Content

Keeping the NNEST Movement Alive
A Letter from the Chair

Paul Kei Matsuda
University of New Hampshire

Ever since its inception in 1998, the NNEST Caucus has been playing a vital role in the TESOL profession, providing professional resources and raising important questions about issues that affect NNESTs as well as our students and NES colleagues. Transcending various Interest Sections, NNEST has become one of the most visible topics at TESOL conventions, and NNEST sessions and open meetings continue to attract a growing number of TESOL professionals —both NNESTs and NESTs alike. NNEST is more than just a Caucus; it's a movement.

As the NNEST movement gains a momentum, it is also coming to a critical turning point because the founding leaders of the Caucus have completed their terms and are now off the leadership rotation. Of course we continue to receive their warm support: George Braine, founding chair, now serves as our Historian; Jun Liu, who has joined the TESOL Board of Directors, is a strong advocate for all Caucuses; and Lía Kamhi-Stein continues to support the leaders as Past-Chair. Yet, in order for our Caucus to keep going strong, we need to cultivate a new generation of leaders who will shape the future of our Caucus and the profession.

Declarative Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, and the Varieties of English we Teach

Kathleen Bailey
 Monterey Institute of International Studies

The way many laypersons, students and employers view non-native speaking teachers has often been a huge source of justified frustration for well-prepared, highly proficient NNESTs over the years. In many countries in Asia, for example, the blue-eyed, blond backpacker who runs out of money and looks for work may have better luck getting a position to teach English than a local teacher with a masters degree or an advanced diploma in TESOL. There is no justification for this practice other than the folk belief that native-speaking teachers are somehow inherently superior – an unquestioned assumption called the "native speaker fallacy" (Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; and Phillipson, 1992).

Unfortunately, this assumption and

Editor's Remarks

I am delighted to present to you the second issue of this year's *NNEST Newsletter* (Volume 4, Number 2), which includes a variety of articles and some related news. I would like to start by introducing the new NNEST Steering Committee Members for 2002-2003: Paul Matsuda, Caucus Chair; Masaki Oda, Chair-Elect; Khalid Al-Seghayer, Newsletter Editor; Aya Matsuda, Webmaster, and. Lucie Moussu, Assistant Webmaster.

As the new editor of the *NNEST Newsletter*, I would like to pay my respects to my predecessor, Paul Matusda. Paul's editorial guidance has been central to the success of this publication for the past year. On behalf of NNEST Caucus members, I extend a hearty thanks to Paul for all he has contributed to the *NNEST Newsletter*.

This issue comprises a letter from the Chair and five articles addressing different related topics. Paul Matusda, our current Chair, discusses issues that current NNEST Caucus leaders and members alike need to take into consideration to keep the NNEST movement alive.

The first article, by Kathleen Bailey, is entitled "Declarative Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, and the Varieties of English We Teach." In it, Bailey argues that English teacher employment decisions should be based on proficiency and professional preparation, not on the national or cultural identity of the English teacher. Bailey also discusses a number of challenges native and non-native English teachers face regarding their declarative and procedural knowledge. Additionally, she examines what varieties of English should be taught in language programs.

In the second article, "The "NNESTessity" of Professional Self-Discovery," Brock Brady discusses the importance and advantages of professional self-discovery. As a result of the importance of professional self-discovery, Brady proposes that teacher education programs ask their NNS student teachers to engage in what he calls "Learning/Teaching Profiles." He maintains that this activity should be viewed as an on-going process that starts when the student enters a program and continues until graduation.

The third article, by Ju Zhan, "From a Research Subject to a Conference Presenter: A NNEST's Decade-long Professional Journey," shares her professional journal over the course of the past ten years and interestingly tells how she has progressed from simply being a research participant to a conference presenter.

In the fourth article, "A Strong Case for Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)," Myo Kyaw spells out some attributes that NNESTs bring to the ESL classroom. Kyaw concludes that these attributes show that NNESTs can indeed benefit the ESL classroom and can thus strengthen their case in the profession. Furthermore, the author strongly calls for investigating means through which we can best employ the services that NNESTs offer, instead of asking whether we should allow them to teach English as a second language.

