



# NNEST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus

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## *From the Chair*

**George Braine**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

A glance at current research in TESOL reveals a range of studies that probe the initiation of nonnative professionals into academic discourse. When such research is presented in academic conferences or scholarly journals, the nonnative speakers are often relegated to the role of anonymous subjects—their backgrounds, identities, and achievements obscured by the conventions of scholarly research and publications. Except for Braj Kachru, Claire Kramsch, and a few others, the voices and achievements of nonnative speaker scholars in our discipline have largely remained submerged.

This is why I invited a few nonnative speaker colleagues for a colloquium at the 1996 TESOL Convention. So, on a freezing Friday afternoon in Chicago, Suresh Canagarajah, Ulla Connor, Kamal Sridhar, Jacinta Thomas, and Devi Chitrapu joined me in a colloquium titled “In Their Own Voices: Nonnative Speaker Professionals in TESOL.” The audience, consisting of both native and nonnative speakers, listened with rapt attention and in absolute silence, riveted by the highly charged, mainly personal narratives of the speakers. I remember Jacinta Thomas’ presentation especially well. She had shown me the transcript a few days earlier, and my advice to her was not to change a single word. Jacinta’s poignant narrative, recalling her personal struggle in the face of discrimination and alienation, appeared to light a spark

(See *From the Chair*, p. 3)

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## *The ELT: Ho(NEST) or not Ho(NEST)?*

**Robert B. Kaplan**

Professor Emeritus, University of Southern California

This title obviously requires a little deconstruction. In his important book, Medgyes (1994) uses the terms *NEST* and *Non-NEST* to mean, respectively, ‘native English-speaking teachers’ and ‘non-native English-speaking teachers.’ In my title, the ‘Ho-’ prefix stands for the phrase ‘hire only.’ Thus, the question actually is: ‘Hire only native English-speaking English-language teachers or not?’ The language humor was impossible to resist, and the title of this article is, perhaps, more interesting than its prosaic paraphrase.

The terms *native speaker* and *non-native speaker* obviously and pointlessly

(See *The ELT*, p. 5)

## *From the Editor*

With this issue, we begin volume 1 of the *NNEST Newsletter*. The newsletter is the voice of the newly created NNEST Caucus.

As George Braine, Caucus Chair and faculty member at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, explains in his opening article, for many of us the journey began at TESOL '96 in Chicago. We decided there to propose the formation of a NNEST Caucus. Now, three years later, we celebrate the first issue of the newsletter.

In his article, George presents the many compelling personal and professional reasons for the founding of the Caucus. Additionally, George states the major goals of the Caucus.

Robert Kaplan, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California and language consultant, a long-time observer of sociopolitical topics in TESOL, provides his perspective on issues related to NNESTs. In his article, Bob points out that many of the problems encountered by NNESTs may be the result of purely political and economic motives. He reminds us that education, training and experience are equally important among the many variables to be considered in hiring a language teacher. Bob Kaplan's article concludes with a discussion of the resolution by the TESOL Board of Directors against discrimination in hiring practices.

Kathleen Flynn, Director of the Credit ESL Division at Glendale Community College, presents the perspective of an administrator with a long-term record of hiring nonnative English-speaking professionals for her program. She states the many reasons for hiring NNESTs as ESL instructors. With candor, Kathleen suggests some of the hurdles and barriers that NNESTs encounter when they apply for ESL-teaching positions.

Keiko K. Samimy and Janina Brutt-Griffler, teacher educators at The Ohio State University, suggest an agenda for critically addressing issues related to NNESTs in TESOL programs. Keiko and Janina note that, in their classes, there is a growing realization among future nonnative English-speaking professionals that they have substantial contributions to make to the TESOL field. As a result of classroom discussions, NNESTs, who are "teacher educators" in their home countries, have developed an impressive agenda to be pursued when they return to their countries of origin.

In this issue we also include a bibliography of publications on NNESTs in the ELT field. We encourage you to let us know about other publications on the topic.

