EVALUATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON THE NATIVE/NON-NATIVE DICHOTOMY

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Abstract

The launch of MEB's new project has revived the heated debate on whether a native or nonnative speaker makes the ideal language teacher. Those who oppose the recruitment of native speakers believe context-sensitive solutions must be provided rather than importing methods, books and teachers. For this reason, a survey of three open-ended questions were administered to 29 student teachers (METU) with the purposes of investigating their opinions on the differences between native and non-native teachers, specifying their teacher preferences in the context of the practicum school and identifying their needs for professional development. Although language proficiency was the most distinguishing factor, pre-service education was believed to be more decisive in the quality of teaching than accent. While the nonnative teacher was favoured more primarily due to his codeswitching ability, familiarity with the students' culture and background and sensitivity to learner needs, few participants listed improved English proficiency among their professional needs.

Key Words: Native Speaker, Nonnative Teacher, Codeswitching.

ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ ANADİL KONUŞURU OLAN/OLMAYAN AYRIMINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

Özet

MEB'in yeni projesi anadil konuşuru olanın mı olmayanın mı ideal dil öğretmeni olacağı konusundaki hararetli tartışmayı canlandırmıştır. Anadil konuşurlarının istihdamına karşı çıkanlar yöntem, kitap ve öğretmen ithali yerine bağlama duyarlı çözümler sağlanması gerektiğine inanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, üç açık-uçlu sorudan oluşan bir anket 29 öğretmen adayına (ODTÜ) anadil konuşuru olan ve olmayan öğretmenler arasındaki farklılıklara ilişkin görüşlerini araştırmak, uygulama okulundaki durumda öğretmen tercihlerini belirlemek ve mesleki gelişim için gereksinimlerini saptamak amacıyla verilmiştir. Dil yeterliliği en ayırıcı etmen olmakla birlikte, öğretimin niteliğinde hizmet-öncesi eğitimin aksandan daha belirleyici olduğu düşünülmüştür. Anadil konuşuru olmayan öğretmen dil değiştirme yetisi, öğrencilerin kültür ve altyapısına yakınlığı ve öğrenci gereksinimlerine duyarlılığından ötürü daha çok yeğlendiyse de katılımcıların birkaçı iyileştirilmiş İngilizce yeterliliğini mesleki gereksinimleri arasında saymıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadil Konuşuru, Anadil Konuşuru Olmayan Öğretmen, Dil Değiştirme.

Introduction

The launch of the new project, called "The Development Project For Foreign Language Teaching", by the Ministry of National Education has received much criticism for the annual employment of 10.000 native-speaking teachers of English (NESTs) over the course of four years, and has revived the heated debate on whether a native-speaking teacher of English (NEST) or a non-native-speaking teacher of English (non-NEST) is the ideal language teacher. Both the minister of National Education, Nimet Çubukçu and the chairperson of Projects Coordination Center, Ünal Akyüz asserted that the project is intended for developing speaking skills in the Turkish students, whose knowledge of English is confined to its grammar and assured that the recruitment of NESTs won't affect the quota of non-NESTs for the next year's teacher appointments (İngilizceyi ithal öğretmenler öğretecek, 2011).

However, the teachers' unions like Türk Eğitim-Sen and Eğitim-İş as well as university students strongly protested the enlistment of foreign teachers on the grounds that it is a shame to take no notice of 350.000 teachers, who are not appointed even in the current presence of 170.000 teaching vacancies, and to invest 1.5 billion TL in "imported teachers" (MEB öğretmenlerimize güvenmiyor, 2011; 40 bin ithal İngilizce öğretmeni geliyor, 2011; Eğitim fakültesi öğrencilerinden ithal öğretmen protestosu, 2011). While the most important component of the project is the recruitment of NESTs, who will team-teach with Turkish teachers of English, conduct conversation classes for both Turkish teachers and students, develop ELT materials, and assist with extra-curricular English activities, it is also envisaged that a series of new practices such as the opening of "English cafes" at schools, the TV broadcast of popular cartoons and programmes subtitled, the purchase of modern, licensed language learning packs will come into effect and the teaching of English will start with preschool education (İngilizceyi ithal öğretmenler öğretecek, 2011; İngilizce derslerine ithal öğretmen, 2011). These "new practices" could not be defined as "a reform", but rather be called "a change of perception" by Akyüz (İngilizceyi ithal öğretmenler öğretecek, 2011).

Yet, the so-called "new practices" are reminiscent of the Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language, which was "held at the University College of Makerere, Uganda in 1961" and most renowned for "crystallizing the principles which were to govern ELT aid in the immediate post-colonial period" (Phillipson, 1992: 66). The following five tenets that emerged from the key conference were soon accepted as "an unchallenged dogma" in the ELT profession and became "the cornerstones of the hegemony of English worldwide": i. "English is best taught monolingually", ii. "The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker", iii. "The earlier English is taught, the better the results", iv. "The more English is taught, the better the results", and v. "If other languages are used much, standards of English will drop" (Phillipson, 1992: 185; Auerbach, 1993: 13).

The first of these tenets, "the monolingual tenet", paves the way for the second tenet by postulating the ideal teacher of English as a native speaker, and consequentially legitimizes the worldwide employment of native-speaking teachers as well as marketing of monolingual textbooks "emanating from the Centre [the core-English countries where English is the indigenous native language], which in turn reinforces anglocentricity and the hold of ELT professionalism" (Phillipson, 1992: 193; Medgyes, 1994: 67). According to Cook (2001: 166), the Centre also controls "the very means of teaching" English where it is taught as a second or foreign language (in the Periphery); for instance, the selling of the British-patent method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to "almost everywhere on the globe". In the same way as its predecessors like the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method and the Natural Approach, which stressed the importance of "the teacher's fluency and capacity to use the language", CLT, too, suggests that native speakers are "ideal for promoting natural and spontaneous communication" and "should naturally be preferred over non-natives" (Llurda, 2009: 41, 46).

Still, CLT has spread to the Periphery countries like Japan and Korea, "not only because of the promotion of the method by Western specialists but also because educators in these countries have advocated the adoption of this method" (McKay, 2003: 16). In the early 1990s, with the purpose of "developing the communicative language ability of the students", the Japanese Ministry of Education released new guidelines for teachers to "strive to adopt CLT methods in their classrooms", while the Korean Ministry of Education replaced "the audiolingual and translation methods currently used in the schools" with the new curriculum (McKay, 2003: 16). But, having been designated in the British EFL tradition, "communicative methodology stresses the English-only approach to presentation and practice" and has thus made it possible for native speakers "to teach English all over the world without the disagreeable necessity of having to learn other languages", whereas it has left the local (nonnative) teachers alone to cope with "the permanent guilt feelings" as they are "never able to apply the Centre-approved methods to their own satisfaction" (Swan, 1985: 85; Holliday, 1994; as cited in Cook, 2001: 166). This is because such methods are "not designed specifically for the needs of any local situation", rather "with a particularly instrumental approach in mind", in institutes like "private language schools" or "annexes to university departments" in Britain, Australasia, North America (BANA) (Holliday, 1994; as cited in Cook, 2001: 166; Holliday, 1994: 12). Since "multifarious contextual factors – institutional, material, cultural – play a part in shaping the realization of the imported methods", pedagogies must not be "received in their own terms"; instead, they must be "appropriated to different degrees in terms of the needs and values of the local communities" (Canagarajah, 1999b: 121).

