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## Employment of English Language Teachers in an EFL Context: Perspectives From School Administrators

Contratación de docentes de inglés en un contexto de inglés como lengua  
extranjera: perspectivas de administradores escolares

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This paper presents a study on the employment criteria used by school administrators and their views on the strengths and weaknesses of local teachers and expatriate teachers. This study aimed to provide a perspective on the issue from an English as a foreign language context. Questionnaires collected from administrators of 94 private primary and high schools in Istanbul were analyzed. Although being a native speaker of English ranked seventh out of the eight criteria, the presence of expatriate teachers in a school was considered important. In addition, participants from schools that employed both expatriate and local teachers attributed more importance to the native-speakerness criterion. Finally, administrators found local teachers more knowledgeable in teaching methods, whereas expatriate teachers were perceived as better in language use.

*Key words:* Expatriate teacher, hiring criteria, native-speaker-English-teacher, native-speakerness, nonnative-speaker-English-teacher.

Este artículo presenta un estudio sobre la importancia de ser hablante nativo de inglés en las decisiones de los administradores escolares en cuanto a la contratación de docentes de inglés. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo proporcionar una perspectiva sobre el tema desde un contexto donde el inglés es lengua extranjera. Se analizaron los cuestionarios recopilados de administradores de 94 escuelas primarias y secundarias privadas en Estambul. Aunque ser un hablante nativo de inglés ocupó el séptimo lugar entre los ocho criterios, la presencia de docentes extranjeros en una escuela se consideró importante. Además, los participantes de las escuelas que empleaban tanto docentes extranjeros como locales atribuyeron más importancia al criterio de hablantes nativos. Finalmente, los administradores encontraron que los docentes locales tenían más conocimiento en los métodos de enseñanza, mientras que los docentes extranjeros eran percibidos como mejores en el uso del lenguaje.

*Palabras clave:* criterios de contratación, docente de inglés nativo, docente de inglés no nativo, docente extranjero, hablante nativo.

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## Introduction

The role of native-speakerness in hiring English teachers is a topic of international concern in the field of applied linguistics and TESOL. Braine (1999, 2010) argues that the unequal treatment of non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the English language teaching (ELT) profession is most observable in employment practices. In countries where English is used as a foreign language (EFL), teaching of English is carried out predominantly by local teachers, and the number of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) is relatively low. However, the situation is changing rapidly in many countries, especially with the growing demand for studying EFL. For example, in Turkey, increasing numbers of English teachers from inner, outer, and expanding circle countries (Kachru, 1985) are being hired by private institutions at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (personal observation).

Parallel to the rising demand for English, the number of private primary level and high schools in Turkey increased from 741 in the 1994-95 academic year to 2170 in 2006-07 (a 193% increase) and to 4896 in 2016-17 (a 560% increase) (Turkish Ministry of National Education, 2017). As of 2017, about 17,000 English teachers were needed countrywide. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is commonly believed by parents, curriculum planners, and school owners that the presence of expatriate staff (or staffing with native speakers only) is an added prestige factor (Garton, 2000). Expatriate teachers are often offered attractive fringe benefits such as free accommodations, private health insurance, and reduced working hours, in addition to a highly competitive salary (personal observation). Finally, it is a common perception that this favoring of NESTs puts local teachers at a disadvantage, even when they have relevant training and qualifications.

While some researchers (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004; Zhang & Zhan, 2014) have looked into hiring practices at tertiary level institutions in North American and British contexts, the

criteria used by school administrators in hiring English language teachers remain largely unexplored in the context of private primary and high schools in EFL contexts. The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to investigate the importance school administrators attribute to a variety of criteria, including native-speakerness, and their perception of the strengths of NESTs and NNESTs. Administrator perspectives are particularly important to explore as administrators have a direct role in hiring English teachers and thus have the potential to shape the employment scene by their practices.

## The NS/NNS Division and NESTs and NNESTs in ELT

In the classical World Englishes model by Kachru (1985), the spread and use of English is described in three concentric circles: the Inner Circle (countries where English is spoken as a native language, such as the US or the UK), the Outer Circle (countries where English has become an institutionalized language, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and India), and the Expanding Circle (countries where English is used only in restricted contexts and not used widely for daily communication, e.g., Poland, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey). Although Kachru's model has been influential, it has been criticized for placing the Inner varieties—and concomitantly the speakers of these varieties, mostly comprised of native speakers of English (NS) (Graddol, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Modiano, 1999)—at the center. The global spread of English and its increasing use as a means of communication among NNSS of English resulted in significant changes in the ownership of English. With this major shift and English emerging as an international language, sharp distinctions between Kachruvian circles and NSS and NNSS began to dissolve. For example, some English users in the expanding circle, for instance in Europe, may use English for business, education, or travel purposes more than some outer circle English users. Similarly, the spread of technology has also had a great impact on increasing communication

between individuals from different parts of the globe and creating a world without geographical boundaries. After all, “nobody owns English now” (Crystal, 2002, p. 16).

