Reflections from Learners of English as a Foreign Language in a Multicultural Non-native Context

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Abstract

This paper aims to reflect the ideas of learners of English at higher education level in a multicultural non-native context. The participants were six learners of English (N=6) from six different countries and they were in the preparatory English class to major in the Department of International Affairs at a state university in Turkiye. The design of the study was maintained through in-depth interviews with the participants selected through a convenient snowball sampling. The data was documented for narrative analysis. The main findings elicited that although it would be better and more effective if they learned English in a native context, participants were all satisfied to learn English in a multicultural classroom which may provide some advantages in terms of learning different things and thinking in a multicultural environment. The motivation that drove them to learn English in a non-native environment was commonly related to educational reasons, yet they also indicated that they enjoyed learning foreign languages. In addition, the study submits that although it may sound favourable to learn English in its native context by native speaker language teachers, placing greater emphasis on hard work and effort, it is also attainable to learn English in a non-native context by non-native English teachers.

Keywords: Learning English as a foreign language, motivation, multicultural context, non-native speakers of English.

INTRODUCTION

There are growing appeals for applying to international programs at universities abroad thanks to educational and financial opportunities in terms of students desiring to get a higher education degree. Affected by globalization that plays an essential role in the pedagogic context, nowadays some learning environments are dominated and represented by multi-ethnic students, particularly at higher education levels worldwide (Honna, 2005). As the communities need to improve their scope in adapting to operate in a globalized world, education systems also get their share in going through drastic changes and renovations. This phenomenon has been widely observed in the field of foreign language learning, particularly in English, as the world's pioneering language in education, technology, science, and communication across nations. This is also related to the concern and motivation of individuals in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) for a variety of reasons (Surendranatha Reddy, 2019).

The field of English as a second language (ESL)/ EFL closely follow the paradigm of teaching English effectively and the reality of teaching may vary from context to context (Hayes, 2008) which also contributes to the achievement of the language teaching process (Harmer, 2003). Although it is thought to permit learners with better learning opportunities through a number of facilities in the native context of a foreign language (Holliday, 2005), there has been a surge of research on the field of learning a foreign language in a non-native context which generally

involves non-native teachers of that target language. The majority of trained ESL /EFL teachers are non-native speakers of English worldwide, which means that they outnumber native speakers of English (Braine, 1999a; Hayes, 2008; Liu, 1999a; Llurda, 2004).

This situation is prevalent in almost all the countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Similarly, it appears as a pertinent situation also in Turkiye where English is predominantly taught as a foreign language at all levels of education which means that students learn English in a non-native context mostly by non-native English teachers in Turkiye.

In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that almost all of the universities in Turkiye accept non-native learners from distinct countries for creating a multicultural environment at higher education levels. Regardless of their programs, initially, students are supported with Turkish language courses by official higher education institutions, namely TÖMER (Turkish Language Teaching Centre) to improve their adaptation to the society and culture and also to learn and confirm their proficiency in the Turkish language. After being officially certified to be able to speak Turkish, students are allowed to continue with their program/department at their university. In cases of attending obligatory English preparation classes, students learn English as an L3 or Ln. In most universities, students learn English in a multicultural classroom and are taught by non-native speakers of English, mainly Turkish native speakers in a non-native context.

It follows that a multi-ethnic learning environment may bring some pros and cons (Colarusso, 2010). Research displays results in strategies to make the most of the opportunities of learning English within a multicultural context (Xerri, 2016), focusing on improving learners' intercultural communication skills and meta-cultural competence (Sharifian, 2014), exploring challenges and opportunities in changing cultural identity and acquiring performance-based standards in English (Lie, 2017), recognizing the internal diversity in a multilingual and multicultural context in learning EFL (Yamada, 2010).

