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Native and non-native English teachers: secondary school students' preferences for their English teachers

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Abstract

This study explores the preferences of secondary school students studying at private schools with regard to their native and non-native English teachers. The reasons behind their preferences are also investigated in the study. In order to reveal their preferences, 680 students were surveyed through an attitude scale including a question about which group of English teachers they would prefer while learning English, followed by an open ended question seeking the reasons for their preferences. Additionally, six structured focus group interviews, for about 4, 5 hours in total, were held with 84 of them, and two English classes of students were observed both with two native English speaking teachers and two non-native English speaking teachers in a period of three months for 35 lesson hours. Descriptive statistics were run on SPSS to analyse the quantitative data and the qualitative data were analysed through the content analysis method. The results of the study indicated that these students had positive attitudes towards both their native English-speaking English teachers (NESTs) and their non-native English-speaking English teachers (NNESTs), so they mostly preferred to be taught by both groups of teachers. It was also revealed that these students mostly recognized their teachers' different strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, they mostly preferred their NESTs for the teaching of oral skills and vocabulary teaching, and they favoured their NNESTs mostly for grammar teaching and as they provided the use of L1 (Turkish) when necessary.

Keywords: native and nonnative English teachers, secondary school English classes, students' attitudes towards native and nonnative teachers, students' preferences.

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Introduction

Today, that English has established its position as a lingua franca of the world with its genuinely global status is a well-known fact (Crystal, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2007). And it is no surprise that non-native speakers (NNS) of it have far outnumbered its native speakers (NS) throughout the world (Crystal, 2003). That means most of the communication in English is carried out between NNSs for commercial, academic, and business-related purposes (Alptekin, 2002) and in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) environments instead of EFL, ESL, or English as a Native Language (ENL) ones (Jenkins, 2003). In addition to the overwhelming number of NNSs, the number of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) (around 80% of all English teachers) also surpasses the number of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in the world (Bolton, 2006). However, NS norms and standards still continue to suppress NNESTs' potentials and put them in an inferior position in comparison to NSs of English, which is still pampered by the "native speaker model" in applied linguistics (Mahboob, 2010). To Mahboob, the native speaker superiority has started to be questioned by some professionals in TESOL and some scholars in applied linguistics, though.

Turkey is one of the countries located in which Kachru (1985) would call the 'expanding circle'. Although ELT has a long history in Turkey, it is an agreed fact that it falls short to teach English to Turkish EFL learners adequately. Although English has already been acknowledged as an international or global language, and the 'native-speakerism' or 'native-speakerdom' has come under fire and the credibility of NESTs has been questioned by many scholars throughout the world, it could be suggested that Phillipson's (1992) 'native speaker fallacy' and the related notion that 'native speakers make the best/ideal teachers of English' still prevail in this Turkish context. Such a suggestion is based on a suspended project through which the Turkish government decided "to hire 40.000 native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to collaborate with the local non-native English teachers…in English as a Foreign Language…classes in Turkey" in order to improve the ELT standards and quality in the country (Coşkun, 2013, p. 1). The idea behind the project may signify possible conscious or subconscious negative perceptions towards NNESTs in general in Turkey.

Tatar and Yıldız (2010) found out that NESTs were favoured more than NNESTs by private school administrators in the hiring processes and that NNESTs cannot apply for some schools as teachers of English. In another study (Öztürk & Atay, 2010), it is indicated that private schools employ NESTs more frequently than NNESTs even if NESTs have fewer qualifications or less teaching experience with the purpose of attracting more "customers" for their schools, which would raise their enrollment rates. Such hiring practices may emerge from school administrators' assumption that parents and students favour NESTs more than NNESTs regardless of NESTs' teaching qualifications or experiences. Llurda (2005) states that students' preferences have influenced school administrators' hiring practices and led them prefer NS teachers over NNSs. However, it is not "logical to assume that hiring a native over a nonnative teacher is always the best administrative decision" because "NNESTs have a great deal to offer their students and may be as effective as or even more effective than some NESTs (Pasternak & Bailey 2004, p. 156.) Medgyes (1992) also hypothesises that "NESTs and NNESTs can be equally good teachers on their own terms" (p. 76), and he states that "…natives and non-natives stand an equal chance of achieving professional success" (p. 346).

