



# The Perceptions of Instructors and Students on Native Speakerism in Terms of English Language Teaching, English Variations, and Culture

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the views of both preparatory school instructors and students concerning native speakerism within the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), English language variations, and culture. The research involved 171 preparatory students and 70 instructors affiliated with a non-profit university in Istanbul, Turkey. Employing a mixed methods approach, this study sought to comprehend the perspectives of these participants. Quantitative data were gathered through surveys adapted from Liu (2018), while qualitative insights were obtained via semi-structured interviews with instructors. The collected data underwent analysis using SPSS and content analysis techniques. The analysis of student perceptions, categorized by gender and proficiency levels, revealed no significant disparities in their views on ELT and culture. Nonetheless, differences surfaced among A1 and A2 level students concerning English variations. In contrast, instructors' perceptions, factoring in their years of experience and academic qualifications, exhibited no variations concerning ELT, English variations, and culture. Qualitative findings indicated that instructors had positive attitudes toward teaching diverse cultures and English language varieties. Moreover, instructors expressed the belief that discrimination between native and non-native instructors should cease.

**Keywords:** native speaker, language variations, English language teaching, culture

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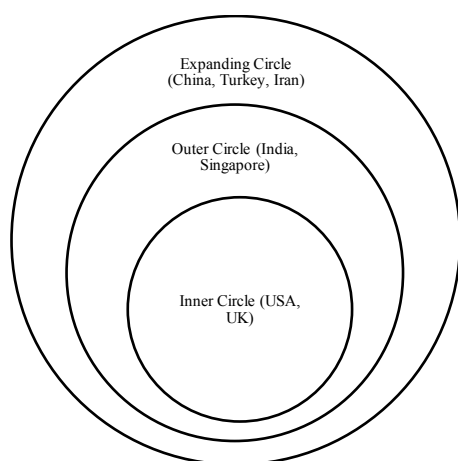
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## INTRODUCTION

Native speakers who are learning English naturally, are the best role models for teaching English since they represent Western culture (Holliday, 2006) and natural language acquisition (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). According to Kubota and Lin (2006), a person's nationality or ethnic background can also have an impact on how well they speak English. However, despite its limited nationality, English is now recognized as the dominant language around the world.

For this reason, Kachru & Nelson (1996) created the term "World Englishes" about the various dialects used in teaching English. He promoted the sociolinguistic diversity of roles in international English and illustrated the distribution of speakers in three circles using the Circle Model (see Figure 1). Although the ELT community has come a long way in recognizing "World Englishes", more acceptance of the various variations of the English language and suitable teaching strategies are still needed. Moreover, culture, gender, religion, and social class are all sociological factors that influence the English language.



**Figure 1.** The Circle Model developed by Kachru in 1985

In English Language Teaching (ELT), native speakers are considered superior to those

whose native tongue is not English. This is known as native speakerism. Given the reference to native speakerism—an ideology that regards English language users as superior—this study aims to investigate the variety of knowledge that exists (Holliday, 2006).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of language teachers and learners to gain an understanding of native speakerism in Turkey. Information about native and non-native teachers, as well as instructors' opinions of native speakerism, must be gathered from tertiary students. Three subfactors—English language instructors, English dialects, and culture—will be the main subjects of the study.

Given the small number of Turkish studies on this subject, the study attempts to gain some understanding of the perspectives of instructors and students by asking research questions about these variables.

1. What are the perceptions of English preparatory program instructors about native speakerism in terms of culture, language variations, and English language teaching (ELT)?
2. What are the perceptions of English preparatory program students about native speakerism in terms of English language teaching (ELT), culture, and language variations?
3. Are there any differences between the perceptions of the instructors towards native speakerism depending on years of experience and the highest educational degree?
4. Are there any differences between the perceptions of the students towards native speakerism depending on their gender and proficiency level?

### ***Native Speakerism***

According to Holliday (2005, p. 6), native speakerism is the belief that native English speakers (NSs) are more fluent in the language and knowledgeable about Western teaching methods than non-native speakers (NNSs). Therefore, Borg (2006) observed that a negative comparison between Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs) tends to be the result of this classification.