The NS/NNS distinction inevitably leads to the labeling of English language teachers as NESTs and NNESTs, stemming from the idea that native speakers are ideal speakers of the language and therefore better teachers. This assumption, referred to by Phillipson (1992) as the “native speaker fallacy”, has been called into question because it leads to discrimination against NNESTs and undervalues their professional status. Similarly, Holliday (2005) explains that the dichotomy leads to the marginalization of professionals from outside the English-speaking countries as the “Other”, which he refers to as native-speakerism. Native speakerism is “an established belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, some scholars (Liu, 1999; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001) have argued that, rather than contrasting NSS and NNSS, a continuum approach should be adopted. Furthermore, the terms NS/NNS are problematic on linguistic, sociolinguistic, ideological, and pedagogical grounds (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Nayar, 1994). Some of the recent alternatives to the terms of NS/NNS proposed are “L2 user” (Cook, 2002), “new speaker” (O’Rourke & Pujolar, 2013), and “L1 vs. LX user” (Dewaele, 2017). Yet, although there is no agreement on what defines a NS or NNS of English, the terms are still commonly used in ELT discourse for practical reasons.

With the influence of the NNEST movement and the increasing interest in the differences between NESTs and NNESTs, the NEST/NNEST debate has become a productive area of research. An important body of work exists on the differences in teaching behavior among NESTs and NNESTs (Árva & Medgyes, 2000), student perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs (Chun, 2014; Ma, 2012a), self-perceptions of NNESTs (Ma, 2012b; Reis,

2011), and the training of NNS TESOL graduate students (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005). Challenging the native speaker fallacy, the authors of many studies (He & Miller, 2011) have shown that students have positive attitudes towards both NESTs and NNESTs, and that they may prefer NNESTs for certain classroom activities (Moussu, 2010). Research has also established that NESTs and NNESTs have their own peculiar strengths in different contexts and have the potential to teach the language effectively (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Pacek, 2005). Recognizing the experience of NNESTs and the important contributions they make in the ELT field, recent research has focused more on empowering NNESTs in the classroom and in the ELT profession in general (Mahboob, 2010) and the collaboration among NESTs and NNESTs (Oliveira & Clark-Gareca, 2017).

### **English Language Teacher Hiring Practices**

The misconception that NSs are inherently better teachers results in unequal treatment of NNESTs in the profession, especially in hiring practices. One of the first studies was done by Mahboob et al. (2004) who conducted a comprehensive survey on the hiring practices of Intensive English Program (IEP) administrators in the US, using data from 122 IEP administrators. They found that the “native English speaker” criterion ranked fourth out of ten criteria and was considered either somewhat moderately or highly important by 59.8% of the respondents. Correlational analyses showed that the more the administrators regarded native-speakerness as important, the smaller the proportion of NNESTs in their program. Mahboob (2009) further points out that “all other things being equal”, native-speaker status makes a difference in hiring (p. 33).

A similar survey based on Mahboob et al.’s (2004) study is Clark and Paran’s (2007) survey of UK institutions on their recruitment practices. Data were collected from 90 employers in private language schools, universities, and other higher education institutions. Seventy-two

percent of the respondents viewed the native English speaker criterion moderately or very important in hiring. Further analysis showed that private school administrators placed more importance on this criterion compared to the two other institution types. In a similar study of six English as a second language (ESL) program administrators in Canada, participants expressed a belief that professionalism and language proficiency were more important in hiring decisions than native-speakerness (Zhang & Zhan, 2014).

In contrast to the amount of research on hiring practices in ESL contexts, such research in EFL contexts is limited. One recent study was conducted in the Saudi context. Alenazi (2014) surveyed the perceptions of 56 Saudi recruiters and compared these perceptions with their actual hiring practices. The results confirmed previous studies, showing that recruiters “either directly or indirectly expressed a preference to employ NESTs even if they were less qualified than NNESTs” (p. i). In the Asian context, Jeon and Lee (2006) provide an overview of English teacher hiring processes in five Asian countries, where they reveal that the recruitment and training of English teachers is highly systematized and regulated by the government in Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea. Through established projects such as JET (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program), NET (Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme), and EPIK (English Program in Korea), large numbers of expatriate teachers are hired to work with local teachers to teach English. In Taiwan and China, on the other hand, private agencies are responsible for teacher recruitment. In most cases candidates are required to be from an inner circle country to be eligible for hiring and are provided generous benefits. Lung (as cited in Braine, 2010), has criticized the favoring of NESTs over NNESTs in these projects.

