

Native-speaker teachers only?

Sprachschulen werben oft damit, dass ihre Lehrer Muttersprachler sind. Aber ist das überhaupt rechtens? Und fordern Kursteilnehmer wirklich Muttersprachler, weil diese die besseren Lehrer sind? VICKI SUSSENS hat Argumente dafür und dagegen gehört. medium

Yes!

“Our clients expect to be taught by native speakers”

Jannette Allen



Being a native speaker brings to the English-language learning experience an authenticity and depth of cultural knowledge that non-natives cannot always provide. Speaking English to a native-speaker English teacher is simply a natural thing to do. This takes the pressure off the grammar, and communication becomes a fun and enriching experience.

Our aim in corporate English language training must be to offer our clients the best quality possible. When we hire trainers, we search for candidates who combine native-speaker expertise with a sound pedagogical background, the ability to teach and a real interest in the individual needs of our clients.

Many of our participants in Germany are already proficient in English; some have even lived or studied in English-speaking countries. They attend our training courses to maintain their level of competence, remove

errors that have entered their English and learn specialist language for their professions. Many job applications I have received from non-natives show the same errors that our high-level participants make and wish to eliminate. Native speakers have a huge repertoire of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, and they know exceptions to rules. This means they feel extremely comfortable teaching the language, and so experience a high degree of acceptance with our clients.

Native speakers also provide a better and more natural pronunciation, including intonation and pitch. They often speak more fluently and intuitively correctly than their non-native colleagues. And their sociolinguistic competence enables them to comfortably apply the right language in different contexts.

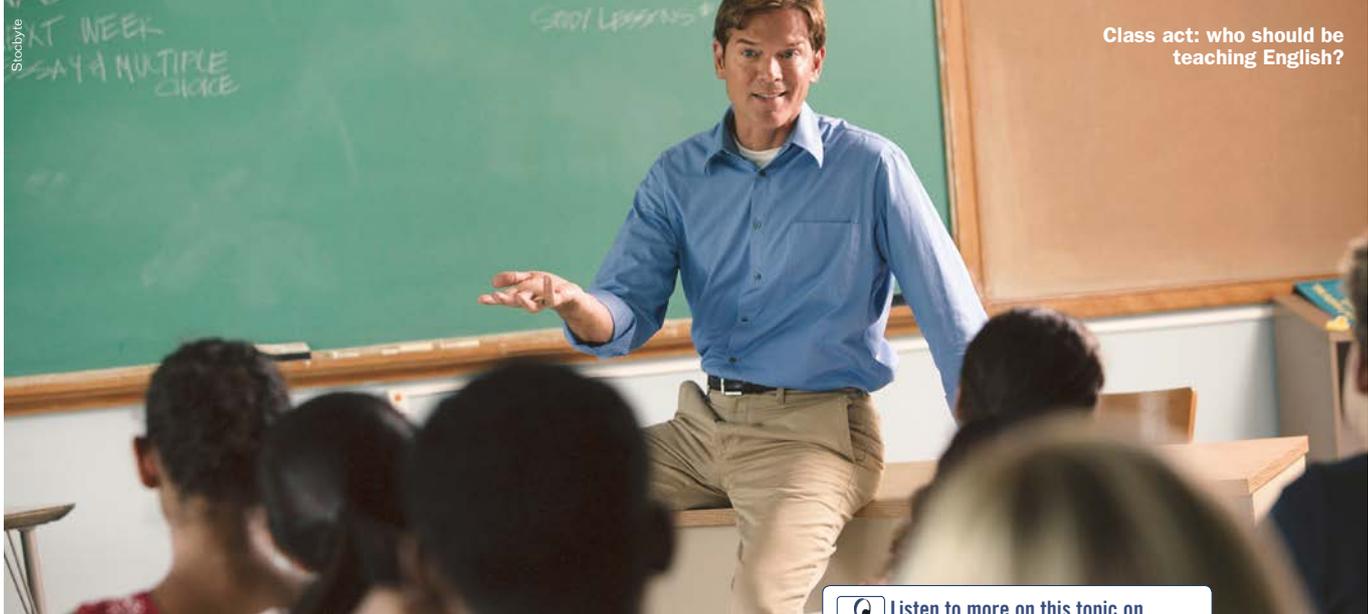
Native speakers who have chosen to teach English as a foreign language are often highly mobile people. They

frequently have practical experience living in different cultures and, ideally, they are also trained in intercultural communication.

