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When East Meets East: Thai EFL University Students' Attitudes towards the Non-native English-Speaking EFL Teacher

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Abstract
This study investigated the attitudes of Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher, who is a non-Thai national. For the quantitative approach, data were collected by distributing questionnaires to seventy-two first-year students (N=72) from two different university faculties, focusing on two specific areas: general attitudes and teaching English language skills. The questionnaire comprised forty-three Likert scale items and an open-ended question. The data were analyzed using the SPSS program, employing means, standard deviations, and Independent Samples t-tests. The findings revealed that most students showed positive attitudes towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher in terms of teacher characteristics and personality, good preparation for class, and students' happiness in class. Moreover, students also indicated that they appreciated the non-native English-speaking EFL teacher teaching reading, listening, and speaking skills regarding teaching English language skills. The results also indicated no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of Thai EFL university students from the two faculties toward a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher. The advantages or disadvantages that students indicated regarding learning English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher were discussed. The study also outlined its limitations and offered recommendations for future research.
Keywords:, English as a foreign language (EFL), non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), non-native English-speaking EFL teachers, students' attitudes, Thai EFL university students

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Introduction

Regarding English language teaching (ELT) issues, Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are still commonly and currently required to teach English in most academic institutions in Thailand, according to job advertisement websites all around the country. Concerning the evidence from previous studies, there were asymmetrical numbers of NESTs who teach English in academic institutions. For example, there were four non-native English speakers for each native English speaker, according to Kachru (1996). A similar situation exists at my university, where it has been quite difficult to recruit NESTs for long-term permanent English teaching positions. To address this issue, the executive team hired NNESTs—both Thai EFL teachers and international EFL instructors—who are fluent in English and have experience teaching the language. As a result, additional teaching positions are still needed to accommodate the large number of EFL students at my institution. Currently, Canagarajah (1999) posited that 80% of the world's English language teachers are non-natives. It appeared to be valid until now. In other words, an increasing number of teachers in the field of English language teaching (ELT) are non-native English speakers. Moreover, Butler (2007) and Evrim (2007) confirm that the majority of English language learners are taught by NNESTs. Notably, English is widely used for international communication. In the Asian context, there is an equal chance for both native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) to teach English. Noticeably, Waterworth (2016) mentioned that a growing number of NNESTs are teaching English in various parts of Asia, particularly within the ASEAN region.

As a result, the global number of English learners continues to grow steadily, including in Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language. Phothongsunan (2017) mentioned that "English teachers teaching at the university level in Thailand represent non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) from various nationalities, not only Thai.". This is consistent with research context as it investigated Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher (Korean teacher). Throughout my research, the terms "non-native English-speaking EFL teacher," "non-Thai EFL teacher," and "Korean EFL teacher" were used interchangeably to refer to a non-Thai instructor teaching English to Thai EFL learners. It is beneficial to conduct this study as it can reflect what students think about how well their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher behaved and performed in class. Interestingly, this is a unique and uncommon case at my academic institution, as it marks the first time a Korean EFL teacher has been chosen to teach English to Thai EFL students. Significantly, it can broaden the worldviews and provide a new direction for recruitment. In addition, it is also essential for the executive team to consider this issue when recruiting qualified NESTs and NNEST teachers who are most suitable for professional teaching positions in the future.

Based on the reasons mentioned above, this study aims to elaborate on the following questions:

1. What are the Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher?
2. Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher between Thai EFL university students majoring in Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology and those majoring in Engineering?
3. What advantages or disadvantages do Thai EFL university students identify regarding learning English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher?

