

EFL Learners and EFL Teaching in Türkiye: Native English-Speaking Teachers' Views*

İlke Menekşe Gerede-Hoyland**¹ and Zeynep Camlıbel-Acar²

Abstract

Many native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) work in Türkiye. NESTs as well as non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) are the major stakeholders, and thus their views and experiences are worth exploring. Despite the ample research on NNESTs' views, there is a scarcity of those of NESTs. This qualitative case study with four NESTs working at primary and secondary levels of a private school in Istanbul, aims to provide insights into their experiences with Turkish EFL learners and the EFL teaching and learning context in Türkiye. Data collected through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively using the thematic analysis technique. Findings showed that Turkish EFL students are perceived as motivated, respectful, competitive and product-oriented learners, preferring more conventional practices like memorization and individual study. While oral fluency in English is seen as their strength, accuracy and literacy skills are evaluated as areas in need of development. The overall experience of the NESTs and their views about their work environment and colleagues are positive, yet factors such as the management style of the administrators, attitude of parents and their own incompetence in Turkish affect their views negatively and challenge them.

Keywords

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Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğrencileri ve İngilizce Öğretimi: Anadili İngilizce Olan Öğretmenlerin Görüşleri*

Öz

Türkiye'deki okullarda anadili İngilizce olan birçok öğretmen (NEST) çalışmaktadır. NEST'ler de anadili İngilizce olmayan öğretmenler (NNEST) gibi dil öğretiminin ana paydaşlarındandır ve bu nedenle görüşleri ve deneyimleri araştırılmaya değerdir. NNEST'lerin görüşlerine ilişkin çok sayıda araştırma olmasına rağmen NEST çalışmaları yetersizdir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, NEST'lerin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen Türkler ve Türkiye'deki yabancı dil bağlamındaki görüşlerine ve deneyimlerine ilişkin içgörü sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nitel durum çalışması, İstanbul'da özel bir okulun ilk ve orta kademelerinde görev yapan dört NEST ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Açık uçlu anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanan veriler, tematik analiz tekniği kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Bulgular, İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin NEST'ler tarafından motivasyonu yüksek, saygılı, rekabetçi ve sonuç odaklı öğrenciler olarak algılandığını; ezberleme ve bireysel çalışma gibi daha geleneksel öğrenme uygulamalarını tercih ettiklerini göstermektedir. Öğrencilerin İngilizceyi akıcı kullanımı, güçlü yanları olarak görülürken gramerin doğru kullanımı ve okuryazarlık becerileri geliştirilmesi gereken alanlar olarak değerlendirilmiştir. NEST'lerin genel deneyimi, çalışma ortamı ve meslektaşları hakkındaki görüşleri olumlu bulunmuştur. Ancak, yönetici ve velilerin tutumu, yönetim tarzı ve kendilerinin Türkçe bilmemeleri gibi faktörler NEST'lerin görüşlerini olumsuz etkilerken onları çalışma ortamında zorlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Anadili İngilizce olan öğretmenler
Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce Öğretmen deneyimleri
Dil eğitimi
Türkiye

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** Corresponding Author / Sorumlu Yazar

¹  Özyeğin University, Schools of Foreign Languages, Türkiye, ilke.gerede@ozyegin.edu.tr

²  Marmara University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language Education, Türkiye, zeynep.camlibel@marmara.edu.tr

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet Giriş

Küreselleşme; ekonomi, politika ve eğitim gibi birçok alanı önemli ölçüde değiştirmiştir. Küreselleşmenin bütünlük anlayışı; birçok ülkenin müfredatını, dil eğitimini ve eğitimdeki dil politikalarını kaçınılmaz olarak etkilemiştir (Cogo, 2012; Tollefson ve Tsui, 2014). İngilizcenin teknolojik ilerleme ve ekonomik büyüme ile arasındaki ilişki nedeniyle ebeveynler çocuklarının küçük yaşta İngilizce öğrenmeye başlamasını istemektedirler (Spolsky, 1998). Günümüzde İngilizce, daha iyi eğitim ve istihdam olanakları için ön koşul olarak görülmektedir (Sarıgül, 2018). Bu sebeple, Kachru'nun (1985) sınıflandırmasına göre *Genişleyen Çevrede* yer alan ülkelerde İngilizce eğitimine büyük öncelik verilmektedir.

Türkiye; 1923'te Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasının ardından modernleşmeye başlamış, yüzünü batıya çevirmiş ve "Genişleyen Çevredeki" ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Bu, Türkiye'nin yabancı dil öğretim politikasını etkilemiş, İngilizceyi eğitimin her kademesinde öne çıkarmıştır (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998; Kirkgöz, 2009). Günümüz Türkiye'sinde İngilizce, devlet okullarında 2. sınıftan, özel okullarda anaokulundan itibaren zorunlu yabancı dil olarak okutulmaktadır (Kirkgöz, 2007; Yaman, 2018).

1983 yılında TBMM tarafından çıkarılan bir yasanın ardından Türkiye'de özel okullar açılmaya başlanmıştır (Resmî Gazete, 23 Haziran 1985), bu da özel okulların tüm ülkede ve ağırlıklı olarak İstanbul'da çoğalmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır (Sarıgül, 2018). Bu artış, anadili İngilizce olan öğretmenlere (NEST'lere) yönelik bir talebe yol açmıştır. NEST'ler, daha etkili dil öğretmenleri olarak görülmenin yanında (Tatar, 2015), İngilizcenin uygun kullanımı konusunda otorite sayılmaları (Foley, 2007), doğal iletişim sağlamaları (Doğançay-Aktuna ve Kiziltepe, 2005) ve hem velileri hem de öğrencileri çekerek okul kayıt oranlarını artırmaları (Öztürk ve Atay, 2010) gibi nedenlerle özel okullarda işe alınmaya başlanmıştır.