Another area where the NS/NNS division is evident is job advertisements. Online job advertisements and recruitment websites consistently discriminate against NNESTs (Mahboob & Golden, 2013). For example, in

Selvi’s (2010) content analysis of two major job search sites, native or native-like proficiency frequently appears as a requirement. One striking finding of the study is that 82% of the advertisements identified as discriminatory occur in EFL contexts. Selvi concludes that the “native speaker fallacy is a practical reality” in hiring practices (p. 173). In Ruecker and Ives’s (2015) critical discourse analysis of written texts and visuals on 59 websites posting jobs in China, Japan, Korea, and Thailand, being a native speaker of English appeared as a criterion in 81% of the advertisements.

Although some research (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et al., 2004; Zhang & Zhan, 2014) highlights important issues regarding NNEST employment and the role of native-speakerness in hiring decisions, they address mainly the practices of the inner circle, providing data from American, Canadian, and British contexts. Some data from Asian contexts is available (Jeon & Lee, 2006) but evidence on administrator perspectives in EFL contexts in general is limited. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate K-12 contexts as much of the research to date has focused on only the practices of administrators at tertiary level institutions, that is, intensive English programs. In countries like Turkey, private primary and high schools play a fundamental role in the teaching of English and the number of such schools is growing rapidly. Additionally, unlike some EFL contexts such as Japan, South Korea, or Hong Kong where expatriate English teachers are hired by the government, Turkey does not have such an established, systematic mechanism (except for a few private agencies). It is therefore important to know what criteria private school owners or administrators use in hiring teachers of English and how they view the role of native and non-native teachers in the teaching of English.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by providing perspectives from the primary and high schools in an EFL context, specifically in Turkey. Moussu and Llorca (2008) point out “the EFL context is in great

need of further studies about practices and beliefs of language program administrators” (p. 339). Therefore, it is hoped that by presenting the perspectives of school administrators in Turkey, this study will contribute to the understanding of English teacher hiring practices in an EFL context.

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What criteria do administrators employ in hiring English language teachers and what is the role of being a native speaker of English in making these decisions?
2. How do administrators view the strengths and weaknesses of local teachers and expatriate teachers in the Turkish context?

## Method

### The Instrument

The methodology of this study is survey research. The instrument consisted of a 15-item questionnaire with no subsections. Five of the items were adapted from Mahboob et al. (2004). The questionnaire, available in both Turkish and English, included a preliminary statement to ensure the respondent was someone who was responsible for the hiring of English teachers.

Items 1 and 6-12 provided data on teachers and type of school. Item 2 required rating the importance of certain criteria in recruitment. The respondents were asked to rate eight hiring criteria on a six-point scale. The hiring criteria used in the questionnaire were based on previous studies (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et al., 2004), with adaptations to reflect the Turkish context. For example, criteria such as accent, American citizenship, American/British/EU nationality, dialect, or ethnicity were removed, as these were deemed irrelevant to the Turkish context. Experience staying/living abroad was added, as this is considered important in hiring English teachers in Turkey. In items 13 and 14 the respondents were asked to rank ten teacher strengths adapted from

previous work on the strengths of NESTs and NNESTs (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Cook, 2005; Moussu, 2006).

In the questionnaire, the terms “foreign national teacher” and “Turkish national (local) teacher” were used instead of NEST and NNEST. Similarly, in reporting the results of this study, the umbrella term “expatriate teacher” was considered more appropriate than “native English-speaking teacher”. There are two reasons for this. First, in the Turkish context, the distinction appears to be between foreign national teachers (regardless of their country of origin or NS/NNS status) and Turkish national teachers. The NS/NNS dichotomy seems to be over-simplistic and fails to capture the variety in teachers’ linguistic backgrounds. Second, the term “native English-speaker teacher” may be associated with teachers from the inner circle only and also because several definitions of “native speaker” exist. We could assume that the term “expatriate teacher” refers to all non-Turkish, foreign national teachers who may have come from inner, outer, or expanding circle countries, including non-local NNESTs coming from countries such as Romania, Brazil, Morocco, or Poland. A further division among the expatriate teachers was not found meaningful for the purposes of this study as non-local NNESTs constitute a small portion of the expatriate group and further division would not contribute to the understanding of the matter under investigation.

### The Context

Currently, there are primary (grades 1-4), secondary (grades 5-8), and high school (grades 9-12) levels in Turkey. At the time of the study, primary and secondary levels were integrated into a single 8-year block and labelled as primary school. Both private and public schools are subject to a centralized curriculum in all subject areas and English is a mandatory subject at all levels, while French and German are offered as elective courses (Kırkgöz, 2009, p. 667). The quality and quantity of the English instruction in private and public schools



varies considerably. Private schools are allowed to add more hours onto the core curriculum mandated by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Therefore, the number of hours of English instruction per week in private schools can range from four to 12 or more, whereas only three to four hours of English per week are offered in public schools. English instruction can begin as early as preschool level in private schools. They can choose their own textbooks, whereas public schools use textbooks written by local teachers and academics from Turkish universities that are provided by the state free of charge. Private schools also hire their own teachers, while in public schools, teachers are selected and appointed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education based on scores on a centralized teacher placement exam. Knowledge of English is becoming a prerequisite to finding a well-paying job, so privately-owned schools are popular among families (who can afford them), largely because of the commonly-held belief that they teach English well.