Concerning this focus, it is crucial to delve into the advantages and challenging aspects of learning EFL in a non-native context by non-native EFL teachers. Hence, the current study focuses on how learners from distinct cultures feel about learning English as an L3/Ln in a multicultural classroom when taught by non-native speakers of English teachers. Therefore, the emphasis of this paper is on probing into the reflections of learners to benefit from the opportunities of learning EFL in a mixed multi-ethnic and non-native context (Xerri, 2016). The research questions formulated for the investigation are as follows:

1- What are the perceptions of students learning English in a multicultural non-native context?
2- What motivates them to study English in a non-native context?
3- How do learners evaluate learning English from non-native speaker teachers of English?

Literature Review

Native vs. Non-native Speaker Teachers of English
Research on the reflections from non-native speakers of English and also from their students covers several studies from different countries (Brown, 2013; Korkmazgil & Seferoğlu, 2013; Mariño, 2011; Moussu, 2006; Walkinshaw, 2012). The debate over the issue arises from the distinction between non-native teachers' proficiency and approach in teaching an L2/Ln to learners (Medgyes, 1992). Native speakers are accepted to carry a "fluent connected speech", and to be representatives of shared cultural knowledge; yet still remaining a learner in their native language (Davies, 2007, p. 433). Although the "expertise is defined and dominated by native speakers" in English teaching (Canagarajah, 1999, p.85), some other researchers have backed up non-native English teachers reporting that they can enhance the maintenance of a multicultural and critical perspective on foreign language teaching process (Rajagopalan,

1999). Phillipson (1992) dismissed the assumption that non-native speaker language teachers would not be so apt at teaching ESL/ EFL. Instead, he advocated that non-native language teachers undergo the process of learning a foreign language, and then be better qualified to teach the language over monolingual native speakers of the target language. Some studies demonstrated a similar language proficiency between native and non-native English-speaking teachers (Ling & Braine, 2007). Medgyes (1992, p. 25) proposed four hypotheses about native speakers and non-native speaker teachers who differ in terms of "language proficiency (1) and teaching practice (2), offering that most of the differences in teaching practice can be attributed to the discrepancy in language proficiency (3) and that both types of teachers can be good teachers on their own (4)".

Being a non-native speaker was reported to have several advantages over monolingual native speakers, as the first group is considered to be endowed with switching back and forth from their L1 to L2 which also makes them understand the demands of the learning situation (Llurda, 2004). Their students will be able to express themselves "in a multilingual world that uses English as the means of expression and as the instrument for interaction among people from disparate cultures." (Llurda, 2004, p. 319). In this context, non-native English teachers are expected to guide this process effectively. Mauludin (2015) emphasizes the importance of proficiency in teaching a foreign language over being proficient in English, stating that non-native English-speaking teachers can motivate and support learners in EFL / ESL by partaking in the same culture and experience. Emphasizing the importance of teacher creativity, Tohidifar and Faravani (2023) found a significant difference between graduates of teaching EFL and non-EFL teaches in terms of instructional competency. It is also suggested that non-native teachers may need to advance their English proficiency to develop a native-like sensitivity against learner errors (Rao & Li, 2017). As addressed by Yastıbaş et al. (2022), the passion for teaching and job satisfaction will motivate teachers to perform better.

As a disruptive disadvantage, students may lack previous English instruction or may have unsatisfactory previous English instruction. Moreover, language interference from their L1 may occur, or they may have little inadequate previous knowledge about English language and culture as well as feel the cultural conflict that hinders their language development (Bensoussan, 2015). Relatedly, English teachers confront growing pressures to satisfy the demands of learners from diverse cultures (Colarusso, 2010). Thus, as offered by the related research, teachers need to manage the process effectively by motivating the learners (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). In terms of teaching styles, it is essential to assess learners' background knowledge and interest, identify their gaps, provide them with more engaging teaching materials, and improve learners' autonomy (Rinekso, 2021).