An ESL and an EFL practitioner provide us with narratives on the importance of having a voice in TESOL. Brazilian-born Elis Lee, an ESL teacher in California, and Carmen Velasco-Martín, an EFL teacher in Barcelona, discuss the importance of the NNEST Caucus from their perspectives as ESL and EFL practitioners. In her

narrative, Elis, who will be attending her first TESOL Conference in New York City, encourages us to join "the wave" and become members of the Caucus.

Jun Liu, Caucus Chair-Elect, welcomes us to the NNEST Caucus booth at TESOL '99. Jun encourages us to assist him with staffing the NNEST Caucus booth. See page 4 of this newsletter for the hours that the booth will be open.

We would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to the first issue of the newsletter and for their willingness to meet an extremely tight deadline. Their contributions and timeliness are greatly appreciated. We also would like to thank José L. Galván, of California State University, Los Angeles, for his assistance in formatting the final version of the newsletter. Lastly, we would like to thank Molly Kirby, TESOL's Field Services Coordinator, for her assistance.

Our next newsletter will be published before TESOL 2000. We hope that you will consider submitting an article.

Lía D. Kamhi-Stein  
California State University, Los Angeles

### **YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME!**

The NNEST caucus invites your submissions to the newsletter in the form of articles, book reviews, and announcements! Send materials electronically to Lía D. Kamhi-Stein at [lkamhis@calstatela.edu](mailto:lkamhis@calstatela.edu). Mailing address: Lía D. Kamhi-Stein, TESOL Program, Charter School of Education, California State University, Los Angeles, 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032. The editor reserves the right to edit any materials submitted for publication in order to enhance clarity or style.

**The deadline for the next issue of the NNEST Newsletter is November 30, 1999.**

every nonnative speaker in the audience. I could never have anticipated what that colloquium unleashed. In retrospect, to say that its effect was electrifying would be an understatement.

Following an animated discussion of the issues that were raised, Ruth Spack from Tufts University collected the transcripts of the colloquium presentations for publication as an anthology, Lia D. Kamhi-Stein proposed the formation of a nonnative speaker caucus, and plans were made for a second colloquium at TESOL '97. The anthology that was proposed will be published under my editorship by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates as *Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching*. Five other colloquia at subsequent TESOL conventions have resulted, and, the Caucus is now a reality.

Following the Chicago colloquium, our first task was to seek the advice of the TESOL Central Office on the formation of a caucus. Molly Kirby, TESOL's Field Services Coordinator, was generous with her time, advice, and encouragement. Since 200 signatures of TESOL members were required to set-up a provisional caucus, a small group of enthusiasts drew up a Petition for a Provisional Caucus and began collecting signatures. The Petition and a list of initial supporters can still be found at the following Website: <http://logic.csc.cuhk.edu.hk/~b788765/>.

A further boost for the Caucus came from an unexpected quarter. Alexander Jenin, an English teacher from Poland, had written to *TESOL Matters* on his long and fruitless search for an ELT position. Despite earning a Masters degree in TESOL in the United States, Jenin had been repeatedly spurned by administrators of English language centers both in the United States and elsewhere. The editor of *TM* invited me to submit a companion article to Jenin's, and the two articles were published in the February/March 1998 issue of *TM* under the heading "Nonnative speakers and ELT." Because the article mentioned that I was forming a caucus for nonnative speakers, and because the articles touched upon employment—an area where nonnative speakers were regularly discriminated against, I was inundated with messages of support nonnative speaker readers. The following are typical of the messages I received.

