international commerce and tourism (Bassi and Álvarez, 2010). However, it is now assumed that all professionals must be able to communicate in English. In fact, being bilingual is nothing new anymore. If one wants to succeed in any profession, it is imperative to know more than two languages. Due to this demand, the number of language schools worldwide has increased significantly in the last years.

The various service companies that have been established in Costa Rica through time now require professionals with different language skills.

Ten years ago two companies hired people with multilingual skills, today they are fourteen, which provide from services to financial and technical support in seven languages: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian and Mandarin (1).

Hence, numerous schools in the country provide people with the opportunity to learn these languages. In addition, since Costa Rica is considered a popular touristic destination, many foreigners choose this country to learn Spanish. That is why there are more than seventy language schools offering Spanish classes in all regions. Similarly, the places for learning English are quite a lot, and the academies where other foreign languages such as Portuguese, French and Italian are taught have multiplied considerably in the recent years.

In these private schools, the requirements for hiring teachers vary significantly. In some of them, either a university degree in education or a certification in language teaching might be needed; in others, the only condition is to be a native speaker of the language being taught. This occurs because of the wide belief that a native speaker is the ideal language teacher, even if not having the necessary credentials to be an educator. Administrators in some schools, not only in Costa Rica but also in other countries, would not hire non-native speaking teachers of a language just because of their non-native condition, regardless of the education and experience they have. Why does this happen? Who supports this assumption, is it the administrators, the students, the teachers themselves, or all of them? Can't students learn a language from a non-native speaker?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the perceptions towards non-native speaking teachers of Spanish, English, Portuguese, French and Italian in some Costa Rican language schools. Besides finding out what teachers, program administrators and students think of non-native speaking teachers, this research presents valuable information on the need for an equal treatment in the language field. This, in turn, will create awareness on this relevant issue, so necessary for teachers and students of any language.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 *The Importance of Language Learning*

Due to globalization, language learning has become a priority worldwide. Regardless of the field of study, all professionals should be able to communicate in at least two or three

languages, if they wish to be highly competitive. Moreover, cultural sensitivity is greatly valued in any profession, and learning another language implies getting to know and understand a different culture.

In the case of Spanish, there are several reasons why speaking this language is really beneficial nowadays. According to the *Don Quijote Spanish Language School* (2011), these are some important global statistics of Spanish speakers:

- Spanish is the world's third most spoken language, after Mandarin Chinese and English, and ranks second in terms of native speakers.
- At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 60 million people spoke Spanish. Today, almost 500 million people worldwide speak Spanish!
- Spanish is the mother tongue of approximately 388 million people in 21 countries.
- Spanish is the second most used language in international communication.
- The US Census Bureau reports that the nation's Hispanic population is expected to jump to 49.3 million from 38.2 million by 2015. The 39 million Hispanics currently living in the USA make up 12.5% of the total population.

There is no doubt the Spanish language has proved to be one of the most necessary and important languages to be learned in the future. Therefore, the number of schools in Spain and Latin America dedicated to teach Spanish has increased considerably in the last years. Only in Costa Rica, there are almost one hundred institutes where foreigners can learn this language. In general, the Costa Rican Spanish language schools offer the opportunity to learn or improve Spanish skills in small groups, while experiencing the country's culture. In addition, students usually take part in extracurricular activities such as tours, cooking and dance lessons. *Intensa*, *Intercultura* and the *Centro Panamericano de Idiomas* (CPI) are just three of the so many private Spanish schools.

Communicating in English represented an advantage some years ago. Now it is a worldwide need no one can deny. The website *English Language* lists the following facts as some important statistics of this language:

- English is the most widespread language in the world and is more widely spoken and written than any other language.
- Over 400 million people use the English vocabulary as a mother tongue, only surpassed in numbers, but not in distribution by speakers of the many varieties of Chinese.
- Over 700 million people speak English as a foreign language.
- More than half of the world's technical and scientific periodicals are in English.
- The main language used throughout the world on the internet is English.

Since it is so vital to learn English today, Costa Rica offers an extensive variety of institutes where people can do so. Some of the most popular ones are the *Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano* (CCCN), *Intensa* and *Intercultura*. These and other schools have campuses in different regions of the country, allowing students the opportunity to study English in both urban and rural places.

Due to the recent expansion of multinational companies, being proficient at languages other than English has become a necessity. Because of this, the interest in learning languages such as Portuguese, French and Italian has increased a lot lately. The *AmeriSpan Study Abroad* website includes the following information about Portuguese: “Portuguese has been ranked as the fifth most spoken language in the world with about 272.9 million native speakers, most of which reside in Brazil and Portugal. Learning Portuguese can open doors to employment in a variety of areas” (1).