Finally, in the fifth article, "The Impact of being a Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher in the ESL Classroom: A Pilot Study," Silvia Pessoa and Fabiana Sacchi, examines how being a NNEST has an impact on the teacher's identity and the classroom, and also looks at the role that teacher training plays in defining the NNESTs' identity. The results of this pilot study indicate that a number of factors define NNESTs' identities, including English proficiency, lack of cultural awareness, and sufficient teaching experience. Pessoa and Sacchi encourage NNESTs to initiate steps to improve themselves in these areas, and they also call on TESOL programs to better prepare prospective NNESTs by address their needs and concerns.

I would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to this issue of the *NNEST Newsletter*. I welcome and look forward to your future submissions.

Enjoy this issue of *NNEST NEWSLETTER*

Khalid Al-Seghayer
University Of Pittsburgh

From The Chair

For this reason, we felt the need to revise the leadership rotation. In the previous system, the leadership rotation required a three-year commitment , starting with Newsletter Editor and moving onto Chair-Elect and Chair. This system allowed the leaders to develop a strong working relationship over a long period of time, which was crucial during the period in which the foundation for the Caucus was being developed. Yet, it also required the leaders to commit themselves to the three-year rotation and to develop both leadership and editing skills.

Under the new system, Chair-Elect and Chair comprise a two-year rotation, and the Newsletter Editor position is now a separate track with a two-year term. These changes were made in response to the concern that Chair and Newsletter positions require different sets of skills. Members can now enter the Chair-Elect/Chair rotation without a strong interest or experience in editing and publishing.

This new system also allows the Newsletter Editor to develop and use editing skills over a longer period of time, thus further improving the quality of the *Newsletter* in the long run. We hope this new system will encourage more members to run for leadership positions.

As the current NNEST Caucus Chair, I am excited by the opportunity to work with new leaders who are committed to addressing the needs of Caucus members. The current Chair-Elect, Masaki Oda, has a strong record of advocating for NNESTs both in theory and practice. Our new Newsletter Editor, Khalid Al Seghayer, is also committed to serving the needs of members by publishing quality articles by many contributors.

In addition to these elected positions, the Caucus has appointed-positions, including Historian, Assistant Webmaster and Webmaster. As I mentioned above, George is our Historian. Lucie Moussu has recently joined the leadership team as Assistant Webmaster; Aya Matsuda, who has been in charge of our website http://www.unh.edu/nnest/ from its inception, will also continue to serve as Webmaster.

These are not the only possible leadership opportunities that NNEST Caucus can provide; it is possible to create additional leadership positions. That's how Lucie became Assistant Webmaster. After the Caucus Open Meeting at TESOL 2002, Lucie expressed her interest in developing her technology skills by helping with the Caucus website. We responded by creating the Assistant Webmaster position, and Aya agreed to serve as her mentor. Lucie will now work with Aya in developing her web skills, and she will eventually take over as the Webmaster.

There are many other ways—both formal and informal—in which you can get involved in the Caucus. For example, you can…
- Initiate and/or participate in the discussion on the NNEST-L email discussion list;
- Share your experience and insights through the *NNEST News letter*;
- Volunteer to work at the NNEST Caucus Booth, where you can meet many people;
- Tell your colleagues about the NNEST Caucus and encourage them to join;
- Run for one of the leadership positions, which will create more leadership opportunities within the TESOL organization; and the list goes on.

Having a strong leadership team is crucial, but it is not sufficient to keep the NNEST Caucus going. Ultimately, the Caucus is a member-driven entity; it needs the help of all its members in developing a strong community of professionals, in providing opportunities for professional growth, and in raising the awareness of everyone in the profession.

Let's work together to keep the NNEST movement alive. ✍

Declarative (Continued from page 1)

the simplistic debate about the merits of native versus non-native teachers over in the chronological sense of which language they learned in infancy. But a teacher's target language proficiency is only one element of professionalism. Another concern is whether or not the person has the appropriate education to be a language teacher. I see these two issues – proficiency and professional preparation -- as continua. Their intersection is portrayed in Figure 1 below (Bailey, forthcoming):
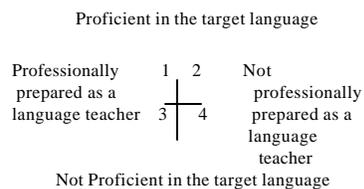
Proficient in the target language

| Professionally prepared as a language teacher | 1 | 2 | Not professionally prepared as a language teacher |
| | 3 | 4 | |

Not Proficient in the target language

Figure 1: Continua of Target anguage Proficiency and Professional Preparation

Proficiency is defined as knowledge, competence, or ability in the use of a language, irrespective of how, where, or under what conditions it has been acquired" (Bachman, 1990, p. 16). It is not necessarily equated with nativeness, and certainly not all native speakers are skilled users of English. There are varying degrees of proficiency: It is a continuum, rather than an either/or proposition. Apparently people can continue to increase their second language proficiency throughout the span of their lives, although some features of language (e.g., pronunciation) seem to be more difficult to change, while others (such as vocabulary) continue to develop regularly, as we read, study and interact with others.

