



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN NESTs AND NNESTs BASED ON PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS IN PREPARATION CLASSES*

Prof. Dr. Hasan ÇAKIR

Necmettin Erbakan University, Faculty of Education, Department of ELT

hasan_cakir63@yahoo.com

Instructor Yusuf DEMİR

Selcuk University, Ilgın Vocational School

yusufdemir@selcuk.edu.tr

Abstract

This study aims to unravel the perceptions and attitudes of Turkish students towards native English-speaking instructors and the potential differences between native and non-native English speaking instructors in the eyes of Turkish students, who have been taught in preparation classes at Basic English Department in Middle East Technical University, Turkey. With the purpose of collecting data, a questionnaire, mostly constructed by the researchers and partly taken from Moussu's (2006) study, was carried out to 96 Turkish students to find out their impressions on both their NES(Native English Speaking) and NNES(Non-native English Speaking) instructors. The results based on their perceptions highlighted significant differences between NES and NNES instructors. While NES instructors were considered to teach such language skills as speaking, listening, pronunciation and vocabulary better, NNES instructors outshone with their skills in teaching grammar and building communication with their students. This study also made clear that NES instructors were seen as better sources of motivation.

Keywords: NES and NNES instructors, students' perceptions, language skills, motivation

* This study was prepared based on the data collected and used in Yusuf DEMİR's MA thesis.





1. INTRODUCTION

Though a number of studies were carried out throughout the globe in order to find out students' and language teachers' perceptions on NES and NNEST teachers/instructors, there are only few studies done in Turkish context focusing on the dichotomy between NES and NNESTs. Here at this point, this study aims to explore Turkish students' perceptions towards NES and NNEST instructors.

It is an undeniable fact that the number of non-native English-speaking teachers is steadily increasing all over the world and the number of non-native English-speaking teachers overwhelms native English-speaking teachers. "In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. Some learned English as children; others learned it as adults. Some learned it prior to coming to the United States; others learned it after their arrival. Some studied English in formal academic settings; others learned it through informal immersion after arriving in this country. Some speak British, Australian, Indian, or other varieties of English; others speak Standard American English. For some, English is their third or fourth language; for others, it is the only language other than their mother tongue that they have learned." (Maum, 2002: 1). This fact justifies our expectations of a more promotive approach towards NNESTs. These data make clear that as Medgyes (2001: 429) puts it "the English language is no longer the privilege of native speakers".

On the other hand, there's still a global prejudice against NNESTs. Especially in

recruitment issues in ELT field, despite the worthy effort made by TESOL and some other institutions against unfair hiring practices, employers still have a positive bias in favour of NNESTs. To illustrate, Moussu (2006) tells us about Mahboob's study (2003) in which he examined the hiring practices of 118 adult ESL program directors and administrators in the US. He found that the number of NNESTs teaching ESL in the United States is low and disproportionate to the high number of NNEST graduate students enrolled in MA TESOL programs. He also found that 59.8% of the program administrators who responded to his survey used the "native speaker" criterion as their major decisive factor in hiring ESL teachers. A reason for this discrimination was that administrators believed only NNESTs could be proficient in English and qualified teachers. According to Selinker and Lakshmanan (1992), the monolingual bias in TESOL and applied linguistics research resulted in practices of discrimination where non-native speakers of English were seen as life-long language learners, who fossilized at various stages of language learning as individuals and as communities. As opposed to this idea, Mahboob (2010) argues that the NNEST lens, takes language as a functional entity where successful use of language in context determines the proficiency of the speaker and where the English language reflects and construes different cultural perspectives and realities in different settings. As a result of this, NNESTs interpret and question language and language learning and teaching in new ways.