For this reason, it may be misleading to adopt a whole new scheme for foreign language education on the basis of second-hand information from the ministry's Korean example. While Ünal Akyüz stated that both teachers and

students express 60-70% satisfaction rate with the current system and not only students but also teachers benefit from "foreign teachers", 32.7% of the 997 foreigners hired from 2004 through 2006 to teach English in Korea were found not to have any teaching certificates (e.g. CELTA) and the rates in some provinces hovering over 50%, it was urged to improve the quality of the program by employing qualified teachers (32% of Native English Teachers Found Unqualified, 2007; İngilizceyi ithal öğretmenler öğretecek, 2011). Another survey by the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations (Korea's largest teachers' group) indicated that "more than half of existing English teachers opposed the recruitment of practical English instructors", and 46% of the opponents argued that "it would bring unqualified teachers to schools" (5,000 Korean English Teachers to Be Recruited This Year, 2009). The fact that having native speaker teachers is "a major selling point for an institution" is evidenced by the results of Choi's survey: 96% of 274 private kindergartens across the country provide English classes, investing an average of 2.7 million won for English education facilities, and 44% have native English speakers, but many kindergartens have been found to be hiring "questionable foreign teachers" (Cook, 2005: 56; 96% of Private Kindergartens Offer English Classes, 2008). When asked why they provide English classes, 66% of them "raised demands from parents", 13.4% related it to "competition with other kindergartens" and 10.3% mentioned "the government's policy strengthening English education" (96% of Private Kindergartens Offer English Classes, 2008).

The situation of China, where the teaching of English is made compulsory from Grade 3 onwards, is even more exemplary in that "more and more NS teachers are being recruited by both state-run and private educational institutions" and "incidents of discrimination against nonnative speaker teachers have been recorded", which "does not bode well for the future of Chinese NNS English teachers" (Cheung & Braine, 2007: 270).

It was, however, only a decade or so ago that Canagarajah (1999a: 77) cited an anecdote where "the non-native ESL teacher", "fresh from graduate school, certified with a Masters or a doctorate in applied linguistics and groomed for a career in language teaching by a reputed university", is confronted with the fact that "only those who are native English speakers… can apply for the available positions" and "discovers a gloomy professional future" in the United States. According to Canagarajah (1999a: 83), the native speaker fallacy not only "protects jobs for Center teachers in their home institutions", but also assures them of "ESL jobs in the Periphery communities", while "Periphery teachers find it difficult to teach in the Center". Reconsidering the Korean and Chinese situations, one can conclude that it has now become even more difficult for the non-native EFL teachers to teach in their local communities and they have been treated as "step-children", despite comprising the majority of English language teachers all over the world (Mahboob et al., 2004; as cited in Mahboob: 2005: 63).

Since "the focus of educational research" was traditionally on "the native teacher working in some private school of a country where English was the primary language" until the late 1980s and "little attention was paid to state education, let alone state education in non-English-speaking countries" (Medgyes, 2000: 444). For this reason, "the study of the non-native teacher remains a largely unexplored area in language education", and "the experiences and perceptions of non-native English teachers feature disproportionately little in the professional academic discourse despite their overwhelming numerical majority" (Hayes, 2009: 1; Medgyes, 2000: 445).

Therefore, it is considered that the experiences and impressions of the student teachers with both native and non-native teachers, the expression of their personal stance towards the native/non-native dichotomy in the setting of their practicum school and the exploration of their self-perceived needs for professional development may have important implications for teacher training programs, where "expertise is defined and dominated by native speakers" (Canagarajah, 1999a: 85). Having studied at a university, where the medium of instruction is English regardless of faculty, and being trained by both native and non-native teachers, the preconceptions of the student teachers about the native and non-native dichotomy are especially important because the everyday teaching experience of these prospective "Periphery teachers" may be characterized by many contradictions as in Sri Lankan English-teaching circles, where they "may profess Center pedagogical fashions, but practice local/traditional approaches in the classroom" (Canagarajah, 1999a: 86-87). For this reason, this study aims to develop deeper insight into what differences the student teachers (as experienced learners) – perceive between their native and non-native teachers of English, to find out their teacher preferences in the given context of their practicum schools, and to determine their needs for becoming better teachers in the future.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were composed of nine male and 20 female student teachers, all senior students (n=29) at the Department of Foreign Language Education (Middle East Technical University). In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants, each student teacher was assigned "a case number", "instead of using respondents' real names to identify their data" in the present study (Ciambrone, 2004: 18).

Data Collection

With the purposes of investigating their opinions on the differences between native and non-native teachers of English, specifying their teacher preferences in the context of their practicum school and identifying their needs for professional development, the student teachers were administered a survey

developed by the researcher. The survey consisted of three open-ended questions, requiring them to supply reasons for their responses:

1. Compare your native-speaking teachers of English (NESTs) and non-native-speaking teachers of English (non-NESTs) in terms of their language proficiency, language awareness and pedagogic skills by referring to your own experience and impressions with both so far.

2. Who do you think would make a better teacher in the setting of your practicum school: a native-speaker teacher or a non-native teacher? Give your reasons please.

3. What could be done to help you out with the areas of language teaching that you feel less competent in?

After being reviewed by ELT specialists and measurement experts, the questions were revised on the basis of their evaluations with the purpose of increasing the validity of the survey.

Procedure

The data examined in this study were collected during the course entitled "Practice Teaching" in the spring semester of the 2010-2011 academic year. The departmental goal of the course is to enable student teachers to consolidate the skills necessary for teaching English as a foreign language through observation and teaching practice under the supervision of mentor teachers at practicum schools and also to critically analyze the previously acquired teaching knowledge through reading, research and in-class activities (Undergraduate Program Course Descriptions).

The course, instructed by the researcher, required the student teachers to do selected readings and tasks from Ur's (2006) "A Course in Language Teaching Trainee Book", to participate in classroom discussions, and to write reflective reports. As a result, the participants responded to the survey questions at the end of the ten-week period. During the practicum, they visited an anatolian vocational high school serving 856 students with 89 teachers, and observed five mentor teachers (with at least five years of experience) for six hours a week in Ankara.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data derived from the responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed by using the descriptive analysis method. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek's (2011: 224) model, descriptive analysis was performed on the qualitative data in four steps: i. firstly, a framework for descriptive analysis was designed on the basis of the research questions and the conceptual structure of the study, and the themes were identified for the subsequent classification of the data; ii. secondly, the data organized according to the thematic framework were read, combined in a meaningful and logical way, and the irrelevant data were omitted; iii. thirdly, the previously-organized data were defined and supported by using direct

quotations from the responses of the participants; and iv. the findings identified were finally explained, related and interpreted in the fourth stage.

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) note that reliability can be increased, bias can be decreased and comparison between categories can be undertaken if qualitative data are quantified through the use of percentages and frequencies. Therefore, each participant was assigned a case number and listed from 1 to 29. Then, eight major themes (student teachers' perceived differences in: language proficiency, language awareness and pedagogic skills between NESTs and non-NESTs, their teacher preferences in the context of the practicum school, reasons for their preference of: NESTs, Non-NESTs and their reasons for no preference, their perceived needs for professional development) were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. After that, the sentences that reflected the participants' opinions were pasted under the sub-themes. During this process, no corrections were made in the responses of the student teachers in order to keep the original language of the qualitative data intact.