Likewise, professional preparation is a continuum. Someone without any formal training cannot be said to be well prepared as a teacher, and there are various levels of professional education available, depending on the position a teacher is seeking. Furthermore, we can continue to pursue professional development throughout our lives. And, I would argue, that it's quite possible for us as teachers to become relatively less prepared than we once were, if we don't keep up with new developments and research in the field.

In my opinion, Quadrant 1 in this figure represents the most desirable set of attributes for language teachers to possess, while Quadrant 4 is clearly the least desirable. But what about the other two combinations? The choice rests on many variables including local needs and constraints. I believe in many circumstances it is better to employ a professionally prepared teacher who has good (but not perfect) English ability (Quadrant 2) than a native speaker of English with little or no training (Quadrant 3). For example, there is a widespread assumption that less proficient teachers can be used effectively to teach beginning and intermediate courses. I am not suggesting that NNESTs should always teach lower level courses, nor am I aware of any research which shows conclusively that this practice is either helpful or harmful to the learners. (I hope the newsletter readers will inform me if there is some.)

My reason for holding this position is based, in part, on the distinction between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. "*Declarative knowledge* includes all of the things we know and can articulate" (Nunan, 1999, p. 3). In other words, declarative knowledge is what we know about something. In our profession, declarative knowledge can be (1) about the target language (e.g., its rules and their exceptions), (2) about the target culture (e.g., its taboos), and (3) about teaching (for instance, knowing about content and for tive language teachers, however, we must have superior procedural knowledge as well. *Procedural knowledge* is the ability to do things – knowing how, versus knowing about. In our field, procedural knowledge entails at least three areas: (1) knowing how to use the target language, (2) knowing how to behave appropriately in the target culture, and (3) knowing how to teach.

Both native speaking and non-native speaking English teachers will face challenges in terms of their declarative and procedural knowledge, though these challenges may differ. Native-speaking teachers of any language may have a natural advantage in terms of their procedural knowledge about how to use their variety of the target language and how to behave in their part of the target culture. However, without the proper professional preparation and the experience of learning a new language themselves, native-speaking teachers may lack the procedural and declarative knowledge about how to teach, and the declarative knowledge about the language itself.

Compared to their native speaking counterparts, non-native speaking teachers may have stronger declarative knowledge about the target language, given the NNESTs' years of study and formal instruction. They may also have excellent declarative and procedural knowledge about nguage teaching. What NNESTs may lack is the experience base for using

the target culture (both instances of procedural knowledge).

Native and non-native teachers have different strengths. As early as 1979, Shaw pointed out that "a native teacher may partially or even completely lack the kinds of insight necessary for an English language teacher to prepare and execute his classes" (1979, p. 12). He also observed that "non-native speaker teachers are typically better able…to control the complexity of their speech in an elementary class" (ibid.). These are examples of procedural knowledge.

Murphy O'Dwyer claimed that as teachers "native speakers have just as much to learn (and in many cases much more) than nonnative speakers" (1996, p. 21). For example, nonnative speaking teachers who studied the target language formally often have better insights into the structure and use of the language than do untrained native speakers who may have little or no explicit declarative knowledge of their first language. Furthermore, Murphy O'Dwyer noted that nonnative speaking teachers have a distinct advantage over monolingual native speakers in that "they already have a successful language learning experience behind them, which they can draw on to inform their teaching" (ibid.).