Learning English in a non-native context

Globalization in education tends to enable intercultural dialogue that helps "achieve a shared conceptually fluent language for adapting subject English in response to new realities" (Colarusso, 2010, p. 439). Diverse culture refers to the idea of sharing common values relating to multiculturalism involving "the full expression of other national cultures: unity within difference" (Colarusso, 2010, p. 437). Undoubtedly, the spread of the English language for multicultural interaction is benefitted by a large number of non-native speakers (Honna, 2005). In language learning, culture is known to establish "a context of cognitive and affective behavior, a template for personal and social existence" (Brown, 2007, p.189). As suggested by Surendranatha Reddy (2019), in multi-ethnic classes, the scope of the teaching practice should also permeate learners to acquire a critical vision for intercultural education. As translation

enables an essential source of mediation, it yields significant speed advantages when different languages are intermixed and mutual identification and respect are shared in a multiethnic classroom (Surendranatha Reddy, 2019).

Having said that, it is of vital importance to consider that the influence of a multicultural setting should not be ignored (Harmer, 2001), and the teachers need to bear in mind that in a multicultural context individuals represent their meanings and cultural references, thus the context should endeavour to enhance the interaction among individuals through a humanistic approach (Surendranatha Reddy, 2019). As the basic notion primarily shows the importance of social interaction in language development (Vygotsky, 1978), it is highly recommended that rather than attaching great importance to the designation of curriculum comprising of related methods and theories for effective teaching, the relationship between the individuals need to be taken into account to make them feel safe in the classroom environment (Colarusso, 2010). Referring to this situation, it has significant benefits to be aware of the social dimensions of the pedagogic context and to reinforce learners' linguistic, cognitive, social, cultural, and intercultural skills. As a result, this will motivate learners directly to be autonomous, and will enable them to self-reflect themselves with a transparent approach. In multilingual contexts, it is the teacher who leads the process for a compatible and sensible learning environment.

Bensoussan (2015) researched to discover the connections between students' motivation and their attitudes towards language learning in a multicultural context. For the data collection, she administered a questionnaire to 194 students with English as a foreign language at Israeli University. Results manifested that motivational issues were of vital importance in language learning. In terms of gaining awareness of the target culture and community in EFL learning, Yiğit & Dolgunsöz (2022) emphasized the significance of devoting attention to improving intercultural competence depending on tasks that are more target culture-related in EFL. Wijaya (2022) exhibited the importance of self-regulated internalization stemming from observed heightened levels of learning persistence, commitment, and diligent efforts demonstrated by EFL learners.

What merits a specific comment is that a multicultural context will improve learners' intercultural communication (Bennet, 1998) which is described as the sharing of information at distinct degrees of consciousness and control between people from different cultures that host not only cultural distinctions resulting from the related nations but also differences connected with engagement in the different activities in a national unit (Allwood, 1985). Moreover, individuals will improve their intercultural literacy which is defined as "the ability to interpret documents and artifacts from a range of cultural contexts, as well as to effectively communicate messages and interact constructively with interlocutors across different cultural contexts" (Hockly, Dudeney, & Pegrum, 2014, p. 34).

Motivation in Language Learning

A comprehensive view of the issue cannot be fully formed without the impact of motivation in language learning. There is evidence that motivation and a positive attitude are influencing factors in learning a second/ foreign language (L2) since learners will be more successful and the process will be easier when learners feel highly motivated to learn that language (Khan & Khan, 2016). As documented by the research on the scores of bilinguals and multilinguals in language learning, being able to use more languages to learn another language; bilinguals and multilinguals outperform monolinguals (Cenoz, 2003; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). There appear some other factors that affect foreign language learning achievement such as motivational, sociocultural, and situational factors (Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford, 2003;

