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REVIEW

The Evaluation of the Employment of Foreign National Teachers in Turkey in the Context of English as a Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

It is known that students who learn English, which is the *lingua franca* of the world, as a foreign language in Turkey do not have satisfactory levels of competency. The present study evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of employing foreign nationals as English as a foreign language teachers in Turkey. As a part of the evaluation, foreign language teaching and teacher's education in Turkey and the recruitment processes of foreign nationals as well as the potential contributions they could make to the Turkish education system are analyzed in line with the related literature, laws and regulations, and statistics. It is understood that foreign nationals could serve as role models for both teachers and students in terms of pronunciation and the use of grammar, pave the way for communicative use of the English language, and increase intercultural awareness of both Turkish citizens and themselves. However, considering the laws and regulations, it is understood that hiring foreign nationals as EFL teachers is not an easy process and that there are a number of factors which can restrict the process. For example, the criteria set by the Ministry of National Education (i.e. being a Turkish citizen and having obtained a sufficient score in the public personnel selection examination) makes it almost impossible to hire foreign nationals in elementary and secondary public schools. Lastly, although hiring foreign nationals to teach a language has the potential to make a positive impact in the Turkish education system, the emergence of such positive impact depends on Turkish educators being aware of foreign nationals' contributions and ensuring a work environment that prioritizes cooperation rather than competition among Turkish and foreign national educators.

Keywords: English as a foreign language teaching, foreign national, higher education, primary and secondary education, teacher, Turkey

Introduction

English, the use of which was limited to the British Isles in the 16th century, has become an international language and is described as the *lingua franca* of the world (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2001). According to Crystal (2003), the current status of English is the result of the industrial revolution that took place in the 19th century in Britain which was accompanied by trade and colonialism activities. This status continued due to the political and economic dominance of the United States of America which won World War II (Crystal, 2003). Although English is used as the mother tongue in the United States of America and England, it is also used as a second/official language (i.e., the Philippines) or as a foreign language (i.e., Turkey) in many countries across the world due to obtaining the *lingua franca* status. In time, the number of individuals who speak English as a second or foreign language has surpassed the number of those who speak it as their mother tongue (Graddol, 2006). Ethnologue statistics published by Eberhard et al. (2020) show that the number of those who speak English as a second or foreign language ($n=898,396,120$) is almost two and a half times higher (243%) than those who speak English as their mother tongue ($n=369,704,070$). In short, the English language obtained different statuses in many different countries over time. The model that is mostly utilized in order to categorize the different statuses that the English language obtained is Kachru's (1987) three-circle model (Figure 1). The circle in the middle of Kachru's (1997) model is titled as the *inner circle* and it represents countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States,

and the United Kingdom where the English language is both dominantly used as the mother tongue by the public and has official status. The second circle in the middle is titled as the *outer circle* and it represents countries such as India, Malaysia, and Singapore which were affected by English colonialism activities, and even though they gained their independence in time, the English language continued its presence in those countries as an official/second language. In such countries, English is generally used in social life, education, and/or bureaucracy. The third and last circle is titled as the *expanding circle* and it represents countries such as Brazil, Egypt, and Turkey where the English language does not generally have a communicative function in daily life and the teaching of it is limited to the schools where students have limited exposure to it.

The countries that Kachru (1997) grouped within the *inner circle* are recognized as the group that decides on the rules and standards of English and they have been treated as the owners of the English language. However, the significant majority of those who speak English as a second or foreign language due to its *lingua franca* status has brought along the question of who the authority(ies) is(are) to decide on the ownership of the English language and the rules/standards of it. Researchers who advocate that English is the *lingua franca* prioritize that learners of English speak in an intelligible and fluent way rather than speak it like a native (Seidlhofer, 2001). This approach resulted in the initiation of a process where English(es) of the *inner circle* countries will no longer be a standard that is required to be reached. In other words, the *inner circle* countries' role in establishing the rules and standards has weakened as well as their