Related to the issues of proficiency and professional preparation of language teachers is the question of what variety of English will be taught in language programs. This decision has, in some regards, become increasingly complicated in recent years. There was a time when a major purpose for studying a foreign language was to be able to read the literature written in that language. Given that goal, the predominance of various forms of the grammar translation method in teaching, and the apparent dominance of recognizable "standard" varieties of

languages, arguments about which variety to teach arose less often than they do today – or if they did, the debate centered on the British standard or the American standard. Later, reading continued to be emphasized although for a somewhat different reason, when English for academic purposes emerged as an international vehicle for gaining scientific and technical knowledge. But with twentieth-century advances in global transportation and rapid, interactive communication, speaking and listening skills have also become central goals for many language learners. And often those learners use English to communicate with other non-native speakers, from other first language backgrounds, rather than exclusively with native speakers. Over twenty years ago, Smith noted,

English is being used by non-native speakers to communicate with other non-native speakers. The countries of ASEAN their cultures. Japanese businessmen use English in … Malaysia to represent their company's policy. Singaporeans use English to tell others about their "way of life." New literatures in English have appeared from India, the Philippines, and the South Pacific as well as Africa – literature written in English by non-native speakers intended for a world audience – not just a native-speaking audience (Smith in Sukwiwat and Smith, 1981, p. 13).

So recently, speaking and listening have been emphasized more than (or at least as much as) reading, and English has been used more and more as a lingua franca, in literature, science, technology, and commerce. As a result of these developments, non-native speaking English teachers (NNESTs) have experienced pressure to increase their own target language skills as well, in order to rise to the challenge of meeting their students' changing needs.

As a result of post-colonial linguistic developments, the multi-country lan English) may have hundreds of regional and social varieties. Some language programs will intentionally provide a particular variety as the target language model taught in class. Learners can enroll, for example, in EFL programs to learn British or American or Canadian or Australian English (though each of these varieties, in fact, has many identifiable subvarieties). In other cases, the program policy may be to hire teachers who represent diverse target norms themselves.

Let's consider an EFL example. When I worked in the English Language Teaching Unit at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the faculty there included teachers whose first language was Mandarin or Cantonese, as well as speakers of Australian, Canadian, British, Sri Lankan, Indian, and American English. But even these national labels are too simplistic to characterize the English varieties spoken by the members of our team. Many of the Cantonese-speaking English teachers had studied in the U.K. or Australia. The American varieties ranged from California to Mississippi, and the Sri Lankan teacher had studied in Texas and worked in Alabama. This rich diversity of English varieties among the teachers was entirely appropriate because it mirrored the multiplicity of the Englishes used in Hong Kong by tourists, businesspersons, and local people. Thus, the English varieties spoken by the teachers represented the Englishes our students would encounter, both immediately, in their daily lives, and in their futures, as educated members of a fluid international society.

What about an ESL example? At my school, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, we have a small intensive English program. It has been the program's policy there to employ well qualified teachers regardless of their apparent status as native or non-native speakers of English. Recent hires there have included teachers whose chronological first languages were Arabic, Dutch, Portuguese, Japanese, German and English. All these teachers are highly proficient speakers of English and they have all completed their masters degrees in TESOL. Still, it is important that the teachers and the program administrators explain the policy to the ESL students, many of whom come to California expecting all their teachers to be native speakers of American English. The students themselves must understand the importance of having good language learning role models, of studying with excellent teachers, and of hearing a range of international accents and different varieties of English. Matsuda (1999) noted that diversity is an asset in teacher development, but I would add that in many contexts, the presence of speakers of several varieties of English can be a great asset to the learners as well.

Concluding Comments

In this brief article I have argued that the native speaker versus non-native speaker debate is overly simplistic and that they key issues to be considered in employment decisions are proficiency and professional preparation. We have considered the different challenges faced by native and non-native speaking teachers in terms of their declarative and procedural knowledge. Finally, we addressed the question of what varieties of English should be taught and represented in professional teaching faculties.

It is my contention that TESOL and the NNEST Caucus can accomplish a great deal to help English teachers improve both their proficiency and their professional preparation. Furthermore, the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge provides us with a useful tool for self-assessing those areas in which we require improvement. ✍

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The "NNESTessity" of Professional Self-Discovery

Brock Brady
American University

I recently had the opportunity to read some of the chapters from George Braine's anthology, *Teaching English to the World* (forthcoming). I was very favorably impressed. An important element if *Teaching English to the World* are the words of practicing non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs), at various stages in their careers, discussing how they came to the profession, how they have grown, and how they plan to continue as TESOL professionals.

As I read some of my colleagues recounting their professional journeys, revealing their successes and doubts, their insights and their insecurities, I felt very privileged. I felt as if I were watching as the writers came to make sense of all that they had done in their careers—through the process of writing about it—as if I were seeing part of their professional growth before my eyes. At times I felt they were furthering my professional growth as well, because as I saw connections between their careers and mine, I found myself being led to many of the same conclusions that the writers had reached about themselves as they succeeded in their careers.