In addition, Shryok mentions some relevant facts about French:

- French as a foreign language is the second most frequently taught language in the world after English.
- 28 countries have French as an official language.
- French is the only language other than English spoken on five continents.
- More tourists visit France than any other country in the world.
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language 2008 Survey indicates that more students are interested in studying French than any other foreign language in the United States (Shryok, 2009: 1).

Some statistics of the Italian language, stated by the *Italian Language* website and Deacon (2011) are as follows:

- Italian is spoken by over 80 million people in Italy and other places of the world such as Malta, San Marino and parts of Switzerland, Croatia, Slovenia and France.
- Italy is one of the biggest places for tourism, being the fifth most visited country in the world.
- Italian is the fifth most taught non-native language, after English, French, Spanish and German.

There are internationally known institutes for learning Portuguese, French and Italian in Costa Rica, which are the *Fundación de Cultura, Difusión y Estudios Brasileiros* (FCDEB), the *Alianza Cultural Franco-Costarricense* (AF) and the *Asociación Cultural Dante Alighieri* (DA), accordingly. Even though these schools are the ones most people prefer in order to learn these languages, other academies offer classes as well.

These schools offering Spanish, English, Portuguese, French and Italian instruction have their own regulations and requirements in terms of hiring language teachers. Some of them accept both, native and non-native speakers of those languages. Others do not hire non-native speakers, even if they hold the necessary teaching credentials, because it is an institutional policy or because the students are the ones who request native speakers. This fact supports the notion that the ideal teacher is a native speaker.

### 2.1.1 *The Native Speaker Fallacy*

Teachers of all languages are either native or non-native; nevertheless, how is this nativeness determined? The most common answer would be: by the country where a person is born. Thus, a native speaker of English, Spanish, French, Portuguese or Italian is a person who is born in an English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, or Italian-speaking country, respectively.

Nonetheless, what happens when a child has bilingual parents, or when they do not share the same mother tongue, therefore speaking two different languages to the child at the same time? Or when someone is born in one country and then moves to another one where a distinct language is spoken? Can one grow up being a native speaker of more than one language? All these circumstances go beyond the common belief of what constitutes a native speaker.

The native speaker fallacy refers to the belief that the best language teacher is a native speaker of that language. Phillipson, who created the term in 1992, opposed to the NS fallacy and believed that teachers are made rather than born whether teachers are native or non-native (Fathelbab, 2011: 1). Non-native speakers (NNSs), however, sometimes experience discrimination in the job market because they are not considered as good as native speakers (NSs). What is even worse is that, in some cases, even if NNSs hold the required credentials to teach the language and NSs do not, NSs might be preferred.

“Native speakers are believed to be equipped with a genetically endowed capacity to teach the language; whereas non-native speakers are perceived as deficient imitators of the language they are trying to learn” (Selvi, 2010: 174). This quote makes reference to the results of a study which documented that native speakerism was more important than relevant education background and sufficient teaching experience. Selvi continues to question: “What might be the rationale behind assuming that a student who graduates as a marine biologist, petroleum engineer, or software developer can successfully meet the expectations of the students in a classroom in rural Thailand, metropolitan Tokyo, or suburban Beijing, only as a result of a few weeks of training, provided that he or she is a native speaker of English? (Selvi, 2010: 174).

Since English is spoken as a foreign language by more people than as a second language, most English teachers are NNSs. Even so, NSs seem to have a clear advantage over NNSs.

Native English speakers without teaching qualifications are more likely to be hired as ESL teachers than qualified and experienced NNESTs, especially outside the United States. But many in the profession argue that teaching credentials should be required of all English teachers, regardless of their native language. This would shift the emphasis in hiring from who the job candidates are (i.e., native or nonnative speakers of English) to what they are (i.e., qualified English teachers) and allow for more democratic employment practices (qtd. in Maum, 2002: 1).

The assumption that NSs are better language teachers than NNSs is a common myth in the teaching-learning field, in spite of the language. There is a general misconception that anybody can become a language teacher as long as he or she is a native speaker, even if not having the required degree or certification. However, is it fair for a proficient, prepared and experienced non-native teacher to be rejected because a qualified or unqualified native speaker is believed to do a better job? Does this happen in Costa Rican language schools? If, so, how often and why? What do students think about it?

### **3 Main body**

In order to find out the perceptions towards native and non-native language teachers, a survey designed by the researcher was conducted during the month of July 2011. The questionnaire was completed by the academic coordinators of language programs in seven different schools in Costa Rica, as well as by approximately 10 teachers and 30 students from each institute. The survey for administrators and teachers was made up of 5 questions, while the

one for students had 6 questions; most of which were the same. The language schools from which the information was gathered offer classes in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian; they are: *Intensa*, *Intercultura*, *Centro Panamericano de Idiomas (CPI)*, *Instituto San Joaquín de Flores*, *Alianza Cultural Franco-Costarricense (AF)*, *Fundación de Cultura, Difusión y Estudios Brasileiros (FCDEB)* and the *Asociación Cultural Dante Alighieri (DA)*. In general, 7 coordinators, 58 teachers and 207 students completed the survey, for a total of 272 people. All solicitants fully responded to the surveys; they are included in the Appendices A, B and C.