To ensure validity, the participants were invited to confirm the researcher's findings and the tentative results were refined in the light of their reactions (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition to respondent validation (member checks), all parts of the data were analyzed and repeatedly inspected, while deviant cases were actively sought out in comprehensive data treatment (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Ultimately, the frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category by using Excel, as in Akşit's example (1998, as cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011: 248-249). Using appropriate tabulations was the last method employed to improve the quality of data analysis, offering "a means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive, qualitative research" (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008: 70).

Findings

The participants were first asked to compare the native-speaking teachers of English (NESTs) and non-native-speaking teachers of English (non-NESTs) in terms of language proficiency, language awareness and pedagogic skills by referring to their own experience and impressions with both so far. These three variables were derived from Medgyes' (1994: 57) description of a language teacher's expertise: "A language teacher's expertise consists of three components: a) language proficiency, b) language awareness, and c) pedagogic skills". Table 1 shows the perceived differences between NESTs and non-NESTs in language proficiency.

Table 1: *STs' Perceived Differences in Language Proficiency between NESTs and Non-NESTs*

Perceived Differences in Language Proficiency	f	%
NESTs are superior to non-NESTs in that they have better speaking skills, correct pronunciation and a richer vocabulary.	27	93
There is no tangible difference between NESTs and non-NESTs in target language use.	2	7
TOTAL	29	100

Out of 29 STs, 27 (93%) STs indicated that NESTs outperform non-NESTs in speaking skills, vocabulary and pronunciation. ST8 pointed out what might happen if a language teacher experiences hardships in language delivery: "*I have seen many nonnatives who really get troubles with speaking. This problem in fluency reflects to the teachers' way of making their lessons; natives effective, nonnatives less effective because of their inability to express their thoughts*". In the same way, ST12 touched upon the demotivational effect of teacher's lack of fluency: "*Nonnatives should do their best to improve their language skills to get close to native-like speaking. Otherwise, learners lose their interest in the lesson very easily if the teacher cannot express themselves in a proper and advanced language*". ST22, on the other hand, made reference to the negative effects of non-NESTs' accent on students' pronunciation: "*…Most of us, students learning language from a non-native teacher, still try not to make a mistake while saying 'determine', for instance*". In addition to non-NESTs' disadvantage in pronunciation, the limitedness of their vocabulary is criticised as in ST27's response: "*Nonnatives lack competence in especially vocabulary and speaking. Unlike natives, they don't use enough idiomatic expressions in class as to teach students real language use and they can't be expected to master English in pronunciation*".

The participants almost unanimously admitted that non-NESTs cannot attain native-speaker proficiency in English and as in ST11's comment, non-NESTs' difficulties in target language (L2) use can be related to their lack of practice in real communication: "*Nonnative teachers try to learn everything related to the language. Most of my non-native teachers seem not to have had many chances to practise the language in the country where it is spoken*". It is only ST19 that believes in the possibility of non-NESTs' achieving native-like proficiency, but he also warned against the deterioration of non-NESTs' proficiency in English over the years: "*No matter how proficient you're, you forget some aspects of language over time. Native-like proficiency isn't permanent…many non-natives are complaining about how they start losing their proficiency while working in a state school*". Only two STs (7%) do not discern any tangible difference in the target language use of NESTs and non-NESTs, as in ST21's statement: "*In terms of language proficiency there is no difference between native and nonnative teacher. Both of them are proficient*".

The second variable that STs compared NESTs with non-NESTs against is language awareness. The results of the comparison between NESTs and non-NESTs with respect to their language awareness are tabulated below.

Table 2: *STs' Perceived Differences in Language Awareness between NESTs and Non-NESTs*

Perceived Differences in Language Awareness	f	%
Non-NESTs are superior to NESTs in that they have a conscious knowledge of L2 and can make crosslinguistic comparisons.	21	72.41
NESTs are superior to Non-NESTs in that they know the minor details of L2.	3	10.34
Non-NESTs and NESTs don't differ as language awareness can be achieved through the study of language system.	5	17.24
TOTAL	29	100

According to Table 2, 72.41% of STs believe that non-NESTs are at an advantage with their conscious knowledge of the target language because they learn L2 in the same way as their students and are capable of making crosslinguistic comparisons, which enhances their explanatory power. Learning a foreign language and acquiring it as mother tongue (L1) involve two different kinds of knowledge about the language, as understood from ST3's example: "*We've taken a lot of grammar, linguistic courses and are aware of language rules more than natives. If a native is asked the reason behind a grammar rule, he may reply it as 'We just use it like that', but a nonnative probably knows the answer*". ST1, too, drew attention to the role of L1 use as a resource to diagnose and remedy errors in L2: "*Native may not know the students' reasons for making mistakes because of their lack of knowledge of the mother tongue. In such cases nonnatives may be more effective in explaining errors and the ways to correct these errors*".

Likewise, ST11 drew on first-hand experiences for supporting non-NESTs' superiority of language awareness especially in crosslinguistic matters: "*…I remember in my third-year at METU, I had to try over and over again to explain something to one of my native teachers…she was not aware of that problem, which was a consequence of the differences between English and Turkish*". Finally, ST14 stated that non-NESTs' use of contrastive knowledge can be widened to include the identification of problem sounds for L2 learners: "*…This applies to all skills of a language. A native speaker may not be aware /ϑ/ and /ð/ sounds are difficult for Turkish learners of English. He may just ignore the practice of such aspects in the second language*".

Unlike the majority of STs, three participants (10.34%) argued that NESTs have higher language awareness than non-NESTs on the grounds that they have a detailed knowledge of the target language as it is their mother tongue. For instance, ST23 responded: "*I've had two native speaker teachers so far. They are confident and can tell small details in language…I've learned different, interesting details, phrases and usages from the native teachers*". According to Table 2, there

are five STs (17.24%), who believe language awareness can be achieved through the study of language rules and forms and has nothing to do with the teacher's nativeness/non-nativeness as a speaker, as in ST12's comment: "*Language awareness is not something that people acquire just because they are native speakers of a particular language*". As well as noting that language awareness involves learned knowledge, ST12 also stressed its functionality in language teaching: "*As long as teachers wonder about the knowledge about that language, they can get that information from a variety of sources. It would help to provide more precise and accurate explanations, comparisons among different languages*".

The third variable that the participants compared NESTs with non-NESTs against is pedagogic skills. Table 3 displays the results of the comparison between NESTs and non-NESTs with respect to their pedagogic skills.

Table 3: *STs' Perceived Differences in Pedagogic Skills between NESTs and Non-NESTs*

Perceived Differences in Pedagogic Skills	f	%
The native/nonnative dichotomy is irrelevant to pedagogic skills as they relate to a teacher's personality, training and experience.	17	59
Non-NESTs are superior to NESTs in that they are more empathetic to the culture and background of the students, and can better meet learner needs.	11	38
NESTs are superior to non-NESTs if they have received teacher training.	1	3
TOTAL	29	100

According to Table 3, more than half of the participants (59%) believe the mastery of pedagogic skills depend more on a teacher's personality, training and experience than his native language. ST27 remarked that differences in pedagogic skills can be characterized as 'individual' rather than 'national': "*I believe competence on pedagogic skills depend on the individuals rather than people having different nationalities*", while ST18 stressed the importance of professional experience and development in the field of language teaching: "*There is no clear-cut division/priority between them in terms of their pedagogic skills. This is related to experience, amount of personal and professional development the teacher gained through the school, the organizations he worked at*".