Another value of *Teaching English to the World* is that our colleagues' stories will serve a powerful means to disabuse those who have never thought to see NNESTs as peers . One cannot read these stories and doubt that their authors are full-fledged professionals—our colleagues, whose voices not only deserved to be listened to, but must be listened to if our profession is to continue to grow and develop, enriching both our students and ourselves.

However, the ultimate value of these professional sagas will probably be the process of self-discovery which they provide. I'm persuaded that the process of recounting one's professional journey helps one to see who one is as a teacher, to see one's strengths both as a language learner and as a guage teacher, and how to see how one's personal history has shaped one's professional growth. I am convinced that each of the writers in the anthology know full well who they are as professionals, know where they are heading, and know what they hope accomplish as teachers.

I think this process of self-discovery is important to any teacher (because teaching is so much about empathy), and unless see ourselves honestly, and see ourselves as others (especially our students) see us, our empathy remains, necessarily limited. However, I think the process of professional self-discovery may be particularly useful for NNESTs.

The primary reason for this is the need to build self-esteem and self-confidence. Many NNESTs have solid self-images with healthy reserves of self-esteem, but others, particularly young professionals or those still in training, lack self-confidence and are often very self-conscious about their own language abilities.

Having such teachers reflect on all that they have learned about English and teaching, asking them to honestly assess what they can and cannot do if they had to try--this will help them give them the confidence they need to provide both effective teaching to their students, and to try out new techniques when they encounter them.

The second reason why I feel professional self-discovery is can be a particularly helpful process for NNESTs is that while we NESTs may need to learn what our our relationship is to <u>teaching</u> (and our sense of self), we (for better or worse) don't have to explore the relationship of English to our identity—English has been the medium of our primary discourse (as James Gee remarks, that "*one discourse we all get for free*" (1996, p. 137)). For NNESTs, English is by definition, the medium of a secondary discourse--a discourse that one has had to acculturate into, and one in which one is likely not full member (and a discourse in which one might have very good reasons for choosing NOT to be a full member). Therefore the relationship between English and the NNEST has to be much more complicated, and part of being a more effective teacher of English will almost surely be coming to terms with how English relates to one's identity.

For this reason, I would recommend that many teacher education programs ask their non-native English speaking student teachers to engage in what I am calling "Learning/Teaching Profiles." I see activity as an on-going process that would start at the time the student enters a program and continue until graduation.

To implement these Learning/Teaching Profiles, non-native English speaking student teachers would meet regularly with their advisor (minimally, on a semester basis), to explicitly explore their knowledge of how they teach English, their intellectual and professional growth, and most importantly, the relationship between English and their identities, so that when they complete the program they will have a sense of themselves as TESOL instructors with their own professional identities--a sense of professional self as strong and as worthy of respect as those writers in

George Braine's anthology.

Some of the elements that should we encourage our student-teachers to explore in their Learning/Teaching Profiles are:

- Ways of teaching though which they learned easily or well.
- Ways of teaching that weren't so obviously beneficial.
- Elements of English they know well.
- Elements they don't feel comfortable about.

Teaching/teaching training history

- Creating Classroom Culture: How they will implement their values and beliefs about teaching in the classroom?
- What they feel they are ready to teach.
- What they don't feel ready to teach.
- What kind of support could they use now to be better teachers?
- How do they plan to continue to improve their teaching and remain enthusiastic after they leave the program?

Thus, for each advising session the student teachers would be asked to prepare a short reflective essay on one particular theme (such as those above*),* that would provide a central focus for the advising session. If the teacher education program uses portfolio evaluation, at the completion of the program, these collected essays could be an element in the student's portfolio. Some caution is necessary in adopting such a component as part of a teacher education program, primarily because it does mean an additional time commitment from both advisors and students. However, after seeing the fruits of professional self-discovery that George Braine has collected for his anthology, I am confident that incorporating such Learning/Teaching Profiles into a teacher education curriculum could have genuine value.