Relatively, this study attempts to find out what the preferences of Turkish EFL secondary school students with regard to NS and NNS English teachers as well as the reasons for them.

In his discussion about NNESTs' advantages and disadvantages, Medgyes (1992) puts forward six positive sides of being a NNEST (p. 347). Namely, NNESTs are claimed to be good at 1) providing a good model for the language learners, 2) teaching language-learning strategies well to the students, 3) supplying information about the English language, 4) anticipating and preventing language difficulties of the students, 5) showing empathy in the learning processes of the students, and 6) benefitting from the mother tongue of the students. As for the disadvantages, the linguistic incompetences of NNESTs are specified as lack of proficiency in vocabulary, oral skills (fluency, pronunciation, and listening), grammar, and literacy skills (reading and writing). Based on the surveys conducted, while elaborating on whether NESTs or NNESTs are worth more, he infers that "NESTs and NNESTs are potentially effective teachers, because…their respective strengths and weaknesses balance each other out" (p. 76). Pasternak and Bailey (2004) discuss the strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs, and they conclude that NESTs and NNESTs both have some strengths as English teachers, but they may also have some deficits in their professionalism.

Another study dealing with students' attitudes to NESTs and NNESTs was of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005). In the study, students' preferences for either group of teachers were explored. The questionnaire used in the study asked about the students' opinions about NESTs and NNESTs' language skills, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, learning strategies, culture and civilisation, attitudes and assessment. They were also required to write their opinions freely about the pros and cons of having NESTs and NNESTs, and which one they would prefer as their teachers. It was revealed that the students favoured NESTs more as the educational level (that teachers teach) increases. This tendency was clear in the areas of grammar, listening, reading and strategy teaching. The preference for NNESTs was the most when grammar was considered, and that was only in primary level teaching. In general, for the most part, these EFL students showed a preference for NESTs over NNESTs. However, they preferred to be taught by both groups in an ideal situation. As for the pros and cons part of the survey, their responses were generally in line with the ones mentioned in Benke and Medgyes' (2005) study. This study aimed at revealing students' views of their teachers' classroom management skills and teaching related personal characteristics as well as how they perceived the potential advantages and disadvantages of both types of teacher The results of the study showed that NNS teachers were thought to be "more demanding, thorough and traditional in the classroom than their NS colleagues, who are more outgoing, casual and talkative" (p. 204). It was also indicated the students were aware of the fact that both groups of teachers are important in the classroom, and they are as complements to each other. About the advantages and disadvantages, the open-ended items revealed that NNESTs were the most advantageous in teaching grammatical issues while NESTs were so in teaching speaking. NNESTs were also perceived to be promoting language learning more effectively. In contrast, NESTs' classes were found to be more lively and colourful in general. NNESTs' tendency to use L1 in class was cited as a disadvantage. However, most of the lower level learners believed NESTs were difficult to understand and inefficient at explaining grammar. Besides, that they come from different cultures and language backgrounds added to the communication

breakdown between students and teachers, so the students thought.

Some studies on students' perceptions towards NESTs and NNESTs were carried out in the Turkish context, and their preferences were explored along with NESTs and NNESTs' perceived strengths and weaknesses. Such a study was Yılmaz's (2006) whose findings showed that these students regarded nationality important for English language teachers, so being a NS of the target language was referred to be important. Turkish NNESTs were viewed better at understanding students' language difficulties in comparison with NESTs. NESTs were regarded to teach English better than Turkish NNESTs, and they were found to inform the students more about the target culture and teach it better than Turkish NNESTs. As for their preferences of English language teachers in general, below is their ranking:

1- NESTs who can speak Turkish,
2- Turkish NNESTs who lived in inner-circle countries,
3- NESTs,
4- English language teachers with English language teaching diplomas,
5- Turkish NNESTs.