Literature Review

One of the heated debatable issues in the field of ELT, the disparity between native and non-native English-speaking teachers has been widely discussed for more than two decades (e.g., Medgyes, 1994; Braine, 1999; Liu, 1999; Benke & Medgyes,2005; Alseweed, 2012; Ma, 2015; Wang & Fang, 2020) and not yet found the absolute answer for the question "Who is the best teacher?". Traditionally, it inevitably refers to Kachru's three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1992). The Inner Circle includes countries where English is used as a native language and as a first language (L1) among people, such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle refers to countries that were formerly colonized by the British Empire. People in these countries commonly use English as a second language in social life or the government sectors; for example, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Kenya, and others. The Expanding Circle represents countries where people use English in universities and other academic institutions to communicate effectively in English daily and for international business reasons. Countries such as the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, Korea, and Thailand are classified within the "Expanding Circle.". Since this model was first introduced with the term "World Englishes" in 1985, it has sparked a massive wave of debatable issues, including the differences between NESTs and NNESTs. Medgyes (1994) suggested that while NESTs and NNESTs vary in their language proficiency and teaching styles, both can be effective teachers in their own unique ways. To support this, consistent with the recent study by Deng et al. (2024), students perceive both NESTs and NNESTs as equally effective, though each group possesses distinct strengths and weaknesses. The study also found a positive correlation between students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. Currently, these issues remain debatable as many researchers attempt to examine how students perceive their NESTs and NNESTs in various contexts and aspects (e.g., Cheung, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012; Sung, 2014; Ma,2015). Therefore, students' perspectives are highly valuable for researchers seeking to gain deeper insights into their views on teachers from multiple angles.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of native- and non-native English-speaking teachers, outstanding aspects that students perceived towards their NNESTS would be their proficiency in student's L1(first language) and sharing the same culture, their knowledge of students' learning difficulties, the students' experience in understanding their teaching, and in communication. In contrast, strong English proficiency and effective facilitation of student learning are perceived as key strengths of NESTs. Moreover, Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) also found that students perceived NESTs as models of pronunciation and correct language use, and they are repositories of cultural knowledge. Ma's (2012) study emphasized these various aspects, which explored students' perceptions in Hong Kong. This is similar to the study of Tsou and Chen (2017), who conducted quantitative research with 184 Taiwanese students, and found that NNESTs were perceived to be superior in their student's first language proficiency, their knowledge of students' learning difficulties, and, generally, in communication. Walkinshaw and Oanh (2014) also found similar results when they conducted research with 20 university students in Vietnam and Japan. The study revealed that students viewed NNESTs as effective in teaching grammar and appreciated their ability to use the student's first language when needed. To support this idea, Ma (2015) conducted research with 196 secondary school students and conducted 10 student group interviews in Hong Kong, and found that NNESTs were better at assisting students with examination preparation; meanwhile, lessons taught by NESTs were perceived as creating a

more relaxed and engaging classroom atmosphere. In parallel, Adara (2019) also reported that the participants believed that NESTs were more effective in teaching speaking skills, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge. However, the participants showed more relaxed attitudes when they had been taught by NNEST due to shared L1 and teachers' understanding of learning English as non-native speakers. Additionally, NNESTs were considered more effective at teaching grammar than NESTs. Concerning the drawbacks, students viewed NESTs as weak in explaining grammar and noted some cultural differences. In contrast, some studies have shown that NNESTs are perceived to give more homework, consistently correct errors, and provide realistic assessments of learners (Benke & Medgyes, 2005).

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 72 Thai EFL undergraduate students who had the experience of being taught by a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher who was Korean. Purposive sampling was used in this study, which primarily involved participants who had studied English foundation courses with non-native English-speaking EFL teachers. They were all mixed-ability freshmen from a state university in Bangkok from two different faculties. The students, enrolled in the Engineering (EG) and Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology (AI) programs, were required to complete Foundation English as a compulsory course. There were twenty-two full-time English teachers, but adjunct instructors were needed to teach all 6,000 to 7,000 first-year students. Consequently, it was necessary to employ a large number of adjunct instructors who were non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Notably, this marked the first time we recruited a single non-native English-speaking EFL teacher from Korea, who speaks English fluently. Additionally, she has experience teaching English to EFL students and taking English language teaching courses. She has been living in Thailand for more than one year, and she has also been studying the Thai language to communicate more effectively.

