

# The Voice of Classroom Achievement towards Native and Non-native Educators in English Language Teaching: An Evaluative Study

Tahany Albaiz

**Abstract** Promoting active information acquisition among students is a challenging task for any teacher. However, it becomes even more complicated to empower learners to attain success when having a poor understanding of their culture or language. Although non-native speakers (NNS) of English can deliver rather efficient results as teachers, the challenges, which they have to overcome, are much more numerous; therefore, the performance rates of the students who are taught by NNS teachers, is likely to be considerably lower than those of the learners taught by NS instructors. The reasons for the specified assumptions concern not the level of subject mastery displayed by the NS and NNS teachers, but the performance rates displayed by their students. A study involving a qualitative analysis of the performance tendencies among the students of NS and NNS teachers displays that the latter are prone to the problems concerning misunderstanding or misinterpreting specific concepts regarding the subject than those having NS teachers as instructors. The study also shows that the specified tendencies can be addressed and the performance of students instructed by NNS teachers can be improved significantly once adequate strategies concerning the use of proper teaching tools are incorporated into the lesson design. Particularly, the use of visual aids, as well as other means of getting the message across in a manner as clear and efficient as possible, needs to be considered.

**Keywords** Assessment · Performance · NS · NNS · Evaluation · Achievement · Teaching · EFL

---

T. Albaiz (✉)

English Language Institute, University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
e-mail: talbeiz@uj.edu.sa

## 1 Introduction

NNS versus NS has been always an issue in the teaching of foreign languages for many years and across many EFL theories. Starting from the very beginning of the concept, facilitating high-quality education in the environment shaped by globalization is a tricky task. The quality of staff performance defines the success of learners to a considerable degree; therefore, with the development of a multicultural environment, in which non-native speaking teachers could instruct students and provide them with the necessary information, questions regarding the possibility for students to understand the source material have been raised (Wong & Barrea-Marlys, 2012). Particularly, it is doubted that non-native speakers (NNS) can attain the voice of classroom (VoC) in the course of the teaching process. Although NNS may deliver less impressive results than NS as far as the achievement of proper VoC rates is concerned, the incorporation of the teaching approaches focused on the development of independence and self-directed learning among students will help NNS create the environment, in which the students will be able to evolve and become independent learners.

The process of teaching has clearly become more complex in the environment of global education. Particularly, the significance of meeting the needs of students as individuals and adapting towards their learning styles, thus, improving the quality of education significantly, can be viewed as a key change. However, apart from the above-mentioned alterations, significant changes seem to have occurred to educators and the very theory of teaching; particularly, the introduction of non-native speaking teachers (NNS) into the target background can be interpreted as one of the essential modifications of the learning environment. The specified change was inhibited partially by the changes in demographics, or, to be more exact, by the drastic increase in the number of learners (Klemencic & Fried, 2012). Therefore, the existence of NNS in education is a part and parcel of the modern reality. However, due to the language issues that may emerge in the course of the learning process, the efficacy of NNS can be questioned. Moreover, because of the obvious need to introduce an increasingly large number of NNS into the designated environment, the design of an approach that will help improve the overall quality of their teaching strategies will be required.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 *Where Control Theory Meets Constructivism*

In order to address the issues raised in the research, one will have to consider the changes in the students' performance from two key perspectives, i.e., the Control Theory, which creates premises for understanding how the process of information transfer may occur between the students and the NNS teacher, and the Constructivist

approach, which focuses on the process of knowledge building. The adoption of two separate theories as the tools for addressing the situation under analysis can be justified by the fact that the variables in question, i.e., the VoC, which is measured by evaluating the students' performance rates (Stairs, Donnell, & Dunn, 2011), are placed in two different environments, i.e., the ones, in which an NS and an NNS perform the roles of teachers. In other words, two different experimental settings are created, which calls for the adoption of two appropriate theories.

## ***2.2 Control Theory as the Means to Assess the Impact of NNS Teachers***

First and most obvious, the above-mentioned issue regarding the communication process between NNS teachers and their students' needs to be addressed as the most ambiguous one. The given issue can be approached from the tenets of Control Theory, as it states clearly that the process of knowledge acquisition can be managed by learners along with the teacher. Indeed, seeing that there is an obvious language issue in the scenario in question, one may assume that the learners have just as much, if not more, control over the course of the lesson and, therefore, the transfer of information. According to a recent study, the Control Theory can be defined as the "theory of motivation that ties learning to what a person wants most at the given time (Papa, 2011, p. 96)." Therefore, the specified approach allows the teacher to focus on the individual needs of each student and, thus, provides them with information that they actually need.