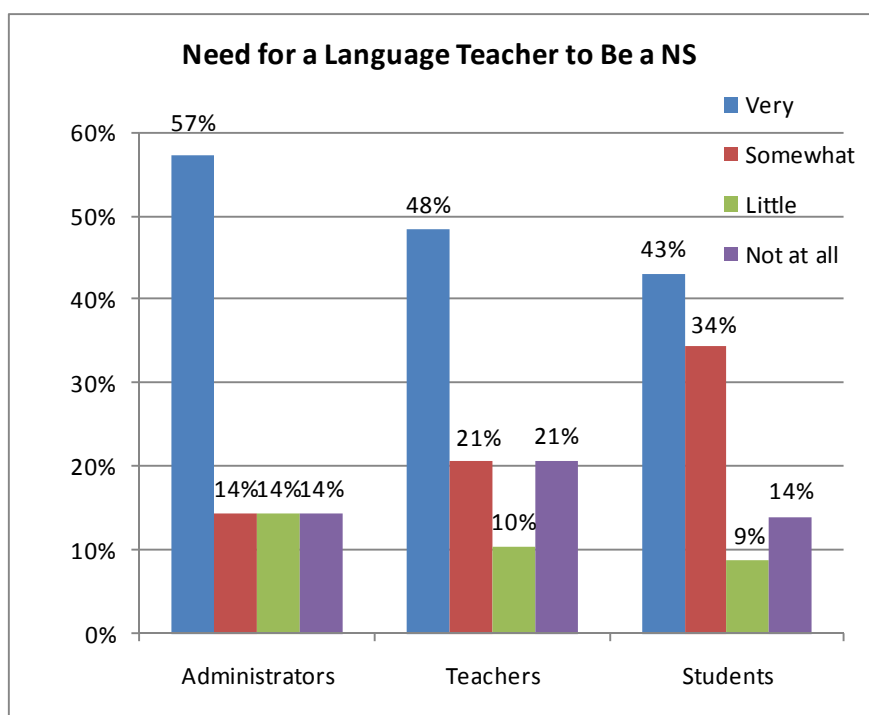
The requirements for hiring language teachers vary a lot in these academies. In one of them it is an institutional policy to hire only native speakers; they should hold a university degree although not necessarily related to language teaching. They do, however, need to have a language certification since the school does not provide any teacher training. In another institute, the students are the ones who request native speakers as teachers, especially for individual classes and intermediate-advanced levels. Lastly, another school requires having 50% of NSs and 50% of NNSs as teachers. The following chart shows the distribution of the teachers working in these places based on their nativeness:

Language School	Total of Teachers	Native Speakers	Non-native Speakers
INTENSA	28	3	25
Intercultura	46	46	0
Centro Panamericano de Idiomas	14	3	11
Instituto San Joaquín de Flores	2	2	0
Alianza Francesa	24	11	13
Fundación de Estudios Brasileños	22	22	0
Dante Alighieri	21	18	3

Table 1. Distribution of language teachers into native or non-native.

When asked how necessary it is for a language teacher to be a native speaker, 57% of the coordinators, 48% of the teachers and 43% of the students responded it is very necessary. 34% of the students believe it is somewhat significant. Some of the reasons are: “Because I can teach the correct accent and it is important for a teacher not to make mistakes as the students”, “Native speakers are experts in their mother tongues, so we will learn the correct forms”. Most answers made reference to perfect pronunciation, informal language and cultural knowledge. Besides, several mentioned the native speaker fallacy: “Because they have the belief that with a native teacher they will learn better”, “Because they think that a non-native teacher does not know the language well”.