Although ST23 admitted that NESTs don't have any superiority over non-NESTs in terms of pedagogic skills and vice versa, she noted that there may be differences in the general attitude towards teaching: "*For this, being native/nonnative doesn't make any difference. Actually, the natives are more flexible and comfortable in setting rules, classroom management. Nonnatives seem more systematic and teacher-like in my opinion*". While ST28 cited teacher education as a determinant of pedagogic skills, he urged non-NESTs to better their language awareness and pedagogic skills as compensation for their language deficit: "*Pedagogic skills could be learned through methodology lessons. I had*

nonnative teachers doing well in teaching. Although natives seem one step ahead, we can compensate by improving our pedagogic skills and language awareness".

Table 3 indicates that 11 of 29 STs (38%) considered non-NESTs priviliged over NESTs due to their empathy towards the culture and background of the students. For instance, ST26 mentioned the potential insensitivity of NESTs to the local culture of the students: "*In Turkey, nonnative teacher would do better as he knows the profile, cultural background of the students, their lifestyles. However, a native would fail in understanding their needs or problems*".

Similarly, ST21 and ST29 remarked on the possibility of communication breakdowns thereof: "*Nonnatives can interact with the students better, understand the needs and interests better. Also the students can express themselves better to them*" (ST21); and "*Pedagogic skills include being aware of the learner's culture and behaving in an appropriate manner. Natives may find themselves in culturally awkward situations easily as it will take sometime to get to know another culture*" (ST29).

Only ST17 (3%) stated that NESTs can surpass non-NESTs in pedagogic skills if they have received teacher training: "*As far as I remember all the natives from which I took lessons were better than nonnatives in all the three areas because all of the natives that taught me were trained ELT teachers*".

Secondly, the hypothetical question, "*Who do you think would make a better teacher in the setting of your practicum school: a native-speaker teacher or a non-native teacher? Give your reasons please*", demands a reflective answer on their choice. Table 4 presents the distribution of their teacher preferences in the native/nonnative dichotomy.

Table 4: *STs' Preferences in the Native/Non-Native Dichotomy*

Preference Orientation	f	%
Preference for NESTs	3	10.34
Preference for non-NESTs	21	72.41
No Preference between NESTs and non-NESTs	5	17.24
TOTAL	29	100

According to Table 4, only three participants (10.34%) were in favour of NESTs, whereas 21 out of 29 STs (72.41%) stated that non-NESTs would be more eligible in the given context. There are also five more STs (17.24%), who showed no preference for either. A further analysis of STs' responses on their choice between NESTs and non-NESTs was undertaken and the underlying reasons for their preferences were tabulated below.

Table 5: *STs' Reasons for Their Preferences of NESTs*

Reasons for STs' Preference of NESTs	f	%
NESTs provide students with more L2 input.	3	37.5
NESTs' presence motivates students to use L2 for real communication.	2	25
NESTs have a full mastery of the language forms.	2	25
NESTs are a good model of English pronunciation.	1	12.5
TOTAL	8	100

Respondents gave multiple answers.

Those three STs, who thought NESTs would prove better teachers in their practicum school, supplied eight reasons for their preference. According to Table 5, all three (37.5%) believe NESTs would provide students with more L2 input, as the use of the students' native language would be non-existent in the case of a monolingual English teacher. For instance, ST1 wrote: "*I think a native-speaker teacher would be better in my practicum school because the teacher will always speak in the target language and this will be great input for the students*". Though being uncertain about the comprehensibility of NESTs' speech for the students with limited English proficiency, ST14 commented: "*Students completely lack the necessary input. If they had a native teacher, they'd have more opportunities to learn the language. However, their level is so low that they may not be able to keep track of the lesson. It is a big dilemma*".

Secondly, two STs (25%) made reference to the motivating effect of the presence of a native-speaker on the desire of learners for real communication. In this regard, ST28 recites a common language learning myth on the critical role of communicative contact with NESTs for language development, by saying: "*I believe the idea, if you want to learn the language, go to the country where it is spoken*" and argued for simulating the same environment by employing a native-speaker teacher in the class: "*If we don't have the chance, we may have native-speaker teachers*".

NESTs' full mastery of the English language is another equally-weighted reason for their preference of NESTs. Again, two STs (25%) regard NESTs more eligible due to their language proficiency, as explained by ST28: "*…a native-speaker would be effective since some language points may not be mastered by a non-native*". In addition, only ST1 preferred NESTs because of their accuracy in pronunciation: "*…They will learn the exactly correct pronunciation and language forms*".

Table 6: *STs' Reasons for Their Preference of Non-NESTs*

Reasons for STs' Preference of Non-NESTs	f	%
Non-NESTs' knowledge of L1 facilitates comprehension especially in beginner level classes.	15	42
NESTs' presence can be intimidating if they are not familiar with students' culture and background.	9	25
Non-NESTs are more sensitive to learner needs.	6	17
Non-NESTs can anticipate and solve the problems of Turkish learners as they have already experienced the same learning process.	3	8
NESTs may be foreign to the realities of the Turkish educational system.	3	8
TOTAL	36	100

Respondents gave multiple answers.

As regards the reasons for their preference of non-NESTs in the setting of their practicum school, 21 STs provided 36 responses. According to Table 6, 42% of these STs believe that non-NESTs' knowledge of the mother tongue facilitates comprehension, especially in beginner level classes. ST29 was anxious that NESTs might prove totally unintelligible for their students: "*In my practicum school, a non-native speaker makes a better job since the students' level are not so high, I think, they cannot survive in a native-teacher's class*". On the other hand, ST17 thought the use of the native language by a non-NEST as a scaffolding device can help: "*…a non-native speaker teacher would make a better teacher, because s/he can utilize the mother tongue of students when necessary and can compare and contrast the mother tongue of the students with the target language*". In addition to their contrastive knowledge, non-NESTs are considered to have more insight into learner difficulties, as understood from ST13's comment: "*A nonnative teacher makes a better teaching in our practicum school as he can understand when students get confused. In these situations, they can use the mother tongue and help students to understand the lesson better*".

As can be seen from Table 6, 25% of the supporters of non-NESTs argue that the presence of a native-speaker in the context of their practicum school can be intimidating as they may not be familiar with the local culture and the background of the students. ST6 asserted: "*A native-speaker wouldn't be of much use in my practicum school unless a TR-ENG bilingual. These students need someone they can connect to culturally. A native-speaker would be completely alienated from them and highly challenging*", and went on to recount a classroom anecdote reflecting the students' attitude towards NESTs: "*Even today they complained about the ministry's new project, saying: Hocam, ithal ithal öğretmen getiriyorlarmış yaa!*". Likewise, ST12 stated that the presence of a NEST might raise their self-generated feelings of learning impotence: "*…Most of them have a negative attitude towards English. They believe they cannot use English at all, so a native-speaker could be a*

little bit frightening for them". On the other hand, ST9 first referred to the complementary role of a NEST in the foreign language class: "*A native-speaker would be of great use if he sometimes visited the class and provided authentic input*", and then, observed the role of the knowledge of students' L1 and culture: "*But a native speaker who never speaks Turkish and doesn't know much about the cultural background of the students may not bring a total success*".