Gardner, 2007). As highly accepted in pedagogical research, motivation directly contributes to L2 learning achievement which is initiated by language attitudes and aroused by promotive behaviours (Gardner, 2007). As put forward by Deci & Ryan (1985), motivation is distinguished between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Referring to inherently satisfying or enjoyable behaviour of the learners, intrinsic motivation comes within the individual, whereas extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual, and it is associated with the behaviours driven by the external factors to obtain a kind of reward or to refrain from punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In L2 learning, intrinsically motivated learners engage in interesting and challenging activities and tasks to learn and use the language, whereas extrinsically motivated learners may study an L2 to pass an exam or not to be obliged to repeat the course, in other words, not for learning itself (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). However, it is highly accepted that students can be motivated by both (Bensoussan, 2015). As reported by Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford (2003), being intrinsically driven, learners with positive attitudes toward advancing in language learning depicture a sign of being highly motivated learners; they need accomplishment, self-efficacy, desire for autonomy; and belief that they can manage the results of their learning.

Learning a foreign language can be challenging in informal settings, especially when the learners have minimal interaction and exposure to the language in its native context. As recommended by Lightbown & Spada (2017, p.29), "learning takes place gradually, as the number of links between language and meaning and among language forms is built." For this aim, teachers need to "induce learning and the teaching techniques" appropriately (Widdowson, 1990, p. 3). As reported by Ellis (2008) successful L2 learning is held to occur when learners engage in frequent and long-term convergence. Regarding the mentioned dimensions of motivation, the teachers need to design classroom activities in a way to motivate and make learners engaged in language learning process.

METHODS

Design
The study was a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews based on data consisting of participants' notions from learners of EFL in a non-native context.

Participants
Through the course of the study, six learners of English (N=6) contributed to the study. The participants were from different countries; namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Somalia, and Turkiye. Their age ranged from 19-21 and 5 of the participants (N=5) were female and one of them was male (N=1). Each participant was given numerical codes from 1-6 to confirm reliability. As shown in Table 1 below, participants have distinct native languages and five of them (except Turkish students) could speak Turkish as a foreign language. At this point, it should be initially stated that although they differ in their origins and native languages, the interviewees are not privileged over others and are all equal in their contribution to the study. The participants except for the ones with Azerbaijani - as Azerbaijani and Turkish have understandable dialect relatedness (Lindsay, 2015) and Turkish language background had studied the Turkish language the year before they started the preparation English class at the School of Foreign Languages as a state university in Turkiye. They have been learning English for 9 months within two academic terms in the preparatory English class that was compulsory for their department ie.: International Affairs at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative

Sciences at the same university. The classes were face-to-face during the period and they were taught English by 4 non-native lecturers. The education period involved a totally of 20 classes of English per week and the English language teaching process involved main course classes (12 classes per week), reading & writing classes (4 classes per week), and listening & speaking classes (4 classes per week) monitored by the lecturers in collaboration. Within the regulation, the students will continue with their department after they complete the preparation class. The table below demonstrates the native language and foreign languages spoken by the participants:

Table 1. The list of native language and foreign languages spoken by participants

Participants	Country	Native Language	Foreign Languages
Participant 1	Afghanistan	Persian	English, Turkish
Participant 2	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani	English, Turkish
Participant 3	Iraq	Arabic	English, Turkish
Participant 4	Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Chinese, English, Kazakh, Russian, Turkish,
Participant 5	Somalia	Somali	English, Turkish
Participant 6	Turkiye	Turkish	English

The Instrument
The study involved a qualitative design mainly revolving around interviews with the participants. The study generated in-depth interviews with 6 international students from 6 different countries selected through convenient snowball sampling. The interview questions generally interrogated their perceptions as they were learning English in a multicultural context by non-native speakers of teachers, the main source of motivation they felt when they were studying English, and their evaluations of learning English from non-native speaking teachers of English.

Data Collection
Interviews with the participants comprised the main data of this research. Individual interviews took twenty minutes on average for each participant. The general mode of each interview was open. The participants were all volunteers to contribute to the study. The interviews were voice-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were mainly in English, but when necessary at some points, the participants and the researcher spoke in Turkish for the clarification of some concepts. The answers were later documented by the researcher based on the replies from the participants.

