



Examining Freshman English Majors' Perspectives on Courses Taught by Native English-Speaking Instructors*

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ABSTRACT

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South Korean universities have increased the number of native English-speaking lecturers/teachers (NEST) to assist students with their language learning goals, improve university rankings, and support cultural awareness. To better understand student perceptions of NESTs and how student perceptions can improve future teaching quality, this study investigates the beliefs of freshmen English majors pertaining to attitude and motivation when attending English courses taught by NESTs. Perceptions pertain to benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, and expected qualities with NESTs courses. The study followed a survey design on a group of 40 English majors attending their first year of university. Results showed that students held generally high levels of positive perceptions towards NESTs, with the highest levels relating to satisfaction and benefits with NEST taught classes. Contrarily, negative affect produced the lowest level among the measured variables. Satisfaction with NESTs showed statistically significant relationships with all variables of interest, except negative affect. Through rank-order analysis of the survey items, a more nuanced understanding of how students perceive NEST taught courses is provided. This study offers implications for NESTs and recommendations for implementing best teaching practices.

KEYWORDS

NESTs, teaching quality, EFL, attitude, motivation, English self-efficacy, satisfaction

1. Introduction

Findings from past research show that South Korean students value NESTs for their contributions to speaking, fluency, and intercultural communication skills. Contrarily, non-NESTs are valued for their shared experiences in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). While NESTs are models for natural English use, they have been criticized for lack of qualifications to teach English for reasons including lack of experience, specialized language education, and cultural awareness.

The expansion of courses taught by native English speakers is partially driven by internationalization goals and increased international collaboration (Kim, Kim and Kweon 2018). Internationalization goals encompass the education of global citizens, the creation of research opportunities, and the generation of income from international students (Gregersen-Hermans and Lauridsen 2021). In response to the competitive nature of attracting international students, courses taught by NESTs have become increasingly prevalent worldwide (Moon and Yoo 2017). As a result, countries like South Korea have implemented university English courses taught by NESTs, including conversational English courses that focus on fluency and pronunciation. However, the emphasis at the institutional and government level has primarily been on expanding the availability of NEST taught courses, with less attention given to the quality of learning within these courses. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity regarding student satisfaction with attending NEST taught courses. In order to maximize student satisfaction and motivation for learning English, instructors, departments, and administrations are responsible for developing NEST-based curricula that students enjoy and benefit from. Consequently, there is an ongoing need for research that investigates the perceived benefits, satisfaction, motivation, and learning outcomes of students attending NEST taught courses.

Foreign language acquisition, such as South Korean students learning English, yields varying levels of success. The teaching styles of NESTs and non-NESTs can lead to different student outcomes. For instance, students under non-NESTs instruction have reported increased confidence and motivation to learn English (Jang and Wood 2019). Interestingly, even with reported lower motivation levels in NEST-led classes, satisfaction wasn't negatively affected, largely because students understood what to anticipate from each teaching style. In essence, students expected less from NESTs (Jang and Wood 2019).

The purpose of this study is to analyze perceived attitudes and motivations held by university English majors attending English courses taught by NESTs. Specifically, this study will measure the magnitude of and relationships among perceived benefits with NESTs, reasons for attending NEST taught courses, satisfaction with NEST taught courses, English self-efficacy when communicating in NEST taught courses, and negative affect resulting from NEST taught courses. Past literature has explored challenges, opportunities, and learning outcomes in classes taught by NESTs at the university level in South Korea (Kim et al. 2018, Lee 2018). Some of these studies investigated the influence learner and class characteristics have on perceived satisfaction and learning outcomes in courses taught by NESTs (Williams 2015). Contributing to past literature on NESTs, this study identifies the strengths, benefits, and weaknesses with NESTs working in South Korea. To this end, findings from this study can help identify areas of teaching NESTs should continue fostering (i.e., strengths) and areas of weakness NESTs need to overcome or avoid in the future. There is ample research on native English-speaking teachers that focused on middle school and high school students (Howard 2019). There is less research that has focused on how South Korean university students perceive learning English with NESTs. How student perceptions equate to recommendations for NESTs teaching practices is even more scant. By asking the following questions, the current study hopes to fill this gap by contributing to NESTs research in the university context of South Korea.

- 1) What is the level of perceived benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, expected qualities, and L2 proficiency for South Korean university students attending courses taught by NESTs?
- 2) What are the relationships among benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, expected qualities, and L2 proficiency for South Korean university students attending courses taught by NESTs?

2. Literature Review

South Korea has significantly invested in English education to enhance its global economic position (Park 2009). The country's English language policy has shifted over time, leading to fluctuating levels of native English-speaking teachers - from 1,017 in 2005 to 4,813 in 2019 (Lee 2022). These shifts, influenced by changing governmental policies, may have impacted students' experience with native English-speaking teachers and potentially affected their English self-efficacy and perceived benefits in NEST taught courses.

2.1. Benefits with NEST taught Course

South Korean universities are responsible for providing English education that can help students become global citizens. Consequently, there is a continuing need to measure how successful English programs are at meeting the learning goals, motivation, and satisfaction students have with their English education. Moreover, there is a need to understand if NESTs are successfully helping students reach their language learning goals (e.g., improve communication skills, test scores, and international employability) (Kim 2014).