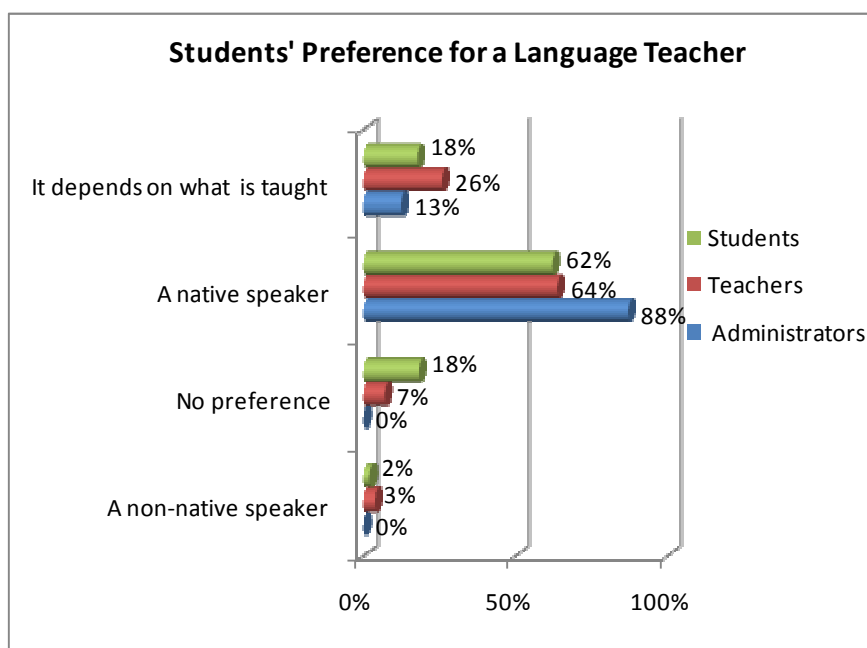
In contrast, others wrote that non-native speakers can also be good language teachers: “There are non-native teachers who can be more qualified and have more experience than a native! The fact that we are French does not mean we know how to teach”, “Because if he really knows English, his nationality does not matter”, “In Belgium I went to school. There I learned French from a non-native teacher and she was really good. My French is excellent”.



Graph 1: Need for a Language Teacher to Be a NS.

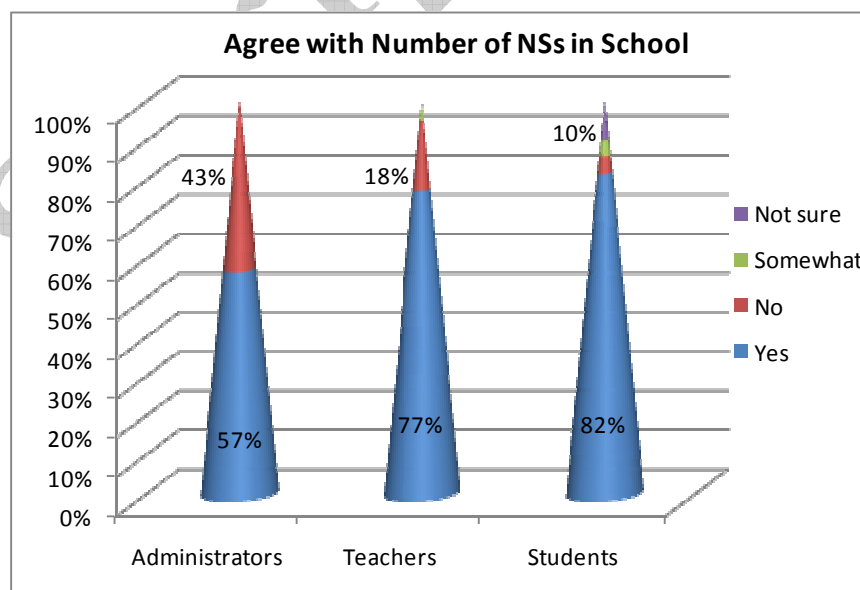
In addition, coordinators and teachers were inquired about students' preference for a language teacher, either a native or a non-native speaker. 88% of the coordinators and 64% of the teachers replied students usually prefer a native speaker. Indeed, 62% of the students would rather have a native teacher because "They have more confidence", "The class seems more 'real'", "I prefer to learn from the best". The ones without preference mentioned "It depends on how they teach rather than where they are from", and those who believe it depends on the skill taught explained that NNSs are preferred to teach grammar and beginners, while NSs are favored to teach advanced levels, oral expression and culture.

As a matter of fact, Selvi affirmed that program administrators in the English Language Teaching profession unfortunately often accept the native speaker fallacy and believe that there is a notable difference between NESTs and NNESTs. While NESTs are considered the ideal teachers, NNESTs are seen as less instructionally qualified and less linguistically competent than NESTs (157).



Graph 2: Students' Preference for a Language Teacher.

