

ENTREVISTA

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Here is a short interview made to Peter Medgyes with the occasion of the celebration of the First International Conference on English Teaching in Educational Institutions which took place in Valencia last May 6th, where he participated as one of the keynote speakers.

Carmen Aguilera (CA)— *Are we, non native teachers, better prepared to provide education?*

Peter Medgyes (PM)— I wouldn't say we are better prepared but we are certainly not inferior to native speakers of English. Of course they have an advantage over us in terms of their language competence. They can speak English more fluently, they can put in more emotion..., but on the other hand we can counterbalance these advantages that native speakers have over us by, for example, sharing the same mother tongue with our speakers. In these days, you know, the mother tongue can help, it has come back into the classroom. We can be more empathetic to our learners because we know everything about them, their problems, their culture is the same. Another advantage is that we also learned the English language just as our learners, so we know in advance what their problems will be, what hindrances and obstacles there are in front of them.

The point is that at the end of the day, I don't think there is a difference between natives and non natives. What matters is the quality of our teaching, and I think natives and non natives can provide good quality and bad quality irrespective on which country we were born in. Whether we were born in Spain or the UK or Hungary, it doesn't make any difference. Qualifications, our personal charisma, our capabilities and so and so forth. So language there, whether you are a native or non native, is not the most important thing.

CA— *There was a great issue some time before about bringing native teachers to work in the bilingual program in Madrid. What would you advice politicians and policy makers to do about this?*

(PM)— My advice would be partly to listen to researchers, what research has brought up, but in particular to listen to teachers, because after all we are the ones in the classroom, we know best what is good and what is not good for our students. Of course from the politicians point of view is very difficult because there are so many English teachers and maybe they don't all agree with one another but I think teachers should voice their point of view and try to find the way to reach up to the top to the political level but it looks as if there is been a great deal of progress made in this sense and politicians seem to listen more perhaps to the classroom teacher.