In her study, Üstünoğlu (2007) required private university students to evaluate their NESTs and NNESTs in terms of in-class teaching roles, in-class management roles, in-class communication skills, and individual qualities. The results of the study indicated that NNESTs were taught to demonstrate in-class teaching roles, like stimulating interest for the lesson, adjusting the level of subject content for the students, using educational tools appropriately, correcting errors efficiently, and checking students' achievements better than NESTs. Similarly, NNESTs were found to be better at in-class management roles than NESTs such as maintaining discipline in the classroom, being better prepared, promoting active participation in the lesson, and complying with lesson plans. As for in-class communication, NESTs were favoured more than NNESTs. They were found to be better at making lessons enjoyable, using body language, praising students, and treating students respectfully.

Although some studies in the Turkish context investigated the attitudes towards and perceptions of their NESTs and NNESTs (B. Demir, 2011; İnceçay & Atay, 2008; Şahin, 2005; Üstünoğlu, 2007; Y. Demir, 2012; Yılmaz, 2006), few explored students' preferences of these respective English teachers and the reasons behind them. So as to fill in this gap, the present study aims to find out which group of English teachers (NESTs or NNESTs) secondary students would prefer in learning English and what kind of strengths and weaknesses they attribute to them respectively as reasons on which these students base their preferences.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a mixed design was used, where both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to explore the preferences of students as to which English teacher they would want to be taught and the reasons for these preferences. The present study attempts to investigate the following research questions:

1- Which group of English teachers (NESTs or NNESTs) do these students prefer while learning English?

2- What are the reasons of students' preferences for native English speaking teachers?

3- What are the reasons of students' preferences for non-native English speaking teachers?

Research Context and Participants

This study took place in an EFL context, where English is taught and learned as a foreign language, Turkey, during the academic year of 2012. The participating students were from six different private schools, and the teachers were from one of these schools. The schools were all members of one foundation. So, the administrators and the teaching staff were supposed to be following the same or similar teaching and learning principles as the educational philosophy of the schools were alike. There was a common syllabus used for teaching English in these schools, and the materials were the same, apart from some extra handouts prepared optionally by individual teachers. The academic syllabi and curricula were planned according to the collaboration of Turkish (NNESTs in this context) and foreign (NESTs in this context) teachers. English was offered through two language courses - Language and Production, and Interaction and Literature. Language and Production was a course in which the focus was mostly on grammar and language use. This course was offered by only Turkish NNESTs in the schools. In Interaction and Literature course, the focus was mostly on interaction and communication, and speaking and vocabulary were given special attention by the teachers. This course was offered only by NESTs in the schools. Students were exposed to their NNESTs more frequently than their NESTs on a weekly-based schedule because the native English teachers were fewer in number.

In order to answer the research questions posed, students who were studying at private secondary schools participated in the study. These students were 6th, 7th and 8th graders, who were at pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of English. The students were from six different private schools. The students' ages ranged from 12 to 14. The number of female and male students was more or less the same in each class. All the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students, 680 in total, answered the question asking about their preferences, but 643 students answered the open-ended question which asked them to elaborate on the reasons of their preference. Apart from that, one group of students representing each class from each school, with an average number of 14 was interviewed. In total, 84 students (42 male, 42 female) were interviewed through 6 different interviews.

Additionally, in one of the schools, two NESTs and two NNESTs were observed to pinpoint possible different or similar real classroom practices of NESTs and NNESTs for the same classes. The purpose of the lesson observations was to identify the convergent and the divergent points between what was presented by the teachers while teaching and what was stated by the students as to their teachers and their teaching in both the open-ended question and the interviews. One 7th grade class and one 8th grade class from the same school were observed for in total of 35 lesson hours. These classes, as was true for all the classes in the study, had a pair of one native and one non-native teacher. The native teachers observed and the ones in all six schools were all from the inner-circle countries. Namely, the NESTs were British, American, Canadian, and Australian.

Data Collection Instruments

During the data collection process, a questionnaire was administered to the students, and interviews were held with some of them. Besides, class observations were carried out to provide the corroboration of the findings.

The Questionnaire

The primary data source in the data collection process was the questionnaires inquiring students' attitudes towards their English teachers. At the end of the questionnaire, a question was attached to investigate whether students would prefer only NESTs or only NNESTs, or both of them together while learning English. Following this item, an open-ended question was added to reveal the possible reasons of their choices.