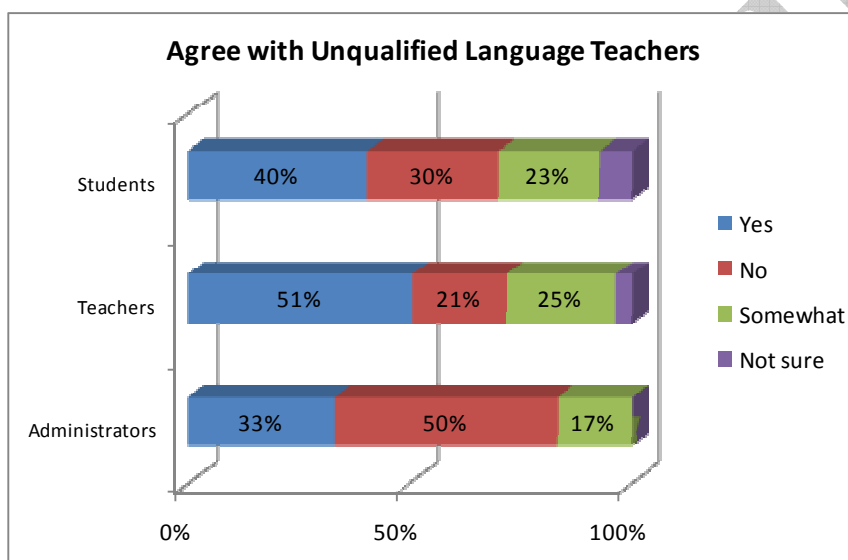
One question in the survey interrogated the participants if they agreed with the fact that all, most, or several (depending on the institute) of the language teachers in the schools were native speakers. Most administrators (57%), teachers (77%) and students (82%) showed their favorable opinion towards this. As to why they think this way, they said it gives the schools more credibility, authenticity, better quality and a status of a serious institution. Moreover, students indicated the importance of being exposed to different accents and cultures.





Graph 3: Agree with Number of NSs in School.

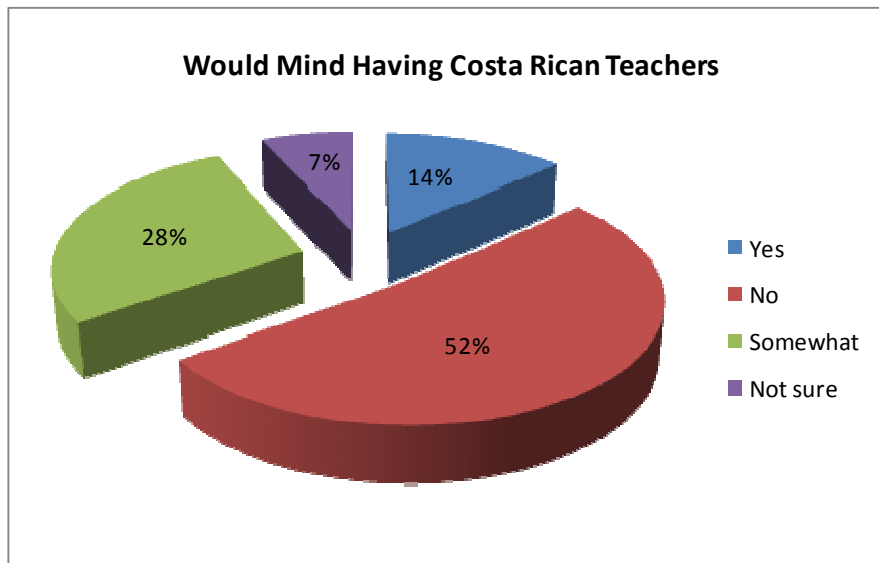
As to how unqualified language teachers are perceived, 50% of the administrators disagree with them and 33% agree. 51% of the teachers assent and 25% do it to some extent, while 40% of the students accept it and 30% do not. There were many insights regarding this, some of them are: “There are degrees which only give theoretical knowledge, not practical. Somebody without a degree but who has taught for many years can be a very good teacher”, “It is necessary to learn how to teach”, “Being a teacher cannot be invented. It is a profession”, “It is possible to teach a language without having a teaching degree, as long as one does it with goodwill and responsibility”, “It can be considered a lack of seriousness and commitment from the school”, “For the same reason I would not like an unqualified doctor to take care of me. Teaching is something one learns”, “Anyone who knows English can teach it”, “I think it is fine but it is not fair for those who actually went to school for teaching”.



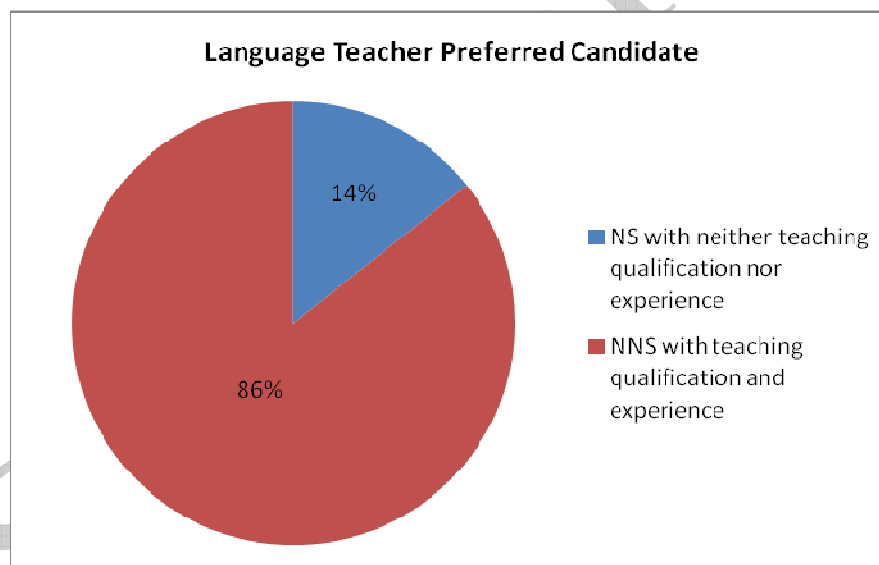
Graph 4: Agree with Unqualified Language Teachers.

