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Abstract

Although English is now a recognized international language and the concept of native speaker is becoming more doubtful every day, the empowerment of the native speakers of English as language teaching professionals is still continuing (McKay, 2002), especially in Asian countries like China and Japan. One of the latest examples showing the empowerment of the native English speakers comes from Turkey planning to embark on a project to hire 40.000 native English - speaking teachers (NESTs) to collaborate with the local non - native English teachers (NNESTs) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Turkey. This study tries to reveal the preliminary reactions of pre - service NNESTs about this project through data obtained from open - ended surveys. The content analysis of the data showed that even before the project was initiated, most of the participants objected to it. Although some of the participants favored the project as they believed that the NESTs might be more helpful for students to improve speaking skills and to increase their cultural awareness, the majority of the participants held negative attitudes towards the project mainly because of employment and pedagogical concerns.

Keywords

Native English - Speaking Teachers, Non - Native English Teachers, Turkey, Qualitative

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Native Speakers as Teachers in Turkey: Non-native Pre-service English Teachers' Reactions to a Nation-wide Project

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Although English is now a recognized international language and the concept of native speaker is becoming more doubtful every day, the empowerment of the native speakers of English as language teaching professionals is still continuing (McKay, 2002), especially in Asian countries like China and Japan. One of the latest examples showing the empowerment of the native English speakers comes from Turkey planning to embark on a project to hire 40.000 native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to collaborate with the local non-native English teachers (NNESTs) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Turkey. This study tries to reveal the preliminary reactions of pre-service NNESTs about this project through data obtained from open-ended surveys. The content analysis of the data showed that even before the project was initiated, most of the participants objected to it. Although some of the participants favored the project as they believed that the NESTs might be more helpful for students to improve speaking skills and to increase their cultural awareness, the majority of the participants held negative attitudes towards the project mainly because of employment and pedagogical concerns. Keywords: Native English-Speaking Teachers, Non-Native English Teachers, Turkey, Qualitative

Introduction

As in many other countries, English is becoming more and more popular in Turkey. Contrary to the increasing importance attached to English Language Teaching (ELT) and despite hard-work to develop effective ELT programs, there are still some considerations when it comes to ELT in Turkey. Although Turkey is known to be the 16th largest economy playing a key role in its region, its low performance in its foreign language teaching policy should not be underestimated. Drawing attention to a recent survey conducted by *Education First*, Koru and Akesson (2011) state that the English Proficiency index (EPI) ranks Turkey 43rd among 44 countries. The survey underlining that English proficiency is high in Europe as a whole reveals that Turkey falls behind most of its neighbors with its “very low proficient” rank.

Many researchers defend that the desired level of English proficiency cannot be achieved in Turkey despite all the investments and efforts (Aydemir, 2007; Çelebi, 2006; Işık, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2008; Soner, 2007; Tosun, 2006). From Zok's (2010) perspective, the major problem with English language teaching (ELT) in Turkey is that even though the field has grown in the course of time, the teaching quality has not. More specifically, Soner (2007) lists some of the major reasons why English language teaching policy has not been very successful in Turkey. From her perspective, the most common obstacles hindering students' learning English are as follows: teachers' lack of adequate foreign language knowledge and methods, their traditional language approaches, students' lack of motivation and interest about foreign language, their lack of chance to use the language outside the class, the lack of importance they attach to English, insufficient language equipment in schools as well as limited number of English teachers.

Due to the increasing importance attached to English in Turkey in recent years and the problems in teaching English, authorities have been seeking ways to develop programs to teach English more effectively. For instance, the English language curriculum was reformed by the National Ministry of Education in 1997 to make the school curricula more in line with EU standards by turning it into a more student-centered and constructivist program (Kırkgöz, 2007). Moreover, English language courses have been added into the programs of primary school fourth graders, which made it possible for students to start learning English earlier. Recently, it has also been announced by the National Ministry of Education that second graders will have English classes starting from next year and the number of classes will increase.

One of the most recent projects aiming to improve the quality of English education in Turkey is hiring NESTs to work with Turkish EFL teachers in English language classes so as to improve the standards of ELT in the country. According to newspaper reports, the five-year long project that will cost around 1.5 billion TL aims to bring in a total of 40,000 English teachers from inner circle countries (Kachru & Nelson, 2001) such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. These teachers will accompany Turkish EFL teachers and organize speaking clubs for students during weekends and the summer vacation. In addition, with this project aiming to be the base of the country's foreign language teaching policy, "English cafés" will be opened at certain corners of the school as places where only the English language is spoken to enable students to practice and improve their English ("Turkey to Hire," 2011).

However, the project aiming to hire NESTs has brought about many criticisms made by different stakeholders. While some well-known columnists, major education unions and practicing English teachers put their firm stance against the project, the most severe reactions were shown by the non-native pre-service English teachers in Turkey by means of social media. Although it is known that they are against the idea to co-teach with NESTs in their classes, no empirical study has so far been carried out to reveal their opinions about the project. The aim of this study is to reveal whether candidate English teachers are really opposed to the project and to probe into the reasons why they are against the ideas proposed within the project. After the literature review related to NESTs and NNESTs as well as the benefits and drawbacks of similar projects around the world, participant' preliminary views about the project planned for the 2012-2013 academic year are discussed. In line with these objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Are pre-service English teachers are in favor of or against the project aiming to hire NESTs?
2. What are the reasons why pre-service English teachers were in favor of or against the project?