According to the existing definition, Control Theory suggests that the process of learning is enhanced not by the external stimuli but by the current needs and requirements of the student (Schwarzer, 2014). In other words, Control Theory suggests that learners should be just as active in the process of defining the course of the lesson and the information that they will need later on to evolve in the designated area as their instructors should (Carey, 2012).

## ***2.3 Constructivism as the Tool for Approaching the NS Teachers' Success***

The Constructivism Theory, in its turn, can be used as the means of evaluating the efficacy of the results delivered by the NS teachers (Fostnot, 2013). The assessment of the teachers' efficacy in getting the key messages across to the students and helping them acquire the necessary knowledge will be assessed based on the students' ability to understand the messages in question and construct the

corresponding knowledge on their own, therefore, building awareness regarding their learning process (Akyol, 2012).

The Constructivism approach, being the strategy that helps “using our words to further our own understandings as well as those of others (Bentley, 2013, p. 44),” allows enhancing the process of acquiring the necessary information and understanding it so that the learners could solve complex tasks based on the theory in question.

A combination of the two theories described earlier will allow for deeper insight into the changes, which the NS and NNS teachers have contributed to. Both theories will shed some light on the importance of the clarity of the message conveyed by the instructor (Benton, 2014), as well as the necessity for the teacher to provide the visualization of the required concepts. In other words, the theories listed earlier will help state whether the learners are capable of constructing the necessary image and, therefore, a concept based on their ability to navigate and even guide the process of knowledge acquisition (Wang, 2011).

### 3 Research Problem

As it has been stressed, the efficacy of NNS as educators can be questioned because of the obvious concerns regarding the communication process. Indeed, a closer look at the specifics of information transfer from an NNS to NS will reveal that the pieces of data transmitted in the process may undergo significant changes when passed from a NNS teacher to a learner; as a result, the latter’s concept of the subject matter may not coincide with the desirable one. As a result, the students’ performance may drop due to the poor quality of the communication process between the teacher and the learners. More importantly, the issues that the students may experience when communicating with an NNS teacher may snowball to the point where the former may lose an opportunity to become a proficient language user. Recent studies (Braine, 2010; Mahboob, 2010) say that the aforementioned concerns are not far-fetched at all. According to a 2012 study by Wong and Barrea-Marlys, they explain that NNS teachers are very likely to face the issues related to language and understanding on a regular basis in the target environment without proper skills:

If teacher candidates are asked to think about methodology and their own L2 acquisition, one can conclude from the findings in this study that their assumptions about what is effective teaching will be based on prior experience. Once teacher candidates reflect on CLT versus more traditional methodologies with which they are familiar, a positive or negative conclusion toward CLT is established. (p. 71)

Therefore, the problem exists and needs to be addressed. More to the point, the issue in question may be viewed from a different angle. Because of the concerns about the progress of students, people tend to overlook NNS as a valuable resource

(Kumaravadivelu, 2013). Therefore, a negative paradigm leading to the evolution and further blossoming of prejudice in the educational setting is created. Unfortunately, the specified instances are not quite rare among students and instructors alike (Jang, 2015); therefore, detailed tests will have to be carried out to prove that the efficacy of NNS teachers depends on a variety of factors and, more to the point, can and will be improved once the corresponding strategies are implemented. The study, thus, aims at proving that the aforementioned VoC can be achieved in both the learning environment created by a NS and the one created by a NNS, as well as the fact that the process of VoC achievement can be enhanced with the help of strategies aimed at improving the efficacy of communication in the setting, where NNS instruct learners.

## 4 Goals and Significance

Defining the key goals of the study, one must mention that the research focuses on the analysis of the differences in the performance of the students, who were instructed by NS, and those, who were instructed by NNS teachers. Particularly, the research addresses the achievement of the voice of classroom (VoC) in the designated settings and the comparison of the rates thereof among the NS and NNS correspondingly.