Instruments

This study utilized a questionnaire consisting of three main sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including students' age, gender, and the number of years they had been studying English. The second part was a 33-item questionnaire adapted from previous studies by Alseweed (2012) and Chun (2014), these were developed to ensure the classroom was suited to the teaching and learning environment. The third part was a 10-item questionnaire examining students' attitudes towards non-native English-speaking EFL teachers in terms of teaching English language skills. Additionally, the questionnaire included an open-ended question to complement the responses. The questionnaire was translated into Thai to ensure participants' understanding, and its accuracy was verified through back-translation by three language teaching specialists who reviewed the Thai version for meaning. Experts rated the relevance of all items to their categories by employing the IOC (Index of item-objective congruence). The items met the criteria with scores ranging from 0.88 to 1.00, indicating acceptable validity. Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for the 33-item and 10-item questionnaires, yielding values of .858 and .918, respectively, indicating a high level of reliability. Quantitative data were collected using 43 five-point Likert scale items administered to 72 Thai EFL undergraduate students, who had experience learning from a non-native English-speaking teacher (a Korean EFL instructor). Concerning ethical considerations, permission was obtained from the Korean EFL teacher to distribute the questionnaire to her students. Furthermore, students were asked to sign a consent

form to confirm their agreement to participate in the research. The researcher also assured them that their identities would remain confidential and guaranteed that all personal data would be kept private and not disclosed publicly.

Data Analysis

After collecting all participant responses, the data were compiled, processed, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Frequency, mean, average, and standard deviation were used to analyzed the students' data. The second and third parts of the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively for means and standard deviations and presented in tables based on the following ranges:

4.21-5.00	means	Very high
3.41-4.20	means	High
1.81-2.60	means	Moderate
1.81-2.60	means	Low
1.00-1.80	means	Very low

Results

Results from a questionnaire

Part one: Personal data

This section addresses three research questions. The findings are presented in two quantitative sections, followed by qualitative results. After collecting all participant responses, the data were compiled, calculated, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results were organized into three categories: personal information, students' attitudes toward their teacher, and the teaching and learning of English language skills, as shown in Tables One, Two, and Three, respectively.

Table 1. *Personal information of participants is shown in frequency, percentage, and mean*

			N=72
Data	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	$\overline{X}$
Faculty			
AI	39	54.14	
EG	33	45.83	
Gender			
Female	46	63.89	
Male	26	36.11	
Age			19
Experience of learning English (year)			13

Table One presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. Of the total, 54.14% were from the Faculty of Engineering (EG) and 45.83% from Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology (AI). In terms of gender, 63.89% were female and 36.11% were male. The average age of the participants was 19 years, and they had an average of 13 years of English language learning experience.

To answer research question number one: "What are the Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher?", the data on students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking teacher were analyzed by mean, standard deviation as presented in Table Two (See Appendix A).

Table Two presents the overall mean score of students' attitudes toward the non-native English-speaking teacher, indicating a high level of positivity ($\bar{x}$=4.17). Among 33 items of students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking teacher, the third highest mean scores were "A non-native English teacher is friendly and provides a relaxed learning environment." (Item 6), "A non-native English teacher is thoroughly well-prepared for class", and "On the whole, I feel happy when I study with a non-native English teacher." (Item 33) respectively ($\bar{x}$= 4.94, 4.83, and 4.67). These items were at a very high level.

Part 3: Students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher regarding teaching English language skills

To address research question one, the data on students' attitudes toward a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher's instruction of English language skills were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, as shown in Table Three.