Structured Focus-Group Interviews

In order to find out what the reasons for students' preferences were, structured focus-group interviews (see Appendix A) were held. The interviews lasted for about 40-45 minutes each. In total, the interviews were recorded for about 4.5 hours. The interview sessions were held with only one group from each school separately. They were adopted as a complement for the findings obtained from the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, which investigated the reasons for why they would choose a NEST, a NNEST, or both. The interview questions sought to find whether they would prefer a NEST or a NNEST in general, the advantages of having both teachers at the same time, which teacher is better at teaching grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, reading, speaking, strategies, culture, which teacher affects the students' attitudes towards learning English and towards English speaking countries in a positive way, which teacher assesses their language skills better, and why. All the interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed.

Lesson Observations

In addition to the tools mentioned above, another qualitative method, field notes were used. In order to obtain some information about possible differences and similarities in classroom practices of NESTs and NNESTs, which could affect students' preferences of the teachers, joint classes of two NESTs and two NNESTs were observed. The field notes were obtained through observation protocols. Descriptive notes and analytical notes were written down in the course of lesson observations with a special attention to students' observable feelings and opinions about these teachers and their behaviours towards them respectively. The observations lasted for about three months in order to have some prolonged engagement and thus some systematic data.

Data Analysis

The last item of the questionnaire investigating whether they would prefer NESTs, NNESTs, or both in English learning was analysed so as to find out the students' preference in general, and the percentage for this item was calculated. Afterwards, the open-ended "Why?" question attached to this item was analysed by using a qualitative method- the content analysis. While carrying out the content analysis, the data were first examined for code labelling through which many themes appeared. Next, a thematic framework including some main categories was developed, namely the linguistic competences of the teachers, their teaching styles, and the personal factors. After the initial coding, the data were examined for any additional categories, but no other themes or categories appeared. Where appropriate, some statistical analyses to present percentages were conducted.

In addition to this question, the interviews were examined to find out the reasons that shaped the students' preferences. As for the interviews, again the content analysis method was employed in order to find out the recurring themes for the reasons of students' preferences. The same procedures mentioned above were followed in the analysis of them. The themes were then classified under some categories. The percentages of some categories were calculated to give some statistical results, as well.

Finally, the field notes obtained through lesson observations were also examined by using the content analysis method through which the same procedures were followed.

Results

Students' preferences towards NESTs and NNESTs

The findings of the attitude scale indicated that these students had positive attitudes towards both their NESTs and NNESTs. The study also investigated which group of English teachers these students would prefer or whether they would prefer both of them while learning English, as a representation of their attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs. Attached to the attitude questionnaire was a question asking about their preferences. To be able to investigate the reasons of students' preferences, what their preferences were was first asked. The analysis of the question revealed that 60% of these private secondary school students would prefer to be taught both by NESTs and NNESTs at the same time in an ideal situation. That was actually the situation at their schools at the time of the study. Both teachers taught English to these students collaboratively. However, while 22% of the students would prefer only NNESTs as their English teachers, 18% of the students would prefer only NESTs as their English teachers. The result clearly indicates that the number of the students who prefer only NNESTs and only NESTs are more or less the same. That is, in general there is not a clear preference of one of group of teachers over another by the students.

Reasons for students' preferences

The reasons for the students' preferences were gathered from the open-ended question "Why?" that was added to the attitude scale. Additionally, the interviews were used to obtain the possible reasons of their choice. Finally, the field notes coming from the lesson observations were analysed to illustrate the reasons.

Apart from the students who preferred only NESTs or only NNESTs while learning English, the majority of the students (60%), who took the questionnaire, preferred to be taught by both teachers at the same time. Two categories emerged from the analyses of the data with regard to the reasons of students' preferences for both groups of teachers. The first one is that NESTs and NNESTs are complementary since they are perceived to be good at teaching different skills. The other one is that a distinction based on their nativeness is irrelevant because there is not a difference between these two groups. 35% of the students found no difference between the teachers, and they stated that the nativeness of the teachers was of no significance as the important thing is their teaching abilities. However, 65 % of the students stated that NESTs and NNESTs are complementary to each other as they teach different skills better. This result implies that the majority of the students attribute different teaching-related characteristics to NESTs and NNESTs. It also follows that students designate different

strengths and weaknesses for their English teachers, which can be inferred from what the rest of the students (40%) relate about why they would only prefer NESTs or NNESTs.