*behalf of all nonnative EFL professionals. What you said is very true and I'm firmly supporting your initiative to get people to know the voice of nonnative EFL educators. I'm a native Chinese. I taught EFL in China at various levels for more than ten years before I came to the US. Nonnative ESL/EFL educators have been keeping silent for many years. Their contributions to the ESL/EFL profession have always been neglected. Their expertise is often treated as a negative effect on the profession. It's the time for us to fight back to gain our integrity in the TESOL profession. I think it's a great idea to set up an organization for nonnative speakers in TESOL.*

*I read your article . . . and thought that I finally had a voice. I'm an ESL teacher whose first language is Portuguese. I'm from Brazil, but I've been living in the US for many years. I've done everything I thought necessary to be an ESL teacher, but I've not been successful in finding a job. I'm very discouraged at this point, and I'm reluctant to accept the reality that I wasted a lot of time, money and energy earning my Certificate and later my M.A. in TESOL. Thank you for giving me a voice.*

*I read your article . . . with great interest. I am a NNS and teacher of ESL in a IEP in Tampa, Florida. Like you, I have encountered multiple barriers to my career advancement and have been very disappointed at the attitude of many program administrators. . . . ESL is a field that I love and I never thought that there was going to be discrimination, especially since we are dealing with a second language and with different cultures. I thought that acceptance of the differences of others would be the norm. Many times I have felt that I shouldn't even try to apply for jobs since I feel I would be discriminated against. It is the first time that I see anything published that has been written from the perspective of a NNS teacher of ESL.*

Following the publication of the *TM* article, Lia D. Kamhi-Stein continued to collect signatures for the Caucus petition in the US and abroad and Jun Liu provided the final spurt at the Seattle TESOL Convention, energetically seeking signatures at every opportunity. I vividly remember him at various presentations, traversing the aisles, making every effort to collect signatures. These efforts bore quick results: at the end of the Convention, we not only had the required number of signatures but had also generated much publicity for the Caucus.

*From the Chair* (continued from p. 3)

So, within a brief two-year period, our Caucus has become a reality. Our aim is to strengthen effective teaching and learning of English around the world while respecting individuals' language rights. The major goals of the Caucus are:

- to create a nondiscriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth,
- to encourage the formal and informal gatherings of nonnative speakers at TESOL and affiliate conferences,
- to encourage research and publications on the role of nonnative speaker teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, and

- to promote the role of nonnative speakers members in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions.

Membership is open to all interested TESOL members, both native and nonnative speakers alike. The success of the Caucus and of nonnative speakers in our profession will now depend on your enthusiasm and commitment.

## NNEST CAUCUS BOOTH AT TESOL '99

Jun Liu, *Caucus Chair-Elect*  
The University of Arizona

Great news! There will be a NNEST Caucus booth at TESOL '99! Along with four other caucuses, our booth will be located on the second floor of the Sheraton near six of the primary meeting rooms, thus ensuring a steady stream of convention participants all week.

With a poster board backdrop, a chair, and a 4' x 24" table, our 6' x 5' booth will make its first professional appearance at a TESOL convention. Our main objective for the booth is to publicize the NNEST caucus and recruit members. We will distribute NNEST statements, flyers, NNEST-related research references, and our first NNEST newsletter. We will also facilitate NNEST networking, answer relevant questions and make ourselves known to those who will be our potential members.

Our booth will be open from 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. from Wednesday (March 10) to Friday (March 12), and we need volunteers to staff the booth. Each volunteer will be on a two-hour shift and we need 16 volunteers altogether with four for each day. We cordially invite those of you who plan to attend TESOL '99 to spare two hours to help us staff the booth. We need your help and your participation is deeply appreciated. Please contact Jun Liu (junliu@.u.arizona.edu), our NNEST chair-elect, by indicating the time slot you are willing to fill in:

	9:00-11:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	1:00-3:00 p.m.	3:00-5:00 p.m.
<b>Wednesday (March 10)</b>				
<b>Thursday (March 11)</b>				
<b>Friday (March 12)</b>				

### NNEST OPEN MEETING AT TESOL '99

We invite you to attend the first NNEST Caucus Open Meeting. We hope that you will participate in the work of the Caucus and assist us with your energy and commitment. We look forward to your attending the meeting.

*Where?* Nassau Room, Hilton Hotel  
*When?* Thursday, March 11  
*Time?* 7:00-9:00 p.m.

