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Preservice ELT Teachers' Native Non-Native Language Teacher Perception[1]

Abstract

Objectives

This study examines prospective ELT teachers' perceptions of native and non-native language teachers regarding the definition of NEST and NNEST, overall learning with NETSs and NNESTs, perceived weakness and strengths of NESTs and NNESTs and classroom behaviour and responsibility of NESTs and NNESTs .

Material and methods

The data will be collected through Likert scale questionnaire which was developed by Hadla (2013) and are going to be administered to ELT students studying at Aksaray University. The collected data will be subjected to descriptive analysis such as percentages, frequencies and statistically significant difference will be tested between the groups.

Results

This research provides valuable insights into pre-service ELT teachers' perceptions on NESTs and NNESTS. Although the pre-service ELT teachers do not have a clear mind on the definition of NEST, it is important to note that most of them do not take the colour of skin as an indicator of it. Growing up in an English-speaking

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country and being raised with native speaking parents are, on the other hand, among the qualities of NESTs according to the participants. The findings also indicate that the participants that are prospective NNESTs themselves link being NEST with better development of speaking (fluency and pronunciation) and listening skill while they are not sure if it also brings better writing and reading abilities or more knowledge on the grammar and vocabulary.

Conclusions

The issue of NEST and NNEST perceptions differ on perceivers' being learner or teacher and especially in Turkish context the perceptions might be standing as an obstacle in front of the system preventing it from successful language teaching. Therefore, important changes in language teacher education that helps to develop self-perceptions of NNESTs are required.

Keywords: *perception, preservice, ELT, teacher, nest, nnest.*

Introduction

With the globalization of the world, English has come to be used as the lingua franca as a result of the need for intercultural and international communication in different fields including economy, trade, education and so on (Seidlhofer, 2001). In this respect, the number of English language users as a second or foreign language around the world today what Kachru (1985) called as "outer circle" and "expanding circle" countries is far more than the native users of it. Similarly, the number of non-native English language teachers (NNEST) teaching around the globe is much higher than native English language teachers (NEST) who claim that they know English best and teach better by nature. The emerging dispute was further intensified by the employment criteria of many English language teaching institutions and English language textbook publishing companies which place greater value on NESTS and infamize NNESTS consciously or unconsciously by doing so. Furthermore, the studies in literature contributed to the superiority of NESTs over NNESTs until 1990's by providing findings supporting it and basing their claims on Chomsky's well known linguistic theory which states that native speakers are the only reliable source of linguistic data (as cited in Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Although the dispute caused a discrimination against NNESTs, NEST and NNEST distinction has been a hotly debated issue among scholars because of

the perception differences. Considering this controversy, this study examines prospective ELT teachers' perceptions of native and non-native language teachers regarding the definition of NEST and NNEST, overall learning with NETSs and NNESTs, perceived weakness and strengths of NESTs and NNESTs and classroom behaviour and responsibility of NESTs and NNESTs.

Literature Review

A considerable number of researches have been conducted on the perception of NESTs and NNESTs by students, teachers and educators.

Cheung (2002) conducted a study with the university students in Hong Kong in order to investigate their perception of NESTs and NNESTs in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. It was interesting to see that participating students appreciated professional skills such as motivating students much more than language skills. The results also presented that participants associated NESTs with language proficiency, fluency and cultural knowledge whereas NNESTs are appreciated with building empathy and friendship with students, common cultural and ethnic background and strict expectations.

In a similar vein, Mahboob (2004) carried out a qualitative research based on a grounded approach with 37 students enrolled in an Intensive English Program whom were asked to write an essay on a given topic about NESTs and NNESTs. The study revealed that while NESTs are seen as good at teaching oral skills, NNESTs were considered better in teaching literacy skills and grammar. Participating students also stated that NNESTs were more satisfactory in anticipating and explaining concepts because their own language learning experience.