When discrimination is the point in question, the NNEST movement shouldn't be disregarded. The NNEST movement that





aims to question the discrimination against them and monolingual myths in TESOL has begun only recently. Mahboob (2010) reports that the NNEST movement can be dated back to the 1996 TESOL Convention where George Braine organized a colloquium “In their own voices: Nonnative speaker professionals in TESOL”. According to Mahboob (2010), this resulted in a drive to set up the NNEST Caucus in the TESOL association. The NNEST Caucus was established in 1998 and in 2008 the NNEST Caucus became the NNEST Interest Section. He sequences the specific goals of the NNEST Caucus/Interest Section as follows:

- to create a non-discriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth,
- to encourage the formal and informal gatherings of nonnative speakers at TESOL and affiliate conferences,
- to encourage research and publications on the role of non-native speaker teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, and
- to promote the role of non-native speaker members in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions.

The reasons for such a discrimination against NNESTs seem to be rather baseless when they are deeply scrutinized. As the point of departure, NNESTs are often considered to lack necessary linguistic command in order to be a proficient English teacher and that they are inferior to their native-speaking counterparts only because English is not their first language but their second or foreign language. However, it would be better to evaluate NNESTs according to their teaching attitudes,

linguistic skills, communicative talents, the ability to empathize with the students etc.. As Liu (1999) stresses, over the last decade there has been little research done in the area of what non-native have to offer in their own right – rather than being compared as a poor imitation of the native speaker of English. In other words, teaching credentials should be required of all English teachers whether they are native English speakers or not. Maum (2002) believes this would shift the emphasis in hiring from *who* the job candidates are (i.e., native or nonnative speakers of English) to *what* they are (i.e., qualified English teachers) and allow for more democratic employment practices.

Characteristics of NESTs and NNESTs

In spite of the fact that there has been a prejudice that NESTs are more competent and more capable teaching and more preferable to NNESTs, teachers of both groups have their own different characteristics which they bring to the teaching environment.

According to Ulate (2011: 62), native speakers possess the following characteristics:

- subconscious knowledge of rules
- intuitive grasp of meanings
- ability to communicate within social settings
- range of language skills
- creativity of language use
- identification with a language community
- ability to produce fluent discourse
- knowledge of differences between their own speech and that of the ‘standard’ form of the language





- ability 'to interpret and translate into the L1 of which she or he is a native speaker'.(Stern, 1983; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Davies, 1996; cited in Cook, 1999: para 3)

Medgyes (2001) further examines the differences in teaching behaviour between NESTs and NNESTs. The table below is based on a survey carried out to 325 native and non-native speaking teachers.

Table 1. Perceived Differences in Teaching Behavior between NESTs and Non-NESTs (Medgyes, 2001)

NESTs	Non-NESTs
<i>Own Use of English</i>	
Speak better English	Speak poorer English
Use real language	Use "bookish" language
Use English more confidently	Use English less confidently
<i>General Attitude</i>	
Adopt a more flexible approach	Adopt a more guided approach
Are more innovative	Are more cautious
Are less empathetic	Are more empathetic
Attend to perceived needs	Attend to real needs
Have far-fetched expectations	Have realistic expectations
Are more casual	Are stricter
Are less committed	Are more committed
<i>Attitude to teaching the language</i>	
Are less insightful	Are more insightful
<i>Focus on :</i>	
Fluency	Accuracy
Meaning	Form
Language in use	Grammar rules
Oral skills	Printed word
Colloquial registers	Formal registers
Teach items in context	Teach items in isolation
Prefer free activities	Prefer controlled activities
Favor group work/pair work	Favor frontal work
Use a variety of materials	Use single textbook
Tolerate errors	Correct/punish for errors
Set fewer tests	Set more tests





Use no/less L1	Use more L1
Resort to no/less translation	Resort to more translation
Assign less homework	Assign more homework
<i>Attitude to teaching culture</i>	
Supply more cultural information	Supply less cultural information

In their study of the classroom interaction between students and NESTs & NNESTs in Chinese context, Yi and Jian (2009) came up with the following major findings related with classroom interaction and teacher attitudes in the teaching environment:

- 1) NNESTs present more language input and feedback to students, but more uptake is observed in NESTs' classrooms.
- 2) For both groups of teachers, classroom interaction is dominated by teacher talk. Transcriptions showed that the total number of teacher questions and feedback moves (for both NESTs and NNESTs) is much higher than the amount of student response and uptake.
- 3) Teachers in both groups ask too few divergent questions, while more convergent questions appear in the NNESTs' classroom and more procedural questions are found in NESTs' classes.
- 4) No statistically significant difference was found in the degree to which teachers offered correction feedback and summary feedback.
- 5) NESTs and NNESTs prefer different feedback types, which affects students' language input. In the observed classes, NESTs preferred to give evaluation feedback, followed by summary and then acknowledgement feedback. NNESTs more frequently used repetition feedback,

followed by acknowledgement and then clarification feedback.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to uncover the participants' overall perceptions towards NES and NNEST instructors. Secondly, it is aimed to detect if the participants' previous NES experience prior to attending preparation classes effects their views on NESTs. This study further aims to make clear which skills are better taught by NESTs or NNESTs and whether the participants' perceptions vary according to their self-perception level in English.

2.1 Setting

Since this study basically centers around students' perceptions towards both native and non-native English-speaking instructors, it was conducted in METU Basic English Department where both instructor groups are employed.

2.2. Participants

This study was carried out with 96 students attending preparation classes in 2011-12 fall semester, all of whom were Turkish students. Almost all of the subjects (%95) were aged between 18-21. There was a homogeneous distribution of the subjects in terms of gender. Of 96 participants, 50 were males and 46 were females. Table-2 presents the number of gender and age distribution of all the participants.





Table 2. Gender and Age Distribution of the Participants

Gender	n.	Age		
		Min.	Max.	Average
Male	50	17	26	19.3
Female	46	17	25	18.9

2.3. Instruments

Following some demographic questions such as age, gender, self-perception of English level and previous NES teacher experience, with the purpose of exploring their perceptions towards NESTs and NNESTs the participants were delivered a five point Likert-type questionnaire made up of 33 items with the answers on the scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’, which were mostly developed by the writers but also included a few statements from Moussu’s (2006) research. The questionnaire was arranged into three categories comparing both instructor groups by using the items related with ‘communication’, ‘motivation’ and ‘teaching/learning’.

The questionnaire was applied to Turkish students in their mother tongue. For this reason, together with the items taken from the previous research, the research items were all translated into Turkish by the writers. Then to establish validity for the instrument, the items in the questionnaire were checked out by two assistant

professors and one instructor in Turkish Language field. Afterwards, the questionnaire was submitted to two assistant professors in ELT field with the aim of investigating the items. The questionnaire items were then reconstructed with the guidance of feedback provided by these assistant professors. In addition, to establish reliability, reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s α) were found as 0.826 for the scale which would let the researchers use the questionnaire in the study.

2.4. Procedures for Data Analysis

The participants’ overall responses to the items were inputted into a computer through the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 16.0) data editor. With the aim of analyzing data, frequency and descriptive statistics and mean comparing tests were used.

3. FINDINGS

The overall responses of the participants to 3-sectioned questionnaire are given in Tables 3, 4 and 5.





Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Responses Comparing Motivation-related Items

Items	Mean	SD
NES instructors are better role models than NNES instructors	3.5312	1.16034
I feel more motivated while learning with NES instructors than with NNES instructors	3.7292	1.12838
Learning English with NES instructors is more enjoyable than learning with NNES instructors	3.8125	1.11745
NES instructors always arouse more interest than NNES instructors	3.8958	1.05111
My interest and attendance to NES instructors' lessons is more than those of NNES instructors	3.2812	1.31951
NNES instructors are more capable of motivating learners than NES ones	2.0613	1.11348

Table 3 presents that participants regard NES instructors as better role models. Furthermore, they feel more motivated during NESTs' courses and find it more enjoyable to learn with NESTs. The

perception that NES instructors arouse more interest receives the highest rank in the scale. It is also understood that students show more interest in NES instructors' courses and take more part in their lessons.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Responses Comparing Communication-related Items

