

Intro

There are three different types of English teachers; native English teachers (NETs), non-native English teachers (NNETs), and home teachers (HTs). NETs teachers are generally in the highest demand and paid the most. Next, HTs are locals [teaching English](#). They can get teaching jobs easier than NETs and NNETs and the local governments like them better because most of their earnings stay in the country. The non-native English teachers are nationals from countries where English is not the primary language. Out of all three, the non-native English teachers tend to have it the hardest when it comes to getting hired and being paid the same rates as the native teachers. In this article, we explore a few possible reasons for this.

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Three Types of English Teachers

Non-Native English Teachers:

Non-native English teachers are typically from countries where English is not the primary language, and they go outside their country to teach English. They often have a degree in linguistics or [TESOL \(Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages\)](#) and may or may not have teaching experience.

#1) Overseas Trained Teachers (OTT)

There are many different types of non-native English teachers. The most common type is the overseas trained teacher (OTT). These teachers are from countries where English is not the primary language, but they have been trained in teaching methods and received their degrees, experience, or teaching certificates from an English-speaking country. OTTs make up the largest group of non-native English teachers.

#2) Home Teachers (HT)

Another type of non-native English teacher is the home teacher (HT). They are locals who teach English in their home country. HTs are usually from countries where English is not the primary language. Home teachers know the local culture and can better attend to the needs of their

students. HTs are either people who have lived in an English-speaking country and then returned to their home countries to teach, or they studied and learned English on their own (i.e. self-taught), and/or studied English as a foreign language extensively in local schools /universities. They have reached proficiency high enough to be qualified to teach English at all levels, but mostly lower and intermediate levels.

Advantages

- Know the culture
- Perhaps more sensitive to their students' learning needs
- Good understanding of grammar rules of L1 and L2
- Can better attend to the needs of students
- It costs schools less to hire NNETs

Disadvantages

- HTs may use their L1 extensively with their students
- May not have as much teaching experience
- English may not be adequate at times (i.e. [pronunciation](#))



Unsplash by Austin Distel

#3) Native English Teachers (NT)

Native English teachers are typically from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom. These teachers usually have a degree in education or a related field, and many have teaching experience. These are basic qualifications, in addition to age and health conditions, for native English teachers to qualify to teach in most countries around the world. For the outsider, it seems that all you have to do is to be born in the right country and speak the right language to be qualified to teach it. However, there is a lot more to being an effective native English teacher than just that. Native English teachers are often required to have a degree in a related field and a [TEFL](#) certification before they can start teaching.

Advantages

- In high demand because of their native-level proficiency
- Paid the most (usually to compensate for the high cost of living in their home country)

Disadvantages

- May not be as familiar with the local culture
- May not be familiar with their students' needs to learn English as a foreign language



Unsplash by Absolutvision

So who is qualified to teach English; native, non-native, or home teachers?

The answer is professionals who have a high proficiency in English and are adequately trained, given the level, age, and needs of learners. [Communicative Language Teaching \(CLT\)](#) was never designed to be exclusively used by native speakers of a language. No English language textbook states that it should only be taught by a native speaker of English, and there is no evidence that any group of teachers (NET or NNETs) are better and more effective language teachers. Generally, each group of teachers has its advantages and disadvantages, and on an individual level, every teacher is different in their lesson delivery as teaching is a personal occupation.

Who gets the jobs depends on a few factors discussed below.

Hiring

The local government or the Immigration Office in the host country sets the rules on who qualifies to

teach English in their country and who does not. Immigration offices usually require citizenship from an English-speaking country, a university degree, preferably in English education or a related field, and a teaching certificate, such as a [TEFL certification](#). Native English speakers usually have an advantage over non-native English speakers when it comes to getting hired and approved by the local government to teach English.

However, many schools are willing to hire non-native English speakers if they have a university degree, teaching experience, and a teaching certificate. The most important factor for many schools is usually the teaching certificate/degree. A teaching certificate shows that the teacher has been trained in teaching methods and knows how to properly teach a language. And this is why many non-native teachers feel they are discriminated against. They often feel that they are not given a fair chance to get hired because they were not born in one of the English-speaking countries.

(Our articles on teaching in [China](#) and [Korea](#))

Teacher Training

Many schools require their teachers to have a TEFL certification, but other types of teaching certificates are also accepted, such as the [CELTA and the DELTA](#). The CELTA (Certificate in [English Language Teaching](#) to Adults) and the DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults) are both internationally recognized teaching certificates that are offered by many universities and language schools around the world. These certificates are usually more expensive than a TEFL certification, but they are also much more comprehensive and can lead to better job opportunities.

