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THE ROLE OF NATIVE ENGLISH- SPEAKING TEACHERS IN STUDYING EFL IN UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES

ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ НОСІЇВ МОВИ У ВИКЛАДАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ У ЗВО УКРАЇНИ

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The article deals with the comparative analysis of traditional and innovative methods of teaching English at universities under conditions of internationalization of educational space. It examines the contributions of native and non-native teachers to an English Language Teaching (ELT) program in Ukraine. It stresses that, in spite of a recent upsurge in writing on issue of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the global discourse of English language teaching (ELT), the experiences of NNESTs working within their own state educational systems remain seriously under-investigated. Attitudes towards native and non-native English speaking teachers have typically been investigated through questionnaire surveys carried out by students of Oles Honchar Dnipro National University.

Key words: traditional and innovative methods of teaching English, native English-speaking teachers, non-native English-speaking teachers, English as a foreign language.

У статті здійснено компаративний аналіз традиційних та інноваційних методів викладання англійської мови у ЗВО в умовах інтернаціоналізації освітнього простору. Розглянуто розширення аудиторії та підвищення мотивації навчання за рахунок залучення носіїв мови в академічні програми вивчення англійської мови (ELT) в Україні. Водночас підкреслено, що, незважаючи на недавнє поживлення у світовому дискурсі дослідницького інтересу до досвіду неангломовних учителів (NNEST), що працюють у рамках власних державних освітніх систем, їхній внесок залишається серйозно недооціненим. Ставлення до вчителів-носіїв мови та вітчизняних освітян, що викладають іноземну мову у вишах України, досліджено методом анкетного опитування студентів Дніпровського національного університету імені Олеся Гончара.

Ключові слова: традиційні та інноваційні методи викладання, вчитель-носій мови, неангломовний викладач, англійська як іноземна мова.

В статье осуществлен компаративный анализ традиционных и инновационных методов преподавания английского языка в УВО в условиях интернационализации образовательного пространства. Рассмотрены условия расширения аудитории и повышения мотивации обучения за счет привлечения носителей языка в академические программы изучения английского языка (ELT) в Украине. В то же время подчеркнуто, что, несмотря на недавнее оживление в мировом дискурсе исследовательского интереса к опыту неанглоязычных преподавателей (NNEST), работающих в рамках отечественных государственных образовательных систем, их вклад остается серьезно недооцененным. Отношение к учителям-носителям языка и отечественным педагогам, преподающим иностранный язык в УВО Украины, исследованы методом анкетного опроса студентов Днепропетровского национального университета имени Олеся Гончара.

Ключевые слова: традиционные и инновационные методы преподавания, учитель-носитель языка, неанглоязычный преподаватель, английский как иностранный язык.

Introduction. With the overwhelming influence of English in the wake of the fast-growing trend of globalization, it is obvious that the number of those who learn it as a second (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) will only soar. Whether English should be taught by native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) or their non-native English-speaking counterparts

(NNESTs) is a widely disputed issue [1; 7; 8] nowadays. It has prompted researchers to investigate the effectiveness of these NESTs and NNESTs in the field of English language teaching.

Recent Research Analysis. As some scholars have suggested, the two groups of teachers have different styles and strategies. For example, Árva

and Medgyes pointed out that native teachers seem to be more tolerant towards students' errors and non-native teachers would be more committed to teaching [8, p. 369]. Clark & Paran [2, p. 10] state that NNESTs have some advantages such as the fact that they share students' first language and have a shared cultural background. Based on recent research [2; 7; 8], the first hypothesis is that university students would prefer a different kind of a teacher depending on whether background knowledge/first language is needed to fully grasp the subject. That means that NEST would be preferred to teach speaking, pronunciation, listening and culture; NNEST would be regarded as more suitable for grammar and learning strategies; and BOTH for vocabulary and reading. The second hypothesis is that the more the students are advanced, the more they will prefer being taught by BOTH [3; 6; 8; 10; 11].