Moreover, Houghton and Rivers (2013) emphasized that native-speakerism could be part of a larger set of prejudices.

Native-speakerism is prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, typically by or against foreign language teachers, based on either being or not being perceived and categorized as a native speaker of a particular language, which can form part of a larger complex of interconnected prejudices, including ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism. Its endorsement positions individuals from certain language groups as being innately superior to individuals from other language groups. (p. 14).

Nowadays, the social generation of native speakerism, a philosophy of language learning, has received considerable research attention, but not as much as it has concerning ELT development and training (Lowe & Lawrence, 2018). This specific philosophy causes an analogy solely in language learning between English teachers who speak native English and those who do not.

### ***Research on Native and Non-Native Instructors in ELT***

Given the significant impact that these terms have on both teachers and students, investigations on the terms "native speakerism" and "native speaker teachers vs.

non-native speaker teachers" have been carried out by examining learners, teachers, experiences, and the similarities and differences between native and non-native English teachers (McKay, 2003; Atay, 2008; Kim, 2011; Aslan & Thompson, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Tatar, 2019).

The study conducted by Medgyes (2001) examined the methods of teaching used by native and non-native teachers. It was discovered that non-native English speakers experience less competent from their inability to use the language correctly and idiomatically. As emphasized by Gündüz (2015), native English speakers have an advantage because of their innate understanding of phonetics, vocabulary, and variation in culture.

### ***Research on Native and Non-Native Instructors in Turkish Context***

According to Kachru's (1985) Circle Model, Turkey is positioned in the "expanding circle" (see Figure 1.). Doğançay-Aktuna (2008) investigated the perspectives of twenty-one non-native English instructors at a Turkish university about themselves. The survey examined non-native speakers' perspectives, professional concerns, and language proficiency in ELT. Simply 41% of teacher educators said they had no language problems, and the majority said they wanted to use English idioms more frequently. Around 50 percent of participants thought their English was "native-like," whereas 33% thought it was "not native-like." The majority of participants thought that native speakers were given preference when applying for English teaching jobs in Turkey, and 43% of teachers did not think that being a non-native speaker was a disadvantage.

In their study, Aslan and Thompson (2016) surveyed 160 Turkish EFL students with an emphasis on their perceptions of teachers. A

questionnaire was used in the study to determine how students felt about NESTs and NNESTs. The outcomes demonstrated that although learners thought NESTs were more useful for speaking and interaction activities, NNESTs were effective in helping them learn English as a second language.

Sezgin and Önal (2021) found in a recent study that non-native English teachers are excellent at teaching speaking skills, but native English teachers are superior at teaching grammar and pronunciation. The capacity to compare their native language with the target language is probably the reason for this. Additionally, students found that they could learn by drawing comparisons between their native and target languages. Instructors and students agreed on this, with native English speakers being more effective in passing on cultural knowledge during the English language teaching.

### ***Strengths and Weaknesses of Native and Non-Native Instructors***

The strengths and weaknesses of native and non-native English teachers in Turkey as pre-service teachers were investigated in Tatar's (2019) study. According to the study, native English teachers make excellent role models for their students and are proficient English users. However, there was still a need for improvement in the language proficiency and fluency of Turkish English teachers. According to the study, there is an increasing demand for native English teachers, which may be linked to some teachers' ineffectiveness. Additionally, native English speakers had insufficient classroom management abilities and little knowledge of pedagogical content.

In line with Tatar's study, the research validates the duoethnographic study conducted by Lowe and Kiczowski (2016) which investigated the experiences of a native and

non-native instructor. The study found that native speakers struggled with communication but were excellent grammar teachers, while non-native speakers were excellent grammar teachers but had trouble with it.

When preservice teachers experience the difficulties faced by native speakers, they realize how important educational certification is when instructing English as a foreign language. As a result, because of their proficiency in communication, native English speakers are viewed as better role models than non-native speakers, who are perceived as approachable because they know L1, enabling their students to speak in their mother tongue.