Literature Review

NESTs and NNESTs

Despite the fact that the majority of learners today use English as a lingua franca spoken mostly among non-native speakers making up the majority of English speakers all around the world (Jenkins, 2005), the native speaker authority is still common and the native speaker teacher model has influences on foreign language teaching policies in the world (Philipson, 1992). Even though English is changing and being used in a variety of new contexts, there is still a strong tendency to view native-speakers as the sole authority in terms of the appropriate use of the English language (Foley, 2007). It is known that NESTs are still

considered to be ideal English teachers (Cook, 2005; Llorca, 2004) because they have certain advantages over NNESTs. Comparing NESTs with NNESTs in terms of their language proficiency in language teaching, Stern (1983) emphasizes the strength of NESTs because of their linguistic knowledge, proficiency and competence. Likewise, Sommers (2005) holds the idea that NESTs teach more effectively as they are better at language abilities. More specifically, McNeill (1993) claims that NESTs are in a more advantageous position in identifying problematic vocabulary in reading passages and in many other areas such as pragmatics and pronunciation (Milambiling, 1999). Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) found that NESTs are perceived to be more accurate, fluent, flexible, conversational, authentic in the use of language, positive when giving feedback to students and different in applying methods. Even the most fervent supporter of the NNEST movement in the field of ELT, Peter Medgyes (2001), admits that NESTs use real English in a more confident fashion, have a more flexible approach and are more innovative. It was also argued by Medgyes that NESTs pay more attention to language in use, oral skills, fluency, meaning and colloquial English in addition to presenting the language in context through the use of a variety of materials. Besides, tolerating errors and providing students with more cultural information are the powerful characteristics of the NESTs. The strength of the NESTs as cultural resources, which may be of interest to students, has also been verified by some other researchers (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Carless, 2006; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). For all these reasons, students express strong preference for NESTs (Coşkun, 2011; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Mullock, 2003).

The “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson, 1992, 1996) referring to the idea that native speakers are ideal English teachers due to reasons summarized above has weakened the position of the NNESTs in the field of ELT (Rajagopalan, 2005). To illustrate, Öztürk and Akay (2010) emphasize that NESTs with less teaching experience and fewer qualifications than NNESTs are more often employed especially by private schools in order to attract students and parents’ attention and to raise their enrollment rates. As also stated by Crump (2007) as follows, there is still a growing demand for the NEST in the ELT market:

An internet search for “English teaching jobs” attests to the high demand for English teachers internationally and shows where the demand is especially strong; the first results are websites advertising jobs in Asia (e.g., China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan). For many of these jobs, the main requirement for the teachers is that they be native speakers of English, not that they be qualified as English language teachers. (p. 12)

However, with the changing status of English as international language (EIL), the native speaker fallacy and the native-speaker model set by the NESTs have become irrelevant for the majority of English learners learning English to use it internationally with other multilingual speakers of English (Alptekin, 2002; Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2006). Cook (1999) believes that with the changing face of English as an international lingua franca, the native-speaker model becomes an unattainable and an irrelevant target for EFL students. Considering Modiano’s (1999) views about the current use of EIL, it would be fair to claim that there are many non-native speakers who are more effective communicators in international contexts than the NESTs speaking a local or a substandard variety of English hard to be understood for English speakers coming from different first language (L1) backgrounds. According to Pasternak and Bailey (2004), being a native speaker does not guarantee being proficient in a language. Parallel to the native speakers’ loss of authority in the ownership of the English language (Widdowson, 1994), the credibility of the NEST becomes questionable. From Seidlhofer’s (1999) point of view, “native speakers know the destination, but not the terrain that has to be crossed to get there; they themselves have not

travelled the same route” (p. 238). In addition, the NEST may discourage students from learning the language because of their inability to compare their own language with the students’ native language and the difficulty they have in establishing empathy with students in the learning process (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Barratt & Kontra, 2000).

On the other hand, it is necessary to underline the advantages of the NNESTs as they are thought to be better teachers in their own countries (Llurda, 2005). Medgyes (1992) argues that despite their natural handicap regarding language competence, the NNEST has particular advantages over the NEST. To illustrate, the NNEST can set a good example for learners as imitable models of successful English learners, offer more information about the language in general and language learning strategies, predict the difficulties students are likely to encounter, understand learners’ needs and problems and even help learners better and establish good rapport with learners by sharing their mother tongue. As asserted by Seidlhofer (1999), the ability to understand and speak students’ first language in the classroom can be regarded as a good source of teacher confidence. Maintaining that the NNESTs are more qualified as they have passed through the foreign language learning process, Phillipson (1996) also draws attention to the benefits of the NNEST by highlighting that they know the linguistic and cultural needs of the learners, are aware of how mother tongue and target language differ and have first-hand experience of learning a foreign language.

As put forward by Cook (2005), because the NNEST is a successful role model who is a proficient user of English, students are positively influenced as their teachers show that it is possible to learn a foreign language. Specifically about the Turkish EFL context, Çelik (2006) acknowledges that the NESTs unfamiliar with the common features of the Turkish students are not very successful in perceiving their goals in learning English by applying the student-centered CLT (communicative language teaching) originated in the inner-circle pedagogy and away from the contextual realities of the Turkish EFL setting (Coşkun, 2009). Therefore, it could be suggested that Turkish teachers of English are in an advantageous position with regards to their knowledge of the local culture that might help them teach better considering the cultural expectations of parents, students and schools in general. The Turkish teachers can also be regarded as better teachers in terms of Tang’s (1997) notion of “familiarity with examinations and the local syllabuses” as Turkey currently has an examination-driven grammar-based English syllabus requiring teachers to “teach-to-the-test” (Şahin, 2007). Likewise, as also emphasized by Canagarajah (1999), local NNESTs are supposed to be more familiar with the expectations, beliefs, capabilities and assumptions of local learners and they are more aware of the importance of developing a curriculum matching with the learning culture in the community.

As can be understood from the discussion above, the local NNESTs familiar with the context of teaching in their own countries have certain advantages over their native English speaking counterparts. Still, some countries have developed projects requiring the employment of the NESTs to teach English. Most recently, it has been announced that Turkey is planning to hire 40.000 NESTs from inner-circle countries to teach in the Turkish EFL context. The next part of the literature review focuses on the most well-known such projects initiated mostly by Asian countries such as Japan and Korea and review the literature about the benefits and drawbacks of such projects.

