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## **Preferred English Accent and Pronunciation of Trainee Teachers and Its Relation to Language Ideologies**

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**Ali Karakaş**

Faculty of Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University

Istiklal Campus, 15030, Burdur, Turkey

Email: akarakas@mehmetakif.edu.tr

### **Abstract**

This paper investigates trainee teachers' preferences for English pronunciation and accent, enrolled in a teacher education program in Turkey with respect to listening activities, after they have familiarized themselves with the diverse English accents. Data has been gathered through semi-open-ended questionnaires, which are later analysed with qualitative research method. The analysis indicates that many trainee teachers prefer native English speaking accent and pronunciation being under the influence of dominant ideologies while a small group values exposure to diverse ELF speakers and accents in listening activities by developing some counter ideologies, which appreciate wider intelligibility and increased familiarity. The findings suggest that teacher trainees' late exposure to diverse speakers and accents is neither very practical to help improve their accent and pronunciation to be near-native nor helpful to make them recognize the global diversity of English and the way pronunciation of such a global language should be taught.

**Keywords:** English as a lingua franca (ELF); speaker preferences; accent preferences; native-English speakers; non-native English speakers; language ideologies

## **Introduction**

With the fast-changing sociolinguistic profile of English speakers, the predominant majority of whom are non-native English speakers (NNEs) representing different countries positioned in Kachru's (1986) concentric circles, the phenomenon of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF henceforth) has consolidated its position in the field of applied linguistics by means of researchers' constant effort to build niches in their empirical and theoretical work. So far, ELF researchers have dealt with a wide range of issues related to different linguistic levels, such as phonology, lexicogrammar and pragmatics, and specific language skills and systems (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011). Additionally, the focus of ELF research evolved in multi direction in parallel with the changing needs of the sociolinguistic situations across the world, which has paved the way for further retheorization, expansion and conceptualization of the field by scholars in response to the major linguistic shifts, such as the increasing multicultural make-up of communication among ELF speakers (Jenkins, 2015).

Despite the diversity of ELF research in terms of issues investigated, one persistent and interesting area for ELF researchers has become the study of pronunciation, or more precisely, the accent (Jenkins, 2000, 2007). This area continues to attract researchers' interest in several issues such as the teaching of ELF pronunciation and the nexus between identity and accent (e.g., Jenkins, 2007; Walker, 2010). The choice for a model accent by speakers may, as noted by Walker (2010), be influenced by some non-language related concerns. For instance, such concerns can be socio-politically motivated. As it was mentioned above, one non-language related concern that has channelled language learners, users and teachers' attitudes and preferences with respect to pronunciation and accent, has been the concept of

language ideology (Jenkins, 2006, 2007; Wang, 2015; Wang & Jenkins, 2016). Taking into account the intimate nexus between accent-speaker preferences and language ideologies, this research reports a large group of trainee teachers' accent and speaker preferences in a setting where they were exposed to various NNESs and native English speakers (NES) as part of a mandatory school subject, i.e., Listening and Pronunciation I. Part of the aim is to find out whether particular dominant language ideologies canalize trainee teachers' preferences in a particular direction and if so, how and whether the lengthy exposure has any influence on trainee teachers' in terms of developing opposing ideologies to the dominant ones.

### **Literature review**

Seidlhofer (2011) describes ELF as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (p. 7). As ELF speakers represent various languages and cultures, they are not expected to conform to native-speaker pronunciation norms or models when they engage in communication with one another (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012). The adherence towards the native-speaker model and the notions of standardness and correctness in ELF interactions is not considered to be among the criteria for effective use of English (Björkman, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2011; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011; Franceschi & Vettorel, 2017). Rather, ELF researchers are more interested in speakers' "good use of the resources in the language" (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 17), highlighting that for ELF communication "the only criterion should be mutual intelligibility" and comprehensibility rather than "blanket conformity to a particular version of native English" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 202).

However, researchers also note that while expressing preferences for target speaker models and accents, individuals' perceptions and attitudes may be shaped by socio-political factors situated in their own society (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010). One factor

guiding speakers' orientations to linguistic issues in a particular manner has been claimed to be the language ideologies (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010; Lee, 2012; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009; Lindemann, 2003; Lippi-Green, 2012; Milroy, 2001, 2007). Against this backdrop, it is vital to explore the issue of speaker and accent preferences of trainee English teachers, especially after a large exposure to diverse ELF and NES accents and to further see whether their preferences and attitudes are shaped by pervading and counter ideologies.