### JOIN THE NNEST CAUCUS!

Please join the NNEST Caucus when you renew your TESOL membership.  
 If you have questions about the Caucus and its activities, please contact George Braine, Caucus Chair.

dichotomize the world neatly into ‘us’ and ‘them,’ but beyond that, they are fairly useless. As Medgyes carefully points out (1994), there is no satisfactory definition of the term *native speaker*; and in the absence of such a definition, the negative term is quite impossible to define. The artificial distinction further implicitly raises the question of a standard; native speakers can teach the ‘standard’ to which they have been exposed throughout their lives, but what variety of English will so-called ‘non-native speakers’ teach? And is the NEST standard anything like ‘global English’? But these too are vacuous questions.

A ‘standard’ language results, generally, from a complex set of historical processes intended precisely to produce standardization; indeed, a ‘standard’ language may be defined as a set of discursive, cultural, and historical practices—a set of widely accepted communal solutions to discourse problems. This set of features is not unique to British English or American English but occurs across all varieties of English, metropolitan and peripheral (as Kachru [1992] has pointed out). Additionally, a ‘standard’ language may be a potent symbol of national unity. If this definition of a ‘standard’ language may be assumed to be viable, then the ‘standard’ language is really no one’s ‘first’ language. On the contrary, the ‘standard’ language must be acquired through individual participation in the norms of usage, and these norms are commonly inculcated through the education sector (with the powerful assistance of canonical literatures and the media, print and electronic). The ‘standard’ language is a sociolinguistic construct, reflecting both the reality that English is a pluricentric language, and the popular notion that one or another variety has greater social cachet.

The reality of most linguistic communities is marked by the normative use of a wide range of varieties in day to day communication—i. e., the use of slang, of jargon, of non-standard forms, of special codes, of different varieties (e.g., in the US context, Network Standard, Eastern, Northern, Midland, and Southern Standard, African American Vernacular English, Gullah, Appalachian Standard) even of different languages [as in code-switching]).

However, the existence of such a construct creates an impression that linguistic unity exists, when global reality reflects vast linguistic diversity. The notion of the existence and dispersion of a ‘standard’ variety through a community (or many communities) suggests that linguistic unity is the global societal norm; it also suggests a level of socioeconomic and sociopolitical equity which may be contrary to the reality of linguistic diversity. The *de jure* obligation to use a

codified standard is likely to cause frustration among minority-language speakers and foreign-language learners, since the standardized language is for them a non-dominant variety; minority-language speakers and foreign-language learners probably use a contact variety, likely to be at considerable variance from the ‘standard’ variety. And there is nothing wrong with that. Indeed, in the FL situation, the contact variety may have the greatest cachet.

So, what’s the problem with non-NESTs (or for that matter non-native speaking teachers of any language)? Why are they discriminated against in terms of employment? It is in fact the case that nonnative speaking teachers of French and German regularly teach those languages in US schools. Why are English teachers singled out for discrimination?

The only apparent reason for this odd outcome may be purely political and economic. In US Intensive English Programs (IEPs), the clients may say: “Why have we traveled thousands of miles to study English in the US only to be taught by a teacher we might have studied with at home?” (Actually, ESL students are not likely to phrase the question quite like that; the point is authentic, even if the language is not.) In fact, as Tollefson (forthcoming) notes:

...English seems in some contexts to provide advantage for some individuals and groups, but in other contexts seems to provide little tangible benefit; and in some contexts, the need to learn English results in serious disadvantages for some groups and individuals.

Non-native English speaking English teachers are prominent among the group that may experience serious disadvantage.

Assuming that the subject of discussion subsumes only **trained** language teachers (not mere native speakers who have accidentally ended up in the classroom), there is a very large number of variables implicated in any discussion. Who is being taught? The evidence suggests that NESTs are more effective with advanced learners, while non-NESTs are more effective with beginning learners. Where is the teaching taking place? The evidence suggests that the non-NEST may bring to bear a knowledge of the indigenous culture essential for learning and unavailable to the NEST. What are the learning conditions? NESTs may be more effective with small groups; non-NESTs with larger groups. Who is paying for the teaching? Government-run schools often simply cannot afford to employ large numbers of NESTs. Quite aside from sheer cost, the presence of large numbers of NESTs in some environments may be politically destabilizing and highly undesirable.