Similar Projects

Despite arguments reviewed above, the native speakers are still believed to be ideal English teachers and appropriate models for language learners (Cook, 2005; Llurda, 2004). This idea was called as the “native speaker fallacy” by Phillipson (1992). Some EFL countries where English learners have no chance to use English realistically outside the classroom buy

into the native speaker fallacy and consider the employment of the NESTs to be a fair idea for the improvement of their foreign language teaching policy. Expanding circle countries, such as Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan have designed official programs in line with this idea. The JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) program in Japan, the EPIK (English Program in Korea) program in Korea, and the NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) Scheme in Hong Kong are examples of initiatives embarked on to improve the English Language teaching system through hiring NESTs. The underlying principle of these projects is more or less the same. For instance, the EPIK Project established in 1995 depends on the purpose of boosting students' English speaking proficiency, developing local teachers' English communication skills, increasing cultural awareness, producing English materials and course books and improving English teaching methodologies in general (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998).

The Taiwanese government also developed a program named "Improve English Teaching Cooperation Program" in 2003 and elementary and secondary schools were allowed to hire NESTs. Similar to the rationale in the implementation of JET, EPIK, NET, the program in Taiwan is based on the following justifications for the idea to hire NESTs:

1. Promote team work of English teaching and learning as well as a better English learning environment for students in remote areas,
2. Introduce local English teachers to current concepts about English education through the sharing of ideas about teaching methods and materials between teachers at home and abroad,
3. Improve students' learning and communication ability in English,
4. Facilitate cultural exchanges between Taiwan and other countries and advance other countries' understanding of Taiwanese culture. (MOE website, 2003)

Although some researchers found positive reactions to such projects, the majority of the findings reveal drawbacks and concerns about hiring NESTs to team-teach with the local teacher. Cheng (2003) showed that parents held very positive attitudes towards the project in Taiwan and Lin (2001) revealed that students found it more interesting and motivating to have a NEST in their classroom. Likewise, focusing on the PNET scheme in Hong Kong, Carless (2006) found that the project had a positive impact on teachers and students. In another study dealing with the NET program, Barratt and Kontra (2000) concluded that the NESTs are in a superior position as they use active vocabulary and idioms appropriately, resort to their intuition about the usage of the language, offer cultural knowledge, justify the need for students to get involved in authentic language use, rely less on course books and thus bring novelty into their classrooms with different materials and ideas.

There are also a few studies pertaining to the benefits of collaboration between the NESTs and the NNESTs (de Oliveira & Richardson, 2001; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001). For instance, Tajino and Tajino (2000) highlight the positive sides of co-teaching practices in Japanese EFL classrooms and conclude that NESTs and NNESTs can work collaboratively so as to facilitate foreign language learning by bringing in different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to the classroom. Likewise, from Buckley's (2000) point of view, through co-teaching, learners can be supported more effectively as there are two teachers in the classroom and the classroom becomes a livelier place with the combination of different personalities, teaching styles and voices of both teachers.

On the other hand, there are a lot of studies yielding the negative sides of projects intended to employ NESTs. For instance, Sommers (2004) asserts that such projects are not very effective because most of the native speakers employed within these projects are not professionally involved in teaching and their instructional skills and abilities were mostly irrelevant in the EFL context. Furthermore, employing NESTs without the necessary

professional training to teach English is the reason of unsatisfactory quality of the foreign language policy in the country (Mattos, 1997). Peng (2003) took the case of Taiwan and found that even though there was a common belief that the NESTs could create a more realistic language learning atmosphere and could more effectively introduce different cultures to students, the conflicts between the local NNESTs and the NESTs as well as the management of the NESTs were found to be serious concerns. The EPIK project in Korea also drew criticisms as a successful co-teaching atmosphere could not be maintained because of the cultural differences of both teachers. In other words, rather than cooperation, conflicts between two teachers were dominant in the EPIK program (Choi, 2001). According to Welch and Sheridan (1995), NESTs and NNESTs need to handle barriers stemming from the conceptual, pragmatic, attitudinal and professional perspectives of both teachers to avoid conflicts and to maintain successful collaborative teaching. As mentioned by Crooks (2001), for the collaboration between the NEST and the NNEST to be successful, a variety of stakeholders ranging from the educational authorities to schools should be supportive enough; otherwise, conflicts and thus failure in the collaboration is unavoidable.

As far as the Korean EFL context is concerned, Kim (2001) showed in her study that the local NNESTs were more effective than their native English speaking counterparts because the Korean teachers could successfully empathize with the learners' psychological learning process. Being aware of the drawbacks of the project, the Korean government even decided to send back the NESTs they recruited for the improvement of their foreign language policy. According to the YTN news released as "Seoul to let all NESTs go by 2014," the results of a poll about students and parents' attitudes towards the NESTs and the Korean NNESTs showed tendency to prefer the non-native Korean teachers to teach English.

Besides, Luk and Lin (2007) found that hiring NESTs within such projects made most of the local teachers feel that there was a lack of confidence in their English competence. Therefore, it is normal for the teachers to show negative reactions against such projects even before or when implemented (Boyle 1997; Luk, 2001). As a result, Law (1987, cited by Boyle, 1997) suggests that the budget allocated for these projects are so big that several less costly, and more urgent things should be done instead to improve the foreign language policies of the countries: improve school libraries with graded materials for extensive reading; provide more audiovisual materials, provide schools with more tape and video recorders, improve the facilities of the English teachers center and provide in-service courses for local teachers.

In Turkey, the preliminary reactions against the project even before it started were quite harsh. Experts like Haznedar (2011) and Bayraktaroğlu (2011) voiced their concerns about the project. Haznedar justified her opposition to the project by listing economic, scientific, psychological and social reasons. She adds that the project will also ruin the professional image of the Turkish NNESTs. Supporting her arguments with statistical data, Haznedar stated that 80% of all the English teachers in the world are NNESTs and being a native speaker does not guarantee effective teaching. On the other hand, Bayraktaroğlu calls this project as "unconscious affectation" for the NESTs. Claiming that the NESTs often employed by some private schools for marketing purposes will not lead to the increase of the foreign language teaching standards in Turkey, Bayraktaroğlu (2011) considers this project as financial extravagance, misconception and a dream.