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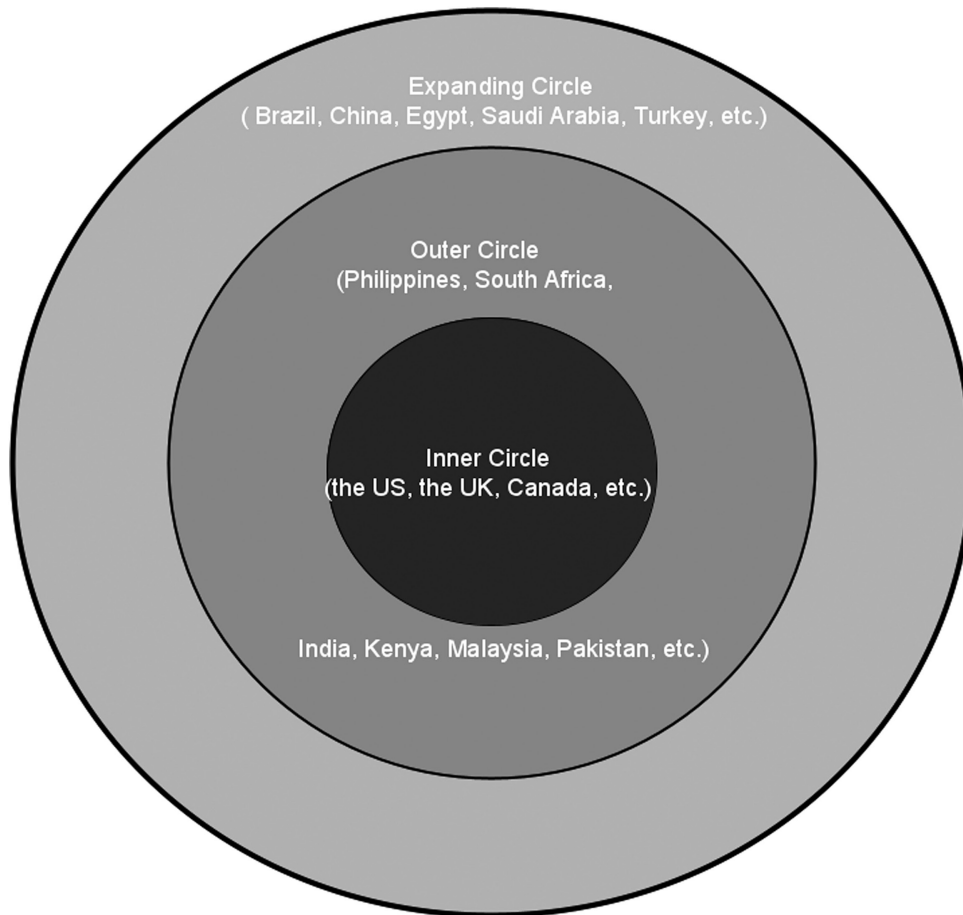


Figure 1.
Kachru's (1997) Three-Circle English Language Categorization.

status of being the owners of English (Llurda, 2004). As such, Crystal (2002) noted that there is no longer any owner of the English language.

Since it is the language of finance, technology, and science, the interest toward teaching/learning English is increasing day by day in our globalized world and English language teaching/learning has become a big market as a result of this interest. Market analysts predict that the value of this market will reach the sum of 50 billion dollars by 2027 (GlobeNewsire, 2022). In such a huge market, not only the quality of teaching/learning materials but also who teaches English matter. In relation to this, teachers who come/are from the *inner circle* countries and speak English as their native tongue are compared to teachers who come/are from the *outer/expanding circle* and have learned English as a second or foreign language (Braine, 1999). The present study aims to evaluate the recruitment of foreign nationals as English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers who are generally given priority in the recruitment process due to the assumption that they are native speakers (but in reality they can be from *inner*, *outer*, and *expanding circle* countries) within the context of the Turkish education system. It is considered that evaluating the recruitment of foreign nationals in our country (Turkey, an *expanding circle* country) will contribute toward the improvement of the current education system. In order to provide context to the evaluation, English language teaching/learning processes in Turkey are explained below.