2.2. Satisfaction with NEST taught Course

South Korean students express positive perceptions of NESTs (Nam 2018), however, fulfilling student expectations to achieve course satisfaction remains crucial. Course satisfaction is achieved when the classroom experience aligns with students' expectations, which can be facilitated by tailoring teaching methodologies, learning resources, and support systems to meet students' needs and aspirations, thereby optimizing their course satisfaction (Al-Zumor et al. 2013). Course satisfaction is subjective and based on how the student feels about their class. Satisfaction is further defined as one's willingness to continue learning because their student-needs are met (Rashidi and Moghadam 2014). Several factors influence the level of reported satisfaction students have towards NESTs. These factors include academic major, class size, and class interactions. Students evaluated non-NESTs higher than NESTs and this was attributed to the student and NNESTs sharing the same L2, cultural heritage, and foreign language (Zhang and Zhang 2019). Academic Major has been reported to influence satisfaction and participation in classes taught by NESTs, with communication (Chu, Lee, and O'Brien 2018). Class size is another factor expected to influence satisfaction with classes taught by NESTs. Students may not expect it necessary to participate verbally when attending large courses (Bailey and Lee 2020). Perceived instructor effectiveness is another explanatory factor toward satisfaction with courses in general (Stephanou and Kyridis 2012), and this is expected to hold especially true in courses taught by NESTs (Yeh 2012). A further indicator of perceived satisfaction with courses taught by NESTs includes participation (Bailey and Lee 2020).

Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015) investigated the relationship between student satisfaction with speaking classes, speaking skills, self-efficacy beliefs, and speaking skills achievement. Using questionnaire analysis on 100 Iranian EFL undergraduate students, Asakereh and Dehghannezhad's (2015) study found significant positive correlation between English self-efficacy and satisfaction. Moreover, positive class performance in the conversational English class positively related to course satisfaction (Asakereh and Dehghannezhad 2015).

There are distinct differences in how students perceive native and non-native English-speaking teachers. Students often value NESTs more, regardless of the teacher's education or experience, as they believe learning from NESTs can boost their English skills and motivation (Pae 2017). However, this preference varies with the type of class, with similar motivation levels found for conversational English classes taught by either NESTs or non-NESTs. Interestingly, students often experience higher levels of English anxiety in classes taught by NESTs, which could negatively impact their English self-efficacy. This study suggests that this anxiety might stem from a lack of experience studying with NESTs (Sheen 2008, Pae 2017).

A survey study by Moon and Yoo (2017) investigated the perceptions Arts and Physical Education majors had towards conversational English courses taught by NESTs. Results from their survey indicated students were satisfied with NEST taught courses as opposed to courses that mainly focused on memorization of English rules and vocabulary. Consequently, students were more motivated to continue studying English. Added levels of motivation due to increased satisfaction may lead to more engagement, opportunities for experiential learning, and improved learning gains. Moreover, students who are satisfied with their courses are likely to perceive themselves as more successful learners and hold higher English self-efficacy beliefs when participating in NEST taught courses.

2.3 English Self-efficacy and Satisfaction with NEST Taught Courses

Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's ability to succeed at a specific task (Bandura 1986). The role of English self-efficacy is well documented (Bong and Skaalvik 2003, Kyo 2022) with overwhelming evidence recognizing that higher levels of English self-efficacy is associated with improved learning outcomes (Cho and Kim 2019, Sun, Teo and Wang 2022). Despite this, few studies have investigated English self-efficacy alongside perceptions towards NESTs and English courses taught by NESTs. The current studies interested in learning how differing levels of English self-efficacy are associated with NESTs perceptions and perceived learning outcomes in middle school English classes taught by NESTs in South Korea. Kyo (2022) carried out a longitudinal study on a sample of 4,501 South Korean middle school high school students and found that English self-efficacy increased over time when attending courses. Older high school students held higher self-efficacy beliefs towards their expected learning outcome in English classes than younger ones (Kyo 2022, p. 15). Further, students with higher levels of L2 proficiency and who have studied English longer hold higher levels of English self-efficacy beliefs (Kim 2015)

The acquisition of English, particularly among South Korean learners taught by native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), is significantly influenced by self-efficacy and anxiety. Notably, anxiety tends to impede language learning (Zheng and Cheng 2018, Liu and Yuan 2021), while self-efficacy fosters it (Kim 2020). While students' attitudes towards English don't differ between NESTs and non-NESTs courses, their anxiety levels can vary depending on the specific NESTs (Han, Tanriover and Sahan 2016). However, these findings need verification due to the study's small sample size.

2.4 Dissatisfaction with NEST taught Courses

Native English-speaking teachers offer certain advantages and challenges to South Korean university students. Benefits include increased opportunities for speaking practice and cultural awareness, while challenges may arise, particularly in terms of heightened English anxiety, especially if the NESTs lack specific qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). NESTs in South Korea often face challenges such as marginalization, lack of opportunity for professional development, and limited career growth (Ruecker and Ives 2015, Howard 2019). Despite their English fluency, their teaching qualifications can vary, impacting their students' second language acquisition and potentially increasing student anxiety. Effective language learning often requires cooperation between NESTs and non-NESTs (Tsou and Chen 2017), thus a deficit of qualified NESTs can amplify student anxiety and may even deter English studies. South Korean public schools and academies (i.e., hag-wan) prioritize nationality and language competence above teaching qualifications (Seol 2012). The main qualification for NESTs are citizenship from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, and South Africa and a four-year degree from an accredited university within one of the aforementioned countries.