British Council (BC) and International House (IH) are usually the training centers for CELTA and DELTA training. They accept both, native and non-native candidates into their training programs. Now, both BC and IH are from the UK and have been the leaders in teaching English and training teachers for decades across the world. Whoever went through CELTA and/or DELTA training will tell you it was not easy. It is difficult for both native and non-native teachers, and not all pass. Now, if the BC or IH trains you and awards you a certificate or a diploma to teach English, whether you are a native or non-native teacher, that should have a priority, in most cases, in the hiring process over the birthplace.



Unsplash by Ibrahim Boran

Economics (it's always about money)

Now that we know all this, how come hiring and pay differences among each group of the teachers we mentioned so far, still persist in the EFL/ESL market?

Opportunity cost

There are two major [EFL](#) job markets in the World; Northeast Asia (China, Korea, Japan) and the Middle East (Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar), and both of these markets pay the highest salaries and offer the best conditions, but most of them require native English teachers or at least citizenship from one of the English-speaking countries.

It is very hard to generalize the whole region, but on average, in both of these regions native teachers of English get paid more than non-native speakers, and the reason is opportunity cost. Employers have to compensate or match the standard of living and salaries from their home countries. If an employer from UAE wishes to hire a teacher from the USA or New Zealand, they need to offer them at least the same money and conditions they would make in their home country. Non-native teachers, on the other hand, may be as good as the teachers from the USA (in both proficiency and pedagogy), but the employer may offer the salaries and conditions that they would make in their home country.

Protectionism

Another reason why non-native teachers are kept outside certain job markets is that some countries are protecting their local job markets (i.e. home teachers). [English teaching](#) and learning is one of

the biggest industries (i.e. teaching, testing, textbooks,..) in Northeast Asia and the Middle East, and it's expected that those countries want to protect those industries from foreign competitors. One of the ways to do that is to raise the bar by requiring citizenship, and native speakers, among other things.

A few non-native teachers always slip through in most of these countries with the blessings of the local immigration offices, but on a very small scale, outside the public scrutiny, to close the demand gap and keep the salaries stable.

But this should be no surprise. There are restrictions on foreigners in every country in every industry. EU member states will give advantages in the hiring process to English teachers from the EU (after Brexit, English in the EU is a foreign language now), then to native English teachers from the US or Canada. Europeans do not seem to be desperate to hire native speakers anyways, since they have some of the highest [ESL](#) proficiencies in the world.

New trends

However, there has been a trend of hiring more non-native English teachers in recent years. The reasons for this are that many countries are now recognizing the importance of having a non-native English speaker in the classroom. Also, many schools are beginning to realize those non-native teachers can be just as effective as native teachers, and sometimes even more effective and efficient. This new trend has been fuelled by platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Another reason is that the market is telling employers that there are not enough NETs to cover the demand of 1.5 billion learners of English as a foreign or second language, and most of this demand is in the Asia-pacific region, while demand for English learning in Europe will slowly go down over the next decade.



Unsplash by Tiffany Leung

Conclusion

Overall, each type of English teacher has its own advantages and disadvantages, but the most important factors seem to be the market forces and protectionism of local jobs. This is not always in the best interest of students, their parents, and schools, but it is the way when it comes to the movement of labor across borders. This happens in every industry in every country. Once we understand how market forces move and the motives of government decisions, we can better assess our situation and adjust accordingly.

The good news is that in recent years, the trend has changed and the gap between native and non-native teachers is shrinking. A possible reason for this is that income and opportunities between English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries are narrowing, and a growing demand for English learning.

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Cite this article

APA: EFL Cafe. (2022, May 29). Native English Teachers, Non-native English Teachers, and Home Teachers | Pay, Opportunity Cost, Job Markets. EFLCafe.net.

<https://eflcafe.net/native-english-teachers-non-native-english-teachers-and-home-teachers-pay-opp>

ortunity-cost-job-markets/

In-text citation: (EFL Cafe, 2024)

MLA: EFL Cafe "Native English Teachers, Non-native English Teachers, and Home Teachers | Pay, Opportunity Cost, Job Markets." EFLCafe.net, 29 May. 2022, <https://eflcafe.net/native-english-teachers-non-native-english-teachers-and-home-teachers-pay-opportunity-cost-job-markets/>.

In-text citation: (EFL Cafe)