An analysis of the VoC rates in the settings headed by NS and NNS is the key objective of the research. To identify the problems, which both NS and NNS face in the specified environment, one will have to consider the fact that NNS teachers have the largest percentage of B and, unfortunately, D and F students, whereas the NS instructors seem to have very high rates of A and B-students. The latter type of teachers, in fact, has the smallest number of D and F students. The identification of the issues that inhibit the development of VoC in the NS and NNS setting can be viewed as another strategy of the study. The development of the strategies that will help NS and especially NNS achieve a significant increase in the VoC rates is the final objective of the research. Particularly, the approaches aimed at enhancing the efficacy of communication among the students and the teacher will be considered.

The significance of the study can be deemed as rather high since it addresses one of the basic problems, which teachers and students alike have to face in the environment of global education, as well as outlines the possible solutions for it. Although claiming that the study in question will have a ground-breaking effect on the theory of teaching would be wrong, the research still provides rather deep insights into the performance of NS and NNS teachers, therefore, building the foundation for making further assumptions regarding the strategies that NS and NNS teachers need to adopt to achieve higher VoC rates in the learning environment.

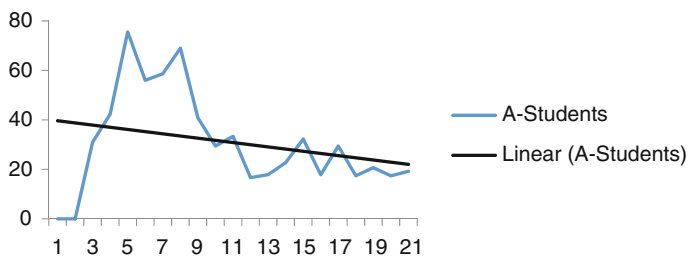
## 5 Results and Discussion

In the course of the study, forty environments have been identified and studied; nineteen of them were created by native speaking teachers, whereas the rest were designed by non-native speakers. The statistical data regarding the students' performance was gathered; particularly, the number of learners achieving the scores of "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" was estimated. Afterward, a statistical analysis based on the calculation of the elements such as the mean and the SD of the students' performance, as well as the regression analysis, have been conducted. The information retrieved in the course of the research serves not only as the proof of the increased efficacy of NS compared to NNS in the classroom setting but also informs the teachers on the further avenues to be taken as far as the teaching of the Arabic language is concerned. Specifically, the use of the opportunities for self-directed learning (Colin & Hammond, 2013) and metacognition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), which the learning environment created by NNS provides, deserves to be mentioned as a crucial outcome of the study.

### 5.1 NNS Teachers and Their Students' Progress

According to the results of the analysis, there is a significant lack of VoC in the learning environment, where NNS teachers are present. Although the performance of the students, instructed by the teachers in question, cannot be deemed as entirely negative, the correlation between the VoC rates among the students instructed by NNS and NS points to the need to adopt the tools that will allow raising the VoC achievement by improving the performance of learners and enhancing the efficacy of communication between students and their instructors. Particularly, the fact that most learners retrieved D and C marks during lessons deserves to be brought up. A closer look at the analysis results revealed that the rates of C, D and F students were much higher among the NNS teachers than the NS ones (Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

It is quite remarkable that the SD rates of VoC in each group vary to a considerable extent; at some point, the SD reaches 15.7, which can be considered a