The third reason for preferring non-NESTs in their practicum school is their sensitivity to learner needs (17%). For instance, ST27 responded: "*A non-native teacher proficient in speaking will be more helpful and efficient, because a non-native teacher whose native language is the same as students' will understand their feelings, situations and needs better*". According to Table 6, 8% of the 21 STs favour non-NESTS as they can anticipate and solve the problems of Turkish learners because they have passed through the same learning processes as their students, as in ST17's statement: "*…a nonnative knows the challenges and problematic parts of learning the target language and knows how to explain it better. However, as a native speaker acquires the language implicitly, s/he cannot recognize such tricky areas of that language*".

Finally, another three STs (8%) argued that non-NESTs are more preferable in the given context because NESTs may be foreign to the realities of the Turkish educational system. In ST11's opinion, a NEST might overreact if curriculum expectations are in conflict with students' achievements: "*A native-speaker would go crazy here. Although they are 10th grade, they can't form a simple sentence. The curriculum given by the ministry doesn't match with reality. A Turkish teacher is familiar with such problems and can deal with them*". ST27 made reference to the compatibility of non-NESTs with the standards of the local educational system: "*Also, the nonnative will know the education system better and direct students according to the philosophy of Turkish education system*", while ST20 had reservations about NESTs' adaptation skills: "*I don't think that a native teacher can adapt to the circumstances in Turkey and in the school environment*".

In reply to the second question, five STs refused to make a choice between NESTs and non-NESTs. Their reasons for no preference in the native/non-native dichotomy are tabulated below.

Table 7: *STs' Reasons for No Preference in the Native/Non-Native Dichotomy*

Reasons for No Preference between NESTs and Non-NESTs	f	%
Non-NESTs can be equally successful as NESTs as pedagogic skills are more important than the teacher's native language.	4	80
NESTs and Non-NESTs should cooperate for the ideal EFL class as each has their own strengths and weaknesses.	1	20
TOTAL	5	100

According to Table 7, four of the five STs (80%) believe non-NESTs can be equally successful as NESTs because the quality of teaching depends more on the teacher's pedagogic skills than his native language, as depicted by ST5: "*If a native*

can't teach what he knows, it is meaningless. If the teacher is good at his field, has communication skills, he can teach well; it isn't important he is native/nonnative. I prefer a successful nonnative to an unsuccessful native". ST18 and ST22 acknowledged the significance of the teacher's procedural knowledge as well as recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and non-NESTs. For instance, ST18 commented: "*Native speakers could give much better input but if they don't have effective methodology, English input alone will not work. However, a non-native teacher who has effective ELT methods could be as successful as a native*". Although ST22 wrote: "*A native could get in touch with students well but lack techniques. A nonnative could explain the topic well but lack interaction. The important point is the combination of skills and nationality isn't that important*", he argued his fellow graduates deserve priority in employment: "*But I prefer Turkish teacher in my country since there are a lot of graduates who try to find a job desperately*". Only ST2 advocated NESTs and non-NESTs should cooperate for the ideal EFL class as each has their own strengths and weaknesses:

- *I wish students had the chance of studying with both native and non-natives. Non-natives speak bookish English and have a limited experience on target language…they suffer from pronunciation and intonation mistakes…natives are more flexible about grammar….they are dominant on their language lexicon. But they fail in applying the right methodology as they don't have enough contrastive knowledge on both languages* (ST2).

Ultimately, the participants were asked to comment on their needs for professional development. In reply to the third question, "*What could be done to help you out with the areas of language teaching that you feel less competent in?*", 29 STs provided 40 responses. Table 8 presents the distribution of their self-reported needs for developing their teaching skills.

Table 8: *STs' Perceived Needs for Professional Development*

Perceived Needs for Professional Development	f	%
I need to practise teaching more with varied learner profiles in different classroom environments.	23	57.5
I need more observation and supervision of experienced teachers.	6	15
I need to build up my teaching skills by consulting professional resources.	6	15
I need to improve my English proficiency.	5	12.5
TOTAL	40	100

Respondents gave multiple answers.

It can be seen from Table 8 that 57.5% of the participants expressed their needs for more teaching practice with varied types of learners in different classroom settings. Their main difficulty seems to lie in putting theory into practice, as understood from ST8's comment: "*I want to experience teaching process with different profiles of students. More practice teaching chance to apply the*

theoretical part can be perfect solution for lacking competencies". It is worth-mentioning here that there is a departmental tendency to choose the practicum school among private or anatolian high schools so that candidate teachers can practise teaching in ideal classroom environments. However, the student teachers in this study had the experience of teaching in a state school in the spring term, which might have raised the need for different coping strategies, as evidenced by ST18's statement:

- *I need to challenge with various language learning environments with students from different levels, socio-economic status, different schools. Each language learning environment has its own requirements, required techniques, different class management strategies. The more acquainted with different experiences, the more I will be prepared and then I will be more competent* (ST18).

According to Table 8, there are two equally-cited needs (15%) that should be met in order for the participants to become more competent professionally. The first of these involves the observation and supervision of experienced teachers as mentors. For instance, ST11 suggested organizing a social network of teachers sharing ideas and experiences: "*There may be a communication network between teachers to share their experiences, videos as interaction may widen our perspective and we can realize there are many other things to apply in our classes*". In the same way, ST1 stressed the importance of working with experienced teachers: "*We will be better in time and after learning and observing some issues from more experienced teachers. Our 'school experience' and 'practice teaching' courses are crucially beneficial for this purpose*". Aware of the differences in their teaching behaviour, ST27 suggested modelling by both NESTs and non-NESTs: "*Observing the methods and strategies of both native and nonnatives will help us develop our skills, so we should be given chance to witness different classes and teachers*".

Another 15% of them reported to be consulting professional resources like ELT books, journals, model lessons on DVDs. For example, ST12 expressed concern over her skill of organizing classroom interaction and stated: "*I have some trouble which activities go well with which interaction pattern and putting it into practice. I'd be glad to find resources specifying such activities and more elaborate cues about how to implement these techniques*". While ST6 was planning to watch more model lessons, ST2 preferred to read more to overcome his problems of class management: "*When I distribute a worksheet and try to make students do the activities, I get lost in the class. To solve this, I've been reading literature related to class management*".

Table 8 shows that there are five STs, who feel the need to increase their level of proficiency in English. Although they merely compose 12.5% of the participants, the information gathered from their responses is strikingly important. They fear that their language deficit will stand in the way of becoming a competent

teacher and believe in the necessity of improving their English by overseas education as in ST8's comment: "*An education abroad where the native language is spoken can be perfect chance to have competency in other areas, because I think being competent in language teaching requires being competent in that language*"; or further study as in ST11's comment below:

- *Language proficiency may be a reason behind my fears and inadequacy. If you don't feel yourself competent enough, you should work harder and try to find other ways to improve your skills. As teachers of English, after four years of education, we have doubts about our language proficiency. So, this leads to fear and it prevents us from realizing our full potential* (ST11).