To turn to the question of proficiency, it may be said,

(See *The ELT*, p. 6)

*The ELT* (continued from p. 5)

as a broad generalization, that NESTs have a greater command of the target language, especially of the pragmatics of the language. But non-NESTs may have greater proficiency in some registers—not necessarily the same registers that NESTs would be expected to command.

The TESOL Board of Directors approved a resolution expressing its disapproval of discriminatory hiring practices:

...[E]mployment decisions in this profession which are based solely upon the criterion that an individual is or is not a native speaker of English discriminate against well-qualified individuals, especially when they are made in the absence of any defensible criteria... (October 1991; published in *TESOL Matters* 1992).

While TESOL does not dictate the rules for the profession, its strong condemnation of such discriminatory practices has done much to alleviate the problem encountered by non-NESTs. In sum, teachers of English to speakers of other languages should be hired on the basis of their qualifications as teachers, without reference to the relative nativeness of their English proficiency, but not without reference to their ability to speak, hear, read, and write some variety of English and their ability to teach in the particular environment. It is not really a question of Ho(NEST)y.

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## *NNEST STEERING COMMITTEE 2000-2001*

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# Hiring Nonnative English Speakers to Teach ESL: An Administrator's Perspective

Kathleen Flynn  
Glendale Community College

As a chair of a large ESL division, I interview a wide variety of teachers each year. What attributes do I look for in a teacher? The basics include a Masters degree in TESOL (or a related area), teaching experience, enthusiasm, and flexibility. What would compel a chair to hire a nonnative speaker of English?

## The Advantages of Hiring NNESs

An ESL teacher who is a NNES knows what it was like to learn English. He or she remembers the frustrations of learning the tense system, articles, and two-word verbs. In other words, the trials of learning the intricacies of another language are very real to the NNES. In general, the NNES has a degree of patience with students that is sometimes lacking in a teacher who is a monolingual speaker of English.

The NNES can also serve as a role model for students. When students moan that "English is too hard." and that they will "never get it," the teacher who is a NNES can remind his or her students that it can be done. The NNES can also be a facilitator of cross-cultural communications between students and other faculty or staff. Sometimes it takes a skilled individual to explain cultural differences in a way that does not threaten either side.

I once observed a teacher from Taiwan explaining to an American-born colleague that green was a "friendlier" color to use in correcting essays than red. The NNES was referring to the fact that in Chinese culture, a person's name is written in red only in an obituary. The American teacher had been used to using red pens for correcting essays and was not aware that this bothered some of her students. The students spoke to a teacher who was familiar with their culture and who could intercede for them without a loss of face.

Those of us who have either worked or traveled overseas for an extended period of time will remember the absolute joy of finding another native speaker to chat with. The topic of the conversation need not have been deep. Most times it was the ability to connect which was important. An ESL teacher who is a NNES can

*The NNES can also serve as a role model for students. When students moan that "English is too hard." and that they will "never get it," the teacher who is a NNES can remind his or her students that it can be done.*

provide that link for a student who is experiencing homesickness or culture shock.

## Issues in Getting the Job

Any NNES who wishes to teach ESL in the US needs to have the basics—a good grasp of grammar, an easy-to-understand accent, and an understanding of US cultural norms of classroom behavior. Let's take a look at these points in more detail.

The grammar and writing style in a cover letter can make or break an applicant's chance to get an interview. I would advise having a colleague look the cover letter over for style, appropriateness, and spelling. I receive a number of letters every year that contain grammatical errors in the first few sentences. Needless to say, these letters do not lead to interviews.