In a survey study of 20 Chinese EFL students, dissatisfaction with NESTs classroom performance was reported due to insensitivity to linguistic issues, inconsistent teaching methods, and unfamiliarity with local culture and

education systems (Rao 2010). Rao (2010) acknowledges limitations of NESTs and recommends their participation in professional development activities, as lack of teaching experience was identified as a major deficiency (p. 66). Another drawback is their limited experience in learning a second language, particularly English. NESTs are encouraged to engage in continuous professional development, including workshops, advanced degrees, and pursuit of additional languages. Education level, multilingualism, and experience are considered significant factors influencing student satisfaction with NEST-led courses. Multilingual teachers play a vital role in students' cognitive development and utilize their knowledge of different languages to enhance their understanding of English (Flores 2001, Ellis 2004).

The Korean government has historically emphasized communicative language instruction, leading to an increase in NESTs employment at universities to boost rankings and foster international communication skills (Jane 2019, Shin and Lee 2019, Bolton, Ahn, Botha, and Bacon-Shone 2022). Programs like Brain Korea 21 and Study Korea Project influenced this trend, encouraging the recruitment of international students and the offering of English courses (Seong et al. 2008, Byun et al. 2011). However, the impact of these initiatives on achieving English acquisition and internationalization goals still requires further investigation. Given the factors presented above, it is paramount that further research is conducted on teacher quality, especially for NESTs, considering the significant influence it holds on student learning and satisfaction. Such research could contribute to refining recruitment practices and ongoing professional development strategies, thereby ensuring the utmost effectiveness of English language instruction in South Korea's educational institutions and optimizing the nation's English acquisition and internationalization goals.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The study's survey was administered in the 12th week of the 2022 spring semester, which marked the English majors' first experience studying with a native English speaker in higher education. 40 South Korean freshman English majors participated in this study. Participants included 29 females and 11 males aged between 19 and 21. Students, while in high school, had attended online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. In South Korea, NESTs typically teach in elementary schools while middle and high schools are taught by Korean non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), focusing on grammar and listening skills. Hence, participants had limited exposure to NESTs in the years leading up to university.

3.2 Data Collection

Second language proficiency was collected using two measures: self-reported L2 proficiency and the British Counsel English Score. While self-reported L2 proficiency scores are simple, they have been found to be valid and reliable for measuring L2 proficiency (Kao and Reynolds 2017, Lee 2018). To triangulate L2 proficiency scores, self-reported proficiency scores were combined with proficiency scores from The British Counsel English Score Test (see [englishscore.com](https://www.englishscore.com)). This test is an online test that can be completed online using a smartphone. To help increase the validity of the results, the test uses the front-facing camera on one's smartphone to observe test-takers during the test. Capturing images of the test taker deters cheating. The British Counsel Score Test measures core skills (e.g., Grammar, Reading, and Listening) and speaking. Scores for the Core Skills section are immediately presented while the score for the speaking component is graded by live reviewers and then sent back to the students within seven days.

3.3 Materials

The study's questionnaire consisted of two parts: 1) demographic information, and 2) items measuring the survey variables. Demographic information included gender, age, international travel and living experience, English study history, L2 proficiency scores, and experience learning from NESTs. Variables of interest included 1) benefits with NESTs 2) Satisfaction, 3) English self-efficacy, 4) negative affect, 5) expected qualities, and 6) reasons to attend a NEST taught course.

Items for the benefits with NESTs were taken from Al-Zumor et al.'s (2013) blended learning perceptions survey. An original item states, "Blended learning is beneficial for reading skills", while the modified item in the current study states, "Native English professor's major English class is helpful for my reading skills." Items measuring satisfaction, expected qualities, and reasons for attending NEST taught courses scales were taken from Kim's (2019) study on student perceptions of teacher satisfaction. An original item reads, "I am generally satisfied with the quality of the classes offered" while a modified item states, "I am generally satisfied with the professor's English class overall." Items for the English self-efficacy scale were adopted Bong and Skaalvik's (2003) self-efficacy for academic outcome scale and include items like "I can easily connect what I learn in class to what I already know." Other past studies influenced the construction of the current study's questionnaire (Nam 2018). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Items on the benefits scale ranged from (1) not helpful at all to (5) very helpful. Items on the 1) important qualities for instructors and teachers, 2) reasons for attending NEST taught courses, 3) satisfaction with NEST taught courses, self-efficacy, and negative affect scales ranged from (1) not at all to (5) very much.

Regarding internal reliability, Cronbach alphas for all variables were above the recommended .70 lower threshold (Kline, 2013), indicating items appropriately measured their respective scales. Skewness and kurtosis values were calculated to identify if values illustrated normal distribution. Adequate levels of normal distribution were achieved as indicated by kurtosis values falling within the recommended -2 and +2 range and skewness values falling within recommended the -1.96 and +1.96 range (George and Mallery 2010).