English as a Foreign Language Teaching in Turkey and Its Importance

Although different foreign languages (i.e. Arabic, French, German) are offered in schools in Turkey, the analysis of the number

of teachers appointed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to teach each language suggests that the most frequently taught foreign language in Turkey is English (MoNE, 2020). Considering it as the *lingua franca*, Genç (2004) underlined that one of the main reasons for the teaching of English in Turkey is to facilitate the integration of the Turkish population into the world. Similarly, Özkan et al. (2016) emphasized the need for teaching a second/foreign language at an early age as well as the need for individuals who can speak multiple languages in the process of becoming an information society. In line with that, the reforms carried out by MoNE resulted in English being taught as early as the second grade in schools in Turkey (MoNE, 2018a). The English language does not have an official status in Turkey which is represented as an *expanding circle* country in Kachru's (1997) model. Thus, it is taught as a foreign language. Parallel to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, MoNE's curriculum for English aims to develop learners' communicative skills in foreign language (MoNE, 2018a, 2018b). In this sense, the updated curriculum focuses on the teaching of integrated skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and fluency rather than grammar (MoNE, 2018a, 2018b). In spite of this, however, the competency levels of Turkish learners of English indicate that the curriculum goals have not been reached (Özkan et al., 2016). Education First English Proficiency Index results in 2021, a test carried out with nationals of different countries every year, indicated that Turkey was in the 70th place out of 100 countries with 478 metaspore and was grouped along with other countries in the "low proficiency" category (EF, 2021). And it was 34th out of 35 countries in Europe. Undoubtedly, there are many different variables that may have contributed toward such results. However, the role that teachers play in teaching/learning processes cannot be ignored, especially considering

the fact that they make up the second most important factor (the first is student characteristics) that impacts learning (OECD, 2005).

English as a Foreign Language Teachers in Turkey

The statistics published by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) ATLAS show that there are a total of 72 programs in Turkey that train EFL teachers (CoHE ATLAS, 2022a). The same statistics show that a total of 4748 candidates have been placed in those 72 programs across Turkey in 2021 (the average number of candidates for each program is 66; CoHE ATLAS, 2022b). The exam which has the highest impact on placements for EFL teacher training programs is the Foreign Language Test (FLT). The average FLT score of the candidates placed in those 72 programs in 2021 was 66.08 out of 80 questions (CoHE ATLAS, 2022a). That score equals a success rate of 83%. In this sense, it is considered that those who have been placed in an EFL teacher training program have high levels of English competency, which is in parallel to findings in the literature (see e.g., Alyaz et al., 2013). However, the analysis of the foreign language exams carried out by the Student Selection and Placement Center (SSPC) suggests that those tests, unfortunately, do not focus on all language skills but rather measure grammar and vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills of participants (Polat, 2020). Even though the English language teaching curriculum focuses on the teaching of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, it is understood that this focus is not reflected in FLT. Moreover, English First (EF, 2021) report underlined that English language teaching in Turkey does not focus on practical communication skills. Consequently, while the intent to teach language skills in a holistic manner is articulated in the curriculum, a number of reasons (i.e. the focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills in the exams taking place in schools) prevent the practice of the curriculum in its entirety (see e.g., Vural, 2017).

On a different note, the curriculum followed in EFL teacher training programs in Turkey include general pedagogy courses (i.e., educational psychology, evaluation, and assessment), general knowledge and culture courses (i.e., information technologies and community service), and content and pedagogical content knowledge courses (i.e., oral communication skills, teaching of language skills, materials development in English language teaching; CoHE, 2022). Unlike the FLT that focuses on the measurement of grammar and vocabulary knowledge, EFL teacher training programs does include courses that aim the development of all language skills as well as how to teach them. Nevertheless, the analysis of the questions in the Public Personnel Selection Exam (PPSE) and Professional Teaching Knowledge-English (PTK-English) test, which all EFL teacher training program graduates wishing to become teachers in public schools have to take, indicate that the focus of the test in the language knowledge part, like the FLT, is on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (see e.g., PPSE-PTK-English; SSPC, 2018). It is also worth noting that most of the questions in the test were focused on English language teaching, but those questions were mostly at the level of remembering information (SSPC, 2018).