Medgyes (1994) wrote a full length book entitled *The Non-Native Teacher*" on the basis of his extensive study with 325 participant teachers from eleven countries through the use of three surveys as research instrument. In fact, Medgyes carried out the research in order to validate the following assumptions:

1) NESTs and non-NESTs differ in terms of their language proficiency;
2) they differ in terms of their teaching behaviour;
3) the discrepancy in language proficiency accounts for most of the differences found in their teaching behaviour;
4) they can be equally good teachers in their own terms.

The findings revealed a considerable number of perceived differences in teaching behaviour between NESTs and NNESTs which could be categorized under four headings. In terms of use of English, NESTs perceived themselves as speaking real and better English more confidently while NNESTs saw themselves as speaking poorer bookish English less confidently. With regard to general attitude, NESTs considered themselves as adopting a more flexible approach and be more innovative and less empathetic while NNESTs preferred to adopt more guided approach and be more cautious and empathetic. In the sense of attitude to teaching the language, NESTs focus on fluency, meaning, language in use and oral skills. Also, NESTs were reported to prefer free activities, teach items in context, favour group and pair works and tolerate errors. On the contrary, NNESTs were reported as focusing on accuracy, form, grammar rules and printed word. Additionally, NNEST preferred to use controlled activities, favour frontal work, teach items in isolation and correct or punish errors. With respect to attitudes to teaching culture, NESTs were defined with the ability of having a rich repertoire of cultural information and supplying more cultural information while NNESTs were characterized as supplying less cultural information (as cited in Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

In Turkish educational context Çakır and Demir (2013) conducted a quantitative study with the participation of 96 Turkish university students. On the basis of the collected data analysis, it was observed that NESTs were considered to teach speaking, listening, pronunciation and vocabulary better while NNESTs were perceived as having better command of grammatical rules and more skilful in teaching grammar and building communication with the students. In this respect, the results of the study presented correlating findings with the existing studies in relevant literature (Medyges, 1992; Barrat &Kontra, 2000; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Mahboob, 2003; Benke & Medyges, 2005; Moussou, 2006).

Within this perspective, the present study aims to examine prospective English language teachers' perception of native and non-native language teacher. In order to achieve this purpose the following research questions were addressed:
1. What are students' perceptions of the definition of NESTs?
2. How do students perceive overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs?

3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs?
4. How do students perceive NESTs and NNESTs' classroom behaviour and responsibility?

Method

As the aim of this research is to examine pre-service ELT teachers' perceptions on NESTs and NNESTs through their answers to a scale, the research employs quantitative design and survey method that is generally used to measure or evaluate the general characteristics of a topic, universe or program (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Sample and Universe

The research was conducted at Aksaray University. The target group was pre-service ELT teachers, and researchers tried to reach the maximum number of sample through convenient sampling that aims selecting the participants from the students who are conveniently available to participate in the study. The total number of the pre-service ELT teachers was about 200 and a total of 139 scales that can be accepted as sufficient for 95% confidence level in random sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 104) were collected.

Table 1. **Demographics of the Participants**

Grade	N	%
Prep	41	29.5
Freshman	33	23.7
Sophomore	24	17.3
Junior	15	10.8
Senior	26	18.7
Total	139	100

Among the total 139 participants, there were 41 prep (29,5%), 33 freshman (23,7%), 24 sophomore (17,3%), 15 junior (10,8%) and 26 senior (18,7%) level pre-service teachers.

Instrument

The data was collected through Native-Nonnative Teacher Perception Scale that was developed by Hadla (2013). Hadla explains that the scale items were borrowed and modified from previously used questionnaires. The 30 items presented on a Likert type of a 5-point scale lie under four sub-dimensions, namely Perceptions about the definition of the labels NESTs and NNESTs, Overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs, Perceived strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs and Classroom Behaviour and responsibility.

Findings

This section provides the findings given separately for the each research question. The first research question examines the preservice ELT teachers' perceptions of the definition of the NESTs.

