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Non-Native & Native English Teachers

İrfan Tosuncuoğlu¹

Abstract

In many countries the primary (mother tongue) language is not English but there is a great demand for English language teachers all over the world. The demand in this field is try to be filled largely by non-native English speaking teachers who have learned English in the country or abroad, or from another non native English speaking teachers. In some countries, particularly those where English speaking is a sign of status, the students prefer to learn English from a native English speaker. The perception is that a non-native English speaking teacher is a less authentic teacher than a native English speaker and their instruction is not satisfactory in some ways. This paper will try to examine the literature to explore whether there is a difference in instructional effectiveness between NNESTs and native English teachers.

Keywords: Native language, English, learning, teaching

¹ Karabuk University, Faculty of Letters, English Language and Literature Department. E-mail: irfantosuncuoglu@karabuk.edu.tr

Introduction

English language is used by millions/billions of speakers all over the world and it has become the preferred language for a number of factors such as prestige, employment, profit academic career, so on and so forth. Crystal (1997) said that without a common language between academicians from different nationalities, conversation would prove impossible in the world. To be proficient at least in one foreign language is seen as a desirable goal for all the people in our country and in many countries of the world. Adams (2001) believes that EFL(English as a Foreign Language or ESL(English as a Second Language) teachers, are under rather have heavy and difficult responsibilities than before and says that studies show that teaching is one of the most stressful jobs in comparison with other professions.

Consequently, it is very clear that the number of non-native English-speaking teachers is increasing continuously all over the world all the more and the number of non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) overwhelms number of native English-speaking teachers. However, nowadays there is a global negative prejudice against NNESTs all over the world.

Daftari (2016), denotes questions about the effectiveness of native English speaking teachers (NEST) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) in teaching English in Turkey sound similar to those rose especially in EFL contexts in the world. Despite their complexity, these three important questions are essential and critical. These questions are: "Can a non-native English speaker be a good English language teacher? (Lee, 2000); to what extent can non-native English teachers "linguistic insecurity influence learners learning process? (Roussi, 2009); is there any relationship between NNESTs proficiency and their linguistic insecurity? (Gonzalez, 2011)." The question of the effectiveness of the NNESTs is very popular not only in Turkey but also in the other countries too. So the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness and differences between native English speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs). This paper mainly consists of; introduction, literature review and discussion and conclusion parts.

Non-Native &Native English Teachers

There is a strong tendency in the international community to consider that a non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) as an alternative to a native English speaking teacher (NEST). This situation creates a problem in the English teaching profession field as there are a lot of qualified NNESTs, and as for, NESTs they are in a pyramid of prestigious positions occupying the best paid and highest profile positions at the top. And the low demand NNESTs taking lesser positions or struggling to find employment all the more. This is particularly true where there is prestige or status associated with the acquisition of English. In the countries and regions where there is a great demand for a native speaker of English and an almost total disregard for NNEST instructors and teachers. The reasons include, of course, aesthetic of English as it is a status language and to some extent that native-like accents are preferred from an English speaking teacher. There has been little experimental research on whether a NNEST is as competent to teach English as a NEST, and there are some studies that mention the subject. The findings available suggest that NNESTs prepare their students equally well when it comes to test results but that there are some significant differences between NNEST and NEST teaching. The study leads to the conclusion that the strengths of NEST and NNEST are complementary and a combination of NEST and NNEST teaching is ideal when and where it is possible.

Related Literature

The literature about review consists of three sections. They deal with the different aspects of the question of whether a NNEST has a difficulty in the subject of employment discrimination and if so do they provide

the same level of teaching as a NEST. In the first section it will be mentioned that a problem of employment discrimination exists and it is more in some regions than the others. Once the existence of a problem is established, the second section will review the research on the comparative effectiveness of NNEST and NEST in the classroom. The third and final section will explore the differences between NNEST and NEST teaching.

I. Employment Discrimination of NNEST

Selvi (2011) deals with the problem of discrimination against NNEST in terms of global perception. He argues that English is used by its speakers regardless of the “native” quality of the English they speak. The number of NNEST is much more than native speakers. So it is not right to express that a native speaker of English more authentic and reliable than a non-native speaker. This perception is represented, however, in the hiring practices of universities, news media outlets, and government agencies.