Data Analysis
The analysis of the data was documented in a transcription form and the replies by the participants were formed concerning each interview question in a narrative design. For data analysis, narrative analysis was employed depending on the directions pertaining to the procedure in narrative analysis described by McCormack (2004).

The Procedure
The study was initiated with the selection of participants through snowball sampling among 24 students in a preparatory English class. Later, the interview questions were identified and piloted with one of the students who did not participate in the study to check clarity and

understanding. Based on her suggestions, the questions were re-arranged in terms of accuracy. Later, the participants were interviewed for data collection. After data collection, the data was transcribed according to the replies from the learners about each question and narratives were elicited for the analysis.

Setting
The context in which the participants studied EFL was a city in the Middle Anatolian Region in Turkiye. The preparation program involved Main Course English, Reading & Writing, and Listening & Speaking classes, which were all compulsory throughout the year. Class size of 25 was the norm, yet less than 25 students were registered to the department (N=24). The formal language of the region is the Turkish language, and participants were exposed to the Turkish language outside. In harmony with official pronouncements, textbooks published by a native university were used in A1, A2, B1, and B2 levels during the classes sequentially and retrospectively in need.

FINDINGS
In this section, the findings relating to each interview question are elicited and documented respectively. Regarding the first research question that interrogated the perceptions of students learning English in a multicultural and non-native context, the reflections were mainly positive.
Participants commonly expressed that they felt contended to learn English in a multicultural setting. Participant 1 from Afghanistan remarked that it was a favourable experience for her, stating that,

> *"It was amazing to learn English in a class with students from different countries for me. I both improved my Turkish and English. I even learned some other phrases or words from the native languages of my friends. Some of the things seemed strange to me, but I tried to feel empathetic for their lifestyle".* (Participant 1).

As reflected by the participants, being a learner in a multicultural classroom made them feel more tolerant toward differences. Relevantly, Participant 2 from Azerbaijani explained that studying with students from other countries made him more tolerating.

> *"As I started here, my horizon expanded, different cultures made the process more interesting, I feel. I learned to live and study with students from other countries. This made me more tolerating."* (Participant 2).

Relating to the same situation, student 4 from Kazakhstan pointed out that, she also learned to respect the differences which made each individual unique:

> *"a multicultural environment thought me to be more tolerant towards differences across cultures. Although we know that we should be respectful towards differences, I experienced a multicultural environment for the first time, and it made me look through the eyes of different cultures. Also, I learned many interesting things from their cultures at school".* (Participant 4).

On the same issue, participant 3 from Iraq clarified that although she found it strange at first, she got accustomed to the classroom environment, and even enjoyed it.

> *"I felt a little weird to study with students from other countries, especially this is my first year in university, so it was weird at first, after I got to know them I knew that this may be helpful for me to improve my English by talking to them, I think I was*

a little afraid of talking at first or afraid of learning, but now I think I can do it even if I meet new people, and the thing that made it easier for us that we have fun and enjoy while talking, that's because the teachers made it easier to do." (Participant 3).

Participant 5 from Somalia expressed that though she was from a closed society, she improved her interaction with other students and felt warm to communicate with students from other countries.

"I tried to understand the way they behave in their cultures, and when I recognized some differences I thought that I can learn different things from these distinctions. As we became closer, I felt positive about their way of life and worldview. One more thing, I could make great memories with all the class and that changed me a lot." (Participant, 5).

Participant 6 who is a Turkish student hosting intercultural students from different countries remarked that,

"I have a positive relationship with all of my friends in the classroom. Some of the students' level of English is high, and some of them were beginners at the beginning. I improved my English with the help of students with good English and I also did my best to help my friends when they couldn't understand a topic in English. So there appeared a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom and this made me more motivating." (Participant, 6).

Related to the second research question that inquired into the motivational factors that drove them to learn English, participants initially referred to educational reasons demanded by their department at the university. Later, they also stated that they were interested in learning English, as it is one of the most significant foreign languages worldwide. Participant 1 from Afghanistan revealed that;

"I can speak Persian as my native language. I can also speak Turkish since I went to high school in another city in Turkiye. I started learning English in Afghanistan. I attended an English course there for two years. But my Turkish is better since I learned it here in Turkiye. I like learning languages". (Participant, 1).