Table 2. **Perceptions of the Definition of NESTs**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
1. In my opinion, a teacher is considered a native speaker of English if he or she has a white colour of skin.	f	82	26	16	6	9	1,81	Disagree
	%	59	18,7	11,5	4,3	6,5		
2. I can categorize a teacher as a native or non-native English speaker of English based on his or her accent.	f	14	24	28	56	17	3,27	Undec
	%	10,1	17,3	20,1	40,3	12		
3. In my opinion, a teacher is considered a native speaker of English if he or she was born in an English speaking country.	f	17	30	28	36	28	3,2	Undec
	%	12,2	21,6	20,1	25,9	20,1		
4. In my opinion, a teacher is considered a native speaker of English if he or she grew up in an English speaking country.	f	9	23	17	55	35	3,6	Agree
	%	6,5	16,5	12,2	39,6	25,2		
5. In my opinion, a teacher is considered a native speaker of English if he or she can produce spontaneous discourse in English.	f	6	29	51	29	24	3,26	Undec
	%	4,3	20,9	36,7	20,9	17,3		
6. In my opinion, a teacher is considered a native speaker of English if he or she was raised with native speaking parents.	f	5	26	26	46	36	3,59	Agree
	%	3,6	18,7	18,7	33,1	25,9		

When preservice ELT teachers' perceptions of the definition of NESTs that is the first sub-dimension of the scale were examined (Table-2), the findings reveal that they were undecided if accent (X=3,27), being born in an English-speaking country (X=3,2) and being able to produce spontaneous discourse in English (X=3,26) are a part of the definition of NESTs. The participants agreed that growing up in an English-speaking country (X=3, 6) and being raised by native speaking parents (X=3,59) make someone NEST. The only item that participants disagreed is about one's being considered as a NEST if s/he has a white colour of skin (X=1,81).

Table 3. **Overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
7. A student will develop better grammatical skills when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	20	31	30	35	23	3,07	Undec
	%	14,4	22,3	21,6	25,2	16,5		
8. A student will learn more vocabulary words when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by NNEST.	f	10	29	31	39	30	3,36	Undec
	%	7,2	20,9	22,3	28,1	21,6		
9. A student's pronunciation will improve better when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	9	15	21	31	63	3,89	Agree
	%	6,5	10,8	15,1	22,3	45,3		
10. A student's listening skills will improve better when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	15	17	21	43	43	3,59	Agree
	%	10,8	12,2	15,1	30,9	30,9		
11. A student will develop better reading skills when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	13	37	35	32	22	3,09	Undec
	%	9,4	26,6	25,2	23	15,8		

The second sub-dimension is related to the perceptions on overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs and participants were undecided if a NEST helps the students to develop better grammatical skills (X=3,07) or

reading skills (X=3,09) and to learn more vocabulary words (X=3,36) than a NNEST. However, preservice ELT teachers agreed that being taught by a NEST will improve students' pronunciation (X=3,89) and listening skills (X=3,59) more.

Table 3. **Overall learning with NESTs and NNESTs (cont.)**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
12. A student will become a more fluent speaker when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	9	16	22	40	52	3,79	Agree
	%	6,5	11,5	15,8	28,8	37,4		
12. A student will become a better writer of English when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by NNEST.	f	13	42	43	29	12	2,89	Undec
	%	9,4	30,2	30,9	20,9	8,6		
14. A student will learn better about different cultures when he or she is taught by a NEST than when taught by a NNEST.	f	9	20	24	46	40	3,63	Agree
	%	6,5	14,4	17,3	33,1	28,8		
15. In my opinion, native English speakers make the best English language teachers.	f	28	37	34	23	17	2,74	Undec
	%	20,1	26,6	24,5	16,5	12,2		
16. In my opinion, a student can learn English just as well from a NEST as he or she can from a NNEST.	f	11	19	41	50	18	3,32	Undec
	%	7,9	13,7	29,5	36	12,9		

The participants were undecided for the item questioning whether being taught by a NEST makes students better writers compared to those who are taught by a NNEST (X=2,89). The result was again undecided for the items asking if native English speakers make the best language teachers (X=2,74) and comparing students' learning English by a NEST and NNEST in terms of success (X=3,32). The pre-service ELT teachers, on the other hand, agreed that being taught by a NEST would make a student a more fluent speaker (X=3,79) and learn better about different cultures (X=3,63) when compared to being taught by a NNEST.