**Fig. 1** A Students' percentage and tendencies among NNS teachers

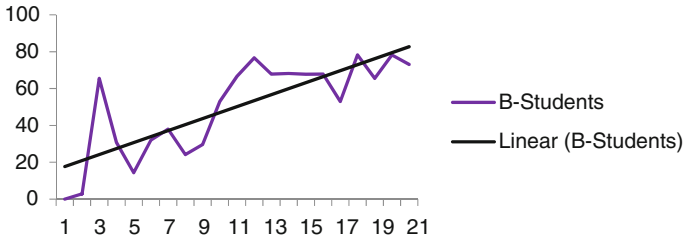


Fig. 2 B students' percentage and tendencies among NNS teachers

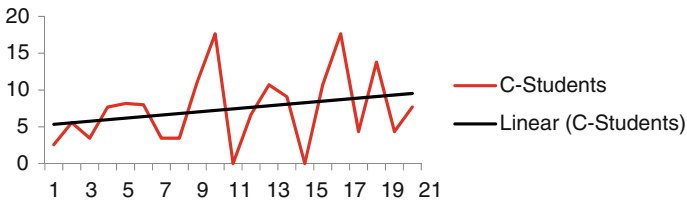


Fig. 3 C students' percentage and tendencies among NNS teacher

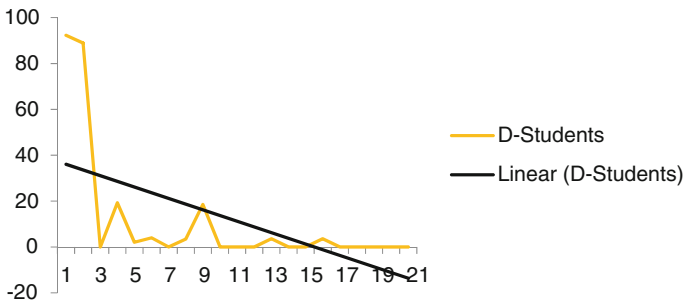


Fig. 4 D students' percentage and tendencies among NNS teachers

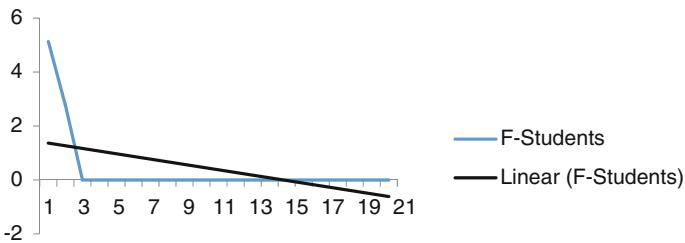


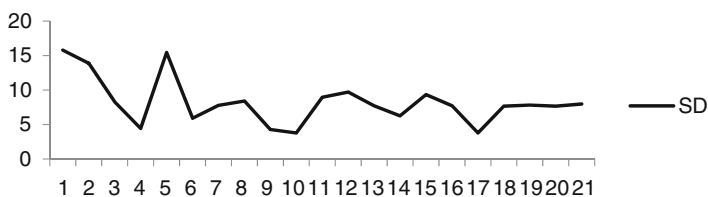
Fig. 5 F students' percentage and tendencies among NNS teachers

rather high difference given the fact that the experimental groups are rather small. According to the analysis carried out, there are obvious tendencies for an increase in the number of students performing positively; particularly, the average number of B- and C-students seems to be increasing gradually, as the trend lines in the corresponding graphs display. The number of A-students, however, is clearly declining, which means that NNS teachers should consider the communication tools that will increase the rates of VoC in the target environment. The research has also shown that the NNS teachers deliver less satisfying results than the NS ones; particularly, the number of D-students peaks in the specified environment, which means that significant changes have to be introduced.

It should be noted, though, that some of the data retrieved in the course of the analysis pointed to the fact that the NNS teachers may succeed at some aspects of teaching to a greater degree than the NS instructors do. Particularly, NNS teachers tended to promote independence among learners, thus, creating the environment, in which the students are supposed to digest the information provided to them in the course of the lesson in comfortable ways. In other words, NNS teachers did not foist a specific mode of thinking onto the students; instead, they left the lecture material free for interpretation, therefore, triggering an increase in creative thinking among learners. It should be noted, though, that the specified phenomenon typically occurs among the students that already have a substantive background regarding the subject matter and, therefore, are capable of forming an opinion on their own (Fig. 6).

The chart provided indicates clearly that there were significant differences in the VoC rates among the students belonging to a single group. While one group may have a rather large number of learners with high performance rates, another group may display the students' inability to grasp the problem suggested by the teacher by adopting the theory that was learned prior to completing the assignment. NNS teachers, therefore, may also achieve VoC in the environment of the classroom despite the language issues that they are most likely to have in the setting of a Saudi educational environment.

The study has also shown in a rather evident manner that the proficiency in the English language, though being admittedly important for an English language instructor, did not define the success of conveying the material to the students entirely. As the study showed, a number of NNS teachers reached the required VoC rates despite the language issues, which they must have been having with the students in the process.



**Fig. 6** SD of Percentage of A, B, C, D and F students in NS groups



### 5.2 NS Teachers and Their Impact on Learners

The results of the study showed clearly that the rates of VoC were clearly much higher in the groups led by NS. The specified results can be explained by the fact that NS teachers are most likely to find the ways to express themselves with the help of both verbal and nonverbal elements of communication in the manner that the students are most likely to understand. The above-mentioned phenomenon aligned with the principles of the Constructivism Theory. Seeing that the latter presupposes that the learners should be provided with an opportunity to build their understanding on the basis provided by the instructor and, therefore, be led by the teacher, so that they could expand their knowledge base, it will be reasonable to assume that the learners had many more chances for receiving decent scaffolding instructions and assistance from the teacher, who could convey the message on a variety of levels (Figs. 7 and 8).