In this part of the study, some of the most well-known projects aiming to bring in native speaker teachers and relevant studies carried out to understand the benefits and drawbacks of these projects were reviewed.

Data Collection Procedure and Participants

Data were collected through a qualitative data collection instrument. The reason why a qualitative research design was used for this study is that the focus was on participants' initial feelings about the project which has not yet been implemented and the reasons behind their feelings rather than the quantitative outcomes or the impacts of the project to recruit NESTs. Through the qualitative nature of the research design, it was aimed to capture the depth of participants' response to an open-ended survey aiming to reveal their reactions to the project (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

The instrument used in the study is a survey starting with a detailed description of the project ("Turkey to Hire," 2011) to hire 40.000 NESTs to work cooperatively with the local EFL teachers in Turkey. It then continues with a key question "Are you in favor of or against the project?" The participants were asked to justify their opinions for or against the project by listing their reasons in the boxes provided on the survey sheet. One of the boxes starts with the statement "I am in favor of the project because..." and the other begins with "I am against the project because..." Participants were also given the flexibility to write comments both in favor or against the project by allowing them to list their reasons for agreement and disagreement with the project idea in both boxes.

The participants are 240 pre-service NNESTs in different grades of an ELT department at a Turkish state university. The reason why candidate NNESTs were chosen as the sample for the current study was that this group of individuals had displayed a certain amount of public disapproval as a response to the project and there have not been any empirical studies dealing with their opinions about the project.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the survey was made through content analysis by means of which it is possible to determine common trends and patterns that emerge from qualitative data (Coetzee, 2009). In the current study, the data was read and re-read to split them into chunks of meaning with identifiable topics, taking the focus of the study into consideration (Miles & Huberman, 1994), namely non-native pre-service English teachers' opinions about the project to hire NESTs. All individual responses were analyzed and similar responses were grouped according to common themes. This analyzing technique can be described as cross-case analysis allowing researchers to group together answers from different people to common question/s or analyzing and grouping different perspectives on central issues (Patton, 2002).

In the following part of the study, the findings obtained via surveys are presented in more depth and participants are referred to with a number (e.g., Candidate English Teacher 1: CE 1) to maintain anonymity.

Results

Participants' answers to the survey were subjected to content analysis and it was found that the majority of candidate English teachers (n=189) were against the idea of hiring NESTs for the improvement of the English education in Turkey. The reasons why they were opposed to the project are analyzed below under the heading of negative perceptions. On the other hand, there were also some participants (n=51) commenting positively about the project. The positive remarks made about the project by the CEs are presented under the heading of positive perceptions.

The following themes emerged as participants' negative perceptions: employment concerns and pedagogic concerns. Two sub-themes emerged under the theme of employment concerns: *the fear of being replaced by the NEST* and *the perceived unequal treatment of the NEST and the NNEST in terms of salaries*. Under the theme of pedagogic concerns, there appeared three sub-themes that are *the poor teaching qualities of the NEST*, *the perceived drawbacks of co-teaching* and *the cost-effectiveness of the project*. On the other hand, three sub-themes emerged as participants' positive perceptions: *the superiority of the NESTs in teaching speaking skills*, *their advantageous position in teaching culture* and *the perceived benefits of co-teaching*.

Negative Perceptions

Employment Concerns

Employment concerns were focused on by 172 participants. These concerns categorized under two sub-themes as the fear of being replaced by the NESTs (f=120) and the perceived unequal treatment of the NESTs and NNESTs in terms of salaries (f=52). Although the pre-service English teachers in Turkey have been assured that the NESTs will not affect their appointment negatively, the most serious criticisms against the project stem from pre-service English teachers' fear of not being able to find a job as a teacher after graduation from the university.

According to the statistics, there are many English teachers waiting to be appointed to state schools in August, 2011 ("İthal Öğretmen İsyanı," 2011). Most of the participants making negative comments about the project are doubtful about whether the NESTs will replace them. They have the feeling that there is going to be no need for them when their native English speaking counterparts come to Turkey. There is a common belief among these participants that they might be unemployed after graduating from their departments as they hold the idea that 40.000 native English speakers will completely close the English teacher gap in Turkey. Among many similar comments, the one embodying most of the other related criticisms is as follows: "While there so many graduates of ELT departments who cannot find a job, hiring NESTs is not a wise decision" (CE 18). Similarly, another CE made the following remark: "The incoming number of NESTs is so high that our chances of finding a job as an English teacher are likely to decrease" (CE 107). Pertaining to the employment concern, an even harsher comment implying that the project abuses Turkish EFL teachers was also made: "While there are still ELT graduates who are unemployed in our country, the employment of 40.000 foreign teachers can be interpreted as exploitation of its own students and teachers" (CE 204). In the same vein, some students approached the project sarcastically. For example, one CE suggests that the ELT departments in Turkey should be closed: "If this project comes true, it means that it is high time to close the ELT departments. There is no need for us any longer" (CE 189).

Another theme emerging under the main category of employment concerns is the perceived unequal treatment of the NEST and the NNEST in terms of salaries. Some of the participants in the study hold the idea that NESTs and NNESTs will be paid differently in favor of the NESTs. Though it was emphasized by the authorities that their salary will not be higher than the salaries of the NNESTs, some CEs believe that justice in terms of salaries cannot be maintained: "Let's think positively that hiring these teachers will not influence our appointment badly. But, I do not think that these teachers will have a salary like ours. Who would like to come to Turkey for 1000 Euro? There will be serious problems if they will be paid more" (CE 145). Pertaining to the salaries NESTs and NNESTs will be paid, one CE commented as follows: "I think there will be an unnecessary rivalry between the NESTs and

NNESTs because of the double standards in their monthly salaries” (CE 76). Another CE made the following statement: “Just like private language courses hiring NESTs for a high amount of money and paying their NNESTs only around half of the salary they offer to NESTs, the government might do the same and pay more to them” (CE 43).

As can be concluded from some comments representative of other similar comments, most of the participants ranked the fear of unemployment as the first reason why they objected to the idea of hiring 40.000 NESTs while there are ELT graduates waiting to be appointed.