A strong consensus now exists among researchers that "what people think, or take for granted, about language and communication is a topic that rewards investigation" (Woolard & Shcieffelin, 1994, p. 56). Hereby, researchers refer to the importance of the concept of language ideologies, i.e. "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" in researching issues related to language (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). For instance, one such issue in the past language attitude studies, which has drawn criticism from language ideology researchers, is the ignorance of the role of the societal context in the formation of people's language attitudes. In this respect, it is argued that language ideologies go in advance of language attitudes, i.e. "the feelings people have about their own LANGUAGE or the language(s) of others" (Crystal, 2008, p. 266), which are especially prone to being "shaped by pervading ideologies in any given society or community of practice" (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010, p. 119).

In ELF research as well as ESL and EFL research, the issue of accent has always been a hot topic as speakers often tend to judge their own and others' English proficiency based on how they sound when they speak English. However, this particular issue has become more complex than ever and received a greater deal of attention in scholarly research following the early of ELF studies on phonology, especially accents, and their implications for speakers. It was also acknowledged by researchers (e.g., Fang, 2016; Galloway, 2014; Ishikawa, 2017a, 2017b; Jenkins, 2007)

that there is a strong interplay between a wider range of linguistic ideologies and speakers' prevailing attitudes to others' and their own accents.

Over more than a decade or so, there has been a large volume of published studies investigating attitudes towards NES and NNES accents in teaching pronunciation, self-evaluation of one's own accents, accent preferences for ELF communication from the perspectives of teacher trainees (e.g., Coşkun, 2011; Kaur, 2014; Kaur & Raman, 2014; Öztürk, Çeçen & Altınmakas, 2009; Uygun, 2013), in-service non-native EFL teachers (e.g., Jenkins, 2007; Llurda, 2009; Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010) and EFL learners in a wide variety of contexts (e.g., Fang, 2016; Ishikawa, 2017a, 2017b; Kung & Wang, 2018; Pilus, 2013; Snodin & Young, 2015). It has conclusively been shown in all but a handful of these studies that the participants displayed more positive attitudes towards NES varieties and accents. The researchers attributed this strong adherence to and the high regard for NES accents in their attitudes and preferences to the guiding effects of some dominant language ideologies on participants.

Among the oft-mentioned language ideologies in previous studies are standard English language ideology and standard NS English ideology, subsuming the ideologies of authenticity and ownership of English. In one study, for instance, Jenkins (2007) observed in relation to a large number of non-native EFL teachers from different L1s that overall, they favoured NES accents, particularly those of the US and the UK as "the 'best' English accents" (p. 186) in terms of correctness, worldwide recognition and acceptance, and pleasantness as a consequence of having "been so strongly influenced ('brainwashed' even) by the prevailing standard NS English ideology" (p. 187). It is that, they tended to operate under the conviction that "language proficiency that is not native-like is seen as 'deficient'" (Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010, p. 71).

A closely related ideology that was found in other studies (e.g., Fang, 2016; Ishikawa, 2017a, 2017b; Karakaş, 2016) is the standard English ideology, which basically mandates the use of English correctly and accurately. It seems that the subtle

difference between the standard NS English ideology and the standard English ideology originates from their point of emphasis. Namely, the former puts its focus on 'unmarked' accent and pronunciation supporting the idea that speakers should give up on their non-native or foreign-accented English to target for native-like accents. Additionally, as Jenkins (2014) notes, another ideology, i.e. authenticity, plays a vital part in forming the basis of the standard NS English ideology as it "locates the value of a language in its relationship to a particular [speech] community," i.e. NESs in the current case (Woolard, 2008, p. 304). However, the standard English ideology deals with the notions of grammatical correctness and linguistic accuracy as this ideology is built on the foundation "that a national standard language [e.g., in the US and the UK] should be valid not only within a particular country but globally" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 42).

As shown above, most of the previous studies investigated the issues relating to attitudes and perceptions about ELF and NES accents from the perspectives of EFL learners (e.g., Fang, 2016; Ishikawa, 2017a, 2017b; Kung & Wang, 2018; Pilus, 2013; Snodin & Young, 2015), EFL teachers (e.g., Jenkins, 2007; Llurda, 2009; Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010), but just a few studies have examined trainee English teachers' accent and speaker preferences so far (e.g., Kaur, 2014; Kaur & Raman, 2014), particularly in the Turkish context (e.g., Coşkun, 2011; Öztürk et al., 2009; Uygun, 2013). Furthermore, nearly none of these studies were concerned that whether their respondents' had prior familiarity with diverse NESs or NNEs and their accents they were asked to judge or indicate a preference for. Thus, as Jenkins (2007) argued long ago, most participants actually tended to hold higher positions for NESs and their accents in their judgments and preferences "on the basis of [no or] limited familiarity" (p. 186). Apart from a few studies (e.g., Coşkun, 2011), previous studies did not deal with the issue of speaker and accent preferences with respect to speaker profiles in listening and pronunciation course books. Additionally, they often utilized quantitative methods in their research, such as the verbal-guise

technique and closed-ended surveys. The major drawback in quantitative methods is that the participants are not given the liberty to provide their own responses to the questions as it is done in the qualitative methods. It is because such techniques only allow participants to make a choice out of specific pre-set answer options, considering that this choice best represents their preferences and views compared to other pre-given choices. However, qualitative methods provide participants the opportunity to justify their choices as they can freely explain their personal expectations, preferences and choices in their own words.