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

In the first part of the survey, the student teachers – as experienced learners – made comparisons between their previous native and non-native teachers with respect to Medgyes' (1994) three components of a language teacher's expertise. The initial comparison between NESTs and non-NESTs with regard to language proficiency reveals that 93% of the participants consider NESTs superior to non-NESTs due to their speaking skills, richer vocabulary, and correct pronunciation, while 7% of them notice no tangible difference in the target language use of both groups. This finding is in line with the results of the epoch-making research by Medgyes (1994), in which vocabulary, speaking/fluency and pronunciation were the most common language difficulties of the 198 non-NESTs, and Cheung (2002; as cited in Braine, 2005) as well as Mahboob (2003; as cited in Braine, 2005) listed high proficiency in English, oral skills and vocabulary among NESTs' strengths. Similarly, Benke and Medgyes' (2005) 422 Hungarian learners of English along with Phothongsunan and Suwanarak's (2008) 24 Thai teachers of English appreciated NESTs for being "perfect models for imitation" in conversation classes. The student teachers here also noted that: i. non-NESTs' lack of fluency may be detrimental to students' motivation and interest; ii. their pronunciation mistakes can contage with students' accent; and iii. their L2 lexicon can be restricted in terms of authentic language use. In the same way, Arva and Medgyes (2000: 361, 363) found that non-NESTs had "a faulty command of English", with problems especially in "pronunciation, vocabulary and colloquial expressions", and "would pass their mistakes and inappropriacies to their students", whereas "NESTs spoke better English" and their superiority "embraced all four skills and all areas of competence".

When the participants compared NESTs and non-NESTs in terms of language awareness, it was found that 72.41% of STs prefer non-NESTs over NESTs due to their explicit knowledge of the target language and ability to make crosslinguistic comparisons. Non-NESTs were reported to be at an advantage because their

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knowledge of the students' mother tongue is helpful in identifying and treating L2 errors, as well as providing students with more explanatory answers, especially in grammar instruction. In the same vein, NESTs in Arva and Medgyes' (2000: 361-362) study cited instances of helplessness in explaining "why it's wrong or right", unlike non-NESTs, who "have in-depth knowledge of the structure of English as well as a metacognitive awareness of how it worked"; and Benke and Medgyes (2005: 207) also drew attention to the tendency of NESTs "to leave problems unexplained" "in the absence of a shared native language". In addition, Barratt and Kontra (2000; as cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008: 322) pointed out that students could easily be discouraged from developing language awareness because of NESTs' incapacity "to make useful comparisons and contrasts with the learners' first language", while Llurda (2009) included the high level of language awareness and the shared mother tongue in his list of advantages enjoyed by non-NESTs. However, 10.34% of the participants in this study believe NESTs have a detailed knowledge of L2 as they acquire it as their mother tongue, and 17.24% of them argue that language awareness involves learned knowledge and is not relevant to the native/non-native dichotomy. To quote Medgyes (1994: 57), "Language awareness involves explicit knowledge about the language, which does not necessarily assume a high level of language proficiency".

The results of the comparison between NESTs and non-NESTs with regard to pedagogic skills indicated a teacher's personality, training and experience are more esteemed than his accent as a speaker by 59% of STs. This calls to mind the question whether it will suffice to have native speaker competence in order to become a good language teacher. Medgyes' (2001: 436) answer was "definitely no": "If a perfect command were a sufficient prerequisite for successful teaching, Medgyes contends, NESTS would by definition be better teachers – which they are not!". In Liang's (2002; as cited in Braine, 2005: 19) study, in which the attitudes of 20 ESL students were not affected by pronunciation/accent, although they initially rated it as very important, it was found that "personal and professional features" in the teachers' speech, like "being interesting", "being prepared", "being qualified", and "being professional" played a role in the students' preference for teachers. Therefore, 59% of the participants in this study can be said to share the same view as Liang (2002; as cited in Braine, 2005: 19), who suggested focusing on non-NESTs' "level of professionalism" instead of their "ethnic and language background".

38% of the participants, however, considered non-NESTs superior in terms of pedagogic skills, because they believe non-NESTs can be more empathetic to the local culture and background of the students, removing the possibility of communication breakdowns, which they might otherwise experience in the case of a NEST insensitive to their heritage. Likewise, Benke and Medgyes (2005: 207) pointed out the occurrence of a communication gap between learners and NESTS, as they "come from different cultural and language backgrounds". Similarly, when Han (2003: 1, 4-6) asked the familiar question, "Does native proficiency in English

mean better English teaching?", South Korean adult learners of English complained that NESTs lack "compassion", "understanding of Korean culture", "qualification as an ESL teacher" as well as "responsibility for teaching". On the other hand, there is only one ST (3%), who accepted the superiority of NESTs in terms of pedagogic skills only conditionally – as long as they have received teacher training. As a result, "a basic distinction needs to be established between well-trained teachers" and "backpackers", "who spend one or two years teaching English in a foreign country without any previous training, experience or knowledge of the local language and culture" (Llurda, 2009: 45).

In summary, there are three immediate conclusions that can be drawn from the triple comparison of their native and non-native teachers: i. language proficiency is the only area that non-NESTs might be disadvantaged, yet it is not a sufficient condition for ensuring expertise in the teaching profession; ii. NESTs can be disadvantaged in terms of language awareness, as they don't have the necessary explicit knowledge of the target language and the students' mother tongue, and iii. the teacher's personality, pre-service education and experience are more important determinants of the quality of his teaching, whether he is native or non-native.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the student teachers – as prospective teachers of English – were surveyed about their preferences for native/non-native teachers in the setting of their practicum school, a state high school in Ankara, where they have observed five non-native teachers (with at least five years of experience) six hours a week throughout the ten-week practicum. The teacher preference survey showed that 10.34% of the participants preferred NESTs. When they were questioned about their rationales for their preference of NESTs, these three STs unanimously articulated that NESTs would provide learners with more L2 input as they wouldn't resort to L1 use at all (37.5%). Another two equally-weighted reasons for their preference of NESTs relate to the presence of NESTs as genuine communicators in the target language, and their full mastery of L2 forms (25%), and the last reason why NESTs are more preferable in the practicum school is that they present a good model of English pronunciation (12.5%).

The supporters of NESTs in this study might be small, yet they accurately identified the strengths of NESTs. Several respondents in Medgyes' (1994: 75) study, too, argued that being "the only form of verbal communication between the teacher and the students", "English had genuine relevance in the classroom", thus postulating "the mere presence of a native" "as a motivating factor" (Arva & Medgyes, 2000: 361). Also, given the results of the following studies, the prestige of the native teacher's accent seems to outweigh other factors of professional expertise. For instance, Kelch and Santana-Williamson (2002; as cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008: 327) found that the students' perception of the teachers' nativeness strongly influenced their attitudes held towards them; NESTs perceived as "more likeable, educated, experienced and overall better teachers". Similarly, in a more

recent study by Butler (2007: 731), the Korean students "thought the American-accented English guise had better pronunciation, was relatively more confident in her use of English, would focus more on fluency than on accuracy, and would use less Korean in the English class", as well as expressing "a preference to have the American-accented English guise as their English teacher". As a matter of fact, these four stated reasons by the minority of the student teachers altogether make up "the primary advantage" of NESTs, "their superior English-language competence" in Arva and Medgyes' (2000: 360) terms. Like 25% of the respondents in Medgyes' (1994: 75) study, 10.34% of the participants in this study, can be said to attribute the superiority of NESTs to "a better overall command of English".