Table 3. *Mean and standard deviation of students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher regarding teaching English language skills*

No.	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher's regarding teaching English language skills	$\overline{X}$	SD.	Meaning
34	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach listening and speaking skills effectively.	4.32	.688	Very high
35	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can provide constructive feedback to help students improve their listening and speaking skills.	4.29	.680	Very high
36	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach reading skills effectively.	4.33	.628	Very high
37	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can provide constructive feedback to develop students' reading skills.	4.25	.764	Very high
38	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach writing skills effectively.	4.08	.818	High
39	A non-native English teacher can provide constructive feedback to develop students' writing skills.	4.04	.830	High
40	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach grammar learning skills effectively.	4.28	.755	Very high
41	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can provide constructive feedback to develop students' grammar skills.	4.14	.775	High
42	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach vocabulary learning skills effectively.	4.18	.757	High
43	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can provide good feedback to develop students' vocabulary learning skills.	4.26	.731	Very high
	Total	**4.22**	**.566**	**Very high**

Table Three shows that the overall mean score of students' attitudes toward the non-native English-speaking EFL teacher's instruction of English language skills was very high ($\bar{X}$ = 4.22). Among 10 items of students' attitudes towards non-native English-speaking EFL teacher, the third highest mean scores were "A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach reading skills effectively." (item 36), "A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can teach listening and speaking skills effectively.", and "A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher can provide constructive feedback to develop students' listening and speaking skills." respectively ($\bar{X}$= 4.33,4.32, and 4.29). These items were at a very high level.

Part 4: The relationship between AI and EG students' attitudes towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher

To address research question two, 'Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher between Thai EFL university students majoring in Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology and those majoring in Engineering?', the data were analyzed using SPSS with mean, standard deviation, and an Independent Samples T-Test. The results are shown in Table Four below.

Table 4. *The relationship between AI and EG students' attitudes towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher*

N=72

Statements	**Faculty**	**n**	**Mean**	**SD.**	**t-test**	**p-value**
Students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher	AI	39	4.23	.342	1.544	.128
	EG	33	4.09	.408		
Students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher regarding teaching English language skills	AI	39	4.29	.560	1.170	.246
	EG	33	4.13	.560		

An Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to examine significant differences between AI and EG students' attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher, considering both the teacher personally and her teaching of English language skills. One variable from the population of each faculty was compared. The significance value (P > 0.05) indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology and Engineering students toward the non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.

Results from an open-ended question

To answer research question three: "What advantages or disadvantages do students identify regarding learning English with a non-native English-speaking teacher?" In addition to the quantitative findings presented in Tables Two, Three, and Four above, these results may also address research question one and align with the insights gathered from the open-ended question. An open-ended item in the questionnaire was employed to obtain more in-depth and valuable insight into the students' attitudes. An open-ended question was included in this study to gather students' opinions about their teacher, with the goal of eliciting richer and more detailed responses. Then, they could describe their opinion in the blank provided. Content analysis was conducted using frequency and percentage, as presented in Tables five and six.

Table 5. *Additional students' opinions are shown in frequency and percentage*

Data	Frequency	Percentage
Responses	28	38.89
Non-response	44	61.11
Total	72	100

Table 6. *Frequency and percentage of additional students' opinions about their non-native English-speaking teacher*

Students' opinions	Frequency	Percentage
The teacher is cute and friendly	8	29.63
The teacher's English pronunciation is easy to understand	7	25.93
The teacher created a relaxing classroom atmosphere and helped reduce stress and language anxiety	6	22.22
Cultural exchange: Teacher shares a Third language and culture between Thai and Korean	6	22.22
Total	27	100

As shown in Table Five, 28 of the 72 students (38.89%) shared their opinions about their non-native English-speaking teacher. Statistical analysis revealed that students exhibited positive attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking teacher, as indicated in Table Six. Following the teacher's personality, eight students (29.63%) reported that "Teacher is so cute, kind, open-minded, punctual, and friendly". Concerning the advantages that students identified, seven students (25.93%) indicated that the teacher's English pronunciation is easy to understand. To support this, some students wrote, "We are Asians, so we can understand each other quite well. Moreover, she is cute, kind, calm, and listens to us patiently. She can teach and explain the lessons slowly and clearly, especially when we have questions to ask.". Furthermore, six students (22.22%) posited that their teacher "…created a relaxing classroom atmosphere and helped reduce stress and language anxiety". Some students asserted that studying English with a non-native English-speaking teacher could reduce anxiety, nervousness, and boredom while increasing relaxation and confidence. Regarding cultural exchange, six students (22.22%) stated that "Teacher shares Third language and culture between Thai and Korean". Some students also commented, 'It is quite interesting that a non-native English-speaking teacher makes an effort to communicate in Thai as much as possible, and also teaches us a third language (Korean) along with cultural differences, so we learn a lot from her.'