Pedagogic Concerns

The pedagogic concerns of 124 participants emerging during the data analysis could be categorized under three sub-themes as poor teaching qualities of the NEST (f=84), perceived drawbacks of co-teaching (f=60) and the cost-effectiveness of the project (f=25), namely the concern whether the budget allocated for the project could be used more effectively for the benefit of the NNESTs.

The main reason why more than half of the candidate teachers do not agree with this project is that they are concerned about the pedagogical qualification of the NEST. The most pressing pedagogic concerns are regarding the perceived teaching qualities of the NEST. In terms of the teaching qualities of the NESTs, participants drew attention to their educational background. Among participants focusing on pedagogic concerns about the project, some believe that the NESTs employed through the project will not be the graduates of departments preparing candidate English teachers to teach English. These CEs made comments affirming their distrust in the pedagogical teaching qualifications of their native English speaking counterparts. One CE held the idea that the coming NESTs might be backpackers visiting Turkey: “I guess some young backpackers in search of adventures will come to Turkey with this project. Serious investigations should be made to understand whether they are eligible to teach English in the Turkish context” (CE 78). Likewise, another CE shared his/her negative experiences in a class taught by a NEST: “I had a NEST as my teacher at my high school. She was generally out of the city for touristic reasons and when she came to class, she was generally late” (CE 91). Another CE argue that international certificates NESTs obtain to teach abroad are not sufficient to teach EFL in Turkey: “If these teachers will be able to attend this project with international certificates, it means these teachers are not pedagogically able to teach English to our student and they do not have the required teacher competencies to teach English in Turkey” (CE 18). Similarly, one CE thinks that although these teachers are educated to be English teachers in their countries, the education they passed through is away from the realities of the Turkish EFL classroom: “Even though these teachers will be those trained to become English teachers, the education is based on the realities of teaching English in their own countries, which means that they are not aware of the challenges they will face in the English classroom in Turkey. In short, we are better teachers who know our students” (CE 103).

Some CEs also believe that the NNESTs should not be taken for granted because of the misconception that the native speaker is pedagogically much better than the local Turkish teacher. Instead, they recommend that they should be appreciated as they can speak students’ mother tongue and they are familiar with the possible problems students are likely to pass through. Comments in favor of the NNEST are as follows: “I think our students are not ready for such a swift change in the classroom. I feel that our students are more comfortable with us and learn more from the teacher who has passed through a similar stage in learning a foreign language in Turkey” (CE 43). Another similar comment is as follows: “I know that being a native speaker of English does not mean being a good teacher. Especially at the initial stages

of learning English, the NEST cannot help our students who are used to hearing at least some Turkish in their English lessons. It is just a waste of time and money to hire these teachers in primary and secondary classes” (CE 65). Focusing on the recent trend to recognize the foreign accent as an acceptable variety of English, one CE underlined that there is no need or even possibility for Turkish students to speak like a native speaker and speaking English with a Turkish accent is acceptable: “In Turkey, our students are not expected to speak native-like English. This is scientifically a utopia anyway. So why do we need a NEST? It is very normal for an English learner to speak English with his/her own accent” (CE 31).

Another theme emerging during the analysis of the data is participants’ reservations about the co-teaching practice between NESTs and NNESTs. CEs generally focused on how powerless and inferior they would feel in the classroom when there was a NEST with whom they might have conflicts. The most common reason why co-teaching is not perceived as a good idea by the candidate EFL teachers is that the NNEST might feel inferior to the NEST and less powerful in the classroom when they are put into the same setting. Participants pointed out that the NNEST’s control over the class might disappear as the NEST recruited to increase the foreign language teaching standards could be admired more than the local teachers who share the feeling that they are not trusted any longer: “When the NESTs and the NNESTs are in the same class, our students will be prejudiced against the NNESTs and it is normal for students to develop a sense of admiration for the foreign teacher. This will spoil the non-native teachers’ authority to maintain classroom discipline” (CE 119). Another CE shared his/her concerns about the intended co-teaching practice as follows: “We will just be teaching assistants to the incoming NESTs” (CE 33). On the other hand, some CEs made suggestions to give the responsibility of maintaining classroom discipline to the local NNEST: “The job of maintaining classroom discipline and marking students should be given to the Turkish teachers to save their authority in the classroom. Otherwise, we would feel powerless and inferior to the NEST” (CE 198). Likewise, one CE also shares his/her concerns arising from the intended co-teaching implementation by maintaining that the role of the NNEST might be belittled to the role of translator after the NEST starts co-teaching with the local teacher: “After the NESTs begin teaching in my class, we will be considered as only translators translating the things the NEST says and our students do not understand” (CE 216). In addition, considering that the non-native teacher will be more passive when the native teacher is in the classroom, one CE made the following comment: “Putting the NEST and the NNEST in the same classroom might end up with a complete fiasco as the NEST will dominate and the NNEST will have no say in maintaining the classroom discipline” (CE 65). Also, one CE used an interesting metaphor by making a simile between the teacher image in the class and the perception of God to emphasize that two Gods in one classroom will confuse students about which God to believe in: “There is only one God in the Earth. Can you imagine that there are two Gods to believe? There shouldn’t be two Gods in one classroom. Students might get confused about which God to obey” (CE 32).

Believing that the co-teaching model as planned with this project may result in conflicts between the local NNEST and NEST, one CE holds the idea that tension and competition between the NEST and the NNEST are likely in the case of co-teaching: “Two teachers in one class cause an unnecessary competition and tension between two teachers” (CE 22). Moreover, one CE goes one step further and claims that co-teaching with a NEST may result in psychological problems for the local non-native teacher: “Turkish teachers who like being the leader in their classes might feel themselves incompetent or unnecessary when there is another teacher. This might even cause psychological problems” (CE 169). In the same vein, another CE argues that the NNEST will even be afraid to speak English in front of the NEST because of the pressure of the NEST: “The Turkish teacher may feel inferior and even afraid to speak in the class where there is a NEST. Their self-esteem, teaching will and

the motivation will be seriously harmed” (CE 18). There is also a CE arguing that the NESTs are deliberately placed in the classroom to observe the NNESTs’ classroom practices: “I feel that they want to place a controller or an observer willing to correct every mistake I make or write a report about me to the school principal” (CE 177).