Finally, the market for language training is a highly competitive one. With few exceptions, our clients expect and wish to have native speakers as their trainers. Some even have a preference for either American or British English. The quality of our service is ultimately judged by the degree to which we meet our clients' expectations and ideas about good English.

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application [ˌæplɪˈkeɪʃən]	Bewerbung
competitive [kəmˈpetətɪv]	wettbewerbsfähig; hier: umkämpft
corporate [ˈkɔːpərət]	Firmen-
enriching [ɪnˈrɪtʃɪŋ]	bereichernd
exception to a rule [ɪkˌsepʃən tu əˈruːl]	Ausnahme von einer Regel
expertise [ˌeksɜːˈtiːz]	(Sach-)Kompetenz
fluently [ˈfluːəntli]	fließend
idiomatic expression [ɪdɪəˌmætɪk ɪkˈspresjən]	Redewendung
intuitively [ɪnˈtjuːətɪvli]	[wg. Aussprache]
maintain sth. [meɪnˈteɪn]	etw. aufrechterhalten
pitch [pɪtʃ]	Tonhöhe, Stimmlage
proficient: be ~ in sth. [prəˈfɪʃənt]	etw. beherrschen, gut können
repertoire [ˈrepətwaː]	[wg. Aussprache]
sound [saʊnd]	solide, fundiert
ultimately [ˌʌltɪmətli]	letztendlich

Jannette Allen is the owner and director of Professional Language Services, Munich (www.pls-training.de), which specializes in corporate business English training and English for Specific Purposes.



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No!

“Discrimination is not only unethical, it’s also illegal”

Helen Strong



Private language schools whose USP is that they employ native-speaker teachers are doing nothing but a disservice to their customers. There are a number of reasons why schools should employ a diverse range of teachers, regardless of their place of birth.

The first is connected to the myth that if English is your mother tongue, you are able to teach it. Just because you can do something well doesn't mean you can teach it well. Surely, people who have learned a foreign language can help others do this better than native English speakers who haven't gone through this process.

Second, most English spoken in the world today takes place between non-native speakers. What is important is that people communicate well enough to do their job. Shouldn't someone who also speaks English as

a lingua franca be an ideal candidate to help them do this?

Third, a teacher who has in-depth knowledge of a specific English-speaking culture doesn't need to be born in that country. They could have moved there later, perhaps to study or work. In fact, this is an advantage, since people who are born into a culture are not always able to explain it effectively to others.

Fourth, it's becoming increasingly difficult to define what a native speaker is, since many people are growing up multilingual. And there are so many varieties of English in the world today. Why should we assume that a native of one variety is the best person to teach all varieties?

Fifth, the argument given by many language schools, “That's what my clients want”, just doesn't hold water. Clients want qualified, competent

trainers who understand their needs and can provide a good service. A trainer's skills and attitudes have little to do with their country of origin. And if customers do demand native-speaker teachers, then we should explain these arguments to them. If they were to demand that their trainer be a heterosexual white male, you would certainly have something to say about that! Discrimination based on place of birth is no different.

Finally, any form of discrimination is not only unethical and immoral, it's also (thankfully, in many places) illegal. For example, according to the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, discriminating against someone on the basis of their first language is against EU law. Many language schools are unaware of this. **BS**

assume that... [ə'sju:m dæt]	davon ausgehen, dass ...
Charter of Fundamental Rights [ˌtʃɑ:tər əv fʌndə'mentl 'raɪts]	Charta der Grundrechte
disservice: do sb. a ~ [dɪ'sɜ:vɪs]	jmdm. einen schlechten Dienst erweisen
diverse [dɪ'vɜ:sɪs]	unterschiedlich
hold water: not ~ [ˌhəʊld 'wɔ:tə]	stichhaltig sein
in-depth [ɪn 'depθ]	tiefgehend, gründlich
mother tongue [ˌmʌðə 'tʌŋ]	Muttersprache
myth [mɪθ]	Mythos, Mär
USP (unique selling proposition) [ˌju: es 'pi:]	Alleinstellungsmerkmal

Helen Strong is a business-skills trainer based in Ingolstadt, Germany, and an advocate of equal opportunities in English Language Teaching.