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Important Announcement

Dear members,

A long term goal for TESOL is to provide full access to all ISs or caucuses by all members, and to do so at a reduced rate or at no cost. The first step in that direction is to reduce expenses and electronic print allows this to happen. Once the expense of producing newsletters is fully eliminated, it is our hope to be able to accomplish the long term goal as stated. Therefore, in an effort to utilize the most effective delivery mechanism and medium for NNEST Caucus) member benefits, TESOL will be transitioning from hardcopy to electronic versions of newsletters during the next year and a half. No longer will you have to wait anxiously by your mailbox for the latest edition of NNEST Caucus) newsletter - it will be sent automatically to your preferred e-mail address in the form of e-Sections or e-Caucuses. To ensure you receive the new electronic publications, you should confirm or provide your preferred e-mail address by e-mailing your full name to: embers@tesol.org (include e-Caucuses" in your message).

From Research Subject to Conference Presenter: A NNEST's Decade-long Professional Journey

Ju Zhan
Jilin University, China

The moment was indeed special. I entered the conference room where a panel discussion was about to start. I came to meet a former professor of mine, Dr. Ilona Leki, from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK). Dr. Leki was astonished to see me there. After we exchanged warm greetings, I reminded her that she had invited me, upon my arrival at UTK in 1992, to participate in a study she was conducting. Now, 10 years later, we met again unexpectedly at TESOL 2002 in Salt Lake City.

It took me almost a decade to become a conference presenter, to finally find my professional home at TESOL, and to confirm my professional confidence.

Before coming to the United States to pursue a doctoral degree, I taught English for about seven years as a college instructor in China. In retrospect, this knowledge and experience did not seem to serve me well upon my arrival in the U.S.A. I was intimidated when I interacted with native speakers of English, and more than that, I felt I neither knew English or how to teach it. Making this period more difficult was the fact that there was no one around to ease my pain, frustration, and confusion. The difficulties I was going through made me question my competency as an English teacher and my ability to continue pursuing a professional career as a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST). There is no doubt that this period of time was the worst in my professional career.

Gradually, I gained a bit of confidence after realizing the source of my problem. After advancing further in my academic program, I realized that I was encountering linguistic and cultural barriers. These linguistic and cultural barriers started to phase out as I took more classes that required reading, writing, presenting papers, and engaging in academic and social discussions with my classmates and professors. This was also due to the comfortable environment. One of my professors taught me what he called the three T's: Things Take Time (TTT). It was the encouragement, tolerance, and patience of this professor, and those like him--the native English-speaking professors and classmates who helped me to survive and prosper professionally. I got my Ph.D. degree in the U.S. and started to publish in English. I am grateful to those professors, because from them, I gained more knowledge and improved my methods of teaching language. However, above all, I learned some of the most valuable human spiritual lessons in understanding, caring, and loving.

Like most NNESTs, I encountered more problems and had to make more efforts than my native English-speaking colleagues did to become a qualified English teacher and researcher. Meanwhile, I feel blessed to be a NNEST, a status that enabled me to be fully aware of the truth that professional development is a lifelong process. I graduated from school and earned the highest academic degree, but I will never graduate from learning languages, including both my mother tongue, Mandarin Chinese, and English, a foreign language. This learning makes my profession more challenging and interesting. After overcoming the cultural barriers, I was one of the most active participants in class discussions, thanks to the multidimensional perspectives that my NNEST status gave me.

Sitting in Dr. Leki's office, talking with her, reading her articles and books, and attending her classes, I was inspired and wished and imagined that some day I could possibly be an ESL/EFL professional, just as she was. Now, from time to time my students come to my office and tell me about their problems in learning EFL. I share my own learning stories as a NNEST, hoping to encourage and inspire them with the spiritual lessons that I have benefited from during my decade of taking a professional journey.

When I waved goodbye to Dr. Leki, I told her that I did not mind her doing a follow-up study with me. TESOL professionals gathered in Salt Lake City this April to celebrate the human spirit in language teaching. My attendance and presentation there marked a new page of my professional journey, which has a long way to go. Confidently, I am on my way. ✍

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Ju Zhan is *a professor of English at Jilin University, China. Her research interests include L2 writing and second language teacher education.. She* has published several articles and presented several papers locally and internationally.

A Strong Case for Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

Myo Kyaw Myint
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The profession of English as a second/foreign language does not seem to fully accept Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in the profession and question the potential benefits they possess when compared to their Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) counterpart. The purpose of this introspective essay is to elucidate and examine the attributes or advantages that NNESTs bring to the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom and thus argue that a strong case indeed be made for the important presence of NNESTs in the profession. Five advantages will be highlighted, including (a) firsthand experience; (b) patience and understanding; (c) multicultural understanding; (d) a living model; and (e) ease of identification through similar experiences. These attributes are not inclusive of all major characteristics that NNESTs have, but they seem to be the most important ones.