The second finding of the teacher preference survey, however, showed that the majority of the participants (72.41%) in this study were in favour of non-NESTS. Similarly, when Medgyes (2001: 436) asked "whether the participants thought the NEST or the non-NEST was a better teacher", 27% were for NESTs, and 29% for non-NESTs. Despite "the linguistic inferiority" of non-NESTs, the proportion of their supporters in the present study is higher, as in the case of Medgyes' (2001) study. Hereafter, "what assets enable them to make up for their linguistic handicap" (Medgyes, 2001: 436) will be discussed from the viewpoints of these 21 student teachers. The most popular argument in favour of non-NESTs refers to the facilitation of comprehension through the use of the students' native language, especially at low levels (42%). The 57 respondents, who favoured non-NESTs in Medgyes' (1994) study emphasized the role of L1 use as an effective tool for explaining new material, while the lack of competence in the local language is labelled as "another defect" in the professional expertise of NESTs, who "felt handicapped" "with no knowledge of Hungarian" when they "can't explain fully", "especially with beginners" (Arva & Medgyes, 2000: 362). In Cheung and Braine's (2007: 267) interviews, the university students as well presented their use of Cantonese for "explaining difficult issues in the English class" as one of the reasons for their positive attitudes towards non-NESTs.

Another reason for preferring non-NESTs is the intimidating presence of a NEST that is not familiar with the local culture and background of the students (25%). These nine STs were concerned that learners might regard NESTs as outsiders due to their lack of knowledge in the local language and culture, and the unintelligibility of their accent added to their worries, especially with weak students. The fact that non-NESTs' variety of English is "easier to understand" or "better understood" has been justified in Medgyes' (1994: 76) as well as Madrid and Canado's (2004: 136) studies. Medgyes (2001: 438) has also ascertained that "the non-NEST teaching in a monolingual class has far more background information about his or her students than even the most well-informed NEST can", while Han (2003: 7) found out that the "take-it-for-granted attitude" of NESTs, "such as making no effort to learn their learners' language and culture" causes South Korean learners to feel distrust toward NESTs and to form misbeliefs

about their "arrogance", "ethnocentric bias", "ignorance and indifference about other cultures".

The sensitivity of non-NESTs to learners needs is the third reason why 17% of the 21 STs preferred non-NESTs in their practicum classes. Both Medgyes (1994: 64-65) and Llurda (2009) have stated that non-NESTs can be more empathetic to the needs and problems of the students, as opposed to NESTs, who "have a vague picture of their students' backgrounds and aspirations". In Wu and Ke's (2009: 44) study, where the mutual expectations of NESTs and Taiwanese university students were investigated, it was observed that while "students expect more encouragement and interaction with the NESTs, and more relaxed activities with fewer assignments and tests", NESTs expressed their discontent with the unwillingness of the students to participate. Such misunderstandings do not apply to non-NESTs because their "gut feelings" based on their "comprehensive familiarity with the students' linguistic, cultural and personal backgrounds" enable non-NESTs to better "satisfy their clients' expectations" (Medgyes, 1994: 65, 75).

When it comes to anticipating and solving the problems of Turkish learners, non-NESTs were again considered better than NESTs by 8% of the participants in this study, as they have experienced the same processes of learning as their students. Similarly, the respondents in Medgyes' (1994: 60) study found non-NESTs more insightful, because "even the minutest item as a possible source of problems" cannot escape their attention thanks to the conscious knowledge of the English language they have accumulated during their own learning process. According to Arva and Medgyes (2000: 362), non-NESTs are more likely to recall those difficulties from their own learning, as they have "moved along the same road as their students", "sharing with them their previous experience as language learners" (Llurda, 2009: 44). Furthermore, in Mahboob's (2003; as cited in Braine, 2005: 21) study, where 32 students' perceptions of non-NESTs were examined in the USA, "experience as an ESL learner" earned the highest number of positive comments. Put differently, "being on the same wavelength as their learners, …they can promote language learning more effectively" (Benke & Medgyes, 2005: 206).

The last reason why 8% of the participants preferred non-NESTs over NESTs in the given context is that NESTs may be foreign to the realities of the Turkish educational system. The three student teachers cited potential problems of adaptation to the local school environment and doubted if NESTs could meet the requirements and curriculum expectations of the local context. Numerous studies have also stressed the significance of the nonnative teachers' familiarity with the dynamics of the local educational system: for instance, non-NESTs were likewise reported to be more conscious of the curricular constraints, the teaching materials as well as the exam requirements within the national system of education (Medgyes, 1994; Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Llurda, 2009). In brief, non-NESTs were believed to scaffold students' understanding through L1 use, to be familiar with their culture and background, to be more sensitive to learner

needs, to anticipate and solve their problems as experienced L2 learners, and to be aware of the realities of the Turkish educational system. "Due to the linguistic, cultural and educational heritage they shared with their students" (Medgyes, 1994: 75), they were much acclaimed by the majority of the participants in the current study.

Yet, there is a third party consisting of five student teachers, who didn't indicate any preference for either of NESTs and non-NESTs (17.24%). As for the causes of their impartiality in the native/non-native dichotomy, four of them (80%) argued that the native language of the teacher does not count for more than his pedagogic skills, while one ST (20%) stated that NESTs and non-NESTs should cooperate in an ideal situation. This finding is similar to the result of Phothongsunan and Suwanarak's (2008) study: eight out of 24 Thai teachers of English rejected the simplistic assumption that NESTs make the ideal teachers of their language on the grounds that the teachers' knowledge and abilities are more definitive of their quality, and non-NESTs could be as qualified as NESTs if they are well-trained in ELT. The ratio of the participants, who didn't make a choice between the two groups is, however, greater in Medgyes' (2001) study, where 44% of the teachers responded "both" (an alternative not supplied in the questionnaire) when asked to decide who is better. In Madrid and Canado's (2004: 136) study, where the teacher preferences of 35 teachers and 459 students were inquired through a similar question, "With whom do students and teachers believe one learns more: with native or nonnative teachers?", it was observed that "students do not evince a preference for native teachers, whom they value as much as nonnative ones", whereas the teachers are "slightly" inclined towards NESTs, acknowledging the importance and ease of lesson delivery in the target language by the native teacher. Although the coexistence of NESTs and non-NESTs is found desirable for the ideal EFL classroom by only one of these five STs, 52% of the participants in Medgyes' (2001) study argued for an equal number of NESTs and non-NESTs when they were inquired about the ideal proportion of NESTs to non-NESTs at schools. Likewise, 82% of the students in Benke and Medgyes' (2005: 206, 208) study agreed that "in an ideal situation both native and non-native teachers should teach you", "stressing that they would be ill-prepared to dispense with the services of either group".