In terms of having Costa Rican teachers, 52% of the students expressed they would not mind while 28% said they would to a degree. They believe that “The accent can interfere”, “I do not think it would be the same quality”, “I would not be sure of his language command”, “As long as they are well-prepared professors, I think they can teach the language well”, “I think a native is the ideal teacher”, “I would like to have a Costa Rican teacher because I could speak in Spanish, but it is a viewpoint I do not support because what we need is to learn”, “The truth is that just as there are good native teachers of English, why couldn’t a Costa Rican teach like them? There are good professors here”.

Interestingly, research has shown that when teachers share their students’ native language, it can be really beneficial. As Maum stated, “Many NNESTs, especially those who have the same first language as their students, have developed a keen awareness of the differences between English and their students’ mother tongue. This sensitivity gives them the ability to anticipate their students’ linguistic problems” (Maum, 2002: 1).



Graph 5: Would Mind Having Costa Rican Teachers.

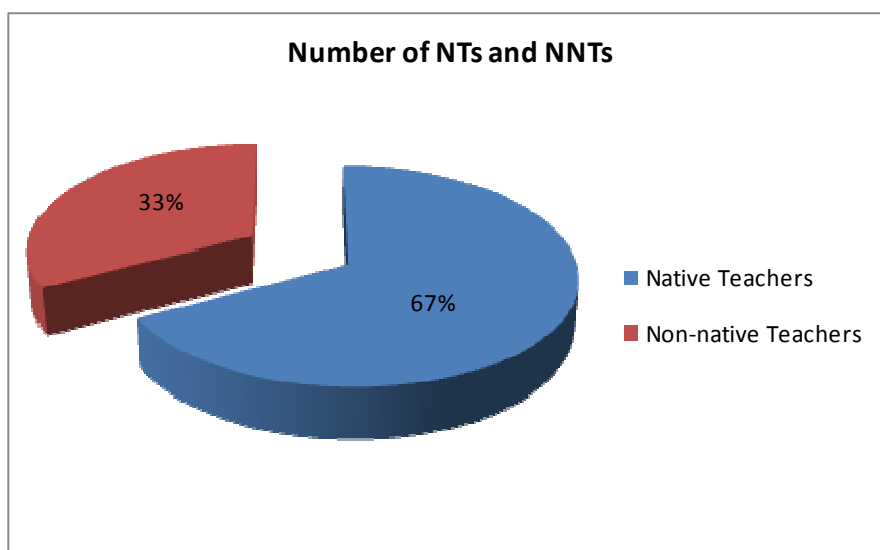


Graph 6: Language Teacher Preferred Candidate.

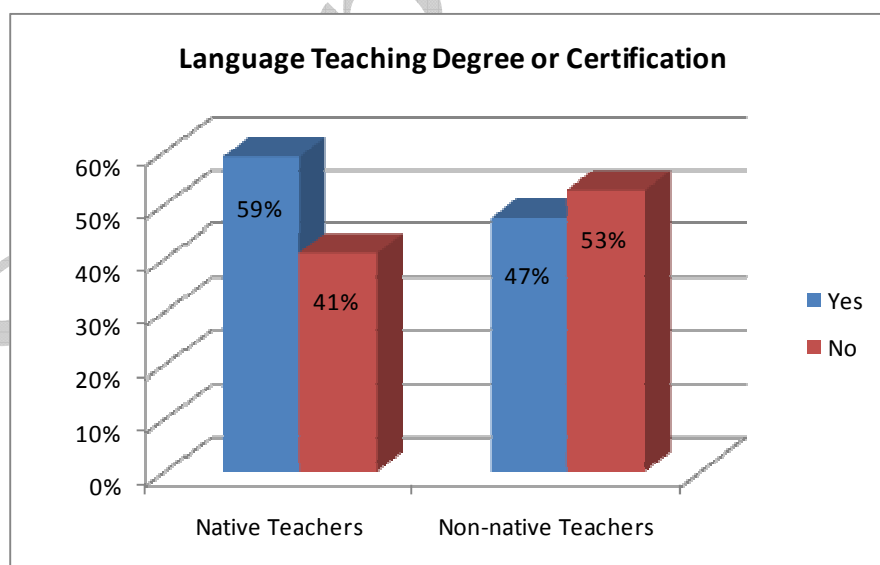
In addition, coordinators were asked to choose one of the following for hiring a possible language teacher: a native speaker without any teaching certification or experience, or a non-native speaker with teaching certification and experience. All of them except one would prefer the qualified non-native speaker, which represented an 86%. Some of their reasons were: “In order to teach a language it is essential and necessary to know about pedagogy, evaluation and to have full command of the grammatical rules”, “Probably I would not hire any of them, but if I had to choose one, I would give the job to the non-native speaker if he could speak English like a native speaker”, “The native speaker with training is the ideal one”, “When I hear phrases such as