Participant 2 from Azerbaijani told that although he had studied foreign languages in his country, he got motivated through the engaging activities implemented in classes in Turkiye. He explained that;

"As English sounds cool and is required, I felt motivated to learn more. I can speak Azerbaijani and Turkish. I can also speak English and French. I studied English for 2 years in the 10th and 11th grades in Azerbaijan. You know English and French are quite similar in vocabulary and grammar. At school, I felt motivated, particularly when I was engaged in activities more. (Participant, 2).

Participant 3 from Iraq stated that although she was obliged to learn English due to school regulations, she enjoyed learning new languages, this was what made her feel more motivated to be successful in English. She shared that,

"I can speak Arabic as my native language. I learned Turkish in Turkiye since I have been living in Turkiye for 5 years. As I learned it here in a native context, I can speak it well and it would be better if I learned English in a native context too, rather than in a non-native context as in Iraq or Turkiye. I can also speak German at the beginner level, I learned it in Iraq. I like learning languages. I enjoy discovering

interesting areas about the languages I learn. This is the most important thing that motivates me to learn English. It is also obligatory for the department but I can already speak it." (Participant, 3).

Participant 4 from Kazakhstan expressed that she found English easy to learn, but she also tended to benefit from the opportunities of being able to speak English, since it would provide her to attend some international programs like 'Erasmus', recalling that

"English was easy for me to improve. Because I can also speak Kazakh language and Russian. I started learning English in the 5th grade in Kazakhstan, but our classes didn't involve performance skills such as speaking and writing. Our classes were centred around grammar and vocabulary. At this school, I improved my speaking and writing skills. I feel pleased about this chance. I felt motivated for educational reasons, to be able to start my department. I know that it is necessary for our department. Another thing that motivated me is that I could go abroad through ERASMUS. I have such a chance and it makes me excited." (Participant, 4).

Participant 5 from Somalia said that

"I can speak the Somalian language as my native. Turkish and English are my foreign languages. We started learning English in 7th grade in our country. But then, I didn't like English. Now, as I improve my language skills in English, I feel astonished and motivated to learn more. Then the culture would be more abstract, yet I know that it is demanded here for my department, and I could also improve my language skills throughout the year. Speaking in English with friends also improved my English." (Participant, 5).

As revealed by Participant 6, learning English is important in many aspects in Turkiye and her main purpose in improving her language skills in English mainly resulted from educational and occupational demands throughout her education. Thus, she reflected that,

"I started learning English in 2nd grade at primary school. Yet, I couldn't improve my English to speak fluently and write appropriately. Now, I decided to study more to learn English this year, especially to qualify in the preparatory class, but I also plan to study more for better occupational opportunities when I graduate from the department." (Participant, 6).

The last research question was about learners' ideas on non-native speaker English teachers and they commonly emphasized that, although the classes were effective for grammar topics, learning vocabulary, and writing skills, they could be more conscious of pronunciation and cultural figures. That matter comes to light by 3 of the participants who agreed that it would be better and more effective when they learned English in its native context and with a native speaking English teacher. Participant 1 from Afghanistan expressed a view shared by all participants that,

"We would like to learn English in a native context but it is possible here in Turkiye when we studied more. We can watch or listen to native speakers whenever we need them with the help of technological facilities. For example, I follow TV series on channels to improve my listening skills and for more exposure to native English." (Participant, 1).

Some of the students, especially those who learn Turkish in a native Turkish context compared the process of learning Turkish in its native context, Turkiye and the process of learning

English in a non-native context and pointed to the importance of learning a foreign language in its native context led by native speaker language teachers. Participant 4 from Kazakhstan stated that,

"We improved our Turkish which is also a foreign language for us. We use Turkish outside when shopping or traveling, or sitting at a café. As we use Turkish, we improve it more and if we could be able to use English in a native environment, I believe that we would also advance our communication skills in English." (Participant, 4).