With the purpose of identifying the perceived weaknesses of the student teachers, they were finally asked to comment on their needs for professional development, and the results indicated that the majority of their responses concern field-related needs like "practice with varied learner profiles" (57.5%), "observation and supervision of experienced teachers" (15%), "consult to professional resources" (15%), whereas a language-related need – "improved proficiency" – was voiced by only five of them (12.5%). The underlying reason why more than half of them stated the need for more practice with varied learners may be related to the change of setting in the spring term of their senior year, when

they encountered low-level learners at a state high school during the course of the practicum as opposed to the departmental tendency of working with advantaged students at private colleges/anatolian high schools. It is evident from the responses of these five participants that they were inflicted with the notorious "inferiority complex" "caused by the defects in their English-language proficiency", as in the case of many non-NESTs in Medgyes' (2001: 434) study. For fear of becoming an incompetent teacher, these student teachers articulated the need for overseas education and further study in compensation for their language deficit. This request is also validated in the literature by Llurda's (forthcoming; as cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008: 339) study on EFL Catalan teachers, who after prolonged stays in English-speaking countries indicated a greater awareness of their non-native strength and thus seemed to be less affected by the inferiority complex "that is much more apparent in some of their colleagues with lesser experience abroad".

Conclusion

The triple comparison of their native and non-native teachers by 29 student teachers in this study has shown that: i. language proficiency is a necessary but not sufficient condition for teaching expertise, although non-native teachers might be disadvantaged in speaking skills, vocabulary and pronunciation; ii. native teachers might be disadvantaged in language awareness, especially in error correction and grammar explanations, due to their lack of conscious knowledge of the students' native language and the target language; and iii. the teacher's personality, pre-service education and experience are more definitive indicators of his pedagogic skills than his accent, while non-native teachers might be advantaged in building rapport due to their empathy towards the local culture and background of the students. Similarly, Phillipson (1992: 194) argued that the native speaker cannot be considered "intrinsically better qualified than the non-native", solely because of his "greater facility in demonstrating fluent, idiomatically appropriate language, in appreciating the cultural connotations of the language, and in being the final arbiter of the acceptability of any given samples of the language", because "none of these virtues is impossible to instill through teacher training" and "nor is any of them something that well-trained non-native cannot acquire". Moreover, he (1992: 194-195) also went on to explain that the insight of the teachers "into language learning processes, into the structure and usage of a language" as well as "their capacity to analyse and explain language" have to be learnt and "the untrained or unqualified native speaker" is, therefore, "potentially a menace", just like "many products of the British education system recruited currently into ELT", which "do not know much about their own language".

Secondly, the results of the teacher preference survey have shown that: i. the native teacher is favoured by only a minority of the participants because of: his potency to provide an abundance of L2 input, his presence as a genuine communicator as well as his better command of English; and ii. the non-native

teacher is favored by the majority of the participants in the context of the practicum school because of: his codeswitching ability to facilitate comprehension, his familiarity with the culture and background of the students, his sensitivity to learner needs, his ability to anticipate and solve learning difficulties (being an experienced L2 learner himself) as well as his awareness of the realities of the Turkish educational system. The importance of the teacher's shared linguistic, cultural and educational heritage with his students is also stressed by Phillipson (1992: 195): "In the European foreign language teaching tradition (teachers of French in Britain, of English in Scandinavia, etc.)", the ideal teacher "has near-native-speaker proficiency in the foreign language, and comes from the same linguistic and cultural background as the learners". On the other hand, like 25% of the student teachers in this study, who are reserved about the social acceptance of the native teacher and the intelligibility of his accent among students, Cook (1999: 200), called attention to the possibility of students feeling "overwhelmed by native-speaker teachers who have achieved a perfection that is out of the students' reach" and advocated that "the fallible non-native speaker teacher" may be preferred by students for the simple reason that he "presents a more achievable model" within their reach. There is, however, a third group that stayed impartial on the native/non-native dichotomy because pedagogic skills count for more than the native language of the teacher in their opinion, and one of them recommended that the native and the non-native teacher should cooperate in an ideal learning situation.

All in all, the fallacy that the native speaker makes the ideal teacher of English is rejected by almost 90% of the student teachers here, as they are aware of the fact that "successful teaching will come out of the balanced combination of the two factors: command of the language as well as training and ability to teach it" (Llurda, 2009: 46). For this reason, "an increasing number of ELT experts assert that the ideal teacher is no longer a category reserved for NESTs", and "both NESTs and non-NESTs can be equally good teachers on their own terms"; or to be more precise, with all other factors held constant, "the ideal NEST is someone who has achieved a fair degree of proficiency in the students' native language", whereas "the ideal non-NEST is someone who has achieved near-native proficiency in English" (Medgyes, 2001: 440). The critical importance of language proficiency for teaching is eventually reiterated as a language-related need by the student teachers, who also listed "practice with varied learner profiles", "observation and supervision of experienced teachers" and "consult to professional resources" as field-related needs for professional development. Their requests for education abroad and further study have also been articulated by Medgyes (2001: 434): "Non-NESTs, on the whole, are well aware of their linguistic deficiencies and of the all-pervasive nature of their handicap….long stays in English-speaking countries, hard work and dedication might help narrow the gap".

In the light of these discussions, it can be concluded that the basic distinction between the native and nonnative teacher lies in the language proficiency and the local nonnative teacher can make as good a teacher as the native one, if his language and pedagogic skills are improved with further training. For this reason, rather than importing native speakers with dubious training, it would be more desirable to invest such large sums of money in the educational betterment of existing human resources. In hindsight from the Hong Kong example, where the government has been hiring native speakers since 1988 "as a remedial measure" for "the declining English standards", the lesson learned from Cheung and Braine's (2007: 260) study is worth mentioning here. Despite the negative attitude of some Hong Kong parents and school administrators towards the local nonnative teacher, the Hong Kong university students preferred to learn from non-NESTs rather than NESTs "with more prestigious accents", because they were aware that "a well-qualified local English teacher who is familiar with the local language and culture is as good as any NS English teacher, usually a foreigner" and that "English spoken with a Cantonese accent is probably easier to deal with and is more appropriate for the Hong Kong context" (Cheung & Braine, 2007: 268). As a result, they called on the government to make an effort to enhance both the language proficiency and teaching skills of local teachers and pointed out that "students who graduate with teaching qualifications from Hong Kong universities have difficulty in finding employment in local schools, while the goverment and the private sector continue to hire NS teachers at enormous cost" (Cheung & Braine, 2007: 270). It was also criticised that Hong Kong is yet to rely on the local nonnative English teachers, "with a 150-year history of teaching English locally" (Cheung & Braine, 2007: 270).

In conclusion, Turkish educational authorities should also be disillusioned from the native speaker fallacy and reevaluate the job prospects of nonnative teachers before taking sudden action to recruit native speakers, while thousands of teacher graduates wait in line. Considering the fast-paced spread of English and the resultant demand for more English teachers, nonnative teachers, who already amount to 80% of all the English teachers in the world, will continue to outnumber their native counterparts (Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 2005). Because there is a limited supply of native-speakers "willing to teach under difficult conditions for a meager salary", the teaching of English will be undertaken exclusively by non-native teachers especially in foreign language contexts (Braine, 2005: 23). This being the case, pre-service education along with continuing professional development of nonnative teachers become even more important, if we are to find independent solutions for our language problems by capitalizing on indigenous education resources.

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