Accent is sometimes a touchy issue. As a native speaker of New York English seeking employment in Southern California, I found it necessary to modify my own accent. I learned to speak slower, modify my vowels, and use fewer East Coast expressions. Was it hard? Yes. Was it necessary? I think I needed to model the local accent to be a better teacher to my students. It made me more employable and the goal was to get a job.

How does this relate to the NNES? Some ESL students complain if their

teachers have very strong accents. If a NNES can sound more native-like, he or she moves up a notch in the eyes of both colleagues and students.

It is important for the NNES to understand the norms of cultural behavior in the US classroom as well as what may be considered illegal or improper. An interesting discussion occurred when I received complaints about a teacher who insisted on showing religious videos as part of required class assignments. The students reported that they received higher grades if they agreed with the instructor's view of the video. The instructor refused to believe me when I told her that public schools have policies concerning the teaching of religious views in class since the situation was different in her native country. The teacher refused to modify her stance, her enrollment shriveled, and her next class had to be cancelled due to lack of enrollment.

To be clear, I have had to discuss the issues of what videos may be shown in the classroom with native speakers as well. The difference is that native speakers are generally aware that such issues exist. It is important for the nonnative ESL teacher to learn what these issues are and how they are handled by the school.

In summary, there are many reasons to hire the NNES to teach ESL in your program. It is incumbent on any chair or administrator to provide training in the matters mentioned above. A department can have nonnative English-speaking faculty make presentations on cross-cultural matters or contrastive analysis between English and another language and can, thereby, gain from having the NNES on staff.

# What Can a TESOL Program Offer to Their "Nonnative" Professionals?

Keiko K. Samimy and Janina Brutt-Griffler  
The Ohio State University

Nativeness in teaching is like a cult: it exists as a *normal, natural, and universal* "regime of truth," to use Foucault's term. The construct of nativeness in a language allows for a binary classification of teachers into those who are native speakers and, by antithesis, those who are nonnative speakers. In Applied Linguistics, the often liberal approach to the question is concerned with first enumerating the strengths and weaknesses of each category of the teachers and, subsequently, often ending with a call for pluralism in the profession. Or, again, it may conclude with a statement that it is a "wishful" thinking that a nonnative speaker of English can achieve native language proficiency (Medgyes, 1994). Importantly, such conclusions ignore the results achieved by NNEST teachers. At best, we see calls for a collaboration of teachers of the supposedly two different camps. On the other end of the spectrum, those who are concerned with standards in English internationally openly ascribe an apprenticed identity for "nonnative" English speaking teachers. Quirk (1995) states: "The implications [of the alleged lack of native speaker competence of NNS] for foreign-language teaching are clear: the need for native teacher support and the need for nonnative teachers to be in constant touch with the native language" (p. 26). Those who address the question critically (e.g., Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, in press; Nayar, 1994; Kachru, 1997; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998) often find the crux of the question within the context of larger sociopolitical and historical contexts; they see the construct of the native speaker in ELT often embodying "Eurocentric" or western cultural assumptions and ideology that disempower nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs).

We suggest that it is critical to address this side of ELT education within a TESOL program. As such, we see that we first need to articulate the issues involved in "nativeness" through the *experiences and self-representation* of

both NNESTs and native English speaking teachers (NESTs) to challenge the professional boundaries often based on questions of ideology and identity. Second, we would argue that we need to develop a conceptual framework that places the knowledge of international English teachers both in the ESL (e.g., India, Nigeria) and EFL (Mongolia, China, Brazil) contexts in a more informed and principled manner—not in juxtaposition to their NS counterparts. That is, we need to find ways to critically address the voices of NNESTs. As a TESOL graduate student recently put it: "There should be some way of empowering the nonnative professionals. By directing

*We suggest that empowerment comes from the knowledge generated from within the international professional and her/his critical self-reflection of the role that s/he can play in the profession.*

the attention of the nonnative professional into native-like proficiency, the whole profession has been very much distressed because we ended up complaining about our inability to have native-like proficiency."