### ***World Englishes (WE)***

Since most people today learn English in addition to their other native languages, the number of World Englishes (WE) studies among English language teaching (ELT) experts has increased (Matsuda, 2003). Individuals who were born into native English-speaking countries, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, no longer speak English as their first language, and learning English is not primarily a "foreign" language. Gnutzman (2000) states that eighty percent of English conversations are carried out by non-native speakers. Currently, more non-native English speakers than native English speakers (Pakir, 1999).

Given its global status and ownership, English has evolved in various ways and is currently a language that is spoken by many people worldwide (Galloway & Rose, 2018). Kachru's (1985) Circle Model which has influenced language policy implementation, learning and teaching methodologies, and the status of English, has had an impact on perceptions toward English in the ELT domain.

Erling (2005) emphasized that rather than concentrating on inner circle variances, ELT

professionals should concentrate on intercultural communication, which includes speakers of various languages and cultures. Additionally, by exposing students to variances and accents, Matsuda (2003) attempted to integrate World Englishes into English curricula.

However, Üresin and Karakaş (2019) carried out a study involving twelve instructors and discovered that although the teachers recognized the usage of various dialects, they thought it could have a negative effect on the efficiency of language learning. On the contrary, Solmaz (2020) conducted a study on 27 pre-service teachers' awareness of World Englishes (WE) and its objectives. The results showed that participants understood English varieties and the importance of a pluralistic approach in English Language Teaching (ELT). The study also highlighted the importance of teachers planning and organizing lessons to cover all forms of English, not just those within the inner circle.

### ***The Role of Culture in English Language Teaching (ELT)***

Bennet (1997) argues that proficiency in a language does not guarantee success, as understanding one's culture is just as important for communication as language proficiency. For language learning to be effective, English teachers are encouraged to integrate cultural knowledge into their lessons as globalization and multicultural societies continue to evolve. With the effects of globalization on the rise, teachers are concerned about the right resources and teaching methods, which asks the question of which language variation should be taught in English classrooms.

According to Byram (1994), language is influenced by its context, and learners of foreign languages need exposure to various

cultural contexts. Moreover, Belli (2018) found that 96 Turkish preservice teachers had positive attitudes towards incorporating culture into English classes and learning cultural aspects helped them become culturally aware when interacting with people from different backgrounds. This highlights the importance of cultural context in language learning.

Also, Civelek and Toplu's (2021) study surveyed 72 instructors from state and private institutions on their attitudes toward teaching culture and English in classrooms. The results showed that instructors, regardless of their workplace, taught culture in their lessons due to their positive beliefs about integrating culture. Yet, private university instructors found it easier to incorporate culture due to their international books.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used a mixed-method approach (Johnson et al., 2007), combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Three types of mixed-method research were used: convergent, sequential (explanatory or exploratory), and embedded design (Klassen et al., 2012)

In this research, an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used to administer questionnaire surveys to instructors and students. Semi-structured interviews with teachers of native speakers were subsequently conducted in response to this. With the help of open-ended questions, Liu's (2018) survey was administered to obtain comprehensive perspectives on native-speakerism for this study.



### Participants

The study was conducted on 171 preparatory students and instructors at a private university in Istanbul, Turkey, aged 17 to 23. The students' levels of proficiency ranged from A1 to B, while the teachers' ELT experience ranged from 1 to 25 years. The survey was conducted during the fall semester of 2022-2023 with a total of 171 students, 95 of whom were female and 76 male.

**Table 1.** Demographic Frequency of the Student Participants

		n	%
Gender	Female	95	55.6
	Male	76	44.4
Proficiency Level	A1	53	31
	A2	58	33.9
	B1	60	35.1

The survey was completed by 70 instructors from the same university, with 19 of them being interviewed. The majority were male, with 21 holding a Ph.D., 13 having a BA, and 49 having a master's degree. The survey included 36 instructors with varying degrees of experience, with 36 having 1-5 years of experience, 19 having 6-10 years, 9 having 11-15 years, and 6 having 16-20 years of experience. Demographic information of the instructors is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographic Frequency of the Instructors for the Survey

		n	%
Gender	Female	49	70
	Male	21	30
Academic Degree	Bachelor	13	18.6
	Master	49	70
	PhD	8	11.4
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5 years	36	51.4
	6-10 years	19	27.1
	11-15 years	9	12.9
	16-20 years	6	8.6