It is quite remarkable that the number of B-students among NS teachers is slowly declining. Therefore, it can be assumed that the VoC rates are growing in the specified environment. Much like the previous result, it could be explained by the fact that the Constructivism-related processes, which promote creative and logical thinking among learners, allowed them to process the information provided by the teacher in the manner that linked their background knowledge and vision of the world to the data offered by the instructor.

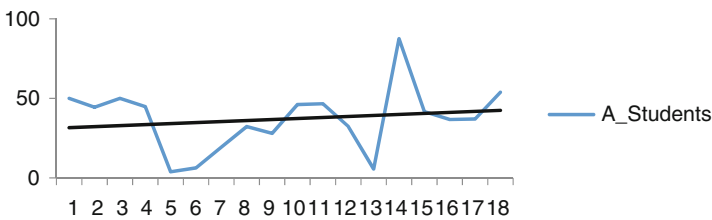


Fig. 7 A students' percentage and tendencies among NS teachers

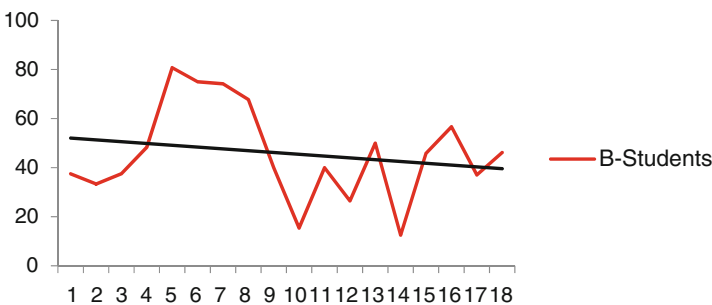


Fig. 8 B students' percentage and tendencies among NS teachers

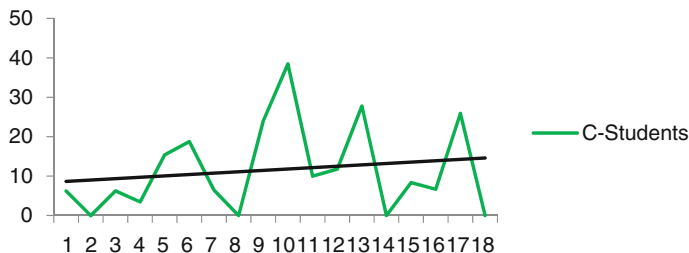


Fig. 9 C students' percentage and tendencies among NS teachers

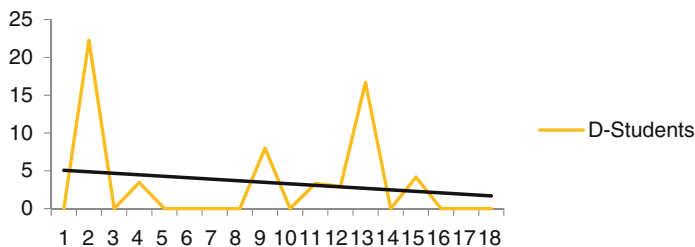
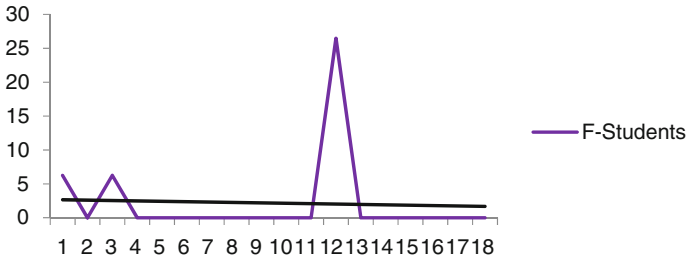


Fig. 10 D students' percentage and tendencies among NS teachers

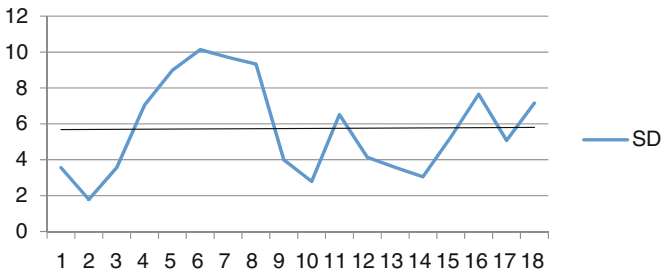
The Constructivist Theory of learning holds that people learn by constructing their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experience and reflecting upon that experience. We are active creators of our knowledge, reconciling our previous ideas as we encounter new experiences and information (Harasim, 2012, p. 47) (Fig. 9).

