

Students' bias towards native speaking tutors

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Abstract

The existing literature in economics education has found that, in universities where the language of instruction is English, non-native English speaking instructors receive lower student evaluation scores than their native English speaking counterparts. The paper investigates whether this is the case using data drawn from an Australian university. The use of our dataset is expected to nullify the above-mentioned difference in evaluation scores for the two reasons. First, our sample students are drawn from an Australian university located in Canberra, which is a multi-cultural city where daily interaction with non-native English speakers is fairly common, whereas the existing literature has focussed on data from U.S. universities that are somewhat insulated from non-English speaking environments. Second, and more importantly, all instructors in our sample have gone through an interview held by the department before their appointments, where this does not appear to be the case in the vast majority of the literature. Surprisingly, even with the use of our sample, a statistically significant and sizeable negative difference in student evaluation scores between non-native speaking English instructors and their native English speaking counterparts is found.

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