The other theme occurring under the main theme of pedagogic concerns is related to the cost-effectiveness of the project. Whether the budget allocated for the project could be more efficiently used for the benefit of NNESTs is commented on by some participants. In addition to the comments related to pedagogic concerns regarding the project, some CEs made suggestions about how to improve the pedagogic qualities of the NNEST. Some CEs pointed out that the major problem of the NNEST is the lack of speaking skills; therefore, they recommended that the CEs should be sent to English speaking countries using the amount of budget allocated for the project: “This project will be more beneficial for the Turkish education system if we are sent to an English speaking country to be proficient fluent speakers of English” (CE 77). Likewise, another CE commented that the budget allocated for the project could best be used to improve the pre-service and in-service training programs and to boost the quality of foreign language education in Turkey: “The amount of money to be spent in this project should be spent in order to improve the standards of the ELT departments in Education Faculties in Turkey. Or, in-service education trainings should be organized” (CE 101). Another CE asserted that this budget could be used to improve the facilities and materials used in EFL classes: “This money could be given to schools for the improvement of their facilities and materials used to teach English” (CE 219). On the other hand, as indicated in the following comment, one CE claimed that NESTs should be employed at the ELT departments of Education Faculties training future English teachers in Turkey so that CEs can improve their fluency: “These teachers can be hired for the ELT departments so that candidate non-native English speakers can hear proper English and speak fluently” (CE 146). Besides these suggestions, some more general recommendations were made on how to improve the foreign language system in Turkey by using the budget allocated for the project. It is recommended by one CE that the foreign language teaching policy should first change its grammar-based teacher-dominated tradition centered on multiple-choice exams rather than hiring the NEST: “The solution to the poor foreign language education in Turkey is not to employ native-speakers but to let our teaching move away from a grammar-oriented teacher centered multiple choice exam-oriented system” (CE 59). Similarly, another CE asserted that the Turkish teachers should not be the scapegoat of the failure to teach English in Turkey and there is a need to investigate the system in general: “This project to hire native speakers is a self-denial of the quality of instruction provided by Education Faculties in Turkey and it is a confession that the English teachers in Turkey cannot do their job well enough. I think, the English teacher should not be the scapegoat for the failure of the foreign language teaching program in Turkey. The system in general should be examined first” (CE 19).

On the whole, some CEs expressed their negative views about the project as they had doubts about how pedagogically ready the NESTs to teach in the Turkish EFL context and the possible negative consequences of co-teaching. Furthermore, in order to increase the English language teaching standards in Turkey, the idea to investigate the foreign language teaching policy instead of bringing in NESTs and to spend the budget allocated for the project to help the local teachers to develop professionally was proposed by some CEs.

Positive Perceptions

Participants’ reactions to the project are not always negative as analyzed above, though. Among all the participants, the number of participants who voiced their positive comments about the project is 51. Superiority of the NESTs in teaching speaking skills ($f=21$)

and their advantages in teaching culture (f=15) were mentioned as the benefits of the projects. The good sides of co-teaching were also indicated by some CEs (f=7). CEs who made positive remarks about the project think that native speakers are superior to the non-native teacher in terms of teaching certain skills and regard the imported teachers as the solution to overcome the chronic failure of the Turkish education system to teach English.

One of the most commonly mentioned perceived benefits of the project from the perspective of the non-native candidate English teachers is that the NESTs are better in teaching the speaking skills. The perceived advantages of the NESTs can be illustrated by some comments. For instance, one CE made the following remark about the superiority of the NESTs: "Native speakers will be great for our students to improve their speaking and pronunciation skills" (CE 23). Likewise, one participant claimed "Thanks to NESTs, our students' sense of achievement in learning a new language can be developed as our students speak with a native speaker" (CE 229). Another CE highlighted the importance of out-of-class activities with native speakers commenting as follows: "The idea of extra-curricular activities with the NEST is a good idea because our students have no chance to practice English outside the class" (CE 98). Another CE arguing that this project might be a remedy for the majority of English learners in Turkey who can understand but cannot speak English asserts that NESTs will help learners to speak the language: "Native speakers will be a solution for many English learners in Turkey who generally complain about their failure in speaking English with the words I can understand English but cannot speak it" (CE 169). One CE exemplified his/her stance in favor of the idea of bringing in NESTs by making the following comment: "In the current foreign language teaching system, students learn English for 11 years but they cannot even describe an address to a tourist on the street. They absolutely need to practice their English with a native-speaker" (CE 233). What is understood from another comment is that the way the NEST teaches English is regarded as communicative and the current ELT policy is described as grammar-oriented: "The grammar-based English education dictated by our foreign language teaching policy should be replaced by a communicative way of teaching that will be led by the NEST" (CE 160). Another CE underlined the importance of variety in the EFL classroom claiming that the NEST might be more appealing for Turkish students. According to his/her comments, having classes with different teachers is favorable in English classes as students have the chance to hear different accents and be exposed to different methodologies: "Our students always have the opportunity to see the NNEST in their class. The NNEST might seem monotonous for the students after a certain period of time. But the NEST is a complete novelty for them, which will be a motivating factor in their learning process. Also, our students will get used to hearing different accents and learning in different ways as a result of the different teaching methodologies the NESTs will use in their classes" (CE 7).