Table 4. **Strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
17. A NEST helps his/her students develop more positive attitudes towards learning English than a NNEST.	f	13	27	47	35	17	3,12	Undec
	%	9,4	19,4	33,8	25,2	12,2		
18. A NNEST who speaks the students' first language is more capable of predicting students' difficulties in learning the English language.	f	9	12	37	56	25	3,55	Agree
	%	6,5	8,6	26,6	40,3	18		
18. A NNEST who speaks the students' first language shows more empathy to the needs of his or her students in learning the English language.	f	3	18	34	45	39	3,71	Agree
	%	2,2	12,9	24,5	32,4	28,1		
20. A NNEST provides a better learner model to his/her students than a NEST does.	f	10	29	49	33	18	3,14	Undec
	%	7,2	20,9	35,3	23,7	12,9		
21. The NEST has higher self-confidence using the English language than the NNEST.	f	14	20	26	37	42	3,53	Agree
	%	10,1	14,4	18,7	26,6	30,2		

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of the NESTs and NNESTs, the participants agreed that a NNEST having students' first language is more capable of predicting students' difficulties (X=3,55) and shows more empathy to the needs of his or her students (X=3,71) in learning the English language. According to participants, the NEST has higher self-confidence using the English language (X=3,53). On the other hand, preservice ELT teachers were undecided if a NEST is more helpful to his/her students in developing more positive attitudes towards learning English than a NNEST (X=3,12) and if a NNEST stands as a better model for learning to his/her students than a NEST (X=3,14).

Table 5. **Strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs (cont.)**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
22. The accent of the NEST makes him/her a better English language teacher than the NNEST.	f	21	27	19	45	27	3,22	Undec
	%	15,1	19,4	13,7	32,4	19,4		
23. The NNEST who speaks the students' first language (L1) is more knowledge-able of the students' culture than NEST.	f	12	19	47	32	29	3,34	Undec
	%	8,6	13,7	33,8	23	20,9		
24. The NEST is more competent in using the English language than a NNEST.	f	7	23	44	45	20	3,35	Undec
	%	5	16,5	31,7	32,4	14,4		
25. A NNEST can provide students with more information about the English lan-guage.	f	11	36	50	34	8	2,94	Undec
	%	7,9	25,9	36	24,5	5,8		

The participants were undecided whether the accent of the NEST makes him/her a better English language teacher than the NNEST (X=3,22) and if the NEST is more competent in using the English language (X=3,35). In terms of the strengths of the NNEST, participants were undecided if being able to speak students' first language makes the NNEST more knowledgeable of their culture compared to NEST (X=3,34) and whether a NNEST can provide students with more information on the English language (X=2,94).

Table 6. **NESTs and NNESTs' Classroom Behaviour and Responsibility**

Questionnaire Items		1	2	3	4	5	X	Result
26. A NEST prepares his or her lesson more carefully than a NNEST does.	f	25	38	44	22	10	2,67	Undec
	%	18	27,3	31,7	15,8	7,2		
27. NEST is a better teacher than a NNEST because he or she does not use the stu-dents' first language in class.	f	15	29	53	31	11	2,96	Undec
	%	10,8	20,9	38,1	22,3	7,9		
28. A NEST is stricter in class than a NNEST.	f	26	31	46	23	13	2,76	Undec
	%	18,7	22,3	33,1	16,5	9,4		
29. A NEST uses a variety of materials in the classroom more than a NNEST does.	f	31	31	46	16	15	2,66	Undec
	%	22,3	22,3	31,1	11,5	10,8		
30. A NNEST is more exam-oriented than NEST.	f	21	21	43	25	29	3,14	Undec
	%	15,1	15,1	30,9	18	20,9		

According to the results of the fourth sub-dimension of the scale that examines perceptions on classroom behaviour and responsibility of NESTs and NNESTs, participants were undecided if a NEST prepares the lesson more carefully (X=2,67); is a better teacher as s/he doesn't use students' first language in class (X=2,96) and more strict (X=2,76); uses a variety of materials in the classroom (X=2,66) compared to a NNEST and a NNEST is more exam oriented than a NEST (X=3,14).