The analysis of the statistics for the PPSE-PTK-English test in 2020¹ showed that the average participant score was 35.6 out of 75 questions (SSPC, 2018). This indicates that the success rate in the test was below 50%. Considering that those candidates had an average success rate of 80% when they were placed to study in teacher training programs, the fact that the average score in the PPSE-PTK-English test was below 50% is a topic that should not be taken lightly. There are two possible explanations for such an outcome:

- 1) It is possible that teacher candidates' language competency levels decreased after they started studying in their respective teacher training programs. The fact that English is taught as a foreign language in Turkey rationalizes this possibility. Since English does not have an official status in Turkey, its teaching/learning is generally limited to school environments and this decreases the possibility that they would be exposed to the target language. Consequently, there is a chance for attrition in individuals' language skills when they are not put into use. This process is referred to as language attrition (Hansen, 2001).
- 2) It is also possible that the teacher candidates did not gain the skills, which they were expected to develop during their tuition, at sufficient levels (i.e., teaching of foreign language skills), and this was reflected in the PTK-English test. That is to say, even though the candidates might have answered the language competency questions correctly, they might have been unsuccessful in questions that measure their abilities to teach English as a foreign language. Unfortunately, SSPC does not publish such statistics, which prevents the testing of this hypothesis.

It should not be forgotten that the success of any language teaching ecosystem depends both on language teachers having a high level of language competency and their ability to effectively teach language skills. The analysis of the literature suggests that there has been an expectation that revisions in the curriculum would have a positive impact on the teaching of foreign languages; however, the fact that such expectations have not been met is blamed upon the teachers not having the necessary language competency levels (see e.g., Zok, 2010). In this sense, it can be argued that there is a need for studies aiming to increase language teachers' competencies. Recruiting foreign nationals to teach EFL has the potential to contribute to the success of the English language teaching system in Turkey in different ways that are articulated below.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Recruiting Foreign National Teachers to teach Foreign Language (English) in Turkey

It is important to define what is meant by "foreign national teachers" prior to discussing the advantages or disadvantages of hiring them to teach English in Turkey. As such, the term "foreign national teacher" is perceived as a synonym to a "native speaker teacher" in Turkey. However, this is not the case in reality. Thus, in the present study, the term is used to include two groups of English teachers: (1) those who were born and/or grew up in *inner circle* countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States and speak English as their native tongue and (2) those who come from countries represented in the *outer* or *expanding circle* and who have learned English as a second or foreign language and completed a degree to teach it.

Firstly, the advantages and disadvantages of recruiting those whose native tongues are English will be evaluated. Undoubtedly, the biggest advantage of teachers in this group is their linguistic competence (due to having internalized the rules of the target language, English). In this sense, a special interest and attention have been placed on native speakers by not only employers but also learners, and being native speakers of English is generally considered as a reason for preference in language teaching jobs (Holliday, 2005). It is perceived that native speakers of English can be good role models, especially in terms of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and speaking skills (Bayyurt, 2006; Skliar, 2014; Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012).

Another advantage of native speakers is that they possess the cultural knowledge of the language they are hired to teach. Considering the close relationship between language and culture (Hall, 2012; Tüm & Kunt, 2013), compared to their counterparts who are non-native speakers of English, native speakers can be considered to be one step ahead in terms

¹ The last PPSE-PTK-English test whose statistics have been announced by SSPC is the test conducted in 2020.

of teaching various language structures in their cultural contexts. As such, related literature supports the idea that native speakers of English are perceived to be sources of the target language culture (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Carless, 2006; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Although native speakers of English can be considered to be transmitters of their language, a number of issues arising from the fact that English has become the *lingua franca* of the world (i.e., who the owners of the English language are, most of the communication in English taking place between non-native speakers, and so on) have brought along discussions regarding which English culture should be taught (i.e. American, British, Canadian, and so on) and even whether it is necessary to teach about the English culture(s). Such a discussion is beyond the scope of the present study because the present study, in line with the English language curriculum suggested by the MoNE in Turkey, focuses on the teaching of intercultural communication. In this sense, studies reported that when native speakers of English introduced their native cultures to Turkish students, it increased the latter's intercultural communication skills (Şahin, 2015). Nevertheless, considering the fact that foreign national non-native English language teachers can come from many different countries, it is possible that such teachers can offer further opportunities to both their Turkish students and colleagues to meet and learn about different cultures, and this can also be considered as an advantage to develop learners' intercultural communication skills.