Three broad categories as linguistic competences, teaching styles, and personal factors emerged from the analyses of the interviews and the open-ended question as to the reasons for students' preferences.

Linguistic Competences

Six factors originated from the data referred by the students under the category of linguistic competences. Specifically, while the students commented on their NEST and NNESTs' linguistic competences, they referred to their oral skills (listening and speaking/ pronunciation-accent-fluency), literacy skills (reading and writing), grammar, vocabulary, culture, strategy, and their competence (or incompetence) in the students' native language.

Under the oral skills category, NESTs were always evaluated positively in speaking skills. Specifically, they were found to be better at pronunciation, fluency, and accent, which altogether enable them to be good at speaking in overall terms. The following examples from the open-ended questions emphasize why they consider NESTs to be good examples of the ideal English speaker more frequently than NNESTs.

> (NEST) Because I think speaking and fluency are very important. (Student#342-questionnaire)

> Because the pronunciation of the native teacher (NEST) is better. (Student#230-questionnaire)

> (NEST) …Her/ His accent and spoken language are better. (Student#587-
>
> questionnaire)

As NESTs are regarded good at speaking, students think this will eventually affect their listening skills in a positive way, though indirectly. That is, only listening to their NESTs may help them improve their listening skills. NESTs were also favoured because they are thought to aid the students in learning and practising how to listen for examinations (standard examinations for English). Again, all the comments were positive on this skill for NESTs. The examples chosen from the responses for the open-ended question illustrate this point.

> Because the foreign teacher (NEST) speaks like the people who speak in the listening excerpts in Cambridge exams. And because we get used to the accent of that foreign teacher, we can do the listening parts more easily. (Student#1-interviews)

> I can learn how to listen and speak from a native teacher (NEST) easily… (Student#270-questionnaire)

Another linguistic factor mentioned by the students was their teachers' vocabulary knowledge and its teaching. NESTs were favoured in this part as much as they were in the competence in oral skills. NESTs are perceived to be able to teach vocabulary better, and the students claim they can learn vocabulary more easily because NESTs are the native speakers of the target language and because they focus more on vocabulary teaching through more activities. The examples below illustrate this point:

> I think foreign teachers (NESTs) know more vocabulary as they have lived there (in English-speaking countries). Because our Turkish teachers generally teach the vocabulary that they study in the books. As they have broader knowledge in this sense (NESTs), I think our foreign teachers are more successful in teaching the subject matter. (Student#9-interviews)

> I think in vocabulary…it is not like that with the foreign teacher (NEST). She/ he even explains every word in detail by giving sample sentences and like saying what kind of a word that is. By this means, our vocabulary knowledge broadens, and we
>
> learn more things. (Student#8-interviews)

As part of linguistic competences, the knowledge and the teaching of grammar by the teachers were also stated by the students. While literally no students mentioned how good NNESTs are at English grammar, NNESTs were overwhelmingly favoured in grammar teaching by these students. In fact, the grammar category in the linguistic competences was the one in which the students made the most positive comments about NNESTs. The reason of this preference is mostly because NNESTs can help them more by using their mother tongue while explaining, or because students themselves benefit from their L1 while asking questions about the rules, which would eventually help them learn grammar better or understand the rules more. Other than these, NNESTs are claimed to use L1 in teaching grammar with a different purpose, too. NNESTs have the opportunity to use students' native language as a base for comparative teaching of the grammar, in which NESTs fall short, and this may aid their understanding. The examples below from the interviews make these points clearer:

> Because we can ask a Turkish teacher about the structures or the things we don't understand, but it is difficult for us to ask about the same things to a foreign teacher (NEST), especially if there is a rule. And we may not understand completely with a foreign teacher. However, when we don't understand something, we can ask a Turkish teacher and learn better. I think in terms of grammar, the Turkish teacher is better. (Student#28-interviews)

> I think we can learn better from a Turkish teacher because a Turkish teacher can also teach by talking about the Turkish grammar at the same time. And she/ he can lower the level according to our understading. Maybe foreign teachers (NESTs) teach

differently in their own countries, and the students there understand in a different way. Their understanding and our understanding may be different from each other. (Student#31- interviews)

NNESTs' past experiences as language learners were also mentioned as another reason for the students' preference of them as teachers of grammar. The fact that NNESTs have some kind of awareness in terms of grammar as it was learned, not acquired like NESTs is also acknowledged by the students who think that this awareness makes NNESTs better at grammar teaching in an in depth way.