Bu sebeplerden dolayı Türk eğitim sisteminde özel okullarda anadili İngilizce olan birçok öğretmen çalışmaktadır. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı Yabancıların Çalışma İzinleri (2011, 2018) raporlarına göre Türkiye'de eğitim sektöründe çalışan yabancı sayısı 2011 yılında 1.284 iken 2018 yılında 3.658'e ulaşmıştır. Görüldüğü gibi Türkiye'de çalışan NEST sayısı artmaktadır (Aydın, Toptaş, Güner-Demir ve Erdemli, 2019). Bu artış, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL) öğretmenlerinin sıklıkla işe alındığı ve aynı zamanda Türkiye'deki İngilizce eğitiminin değerli paydaşları olduğu anlamına gelmekte (Tatar, 2015), bu nedenle de deneyimlerinin araştırılması önem kazanmaktadır.

Yöntem

Çalışma, İstanbul'daki özel bir okulda İngilizce öğreten ve anadili İngilizce olan dört yabancı öğretmeni kapsamaktadır. Bu nitel vaka çalışmasında veri toplamak için iki bölümden oluşan anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanılmıştır. Açık uçlu anketin birinci bölümünde yer alan 12 soru, katılımcılar hakkında demografik bilgi toplamak amacıyla oluşturulmuştur. İkinci bölümde, NEST'lerin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrenciler ve onların dil öğrenme tercihlerinin yanı sıra Türkiye'deki İngilizce öğretim ortamı hakkında genel bilgi elde etmek için altı soru hazırlanmıştır (Örneğin, Türkiye'de okul yönetimini nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?). Veri derinliğini sağlamak için yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar, her bir katılımcı ile sanal ortamda bire bir olarak yapılmış ve kaydedilmiştir. Her görüşme yaklaşık 40 dakika sürmüştür.

Veri toplama araçlarının güvenilirliğini sağlamak için veri toplamadan önce anket ve görüşme soruları, alanında uzman iki akademisyene gönderilmiştir. Önerilerine dayanarak netliği artırmak için birkaç maddede revizyonlar yapıpı tekrar onay alınmasının ardından anketin ve görüşme sorularının son hâli veri toplamak için kullanılmıştır.

Kaydedilen görüşmeler yazıya dökülmüş, hem anket hem görüşme yanıtlarına tematik analiz uygulanmıştır (Braun ve Clarke, 2006). Bu amaçla öncelikle her katılımcıya ait veriler kodlanmış, ardından ortak temalar altında gruplandırılmıştır. Hakemler arası güvenilirliği sağlamak için yabancı dil öğretimi alanında doktora derecesine sahip ikinci bir kodlayıcı, aynı prosedürleri izleyerek verileri analiz etmiştir. Akabinde analizler karşılaştırıldığında yüksek oranda fikir birliği saptanmıştır.

Bulgular ve Sonuç

Bu çalışmanın amacı, anadili İngilizce olan öğretmenlerin Türkiye'deki özel bir okulun İngilizce eğitimi bağlamında Türk öğrencileri ve Türkiye'deki deneyimlerini nasıl algıladıklarını incelemektir. Bulgular, Chun (2013)'ün Kore bağlamında yaptığı çalışmaya benzer olarak NEST'lerin hepsinin Türkiye'de özel bir okulda çalışmak ve Türk öğrencilere İngilizce öğretmek konusunda genel olarak olumlu tutum ve duygular ifade ettiğini ancak iş memnuniyetlerini olumsuz etkileyen bazı durumlar da olduğunu göstermiştir. Çalışma koşullarındaki memnuniyetsizliklerin, iş doyumsuzluğuna yol açabileceği ve tükenmişlik ya da işten ayrılma ile sonuçlanabileceği nedenleriyle (Okeke ve Mtyuda, 2017), NEST'lerin gözlem ve deneyimlerinin öğrenci gelişimi ve eğitimin devamlılığı açısından detaylı araştırılması gerekir.

Analizler, özel okullarda İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin NEST'ler tarafından saygılı ve motivasyonu yüksek olarak görüldüğünü göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda NEST'ler, Türk öğrencilerin motivasyon düzeylerinin, İngilizce yeterlilikleri ve sınıf seviyeleri yükseldikçe ve ülke çapındaki sınavlarla yüzleştikçe azaldığını düşünmektedir. Chun (2013) çalışmasında benzer durum Kore bağlamı için belirtilmiştir. Bu gözlemler daha sonraki çalışmalarda doğrulandığı takdirde, araştırmacılar/öğretmenler, öğrencilerin yüksek motivasyon düzeyini ve olumlu tutumlarını üst sınıflara kadar sürdürmenin yollarını araştırabilirler.

Ayrıca, NEST'lerin, öğrencilerini oldukça rekabetçi ve bireysel çalışmayı tercih eden kişiler olarak gördükleri belirlenmiştir. Chin'in (2022) çalışmasındaki Koreli öğrencilerin aksine, Türk öğrencilerin grup çalışmalarını sevmedikleri düşünülmüştür. İletişime dayalı dersler iş birliği gerektirdiğinden (Saeed Zyngier, 2012), EFL sınıflarında yapılandırılmış iş birlikçi çalışmaların kullanılması önerilebilir. NEST'ler bu rekabet ortamıyla başa çıkmak için farklı yollar geliştirmiştir ancak bulgular, rekabeti azaltmak ve iş birliğini artırmak için daha fazla desteğe ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermektedir.