Despite the fact that the results continue to give insights in language teaching and shed light on our way, most people have prejudices about NESTs and NNESTs. Generally, there have been positive attitudes towards NESTs and beliefs regarding their superiority especially in speaking and pronunciation teaching over their non-native counterparts.

Topicality. Ukraine has been ranked in the expanding circle of concentric circle model where English is used primarily as a foreign language. Traditionally, learning and teaching ESL/EFL has been predicated on the distinction between native and non-native speakers [3]. In Ukraine's ESL/EFL context, non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) still predominate over native English speaking teachers (NESTs). Although there is a higher number of NNESTs, NESTs seem to be favored more in the field of English teaching. They are often viewed in Ukraine as well as around the world as the embodiment of the English standard. Native speakers are endowed by non-native speakers with high level of credibility. In turn, non-native speakers are expected to follow the native speaker's vocabulary, grammar, idioms and culture.

However, the language one uses is extremely different from the language one teaches. English proficiency should be dependent on "what you know" rather than "who you are". Thus, from the early 1980s, the question of "who is a qualified English teacher?" has attracted more and more attention. In this study, we aim to examine how students in an English language teaching (ELT) program in Dnipro national university perceive their NESTs and NNESTs.

This article **examines** the contributions of native and non-native teachers to an English Language Teaching (ELT) program in Ukraine. It stresses that,

in spite of a recent upsurge in writing on issue of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the global discourse of English language teaching (ELT), the experiences of NNESTs working within their own state educational systems remain seriously under-investigated. To help to redress this, the article explores, from their own perspectives, how a group of NNESTs experience English teaching in Ukraine, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Though this article only has space to consider two aspects of the teachers' lives and careers – classroom methods and commitment to teaching – there is hope that it will contribute to an understanding of the many and varied locally-based practices of ELT, as well as helping to correct a monolithic view of ELT based on western conceptions of practice. The importance of NNESTs of English being 'native' in terms of their situational teaching competence is, accordingly, given due weight.

Presenting research material. Although there are more and more voices for more equality between native and non-native teachers, the actual situation is quite another story. Todd & Pojanapunya focus on the conflict between the educational principle of equality between NESTs and NNESTs and the commercial realities of Ukraine. Language private schools and courses offering English language programs often promote themselves by employing NESTs [1, p. 132]. Ukrainian students aspire to the British and American English standard, which has, in turn, led to a blind adoration of native-speaker as the norm. Although more and more EFL learners accept the concept of "World English", it is not easy for many to alter their conscious preference for native speakers.

Among many definitions of who a 'native speaker' is, Cook's definition appears to be one of the most popular. Cook describes a *native speaker* as the one who acquires his/her first language in their childhood [3, p. 207]. This suggests that adult language learners can never be native speakers of a language other than their first. Yet there are some adult learners who aim to achieve native-like speaking and high level of proficiency in the target language.

Recent studies indicate that such learners have very positive perceptions of native speakers and prefer to learn a language under their tuition to reach their own goals. However, it is suggested that non-native speakers, generally, have the same features that native speakers do have [3]. That is, except from the concept of nativeness, many other characteristics of native speakers are also shared by non-native speakers.

Lewier and Bilmona argue that although many people prefer NESTs as the best ones, NNESTs may

also have some superiority over the NESTs, and students may benefit from NNESTs more than NESTs in some cases [8]. According to Medgyes, a NNEST can predict and prevent students' possible problems with the language(s), he can talk to students in their first language, and she/he can teach language learning strategies more successfully since (s) he can be a better and more realistic learner model of English. (S) he can be more sensitive to students. In another work, Medgyes states that NNESTs generally feel unsafe while speaking the language which they are teaching [7]. As a consequence of this feeling, they become more pessimistic and more aggressive. It becomes clear that pessimistic NNESTs spare less time on pronunciation and vocabulary than they do on grammar.

