

Growing Recognition - The New Non Native English Speaking Teaching Interest Section

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TESOL's newest Interest Section, the Non Native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) Interest Section, starts with an established history. The Interest Section has its roots in the NNEST Caucus, proposed by George Braine in 1996, and founded in 1998. The Caucus' overarching goal at that time was to create a positive professional identity for NNESTs by building a community that would provide advocacy for NNESTs, emphasize the benefits that NNESTs bring to English language teaching, foster NNEST leadership development, and support Caucus members' efforts to publish.

A decade later, the Caucus had over 1,700 primary members. CATESOL and WATESOL had NNEST entities in their governance, and NNEST Caucus members had been active in TESOL leadership, including several who served as TESOL Board Members-most notably, Jun Liu, TESOL's first NNEST President. Even more significant was the Caucus' contribution to the creation of an entirely new field of research, NNEST studies. The seminal work on NNESTs is usually identified as Peter Medgyes, 1994 text, "The Non-Native Teacher." Today five major NNEST anthologies are either in print or in press, and over 200 articles have been published related to NNEST issues. The 2008 New York TESOL Convention saw more than 25 NNEST related presentations, and numerous unpublished dissertations and theses have examined NNEST concerns.

Due in large part to this robust research growth, discussions began about transitioning to an Interest Section structure as early as 2002. Arguments advanced included, interest sections having more visibility in TESOL; caucuses not being well understood and therefore under subscribed, and finally, the awareness that NNEST Caucus members had become less concerned about their identity (an appropriate caucus focus) and more concerned with professional issues (a key characteristic of interest sections).

Thus, when the TESOL Board announced the dissolution of Caucuses this year, the NNEST path was clear: apply for interest section status. The application was approved by at the June Board meeting and the NNEST Interest Section was formed.

As NNESTs have achieved the recognition they sought, both in their careers and in the TESOL organization, there has been a change in both the outreach and the research focus of the entity. Outreach today is less about discrimination (although certainly this is still a concern) and more about working across specializations and coming to terms with English as a Lingua Franca. Research today focuses less on how NNESTs are perceived and looks more to professional issues; such as effective NNEST classroom practices and appropriate professional development in local EFL settings.

The NNEST Interest Section actively welcomes both Native and Nonnative English Speaking TESOL members. It intends to continue the NNEST Caucus traditions of actively supporting members' publication efforts and preparing them for leadership roles. Looking ahead, our aim is to be at the forefront of research on English and English teaching in world where English is used by many-in many different ways.

For more information on the NNEST IS, please visit <http://www.tesol.org>: Communities: Interest Sections: Non Native English Speaking Teachers.