In this study, Turkish, American, and international private schools (that comprised about 98% of all private schools in Turkey (Turkish Ministry of National Education, 2017) were selected as the focus because these schools would potentially hire the highest number of English language teachers. Private schools that teach foreign languages other than English, were excluded. Public schools were also excluded because their teachers are employed via ministerial appointment and—except for some special cases—almost no foreign nationals are employed.

## Data Collection

### Background

Istanbul is the most densely populated city in Turkey, with 20% of the country's entire population. More private schools are located in Istanbul than in any other city in the country, and for this reason it served as a good research site for the study.

This study targeted individuals responsible for hiring English language teachers for private K-12 schools in Istanbul. Purposeful sampling procedures were followed. To identify potential schools, the list of all the Turkish, American, and international private schools in each administrative district of Istanbul was obtained from the website of the General Directorate of National Education (IGDNE). Although some lists had inaccuracies, they provided the approximate number of private schools located in the 39 districts (325). Of the 39 districts, five had no private schools. Of the remaining 34, the twelve that had more than ten Turkish, American, and international private schools were chosen as the focus of the study, one of which was later excluded due to logistics. The remaining districts, which had only a few schools, were excluded due to time limitations and transportation constraints.

### Delivery of the Questionnaires

Five of the researcher's colleagues checked the questionnaire concerning format, style, and content to ensure clarity. Some items were then revised before delivery. After receiving official permission from IGDNE, the researcher initiated the procedures for delivery of the questionnaires. Two alternatives were possible: (a) mailing the questionnaires to each school by the researcher and (b) having the questionnaires mailed to schools through the directors in each district. Due to a concern about the possibility of a low return rate, the second option was chosen.

The eleven districts chosen for the study were visited by the researcher in person and the purpose of the study was explained to the directors. Ten directors agreed to deliver the questionnaires to the schools under their supervision. The number of schools in these districts ranged from 10 to 17 (170 schools total). To collect as many questionnaires as possible, the researcher revisited each directorate in the following month. Ninety-four questionnaires were collected, with an overall return rate of 55.29%.

Since no data were received from two of the districts, the researcher prepared an online version of the questionnaire to reach respondents. With a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a copy of the official permission to conduct the research, e-mails were sent to the addresses available on the websites of the schools located in these two districts. To ensure anonymity, a username and password for the online questionnaire were provided. This yielded eight more completed questionnaires. Of the 102 questionnaires that were collected, 94 were usable. Duplicate (three questionnaires had duplicates because they were mistakenly sent twice) or illegible copies were excluded from the analysis. The official permission by IGDNE is granted only if certain requirements about data collection and delivery of questionnaires are met. More precisely, (1) the questionnaire did not ask for any information that would identify a school or participant, and (2) responding or not responding to the questionnaire did not bear any potential risks on the part of the participants. As the researcher's application met the requirements in question, the researcher proceeded to begin the study after official permission from IGDNE was granted.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, and totals were calculated for the items which provided data on teacher profile and the strengths of individual schools. The importance attributed to various hiring criteria, including native-speakerness, was determined by analyzing frequencies and percentages as well as the mean, mode, and the standard deviation for each criterion. To explore how the administrators perceive the strengths and weaknesses of expatriate and local teachers, sums for each characteristic were calculated. For the open-ended items such as those about teachers' country of origin or fringe benefits offered to expatriates, the answers from each respondent were listed and frequencies were counted.

## Results

### General Information on Participant Schools and English Teachers

Among the schools participating in the study ( $n = 94$ ), there was one "American" and one "international" school. Forty percent of the schools ( $n = 38$ ) were primary level (grades 1-8) and 30% ( $n = 29$ ) were high schools (grades 9-12). The remaining 26 schools (27%) had both primary and high school. One respondent provided no data on the status of their school.

Nearly half of the schools employed both expatriate and local teachers ( $n = 44$ ) and the other half employed only local teachers ( $n = 50$ ). As shown in Table 1, expatriate teachers constitute 31.4% of the staff in schools that employ both expatriates and locals. Overall, 20.8% of all English teachers in all schools are expatriates.