Apart from the superiority of the NEST regarding the teaching of speaking, a few students underlined the fact that with native speakers, Turkish students can learn more about English culture. For example, one of these CEs commented as follows: "This project is an opportunity for our students to learn about English cultures" (CE 79). Another CE also emphasized the strength of the NEST as a more accurate source of cultural knowledge: "The cultural knowledge of the countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue should be learned by the students who want to learn English, and I believe that NESTs can provide our students with more accurate knowledge" (CE 211). Likewise, one CE commented as follows: "Language and culture are integrated and English has its own cultural norms. These norms can best be taught by its real owners who are the NESTs" (CE 34). Also another CE stated: "NESTs know better what is culturally correct so they can help our students more. For example, what is polite and impolite can easily be taught by NESTs" (CE 89). Finally, considering that the native speaker is superior to the local English teachers, one CE openly

discredited the NNEST and maintained that if he/she were given the option to choose between a NEST and NNEST and a NNEST, his/her preference would be the former: “If I were a student allowed to choose my teacher, I would love to choose a native-speaker one as I believe I can learn more from them” (CE 85).

Among participants sharing their positive insights about the project, those arguing in favor of the idea to work with native speakers highlighted the benefits of co-teaching. One of the representative comments about co-teaching with NESTs is as follows: “As a prospective English teacher, I guess this project will take a lot of burdens off my shoulder as I can teach the grammar and the NEST can encourage students to speak the language” (CE 71). Similar to this comment, another CE believed in the merits of co-teaching by saying: “The NNEST and the NEST can share their ideas and create a more effective teaching environment” (CE 49). Another participant also focused on the advantages of co-teaching by arguing that when the NESTs start teaching with the NNESTs, the non-native ones will try to put more effort into searching ways to develop their professional competencies so as to compete with the NEST: “I think that the NNESTs will seek ways to improve their professional skills in order not to fall behind the NEST” (CE 231). Likewise, one CE stated: “NNESTs and NESTs can work in close cooperation if their roles and responsibilities can be clarified. If this can be achieved, NESTs will not only work with us to make our lessons more effective but also help a lot to improve our English fluency” (CE 47). In the same vein, one CE made the following comment: “Sharing the same teachers’ room, working together on lesson plans and exam preparation with NESTs will expose us to English outside the class” (CE 29).

In summary, the analysis of the positive comments made about the project reveals that some participants argue that the NEST has certain advantages for Turkish students, especially in terms of teaching speaking, pronunciation and culture skills. Furthermore, some of them view this project as a solution to the major problems regarding ELT in Turkey. On the other hand, co-teaching with NESTs was evaluated by some CEs as a positive development as it was believed that the responsibilities and different ideas could be shared to create a more effective classroom environment.

Discussion of the Results

The data collected via an open-ended survey after providing participants with the necessary background information about the project shed light on how the prospective English teachers in Turkey may react if NESTs start teaching at Turkish schools. Although there were some positive comments focusing on the advantages of the NEST in teaching speaking, pronunciation and culture skills as well as on the benefits of co-teaching as a means of sharing ideas and responsibilities in the classroom, these comments were negligible when compared to the negative comments. This study reveals that the participants are mostly against the project and implies that the project might not be successful at least from the perspective of non-native pre-service English teachers.

As also discussed by Baker (2011) in his blog post *The Native Speaker Myth in Turkey: 40,000 Native English Speaker Teachers needed for 2012*, the project won't be successful because a simple answer (NESTs) is given to a very complex problem (English learners in Turkey can't speak English) with this project. Given the large number of pre-service NNESTs who focused mainly on the negative aspects of the project, it could be suggested that the idea of recruiting NESTs, which was inspired by previous projects like the JET program in Japan and the EPIK program in Korea, might not be welcomed warmly. Therefore, the project, which requires co-teaching with NESTs, may not work miracles to overcome the problem of English proficiency in Turkey (see, e.g., Çelebi, 2006; Işık, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2008; Tosun, 2006). Believing that that the NESTs employed generally by private

schools in Turkey for marketing purposes are not likely to improve the English education in Turkey, Bayraktaroğlu (2011) views this project as a misconception based on the so-called superiority of the NESTs to their local counterparts. Evaluating recent changes in foreign language policies in Asian countries like China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, Nunan (2003) also suggests that it is wrong for these countries to hire NESTs with high budgets rather than providing the local teachers with the required appropriate training.

The results of the study indicate that non-native pre-service English teachers have the biggest fear of not being appointed to a teaching position because of the high number of NESTs that will be brought in. Their major criticism against the project is related to the fear of unemployment and making a living. In the past, graduates of the ELT departments used to find a job very easily but as the number of graduates is increasing each year, being appointed as a teacher gets more and more challenging. As also emphasized by Haznedar (2011), the economic reasons are one of the most important reasons why this project should be objected to. She highlights that the professional image of the Turkish NNESTs will be ruined when the NESTs start teaching in Turkish schools. Similarly, Luk and Lin (2007) argue that the governments hiring NESTs to improve their foreign language teaching policies have a lack of confidence in the local teachers' English competence.

Employment concerns are followed by pedagogical concerns. The comments about pedagogical concerns are connected to the perceived negative results of the co-teaching practices in Turkey and how pedagogically prepared the NESTs are to teach in the Turkish EFL context. Pertaining to the pedagogical reasons why CEs are against the idea of co-teaching with NESTs, some CEs participating in the survey stated that conflicts might be unavoidable as the NNESTs may feel themselves less powerful. In a study focusing on the perceptions of NNESTs about NNESTs, it was also found that many NNESTs perceive NESTs as superior teaching professionals hired to show them how to teach English (Boyle, 1997). Some participants hold the idea that they will lose the classroom authority as NESTs will be more dominant. The literature about co-teaching corroborates with the negative views of the participants asserting that conflicts may emerge between the NEST and the NNEST during co-teaching practices. It is stated that because of inequality in terms of practices and power relationships between NESTs and NNESTs (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2010), the application of co-teaching may fail and the intended cooperation through co-teaching might turn out to be conflict between two teachers (Choi, 2001).