Kore bağlamında Chun'un (2013) ortaya koyduğu bulguların aksine, İngilizcenin akıcı kullanımı Türk öğrencilerin güçlü yanı olarak görülürken gramer, okuma ve yazma becerileri gelişmeye açık alanlar olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bir başka nokta da Türk öğrencilerin sonuç odaklı bakış açısına sahip oldukları ve bu nedenle öğrenme sürecinden ziyade notlara odaklandıklarıdır. Üstelik, öğrencilerin bu yaklaşımları, onları öğretmene bağımlı göstermekte ve inisiyatif almak, karar vermek ve yaratıcı olmak yerine, sınavları geçmek için ezberlenecek bilgilerin kendilerine sunulmasını tercih eder şekilde algılanmaktadır. NEST'ler, bu geleneksel beklentilerin Türkiye'deki sınava dayalı akademik sistemden kaynaklandığına ve öğrencilerin üst düzey düşünme becerilerini sınırladığına inanmaktadır. Bu bulgular Kim (2004), Chin (2002), Aydın ve diğerlerinin (2019) bulguları ile uyumludur. Türkiye'deki EFL öğrencileri için genellikle ezberci eğitime atıfta bulunulduğundan gelecekteki araştırmalar NEST'lerin bu tür geleneksel alışkanlıklarla nasıl başa çıktığını inceleyebilir.

NEST'ler, okullarındaki olumlu çalışma ortamını takdir ederken yönetim hakkında Aydın ve diğerlerinin (2019) bulgularına benzer olarak tutarsızlıklar, serbest ve öznellik içeren kararlardan bahsetmişlerdir. NEST'ler için bir başka zorluk Türkçeye hâkim olmamalarına rağmen yapılan toplantılarda ve mesajlarda Türkçe kullanılmasıdır. Bu bulgular, özel okul yönetimlerinin yabancı öğretmenleri daha etkin bir şekilde bünyesine katmasını ve onlara okulun eşit ve daimî üyeleri gibi davranması gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır. NEST'ler ayrıca sınıfların fazla kalabalık ve belirli etkinlikler için elverişsiz olduğunu düşünmektedir. Özel okullardaki kaynaklar düşünüldüğünde sınıfların dil öğrenimi için daha donanımlı olması ve tasarımlarda NEST'lerin ihtiyaçlarının dikkate alınması beklenmektedir.

NEST'ler, özel okullarda ebeveyn katılımını yönetime, akademik hayata ve öğrencilerin gelişimine bir müdahale olarak görmekte olup okul yönetimi kendilerine, velilerle çocukları hakkında açık iletişim kurma yetkisi vermediği için bazen hayal kırıklığına uğradıklarını belirtmişlerdir. NEST'ler için ebeveynler, öğretmenlere karşı 'her şeyi bilen' tavırları, yönetim ve eğitim konularına karışmaları ve çocuklarına sınır koyamamaları gibi nedenlerden dolayı sorun kaynağı olarak görülmektedir. Bu bulgular, Aydın ve diğerlerinin (2019) Türkiye'deki yabancı öğretmenlerle ilgili çalışmasıyla da uyumludur. NEST'ler, Türk meslektaşlarını yetkin ve destekleyici İngilizce öğretmenleri olarak gördüklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Ancak, Kesevan, Madzlan ve Kanapathy'nin (2018) bulgularının aksine onlarla ortak bir eğitim yaklaşımı içinde olmadıkları belirlenmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, EFL ülkelerindeki NEST'ler ve paydaşlar için oryantasyon programlarının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Yerel grup, NEST'lerin inançları ve beklentileri konusunda bilgilendirilebilir, NEST'lere ise göreve başlamadan önce Türk eğitim sistemi ve toplumun özellikleri ve beklentileri hakkında bilgiler sunulabilir. Bu, NEST'lerin sosyo-kültürel çerçeveye daha kolay uyum sağlamasını sağlayacak ve tüm tarafların birbirleriyle açık ve güvene dayalı bir ilişki kurmasına yardımcı olacaktır.

Behroozizad, Nambiar ve Amir'in (2014) vurguladığı gibi *"öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin dil öğrenimi hakkındaki görüşlerinin, öğretim ortamlarını oluşturmada bir etkisi olmaktadır"* (s. 219). Çalışmanın bulguları, Türkiye'de çalışmak isteyen NEST'leri bilgilendirecek ve bu bağlamda bir özel okulda çalışma konusunda onları aydınlatacaktır. Aynı zamanda, EFL ülkelerindeki öğrenciler, veliler, öğretmenler ve okul yöneticileri NEST'lerin algıları ve beklentilerinden haberdar olabileceklerdir. Ayrıca, EFL öğrencileri için yöntem, materyal ve aktivite geliştiren birimler çalışmanın verilerinden amaçları doğrultusunda faydalanacaklardır.

Introduction

Globalization has had a profound impact on various areas, including economy, politics, and education (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). The idea of unification entailed in globalization has also had inevitable effects on curricula, language learning, and language policies of many countries (Cogo, 2012; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). The association of English with technological and economic progress has meant that parents want their children to start learning the language from an early age (Spolsky, 1998). English is now perceived as a key to better education and job opportunities (Sarigül, 2018). Also, English language learning and teaching is consequently prioritized in the Expanding Circle, according to Kachru's (1985) classification in which three concentric circles were proposed to elucidate the spread of English in the world by taking the historical conditions, status, and functions of English worldwide into consideration, and the Expanding Circle advocates for using English as an international and a foreign language. Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Türkiye sought to modernize and aligned itself with the west and became one of the countries in the Expanding Circle. This influenced foreign language teaching policy in Türkiye, and the importance of English increased in all levels of education (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998; Kirkgöz, 2009). Nowadays in Turkish schools, English is taught as a compulsory foreign language, starting at Grade 2 in state schools and at kindergarten in private schools (Kirkgöz, 2007; Yaman, 2018).

Following a law enacted by parliament in 1983, private schools started to be established in Türkiye (Official Gazette, June 23, 1985), which resulted in a proliferation of private schools all over the country, predominantly in Istanbul (Sarigül, 2018). This increase led to a demand for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs). NESTs started to be recruited at private schools for a variety of reasons, ranging from being viewed as more effective language teachers (Tatar, 2015) to being an authority on the appropriate use of the English language (Foley, 2007) and from being a proper source of authentic communication (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005) to contributing to enrolment rates by attracting parents and students (Öztürk & Atay, 2010).