The first, and perhaps the most important, advantage NNESTs have is that of firsthand experience in what the students are encountering as they struggle to learn English. The argument that a native speaker of English who has taken the time to learn a foreign language has pretty much gone through a similar experience and, therefore, can understand and appreciate the problems faced by ESL learners can be made. This is true to a certain extent, but it is also true that the difficulties that ESL learners experience can only be fully understood by someone whose native tongue is not English.

Secondly, a NNEST is far more likely to be patient and understanding when students make mistakes, because, in the past, the NNEST has probably made similar mistakes at one time or another. By contrast, no matter how patient and understanding native speakers are, it is hard for them to shake off the idea that fears and culture shock.

The third advantage that NNESTS bring to an ESL class is an understanding of a culture other than the mainstream American or English culture-at-large. This enables teachers to be more appreciative of the cultural varieties present in any ESL classroom and also helps them ease the students into appreciating and understanding the cultures of countries other than their own. As a fellow immigrant, the non-native teacher is better able to understand the cultural, social, and language problems that ESL learners face, and thus, is in   The fourth advantage actually stems from what appears to be a disadvantage. Indeed, much criticism has been leveled at NNESTs for occasional lapses in both grammar and pronunciation. Arguments have been made that only a native speaker can be error free, and that since a teacher needs to model the language, non-native teachers are at a serious disadvantage. On the contrary, this seeming disadvantage is actually an advantage by the same reasoning. We can never expect our ESL students to function like native English speakers. Having a NNEST who makes occasional lapses makes students feel more encouraged because they see a model who is not perfect but whose knowledge of the language is entirely within their grasp.

Finally, there can be no doubt that it is easier for an ESL student to identify with a non-native teacher than with a native one. The NNEST creates an easy rapport with students and leads to a better understanding and stronger motivation to learn English. The fact that the teacher is seen as "one of us," and not as someone different than the students, makes a big difference in the way students view the lessons, and it helps them to overcome anxiety and distress. The NNESTs serve as living models of what the students can achieve if they are willing to work hard and sacrifice time to the study of English. The presence of NNESTs in the class is enough to remind students that if they are willing to work hard, the world is within their reach.

This discussion argues that NNESTs offer benefits to ESL students. Clearly, there is room for both native and non-native English teachers in the profession, and careful collaboration between the two can lead to immense benefits for the students, as well as for the teachers. The question, "Should non-native teachers be allowed to teach ESL?" should not be pondered. Instead, the more practical question, "How can we best utilize the services of non-native teachers in the ESL classroom?" should be asked. Our answer to that question may well hold the key to the future success of ESL programs in the United States, and perhaps in the world. ✍

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The Impact of being a Nonnative-English-Speaking Teacher in the ESL Classroom: A Pilot Study

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Given the native/non-native speaker dichotomy and the increasing number of non-native English speakers in Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs in the U.S., the present pilot case study explored some issues related to being a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. Of chief interest was the impact of being a NNEST on the teacher's identity and the classroom, and the role that teacher training plays in defining the identity of NNESTs.

This pilot study was conducted in the fall of 2001 at a major Midwestern university. The participants were five female Asian MA TESOL students who shared the experience of having done only limited teaching, and doing their student or practicum teaching course as NNESTs. Two instruments were used to collect the data: interviews and questionnaires.

The results of the study are in line with the literature on this issue, which concludes overall that both the teacher's identity and the classroom are indeed affected by the teacher being a NNEST. Tang (1997) explained that one's identity is not innate, but is affected by various social factors, such as being compared to others. In the case of NNESTs, the fact that they are compared to native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) is what challenges their identity. As reported in the present study, the participants expressed a high level of anxiety and discomfort when teaching English as a Second Language. They attributed these feelings to two causes: their status as NNESTs and their lack of sufficient experience. The label NNEST has an impact on their identity as confident and effective teachers, as demonstrated when one of the participants expressed her perception that being a NNEST means "incompetent, unqualified". Any other inexperienced teacher being supervised would probably face some of the challenges described by these participants, but the fact that they are NNESTs adds another challenge to their practicum experience. According to Greis (1985) in Tang:

> Anxiety may be felt by any beginning teacher, whether native or nonnative. However, when put next to the native speaker, the non-NESTs (nonnative ESOL trainees) often experience a strong sense of fear that they will not attend the same level of proficiency, and that the ESL students may reject them preferring a native speaker as a teacher (p. 318).