‘Ahh, you teach the gringos, so easy!’ (Ironically) or ‘I am a teacher of Spanish for foreigners’ (somebody asking for a Spanish teaching position without any certification), I think that many have underestimated the specialty and they call themselves professionals of a teaching that implies years of education and constant updating.”

Finally, out of the 58 teachers surveyed for this research, 39 of them are native speakers of the languages they teach (67%) from which 23 hold a language teaching degree or certification (59%). Meanwhile, from the 19 teachers who are non-native speakers (33%), 10 of them do not hold the necessary teaching credentials (53%).



Graph 7: Number of NTs and NNTs.



Graph 8: Language Teaching Degree or Certification.

Since it is also important to consider the results in the different languages researched, the following charts provide the information already presented in the graphs, but based on each language:

Graph	Coordinators	Teachers	Students
#1	67% (very)	44% (very)	38% (very)
#2	100% (NS)	52% (NS)	56% (NS)
#3	67% (no)	92% (yes)	94% (yes)
#4	50% (yes) 50% (no)	52% (yes)	43% (yes)
#5			54% (no)
#6	100% (NNS)		
#7		52% (NNTs) 48% (NTs)	
#8		69% (NTs) 31% (NNTs)	

Table 2. Distribution of the survey results in the English language.

Graph	Coordinators	Teachers	Students
#1	50% (very) 50% (somewhat)	86% (very)	61% (somewhat)
#2	67% (NS)	71% (NS)	55% (NS)
#3	100% (yes)	86% (yes)	45% (yes)
#4	100% (no)	43% (yes)	36% (yes)
#5			73% (no)
#6	100% (NNS)		
#7		100% (NTs)	
#8		100% (NTs)	

Table 3. Distribution of the survey results in the Spanish language.

Graph	Coordinators	Teachers	Students
#1	100% (not at all)	56% (not at all)	70% (very)
#2	100% (NNS)	56% (Depends on skill)	70% (NS)
#3	100% (no)	78% (no)	70% (yes)
#4	100% (yes)	63% (no)	39% (no)
#5			39% (no) 39% (somewhat)
#6	100% (NNS)		
#7		56% (NNTs) 44% (NTs)	
#8		56% (NNTs) 44% (NTs)	

Table 4. Distribution of the survey results in the French language

Graph	Coordinators	Teachers	Students
#1	100% (very)	56% (very)	52% (very)
#2	100% (NS)	89% (NS)	86% (NS)
#3	100% (yes)	100% (yes)	97% (yes)
#4	100% (somewhat)	100% (yes)	52% (yes)
#5			41% (somewhat)
#6	100% (NS)		
#7		100% (NTs)	
#8		44% (NTs)	

Table 5. Distribution of the survey results in the Portuguese language

Graph	Coordinators	Teachers	Students
#1		75% (very)	48% (very)
#2		88% (NS)	62% (NS)
#3		75% (yes)	79% (yes)
#4		38% (yes) 38% (somewhat)	41% (no)
#5			62% (no)
#6			
#7		88% (NTs) 13% (NNTs)	
#8		25% (NTs) 0% (NNTs)	

Table 6. Distribution of the survey results in the Italian language

#### 4 Conclusions

Although quite some research regarding native/non-native speaking teachers has been done recently, the largest part of the literature focuses on the teaching of the English language, especially in ESL contexts. As explained by Moussu & Llorca, “we have often wondered about the teaching of other languages and noticed that very little has been done to investigate how non-native teachers of languages other than English are perceived by their students and supervisors” (Moussu and Llorca, 2008: 342). Consequently, research on how non-native teachers in Costa Rican language schools are considered by academic coordinators, students and themselves is of valuable contribution.