**Table 1.** Profile of English Language Teachers in Participating Schools as Reported by Administrators

	Teachers in schools with both expatriates and locals		Teachers in schools with locals only		Teachers in all schools	
	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%
Females	505	81.4	279	88.8	784	83.9
Males	115	18.5	35	11.1	150	16.0
Turkish nationals	425	68.5	314	100	739	79.1
Expatriates	195	31.4	0	0	195	20.8
All teachers	620	100	314	100	934	100

*Teachers' countries of origin.* Table 2 presents all the countries of origin represented in the data, based on questionnaires from schools that employ both



expatriates and local teachers ( $n = 44$ ). The majority of the expatriate teachers are from England, the us, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and Scotland, that is, predominantly inner circle countries. Other countries listed are mostly expanding circle countries (except for Singapore, the Philippines, and Pakistan-us). Although the countries of origin are varied, their distribution suggests that there is a preference for native-English-speaking expatriates.

**Table 2.** Country of Origin of Expatriate Teachers (Frequencies of Each Country Listed)

Countries	F	%
England*	26	59.09
us*	18	40.90
Canada*	15	34.09
Australia*	9	20.45
Ireland*	4	9.09
Scotland*	2	4.54
Greece	2	4.54
Wales	2	4.54
Brazil	1	2.27
France	1	2.27
Germany	1	2.27
Morocco	1	2.27
North Cyprus	1	2.27
Pakistan-us	1	2.27
Philippines	1	2.27
Poland	1	2.27
Russia	1	2.27
Slovakia	1	2.27
Singapore	1	2.27
Spain	1	2.27
Taiwan	1	2.27

\*Inner circle countries

*Teachers' formal training in the teaching of English as a foreign language.* The respondents were asked if the expatriate teachers and local teachers currently employed in their schools had formal training in the teaching of EFL. Out of the 44 respondents to this item, 34 indicated that all their expatriate teachers had training in teaching EFL. Only nine indicated that they did not. One respondent

left this item blank. In cases where the expatriate teachers did not have training in teaching EFL, some respondents listed the minimum requirements to become a teacher in these schools. These included holding a university degree, an ability to speak English well, possession of a teaching certificate, graduating from a faculty of education, a good accent, teaching experience, ability to teach literature and drama, creativity and productivity, and professional experience in international schools. In contrast, all respondents indicated that the local teachers in their schools had training in the teaching of EFL. This is expected, owing to the regulation that all local teachers must possess either an undergraduate degree in ELT or an ELT certificate approved by the Turkish Ministry of National Education.

*Fringe benefits for expatriate teachers.* Another item asked about fringe benefits for expatriate teachers such as free accommodation, private health insurance, reduced working hours, and airfare. Six respondents indicated that no extra benefits were available; five left this item blank. Thirty-three respondents (75%) reported offering fringe benefits to expatriate teachers, with 26 mentioning free accommodation, 24 mentioning private health insurance, 16 mentioning airfare, and nine mentioning reduced working hours. In addition to these, extra leave on non-Turkish holidays such as Christmas or Thanksgiving, tuition-free education for their school-age children, a competitive salary, free lunches, fewer hours of hall duty, transportation, a cash bonus, free participation in extra-curricular activities, and free fitness club membership were listed.

### The Hiring Criteria

The first research question investigated the criteria administrators employed in hiring teachers and the role of native-speakerness in these decisions. To determine the relative importance of eight criteria in hiring teachers, the mean, mode, and the standard deviation for each criterion were calculated. The results are displayed in Table 3.

The high means and mode value of 5 for “educational background/training,” “pronunciation,” and “teaching certificate/master’s degree” indicated that the respondents agreed on the importance of these criteria. Administrators also found “teaching experience” and a “reference from individual/institution” important in hiring decisions, with a relatively high mean of 4.16 and 3.67 respectively, and a mode of 4. “Experience staying/living abroad” received a mean of 2.97, “being a native speaker of English” received 2.63, and “citizenship” received 2.24 with a common mode of 3. “Being a native speaker of English”

had the highest standard deviation of all criteria with 1.51, indicating that the administrators were divided in their views, with many responses clustering at the high and low ends. Similarly, administrators were also divided in their views on the importance of “experience staying/living abroad” and “citizenship”.

The respondents were asked to assign a score to each criterion from (0) to (5), with (0) being “not important at all” to (5) being “highly important”. The frequency and percentage of the responses to each criterion are shown in Table 4.

**Table 3.** The Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mode for Each Hiring Criterion

Hiring Criteria	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mode*
Educational background/training	4.72	0.51	5
Pronunciation (in English)	4.69	0.60	5
Teaching certificate/master’s degree	4.50	0.83	5
Teaching experience	4.16	0.86	4
Reference from individual/institution	3.67	1.15	4
Experience staying/living abroad	2.97	1.17	3
Being a native speaker of English	2.63	1.51	3
Citizenship	2.24	1.45	3

\*Most frequently repeated score.