For these reasons, many native speakers work in private schools in the Turkish education system. According to the Ministry of Family, Work and Social Services reports of Work Permits for Foreigners (2011, 2018), the number of foreigners in the education sector in Türkiye was 1,284 in 2011 and reached 3,658 in 2018. This fast increase in the number of NESTs working in Türkiye (Aydın Toptaş, Güner-Demir & Erdemli, 2019), means that foreign teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are frequently hired and also valued stakeholders of English education in Türkiye (Tatar, 2015). Hence, the documentation of their experiences is needed.

Literature Review

Although there are multiple studies exploring views on NESTs in the world (e.g., Cheung, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Mahboob, 2004; Medgyes, 1992) and in Türkiye (e.g., Demir, 2011; Devrim & Bayyurt, 2010; Üstünlüoğlu, 2007), fewer studies have focused on NESTs' opinions. Despite their prominent role in English language teaching (ELT), there is scarcity of studies that explore NESTs' experiences in EFL countries. As can be seen in the contextually presented summaries below, studies on NESTs were predominantly conducted in Asian countries.

In 2002, Chin conducted a study with 18 NESTs to examine their perceptions on EFL learning and teaching at a university in Korea. The results showed that the NESTs believe in communicative language teaching and relate language learning to gaining skills by making mistakes. The problems encountered by NESTs included oversized mixed-ability classes, and learners with low levels of self-confidence and autonomy. They also reported that Korean learners favoured working in groups. In another study conducted in the same country, Korea, Kim (2004) investigated the difficulties six novice NESTs encountered while teaching at foreign language institutions of Korean universities. The interviews revealed that outside the classroom, culture shock, being looked upon as a foreigner, and the language barrier were the main problems. In the classroom, NESTs thought that Korean learners were not active enough and were unwilling to participate in communicative activities owing to their habits of rote memorization and teacher-centred teaching model. In the same context, interviewing three NESTs, Nam (2011) examined the perceptions on team teaching and the challenges faced by NESTs at two different secondary schools in Korea. The unfamiliar demands of the new educational context were challenging for them. Vaguely designed team-teaching combined with unstable teaching goals made setting goals and dealing with Korean classrooms pedagogically difficult for NESTs. Large-size and mixed-ability classrooms, exam-oriented culture, and classroom issues were additional challenges identified by the NESTs. Another related study was conducted by Lee (2011) with six experienced NESTs to explore conflicts arising from the differences between Korean and Canadian ways of thinking. The interviewees described Korean EFL learners as passive and shy, preferring rote-learning; they characterized English classes as teacher-centred and lacking creativity and challenge. In another study, Chun (2013) investigated five NESTs' experiences with Korean young learners. All the participants had positive attitudes towards young Korean learners and used different techniques to improve their language skills such as utilizing realia to take English out of coursebooks, using role-plays, and checking on students' interest levels and directing lessons accordingly. The NESTs viewed the learners as eager, engaged, and responsive and thought they

were better at written skills compared to oral skills. Not knowing the language of the learners, having mixed-ability groups, and classroom management issues were the challenges enlisted. The study revealed that although the NESTs did not agree with the teaching styles and discipline techniques of the NNESTs, they did not openly discuss these issues with them.

In different Asian countries with a similar inquiry, Tanaka (2008) interviewed three Canadians who worked as Assistant Language Teachers in state schools in Japan to find out what teaching English to Japanese students was like. The findings showed that NESTs' prior expectations about teaching in Japan led to some problems, such as having a less important role than expected, and not having attentive and eager students. Another study was conducted by Choklap (2015) to investigate the experiences and cultural adaptations of four NESTs in Thailand. The findings showed that NESTs considered most Thai learners unenthusiastic. In addition, their motivations for teaching English were related to appreciation, students, pay rates, and enjoyment of teaching, while being excluded from administration was viewed as limiting their career paths.

To provide a broader view into NESTs' experiences, Kung (2015) documents interviews with ten American NESTs teaching in non-English speaking countries, who encountered differences between Western cultures and the cultures they taught in. A number of factors affected the teaching practices of NESTs, including oversized classes with mixed-ability students, students' attitudes and views on learning English, governmental decisions, lack of resources and support from the administration and government, and the expectations of students and parents. The NESTs reported adjusting their teaching strategies and methodologies according to the cultural dimensions of the country they worked in and the expectations of the students.

In a comparative analysis, Kesevan, Madzlan, and Kanapathy (2018) conducted a study with three Malaysian English teachers, four native English-speaking teachers and 150 students taught by both groups of teachers. While the NESTs believed that a learner-centred teaching style is the best approach, NNESTs thought that other approaches could be utilized, accompanied by a learner-centred teaching style. Interaction in the classroom was seen as vital for each group of teachers, and wait time, types of questions, and feedback were vital elements, yet they differed in technicalities of teaching. Although the NESTs preferred giving students additional wait time and a chance to choose questions, and used referential questions, the NNESTs favoured less wait time allocation, individual nomination for questions and answers, and referential questions. Similarly, the NESTs preferred giving implicit feedback, whereas explicit feedback was favoured by the NNESTs.

In one of the rare studies in Türkiye on NESTs' views, Yılmaz (2014) collected data from 25 native English-speaking teaching assistants at different universities. The participants reported that Turkish students possessed a high aptitude for English, yet had low levels of motivation, and also lacked sufficient contextual factors to facilitate language learning. Another study in the Turkish context is by Aydın et al. (2019). It investigated the views of 25 expatriate teachers at private schools. Their findings showed that they considered the education system at private schools in Türkiye outmoded. They also believe that there are some problems with the assessment system. The teachers had positive relations with their administrators yet believed them to be inefficient in terms of management skills. Despite their high level of motivation, Turkish EFL students were considered to have a result-oriented attitude and a tendency for memorization. Although there was a friendly relationship between parents and teachers, the language barrier, as well as interference and the protective attitudes of parents, were criticized by the expatriate teachers.