The native/non-native speaker issue, whereas essential in language learning, is frequently not a prevalent matter. Program administrators, teachers and students are many times not even aware of what it means to be a native or non-native speaking teacher, of the strengths and

weaknesses of each. Besides, there is a wide belief that having native speakers as language teachers is the best; many people consider this myth as the absolute truth. This is probably due to the propaganda of many private institutes as well as their sometimes unfair hiring practices.

The results in this research reflect the existence of the native speaker fallacy in several language schools of the country, from coordinators, teachers and students. Something surprising, however, is that most students would not mind having Costa Rican teachers. In addition, non-native English teachers seem to be more common in language schools due to the expansion of this language and the need for more teachers specialized in this area. It also has to do with the fact that English is taught as a Foreign Language. On the other hand, all Spanish teachers appear to be native speakers, mostly Costa Rican, for obvious reasons. In the case of the other languages, native speakers prevail, with a few exceptions. The reason for this could be that despite being foreign languages too, there are less certified teachers, at least in Portuguese and Italian. This might promote the misconception that native speakers of those languages are the ideal teachers.

The native/non-native speaker notion is relatively new in language teaching, and it has become a controversial but indispensable concern. Thus, it becomes crucial to create consciousness regarding this issue in language professionals as well as in students. It is important then, to continue doing research in the different languages, especially the ones becoming more popular. Investigating the perceptions towards NTs and NNTs at the university level, in Costa Rica and in other countries, would be greatly valuable. As the number of language teachers increases day by day all around the globe, so does the urge to become more knowledgeable on this matter.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the academic coordinators, teachers and students at Intercultura (Heredia), Centro Panamericano de Idiomas / English Program (San Joaquín de Flores), Instituto San Joaquín de Flores, Dante Alighieri (Heredia and San Pedro), Alianza Francesa (San José), INTENSA (Heredia), Fundación de Cultura, Difusión y Estudios Brasileños (Santa Ana) for their time and help in completing the surveys.

### Appendices

#### Survey to Coordinators

The intention of the following survey is to gather information on the perceptions towards native and non-native speaking teachers. Thank you for your help!

Language school where you work:

1. In your opinion, how necessary is it for a language teacher to be a native speaker?

Very       Somewhat       Little       No  all

Why?

2. Who do you think a student generally prefers to have as a language teacher?

A non-native speaker

A native speaker

No preference

It depends on the skill taught

Why?

3. Do you agree with the fact that most (or some) teachers at this school are native speakers of the language they teach?

Yes No Somewhat Not sure 

Why?

4. Do you agree with a native speaker being a teacher, even if he/she does not have a teaching degree?

Yes No Somewhat Not sure 

Why?

5. If you had to hire a language teacher to teach at the school where you work, which of the following candidates would you choose?

A native speaker without any teaching certification or experience A non-native speaker with teaching certification and experience 

Why?

### Survey to Teachers

The intention of the following survey is to gather information on the perceptions towards native and non-native speaking teachers. Thank you for your help!

Mother tongue:

Language(s) you teach:

Language(s) you speak:

1. In your opinion, how necessary is it for a language teacher to be a native speaker?

Very Somewhat Little Not at all 

Why?

2. Who do you think a student generally prefers to have as a language teacher?

A non-native speaker

A native speaker

No preference

It depends on the skill taught

Why?

3. Do you have a degree or credential that certifies you as a language teacher?

Yes No 

Which one(s)?

4. Do you agree with the fact that most (or some) teachers at this school are native speakers of the language they teach?

Yes No Somewhat Not sure 

Why?

5. Do you agree with a native speaker being a teacher, even if he/she does not have a teaching degree?

Yes No Somewhat Not e

Why?

**Survey to Students**

The intention of the following survey is to gather information on the perceptions towards native and non-native speaking teachers. Thank you for your help!

1. In your opinion, how necessary is it for a language teacher to be a native speaker?

Very Somewhat Little Not ll

Why?

2. Who do you prefer to have as a language teacher?

A non-native speaker A native speaker No preference It depends on the skill taught 

Why?



3. Would you mind if your teachers were Costa Rican?

Yes  No  Somewhat  Not sure

Why?

4. Why are you studying at this language school?

5. Do you agree with the fact that most (or some) teachers at this school are native speakers of the language they teach?

Yes  No  Somewhat  Not sure

Why?

6. Do you agree with having a native speaker as a teacher, even if he/she does not have a teaching degree?

Yes  No  Somewhat  Not sure

Why?

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### **About the Author**

Nuria Villalobos Ulate holds a Master’s degree in Linguistics/TESL from Indiana State University. She has taught English for 10 years and is currently a professor at the Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje, Universidad Nacional, and a teacher trainer for the MEP-CONARE program. Her interests include L2 teacher education, global issues in language education, and non-native speaking teachers-related issues. Her work on these issues has been published in Costa Rica, Brazil and Spain. [nutica@gmail.com](mailto:nutica@gmail.com)

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