The foreign teacher (NEST) does not give importance to grammar as she/ he has been learning it since her/ his childhood. However, a Turkish teacher can teach us the grammar in a detailed way as she/ he learnt English later in her/ his life.

(Student#24interviews)

Teachers' competence or lack of competence in the students' native language (Turkish, in this context) is the last category of the linguistic competences. The students prefer NNESTs over NESTs overwhelmingly as they are competent in L1 of the students. For some students', NESTs' inability is an obstacle for students' understanding the lessons, especially vocabulary, grammar, and reading, and for communication between the teacher and the student. NNESTs' are mostly favoured because the mutual use of L1 facilitates the students' understanding and learning, especially in vocabulary, grammar, and reading. Related to this issue, the following comments of two students can be given:

When we do it with the Turkish teacher, we can ask about the words that we cannot understand, but when it is a foreign teacher (NEST), we cannot ask; we have difficulty. (Student#28-interviews)

I think a foreing teacher (NEST) is more disadvantageous in grammar because a Turkish teacher can provide its Turkish when you don't understand. However, when you ask a foreign teacher (in Turkish), I just don't understand as I cannot get an answer. (Student#21-interviews)

…in sentences and paragraphs, and in reading passages, when we sometimes have some problems, the Turkish teacher needs to explain it in our native language. Otherwise, we can't understand however much it is explained in English. You know, when it is explained in our native language (Turkish), we get it better. (Student#16-interviews)

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the study was to find out the students' preferences as to which group of English teachers they would like to be taught along with the reasons of their preferences. In order to obtain data, the students were asked to write about the reasons of why they would

prefer NESTs, NNESTs, or both while learning English. Structured focus-group interviews were held, and lesson observations were carried out to triangulate the results.

It was revealed that most of the students (60%) preferred to be taught both by their NESTs and NNESTs because the majority of these students (65%) thought that their teachers were complementary to each other as they were good at different skills. This result entails the fact that NESTs and NNESTs are viewed to have their own strengths and weaknesses based on nativeness or nonnativeness. While NESTs were mostly preferred for their vocabulary and oral skills teaching, NNESTs were mostly favored because they were perceived to be good at grammar teaching and because they share the L1 of the students, which they benefit a lot while learning English.

Although it was shown in a study (Butler, 2007) that teachers' accented English did not affect the students' comprehension negatively and thus performance levels, these students are still in favour of native accents. This may be due to the students' "stereotypical beliefs and assumptions about the supremacy of native teachers" in speaking skills (Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002, p. 64) because "[w]e usually learn to value what we see valued and to undermine what we see undermined" (Thomas, 1999, p. 8). For the teaching of listening skill, NESTs were also favoured more especially because they thought their teachers' speaking to them would naturally improve their listening skills indirectly. Besides, their helping them practice for listening exams also makes them more preferable. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) suggest that "some NNEST's fluency (e.g., in listening and speaking) may be far less developed than their accuracy (e.g., in grammar and writing)" because of the scarcity or lack of input (exposure to target language speech) or interaction (with i.e. NESTs) (p. 157). This may be a major reason for why NNESTs were not preferred as much by these students.

As for vocabulary and its teaching, in this study, NESTs were preferred over NNESTs. This is because students are aware that NESTs normally and naturally have a bigger lexicon as they are the native speakers of English. So, they think that they can teach them vocabulary better than NNESTs. As another reason for this result, in the interviews, the students stated that they learn vocabulary with NESTs more and better because the course book used in their lessons includes more reading passages with a lot more vocabulary items to be learned. Even, one student said that "if that book were used in our Turkish teacher's lessons, we could learn (vocabulary) better from them" (Student#40-interviews).