Translation of survey items from English to Korean was carried out by a professional translator with over ten years of experience in translating academic documents. A second translator was asked to review the translated items. Differences in translation were identified, discussed and resolved. The questionnaire, to certify its validity, was meticulously evaluated by two EFL instructors with doctoral degrees and over 10 years of experience in teaching applied linguistics. The instructors' feedback resulted in the revision or removal of items that were ambiguous or had too much similarity to other items. A pilot test was then performed on a select group of Korean participants, employing convenience sampling, to measure the survey's practicality, precision, and effectiveness. The participants accomplished the survey easily, without encountering any complications.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS software (version 27). For the first research question, average scores were computed for the key variables, including 1) L2 proficiency, 2) benefits with NEST taught courses, 3) satisfaction with NEST-led courses 4) self-efficacy for learning within NEST taught courses, 5) negative affect with NEST taught courses 6) expected qualities in NEST, and 7) reasons for attending NEST taught courses. Alongside the calculation of mean scores, a detailed item-by-item evaluation was performed within scales, evaluating the items according to low (1-2.5), medium (2.5-3.5), and high (3.5-5) range groupings. For the second research question, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify significant relationships among these variables.

4. Results

4.1

RQ1: What is the level of perceived benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, expected qualities, and L2 proficiency for South Korean university students attending courses taught by NESTs?

Research question one investigates the magnitude and ranking of student perceptions towards native English-speaking teachers. To begin with, mean scores for the variables of interest are presented in their corresponding Tables (i.e., Tables 1 to 6). Overall, students held positive views towards their NEST taught courses, with mean scores falling within the 3.5 to 4.0 range for variables including benefits, satisfaction, self-efficacy, and expected qualities. In fact, benefits, expected qualities, and satisfaction with NEST taught courses were above the 4.0 to 5.0 range. Mean score for English self-efficacy had the lowest value ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.57$). While English self-efficacy produced the lowest score, the mean score of 3.76 is considered relatively high. Second language proficiency is another important variable of interest in this study. Contrarily, negative affect produced the lowest mean score, within the 1.00 to 2.50 range. Students participating in the current study reported have high levels of positive perceptions pertaining to NEST taught classes while also reporting low levels of apprehension to using English.

Two measures were used to report L2 proficiency, self-reported proficiency levels pertaining to speaking, reading, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The second L2 proficiency measure was the British Council Core skills test, a standardized language test students complete with their smartphones. In general, students reported moderate to moderately high levels of second language proficiency. Regarding self-reported English skills, students reported reading skills highest ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .89$), followed by pronunciation ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .864$) and grammar skills ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .862$).

4.1.1 Item Ranking for Benefits with NESTs Courses

The next step entailed an item-by-item ranking for individual scales. Specifically, Tables 1 to 6 show mean scores for each item in order from highest to lowest. Table 1 displays scores for benefits with NESTs courses. According to student responses, NESTs courses offer the greatest advantages in areas such as listening, pronunciation, spoken English, and confidence in the English language. On the contrary, students found vocabulary and grammar skills to be less improved through NESTs courses. These results resonate with prior studies that highlighted Korean students' appreciation for NESTs due to their English fluency, while non-native English teachers were favored for facilitating non-verbal English components like grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Braine 2010).

Table 1. Benefits with NEST taught Courses

Rank		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	Helpful for my listening skills.	4.45	0.60	.094
2 nd	Helpful for my pronunciation skills.	4.38	0.70	.111
3 rd	Helpful for my speaking skills.	4.25	0.74	.117
4 th	Helps me to develop my English confidence.	4.23	0.70	.110
5 th	Helps me to develop my motivation to study English harder.	4.15	1.03	.162
6 th	Helps me prepare for employment and study abroad.	4.10	0.78	.123
7 th	Helpful for my writing skills.	4.05	0.85	.134
8 th	Helpful for my reading (reading) skills.	4.05	0.75	.118
9 th	Helpful for my vocabulary (words) skills.	4.03	0.73	.116
10 th	Helpful for my grammar skills.	3.88	0.97	.153
	Total Mean	4.16	0.60	.124

4.1.2 Item Ranking for Satisfaction with NESTs Courses

Table 2 displays mean scores for items in the satisfaction scale. Students reported high levels of satisfaction with their NESTs course as indicated by all but one item in the satisfaction scale above the mean value of 4.0. In other words, eleven of the twelve items in the satisfaction scale were about the 4.0 means score level. Item 1, I was satisfied with the professor's English class overall, was ranked highest with a mean score of 4.35 ($SD = 0.66$). Other points of satisfaction pertained to professionalism (item 3), praise (item 4), and variety of learning material (item 5). Areas of improvement pertaining to the development of confidence (item 12) were ranked lowest. Further, students reported the lowest satisfaction for content of the English class textbooks (item 11), and assignments aligning with the purpose of the class (item 10). While these items were the lowest ranked, they were still in the 3.5 to 5.0 range.

Table 2. Satisfaction with NEST taught Courses

Rank		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	I was satisfied with the professor's English class overall.	4.35	0.66	.098
2 nd	The professor checks what has been learned and evaluates it appropriately.	4.28	0.68	.124
3 rd	The professionalism and teaching methods of the faculty were satisfactory.	4.28	0.78	.107
4 th	The professor gives a lot of praise and encouragement during class.	4.23	0.86	.136
5 th	The professor uses a variety of learning materials to make it easier to understand the content of the class.	4.23	0.86	.136
6 th	It increased the learning motivation and interest in the major subject of the English class.	4.18	0.75	.118
7 th	Even if the professor's English class is not compulsory, I am willing to take it.	4.13	0.88	.140
8 th	The level of English teaching materials was appropriate.	4.10	0.74	.118
9 th	The professor's class increased my interest in English.	4.05	0.90	.143
10 th	The assignments of the English class met the ultimate purpose of the lecture.	4.05	0.93	.147
11 th	The content of the English class textbook was interesting and fun.	4.03	0.92	.145
12 th	I gained confidence in speaking English while taking classes with the professor.	3.70	0.91	.144
	Total	4.19	0.64	.130

4.1.3 Item Ranking for English Self-efficacy with NESTs Courses

Table 3 displays mean score results for the English self-efficacy scale. These items measure the amount of confidence students have about their ability to learn English when attending courses taught by NESTs. Five of the

six items on the English self-efficacy scale were in the 3.5 to 5.0 range, indicating high levels of confidence among the participating students. The highest ranked items related to connecting what one learns in class to what they already know. Students feel capable of completing exam questions in a given time (item 2) and understanding what they learn in class. Such high ratings for items with the self-efficacy for expected learning outcome scale suggest students in the current study are confident they are achieving their language learning goals.