Table 7. **Perceptions compared in terms of Being Taught by a NEST**

Definition of NEST/NNEST	Taught by a NEST	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
		Yes	44	78,08	3435,50	1734,50	,106*
		No	95	66,26	6294,50		
Learning with NEST/NNEST	Taught by a NEST	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
		Yes	44	79,94	3517,50	1652,50	,047**
		No	95	65,39	6212,50		
Strengths & Weaknesses of NEST/NNEST	Taught by a NEST	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
		Yes	44	74,91	3296,00	1874,00	,327*
		No	95	67,73	6434,00		
Class Behaviour & Responsibility	Taught by a NEST	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
		Yes	44	64,00	2816,00	1826,00	,230*
		No	95	72,78	6914,00		

(*p>,05; **p<,05)

According to Mann-Whitney U test results that compare participants who were grouped into two as those having been taught by a NEST or not, there is not a statistically significant difference between the group in terms of their perceptions on the definition of NEST/NNEST (p=,106; p>,05), strengths and weaknesses of NEST/NNEST (p=,327; p>,05) and class behaviour and responsibility of NEST/NNEST (p=,230; p>,05) while the difference in the two groups' perceptions on learning with NEST/NNEST is statistically significant (p=,047; p<,05).

Results and Discussion

This research provides valuable insights into pre-service ELT teachers' perceptions on NESTs and NNESTS. Although the pre-service ELT teachers do not have a clear mind on the definition of NEST, it is important to note that most of them do not take the colour of skin as an indicator of it. Growing up in an English-speaking country and being raised with native speaking parents are, on the other hand, among the qualities of NESTs according to the participants. The findings also indicate that the participants that are prospective NNESTs themselves link being NEST with better development of speaking (fluency and pronunciation) and listening skill while they are not sure if it also brings better writing and reading abilities or more knowledge on the grammar and vocabulary. Çakır and Demir (2013), in their research on perceptions of university prep course students on two kinds of teachers, indicate that vocabulary, different from the results of this study, is also among the parts of language taught better by NESTs together with speaking and listening. Sevy-Biloon (2017), in a similar study in Ecuador context, also explains that the difference in perceptions differ especially in fluency and pronunciation similar to findings in Abriel, (2015) whose research includes the perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs over the two types of teachers. Besides, they don't set their mind if a student can learn English from a NEST as well s/he can do from a NNEST while they are assured whether the NEST makes the best language teachers. This result is important as it addresses an ongoing issue in Turkish foreign (English) language education context for ages. Although providing long years of study starting from early ages and going through university, the language education, for most of the learners, results with a detailed knowledge of grammar and some vocabulary but no success in either speaking (fluency and pronunciation) or listening. Considering this as the result of NNESTs' self-perception of weakness in being able to teach speaking and listening, the ELT programs in Turkey should focus more on developing prospective teachers' given skills because the participants do not perceive a superiority of NESTs or NNESTs on the other even in the use of English or knowledge about the target (learners') culture. Their perception changes when it comes to the self-confidence in using English so that point requires special attention in teacher training. When it comes to pedagogy,

again, there is not a clear distinction between NESTs and NNESTs according to prospective non-native English teachers participating to the research. Similarly, Aslan and Thompson (2017) argue that a population of ESL students studying in a university level English language program perceive NESTs and NNESTs as equals in terms of teachers' attitudes toward students, teaching style and practice in the classroom, and personality while Ping and Ma (2012) conclude that their NNEST participants perceive higher pedagogical skills over NESTs. However, Alseweed (2012) looking at the same issues through students' perceptions, explain that learners taught by both kind of teachers show explicit preference for NESTs in relation to the teaching strategies used by them. To conclude, the issue of NEST and NNEST perceptions differ on perceivers' being learner or teacher and especially in Turkish context the perceptions might be standing as an obstacle in front of the system preveting it from successful language teaching. Therefore, important changes in language teacher education that helps to develop self-perceptions of NNESTs are required. For further studies, it is recommended to have personal interviews with respondents on the issue to have a deeper understanding over the reasons causing differences in perceptions.

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