This paper seeks to fill these gaps in the literature by investigating Turkish trainee teachers' speaker and accent preferences, especially after they received a prolonged exposure to a wide range of NNESS' and NESs' accents as part of their listening course. In particular, it attempts to find whether their familiarity with various NESs and, in particular, NNESSs, along with their accents, has taken any effect in their readiness for ELF accents in some way or another. Lastly, in light of the previous ELF studies, the study aims to determine the entrenched and emerging linguistic ideologies that play a covert part in shaping trainee teachers' orientations and preferences towards accents, especially those of ELF speakers.

## **Methodology**

### **Research questions**

This study seeks to explore speaker and accent preferences among a group of teacher trainees, the kinds of language ideologies that prevail in their expressed preferences and whether being exposed to divergent accents of NESs and NNESSs might affect the trainee teachers' accent and speaker preferences. Consequently, this inquiry generated three research questions:

1. What English pronunciation and accent are the trainee teachers' preferences with respect to listening activities?
2. Are the trainee teachers' accent and speaker preferences influenced by the dominant language ideologies? If so, what factors contribute to the adoption of the ideologies

by the trainee teachers?

3. Does lengthy exposure to different accents of NESs and NNESs have a possible influence on the trainee teachers' preferences for accents and speakers?

### **Research design**

This paper draws on an exploratory qualitative case research design to strive for the amelioration of "a research problem" at a time "when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome" (Abahumma, 2017, p. 85). The research problem under investigation is whether prolonged exposure to divergent accents of NESs and NNESs impinges on trainee teachers' preferences for speakers, i.e. ELF speakers or NESs, and their accents. As there are very few studies having kept in mind the role of familiarity with various speakers and accents in trainee teachers' speaker preferences and accent judgments, this paper can, through its design, "may reveal new perspectives of processes or experiences from participants themselves" (Duff, 2008, p. 44).

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of 47 first-year trainee teachers of English enrolled in a teacher education program at a Turkish state university. In terms of their gender breakdown, there were 26 females and 21 males. The age range of the participants was between 18 to 32 years. A mixture of purposive and convenient sampling was used in the recruitment of participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrision, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). The recruitment was purposive in that the participants attending a particular course were included in the study. It was convenient in the sense that the data was collected from teacher trainees could be easily accessed by the researcher. All participants were advanced users of English (somewhere between B2 and C1) who had been studying English for over twelve years. Only a handful of students had overseas experience, and therefore, the majority did not have any previous experiences of using English with speakers



from different countries.

### **Data collection**

The data was collected through a coursebook evaluation survey in which trainee teachers were asked to evaluate two course books, i.e., *Advanced Outcomes* by Dellar and Walkley (2012) and *Real Listening & Speaking 4* by Craven (2008), via completing a semi-open-ended questionnaire distributed to them in the final meeting of the fall term. Both coursebooks feature a wide range of NESs (e.g., the UK, Ireland) and NNESs (e.g., Italian, Spanish, German, Brazilian, Saudi Arabian, Kuwaiti, Japanese) voiceovers in the accompanying CDs. The open-ended questionnaire given to students asked them the following questions:

- a. Which type of speakers do you prefer in listening activities? And why?
- b. There are conversations including both NESs and NNESs in the course books. Are you happy with this case? Yes/No. Why?
- c. Do you think students should get more exposure to different (non-native) varieties/accents of English at schools? Yes/No. Why?

The ‘why’ questions were particularly included in the questionnaire considering that open-ended questions of such type “can provide a greater “richness” than fully quantitative data” often obtained through closed-ended questions, and “can yield graphic examples, illustrative quotes, and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 36).

### **Data analysis**

The data were analysed via qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2001; Schreier, 2012) in order to offer "subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Overall, the analysis consisted of three stages: (i) pre-coding,

coding and categorising, (ii) growing ideas, i.e., comparing and contrasting categories, and finally (iii) interpreting the data and drawing conclusions (Dörnyei, 2007; Ezzy, 2002). To ensure reliability regarding the codes, an independent rater, a colleague of the researcher, was asked to classify and code the data in order to reach an inter-rater agreement, which was found to correspond to 89% consistency between the two raters.