Table 3: Self-efficacy for Learning within NESTs Courses

rank		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	I can successfully complete a given task within a set time	4.20	0.72	.094
2 nd	I can easily connect what I learn in class with what I already know.	3.95	0.60	.130
3 rd	I can solve all the exam questions in the given time.	3.88	0.82	.122
4 th	I can get a good grasp of what I have learned in class overall.	3.85	0.77	.117
5 th	I can remember well what I was taught.	3.75	0.74	.116
6 th	I never miss a point on an exam by a careless mistake.	3.35	0.74	.094
	Total	3.76	0.57	.112

4.1.4 Item Ranking for Negative Affect with NESTs Courses

Table 4 displays means scores for items in the negative affect scale. These items pertained to negative feelings or feelings of anxiety students have toward NEST taught classes. In contrast to scales measuring positive perceptions (e.g., satisfaction scale and benefits scale), items measuring negative affect were in the 1.0 to 2.5 range, with one item above this level with a mean score of 2.64 ($SD = 1.00$).

Table 4. Negative Affect (Feelings) with NESTs Courses

rank		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	When I make a presentation, I do not express my opinion properly because I fear that I will be embarrassed.	2.65	1.00	.158
2 nd	I tend to get nervous before exams and I can't remember anything I studied.	2.50	1.04	.164
3 rd	When the professor speaks in English, I am anxious because I cannot understand it.	2.40	1.17	.185
4 th	I think the professor's English class is boring.	2.15	1.05	.166
5 th	It seems that the professor's class only increased the fear of English.	2.10	1.03	.163
	Total	2.36	0.74	.167

4.1.5 Item Ranking for Expected Qualities with NESTs Courses

The following scale evaluates the attributes students anticipate from courses instructed by NESTs. Mean scores for these elements are presented in Table 5. Students' expectations of a NEST-led class include the NEST's enthusiasm, their own confidence in English (i.e., English self-efficacy), and the NEST's proficiency in delivering lectures. Alongside English confidence, students' English proficiency levels are also seen as crucial for NEST-led courses. On the other hand, the diversity of class assignments, instructional resources, and the NESTs teaching style, while scoring within the 3.5 to 5.0 range, were the least favored items on the expected qualities scale. The type of assignments and materials utilized received the lowest scores, possibly reflecting previous findings that Korean students tend to have lower expectations of NESTs compared to non-NESTs (Pae 2017). This points to a potential area of improvement for future NEST-led courses. Encouraging students to critically review NESTs content, educational materials, and assignments could be beneficial as such feedback might aid NESTs in identifying the most effective practices and formulating a more impactful curriculum.

Table 5. Expected Qualities in NEST taught Courses

Rank		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	The degree of interest of native-speaking professors to students is important to taking English classes.	4.50	0.68	.107
2 nd	My English confidence is an important factor in taking classes from native speakers	4.43	0.55	.087
3 rd	Proficient lecture experience and English skills of native-speaking professors are important factors for taking classes.	4.25	0.63	.100
4 th	My English skills are an important factor in taking classes from foreign professors.	4.13	0.76	.120
5 th	My hard work is an important component of a successful native-speaking professor's class.	4.05	0.88	.161
6 th	A variety of class assignments from native-speaking professors are an important factor in taking English classes.	3.83	1.03	.138
7 th	The teaching materials and teaching methods of native-speaking professors are important elements in taking English classes.	3.68	1.33	.164
	Total	4.08	0.58	.128

4.1.6 Item Ranking for Reasons to Attend NESTs Courses

Table 6 displays mean scores in rank order for reasons for attending NESTs courses. The highest ranked item in this scale pertained to improving English skills. Similarly, self-development ranked 3rd most important reason for attending courses taught by NESTs. Future employment opportunities and curiosity about foreign cultures were also ranked high (i.e., above 4.0 level) for reasons students attended NEST taught courses.

Table 6. Reasons for Attending NEST taught Courses (n=40)

	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1 st	Improvement of English skills	4.40	0.59	.093
2 nd	It is necessary for employment and career choice after graduation.	4.23	0.83	.131
3 rd	Self-development	4.18	0.78	.123
4 th	Curiosity about foreign cultures	4.13	0.82	.130
5 th	Academic interest in your field of study	3.95	0.75	.118
6 th	Compulsory credit completion	3.78	0.89	.141
	Total	4.11	0.55	.123

4.2

RQ2: What are the relationships among benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, expected qualities, and L2 proficiency for South Korean university students attending courses taught by NESTs?