**Table 4.** Frequency and Percentage of Responses for Each Hiring Criterion

	0	1	2	3	4	5	No/invalid response
Educational background/training	0	0	0	3 (3.2%)	20 (21.5%)	70 (75.3%)	1
Pronunciation (in English)	0	0	0	7 (7.4%)	15 (16.0%)	72 (76.6%)	0
Teaching certificate/master’s degree	0	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	12 (12.8%)	16 (17.0%)	64 (68.1%)	0
Teaching experience	0	2 (2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	13 (14.1%)	40 (43.5%)	36 (39.1%)	2
Reference from individual/institution	1 (1.1%)	5 (5.4%)	5 (5.4%)	26 (28.3%)	30 (32.6%)	25 (27.2%)	2
Experience staying/living abroad	3 (3.2%)	7 (7.4%)	16 (17.0%)	41 (43.6%)	17 (18.1%)	10 (10.6%)	0
Being a native speaker of English	12 (13.6%)	7 (8.0%)	18 (20.5%)	26 (29.5%)	14 (15.9%)	11 (12.5%)	6
Citizenship	14 (15.4%)	15 (16.5%)	20 (22.0%)	26 (28.6%)	9 (9.9%)	7 (7.7%)	3

Note. 0 = Not important at all, 1 = Not very important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Somewhat important, 4 = Moderately important, 5 = Highly important

Confirming the high mean values, “Educational background/training” and “pronunciation” were considered the two most important criteria. The administrators seemed to agree on the importance of having a “teaching certificate/master’s degree”, “teaching experience”, and a “reference from individual/institution” in hiring teachers. Unlike the first four criteria, the responses for the last three criteria represented more variety. For these, the majority chose “somewhat important”. “Being a native speaker of English” ranked seventh of the eight criteria and ‘citizenship’ was considered to be the least important of all.

### The Native-Speakerness Criterion

Administrators’ views on the native-speakerness criterion were varied. The largest number of responses pointed to “somewhat important” (29.5%). When collapsed with “slightly important” (20.4%), these two categories accounted for half of the responses. The remaining responses showed an almost equal spread across the other categories. The total responses of “not important at all” and “not very important” collapsed and “moderately important” and “highly important” collapsed were 21.6% and 28.4%, respectively. Overall “being a native speaker of English” was regarded as somewhat, moderately, or highly important by 57.9% of the participants, whereas 42.0% chose “not important at all”, “not very important” or “slightly important” for this criterion. The native-speakerness criterion had the highest no-response or invalid responses.

The distribution of the responses to the native-speakerness criterion varied across schools that had and did not have expatriates in their teaching staff. Of the administrators that employed both locals and expatriates in their schools, 72.1 % found native-speakerness at least somewhat important, whereas only 44.4% of those who employed only locals found native-speakerness at least somewhat important. The administrators of schools with only local teachers who responded (0) or (1) outnumbered those in schools with expatriates

(26.6%). Also, five administrators of schools with only locals supplied no answer to this item (11.1%). This could be interpreted to mean that administrators who view native-speakerness as an important quality tend to employ expatriates more.

To explore the importance placed on having expatriate teachers, administrators were asked to choose the strongest aspects of their schools from among five options (only schools that had both expatriate and local teachers were included in this analysis). Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option. Two questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because the respondents assigned numbers to each strength rather than simply ticking them ( $n = 42$ ). The results are displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Frequency of Responses for Various Strengths of Schools

Strength	F (N = 42)	%
Language syllabus/curriculum	39	92.9
Teaching staff	39	92.9
Encouraging language learning through extra-curricular activities	26	61.9
Use of the most up-to-date technological tools	23	54.8
Number of expatriate teachers	14	33.3

The percentage of expatriate teachers in each school ranged from 4% (the lowest) to 100% (the highest) of the English teaching staff.

As Table 5 shows, “number of expatriate teachers” was chosen as an important strength of their school by 14 respondents. The number of expatriate teachers in these schools ranged from 1 to 25, constituting 14% to 100% of the English teaching staff. Interestingly,

one school that had only two English teachers, one of which was an expatriate, chose “number of expatriate teachers” as a strength of their school.

Of the 28 respondents who did not choose “number of expatriate teachers” as a strength, 19 had an expatriate teacher percentage of 20 or below. The percentage of expatriate teachers in the remaining nine schools ranged from 4 to 50. This suggests that the number of expatriates is considered important by some school administrators, and so long as a school has a certain proportion of expatriates, some administrators preferred to promote that as a strength of their school.

Among the schools participating in the study were one “American” and one “international” school (“non-Turkish” schools). The small numbers did not allow for further analysis or a comparison of Turkish and non-Turkish schools with regard to the importance they attribute to English native-speakerness. However, it could be expected that such schools would be more inclined to hiring expatriate teachers, as they offer more hours of English instruction and may follow a British/American/IB curriculum. Unsurprisingly, in these two schools expatriate teachers constituted 92% and 100% of the language teachers, respectively, with all English teachers but one from inner circle countries.