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 instructors, with 12 females and seven males. It involved 12 female and 7

male instructors, with 14 holding master's degrees, 3 bachelor's degrees, and 2 PhDs. Most instructors have 1- 5 years of teaching experience, with 5 having 6- 10, 4 having 11-15 years, and 2 having 16-20 years at university level (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Demographic Frequency of the Instructors for the Semi-Structured Interviews

		n	%
Gender	Female	12	63.2
	Male	7	36.8
Academic Degree	Bachelor's	3	15.80
	Master's	14	73.7
	PhD	2	10.5
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5 years	8	42.1
	6-10 years	5	26.3
	11-15 years	4	21.1
	16-20 years	2	10.5

### Data Collection

To collect information on native speakerism, the study used semi-structured interviews with instructors and students as well as an attitudinal tendency questionnaire. Surveys were developed by Liu (2018) to investigate the views of both groups. Five multiple-choice questions concerning demographics, such as gender, language learning experience, interactions with foreign or native teachers, proficiency levels, and motivations for learning English, were included in the first section of the survey. Besides, to find out how students felt about various cultures, languages, and native and foreign teachers, a four-point Likert scale was used in the second section of the questionnaire.

The survey for instructors included demographic data such as gender, years of experience, and academic degree (items 1-3). The survey followed 19 questions with 5-point Likert-type scale statements (items 4-22). Moreover, Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand participants' opinions and behaviors. The interview inquiries were

adapted from Liu's 2018 research on the Chinese context and modified to suit the Turkish context for the study's relevance.

During the fall semester of 2022–2023 at a private university in Istanbul, surveys and one-on-one interviews with students and faculty were carried out. Data was collected using a hybrid learning strategy and kept confidential. Teachers were requested to fill out both surveys and give them to their students. After the completion of the surveys, interviews started. The researcher started data analysis after gathering all the required information. With some interviews done in person and others done through Microsoft Teams, the institution used a hybrid learning strategy.

### Data Analysis

In this study, the quantitative data was gathered from instructors and students using SPSS, and the mean, percentage, and frequency of multi-item scales were used to investigate their attitudes toward Native-speakers. A one-sample t-test was used to calculate the mean for each scale.

For the qualitative data, Content analysis was used from semi-structured interviews, categorizing responses and identifying themes. To enhance research reliability, the triangulation method was applied, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods or sources. This approach helps to understand the attitudes toward Native-speakerism among students and instructors.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### Qualitative Findings

To answer the first research question which was “What are the perceptions of English preparatory program instructors about native speakerism?”, semi-structured interviews were

conducted with 19 instructors. 3 categories and 6 codes were found after an in-depth content analysis of the transcripts of the interviews (see Table 4.).

**Table 4.** Frequency Distribution of Codes Sorted by Perception Interviews

Category	Code	Count	%Codes
English Language Teachers	Strengths	53	25.02
English Language Teachers	Weaknesses	50	24.22
English Variations	Accent	21	9.06
English Variations	Lingua Franca	23	11
Culture	Discrimination	17	11.03
Culture	Authenticity	23	19.87

The study analyzed perceptions of English Language Teachers (ELT), English Variations (EV), and Culture (CUL) among Turkish, native, and non-Turkish English instructors. It identified strengths and weaknesses in ELT, accent, lingua franca, authenticity, and discrimination in EV and CUL, respectively.

### English Language Teachers (ELT)

Following an extensive investigation, the interview data revealed three categories of instructors' strengths: Turkish English instructors, native English instructors, and non-native English instructors, each with unique qualities. Subsequently, the weaknesses were classified as Turkish English instructors, native English instructors, and non-native English instructors.

#### *The Strengths of Turkish English Instructors.*

During interviews, Turkish English teachers emphasized their strengths in foreign language learning, particularly in developing relationships with students. They focused on understanding students' learning processes and identifying their difficulties. Their unique educational background, which required a degree, enabled them to support and assist students experiencing difficulties.