The need for this study was demonstrated by an analysis of previous research on NESTs' perceptions. There is a dearth of study in the literature based on NESTs' perspectives in the context of EFL, despite the abundance of studies on perceptions in ELT. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no other research has been done specifically on NESTs' perspectives on teaching EFL at private schools in the Turkish context, except for Aydın et al.'s (2019) study, which focused on the opinions of foreign teachers at Turkish private schools. Given the fact that culture and context comprise the schema through which we understand reality (Vygotsky, 1986), NESTs' views are shaped in relation to the context of their current educational environment and their interactions in it. As NESTs have an important role and place at private schools in Türkiye, and shape the learning and teaching process, their views are significant and need to be studied. To contribute to the gap in the literature, this study was conducted to provide insights into their views on teaching EFL in Turkish private schools. The following research questions were asked:

1. What are NESTs' experiences of and views about Turkish EFL learners and their learning preferences?
2. What are NESTs' experiences of and views about the EFL teaching and learning context in Türkiye?

Method

Context and Participants

As case studies are employed to gather descriptive data by closely examining an occurrence within a certain group, organization, or circumstance, in this study, a qualitative case study design was used. The study was conducted at a prestigious private school in Istanbul. The school's students are exposed to English in extra-curricular activities, such as travelling abroad or watching English films at home, so their exposure to English is not restricted to formal language education provided at school.

Typical of high-ranking private schools in major cities of Türkiye, class sizes vary between 20-24, and the school employs both local and foreign EFL teachers. The number of English class hours and the distribution of them to NESTs and NNESTs vary according to grade levels as shown in Table 1. In Kindergarten, both NESTs and NNESTs teach English through Content-based Language Instruction. In primary school, at grades 1, 2, and 4 only NESTs teach English, whereas at grade 3 both NESTs and NNESTs are responsible for teaching English. Grade 5 is a preparation-year with an intense English program. In secondary school, in addition to content-based lessons, students take literature and grammar-focused lessons.

There are 14 NESTs teaching K-12 in this school. Eight of them work at primary and secondary levels, while four work at high school level, while two work at kindergarten. Regardless of their nationalities, all EFL teachers are required to use English for all communication purposes with their students. Except official tasks or paperwork that needs to be completed in Turkish, NESTs have the same responsibilities as NNESTs.

Table 1
Distribution of English Lesson Hours to Grade-Levels and Teachers

Levels	Grades	Total hours per week	Hours by NESTs	Hours by NNESTs
Kindergarten	Age 3	8	3	5
Kindergarten	Age 4	8	3	5
Kindergarten	Age 5	10	5	5
Primary	1	10	10	-
Primary	2	10	10	-
Primary	3	11	6	5
Primary	4	10	10	-
Secondary	5	16	9	7
Secondary	6	9	3	6
Secondary	7	9	3	6
Secondary	8	6	-	6

While the school was chosen on the basis of convenience sampling, the participants were selected through the purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 2013). NESTs of different nationalities, and with a minimum of one-year work experience were chosen. They were informed about the study, asked to participate, and sent the questionnaire via email upon their consent. As a result, four NESTs completed the questionnaire: one British, one Canadian, one American, and one South African. Two participants worked at primary level, one worked at both primary and secondary levels, and one worked only at secondary level. Their background information is shown in Table 2. Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality.

Mary (P1) went to Thailand and worked there for three months as an EFL teacher upon receiving her TEFL training. She said that there were many similarities between South African and Turkish lifestyles, so Türkiye was a good option for her to teach English and start a new life. She has worked at two different private schools here, teaching English to young learners. She defines herself as an introvert and a perfectionist, and someone open to professional development. She reported basic comprehension and communication skills in Turkish, which she used with her students for urgent needs.

Larry (P2) decided to teach English abroad and came to Türkiye because he had heard about the country from friends who had previously worked here, and the work benefits and easy adaptation to the culture were his reasons to stay. He has worked at a language school and a private school and gained 11 years of teaching experience at all levels. He has been teaching EFL to students in Grades 5 and 6 at his current school for three years. Although he says he is able to communicate easily using Turkish in his daily life, he reports limited writing ability. He explains that he does not inform his students of his language ability to prevent them to use Turkish with him.

Table 2
Background Information of the Participants

Participant	Age	Nationality	Qualifications	Experience in years	Experience in years in Türkiye
Mary (P1)	40	South Africa	BA in Language and Culture, TEFL	5	5
Larry (P2)	40	United States	BA in History, CELTA	11	11
Emily (P3)	53	Australia	BA in Education	34	24
Nancy (P4)	44	United Kingdom	BA in Language and Literature, TESOL	24	20

Emily (P3) graduated with a teaching degree and taught in Australia for two years. Then she went to Japan and worked in a high school for three years, and in a language school for three years. Afterwards, she went to England and taught in London for two and a half years in primary schools. While working in the UK, she looked for another job and had an interview with a school in Istanbul. She liked the offer, took the job, and has since been working at this school teaching at the primary levels. She describes her level of Turkish as basic.

Nancy (P4) completed a TESOL training. Prior to coming to Türkiye, she worked as an English teacher in China for two years, in Thailand for a year, and in England for a year. She says that she had heard pleasant things about Türkiye from her friends, so decided to come and work here. She assesses her oral language skills as sufficient to communicate in Turkish, however reported lower literacy abilities.

The first researcher of this study was a teacher who worked with the participants in the same context, which made a positive contribution to the data collection procedure in terms of voluntary participation and ensuring confidentiality.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to increase the reliability of the study findings, develop a thorough grasp of the research question, and validate the data collected, it is necessary to collect data using a range of sources and various data collection instruments (Patton, 1999; Yin, 1981). Also, in educational research, questionnaires are a commonly used data-gathering instrument as “the participants respond by writing their answers in their own words, open-ended questions can provide rich information” (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p.282)”. For this purpose, a questionnaire with open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews to clarify or expand on ideas or details were used. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended items in two parts. The 12 questions in the first part were formed to collect demographic information. In the second part, six questions were prepared to obtain general information about the NESTs' views on teaching English in the Turkish EFL context and on Turkish EFL learners (e.g., How would you evaluate school management in Türkiye?). To gain further insight into the NESTs' ideas and experiences and to ensure triangulation, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews included questions such as “What are your opinions about Turkish EFL students?”