However, based on students' opinions, some disadvantages were noted in their attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking teacher. When comparing studying with NESTs and NNESTs, some students remarked, 'Although I can understand what a non-native English-speaking teacher teaches, I sometimes struggle to follow her pronunciation of certain English words.'. Regarding exam preparation, one student indicated, "NNEST tries to communicate with us, but she should inform us more about the guidelines to prepare for the exam. Thus, students can prepare themselves in advance. Moreover, NNEST should give us more sentence examples, including grammar explanations.".

Discussion

To answer research question one: "What are the Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking teacher?", it can be discussed as follows:

According to the purpose of the study, this study attempts to investigate Thai EFL university students' attitudes towards their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher who are Korean. Findings from both the closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires indicated that even low-proficiency students held highly positive attitudes toward their NNEST, as reflected by the high overall scores in Tables Two and Three. Particularly, the results showed the third-highest mean score in three items, which were "A non-native English teacher is friendly and provides a relaxed learning environment.", "A non-native English teacher is thoroughly well-prepared for class", and "On the whole, I feel happy when I study with a non-native English teacher." respectively. When the Korean teacher taught English to Thai EFL students, they recognized that she was not Thai and could not communicate using their first language (Thai). However, both the teacher and students could adapt to each other effectively. Statistically, the evidence showed that students perceived that their NNEST was friendly, well-prepared for class, and also created a relaxed learning environment. This aligns with the open-ended responses, in which students described the teacher as 'cute, kind, open-minded, and friendly.'. In this case, it depends upon the teacher's nationality, personality, and appearance. Supporting this view, Al Muabdi (2021), in a study conducted in the Saudi context, suggested that 'methodology and teachers' personalities are more important than their nativeness'. The teacher's Korean nationality may have contributed to her appeal, as Korean culture and language are highly popular due to the influence of media and social networks, including Korean dramas, K-pop idols, and influencers. It likely helped foster a strong teacher-student relationship. Additionally, it likely captured students' attention and fostered better understanding between the teacher and students. The positive relationship would encourage them to learn and communicate with their Korean teacher. These results correspond to the outcomes from Braine (1999) and Thomas (1999), who expressed that although students will initially perceive NESTs as perfect models in language learning, as they become better acquainted with qualified, competent NNESTs, students often enjoy learning in their classes, knowing that NNESTs better understand their language problems and needs.

Concerning teaching English language skills, as can be seen from the evidence from the responses to the questionnaire, most students highly agreed that their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher has confidence in using English for communication efficiently. Despite the Korean teacher's limited fluency in Thai, she and the students could still able to understand each other well. Most students agreed that their teacher could teach reading, listening, and speaking skills effectively. Similar to Mahboob's (2004) study, students believed that NNESTs are good at teaching reading, listening, and grammar skills. Responses to the open-ended question revealed that, since the Korean EFL teacher could not explain lessons in Thai, she sometimes used body language to help students understand the material. In terms of pronunciation, some students expressed that the Korean teacher's pronunciation might be easy to understand; however, it would be better to study with NEST according to the different pronunciations between NEST and NNEST. This is similar to Lasagabaster and Sierra's (2005) study, they found that students tended to favor NESTs for their pronunciation, but they perceived that NNESTs were more empathetic and better at anticipating their students' language difficulties. Students preferred NNESTs when studying grammar and learning strategies. Conversely, as seen in this study, NNEST is a non-Thai EFL teacher, unlike Thai EFL teachers, so she could not explain grammar explicitly in Thai. Students claimed that she tried hard to learn Thai and communicate in Thai with students. These reasons explain why most students strongly agreed that they could understand their teacher's explanations.