(...) most of the local nonnative English teachers are educated to be English teachers unlike the native ones (Female, Master, 1-5 years of experience)

Additionally, Turkish teachers are very good at understanding the language that their students are native speakers of, which helps with learning in social and academic contexts. Their ability to relate to students in their mother tongue and to understand those who have difficulty with expressive English makes them excellent teachers.

(...) they are also capable of understanding their learners whenever they struggle with expressing themselves in L2 with less effort compared to native English teachers (Female, Ph.D., 6-10 years of experience)

***The weaknesses of Turkish English instructors.*** The interview results revealed that although Turkish instructors were highly educated, proficient in the target language's grammar, and capable of fostering positive interactions with students, they encountered difficulties with pronunciation, accent, and fluency. It can be inferred that Turkish teachers were highly valued for their pedagogy, teaching abilities, and grammar knowledge. However, their communication skills, including accent and fluency, were considered to be less effective than their perceived strength in the educational and sociological domains.

***The Strengths of Non-Turkish English Instructors.*** Since non-Turkish instructors would be unable to understand the student's native language (Turkish), they would be exposed to the target language (English) more frequently. In addition to exposure, the instructors stated that having non-Turkish instructors would increase students' awareness of different cultures.

***The Weaknesses of Non-Turkish English Instructors.*** While some of the instructors stated that it would be beneficial for students to learn various aspects of languages if the instructors came from a different cultural background than themselves or the culture of the target language (English or American), others stated that this could be problematic.

(...) their accent could be tough to understand. They cannot easily understand the problems that local learners have because of their local language. They cannot make the connection since they do not speak the local language (Male, Bachelor, 1-5 years of experience)

In conclusion, the instructors stated that since the instructor lacks knowledge of Turkish, the students get exposed to the target language, a variety of accents, and cultures when they study English with a non-Turkish teacher.

***The Strengths of Native English Instructors.*** Having a strong command of the English language was one of the most common traits of native English speakers and instructors according to the interviewees. The language learners would be motivated and inspired to communicate in their L2, as native English instructors model pronunciation, and more sophisticated vocabulary with a variety of idioms and structures. An additional strength of native English instructors was found to be their ability to present their culture more authentically which according to the instructors, motivated the learners.

The findings revealed that the strengths of the native English instructors would mostly be the innate language knowledge, cultural background, as well as natural flow of speaking skills which could also encourage their students to speak fluently and encourage them to use the language both inside and outside of the classroom.



**The Weaknesses of Native English Instructors.** After an in-depth analysis, despite their potential benefits, native instructors' strengths of being from different cultures and not speaking their native tongue may also work against them. Moreover, the fact that most native English instructors lack a teaching degree may be another weakness of them. The most apparent distinction between native and Turkish English instructors is their educational backgrounds. Turkish instructors hold a teaching degree, but native English speakers are employed merely because they were born in a particular nation.

Overall, it was evident from the examination of the responses that the instructors' opinions would not vary based on their experience in the field or their educational background. Similarly, the perceptions of the instructors' strengths and weaknesses were found to be similar among the instructors holding a Ph.D., a master's degree, and a bachelor's degree.

### **English Variations (EV)**

After an extensive review of the interview responses, two subheadings for the English variations category were *lingua franca* and *accent*. The instructors stated that different forms of English are not regarded as being on par with American and British English.

**Accent.** The instructors claimed that accents played a significant role in speaking the target language, so students needed to be exposed to a variety of accents and language variations. Some educators were insistent that students should only use one variety of the English language while others believed that English language variations should be used in classroom activities like listening.

(...) there should be one correct style of formal English for teaching at schools (Female, Master, 11-15 years of experience)

**Lingua Franca.** Because English is a language that is spoken all over the world, instructors feel that students must comprehend the significance of it. The language has many variations, but it serves as a medium of communication for both native and non-native speakers, with non-native speakers dominating.

(...) if it is to continue as a universal language in the future, we must allow all nations' people to embrace it and own it (Male, Master, 16-20 years of experience)

Overall, the instructors' perceptions of *lingua franca* did not differ based on their level of education or years of experience, but their perceptions of language variations varied based on their experience in the field. More inexperienced teachers stated that students should be exposed to a variety of English variations, while experienced instructors maintained that only a standard norm of English should be taught.