Items	Mean	SD
I communicate more with NES instructors than NNES instructors	2.8646	1.04294
There are a lot of NNES instructors that can effectively communicate in the target language	3.4792	1.05610
NNES instructors are more sincere and empathetic than NES instructors while communicating	3.9122	1.12035
NES instructors' being foreigners pose a social barrier in my interactions with them	2.4167	1.04294
NES instructors give more importance to friendly conversations outside the class than their NNES counterparts	2.7684	1.09768
The accent of NNES instructors while speaking English is important to me	3.8854	98269
I think English instructors should all speak with a perfect British accent	2.7396	1.28346

Table 4 reveals that participants find NNESTs communicative enough and that they are considered more empathetic and

intimate during the conversations. It was also made clear that the fact that NES instructors aren't the same nationality as the





participants doesn't prevent participants from building communication with NESTs. What's more, another point the participants highlighted is that however much they don't think instructors should all speak with a perfect British accent, the accent of NNES

instructors while speaking English is considered important.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Responses Comparing Teaching/Learning-related Items

Items	Mean	SD
In general, having a native English-speaking (NES) instructor positively effects my learning	4.5208	.88233
I would rather have a NES instructor than a NNES instructor	3.9271	1.18982
Learning English with a NNES instructor is easier for me than with a NES instructor	2.5104	1.05626
During the lesson, NES instructors correct my mistakes less than NNES ones	2.6771	1.10972
NES instructors provide more feedback than nonnative ones	3.6146	.93324
NES instructors present the cultural contents of the target language better than NNES instructors	4.3125	.86222
There are many NNES instructors who teach just as effectively as NES instructors	3.7396	.92047
I would prefer to be taught by both NES and NNES instructors at the same time rather than by just one of the two	3.5521	1.23859
My learning experiences with NNES instructors have been good so far	3.5729	.92617
I don't care whether my instructor is a native or non-native speaker as long as he/she is a good teacher for me.	4.2396	.89142
While learning English, NNES instructors provide me with more strategies and ideas than NES instructors	2.8854	1.03486
To learn English well, I need to have a teacher who knows about British culture	3.4479	1.12268
NNES instructors are better at explaining grammar than NES instructors	3.2917	1.11371
NES instructors are better at teaching writing than NNES instructors	3.7917	1.04546
NES instructors are better at teaching vocabulary than NNES instructors	3.8958	1.10004
NES instructors are better at teaching pronunciation than NNES instructors	4.3958	.87635
NES instructors are better at teaching listening than NNES instructors	3.9375	1.09364
NES instructors are better at teaching reading than NNES	2.9583	1.24745





instructors		
NES instructors are better at teaching speaking than NNES instructors	4.2396	.95966
instructors		
NES instructors provide me with more information about English speaking countries than NNES instructors	4.0104	.92332

Table 5 presents the participants' notion that having a native English-speaking instructor positively effects their learning. Besides, when it comes to picking just one of the two, participants would rather have a NES instructor than a NNES instructor. On the other hand, they state that it doesn't matter whether their instructor is a native or non-native speaker as long as he/she is a good teacher and that there are many NNES instructors who teach just as effectively as NES instructors.

As a result of upbringing in an English-speaking country, NES instructors were assumed to provide more information about English speaking countries and present the cultural contents of the target language better than their non-native counterparts. While NNES instructors were considered better at teaching grammar, NES ones were found better at teaching vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, and speaking, which can be attributed to their native status.

Independent sample t-test in Table 6 compares females' responses to males'.

Table 6. T-test for Gender of Participants for the Overall Responses

Gender	N	\bar{X}	Sd.	t	df	Sig.
Female	46	3.5563	1.0772	.480	94	.632
Male	50	3.5193	1.1087			

Table 6 gives the mean values of the overall responses to the whole questionnaire and does not indicate significant differences between males and females [$t = .480$ $p = .632$].

Independent sample t-test in Table 7 compares participants who had previously been taught by NESTs prior to their attendance to preparation class to the ones who hadn't.