Participant 2 from Azerbaijani related to a different point stating that he found non-native speaker English teachers helpful as he struggled in learning English;

"As I started this preparation class, I thought that I couldn't do well in English and even decided to quit the program. Yet, my teachers helped me a lot to continue, and later I made up my mind that as the teachers help me learn English even in topics that just I can't understand, I can do it and I studied more to accomplish and do better in the exams. It was with their help that I progressed in learning English. In this way, I didn't think, of course, even comparing them with native speaker English teachers, but they could all speak English, they taught us how to construct sentences and how to develop our sentences both in writing and speaking. So, I feel pleased that they were our teachers." (Participant, 2).

Looking through the topic from a different angle, Participant 5 from Somalia reported that, it would be better basically for cultural topics relative to cultural reading passages or extract since she needs to visualize things that she has never seen in her life. She stressed that,

"Two of my siblings live in England and their English is far better than mine. They learn English by interacting with native people there and using English in their daily life. It would be better if I could also have this chance, some cultural figures would sound more meaningful then." (Participant, 5).

Upon the same research question, Participant 6 from Turkiye emphasized the importance of class hours rather than being educated by non-native speaker English teachers. She figured out that,

'I have been learning English for about 12 years in Turkiye, and all of my teachers were non-native speakers of English teachers. I admit that I could progress in English this year, in preparatory class, in my opinion, the main reason was due to long hours of classes. At primary school, we had only 2 classes a week; at secondary school, just 4 hours; and at high school, it was 4 or 6 hours a week. So it was not satisfactory to improve a foreign language. But we have had 20 hours of classes per week and some of the classes focused on developing language skills. Hence, in my opinion, although it would be better if we had a chance to learn English in England or USA, it is also possible with non-native speaker teachers of English even in a non-native context. It specifically depends on our systematic and hard work and effort to improve English as a foreign language." (Participant, 6).

DISCUSSION
This research study aimed to investigate the perceptions of English learners from different countries in the preparatory English class at a higher education level in a multicultural non-native context at a state university in Turkiye. 6 students contributed to the study all from different countries.

As noted earlier, there have been reforms and innovations in the education systems of communities due to the globalization trend. Such a salient tendency also has an impact on the English language which should not be regarded only as a foreign language to be learned but also as a key point in building intercultural relations in a multicultural setting. Participants in the study were all from different countries which meant that they studied English throughout the year in a multicultural setting. The process of the study was based upon three research questions that revolved around the perceptions of the participants on learning English in a multicultural non-native context, the motives that led them to study English in a non-native setting, and how they evaluated being taught by non-native speaker teachers of English. As for their views on learning English in a multicultural classroom, they were all satisfied with learning English in a multiethnic classroom stating that differences should be respected and they learned different things from their friends. Moreover, as reflected by the learners, studying in a multicultural context made them more tolerant of differences, and also sensible for things that were regarded to be "strange" in their own culture. As reported by the majority of the participants, although they felt weird in the classroom, they felt affectionate and became close friends over time. A multicultural context is essential for building an intercultural relationship between individuals (Allwood, 1985; Harmer, 2001) and for improving their intercultural literacy plus developing linguistic, cognitive, and social skills (Hockly, Dudeney, & Pegrum, 2014). These findings are in line with what was referred to as advantageous in terms of benefitting from differences and learning from the "different others" (Surendranatha Reddy, 2019). Eventually, a closer relationship that intertwines individuals in a learning environment will improve their motivation level.