According to research question two: "Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher between Thai EFL university students majoring in Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology and those majoring in Engineering?", it can be discussed as follows:

As shown in Table Four, there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of Thai EFL university students from Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology (AI) and Engineering (EG) towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher. It showed the reliability that although students came from two different faculties, their attitudes towards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher would be the same. That was probably because their teacher treated them equally regardless of the students' language proficiency and which faculty she taught. The findings confirmed a shared consensus between the two student groups, revealing positive attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher in various aspects.

Regarding research question three: "What advantages or disadvantages do students identify regarding learning English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher?", it can be discussed as follows:

Evidence from the responses to the closed-ended and an open-ended questionnaire revealed that the most students have a positive relationship with their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher. However, there was the emergence of both advantages and disadvantages that students identified regarding learning English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher. The benefits of being taught by a non-Thai, non-native English-speaking EFL teacher are discussed from various perspectives based on the findings of this study. It is worth noting that hiring a Korean EFL teacher to teach Foundation English to Thai students could be beneficial, as both the teacher and students share a common Asian cultural background and use English as a foreign language to communicate. Consequently, these findings align with the suggestions of Medgyes (1994), Cheung (2002), Mahboob (2003), and Koksal (2006). In this study, the Korean EFL teacher could empathize with students' needs and challenges and effectively anticipate and address language difficulties despite not sharing the student's first language. On the contrary, as Medgyes (1994) mentions, there would be benefits from their ability to use the students' mother tongue. In this instance, the case is exceptional because the teacher was a non-Thai EFL instructor from the expanding circle (Kachru, 1992). Therefore, the teacher and students had to use English as the medium of communication in the classroom rather than the students' native language (Thai). Specifically, the Korean EFL teacher possessed some background knowledge of the Thai language, which helped create a more enjoyable and relaxed classroom environment, as noted by several students in their open-ended questionnaire responses. Most students reported that being taught by a Korean EFL teacher helped reduce nervousness, language anxiety, and boredom while also boosting their confidence in speaking English. Moreover, students were happy to have a chance to learn a third language and cultural exchange, so the opportunity to communicate in three languages (English, Korean, and Thai) has arisen. The findings of this study align with the research conducted in the Iraqi context by Ahmed and Osam (2022), who found that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) were perceived as more capable of building strong connections with students, showing empathy, and understanding their needs and challenges.

Nevertheless, some drawbacks were noted in being taught English by a Korean EFL teacher. As can be seen from the findings, some students posited that somehow, they could not understand the Korean EFL teacher's English accent and pronunciation. They believed that English should be taught by NESTs to ensure exposure to native pronunciation and various accents. Similar to what

Watson & Pojanapunya (2009) found in their study, students preferred being taught by NESTs, especially in pronunciation areas. One potential disadvantage of being taught by a Korean EFL teacher is her limited ability to speak and understand the students' first language (Thai). In this case, students' language proficiency also plays a role, as low proficiency levels can make it more challenging to understand the teacher's instruction. This finding contrasts with previous studies (Madrid and Canado, 2004; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014), which reported that students preferred NNESTs because they could understand the students' first language (L1), reflecting different contextual factors.

In terms of exam preparation, students suggested that the teacher should inform them more about the guidelines to prepare for the exam. So, students were able to prepare themselves in advance. Additionally, the teacher should provide more sentence examples along with grammar explanations. Previous research (Benke & Medgyes, 2005) has identified that NNESTs were often perceived as assigning more homework, consistently correcting errors, and assessing learners realistically. However, the findings in this study showed no evidence that the Korean EFL teacher assigned excessive homework or consistently corrected errors.