### **Culture (CUL)**

The perceptions of the instructors on culture had two subheadings: *discrimination* and *authenticity* summarized in the next section of the paper.

**Discrimination.** The instructors claimed that discrimination against variations and cultures stemmed from cultural differences. Some instructors, however, asserted that there was no prejudice against different linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Also, some instructors argued that the term *discrimination* was a strong one to be used. Yet, the instructors' perceptions did not show any differences based on their experience in the field or their educational background. Following an in-depth review, no significant difference was found regarding *discrimination* between the variables of this current study.

**Authenticity.** While a few instructors thought that the native English speakers were more authentic in the classroom than the Turkish and/or non-Turkish English speakers, other instructors thought that the authenticity was more due to the resources and activities of the lessons than to the teachers themselves. Authenticity, in the opinion of certain instructors, was associated with their educational background.

### Quantitative Data Findings

**Research Question 2.** The results of the university students' perceptions of native speakerism were analyzed by using SPSS. The means and standard deviations of descriptive statistics were calculated. The answers were assigned codes as follows: 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, and 4 strongly agree (See Table 5) in the appendix.

To identify the subfactors of the survey, factor analysis was employed. The subfactors were found as English Language Teachers (ELT), English Variations (EV), and Culture (CUL). Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of the subfactors.

**Table 6.** Descriptive Statistics of the Subfactors ELT, EV, and CUL

	ELT	EV	CUL
<b>Mean</b>	2.6	2.84	2.71
<b>Std. Error of Mean</b>	.03	.02	.03
<b>Median</b>	2.6	2.88	2.75
<b>SD</b>	.49	.36	.42

**Research Question 3.** The instructor survey was examined using SPSS to determine the instructors' perceptions regarding native speakerism. The means and standard deviations were calculated to find the instructors' perceptions. The survey responses were coded as follows: 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 is neutral, 4 is agree, and 5 represents strongly agree. Factor analysis was conducted to find the subfactors which

were English Language Teachers (ELT), items 9, 13, 15, 20, 21, and 22, English Variations (EV), Items 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, and 16, and Culture (CUL), items 7, 8, 14, 17, 18, and 19. (Table 7.)

**Table 7.** Descriptive Statistics of the Subfactors ELT, EV, and CUL.

	M	SD	STD. Error of Means
<b>ELT</b>	3.09	.54	.065
<b>EV</b>	3.21	.56	.061
<b>CUL</b>	2.89	.51	.067

Note: ELT: English Language Teaching, EV: English Variations, CUL: Culture

**Years of Experience.** One-way ANOVA was utilized to investigate the relationship between instructors' perceptions and their years of experience. In terms of years of experience, the instructors were split into five groups: 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, and 16–20 years. The ANOVA test results indicated that the years of experience did not significantly alter the scale's mean scores. For the subfactors ELT, EV, and CUL, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of years of experience of the instructors.

**Highest Educational Degree.** To investigate the relationship between the instructors' perceptions and their highest level of education, a one-way ANOVA was performed. 8 instructors had a Ph.D., 49 had master's degrees and 13 had bachelor's degrees. The one-way ANOVA test results did not reveal any significant differences between the instructors' perceptions and their highest educational degree. It could be concluded that there were no significant variations between the educational degree and the perceptions of the instructors regarding ELT, EV, and CUL subfactors.

**Research Question 4.** Human factors like gender and proficiency levels were found to be among the most significant determinants of

how students perceived native speakers. To find out how male and female students perceived native speakerism differently, an independent sample t-test was performed. Consequently, the results of the subfactors ELT, EV, and CUL analyses showed no significant differences in mean scores between the male and female genders.

**Proficiency Level.** Another factor influencing the variation in the students' perceptions was their level of proficiency. how students' perceptions varied based on their level of proficiency was studied. To examine the variation, a one-way ANOVA was performed. Depending on their proficiency levels, the students were split into three categories: 1 (A1), 2 (A2), and 3 (B1). A Post Hoc test was utilized to determine the significance of the proficiency level difference. Between A1 and A2 level students a significant difference was found regarding the English Variations (EV). The difference between the levels of A1 and A2 was significant. 02 points.