The perception of the NNEST in mind as an inferior factor of language teaching, gives harm far beyond in the field employment. The negative perception about so called teachers leads them to feel worse in the matter of self-esteem and in their class performance as teachers. The question of NNEST or NEST needs to be discussed again as the demand for well quipped and qualified English teachers is growing all the more. The perception should be that both NNEST and NEST bring specialised knowledge and strengths that work best in combination with one another.

The idea that a NNEST is a less authentic instructor of English is due in large that a native speaker is a superior agent for such instruction. Reis (2011) uses the Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978; Wertsch, 1985) to explore in detail the formation of a particular English teacher’s professional identity. His assumptions about the native English speakers compared to their non-native counterparts. Reis realized his research through observation of in-class teaching, interviews with the teacher. Over the course of the research period the teacher’s attitudes about non-native English speakers underwent an evolution from non-critical assumptions to a self-generated reevaluation of non-native speakers that they are the agents of expert use of English. The teacher raised his evaluation of the non-native speaker but never overcame the basic assumption that no matter the qualifications of the non-native speaker, the native speaker will always be just that little bit better. The conclusion reached in that article is that there needs to be more research about the idea of the superiority of the native speaker.

II. Comparative Effectiveness

Gurkan, and Yuksel, (2012) did a study on the performance of NNESTs and NESTs in the classroom. The study consisted of more than 70 students, seven NNESTs, and three NESTs. The researchers conducted interviews with the participants, had a questionnaire, and evaluated outputs. The study results showed that the NNESTs and NESTs performed very similarly in all categories in the study. It suggests that there is no quantitative difference between the instruction provided by either group. There is a conclusion that there are some differences between a NNEST and a NEST.

In particular, the NNESTs were identified as providing better learning strategies, they were better at understanding the difficulties their students faced with, and had a better factual knowledge about the English language. The NNESTs also had a stronger grasp of technical grammar and were better positioned to assist their students in their related language. Conversely the NESTs were better at providing a consistent language model and showed greater ability of adaptation and they used own idiolect in their lessons it means they improvised in the lesson. The NESTs, for sure, were better at pronunciation during the process of teaching and getting the students engaged with the cultures that speak English as their primary language. The researchers note that their findings are almost the same with previous studies. The

findings showed similar classroom success for NNESTs and NESTs such as pronunciation and cultural engagement for NESTs and grammar. The conclusion is also supported by those earlier studies that show the students prefer and perform best when a combination of NNESTs and NESTs are utilized in their instruction.

III. Differences between NNEST and NEST

Ma & Ping (2012) did a very detailed study of the advantages and disadvantages of native and non-native English speaking teachers with a specific focus on students in Hong Kong. Their research shows a trend that the perceived strengths of a NNEST are almost always the weak side for a NEST. For example that a NNEST is fluent in the student's mother tongue while a NEST is not. The NNEST is able to assist a student with a misunderstanding using their primary (mother tongue) language and so this activity is very helpful especially in the beginning stages of teaching. That the NEST is unable to provide such assistance is considered as a weakness. At the later stages of instruction this paradigm changes that NEST is perceived by the learners as stronger because the need to speak English is required more and more. Similar to other studies this research showed that students in Hong Kong felt that a combination of NEST and NNEST instruction was the best but on the whole a NNEST is preferred at the early levels of instruction and NEST at later levels. This situation is partly due to the perception of the native speaker representing a more authentic version of English. This study also shows that students experienced anxiety or felt intimidated when learning from a NEST and they did not have so called feelings when a NNEST was conducting a lesson in the class. The conclusion presented in this research is that NNEST and NEST are complementary teaching elements that should be utilized in combination.

Discussion and Conclusion

The available literature concerning with NNESTs suggests several conclusions. Firstly there is a real problem faced by NNESTs when it comes to equal opportunity for employment. There is a systemic perception that a native speaker is a better teacher of English than any non-native speaker. The research review shows this perception to be false and that in some areas, particularly grammar, the NNEST are significantly better prepared than their native speaking counterparts. The efficacy of each group of teachers is similar when it comes to classroom. In order to counteract this tendency it is necessary to change perception to more accurately reflect reality. The research reviewed also showed that while both groups were equally qualified to teach English they did have different strengths and weaknesses that complete each other. The conclusion supported is that an ideal English class would utilize both NNEST and NEST instruction in order to best serve their students, since, there are a lot of NNESTs their numbers are more that NESTs all over the World. This outcome supports the idea that while nativeness of language is becoming less of an overt factor in the profession of English Language teaching. As a result it can be said that NNESTs should work with NESTs, as NESTs work as a supplementary source as a guest instructor, teacher or similar function.

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