## Findings

### Speaker preferences in listening activities

The main categories and sub-categories that are related to the first question in the questionnaire are given in the following table.

**Table 1:** Categories for trainee teachers' speaker and accent preferences in listening activities

NESs (n= 38)	NNESs (n= 9)
Intelligibility	Comprehensibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of speech</li> <li>• Correctness/accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplicity</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Familiarity</li> </ul>
Target (ideal) model	Pleasantness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Linguistic superiority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liking</li> </ul>
Pleasantness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liking</li> </ul>	

### Preference for NESs and their accents

As seen in Table 1, the overwhelming majority of the participants expressed their wish for listening to NESs in the listening activities. Most participants' responses fell into the categories of *clarity of speech* and *correctness* subsumed under the broad category of *intelligibility*. In their accounts of why they favoured NESs over NNESs, the categories of clarity of speech and correctness frequently recurred, demonstrating beyond doubt that the trainee teachers see them as essential attributes that make

NESs more intelligible compared to NNESs. The selected accounts presented below well illustrate this line of reasoning:

1. **S26:** Because native English speakers speak English more correct[ly] than non-native English speakers. I can understand them more easily.
2. **S31:** Because their pronunciation is accurate. I can understand them easily by this way.
3. **S46:** Because native English speakers clearly speak English for me.

Another recurrent category was concerned with the belief that the native speaker model is the *ultimate target* for learners in respect of pronunciation. Their preferences were based on two grounds: NESs' being authentic speakers of English and their supposed linguistic superiority over NNESs. As most participants perceived NESs as representing the authentic voice and the best model for learners to mimic, they particularly ascribed certain attributes to NESs, of which, they most probably think, NNESs are devoid. These attributes are mostly about NESs' being the real doyens of English and accordingly being the best sources of input, representing the most proper use of English, and offering the best chance of learning English. Speaking of these issues in their accounts, several participants demonstrated their desire for NESs as follows:

4. **S4:** To learn with the best way, we should listen [to] native English speakers.
5. **S20:** Because native speakers are the best sources to learn English from. They know much more details about their language.
6. **S34:** Because it makes me feel like I am actually abroad and chatting with them [NESs]. And that develops our speaking and listening more than other one [NNESs].

The category that recurred the least throughout the data set was indicative a feeling of a particular *liking for NESs* amongst a handful of participants. It further emerged that the participants favouring NESs out of their liking seemed to be generally

intrinsically motivated, often having a positive attitude towards improving their English in company with NESs

7. **S15:** Because I want to increase my English. And I really like their accent.
8. **S27:** Because I want to speak fast with them and have a nice conversation.

### **Preference for NNEs and their accents**

The participants in this category made clear in their accounts that their preferences were influenced by some factors, such as the previous use of English with NESs and NNEs and some reflection on the current speaker profiles of English. As reported by some, NNEs are apt to be more flexible and simpler in their language use, which, as some participants stated below, positively contributes to NNEs' wider *comprehensibility*:

1. **S8:** Because non-native English is more comfortable during the speech. Native English has a lot of rules.
2. **S38:** Native English speakers speak more complicated than non-native English speakers.
3. **S28:** Native speakers speak too fast. So, it is hard to get what they say. Also non-native speakers don't use shortcuts so much.

However, only a couple of participants alluded to the affective factors, emphasizing the impact of *pleasantness* in speaker and accent preferences. Especially, some participants stressed how important it is to have an awareness of NNEs and the ways they sound considering the amount of effort speakers put into understanding NESs. For example, two participants remarked:

4. **S2:** Their accent[s] are more delightful to listen. They sound nice & arouse curiosity.
5. **S18:** Because I am not able to understand the natives. So, I more like listening to non-natives.

### Being happy with listening to NNEs alongside NESs

In response to the question whether the trainee teachers have felt content with listening to speakers from different countries, more than two-thirds of the participants (n=37) responded affirmatively while the rest (n= 10) held a negative position about listening to ELF speakers. Closer inspection of their responses generated the following categories.