Parallel to this description, participants also reflected that they felt motivated, particularly for educational reasons. Given that highly motivated learners have positive attitudes toward learning, it is significant to improve the motivation of individuals in learning English (Gardner, 2007). It is also clear that sociocultural and situational factors also have a vital impact on the increasing motivation of the learners (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). Among their responses that were mainly about educational reasons, learners also reported feeling motivated for their aim to attend international programs like Erasmus. Moreover, some of the participants made a comparison of their journey in learning English previously and elicited that the system in the preparation class was a driving force for them. Relatedly, some of the participants expressed that they enjoy learning new languages and that's why they intend to prosper in English. It is substantial for language learners to feel motivated either by intrinsic or extrinsic forces (Deci & Ryan, 1985), hence commonly educational reasons and also some individual forces drive learners to achieve in learning English as a foreign language, even in a non-native context. Moreover, such a multilingual environment would push learners to recognize some linguistic aspects across nations in a multicultural environment where individuals reflect on their configurations of their native language, and also of foreign language.

As for the perceptions of the participants about non-native speaker English teachers, learners arrived at a consensus on the advantage of being lectured by native speaker English teachers although confessing that they had never experienced it. They commonly indicated that this would make a difference in being exposed to the culture of the target language directly. Another significant aspect was pronunciation which is believed to sound native by native speakers (Davies, 2007). Yet, emphasizing the effort of their lecturer, participants also stated that, they could learn English with the help of their teachers throughout the year. As underlined by some of the participants they could compensate for exposure to native speakers by watching or listening to videos or TV programs. The most conspicuous finding about their perceptions was that learners also believed in the effort which would make them progress in language learning.

Although the debate over the performance of native vs. non-native speaker teachers continues, the literature directly shows that non-native speaker English teachers also undergo a process of being trained for teaching ESL /EFL at distinct levels. (Medgyes, 1992; Rajagopalan, 1999). Correspondingly, the lecturers of the preparatory English program were all non-native speaking English teachers all trained in English Language Teaching departments at universities in Turkiye. Furthermore, non-native speaker teachers are bilingual or multilingual teachers, hence they are perceived to analyze and make a comparison of both languages and cultures (Llurda, 2004). In association with the findings in this study, it is eloquent to suggest that although they may seem to lack some original or cultural standard about the target language compared to native speaker teachers, non-native speaker teachers may also furnish a learning environment with distinctive figures of both languages and cultures in terms of teaching EFL even in a non-native context.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of 6 learners of English in a multiethnic classroom at a higher education level in Turkiye. Participants were all from distinct countries and reflected their ideas and perceptions about learning English in a multicultural non-native context. They also revealed the motivational figures that made them learn English in a non-native context. The results of the study elicited favourable results in terms of the benefits of learning a foreign language in a multicultural setting. As revealed by the findings, the participants were all contended to have friends with different cultural backgrounds although at first, they felt strange or exciting. They remarked that they were generally motivated for educational reasons, however, some also signified that they studied English since it sounded cool and since they enjoyed learning new languages and new and interesting things from their friends who were mostly from diverse countries. The core findings indicating their view over being lectured by non-native speaker English teachers demonstrated that it would be more effective if they learned English from a native speaking teacher, however, they also praised their non-native English teachers for their effort and help in teaching them English. Drawing on these results, it can be concluded that, although it may sound favourable and opportune to learn English in its native context by native speaker teachers, it is also attainable and contingent to learn English in a non-native context, taught by non-native speaker English teachers.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers important implications specifically for learners who study ESL/ EFL in a multicultural non-native context. It is highly recommended that building bridges across cultures is significant when learning a foreign language in a multicultural setting. Thus, teachers need to be conscious of the pros and cons of teaching a foreign language in a multicultural context. They should be aware of the social aspects of the pedagogic context to evolve the linguistic, social, cognitive, and intercultural skills of the learners. Related implications were accordingly provided for paying attention to the needs of the individuals for improving intercultural communication and literacy. Moreover, within the realms of hard work and effort, learning ESL /EFL is also acquirable and relevant in a non-native context. Thus, teachers need to direct learners appropriately for a more effective and successful language learning process benefitting from the conditions of the learning environment.

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