In addition, although native speakers are considered to be role models in terms of pronunciation, there are instances where even native speakers speak their language with such a terrible accent that they are unintelligible. For example, Braine (2010), who conducts research on non-native teachers of English, communicated their experiences with an Australian (an *inner circle* country) and an Asian (an *expanding* or *outer circle* country) and noted that both people's accents were unintelligible. At this point, it is important to remember the focus on intelligibility within the context of English as a *lingua franca* (Seidlhofer, 2001). From this point of view, experiences that can be gained with an intelligible accent (regardless of being a native or non-native speaker of English) can allow learners to be exposed to different accents and contribute to the development of their language skills (Braine, 2010). Similarly, it has been noted in the literature that non-native English language teachers generally experience problems in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and language skills (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimiy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999) as well as speaking anxiety (Tüm & Kunt, 2013). In this sense, working alongside and practicing with foreign nationals who (will) teach English has the potential to develop Turkish English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' language skills (i.e. pronunciation, fluency, and listening) as well as decrease their speaking anxiety.

Although native speakers of English have higher levels of linguistic competence compared to non-natives, it does not mean that people in the former group are better teachers (Braine, 1999). As such, speaking a language as a mother tongue does not necessarily equip an individual with the ability to teach it (Harmer, 1991). In addition, as stated above, the value of speaking English with an intelligible accent (not necessarily with a native one) has increased due to the *lingua franca* status of English. Consequently, speaking English as a mother tongue is not necessarily considered as an advantage, as it contributes toward recognizing native speaker fallacy among teachers of English who speak it as a mother tongue and who speak it as a second or foreign language. In fact, non-native speakers of English who teach English are as valuable as those who speak it as their mother tongue (Braine, 2010). It can even be considered that non-native English language teachers are even better teachers than the native ones because of the following reasons:

- 1) They have been through the process of learning a second/foreign language and can present themselves as role models that students can follow.

- 2) They can teach language learning strategies more effectively.
- 3) They can provide learners with more detailed information regarding the structure of the English language.
- 4) They can better anticipate learning difficulties and take appropriate measures accordingly (Medgyes, 1992).

Moreover, considering the below topics, it can be argued that hiring foreign nationals in both groups (native and non-native) can offer certain advantages in Turkey. Firstly, hiring foreign nationals can help the process of Turkish EFL teachers keeping their English competency levels high and support them in reaching the 90-95% interval level in the interlanguage continuum proposed by Medgyes (1992). It should be noted that language learning is a life-long process and just like the fact that people can learn something new everyday, they can also forget different aspects of the language when they do not use it (language attrition; Hansen, 2001). The analysis of the primary and secondary school English language curriculum shows that the curriculum aims the development of language skills at A1 (beginner) to A2 (beginner) levels in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (MoNE, 2018a).

The analysis of the high school English language curriculum (MoNE, 2018b), on the other hand, shows that the aim is to develop students' language skills from A1 (beginner) to B2 (medium). In this sense, it can be understood that even though the teachers have high levels of English language competency (i.e., C1, advanced), the level of English that they would teach will be lower than their levels. And, unless they pay specific attention to keeping their language skills high, it is possible that they experience language attrition after a while. In other words, the language competencies of those teachers can fall back in the interlanguage continuum proposed by Medgyes (1992). Considering this, having foreign nationals who are integrated into the Turkish education system can provide language teachers with increased opportunities to be exposed to the English language and allow them to frequently practice and use their language skills. Such an approach will contribute toward keeping Turkish EFL teachers' language skills high, being exposed to an intelligible English pronunciation, and increasing their intercultural communication skills.

Another advantage of hiring foreign nationals in Turkey is their potential to contribute to networking processes (i.e., establishing eTwinning and/or Erasmus project partnerships) in their respective organizations, thanks to their social background and environment. That is to say, such teachers can take on the responsibility to create bridges between the organizations they work at in Turkey and the organizations they previously worked at in other countries and contribute to the development of cultural diversity and multiculturalism which are among the goals set by the European Union which Turkey is trying to be the part of (Camilleri & Gritter, 2016).

Last but not least, considering that foreign national language teachers complete their degrees outside Turkey, the opportunity arises for collegiality between foreign nationals and Turkish EFL teachers in which teachers can discuss, compare, and contrast different educational approaches and share experiences. Such an approach has the potential to increase the quality of education offered in schools. The importance of employing foreign nationals to teach alongside Turkish EFL teachers becomes more apparent when we consider that one of the goals of the Erasmus Teacher Academies (one of the initiatives developed by the European Commission, E.C., 2022) is the exchange of good practices between countries.