When it comes to grammar teaching, NNESTs were preferred far more than their non-native counterparts. As Pasternak and Bailey (2004) point out, NNESTs are thought to have better declarative knowledge about the target language, which gives them an awareness of how language works, and thus they are inclined to explain grammar rules and teach them better than NESTs.

The qualitative data also revealed that NNESTs were preferred over NESTs because of their competence in L1 of the students, Turkish, which made them more understandable while teaching (i. e. vocabulary, grammar, reading). It is interesting to find out that students in other EFL studies did not mention the L1 use of teachers as an advantage as much (except for Yılmaz, 2006; İnceçay & Atay, 2008) although it is proved to be a useful and a necessary tool while teaching a foreign language (see Harbord, 1992; Forman, 2010). NNESTs

themselves regard it as an advantage as in the studies of Tang (1997), Tatar and Yıldız (2010), and Arva and Medgyes (2000) although in practice (especially if they are observed) they avoid using the L1 of students as a result of the pressure of classical language acquisition theories. Although the students in this study regarded this L1 use of NNESTs mostly as an advantage, some students thought it could slow down their progress in English, which led them to prefer NESTs over NNESTs.

The quantitative analyses of the questionnaire indicated that most of these secondary school students preferred to be taught by both NESTs and NNESTs at the same time (not team-teaching, though), which is the actual practice in their schools today. Besides, the analyses of the qualitative data revealed that from the viewpoints of the students both NESTs and NNESTs serve equally useful purposes in their own terms; i. e. NESTs, better language models versus NNESTs, better language learner models (as cited in Braine, 2004, p. 21). Based on these results, it could humbly be suggested that NESTs should be included in the teaching of English in this EFL context as they are thought to have positive effects on the students' English learning. NESTs and NNESTs collaboration in EFL teaching has been indicated to be effective for especially students (i.e. in Hong Kong) (Careless, 2006). And provided that NESTs are also experienced ELT teachers, students from any levels, especially primary school levels, would benefit a lot from such a practice. So, "in an ideal school, there should be a good balance of NESTs and non-NESTs, who complement each other in their strengths and weaknesses" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 349).

For school administrators or teacher educators and those in charge of recruitment procedures, the results of this study also imply that instead of a 'either/ or discourse' (i.e. NEST or NNEST), a 'both/and discourse' (i.e. NEST and NNEST) should be adopted, which would enable cooperation and collaboration, which in turn "foster more educationally, contextually, and socially appropriate English language learning opportunities" for students (as cited in Selvi, 2011, p. 188). Moreover, beside the perceived relative strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs, they should also consider the strengths and weaknesses of each individual teacher or teacher candidate regardless of their nationality in their programs. As a result, they should allocate each teacher to different skills instead of the 'traditional' practice, NESTs for oral skills; NNESTs for grammar. Thus, the students could benefit from their teachers' potentials to the fullest extent, instead of the current practice, which underestimates their capacity.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1- In general, would you prefer a native or a non-native speaker of English as a teacher? Why?

2- In general, if you could choose, would you prefer to have both a native and a non-native speaker of English as a teacher? Why?

3- Is a native or a non-native English teacher better at explaining grammar? Why do you think so?

4- In terms of vocabulary, would you learn more with a native or a non-native teacher? Why do you think so?

5- Would your pronunciation be better with a native or a non-native teacher? Why do you think so?

6- Would your listening be better with a native or a non-native teacher? Why do you think so?

7- Would your reading skills be better with a native or a non-native teacher? Why do you think so?

8- Would you speak more fluently if you had a non-native teacher? Why/ why not?

9- Would a native speaker give you more strategies/ ideas to learn better? Why/ why not?

10- Would you learn more about English speaking countries with a non-native speaker? Why/ why not?

11- Would you have more positive attitudes towards English speaking countries and their speakers if you had a native teacher? Why/ why not?

12- Would you have more positive attitudes towards the learning of English if you had a native teacher? Why/ why not?

13- Would a non-native teacher be better than a native speaker in terms of assessing the following:

- your listening comprehension?

- your reading comprehension?

- your speaking?

- your writing?

- your pronunciation?

- your knowledge of grammar?

Why do you think so?

*Adapted from Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005.