Figures 10 and 11 make it quite clear that the number of D- and F-students is slowly declining. Thus, the VoC rates among the students that were instructed by NS teachers could be deemed as rather high due to increasingly high performance rates among the learners in question. According to the information retrieved in the course of the analysis, 37 % of the students received A marks on average. The same could be said about B-students; as the results displayed in a rather graphic manner, at least 46 % of learners achieved the specified mark. The number of C, D and F students, on the contrary, was very low, the means being 12, 3, and 22 % correspondingly. Moreover, the study revealed that the SD rates among the A-students in the designated groups were comparatively low (4.1), which means that the number of the students, who perform well, is basically similar in all eighteen groups supervised.

Unfortunately, the SD rates among the learners of different performance rates in the target groups were also rather low, as Fig. 12 shows. The specified characteristics of the experimental groups, however, could be attributed to the fact that the number of students in each of them was comparatively low (Rasinger, 2013); therefore, the slightest changes registered as very high in the given setting.



**Fig. 11** F Students' percentage and tendencies among NS teachers



**Fig. 12** SD of percentage of A, B, C, D and F students in NS Groups

Hence, it can be assumed that VoC is achieved by NS teachers in most cases in the above-mentioned setting. Although the VoC rates achieved by NS might be viewed as questionable when considering the issues that some of the students might have due to the low performance rates as displayed in Figs. 10, 11, and 12, the number of A- and B-students was still far higher in the groups headed by NS than in those that were instructed by NNS. Indeed, according to Fig. 12, the differences in the VoC rates were considerably lower than the groups led by NS. More importantly, the general tendency, which could be traced in the above-mentioned charts, could be defined as quite stable. Although the lack of growth as displayed by the trend line in Fig. 12 may be considered somewhat discouraging and the absence of negative tendencies in the designated area should be interpreted as the perfect grounds for the promotion of new learning tools among the students and the process of testing new teaching approaches. The appendices attached have numerical comprehensive presentations of all findings.

## 6 Suggestions and Recommendations

It can be suggested, therefore, that the NNS teachers should focus on the development of stronger ties with students by engaging in communication processes during lessons. Additionally, the fact that the students of NNS teachers were

exposed to the environment, in which they are also capable of controlling the process of information transfer, made it necessary to make sure that the target audience should be able to navigate the learning environment along with teachers, therefore, contributing to the development of lessons and steering the latter in the direction that they felt necessary to digest specific bits of information.

As far as the improvement of the score delivered by the NS teachers is concerned, it is advised that the instructors should consider the tools that would help learners enhance their metacognition skills; particularly, the students would need to understand exactly how they acquired communication skills and adopted the identified approaches to their English language practice and their needs. Seeing that communication is not an issue in the teaching process facilitated by NS, it is essential to identify the obstacles that blocked learners' way to gaining the required knowledge and skills by improving the process of communication between teachers and learners. Once the latter are capable of identifying and naming the problems that they have in the course of learning, instructors will be capable of identifying the patterns that would help the students learn the necessary information in a manner as efficient and expeditious as possible (Hartman, 2013).

As the study has shown, the relationship between the native language of the teachers and the success of their students is obvious. Although the endeavours of NNS teachers are worth appreciating, the number of students, who seem to have problems with understanding English as a subject and developing the skills required to solve the related problems are worth appreciating, there is no need to stress that the number of A-students is much higher in the groups led by the NS teachers.

Herein the need to reconsider the teaching strategies used by NS instructors to achieve VoC lies. Increasing the rates of VoC among the English native teachers is essential to the improvement of students' performance rates; as the analysis carried out above has indicated, the students' ability to interpret the information that is given to them depends largely on the instructor's ability to deliver the key facts and assumptions in the manner that learners will find accessible. It also depends on their experience with the language.

## **7 Conclusion**

According to the research results, there is a direct correlation between the teacher's native language and the students' success rate. In other words, the connection between the VoC rates and the educator's ability to use the concepts and notions that the students actually understand exists. Moreover, this direct correlation defines the strategies that NS and NNS need to adopt in order to approach the learners efficiently and make sure that they are able to apply the information learned to solve a practical task.