### Strengths of Local and Expatriate Teachers as Perceived by Administrators

The second research question aimed to assess how administrators viewed the strengths of local and expatriate teachers in the Turkish context. To explore these views, two items on the questionnaire asked respondents to rank ten strengths by assigning each of the strengths a number ranging from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating the least strong and 10 the strongest aspect. Table 6 shows the responses, based on data from 61 questionnaires.

The participants perceived that local teachers were the most successful in their “Ability to use language teaching methods effectively” and “Classroom management”, whereas “Being a good model for the learner” and “Being knowledgeable in teaching the culture” were perceived to be their least strong aspect. The requirement for local teachers to hold an ELT undergraduate degree or a teaching certificate seems to be working well, as administrators perceived that local teachers have a solid knowledge of language teaching methods. Lack of knowledge in culture is not surprising as a majority of the local teachers study English in their own countries, with very limited opportunities to spend time abroad.

**Table 6.** Ranking of Local vs. Expatriate Teachers’ Strengths by Administrators

	Expatriate Teacher	Local (Turkish) Teacher
<b>Strongest aspect</b>	Fluency in speaking English	Ability to use language teaching methods effectively
	Motivating the student to learn English	Classroom management
	Ability to teach (English) speaking skills well	Ability to teach (English) speaking skills well
	Ability to communicate with the student	Motivating the student to learn English
	Pronunciation	Ability to communicate with the student
	Being knowledgeable in teaching culture	Fluency in speaking English
	Being a good model for the learner	Pronunciation
	Ability to use language teaching methods effectively	Ability to teach grammar rules
	Classroom management	Being a good model for the learner
<b>Least strong aspect</b>	Ability to teach grammar rules	Being knowledgeable in teaching culture

By contrast, expatriate teachers' strongest aspects were their "Fluency in speaking English" and "Motivating the student to learn English", while their skills in "Classroom management" and "Ability to teach grammar rules" were perceived to be low. Expatriate teachers' weakness in these two areas could be explained by their lack of experience in an educational context new to them, limited or no knowledge of the local language, and lack of metalinguistic awareness in English.

"Being a good model for the learner", where both groups of teachers were perceived as weak, could have been interpreted to mean two different things by the respondents; as a good learner model or a good language model. Due to the ambiguity, the respondents might have rated this low. Interestingly, administrators considered local and expatriate teachers equally successful in their "Ability to teach (English) speaking skills well", which contradicts their view of local teachers as poor in their fluency. Another finding that contradicts previous studies (Reves & Medgyes, 1994) is that administrators do not perceive local teachers as strong in teaching grammar rules.

## Discussion

Contrary to previous studies that showed that administrators find native-speakerness important in hiring decisions (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et al., 2004), the results of this study reveal a more nuanced view of native-speakerness as a criterion. According to the results, native-speakerness ranks seventh out of the eight criteria listed, with citizenship being the least important. The participants of this study do not consider native-speakerness more important than qualities such as educational background or teaching experience. However, although native-speakerness is not a main factor in making employment decisions, the presence of expatriates as part of a school's staff is deemed important by some administrators. The reason for the inclusion of expatriates may be that private schools feel the need to accommodate their students and their caregivers by

responding to their expectation of expatriate teachers on staff, a view shared by Braine (1999) and Alenazi (2014) as well. More expatriate teachers might signal a more prestigious school.

While native-speakerness ranks only seventh among the eight criteria, "pronunciation" is the second most important criterion, considered more important than teaching experience or experience of living abroad. The criterion "pronunciation" is a complex one because it may have meant different things to different participants. Some participants may consider good pronunciation a must for English teachers, regardless of one's native or nonnative speaker status. Considering the diversity in countries of origin, and that schools employ NESTs, non-local NNESTs, and locals, this explanation seems reasonable. On the other hand, the total absence or underrepresentation of some countries/regions in teachers' countries of origin may be an indicator of a different perception of "pronunciation". Although not intended by the researcher, the criterion "pronunciation" may have been perceived by some participants as a representation of native speakerness or citizenship. Then this means they may decide to hire or not to hire a teacher based on their pronunciation, which was documented as a discriminatory practice in hiring teachers by previous studies (Boyd, 2003; Buckingham, 2014). Additionally, absence of some countries/regions could also be due to a lack of applicants from those countries/regions. Therefore further exploration is needed to understand why and in what sense pronunciation is considered to be so important or whether certain accents or pronunciation are favored.