Ryan points out that teachers' attitudes and belief strongly affect students' behavior [3, p. 45]. Native teachers show more self-esteem than non-native teachers. Bulter examines the influence between native and non-native teachers' accents on students' performance; the result indicates that native teachers tend to have more confidence in their use of English [3]. NESTs are more aware of learners' needs, they speak English more confidently, and they are potentially more accomplished users of English.

Some scholars claim that NESTs use authentic oral language and provide students with more cultural information. Supportively, Modiano states that especially young learners have positive attitudes towards their NESTs as they display a good model of the target language. In a similar vein, Lasagabaster and Sierra conclude that students' perceptions toward NESTs are quite positive regarding their development of language skills such as speaking, writing, and reading [7, p. 241]. Parallely, Falk stresses the idea that target language students who admire the culture, like the people that speak the language, have a desire to become familiar with or even are eager to integrate into the society in which the language is used are the most successful ones [6, p. 45]. Additionally, Rampton argue that for most cases students are in favor of NESTs, claiming that students are willing to learn from native speaker in a way that they have a desire to enter into the target language and interact with the native speakers [10, p. 99].

Another aspect that can play a determining role in perceptions of students towards NESTs in education field is motivation. Shimizu emphasizes that motivation of the students could be detrimentally affected by the negative attitudes of students towards their teacher [1, p. 132]. Unfortunately, such an influence is not limited to the classroom context; it can sustain its adverse effect throughout the learning experiences of students. Dornyei suggests that whoever

the teacher is, native or non-native, he or she should promote integrative values by encouraging a positive and open-minded disposition towards the target language and its speakers in such a way that language learners can develop a positive attitude towards native speakers [4]. It is suggested that only in this way students can best benefit from native speakers.

Medgyes notes that an ideal native-speaking English teacher should possess a high degree of proficiency in the learner's mother language [9, p. 342]. It could be easier for NESTs in the EFL setting, but compared to that in the EFL setting, NESTs would have difficulties in the ESL setting. In Medgyes' book, he discusses the differences between native and non-native English speakers' use of English, general attitude, attitude to teaching language, and attitude to teaching culture. In terms of their use of English, he notes that NESTs use real English and use it more confidently compared to NNESTs. This argument has been questioned by those who stress that a native speaker does not mean to inherently speak his first language well [3; 8; 11]. Using language as the first one is not necessarily equal to language competence. Barratt and Contra accuse NESTs of discouraging learners since they have no capacity or willingness to make comparisons and contrasts to the students' native language. Despite such disadvantages native speakers are still more popular and preferable in the English language teaching profession.

What difference does being native speaker of English make in the ESL/EFL classroom? Cook argues that language teaching would benefit by paying more attention to the ESL user rather than concentrating on the native speaker [3, p. 124]. One group of teachers should not necessarily be superior to another. What teachers should care about is how to improve their teaching through more professional training in linguistics and sociolinguistics. Most of all, they need to understand better the students' needs. Nunan asserts that "if English is a necessity, steps should be taken to ensure that teachers are adequately trained in language teaching methodology appropriate to a range of learner ages and stages, that teachers' own language skills are significantly enhanced, that classroom realities meet curricular rhetoric, and that students have sufficient exposure to English in instructional context" [2, p. 610]. In Ukraine, English has become a necessity. Steps have also been taken to increase English proficiency in general. However, the outcome is far from being realized. Students' communicative competence has long been neglected and hindered due to teacher-related, student-related, and educational system constraints. Teacher-related problems derive largely from NNEST's deficiency in

spoken English and lack of socio-linguistic and cultural sophistication [3]. Students' low proficiency in English and passive learning style do not help matters. Student reticence and passivity has a cultural interpretation. Although different perspectives exist, many foreign teachers express a good deal of frustration in the face of student reticence and passivity [7; 11].