Research question two investigates the interconnections between the target variables. To address this question, a Pearson correlation analysis (see Table 7) was conducted encompassing 1) perceived benefits of NESTs, 2) satisfaction, 3) English self-efficacy, 4) negative affect, 5) anticipated qualities, 6) motivations to enroll in NEST-led courses, and 7) L2 proficiency. The elements of L2 proficiency comprised self-evaluated English capabilities and scores from the British Council Core Skills test. All positive perceptions, namely, benefits, satisfaction, expected attributes, English self-efficacy, and reasons for choosing NEST-led courses, demonstrated significant positive correlations with each other. The highest correlation was found between self-efficacy and learning strategies ($r = .75, p < .001^{**}$). Numerous other significant relationships were also detected. The perceived benefits and satisfaction associated with NEST-led courses yielded the most statistically substantial relationships. All

variables, except negative affect, demonstrated a statistically significant interrelation. While the relationships involving negative affect (in relation to NEST-led courses) trended negatively, these correlations were not statistically significant, except for the two L2 proficiency measures. Satisfaction showed multiple statistically meaningful connections with the other variables under consideration, leading to the conclusion that satisfaction with NEST-led courses generated the most statistically noteworthy relationships with other variables.

Table 7. Mean Scores and Correlation Analysis of Study's Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Gender									
2 Core Score Test	-.04								
3 Self-Report Prof.	.02	.76**							
4 Benefits	-.01	.43**	.62**						
5 Satisfaction	-.03	.33*	.37*	.59**					
6 English SE	-.01	.09	.36*	.49**	.54**				
7 Neg. Affect	.03	-.50**	-.52**	-.26	-.10	.032			
8 Expected qualities	.18	.12	0.28	.47**	.64**	.41**	.06		
9 Reasons to attend	.14	.20	.34*	.61**	.58**	.51**	.06	.40*	
<i>M</i>	1.73	354.25	3.30	4.16	4.19	3.76	2.36	4.09	4.11
<i>SD</i>	0.45	119.20	0.79	0.60	0.64	0.57	0.74	0.58	0.55
Skew	-1.05	0.95	0.046	-1.26	1.08	-0.74	3.22	-1.17	-0.72
Kurt	-0.95	-0.59	0.40	0.11	-0.88	-0.06	1.12	0.29	-0.22
Cron. α	n/a	0.90	0.90	0.91	0.77	0.93	0.74	0.83	0.80

Note: alpha* = .05, ** = .01. Self-Reported Prof. = Self-Reported English Proficiency, Benefits = benefits with NESTs courses, Satisfaction = satisfaction with NESTs courses, English SE = self-efficacy to use English during NESTs courses, Neg. Affect = negative affect pertaining to NESTs courses, expected qualities = expected qualities when attending NESTs courses. n = 40.

Second language proficiency is a potent determinant of English self-efficacy and second language anxiety, and this correlation was evident within the framework of NEST-led courses. The current study identified the interrelations between L2 proficiency and the focused variables (e.g., perceived benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy). Consistent with prior research, the relationships between the variables of interest and L2 proficiency followed the anticipated trajectory. As for the British Council English Core Test, statistically significant relationships were exclusively associated with satisfaction from NEST-led courses and negative affect. Students with higher L2 proficiency reported greater benefits from NEST-led courses and experienced less English-associated negative affect. As a result, NESTs should strive to cater to the needs of lower L2 proficiency students attending their classes. Moreover, those with lesser L2 proficiency might also find value in attending language courses conducted by non-NESTs. A similar pattern of relationships was observed between self-reported proficiency scores and study variables (e.g., perceived benefits, satisfaction, and English self-efficacy).

The responses to research question one provided insight into the importance of the variables of interest in this study. Subsequent item-by-item analysis revealed specific details about the most and least reported items. Responses to research question two illuminated the relationships between the variables under study. Findings for research question three are presented in the following discussion.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Several findings of significance emanate from this study. First and foremost, students reported generally positive views towards courses taught by NESTs. Past research has shown that English majors generally hold higher levels

of motivation for English than non-English majors (Sun et al. 2022), and this partly explains the high levels of positive attitudes and motivation beliefs reported by students in the current study. Further explanation can be attributed to the quality of NESTs. The participating instructors in the current study both had over ten years of experience teaching English at the university level and held graduate degrees in related fields. According to extant literature, the instructors' experience and education has an important influence on self-beliefs held by students (Ellis 2004, Afshar and Farahani 2018). Furthermore, this finding of positive perceptions among the participating students clearly aligns with past research that investigated South Korean perceptions of NESTs and NEST taught courses (Kim 2019). Students reported generally low levels of English anxiety, a finding consistent with the observed trend among highly motivated South Korean students. Students in the current study were English majors and therefore highly motivated to learn and use English. Therefore, low levels of negative affect towards attending English classes taught by NESTs is in line with extant literature (Sheen 2008, Pae 2017). Another noteworthy finding pertained to English self-efficacy in NEST taught courses. Specifically, regarding confidence at achieving a successful learning outcome, students held moderate to moderately high levels. Generally, moderately high to high levels of English self-efficacy is a common trait among highly motivated students with moderate to high levels of English proficiency (Kim et al. 2015), and this was also the case here. Students who scored higher on the English Core Skills Test also reported having higher English self-efficacy. Consequently, students who are most able to succeed when beginning a NEST taught course (i.e., high L2 proficient students) will also expect to succeed compared to their lower L2 proficient counterparts. Here lied a fundamental problem with not only NEST taught courses but EFL courses in general: The students' expectations for success or failure depend on L2 knowledge learned prior to every beginning the course.