The results indicate that local teachers are strictly held to the requirement to hold an ELT degree or a valid ELT certificate, whereas similar requirements do not apply to expatriate teachers without ELT training, at least not to the same degree. This finding is consistent with those of other studies documenting how individuals without any professional qualifications or language teaching experience have the potential to be hired,

based solely on their native speaker status (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010). The expatriate teachers in this study are also offered several benefits. Although the study did not investigate whether local teachers were offered any benefits, only limited benefits are available for local teachers such as tuition-free education for their school-aged children or free lunches (personal observation). This suggests that qualified local teachers are subject to unequal treatment in this sense.

The strengths of expatriate teachers as perceived by the administrators are “Fluency in speaking English”, and of local teachers “Ability to use language teaching methods effectively”. Based on this observation, it is apparent that expatriate teachers are perceived as better in language use, whereas local teachers are perceived to be superior in teaching methods. Local teachers’ “Fluency in English” ranks only sixth out of the ten strengths listed. Considering that most English teaching is carried out by local teachers in EFL contexts, “Fluency in English” seems to be an area that needs improvement. Previous research showed that NNESTs perceive fluency in English as one of their weaknesses (Brinton, 1999). This problem can be addressed by including more language classes, with an emphasis on oral and written communication in teacher education programs. Encouraging students to participate in study abroad programs where they can improve their oral skills could be another suggestion. For expatriate teachers, their “Ability to teach grammar rules” and “Classroom management” are perceived as their least strong aspects. Classroom management was found to be a problematic area for NESTs in a recent study in the Hong Kong context (Ma, 2012b). Although the majority of respondents indicated that expatriate staff in their schools have training in teaching, there appears to be a need for more specific training focusing on the needs of the schools and learners. This finding is in line with research that puts forward the need for NESTs, especially, to improve their metalinguistic knowledge (Barratt, 2010).

Among the ten strengths, both groups of teachers are viewed as equally good in teaching speaking skills. This finding is interesting because, traditionally, native speakers are considered to be ideal language speakers and teachers and therefore better qualified to teach conversation classes. For example, in Árvai and Medgyes (2000)’s study, all but one native speaker teacher were asked to teach conversation classes whereas NNESTs taught grammar classes. The finding that administrators found both NESTs and NNESTs efficient in teaching speaking might indicate that these views are changing, as reflected in a participant’s comment: “We would prefer to hire a well-educated local teacher with efficient grammar knowledge and practical English knowledge, who can function better in this cultural and local environment, loves her students rather than a native speaker with low teaching abilities.” This statement also suggests that rather than taking an essentialist view of the abilities of expatriate or local teachers, we should bear in mind that language teachers’ effectiveness depends on their ability to teach successfully in their own contexts.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the picture in the EFL scene is quite different from that in ESL contexts, in the sense that although more and more expatriates are being hired for a variety of reasons, local teachers will continue to constitute the majority of English teachers in EFL contexts. Therefore, it can be suggested that although local teachers seeking employment in their own countries may not face as much competition with NESTs as in ESL contexts (compared to NNESTs functioning in ESL contexts), they may experience unequal treatment.

Some participants in the study reported that the expatriate teachers on their staff did not have any ELT related training and were hired based on some other minimum requirements such as fluent English speaking skills, possessing a teaching certificate, and so on. It seems that some expatriate teachers without adequate training in the teaching of English may be



hired. Based on this finding, two implications stand out. First, in order to create equal job opportunities for both local and expatriate teachers, both groups of teachers should be subject to similar requirements in hiring. Necessary precautions should be taken to prepare an environment where both local and expatriate teachers will be hired solely based on their professional qualities/qualifications. Second, expatriate teachers with insufficient training should be equipped with the necessary teaching skills before they start teaching. These teachers are mostly new both to the country and to the educational culture and practices. Preparing them to be better teachers in EFL contexts is an important issue that is rarely addressed in the literature.

While this study provides a general picture of Istanbul private school hiring preferences, more research is needed about the factors in the decision-making process, especially administrators' understanding of who counts as a native speaker of English or their definition of pronunciation (comprehensibility? native-like pronunciation? language skills?). It would also be valuable to explore the motivation behind the hiring of expatriate teachers. As the variety in teachers' countries suggests, expatriate teachers are not a homogenous group composed of both NESTs and NNESTs. In some cases local or non-local NNESTs are advertised as NESTs in order to meet the expectations of students or caregivers who demand native-speaker teachers (personal observation). When speaking of hiring, whether it matters if one is a NEST or NNEST expatriate could be investigated.

Teaching and learning English is a huge industry worldwide, so the presence of expatriate teachers possibly serves to promote schools in the eyes of the parents, a view shared by Garton (2000). At this point, parents' perceptions are worth studying. How do parents view the differences between local teachers and expatriate teachers? Further studies could be designed to include a countrywide sample of schools and combine the views of parents, students and administrators, to have a broader picture.

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