## Discussion

The current study was designed to investigate how instructors and students perceived native speakerism in language variations, culture, and instructor strengths and weaknesses. A perceptions survey was given to the instructors and students, and a few of the instructors who took the survey participated in the interviews to gather detailed data. Since instructors and students are the two main prominent figures in language learning, the purpose of the data collection process was to acquire as much detailed information from the instructors and as much information in terms of numbers from the students. The data were analyzed using the use of a mixed-method study.

The perceptions of instructors on native speakerism raise the question of whether

native English instructors are somewhat better than non-native instructors. Based on the collected data, it was discovered that both native and non-native instructors had strengths and weaknesses. The findings of the semi-structured interviews demonstrated that instructors did not favor native instructors over non-native ones. The interview results revealed that native instructors were perceived as having the ideal pronunciation, accents, and the capacity to demonstrate the target language's natural flow, whereas non-native teachers were seen to have the ability to relate to their students using their first language and to have an awareness of the difficulties that their students encounter because they have gone through similar experiences themselves. Similarly, [Mensincigiller and Akcan \(2015\)](#) also found that native and non-native instructors, although they had their strengths and weaknesses, work well together. It can be said that the findings of the semi-structured interviews follow the previous studies.

While looking into the perceptions of the instructors on teaching different language variations, it was found that the instructors did not view other forms of English to be equivalent to either British or American English. Most of the instructors made remarks about accents when discussing language variations. Accent was therefore the term used in this study's data analysis. Accordingly, participants in [Young and Walsh's \(2010\)](#) study gave British and American English variations importance, prominence, and relevance. While the less experienced instructors were willing to teach and expose learners to different variations of English, the more experienced instructors did not change their views on exposing learners to only one variety of English.

The final significant factor discovered during the analysis of the qualitative data was the perceptions regarding teaching culture in

English language classrooms. The results of the interviews demonstrated that instructors believed it was necessary to teach culture alongside language. Nonetheless, some of the study's instructors argued that native speakers were more authentic considering they had an innate understanding of the target language's structures and culture, while others stated that authenticity had more to do with the lesson plans and activities than with innate language or cultural knowledge. Similarly, [Aydemir and Mede \(2014\)](#) found that learners should be exposed to all English-speaking cultures along with American and British cultures.

Moreover, since students are the most essential part of the language learning process, their perceptions were also investigated. There was no significant difference among the current study's student participants on the question of whether foreign English teachers ought to be native English speakers. It can be inferred from previous studies on students' perceptions of native-speaker teachers that the results of this study were in line with those of the earlier studies. Furthermore, in their study, [Gürkan and Yüksel \(2012\)](#) found no significant difference between the perceptions of the students on whether native instructors were superior to non-native instructors. Based on the findings, it could be concluded that the student participants of this study believed standard English was American and British. According to the students, they should imitate writing conventions, pronunciation, and the oral expressions of native English speakers who were born in Inner Circle nations ([Kachru, 1985](#)). Similarly, [Rondonuwu et al. \(2022\)](#) revealed that learners believed English spoken by Americans or British to be standard English.

The last factor studied in this study was how language learners perceive the role of culture. The student participants were highly open to studying culture in language classes. The

participants said that they should learn the cultures of countries where English is the primary language, like the USA and the UK. Additionally, they pointed out that the foundation for English language instruction needs to be based on native-speaking countries' cultures. The results of this study showed similar results to [Atay's \(2005\)](#) findings and also indicated that students displayed a strong desire to acquire knowledge of the target language's culture.

Years of experience were found to be one of the subfactors shaping the language instructors' perceptions based on the literature review. This study's results aligned with previous research on native speakers and instructor perceptions. The findings of the study demonstrated that the instructors' perspectives did not differ significantly based on their experiences in teaching English regarding culture, language variations, and English language teaching. Likewise, [Ceyhan-Bingöl and Özkan's \(2019\)](#) study findings indicated that the instructors were aware of the different language variations and were utilizing different resources and tools to support language learning.