Table 7. T-test for Having Previous NEST Experience for the Overall Responses

Previous NEST Experience	N	\bar{X}	Sd.	t	df	Sig.
Yes	24	3.5554	1.0598	.282	94	.778
No	72	3.5303	1.0571			

Table 7 gives the mean values of the overall responses to the questionnaire and does not indicate significant differences between the participants who had previously taken courses from NESTs and those who hadn't [$t = .282$ $p = .778$]. In the light of these results it can be claimed that taking courses from NESTs before starting the preparation classes doesn't effect the participants' opinions.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employing native speakers of English in ELT field is not so new. On the other hand, it is an undeniable fact that the number of non-native teachers of English is increasing day by day. There is still a world-wide dichotomy between those two groups of teachers throughout the globe. Besides, there is a widespread prejudice that NNESTs often lack linguistic command in order to be proficient English teachers and that they are inferior to their native-speaking counterparts. In other words, there is a remarkable campaign and bias against non-native English speaking teachers, only because they aren't native speakers of English. At this point, this study has intended to publicise which skills are better

taught by each group. While items in the third part of the questionnaire made clear that in the opinion of the students; vocabulary, pronunciation and speaking skills are better taught by NES instructors, it was understood that NNESTs teach grammar better and communicate more with the students as could be seen from the second part. These conclusions are consistent with Medgyes' (2001) and Lasagabaster & Sierra's (2002) research findings.

It was also made clear from the items related with teaching/learning that rather than the obligation to choose the members of just one of the two groups as teachers in English language teaching field, collaboration of NES and NNESTs in English teaching process will definitely overwhelm doubts and unfavourable comments. Thanks to this 'union of forces', students will be able to learn certain skills of English a lot better and make up for their weaknesses that should result from lack of exposure to both groups simultaneously. It should seriously be considered by the authorities in Turkish Ministry of National Education to employ both of the teacher groups at primary and secondary education levels and also in high schools. However, following a wrong policy while employing





NES teachers must in no way result in a constraint in the number of NNES teachers to be employed which may get things even worse and discourage NNESTs.

Moreover, in this research, it was also made clear that NES instructors present the cultural content of the language better than NNES instructors. Now that at present there is no place for NESTs in Turkish national education policy, within a vocational

education or in-service training, giving Turkish NNESTs the opportunity to witness real life situations in the countries where English is interbedded with its culture should as well be taken into consideration by the Turkish Ministry of Education.. In this way, NNESTs who are to be exposed to some authentic language will be expected to bring more cultural elements in the class and use more real language rather than 'bookish' language.

5. REFERENCES

1. Lasagabaster, D. & Sierra, J.M. (2002). University students' perceptions of native and non-native speaker teachers of English. *Language Awareness*, 11(2),132.
2. Liu, J. (1999). Nonnative English-speaking professionals in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 85–102.
3. Mahboob, A. (2003). *Status of nonnative English-speaking teachers in the United States*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.
4. Mahboob, A. (2010). *The NNEST Lens: Non Native English Speakers in TESOL*. Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
5. Maum, R. (2002). Nonnative English-speaking teachers in the English teaching profession. *Eric Digest*, EDO-FL-02-09.
6. Medgyes, P. (2001). When the teacher is a non-native speaker. *Teaching pronunciation*, 429-442. Retrieved August 2, 2011 from <http://teachingpronunciation.pbworks.com/f/When+the+teacher+is+a+nonnative+speaker.PDF>
7. Moussu, Lucie M. (2006). *Native and nonnative English-speaking English as a second language teachers: student attitudes, teacher self-perceptions, and intensive English administrator beliefs and practices*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Purdue University, United States.
8. Selinker, L. & U. Lakshmanan (1992). Language and fossilization. In S. Gass and S. Selinker (eds.), *Language Transfer in Language Learning*, pp. 197-216. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company





9. Ulate, N.V. (2011). Insight towards native and non-native ELT educators. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & literature*, 4(1), 56-79.
10. Yi, Z. & Jian, W. (2009). A comparative study of Nest and Nnest classroom interaction in Chinese context. *CELEA Journal*, 32(2), 101.