**Table 2:** Categories for trainee teachers' happiness at listening to NNEs

YES - happy (n= 37)	NO - unhappy (n= 10)
Familiarity	Unintelligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real-life English (ELF) use</li> <li>• Improved listening comprehension</li> <li>• Awareness about deviant language use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deviant &amp; non-standard</li> <li>• Complicated</li> </ul>
	Unpleasantness
	Inauthenticity
Appreciation of diversity	

### Feeling happy with listening to NNEs

From the table, we can see that the responses of those being happy with listening to NESs in the exercises gather around two major categories, i.e. *familiarity* and *appreciation of diversity*, of which the former is much broader than the latter. Most participants, as can be seen in the participant remarks below, strongly emphasised the importance of familiarity with ELF accents in their responses, arguing that it is through such familiarity that they will be able to effectively communicate with those speakers in case of real encounters with them.

1. **S12:** I need to use both of them. I'll meet native or non-native speakers in the future.
2. **S20:** Because we may come across some non-native English speakers and they may need our help. In order to understand them we ought to be got used to their speech pattern.
3. **S28:** In daily life we will face with both of them. If we learn both of them we will have a good communication.

The teacher trainees seem to have reflected upon their future English use, building an awareness of the speaker profiles they are likely to meet in real-life English use. Interestingly, it can also be concluded from their remarks that even if they do not refer to ELF communication by its technical name, they seem to be acutely aware of the fact that real-life English communication often occurs amongst those who do not speak it as their L1.

Another group of participants brought the issue of *improved listening comprehension* to the forefront in their responses, stressing the weight of familiarity for this to happen. Put differently, they attributed the trouble they have had understanding NNEs to the lack of earlier acquaintance with such speakers and their accents. In this respect, some participants made the following explanations:

4. **S31**: I am getting used to non-native English speakers and it develops my listening skills non-native English speakers teaches me how to pronounce words correctly in their own way.
5. **S44**: Because we can adapt and understand their different accents. Different accents are useful for us.

The final sub-category listed under *familiarity*, i.e. *awareness about deviant language use*, was not as prominent as the other categories. This sub-category surfaced only in five participants' responses. What came up in their responses was often about their satisfaction in being cognizant of different accents and speech patterns through the listening exercises in the books. This common view amongst these participants was put into words as follows:

6. **S2**: We see different forms of speaking & how they pronounce words.
7. **S21**: We see different pronunciations. it's nice for our ears. That's why I'm happy.
8. **S43**: You see the difference between native and non-native speaker, more clearly.

As regards the second main category, *appreciation of diversity*, only a few students mentioned that they were personally in favour of familiarity with NNEs in listening exercises due to their appreciation of diversity. The respondents in this category reported:

9. **S39**: I like the variety but in some cases non-native speakers make the conversations so difficult.
10. **S47**: I love this situation because variations are always good for learning English. Thanks to these books, we are learning much more than I expected.

### **Feeling not happy with listening to NNEs**

The participants in this category primarily perceived NNEs' pronunciations to be *unintelligible* as their use of English is rather deviant and thus does not conform to what they have been taught at schools. Secondly, they did not find the ways NNEs sound so nice to listen to, i.e. *not so pleasing* to the ear. Thirdly, attributing the ownership of English to NNEs, some participants maintained that *authenticity* cannot be ascribed to NNEs as they do not, in their view, represent the authentic voice. The following excerpts illustrate how these points were articulated in the words of participants

#### *Unintelligibility*

9. **S24**: Non-native English speakers are complicated. Because their accents are different.
10. **S8**: Because they are different from each other. And when you're listening to the conversation, you feel complicated.

#### *Unpleasantness*

11. **S34**: Because I don't like non-native English speakers, we should listen native speakers in order to speak well.
12. **S41**: We are supposed to learn English, not trying to understand awkward speeches.

#### *Inauthenticity*

13. **S16**: Non-native speakers can't speak English.

The above remarks are revealing in some ways about the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards NNEs and their pronunciations. They depict NNEs as linguistically flawed and even inferior against NESs. Additionally, it is apparent from their word choices that they do not cherish linguistic diversity, regarding it as something giving way to complication and discomfort in interaction.

### **Exposure to NNEs and their accents**

An overwhelming majority (n=41) took a stance in favour of making students familiar with diverse accents. Only six participants were against students' being exposed to NNEs and their accents in listening activities. While justifying their stance on the issue, they referred to various arguments which were categorically classified in the following table.