5.1 Research Question One

In response to the first research question, "What is the magnitude of NESTs-based assistance to second language acquisition, positive EFL student characteristics, negative EFL student characteristics, satisfaction with NESTs courses, and expected course outcomes?" several noteworthy findings emerged. Students reported appreciating the benefits of NESTs courses, expressed high levels of satisfaction with NEST taught classes, and had high expectations of these courses – all at relatively similar levels. They also displayed strong reasons for choosing NEST taught courses. Generally, it appears that students are highly motivated to attend classes taught by NESTs.

This high level of satisfaction and recognition of the benefits of NEST taught classes aligns with Jang and Wood's (2019) findings, which also indicated that South Korean students were satisfied with NEST taught classes. Kim's (2019) study comparing satisfaction levels between English majors and non-English majors found that non-English majors were more satisfied, which was attributed to the disappointment of English majors with the low level of challenge the course presented. Since the students in the current study were taking courses directly related to their major, this could have contributed to the reported high levels of course satisfaction and perceived benefits to their language learning goals.

Moreover, students in the current study cited improving English skills (e.g., reason scale item 1, improved English skills, $M = 4.40$) as a primary reason for attending NEST taught courses. This contrasts with Kim's (2019) finding that the main reason English majors attended their English course was because it was compulsory. In the current study, the course being "compulsory" ranked last among the reasons students provided for attending the English class. Instead, the students in this study seem to possess high levels of both intrinsic and instrumental motivation. The second highest-rated item on the reasons for attending NEST taught courses was to better opportunities for future employment, indicating a certain level of instrumental motivation.

Regarding self-efficacy (e.g., confidence to use English in NEST taught courses), students reported moderately high levels. Despite being moderately high, this was the lowest reported variable among those measuring positive student characteristics (e.g., satisfaction, benefits, and reasons for attending NEST taught courses). Generally,

students exhibit higher levels of English self-efficacy beliefs when they possess higher levels of L2 proficiency, have lived overseas, or possess more experience studying English as a foreign language (Kim et al. 2015). This was also true with the students in the current study.

In this study, self-efficacy referred to the level of confidence students had about their ability to succeed in a NEST taught class, specifically a pronunciation clinic course which was a requirement for their graduation. Self-efficacy for expected outcomes in a course can be considered an important outcome measure since the expected outcome is a measure of learning accomplishment (Williams 2010). Future research may wish to investigate the influence of variables like satisfaction, benefits, L2 proficiency, and negative affect on self-efficacy for expected outcomes in NEST taught classes. Findings from such research could shed new light on what matters when it comes to achieving learning goals in NEST taught classes.

Overall, students held positive perceptions towards NESTs. Students had a positive level of benefits with a mean score in the medium-high range (3.5-5). Regarding the item-by-item analysis, several interesting findings emerged. Students felt that NESTs were most beneficial in helping them learn listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills. This finding aligns with past research that investigated student perceptions of NESTs (Nemtchinova 2005, Yeh 2012, Chu et al. 2018). The reasons for attending NESTs courses were to improve English skills (see Reasons scale Item 1), boost employability (see Reasons scale Item 2), and foster self-development (see Reasons scale Item 3). The reasons students attend NEST taught courses are due to both intrinsic motivation (e.g., self-development) and instrumental motivation (e.g., future employment), in contrast to past studies which found that students attend NESTs courses because they are compulsory (Kim 2019). The difference in reasons for attending may be attributed to the student's major. In this study, students were attending their first year at university as English majors. In line with Moon and Yoo's (2017) study on Art and Physical Education majors, the current study supports the position that South Korean university students, both English and non-English majors, appreciate communication-based English courses as opposed to courses that focus mainly on rote memorization. Echoing Kim's (2019) findings, students in the current study also reported self-development as a main reason for attending NEST taught courses. Regarding satisfaction, students' satisfaction levels in the current study were highly influenced by the instructor's ability to use appropriate learning material and conduct class professionally. This finding aligns with past research (Rao 2010, Kim 2019). Following Rao's (2010) recommendation, instructors are highly encouraged to participate in professional development activities throughout their career. When attending courses taught by NESTs, students appreciate the professor's class preparation attitude and teaching method (Kim 2019). Students in the current study appreciated the variety and quality of class assignments as indicated by item 6 on the satisfaction scale ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .86$). A wide variety of assignments provides students with more opportunities to practice different language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, and writing), resulting in overall improvement. Future research should investigate the relationship between assignments and learning outcomes in EFL courses taught by NESTs.

5.2 Research Question Two

Regarding research question two, "What are the relationships among task value, English self-efficacy, English proficiency, and language learning strategies on expected learning outcomes within university English courses taught by native English speakers?" several significant findings were observed. Statistically significant positive correlations were found among variables measuring positive student characteristics (e.g., benefits, satisfaction, and reasons for attending NESTs courses). Furthermore, these variables positively related to L2 proficiency, in terms of both standardized test scores and self-reported proficiency levels. Contrarily, negative affect (e.g., anxiety beliefs towards attending NEST taught courses) did not demonstrate any statistically significant relationships with the other perception variables. Nevertheless, negative affect did have a negative association with L2 proficiency, indicating that students with lower levels of L2 proficiency tend to have higher levels of anxiety or apprehension when attending courses taught by NESTs. This trend of high anxiety among lower-performing, less proficient

students has been documented in previous research (Pae 2017).