The difference in perceptions of the instructors based on their highest educational degrees was the other subfactor. 71.2% of the instructors who took part in the survey had a master's degree, 17.8% had a bachelor's degree, and 11% had a Ph.D. According to the results of the survey, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the instructors based on their educational degree. [Tatar \(2019\)](#) similarly discovered that instructors of English held similar perceptions regardless of their academic degrees.

The last research question, aimed to find if there were any differences between the perceptions of the students based on their gender and their proficiency levels. The results

of the perception survey demonstrated that there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the students based on their genders in terms of subfactors ELT, EV, and CUL. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the students based on their proficiency levels regarding subfactors ELT and CUL. However, it was found that the perceptions of A1 and A2 level students showed a difference regarding the subfactor English Variations (EV).

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to contribute to the existing research on the perceptions of students and instructors in terms of English Language Teaching (ELT), English Variations (EV), and Culture (CUL). The study took place in Istanbul, Turkey, at the English Preparatory School of a foundation university with its students and instructors. The data were collected in the academic year of 2022-2023. The perceptions surveys were utilized to gather the quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and face-to-face meetings with some of the instructors.

According to the findings of the interviews, neither the native instructors nor the non-native instructors perceived themselves as inferior or superior to the other group in terms of ELT. Furthermore, the instructors were aware of the variations of English (EV) but they did not put effort into teaching these variations. The perceptions of the instructors on teaching culture (CUL) were like previous research. Regardless of their gender and proficiency levels, the students did not favor native or non-native instructors (ELT) and learning culture (CUL). In contrast, the perceptions of A1 and A2 level students showed a difference in terms of English variations (EV).

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## Appendix

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics of Student Perception of Native Speakerism

	Items	M	SD
1.	Compared to the countries (India, Turkey, China, etc.) where the native language is not English, the English that is spoken in countries where the native language is English (the USA, the UK, etc.) is more understandable.	3.09	.76
2.	Compared to the countries (Turkey, China, etc.) where the native language is not English, English that is spoken in countries (the USA, the UK, etc.) as a native language is more authentic and safer.	3.00	.70
3.	Compared to the countries (Turkey, China, etc.) where the native language is not English, English that is spoken in countries (the USA, the UK, etc.) as a native language is more standard.	2.88	.71
4.	It is expected that the foreign teachers are native speakers of English.	2.36	.81
5.	I believe that compared to the English variations of different countries, the English that is spoken in countries as a native language is the most standard.	2.91	.64
6.	To learn English well, the students need to follow the language norms of native English speakers.	3.01	.63
7.	To learn English well, the students need to imitate the pronunciation of native English speakers.	2.94	.74
8.	To learn English well, the students need to imitate the oral expressions of native English speakers.	2.84	.70
9.	To learn English well, the students need to imitate the writing convention of native English speakers.	2.88	.65
10.	English language learners need to learn about the culture of different countries (including native English-speaking countries and non-native English-speaking countries).	2.67	.73
11.	In addition to the English language of native English-speaking countries, learners need to learn the English language of other countries (e.g., Indian English, Singaporean English, and French English, etc.)	2.03	.77
12.	The English language is based on the culture of traditional native English-speaking countries (Britain, America, etc.)	2.74	.67
13.	Some countries take English as the second language, but their cultures are not the base of English.	2.88	.62
14.	Compared with that of most Turkish-English instructors, the English language of native English speaker is more standard.	2.67	.68
15.	Compared with most Turkish-English instructors, native English speaker instructors know more about the culture underlying the English language.	2.85	.79
16.	Compared with most Turkish-English instructors, native English speaker instructors know more about the pragmatic rules of the English language.	2.75	.73
17.	Compared with most Turkish-English instructors, native English speaker instructors are more capable of stimulating students' enthusiasm in learning.	2.46	.84
18.	The content of English language classroom teaching in Turkey should focus on the culture of native English-speaking countries.	2.56	.78
	ELT	2.62	.49
	EV	2.84	.36
	CUL	2.71	.42