**Table 3:** Categories for trainee teachers' views on exposure to NNEs and their accents

Positive views (n= 41)	Negative views (n= 6)
Familiarity	Undesirability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved listening comprehension</li> <li>• Wider intelligibility</li> <li>• Effective communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detrimental to listening skills</li> <li>• Detrimental to the purity of English</li> </ul>
Real-life English use (ELF communication)	
Future career prospects	

### **Favouring exposure to NNEs and their accents**

Most participants seemed to believe that increased familiarity with diverse accents and speakers would accelerate their listening comprehension skills, enabling them to have improved listening comprehension in actual communication situations. Further to this, several participants added another argument, which rests on the idea that improved listening comprehension gained through familiarity with NNEs is the precursor to *wider intelligibility* and *effective communication*. The



following comments amply illustrate the foregoing points:

1. **S27**: Because not all the people speak English like brits and Americans so it's good to learn and hear and listen to how they speak so you can get used to the accents of the people.
2. **S29**: If they get more exposure to different accents of English, they would be able to understand easily. It makes them qualified listener.
3. **S39**: Getting more exposed to non-native speaker will be a lot better for the students. They can understand those non-native speakers in real life.

From the above statements, one can infer that the participants have been involved in some reflection with regards to the questions of who speak English and how they use it at present, with whom they will most likely speak English in future, and what it requires to have wider intelligibility against the rich diversity of English speaker profiles. Such reflections were more explicitly verbalised in the participants' responses, supporting the inclusion of NNEs and their accents in listening activities owing primarily to the fact that their interlocutors will not always be NESs, and that much of their future communication will very possibly take place in the Expanding and the Outer circle countries where the presence of NESs will be fairly low or none in interactions. Typical responses falling into this category, i.e. *real-life English use*, were as follows:

4. **S7**: Because we can face with different people who speaks English and should understand them.
5. **S20**: There are so many nations that speak English. To understand them and communicate with them students need to be exposed to different varieties of speakers.
6. **S21**: They should hear all pronunciation. For example, when they go to japan they shouldn't find the pronunciation strange.

In the final category is the issue of *future career prospects*, in which only two participants argued in favour of having greater familiarity with NNEs and their accents, justifying their arguments on their future professional identity as language teachers, and referring to their task of teaching English in accordance with the realities of everyday English use. Commenting on this issue, the two participants made the following remarks:

7. **S10**: Because it's necessary for our future. We will be a teacher and we should understand different accents. We will teach a global language.
8. **S14**: As future teachers we need to learn different accents of English.

### **Opposing exposure to NNEs and their accents**

A small number of students did not support the idea that students should be exposed to NNEs and their accents in listening activities, citing one major reason, i.e. finding NNEs and their accents undesirable. Their stance on NNEs *undesirability* as target models was observed to originate from the participants' strong positions about the traditional EFL teaching methods (e.g., the Direct Method, the Audiolingualism) that set native-speakerism as the ultimate goal to be reached by learners of English, with considerable emphasis on accuracy and correctness in pronunciation to prevent learners from forming bad pronunciation habits (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Their stance is also evidence that their perceptions have been influenced by the ideologies of standard NS English and standard English. In this respect, some respondents put forward the following arguments:

1. **S25**: It is of course no, if you have enough degree in listening & speaking you can easily understand other varieties, accents. Exposing students to get different speakers makes it more harmful.
2. **S5**: It is confusing the student's mind. It makes the listening harder than normal.

3. **S41:** Most likely we are learning academic English and this requires a pure accent.

### **Discussion**

Overall, the results showed, confirming the findings of rare studies into the speaker and accent preferences in listening or pronunciation course books (Coşkun, 2013), that most teacher trainees prefer to listen to NESs in the listening exercises. From this finding, it is also evident that the dominant ideologies, such as ownership of English, the authenticity of NESs, standard English ideology and standard NS English ideology, are firmly entrenched in the participants' cognitions. It is because most teacher trainees have tended to "hold a N[E]S norm-bound perspective regarding pronunciation" (Uygun, 2013, p. 196). A possible explanation of the vast majority holding such ideologies and perspectives largely lies, as noted in previous studies with similar findings (e.g., Fang, 2016; Ishikawa, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Karakaş, 2016; Kaur & Raman, 2014; Kung & Wang, 2018; Snodin & Young, 2015), in the participants' previous educational experiences. That is, the ways these participants were taught English in schools have a key role in their NES norm-bound perspective as school settings are the places where the implicit native-speaker ideal and standard English-orientation, and the admiration of those with a native-like accent are instilled through mediation of learning resources (Cook, 2005; Jenkins, 2014; Kung & Wang, 2018; Syrbe & Rose, 2018; Vettorel, 2013). It may be for this reason that the amount of their exposure to different Englishes has been relatively little so far.