It is well-known that traditional EFL instruction in Ukraine focuses on teacher-centered, grammar-translation, and exam-oriented approaches. These approaches fail to meet the students' need to express or comprehend messages in English when they study abroad. Ko attributes students' low proficiency in English to inappropriate teaching methods [3, p. 192]. Scovel notes grammar-translation and exam-oriented assessment make it harder for ESL/EFL students to use English as a communicative medium [11, p. 107].

Assuming that the official national language, Ukrainian, is best taught and learned from a native Ukrainian speaker, then it certainly would follow that English ought to be accorded the same pedagogical consideration. From a linguistic point of view, it is easy to observe the difference between NESTs and NNESTs in terms of language competence. Phillipson uses the term "the native speaker fallacy" [10, p. 65] to refer to unequal treatment of non-native English speakers. In Ukrainian private language schools, NESTs are paid higher salaries and receive more respect from students and parents alike. A mere manipulator of the language, however, does not guarantee a good English teacher in the classroom. Ebele notes that:

English speakers benefit from the usual exotic allure of any foreign language, and they benefit from the commonly accepted idea that their native language is a practical skill useful in the workplace. In many cases, they were hired for teaching jobs solely on the basis of being a native speaker [5, p. 339].

This study indicates that the native speaker still has a privileged position in English language teaching; native speakers represent both the model speaker and the ideal teacher.

A survey intended to measure students' expectation on the teaching of native-speaking teachers was conducted in November 2018 by the Department of Foreign Languages for the Humanities of Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. Of 187 students, 134 regard it necessary to have native-speaking teachers in the department. When the participants were asked about the comparison between NESTs and NNESTs, the most commonly stated distinction between them was the opportunity of

using the mother tongue of the learners. Most of the participants (68%) claimed that the ability to communicate in their first language was an advantage for teachers.

More than half of the students commented that it was easier to catch up with the speech of a NNEST than the speech of a NEST. 58% of the participants stated that understanding a NEST was harder for them which might result in an ineffective communication atmosphere.

One strong expectation from the students concerns the NES teachers' teaching attitude. They anticipate that NES teachers will encourage them a lot in a very relaxed classroom atmosphere, and behave like friends with them.

The majority of the students expect the NES teachers to be flexible, use more activities than lectures, correct their pronunciation, assign little or no homework, and rarely test them. There seems to be a set of related expectations from the students on NESTs. Expecting a relaxed class, the students hope that NESTs will employ more activities and bring up various topics as the circumstance allows without sticking to a certain teaching plan or covering all the necessary content. The role of NES teachers, in the students' eyes, is mainly to be a model and correct their pronunciation, instead of being a traditional teacher who demands formal assessment like assignments and tests. In other words, the students wish to have fun in the class while improving their listening and speaking at the same time.

Expectedly, having the native accent was found to be the most distinguishing feature between both types of teachers. 70% of the participants claimed that this feature was the one that makes NESTs valuable.

Findings. Affected by globalization, Ukrainian parents and students are more or less changing their impression toward native-speaking English teachers. They expect native English teachers teach "real" and "authentic" English, namely the accepted standard English. Foreign teachers are also more popular because of their appearance, way of talking, and flexible teaching approach [7; 8; 9]. The reality, however, is very different in terms of teaching approach, teaching attitude, and knowledge of English. For NES teacher to teach better and local students to learn more, the expectation gap between NES teachers and local students needs to be bridged. This can be done in a myriad of policies and measures. Here we suggest three possible ways to amend this perceptual deviance that may harm the teaching and learning process. First, universities and high schools should consider how to interact with NES teachers in an orientation meeting for incoming new student before

any course begins if there are NES teachers working for the institute. They should also offer training sessions for NES teachers who have little experiences teaching students from a different culture. Second, the school might consider having a NES teacher team up with a local teacher or teaching assistant to

make the instruction more effective. Third, both NES teachers and local teachers are suggested to rethink their roles and adjust self-expectation as the world changes rapidly. The most direct way to close the conceptual gap between the teacher and students is to take time to discuss it.

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