We also ask two fundamental questions: what does it mean to empower an international English teacher, and how are we to do it? We suggest that empowerment comes from the knowledge generated from *within* the international professional and her/his critical self-reflection of the role that s/he can play in the profession. We make this assertion on the basis of a critical praxis project that we carried out in a TESOL

program with the goal of examining the issues that concern NNESTs and to explore conceptual tools geared towards the empowerment of NNESTs. What follows here is a very general and broad outline of a *program* of research that emerged out of our critical praxis project that we consider very important in building a knowledge base and a theoretical substantiation for the concerns of NNESTs.

It is important to establish a built-in mechanism in the existing TESOL programs which encourages critical praxis to explore these issues. In 1997, as a form of critical praxis to empower nonnative speaking students in TESOL, we offered a pilot graduate seminar at a major research institution in the US. In our earlier meetings, students' comments reflected some of the "disempowering" practice that goes on in TESOL education. Rather than empowering them as ELT professionals, many aspects of our current TESOL practice may unconsciously reinforce Western cultural hegemony (Peirce, 1997) in our classrooms, unwittingly silencing multicultural voices and domesticating them into an ESL ethos. One interesting theme that has emerged from the course is the students' realization about the potential contributions that they could make as professionals in TESOL. Initially, many of them did not perceive themselves as active contributing members in the field; however, over the 10-week period of dialogic exchanges and problem-posing in the seminar, they were able to identify the areas that they could contribute in ELT.

Many of the students discussed their role as "teacher educators" upon their return to their home countries. Their future agendas included: (1) to insist on the distinction between teaching in the



ESL and EFL contexts so that textbooks and teaching methodology are situated in local contextual conditions (cf. Widdowson, 1996); (2) to empower EFL teachers so that they develop critical awareness toward “received wisdom” (Nayar, 1997; Pennycook, 1990) and challenge the appropriateness of imported materials according to their settings and their students’ needs; and (3) to create opportunities for in-service teachers to work with English users from various English speaking countries such as India, Singapore, and Philippines to promote the notion of English as an international language. In addition, course evaluations revealed: (1) an increased level of awareness among students about themselves and other international professionals, including geopolitical issues in EFL contexts (e.g. Asian countries vs. West African countries); (2) a new sense of group identity; and (3) an emphasis on means of contributing to other international professionals’ careers. It is on the basis of the classroom dialogic as well as written dialogic that the students arrived at the above realizations. We see that this is a critical part of empowerment—that, as we suggested earlier, comes from the knowledge generated from *within* the international teachers and professionals and his/her critical self-reflection of the role that s/he can play in the profession.

The delineation of the major issues by NNESTs shows the importance of developing a vital research program in this area of teacher education within a TESOL program. One of the critical points of discussion in the course centered on the distinctions of “two most widely used acronyms, ESL and EFL” (Nayar, 1997, p. 9) and their sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and political implications (cf. Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Nayar, 1997; Phillipson, 1992; Strevens, 1980). Why does the ESL/EFL distinction matter? It matters because it affects both the teachers and the learners in terms of their expectations of success, average level of attainment

reached, and the ultimate norms or goals that the teachers and the learners set for themselves (Strevens, 1980). We contend that the cross-cultural boundaries of the varied contexts have significant implications for teacher education in TESOL programs. In particular, attention must be directed to the following areas in TESOL: (1) the roles that native and nonnative speaker teachers can play in ESL/EFL contexts; (2) the development of a cross-cultural methodology which draws upon the principles of multilingualism in teaching English; and (3) exploration of the existing power relationships between native and nonnative English speaking teachers and the need for a paradigmatic shift in TESOL pedagogy by making authenticity more context-specific (cf. Widdowson, 1996).

While teacher education often focuses upon developing the skills for successful teaching and understanding of the second/foreign language acquisition processes, it also might benefit from providing curriculum space for NNESTs and NESTs to critically address their concerns regarding their own roles, develop more complex sense of identity as professionals based not upon the binary distinctions, and give them voice in the profession.