As Jenkins (2007) discussed earlier, another closely related explanation for the participants' strong attachment to NESs and their accents might be attributed to the participants' being among the teaching professionals. Namely, the participants are all teacher trainees who will start teaching English in schools as in-service teachers in the very near future, thereby being more disposed to supporting the notion of prescriptivism than non-teaching professionals. As is seen in a few remarks on preferences

for NESs, the notion of correctness intertwined with prescriptivism and the standard language ideology is rather ubiquitous among some teacher trainees, although not only from an ELF perspective but also "from a linguistic point of view, the standard is neither superior nor more stable than any other variety" and any fluid and dynamic ELF communication (Cook, 2003, p. 15). Finally, a less likely drive behind the trainee teachers' motivation to prefer NES accents and standard English norms may be due to "the exposure to the American and British cultural media, such as TV series and movies, [which] to a certain extent has shaped their preferences" (Kung & Wang, 2018, p. 6).

The findings also indicated that only a few participants emphasized the importance of communication with speakers from different L1 backgrounds and avoided adopting a deficit approach to NNEs and their accents. Most probably, they did so in defiance of a counter position by adopting some emergent but closely associated ideologies, such as wider intelligibility over correctness, global ownership of English, and legitimate language usership by NNEs. The reason for the emergence of such counter ideologies is not very clear but it may, as argued by Kung and Wang (2018), have something to do with the teacher trainees' previous lived experiences in ELF communication, or more precisely, the transformation of their learning context and the transformation from being surrounded by monolingual Turkish peers in high school to international students at the tertiary level. In some respects, it is also probable that the exposure to other Englishes in the listening activities of their course books might have motivated the teacher trainees to reflect upon their stereotypical views of NNEs and their accents. There is evidence for such a reflection from previous observations (e.g., Fang, 2016, Karakaş, 2016) that those being appreciative of NNEs and their accents did so due largely to their increased awareness of the current face of English and its culturally rich speaker profiles. As some researchers suggest, language users' awareness is often heightened "when they have more contacts with people from different cultures" (Fang, 2016, p. 76). Such absence of the

previous contact with different English users, therefore, explain why the findings in this category are contrary to the previous studies (e.g., Coşkun, 2011; Kaur, 2014; Kaur & Raman, 2014; Uygun, 2013), in which the respondents were not appreciative of NNEs and their accents.

Another important and unanticipated finding was that despite the small number of the teacher trainees showing a preference for NNEs in the listening activities, the number of participants favourably viewing NNEs and their accents dramatically increased for several reasons when it comes to being content with exposure to NNE accents. This finding was somewhat surprising in that the teacher trainees, in the main, had faced an ideological dilemma (Billig, 2011) of showing a strong preference for NESs as the target listening models while changing their stance towards NNEs for several instrumental reasons. This bewilderment among participants may stem from the fact that although some participants can see the importance and relevance of acquaintance with various speakers and accents for effective communication in principle, particularly if it comes right down to making students familiar with different Englishes and accents, the majority still cannot withdraw themselves from inclining towards NESs and taking their accents as the target model in practice.

The blind submission to NESs among many teacher trainees may be also due the fact that as confirmed in earlier studies with practising teachers (e.g., Galloway, 2014), the teacher trainees prefer NESs and imitate their accents because they are perhaps uneasy about revealing their own NNE identity as a result of suffering from an inferiority complex. This inferiority complex may in part be explained by the social connotations hypothesis (Trudgill & Giles, 1978) in which the teacher trainees' preferences for NESs are strongly biased due to the socio-cultural stereotypes and positive social connotations they hold about NESs and their accents. However, in the case of those who do not pursue native-like accents, they seemed to have realized, most probably by means of being exposed to several NNE accents and observing their successful communication, that "more time and

energy should be spent on improving the content and fluency of their speech instead of struggling for a native-like accent" (Kung & Wang, 2018, p. 9). That is, in contrast to those preferring NESs, the teacher trainees who favoured NNESs seem to operate under two hypotheses: the intelligibility-driven hypothesis and the familiarity-driven hypothesis (Van Bezooijen, 2002) which complement each other. We can infer from the findings that as the teacher trainees get more familiar with NNES accents, they have considered the inclusion of NNESs in the listening materials rather crucial in respect of preparing students for real-life English communication with people from different countries and cultures.

### **Conclusion**

In this investigation, the main objective was to explore Turkish trainee teachers' speaking and accents preferences in a university course (Listening and Pronunciation I), especially after exposing them to different speakers and their accents over an academic term. Part of the purpose was tapping into their attitudes towards NESs and NNESs and their perceptions about them in order to discover the role of language ideologies in the expression of their speaker and accent preferences and whether their preferences might be influenced by lengthy exposure to different accents of NESs and NNESs. The findings have shown that the majority opted for NESs and their accents acting under the influence of hegemonic ideologies related to the teaching of English while the preference of a small minority for NNESs and their accents was shaped by the emergent ideologies that confront the doctrines of the prevailing ideologies. Particularly, one significant discovery to emerge from the findings is that while the preference for NNESs was rather low in terms of speaker and accent preferences, it got much higher when it came to raising students' awareness of other Englishes. However, it appears that such positive orientations to NNESs and their accents have not originated as a result of adopting an ideological position supportive of welcoming linguistic diversity but as a result of making practical decisions. Drawing on these findings, in general,