Competence in English and having to teach "English in English" is another challenge for NNESTs, as reported by the majority of the participants. Related to this, Medgyes (1992) discussed the perception that because of their innate competence in the language, native speakers of English have an advantage over non-native English speakers. He claims that this advantage is so strong that other factors such as aptitude, experience, and education cannot outweigh it. He argues that, "For all their effort, non-native speakers can never achieve a native speaker's competence" (p. 342). Even though competence in English is crucial for being an effective teacher, many studies indicate that non-nativeness is not the cause of ineffective teaching practices. Rather, training and experience play a greater role in defining a teacher's success (e.g., Liu, 1999; Brutt-Grieffler & Samimy, 1999; Cook, 1999). Despite the acknowledged importance of training over nativeness, it is still very hard for NNESTs to acknowledge this fact and to perceive themselves as qualified teachers.

The label NNEST also affects their teaching practices in the classroom. Even though no major challenges were shared by the participants, they acknowledged the fact that students may expect to be taught by NESTs. Braine (1999) touches upon this issue by describing experiences of NNESTs who had to face students who discriminated against them on the basis of their ethnicity and language proficiency.

Other factors related to the impact of being a NNEST in the classroom are the language skills the participants felt capable of teaching. These were reading, writing, and grammar, but none of them felt competent enough to teach speaking, pronunciation, and listening in an ESL context. Tang's participants expressed the same discrepancy, indicating that the native speakers were "superior to NNESTs in speaking, pronunciation and listening," while "NNESTs were felt to be associated with accuracy rather than fluency" (p. 578). In order to compensate for their language challenges, participants incorporated a number of strategies into their teaching such as over-preparation and the use of visuals and handouts.

These are strategies used not only by NNESTs but also by teachers in general. However, because of the linguistic constraints that NNESTs may have, these strategies are especially valuable for them.

Despite all the challenges that NNESTs face, they bring a great many positive attributes to the classroom which enhance learning, as reported in the literature (Medgyes, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). The participants in this study mentioned several such attributes which they have as NNESTs, namely sharing the same language with some of the students, having been through the complex process of learning English, being aware of difficulties students encounter, and empathizing with them.

The other major issue that the pilot study undertook to explore was the role that teacher training plays in defining the identity of NNESTs. Participants stated that TESOL programs could better prepare NNEST trainees by addressing their needs and concerns. The pinpointed to some of the initiatives that TESOL programs can take to cater for the needs of NNES trainees including: First, the option of taking language usage courses rather than grammar courses, since most NNESTs have had a great deal of exposure to grammar instruction as EFL students. Second, the incorporation of American Culture courses in order to learn more about the environment in which ESL instruction takes place. Third, the implementation of a course for NNES TESOL trainees in order to train them in different issues related to managing an ESL classroom. Such a course could address (a) strategies that NNESTs could use to compensate for their language difficulties, and (b) teaching practices in the American educational system that may differ from those in the NNES trainees' native countries. Finally, the opportunity of having gradual exposure to the ESL classroom. This is in order to gain experience before doing the practicum. These are similar to some of the suggestion made by some researchers (e.g., Brutt-Griffer & Samimy, 1999; Greis 1984; Kamhi-Stein, 2000).

To conclude, the results of the present pilot study are in line with the literature indicating that NNESTs face many challenges when teaching ESL. English proficiency, lack of cultural awareness and ESL teaching experience were reported as key issues in defining the identity of NNESTs While it is true that NNESTs can take the initiative to improve in these areas , TESOL programs also need to prepare NNESTs to teach ESL and to help them deal with the challenges that they may experience. The participants not only shared challenges but also some of the positive attributes that they bring to the ESL classroom.

The issues raised in this pilot case study call for further research in order to better understand the impact of being a NNEST on the teacher's identity, the classroom, and the students who are taught by them, as well as what TESOL programs can do to better prepare them to teach in the ESL setting. The researchers have already explored some of these issues and are currently working on a project on how TESOL programs can help NNESTs have a more positive practicum experience. ✍

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