To ensure trustworthiness, the questionnaire and the interview questions were sent to two academic experts prior to data collection. Based on their suggestions, revisions were made to increase clarity. The revisions were approved, and the final version was used for data collection.

Data Collection Process

NESTs were sent information about the study and consent forms via e-mail. Once they signed the consent forms, the questionnaires were e-mailed to them. The participants returned their responses within two weeks and were contacted to arrange interview appointments. The interviews were conducted by the first author, lasted for about 40 minutes with each NEST and were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. For the analysis of both questionnaire and interview responses, thematic analysis was implemented (Braun & Clarke, 2006), where data for each participant were initially coded, and then grouped under common themes. To ensure inter-rater reliability, a second coder, holding a PhD in ELT, analyzed the data following the same procedures. The analyses of the two coders were compared and yielded a

high rate of agreement of 90 %. Whenever a mismatch was detected, the coders discussed the issue to reach an agreement.

Ethical Issues

Permission for this research was obtained from the Marmara University Institute of Educational Sciences Research and Publication Ethical Board, prior to data collection.

Results

All four NESTs had a generally positive attitude towards working at a private school in Türkiye. Specific themes that emerged from their responses, reflecting their views about Turkish EFL learners and the setting are presented below under relevant research questions.

NESTs' Views on Turkish EFL Learners and Their Learning Preferences

The NESTs' answers revealed their opinions of learner characteristics, learning styles, attitudes towards English, and competence in English, all of which are presented and discussed below.

Views on Learners' Characteristics. A major positive characteristic was the NESTs' view of the EFL learners as respectful. As P1 comments: "They call you *Hocam* ('My teacher' or 'Sir') while addressing you, and you can see that there is a level of respect there". Another positive characteristic of Turkish EFL learners reported is having a good relationship with teachers. P2 expressed it as follows:

Kids have a really good rapport, and they ask you about things that Western kids wouldn't be so interested in. They know I have nine cats so they will ask me about that, and Turkish kids love to share things about their personal life, about what they did on the weekend or anything they have. A new pencil.

P3 noted that even though an authority-oriented relationship exists between Turkish teachers and students, students have a friendly relationship with their NESTs. In contrast, the NESTs described a lack of discipline during lessons. P1 complained that the same students who were respectful and helpful at break times acted differently during classes and were "talking amongst themselves or not doing a task that you've asked them to do". P2 expressed a similar problem:

I think the boundaries need to be set ... I think the kids feel more freedom with a foreign English teacher. I think they play up more with a foreign English teacher than they do with their class teacher because of the language barrier. But this was worse in the past.

The NESTs used similar adjectives while describing their Turkish EFL learners: "spoon-fed", "not responsible", and "dependent", which they related to the way the students had been brought up. P3 asserted that learners did not take responsibility, yet held the education system and parents accountable. She said: "we put everything on a plate and I think ... we actually put it in their mouths with a spoon".

In addition, from the point of the NESTs, Turkish EFL learners are seen as competitive. One participant said that Turkish learners participate more in activities that involve playing against each other, while another stated that she often made use of competitive activities with young learners as a way of maximizing participation and learning. P2 made the same point; however, as a reason for not using competitive activities:

I'm fearful of doing competitive activities because I know the outcome will not be good. When they don't win, they switch off. They don't try, they don't join in and if a kid is winning and then he loses a point, he argues about that point and refuses to take part...do not have the concept of fair play.

Insufficient use of critical and creative thinking was also mentioned by the NESTs. The participants pointed out that Turkish EFL learners at private schools are rather goal-oriented and focus on exam results more than the process of learning. P3 states that "They can do tests, they can choose, but anything that involves doing any kind of creative thinking, where they have to do it from beginning to end...".

Views on Learners' Learning Styles. According to the NESTs, EFL learners prefer conventional methods, where the teacher presents knowledge and students memorize it. As P1 explains: "... and then the only real reason that they're memorizing it is because they know that there's an exam where they just regurgitate everything that they've just learned on paper".

Another point noted by the NESTs is Turkish EFL learners' preference for individual work and unwillingness to do group work which they find demanding. The NESTs saw this as the main reason why group activities created problems, such as noise and disturbance. P2 attributed it to the educational system in Türkiye:

There's very little group work, although there's more than when I was first there ... I mean, now teachers are more willing to have the kids sit in groups. But still kids are working individually, and still the teachers are out at the front, making all the decisions.

All of the NESTs assert that Turkish learners prefer learning through games, movement, competition and entertainment. P3 commented on the willingness of students to play games, no matter how old they were:

They all want to have fun while learning. So, at grade four and five, they're definitely into games. Like every lesson I go into, doesn't matter, we played like two hours. Straight playing games with English, of course. The next lesson, they will still ask for games as well. They want to be intrigued. They want to have fun.

Views on Students' Attitudes Towards English. All the NESTs agreed that their students are generally eager and have a positive attitude to learning English. One participant said that Turkish kids are happy to be in their English classes, are not resistant to instruction, and take learning English seriously. P4 added:

Generally, they love it...I don't really have to struggle with most students, like 90% of students to motivate them. They know it's important, and the thing is, in private schools, generally, most students have seen it since primary school, nursery school. So, they know it, and they don't want to be very different from their friends. They want to be as good as them. So, not knowing English is not cool.

It was noted by the same participant that there are shy students who are afraid of making mistakes, but are still willing to attend English classes. The participants acknowledged that various factors influenced learners' motivation and attitude towards English. Among such factors, they listed exposure to English and family English background. As P1 noted:

Mostly the ones who have some English exposure are fantastic. Even if their English is terrible, they are more enthusiastic and not scared. The ones who had no English exposure and whose parents don't understand a single English word, they are much more timid, and it takes a lot longer to open up and start trusting, start speaking in an audible voice.