it seems that the exposure to different accents and speakers as well as previous experiences of contact with such accents and speakers in ELF communication have allowed some teacher trainees to be reflective about their preferences and perceptions, the vast majority have, albeit making some practical decisions, acted on their assumptions and stereotypes. From these findings, it can be concluded that that late exposure to ELF accents can, especially among the teaching folk barely demolish the socio-historically constructed dominant ideologies whose walls are constituted by deep-seated assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices inherent in the language teaching industry.

Overall, the findings of this study offer, in terms of pronunciation teaching through the lenses of ELF, some implications for the primary stakeholders of the language teaching industry, including teacher education program writers, teacher educators, teachers and trainee teachers. To start with the language teacher education program, as some researchers (i.e., Karakaş & Yavuz, 2018) suggest, drawing on their observation that the current program is devoid of courses such as World Englishes and ELF, that courses which will increase student teachers' ELF-awareness therefore should be included in the program, at least, as an elective. It is also vital that even if such courses do not take place in the program, teacher educators can take initiative in other courses, as in the case of Listening and Pronunciation in this research, by adopting "a pluricentric approach to introduce the diversity of English and accommodation skills when teaching students" (Fang, 2016, p. 77).

Another implication that has emerged from the findings that showed the impact of previous educational experiences on teacher trainee's pursuit of NESs in pronunciation is that practicing teachers need to be trained, too, through in-service training programs to reflect upon their traditional and norm-driven targets grounded in the assumptions (e.g., fixed pronunciation drilling, activities for accent reduction or neutralization) of the methods originated in the 1970s or so in their pronunciation teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). They

need to learn how to fine-tune their goals and practices in accordance with the current linguistic needs of their students, primarily recognizing the global dissemination of English across the world and the key role of accent exposure in leading students to reflect upon their goals, practices, and the use of English in the real-world. That is, the ultimate goal should be set as to transform "them into ELF-aware teachers who will be ready to convey such awareness amongst their students" (Llurda, Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2018, p. 155). When transformed into ELF-aware teachers, they will not only "avoid promoting a particular accent as the default pronunciation choice" but also "challenge the view of L1-influenced accents as being inferior and problematic" (Sung, 2014, p. 38).

Likewise, English teaching materials and resources have been claimed to act, while learning English, as an implicit agent in the formation of students' assumptions and stereotypes relating to issues around language teaching (Jenkins, 2014; Kung & Wang, 2018). Therefore, materials designers and developers need to keep the realities of using English outside the school environment in perspective by considering "the presence or absence of references to WE and/or ELF, of awareness-raising activities" as well as "of the use effective English communication and intercultural strategies among non-native speakers" (Vettorel, 2013, p. 483).

I should also note that the study is limited in some aspects. For instance, the data gathering was done through qualitative means (open-ended surveys), with a limited number of students taking the Listening and Pronunciation course in a single state university. Therefore, the findings cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the students enrolled in similar programs at other universities. Additionally, the content and nature of the course might show differences from one institution to another as the course tutors design the content and choose the course materials at their own discretion. However, this does not mean that no benefits can be drawn from the findings for the lecturers and students based in different institutions. In fact, the issues that emerged from the findings have particular resonance for those



lecturers and their trainee teachers in terms of raising their awareness of the utility of accent exposure to ELF speakers and diverse NESs. In addition, it is hoped that they may deduce from the findings that their preferences and perceptions are guided by certain ideologies, and that they go through a shift in their deficit perspectives about ELF speakers and accents, paying more attention to such notions as communicative efficiency, pragmatic fluency, accommodation skills, and the lingua franca core in teaching pronunciation (House, 2003; Jenkins, 1998, 2000, 2002; Zoghbor, 2011). Finally, since the impact of exposure to different accents on teacher trainees was not statistically tested but assumed in this study based on their responses, future studies can adopt an experimental research design to determine whether lengthy exposure to diverse accents will give rise to a meaningful change in trainee teachers' speaker and accent preferences.

### **The Author**

Dr. Karakaş is currently working as Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language Teaching at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey. He earned his PhD in Applied Linguistics from Southampton University, UK. He's also a postdoctoral member of the Centre for Global Englishes, Southampton University, UK. His main research interests include Global Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, Language Policy and Planning, and Teacher Education.

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