**Appendix 1: NS Teachers: VoC Rates**

NS	A	B	C	D	F	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	F (%)	SD	Mean
	8	6	1	0	1	50	37.5	6.25	0	6.25	3.5637	3.2
	4	3	0	2	0	44.44444	33.33333	0	22.22222	0	1.7339	1.8
	8	6	1	0	1	50	37.5	6.25	0	6.25	3.5637	3.2
	13	14	1	1	0	44.82759	48.27536	3.448276	3.448276	0	7.0493	5.8
	1	21	4	0	0	3.846154	80.76923	15.38462	0	0	8.9333	5.2
	2	24	6	0	0	6.25	75	18.75	0	0	10.139	6.4
	6	23	2	0	0	19.35484	74.19355	6.451613	0	0	9.7057	6.2
	10	21	0	0	0	32.25805	67.74194	0	0	0	9.3381	6.2
	7	10	6	2	0	28	40	24	8	0	4	5
	6	2	5	0	0	46.15385	15.38462	38.46154	0	0	2.7923	2.6
	14	12	3	1	0	46.66667	40	10	3.333333	0	6.5192	6
	11	9	4	1	9	32.35294	26.47059	11.76471	2.941176	26.47059	4.1473	6.8
	1	9	5	3	0	5.555556	50	27.77778	16.66667	0	3.5777	3.6
	7	1	0	0	0	87.5	12.5	0	0	0	3.0496	1.6
	10	11	2	1	0	41.66667	45.33333	8.333333	4.166667	0	5.2631	4.8
	11	17	2	0	0	36.66667	56.66667	6.666667	0	0	7.6435	6
	10	10	7	0	0	37.03704	37.03704	25.92593	0	0	5.0794	5.4
	14	12	0	0	0	53.84615	46.15335	0	0	0	7.1554	5.2
SD	4.108416	7.094369	2.346601	0.916444	2.118237							
M	7.944444	11.72222	2.722222	0.611111	0.611111	37.0237	45.79778	11.63691	3.376575	2.165033		

## References

- Akyol, Z. (2012). *Educational communities of inquiry: Theoretical framework, research and practice*. Washington, DC: IGI Global.
- Bentley, D. F. (2013). *Everyday artists: Inquiry and creativity in the early childhood classroom*. New York City, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Benton, C. (2014). *Thinking about thinking: Metacognition for music learning*. New York City, New York: R & L Education.
- Braine, G. (2010). *Non-native speaker English teachers: Research, pedagogy, and professional growth*. New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Carey, T. A. (2012). *Control in the classroom: An adventure in learning and achievement*. Buffalo, New York: Living Control Systems Publishing.
- Colin, M., & Hammond, R. (2013). *Self-directed learning: Critical practice*. New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Fostnot, C. T. (2013). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York City, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harasim, L. (2012). *Learning theory and online technologies*. New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Hartman, H. J. (2013). *Metacognition in learning and instruction: Theory, research and practice*. Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Jang, L. J. (2015). Identity matters: An ethnography of two non-native English-Speaking teachers (NNESTS) struggling for legitimate professional participation. In *Advances and current trends in language teacher identity research* (pp. 116–131). New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Klemencic, M., & Fried, J. (2012). Demographic challenges and the future of the higher education. *International Higher Education*, 1(1), 12–14.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2013). Rethinking global perspectives and local initiatives in language teaching. In S. B. Said & L. J. Zhang (Eds.), *Language teachers and teaching: Global perspectives and local initiatives* (pp. 317–323). New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Mahboob, A. (2010). *The NNEST lens: Non-native English speakers in TESOL*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Papa, R. (2011). *Technology leadership for school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.
- Rasinger, S. M. (2013). *Quantitative research in linguistics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). A & C Black.
- Schwarzer, R. (2014). *Self-efficacy: Thought control of action*. New York City, New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Stairs, A. J., Donnell, K. A., & Dunn, A. H. (2011). *Urban teaching in America: Theory, research, and practice in K-12 classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. New York City, New York: Routledge.
- Wang, Y. (2011). *Education and educational technology*. Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Wong, C. C. Y., & Barrea-Marlys, M. (2012). The role of grammar in communicative language teaching: An exploration of second language teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9(1), 61–75.