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# Wanted: A Wave of Role Models

Elis Lee

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Have you ever seen or been to a sports event in which the spectators do “the wave”? It is a powerful way for the people to participate in the action, show support, and share the passion for the game. However, in order for the wave to work, there are certain requirements. First, there must be a number of people. If there are only a few people present, the wave is not effective. Second, someone must start the wave. If no one stands up and starts the movement, there is no wave. Finally, the most important requirement in a good wave is people willing to participate with passion or the wave is broken in its course and its purpose defeated. In the TESOL field, there is a need for a “wave” of nonnative English-speaking role models.

When I first decided to become an ESL teacher, I heard many discouraging words. “How can you teach the language if you are a learner of the language yourself?” people said in disbelief. I began to doubt myself and regard my desire to teach as a dream, the foolish dream of a NNEST to teach the language I had been learning for not too long. In my dream, I still wanted to make a wave, but I felt like I was the only one watching the game. As I went through my master’s program, I met other people like me. There were many other NNESTs with the same concerns.

*It seems that with the creation of the NNEST caucus, the wave is on its way. For the first time, the voices of NNESTs can be heard. It is time to join the wave. Participate. Support. Share the passion. Move the wave.*

Suddenly I was not the only one. Now I know that we, NNESTs in the TESOL field, are big in numbers that just keep growing, as anyone can see when looking at statistics in a TESOL graduate program. We have the numbers to make the wave.

I can see myself sitting in a stadium filled with nonnative English-speaking educators from around the world. My heart is pounding, aching to participate, waiting for someone to stand up and raise both arms in the air. I sit there for a while, until finally someone starts the wave. For the first time, I see a successful nonnative speaker stand up and show everyone that it is possible. Through her success story, this role model showed me that I did not have to be afraid by myself, that I could also succeed in the field, that I had a future in TESOL despite the skepticism of some. She opened my eyes and guided the way.

She inspired me to try my hardest and do my best. Someone had started the wave.

It seems that with the creation of the NNEST caucus, the wave is on its way. For the first time, the voices of NNESTs can be heard. It is time to join the wave. Participate. Support. Share the passion. Move the wave.

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## EFL Teachers: A Different Perspective

Carmen Velasco-Martín

Universidad de Barcelona

Ever since I was a child I had a special feeling towards “foreign” languages, those languages that came from countries that were so close, and at the same time, so different from mine. I still remember my first EFL teacher. Although her face is blurred, I remember that she not only taught me English, but she also inspired in me the passion she felt towards countries that I had only seen on maps. I can still hear my EFL teacher telling me the stories that raised my curiosity. Those stories encouraged me to speak English, to communicate with native English speakers and to travel to places where English was spoken. My first EFL teacher was a NNEST, as were most of the EFL teachers that I have had throughout my life.

When I became an EFL teacher, I wanted to emulate my first EFL teacher. I wanted to be a messenger who would use the EFL class as a vehicle to deliver a load of cultural messages. I wanted to be a reporter who would tell my audience—my students—exciting stories about the cultures and peoples of the countries where English is spoken. More importantly, I wanted to give my students an appreciation of a language and culture different from their own. It did not matter that my students were NNESTs. I am also a nonnative

English speaker of English. My students know that I was once an EFL student. They also know that I had problems communicating with native English speakers, that words did not always come out of my mouth as easily and fluently as I wanted. Nonetheless, my students believe that I can be as good a teacher as a native English speaker. My students know that I understand how they feel when they try to communicate and they are unable to find the right word, when they feel insecure, and when they want to stop trying. They know I have experienced similar problems. As a Spanish saying roughly states, “the person who has been a cook in front of a stove knows well what happens in the kitchen.”

Unfortunately, not everyone feels the same way. There are people who believe that you need to be a native English speaker in order to be able to teach English. Additionally, there are people who underestimate the competence of the NNEST to teach “their” language. Therefore, we need to join together in order to make our voices heard. The newly created NNEST Caucus will allow us to carry our message both within and beyond the TESOL community.

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