The Process of Recruiting Foreign National English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers within the Turkish Education System

The process of recruiting foreign national EFL teachers in Turkey can be analyzed in two categories: (1) recruitment procedures at the

tertiary level and (2) recruitment procedures at the primary and secondary school level. The details of recruiting foreign national educators at the tertiary level can be found in the 34th article of the Higher Education Law (Law number 2547; Higher Education Law, 1981). This law allows Turkish higher education institutions to offer job contracts to foreign national educators for a period between 3 months and 2 years provided that the ratio of foreign nationals to Turkish nationals does not surpass 2% in a given higher education institution. In an effort to increase the quality of education offered at the tertiary level, the CoHE has revised the “Rules and Procedures of Recruiting Foreign National Lecturers” on January 18, 2020, and the minimum requirements for recruiting foreign national EFL teachers to teach in English language preparation classes have been updated (CoHE, 2020). According to the changes, in addition to the criteria of having a bachelor’s degree or higher in linguistics, literature, comparative literature, teaching, or educational sciences, those whose native tongues are English should now have a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience in an internationally recognized and accredited language center or possess a (CELTA) Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults/(DELTA) Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults certificate (CoHE, 2020). The recruitment processes of foreign nationals who are non-native speakers of English depend on similar criteria (graduating from a bachelor’s degree or higher that is associated with the English language and having a 2-year experience of teaching English in an internationally recognized and accredited language center or possessing CELTA/DELTA). As discussed in the previous section, speaking a language as a mother tongue does not necessarily guarantee that an individual will be able to teach it. In this sense, the new criteria introduced by CoHE (having teaching experience or internationally recognized language teaching certificates) can, indeed, be considered as a positive development that aims to increase the quality of language teaching processes.

Ministry of National Education in Turkey is the body that coordinates the foreign national recruitment processes in primary and secondary schools. And teacher recruitment criteria are detailed in the second section of the MoNE Teacher Recruitment and Appointment Regulations (MoNE, 2022). The second clause in Article 5 states that those who will be recruited to teaching roles should meet the general criteria specified in the 48th article of the Law Number 657 (MoNE, 2022). The analysis of the 48th article of the Public Servants Law (Law Number 657) shows that the first criterion is “being a Turkish citizen.” This indicates that foreign nationals (unless they have earned the right to become Turkish citizens) cannot be recruited in public primary or secondary schools. Furthermore, even if they have earned the right to become Turkish citizens, the recruitment process would still be difficult. As such, considering that foreign nationals do not generally speak Turkish very well, it becomes almost impossible for them to succeed in the PPSE which is another requirement in the MoNE Teacher Recruitment and Appointment Regulations (Article 5).

On the other hand, the analysis of MoNE’s regulations for educational institutions that follow special programs and conduct projects (MoNE, 2016) indicates that foreign nationals, provided that they meet certain conditions, can be recruited in private educational institutions. Nevertheless, the recruitment process can be long and cumbersome. According to those regulations, an employer should first apply to MoNE and receive a prior authorization for the foreign national who will be hired and then the employer should apply to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to get a work permit (MoNE, 2016).

The comparison of foreign national recruitment processes at tertiary level with recruitment processes in primary and secondary school levels suggests that it is almost impossible to hire foreign national

educators in primary or secondary schools (in the context of public schools) and it is difficult and cumbersome (in the context of private schools). Considering that the goal of the English language curriculum in primary and secondary school level is to get learners to reach A1 and A2 levels (MoNE, 2018a) and to reach A1 and B2 level in high school level (MoNE, 2018b), it is understood that Turkish EFL teachers can potentially teach language skills that are below their level. If such a situation continues over a long period of time, then Turkish EFL teachers can potentially experience language attrition which would negatively affect language teaching/learning processes. It is worth paying attention to the fact that there are very limited opportunities to recruit foreign nationals in Turkish primary, secondary, and high schools, especially considering the fact that hiring foreign national EFL teachers can provide their Turkish counterparts with opportunities to practice, preserve, and develop their language skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study aimed to provide an evaluation of recruiting foreign nationals to teach foreign languages (in this case English) in Turkey. The analysis of related literature, law, and regulations suggested that hiring foreign nationals (both native and non-native speakers of English) to teach English can have a positive impact on teaching/learning processes at all levels of the Turkish education system. The mentioned positive effects include but are not limited to (a) native speakers of English serving as role models in terms of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and speaking skills; (b) considering the criterion of “intelligibility” within the context of English as a *lingua franca*, contributions of foreign nationals (both native and non-natives) to the development of their students’ and colleagues’ communicative language skills and decreasing the chances of language attrition; (c) contributing to the development of multiculturalism, thanks to introducing their own culture to Turkish students and teachers and providing students and their Turkish colleagues with the opportunity to introduce the Turkish culture to them; and lastly (d) providing opportunities for collegiality in which foreign national teachers can discuss, compare, and contrast between educational approaches, methods, and/or techniques of teaching languages in their home countries and Turkey.