For the NESTs, an increase in age, as well as the exam-centered system in the upper grades, are factors that influence students' motivation for English. P2 observed that students did not maintain their positive attitude towards English after reaching a certain proficiency level:

The ones who are interested are the ones who maybe want to pursue, go to university or go and study abroad. A lot of the students, they just think, I'm going to stay here in Türkiye. I don't really know why I need to learn English once I've learned enough.

Views on Students' English Proficiency. All of the NESTs thought that Turkish EFL learners had high comprehension abilities in English and had good oral communication skills. P1 commented on this issue: "They generally do very well in terms of listening, they understand a lot. Speaking, they're generally good, although their accuracy isn't very good. They're generally fluent at the schools that I've taught at". P2 also commented on students' strengths and weaknesses in English, and stressed the need to focus on accuracy:

These students have been learning English from a young age ... Their level of English is, comparatively, high to students who've not had that kind of background of English ... So, they don't tend to pause and stop that often. But in terms of accuracy, I think they make a lot of mistakes. The things they say still have meaning, and they put meaning across well ... but they do make a lot of mistakes in terms of their accuracy, whether it be a choice of vocabulary, or just general sentence structure.

The NESTs also identified weaknesses in the students' literacy skills. As P4 stated:

... you have the kids that can speak like a native can speak, just like I am with you. But when it comes to reading and writing, you'll be shocked. You think that the student hardly knows any English whatsoever.

P1 described students' attitude to reading and writing, saying: "if they have to do writing or reading, any kind of long passage, they generally, switch off very quickly in these kinds of lessons". Additionally, P4 said that young learners had difficulties in pronunciation (such as "v" and "w" distinction), and P1 mentioned punctuation as deserving attention.

NESTs Views on the Teaching and Learning Context in Türkiye

The main themes that emerged from the NESTs' responses about the Turkish private school context had to do with management, parents, classroom environment, and NNEST teachers, which are presented below.

School Management. In general, the NESTs did not have any personal problems with the school administration. P2 gave credit to the management for their supportive attitude: "I never saw them standing in the way or stop anything to do with English learning that the kids were doing, that we wanted to do, that we planned". However, at a deeper level, all of the NESTs expressed discontent, as they thought the administration provided improper management. P1 explains:

I feel it is very well managed overall. However, I do often experience a lack of forethought. Decisions are made and systems are changed without thinking things all the way through and without brainstorming the reasons why it might go wrong. When things then do go wrong, it is the teachers who suffer from having to adapt on

short notice. And it could have been avoided if the teachers who have to carry out the decisions were consulted before going ahead.

The NESTs also described a lack of direct contact with the management, not being involved in the decision-making process, and not feeling fully understood, which made them feel powerless. P2 characterised this as follows:

Another foreigner said to me, why don't we all band together and say, we want this changed. And the first thing I said to her was they won't listen to us. We mean nothing to them, because I think as a foreigner, you are on the outside. You can always be replaced. I think you can always be replaced by another foreigner. You can always be replaced by a Turkish teacher. You would be cheaper; you would be less problematic.

Additionally, all of the NESTs complained that they could not understand important meetings and emails as they were held in Turkish. P4 said: "I struggle in school meetings and miss out on a lot of information. Reading official e-mails via Google Translate can be problematic".

Parents. The NESTs in general indicated an appreciation of the high socio-cultural background of the parents. For example, P4 made positive comments about parents:

I have had mostly positive experiences with the family members of my students. The majority of my students' parents have a tertiary education. I feel this contributes greatly to my students' curiosity and willingness to learn and be inspired to become citizens of the world.

At the same time, the NESTs felt the pressure of 'I pay, and it has to be my way' attitude of the parents. In other words, extensive parental intervention appeared to challenge NESTs. They criticized parents for their controlling and demanding position, and conveyed feelings of powerlessness. P1 explained it as:

Unfortunately, there are some parents, who believe that their child can do no wrong. So, they think that what might be the real issue is either the other students at school, the school itself, or even you as a teacher. So, and a lot of the time, rather than come to you directly with any issues, they might choose to go directly over your head and speak to your supervisor, your line manager, your team leader.

The participants were concerned about the fact that they could not speak directly to the parents about their kids. P3 stated how this made the job difficult:

We're always told not to be so direct but to put it in a nice way ... Because the moment you say something, you can tell from the parent that is not what they want to hear. So, you have to put it in a way that's more positive, or more vague, should I say? ... I think this is the most tiring part for me, where I can't speak my mind.

Classroom Environment. The NESTs thought that the classroom layout in private schools was suitable for general activities and had a satisfactory level of technology. However, when it came to specific requirements, they documented limitations. Classrooms were not very 'learner-friendly', especially for younger learners. P2's answer lists some shortcomings and offers suggestions:

I want the kids to sit on the floor because you have that physical closeness. They can all see what you've got in your hand, but who wants to sit on a dirty lino floor? ... I think the structure of the room, how there's nothing extra in the room, like there isn't a book corner for the kids to go to and read a book. There isn't a games corner for the kids to go to and play a game. And so there's no reward for a kid. You have these kids who finish early, and I think a nice reward would be to go to the book corner, go to the games corner, but it doesn't exist.

Despite the small class sizes, participants suggested student numbers should be between 12 and 20, to improve efficiency and reduce paperwork. P2 remarks:

Fewer is always better because there's more speaking time. There's less waiting time and I think that's where I lose my kids. When it's one child's turn to talk, I lose the others because they're waiting for their turn. So, I think the ideal number, when I think I was working in a language school, the ideal number is 12. It's always best to have an even number. You can pair them up.