Some participants also shared their concerns that the NESTs may not be pedagogically ready to teach in Turkey. In terms of the pedagogical readiness of the NESTs, Barratt and Kontra (2000) warn that bringing in NEST without the required professional training to teach a foreign language gives rise to a poor quality foreign language policy. Sommers (2004) also suggests that most of the native speakers hired within such projects are not professionally involved in teaching and their teaching skills were not suitable for the EFL context. Specifically about the Turkish EFL context, Çelik (2006) emphasizes that the NESTs often using communicative methodologies are unfamiliar with the common features of the Turkish students and thus are not very successful in perceiving our students' goals in learning English. On the other hand, most of the local Turkish EFL teachers are aware of their knowledge about the sociopolitical context of the Turkish EFL setting, which allows them to be better teachers in Turkey (Doğançay-Aktuna, 2008). As mentioned by Bayyurt (2006), Turkish EFL teachers are perceived by their students as good language learning models and guides.

Considering the pedagogical qualities of the NNESTs, it could be suggested that they are ideal teachers in their own countries (Llurda, 2005). For Medgyes (1992), Lee (2000), and Cook (2005), the NNEST who passed through the foreign language learning process successfully is viewed as a successful model by EFL learners. More specifically, Medgyes (1992) maintains that NNESTs have the superiority to be able to speak the learners' first

language. The ability to speak students' mother tongue is emphasized as one of the biggest strengths of the NNEST by Seidlhofer (1999) as well. Investigating the native and non-native dichotomy in the Korean context, Kim (2001) found that the local non-native teachers were better than their native English speaking counterparts as the local teachers could empathize with students in the learning process more successfully. On the other hand, it is argued that the native speaker teacher might even hinder students from learning the language because they cannot compare their own language with the students' native language (Árva & Medgyes, 2000).

Approaching the issue of pedagogy from the perspective of the current status of English as an international language (EIL), it could be argued that the native speaker model is both unnecessary and irrelevant in EFL contexts like Turkey where students learn English as an instrumental language mainly to communicate in cross-cultural settings with other non-native speakers (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005) making up the majority of the English-speaking world (Alptekin, 2002, Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997; Jenkins, 2005; Llurda, 2004). Besides, exposing students to different non-native varieties instead of the native-speaker norms is believed to better equip learners to communicate more successfully with other non-native English speakers in the multicultural globalized world. As suggested by Prodrómo (1992), the native-speaker norms should be replaced by different non-native English speakers' cultural norms and their English varieties so that EFL learners can develop cross-cultural understanding and become more aware of multi-cultural diversity.

The discussion and related literature above about the changing status of EIL lead us to the idea that the norms determined by the NESTs have become irrelevant for EFL contexts like Turkey. Investigating the motivational factors behind learning English in Turkey, Kızıltepe (2000) found that learners strive to learn English for instrumental purposes, such as finding a better job after graduation, and that having conversations with British and American people was considered to be unimportant. Considering the profile of English learners in Turkey and the changing role of English in the world, the goal of English language education in Turkey should be the teaching of EIL which is "based on an entirely different set of assumptions than has typically informed ELT pedagogy" (McKay, 2003, p.1). EIL challenges the myth that the goal of learning English is to acquire native-like proficiency (McKay, 2005). Within an EIL perspective challenging the native speaker fallacy and linguistic imperialism (Matsuda, 2003), English proficiency should not be assessed against unrealistic and unattainable native-speaker norms. Instead, the ability to communicate ideas intelligibly to other non-native speakers coming from different L1 backgrounds should be adopted as a means to promote a pluralistic view of the language away from the mere bombardment of the so-called native-speaker norms (Alptekin, 2002; Jenkins, 2000).

Any change in the English language teaching policy in Turkey needs to start with a change in the pre-service English teacher preparation programs educating the future English teachers. Taking the pre-service NNESTs' concerns about the project and the changing status of EIL into account, it would be fair to conclude that rather than recruiting NESTs, more attention should be given to English teacher preparation programs in Turkey so that pre-service NNESTs can be prepared to teach EIL. Claiming that the English language instruction pre-service teachers received before attending teacher education programs is generally American/British-oriented, Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) suggest that English teacher education programs play a vital role to familiarize them with the linguistic and functional diversity of EIL.

In order to empower prospective NNESTs (Inbar-Lourie, 2005; Rajagopalan, 2005) and to equip them with the requirements of EIL, some recommendations regarding the pre-service English teacher preparation in EFL contexts such as Turkey could be made as an

alternative to the recruitment of the NESTs. For instance, now that NNESTs have been criticized for their lack of proficiency in English (Seidlhofer, 1999; Tang, 1997), which is considered to be the reason why NNESTs perceive themselves inferior to NESTs (Llurda, 2004), Ma (2012) suggests that more emphasis should be put in English teacher preparation programs on helping pre-service NNESTs to become highly proficient users of English. There is a need in such programs for ongoing language improvement, especially for the improvement of their lack of English proficiency (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). As rightly argued by Eslami and Fatahi (2008), the professional confidence of non-native English teachers depends mainly on their language proficiency. However, the native-like pronunciation should be avoided as the ultimate goal while addressing to the linguistic competence of pre-service teachers. Instead, they should be given the awareness that they are “successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers” (Cook, 1999, p. 204) or what Alptekin (2002) calls “successful bilinguals with intercultural insights” (p. 63).

To make pre-service NNESTs ready to teach EIL, English teacher preparation programs should be restructured in line with requirements of EIL by exposing pre-service teachers to varieties of English beyond the native-speaker model, helping them to deconstruct the myth of the native speaker, enabling them to value themselves as intercultural speakers, integrating methodologies valued in the local context, increasing language development through consciousness-raising activities and immersing them in on-going reflective practices (Snow, Kamhi-Stein, & Brinton, 2006). According to Lee (2004), promoting reflection in English teacher preparation programs for NNESTs, which is considered to be an effective tool for teacher empowerment in general (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan 2001), should be promoted by means of teaching how to carry out peer observation, written accounts of experiences in the class and recording lessons (Richards, 1991).

As this study is limited to perceptions of some pre-service NNESTs about a project which has not been initiated yet, further studies can focus on the opinions of various stakeholders including school administrators, parents, students, practicing NNESTs and the NESTs in order to evaluate the success of the project. Moreover, these studies should be carried out after NESTs start teaching so that the project outcomes can be thoroughly evaluated.

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