The analysis of foreign national EFL teacher recruitment processes indicates that the CoHE allows the recruitment of foreign nationals at the tertiary level and the recent revisions regarding the criteria for recruitment (i.e., having a bachelor’s degree or higher related to the teaching of English and having previous work experience) both aim and also have the qualities necessary to increase the quality of English language teaching/learning processes in Turkish universities. It is understood that CoHE is responsible for the employment of the foreign nationals at the tertiary level, and the authority to recruit foreign nationals to work as teachers in primary and/or secondary school level belongs to the MoNE. However, the analysis of laws and regulations related to the recruitment of foreign nationals in Turkish public schools (i.e., the Public Servants Law, law number 657, MoNE Teacher Recruitment and Appointment Regulations) indicates that the recruitment of such individuals is quite restrictive (i.e. being a Turkish citizen and succeeding in the PPSE administered in Turkish). The law and regulations seem to be relatively less restrictive for private educational institutions (i.e., no need for being a Turkish citizen). It should, nevertheless, be underlined that the recruitment of foreign nationals to teach English in Turkey has the potential to increase the quality of language education offered. Especially considering that Turkish EFL teachers who teach English at lower levels are susceptible to experiencing language attrition, having foreign national counterparts can allow Turkish EFL teachers to continuously practice and develop their language skills (thus decreasing the likelihood of experiencing language attrition).

Although the present study argues that hiring foreign national EFL teachers in the Turkish education system will have positive outcomes, the emergence of the mentioned outcomes depends on meeting certain conditions. For example, in 2011, MoNE announced its project “The Development of Foreign Language Teaching” which planned to recruit 10,000 native English teachers every year over the course of 4 years to work alongside Turkish EFL teachers (Hürriyet, 2011). However, teachers and teacher candidates reacted against the project since its details were not sufficiently communicated to the public (Coşkun, 2013). The fear that Turkish EFL teachers will be replaced by foreign nationals and foreign nationals will earn more than their Turkish counterparts were among the reasons for being against the project as reported by teachers and teacher candidates (Coşkun, 2013). Therefore, it can be considered that the requirements for the success of recruiting foreign nationals to increase the quality of language education offered in Turkey are, at the very least, to ensure that Turkish EFL teachers are aware of the advantages brought by working alongside foreign national teachers and to create a work environment where teachers feel they can collaboratively develop each others’ teaching practice. As such, working alongside foreign national teachers and being able to communicate with them have been found to increase teachers’ self-sufficiency skills, which can, indirectly, increase their performance at work (Memduhoğlu & Çelik, 2015).

On a different note, an alternative proposal can be made about the negative perceptions regarding how much Turkish EFL teachers and their foreign counterparts would earn. A number of arrangements can be made to offer a similar version of the sabbatical program run by CoHE to be put into practice by MoNE. As such, agreements can be made with other countries for the exchange of foreign national EFL teachers rather than recruitment where foreign nationals will swap places with their Turkish counterparts for a certain period of time. In fact, such kinds of practices are readily available as part of the Erasmus program supported by the European Commission and teachers can be assigned to teach abroad for a period between 2 and 365 days (National Agency, 2022). Then, it becomes sensible to set a goal to make such practices more common and allow the exchanges to take place for longer periods of time.

The ultimate goal of the education community is to increase the quality of education, and the present study aimed to contribute to the literature by providing an overview and analysis of the potential that recruiting foreign national EFL teachers can have in increasing the quality of language education offered in Turkey. In future studies, researchers can undertake case studies investigating whether recruiting foreign national teachers of English as a foreign language makes a positive impact on the school environment (i.e. in terms of student outcomes and/or teacher development).

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