The high correlation between satisfaction and all the other variables is notable. As identified by Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015), students appear to be satisfied with NEST taught courses, and this is partly due to the conversational component, which is unlike the rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules more commonly found with non-NESTs courses (Moon and Yoo 2017). The strongest correlation with satisfaction was observed with the reasons for attending NEST taught courses. This suggests that students who have more motives for attending NEST taught courses are likely to report higher levels of satisfaction.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

Based on this study, we can extrapolate potential influences on teaching practices. By assessing the findings from the first two research questions, we can offer a set of crucial pedagogical suggestions for NESTs in South Korea. Given the generally positive attitudes students exhibit towards courses taught by NESTs, it becomes imperative for these courses to sustain an atmosphere conducive to fostering high motivation and positive attitudes. The teachers' qualifications and experience, which play significant roles in shaping student self-beliefs and satisfaction, should be actively taken into account. Understanding and addressing student anxiety, especially among those with lower English proficiency, is another key area where NESTs need to focus, possibly through implementing confidence-boosting activities, providing additional tutoring or support, and integrating anxiety-management strategies into the teaching process. In addition, given students' high expectations of NEST taught courses and their motivations to improve English skills and enhance future employment opportunities, NESTs should strive to meet these expectations by focusing on practical skill improvement and career-oriented English education. The students' value for NEST taught courses, particularly for improving listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills, suggests that NESTs should persistently emphasize these areas in their teaching approach. Given the high correlation between student satisfaction and the reasons for attending NEST taught courses, it becomes crucial for NESTs to meet students' specific needs and expectations, which could be achieved through a variety of assignments, using engaging learning materials, and maintaining professionalism in class conduct. Furthermore, due to the strong correlation observed between high self-efficacy and high L2 proficiency, NESTs should concentrate on building student self-efficacy as a strategy for improving L2 proficiency, possibly through success-focused tasks and positive feedback. In conclusion, a student-centric approach that addresses individual needs, reduces anxiety, and promotes a positive learning environment should be the guiding principle for NESTs, while understanding that these pedagogical implications are not exhaustive and warrant further research to continually improve English education in South Korea.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

The current study identified levels of perceived attitudes and motivations reported by South Korean university students. In addition, this study identified the relationships among motivations and attitudes students have to participate in university courses taught by native English-speaking teachers. In addition to motivation and attitudes, the relationship L2 proficiency has with the variables of interest was also investigated. Ultimately, this study explored levels of perceived benefits, satisfaction, English self-efficacy, negative affect, expected qualities, reasons for attending NEST taught courses, and L2 prophecy. Overall, students perceive their learning experience with NESTs positively, especially regarding benefits and satisfaction. While self-efficacy was rated lowest, this variable was still in the 3.5 to 5.0 range, indicating students identified as relatively successful when attending

courses taught by NESTs. However, lower L2 proficient students reported higher levels of negative affect and lower levels of self-efficacy. NESTs are recommended to identify students with high levels of negative affect early in the semester. Early intervention with high-risk students who identify as having low levels of self-efficacy and high levels of negative affect may encourage lower performing students achieve their learning goals. The research reveals key pedagogical recommendations for NESTs in South Korea, emphasizing the necessity of creating a positive, motivating environment and tailoring teaching to students' specific needs. This approach should involve a focus on practical skill improvement and career-oriented English education, particularly listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills, reducing student anxiety, and building self-efficacy as a strategy for language proficiency. Furthermore, the research advocates for continuous exploration and adaptation of these recommendations to improve English education in South Korea.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

A few key limitations need to be stated. First, the current study consisted of students recruited from two classes and contained only 40 participating students. Future research should survey a larger group of students to allow for a more sophisticated analysis. Next, all students in the current study were English majors. While past studies have found English majors to be more critical of NEST taught courses (Kim 2019), the high levels of positive perceptions recognized among the current group of students may be attributed to higher levels of motivation due to their academic major. Future research may want to include participants from wider variety of majors. Next, only survey analysis was used to measure student perceptions of NESTs and NEST taught courses. Future research should attempt to include data from more than survey instruments. For instance, future research can employ student interviews, journals, and class observation. More data sources will increase reliability of the findings and help identify more nuanced phenomena with student perceptions of NESTs and NEST taught courses. Finally, perceptions measures alone may not provide enough specific information that can be practically applied in the NESTs classroom. Therefore, future research may also want to investigate the relationship between assignments and learning outcome in EFL courses taught by NESTs. By identifying the type of assignments NESTs employ in NEST taught classes, researchers will be able to recommend activities that contribute to higher levels of satisfaction and motivation.

Universities in South Korea are quickly reacting to issues related to decreasing student populations and increased competition with other universities. Policy pertaining to NESTs has historically been established to help bolster international rankings, encourage cultural exchange, and assist students on becoming global citizens. Moving forward, universities must consider the payoff of allocating financial resources to NESTs instead of local non-NESTs Korean instructors. Moving forward, NEST taught courses must meet curriculum goals including providing a learning environment that is conducive to feeling of satisfaction and learning accomplishments by students. Students, faculty, and administration should continue evaluating NESTs and NEST taught courses. Continuous evaluation will lead to opportunity for critical feedback and, ultimately, a NESTs-based learning environment that meets the language learning, communication, and other academic needs of student, in general, and South Korean English majors, specifically.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Level: Tertiary