NNEST Colleagues. The NESTs conveyed positive opinions about the local EFL teachers in their department. For the NESTs, the NNESTs were helpful and maintained good relationships with them. NNESTs were perceived as competent and well-qualified EFL teachers. P2 elaborated on this issue with a hint of differential treatment:

The Turkish English teachers I have worked with have always had a very good understanding of grammar and been competent in all four skills. I believe they teach the way they were taught as students. They are very thorough in the way they present material and successful at getting what they teach across to the students. I don't see Turkish English teachers as natural risk-takers, they tend to play it safe. I think this is due to the expectations that management have of Turkish English teachers being much higher than the expectation they place on foreigners who are there for their 'expertise of English'.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study presented the experiences of four NESTs in Türkiye and described how they perceive Turkish students within the EFL context of a private school. In terms of the research question related to Turkish EFL learners, the

results show that Turkish EFL learners are seen by their NESTs as respectful and motivated students, who are positive about learning English. At the same time, it is observed by the NESTs that the motivation level of Turkish EFL learners decreased as their English competence and grade level got higher, and as they faced hardships such as nation-wide exams. Once these observations are confirmed in further studies, researchers/educators can explore ways of maintaining the high motivation and positive attitudes of students into upper grades. The findings reveal that the NESTs also viewed Turkish EFL learners to mostly favour competitive and individual classroom activities. Unlike Korean learners in Chin (2002), the learners in this study were not perceived to like cooperative work. As communicative activities require collaboration (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012), the use of structured collaborative tasks in EFL classes is suggested. The NESTs of the study have developed different ways of dealing with competitiveness, but the findings indicate that they may need further support in reducing competition and increasing collaboration. Moreover, the NESTs stated that Turkish EFL learners are competent in comprehending English and fluent in their oral interactions. In contrast with their oral competency, they were deemed weak in written skills and accuracy, unlike Chun's (2013) study, where Korean EFL learners had better written skills. Another point raised in the NESTs' responses is that Turkish learners hold a product-oriented perspective, and focus more on scores than on the process of learning. Furthermore, the students' approach to learning led them to be viewed as teacher-dependent learners. For the NESTs, instead of taking initiative, making decisions, and being creative in the learning process, learners prefer to be presented with information, which they memorize to pass exams. The NESTs believe these traditional expectations are because of the exam-based academic system in Türkiye and limit students' thinking skills. These results are in line with the findings of Kim (2004) and Chin (2002) in the Korean context and Aydın et al. (2019) in the Turkish setting. Rote-learning is often cited to characterize EFL students, so future research can examine how NESTs cope with such conventional habits.

Regarding the research question related to NESTs' views about EFL teaching and learning context in Türkiye, the findings show that the NESTs expressed positive feelings, but also had various issues that affect their job satisfaction. Naturally, discontentment with work conditions leads to job dissatisfaction and might result in burn-out or quitting (Okke & Mtyuda, 2017). As teachers are important for the development of students and the continuity of education, the NESTs' specific observations and experiences need to be investigated, and implications must be drawn. The findings also show that the NESTs appreciated the positive work environment in their school. Nevertheless, they made comments about management, which involved inconsistencies, spontaneous decision-making, and subjectivity, coherent with Aydın et al. (2019). Another challenge for the NESTs was the use of Turkish in meetings and messages as they were not competent in Turkish. These findings suggest that private school administrations need to accommodate foreign teachers more efficiently and treat them as equal and permanent members of the school. This necessitates including NESTs in the decision-making process and in school activities. The NESTs also thought that classes were overpopulated, and inconvenient for certain activities. Considering the financial resources at private schools, classrooms can be better equipped for language learning, and NESTs can be consulted when designing classes. In relation to the views on the educational context in Türkiye, it can be understood that the NESTs viewed parental involvement in private schools as an interference in management, academic life, and students' development. They indicated that they sometimes felt frustrated because they were not authorized by the school administration to engage in open communication with parents. For the NESTs, parents seemed to be a source of stress, due to several other reasons; their 'know-it-all' attitude towards teachers, dominance in managerial and educational matters, and their failure to set boundaries for their kids. These findings are also in line with Aydın et al.'s (2019) study of expatriate teachers in Türkiye. The NESTs' opinions of their NNEST colleagues were positive as they viewed them as competent and supportive teachers. Unlike the findings of Kesevan et al. (2018), however, they did not convey a common approach to teaching with the NNESTs.

The overall findings of this study stress the importance of orientation programs in EFL countries for NESTs as well as local stakeholders. Locals can be guided through NESTs' beliefs and expectations. At the same time, NESTs can be provided with culturally related information on the Turkish education system as well as characteristics and expectations of locals before taking up their posts. This would enable NESTs to adapt to the social and cultural framework more easily and help all parties build an open and trusting relationship with each other. As Behroozizad, Nambiar, and Amir (2014) suggest, "views of teachers about learners' language learning have an effect on constructing their teaching environment" (p. 219). The findings of the present study may inform NESTs who intend to teach EFL in Türkiye and enlighten them about how it is to work at a private school in this setting. At the same time, students, parents, teachers, and school administrators in EFL countries can understand perceptions and expectations of NESTs. Furthermore, methods, materials, and activities designers for EFL students can find valuable information within the presented data.

This study embodies several limitations, too. First of all, it was conducted with a small sample. The detailed description of the setting and participants aimed to aid generalizability as the NESTs' thoughts and experiences may reflect those of NESTs in similar EFL countries. Yet, a larger sample may yield different results. Secondly, while this study investigated NESTs working in a private school, future projects can investigate NESTs working in other types of schools. In addition, a qualitative research design was used, yet other designs may present new

perspectives. Different data collection tools and techniques may also produce useful insights. Furthermore, this study is based on teachers' perceptions. Future research could explore the extent to which NESTs' perceptions correspond to their reality. Finally, the focus of this study was NESTs and their experiences. Research that explores local Turkish NNESTs' and nonlocal foreign NNESTs' experiences and opinions on the same issues would contribute to our understanding of the topic. The views of other stakeholders on the same issues may also be studied to obtain their perspectives and construct a holistic picture. Studies that analyze stakeholders' (i.e., students, parents, administrators, NESTs, local NNESTs, foreign NNESTs) views of each other would be especially helpful to build successful communication and collaboration between these parties and a fruitful EFL atmosphere for all.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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