Conclusion

In summary, the study's results revealed that most students held positive attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher, appreciating her characteristics and personality, thorough class preparation, and the enjoyable learning environment she created despite not sharing the students' first language. Additionally, students valued her instruction in reading, listening, and speaking skills. The analysis showed no significant difference in attitudes between students from the two faculties. The findings highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of being taught by a Korean EFL teacher. Advantages included her empathy for students' needs and challenges, fostering a relaxed classroom atmosphere, and facilitating cultural exchange. Disadvantages included limited use of students' first language and accent and pronunciation issues, especially with lower-proficiency students.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study explores Thai EFL university students' attitudes toward their non-native English-speaking EFL teacher, a Korean national. However, certain limitations of the study should be acknowledged. Firstly, this study was carried out with a relatively small sample size, limited to students from only two faculties at a state university in Thailand. Secondly, all participants shared similar characteristics and studied Foundation English with a single non-native English-speaking EFL teacher from Korea. Therefore, the findings may not apply to all non-native English-speaking EFL teachers in Thailand. Lastly, the study relied solely on closed- and open-ended questionnaires as its research instruments. For future research, incorporating additional methods is recommended. Qualitative approaches, such as classroom observations and in-depth interviews, could be used to triangulate the data and provide more comprehensive insights. The findings of this study are expected to be valuable to administrators, stakeholders, and researchers when planning the recruitment of non-Thai EFL teachers in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 2. *Mean and Standard Deviation of students' attitudes tow+ards a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher*

No.	Statements	$\overline{X}$	SD.	Meaning
1	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is confident in using English effectively for communication.	4.54	.604	Very high
2	I feel comfortable studying English in a class with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.53	.649	Very high
3	I feel anxious and uncomfortable when I study with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.18	1.012	High
4	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher knows students' language skills needs.	4.33	.805	Very high
5	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is thoroughly well-prepared for class	4.83	.444	Very high
6	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is friendly and provides a relaxed learning environment.	4.94	.231	Very high
7	Having a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher helps reduce my fear of talking to foreigners outside the classroom.	3.86	.997	High
8	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher has difficulty understanding what students ask and cannot answer students' questions explicitly.	4.03	1.100	High
9	I miscommunicated with my non-native English-speaking EFL teacher and had trouble understanding her accent.	3.97	1.126	High
10	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher usually uses a variety of teaching methods.	4.04	.759	High

11	I had opportunities to practice English in a class taught by a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.10	.790	High
12	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher explains English lessons to us clearly.	4.36	.678	Very high
13	I can understand my non-native English-speaking EFL teacher's pronunciation clearly.	4.26	.839	Very high
14	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher used innovative teaching strategies to help students learn better.	4.21	.749	Very high
15	I often feel frustrated because my non-native English-speaking EFL teacher cannot speak Thai fluently.	3.99	1.239	High
16	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher should practice speaking Thai to facilitate easier communication with students.	3.33	1.199	High
17	It is beneficial for low-proficiency students to study English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	3.97	.888	High
18	My English proficiency level is not suitable for studying with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	3.93	1.179	High
19	If I could choose a teacher, I would choose a course taught by a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	3.29	1.093	High
20	I have confidence that I have a good relationship with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.61	.662	Very high
21	When students do not understand what they learned, a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher allows students to ask questions.	4.57	.747	Very high
22	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher often teaches English only from textbooks.	3.17	1.267	High
23	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is strict with classroom discipline.	3.28	1.091	High
24	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher speaks with a clear and easily understandable English accent.	4.24	.831	Very high
25	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is well-prepared and explains the cultural perspectives concerning English-speaking countries.	4.35	.675	Very high
26	The non-native English-speaking EFL teacher frequently corrects errors in English usage.	3.99	1.104	High
27	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher is well-prepared for students' preparation for the exams.	4.42	.622	Very high
28	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher often explains the meaning of English words using gestures.	4.17	1.021	High
29	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher often asks students to work in pairs or groups.	4.26	.949	Very high
30	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher often assigns a lot of homework.	4.15	.974	High
31	A non-native English-speaking EFL teacher helps students practice and encourages them to speak English in the classroom.	4.25	.795	Very high
32	I have a positive attitude towards learning English with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.63	.615	Very high
33	On the whole, I feel happy when I study with a non-native English-speaking EFL teacher.	4.67	.650	Very high
	Total	4.17	.377	High