



NNEST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus

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A Letter from the Chair

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Since its inception in 1998, NNEST Caucus has been playing a vital role in promoting the discussion of issues surrounding NNESTs. Thanks to the contributions of its members, the Caucus has been quite successful in moving toward its goals. Here are our four major goals and the progress we have made over the last year or so:

1. Creating a Nondiscriminatory Professional Environment. Recognizing the importance of this issue, TESOL 2003 will feature an all-caucus colloquium on employment issues, and I will be joining representatives from various caucuses in discussing the issue of equality for all TESOL members. Aya Matsuda will also be leading a workshop on tenure-track job search for NNEST professionals.

2. Developing Communities of NNESTs. Facilitating the network of NNESTs has been another important goal of our Caucus. In recent years, we have expanded this goal to also encourage native English speakers to join the discussion of NNEST issues that affect everyone in the profession. Our recent discussion on NNEST-L has also highlighted the importance of paying more attention to NNEST issues in countries where English is not the dominant language.

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Non-Native English Speaking Teachers' Continuous Improvement: A Double Challenge

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Once you decide to become a teacher, you embark on a never-ending journey. For some non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs), the journey of teaching English is sometimes longer and harder. I have always be-

lieved that NNESTs are required to continuously improve in two major areas: the language itself and language teaching pedagogy. These two areas are not exclusive; on the contrary, they complement each other and are necessary to grow professionally (Bailey, 2002). In this article, I will undertake to entertain a discussion about language skills that NNESTs should be concerned with, and what they need to know and do to be more effective English teachers.

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Editor's Remarks

It is equally vital that we advocate or call attention to the strengths of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and simultaneously acknowledge and pinpoint areas where NNEST professionals need improvement. Constant enhancement is essential to ensure high English language proficiency, excelling qualifications and effective teaching, to establish credibility and maintain self-confidence.

In his letter (p. 1), Paul Matsuda, our Caucus Chair, elucidates the accomplishments of the NNEST Caucus thus far and portrays our future projects.

Our first two feature articles examine the importance of seeking ways to advance ourselves professionally as NNESTs from similar perspectives. In "Non-Native English Teachers' Continuous Improvement: A Double Challenge," (p. 1) Norbella Miranda calls on NNESTs to continuously improve in the English language and pedagogy competencies and offers practical recommendations pertain to the two areas. And in "Is our English Good Enough to Teach English?" (p. 5) Icy Lee explores the necessity of improving NNESTs' language proficiency to overcome potential challenges and suggests ways to help NNESTs improve their language competence. She also directs attention to areas of future research related to helping NNESTs pursue language improvement. Both of these articles support the notion that language and pedagogical improvement of NNEST professionals should be life-long professional goals.

Less attention is given to NNESTs teaching English to native English-speaking (NES) students. In "The Cultural Difference NNESTs Bring to the English Composition Classroom May Cause an Avoidable Problem and Be an Advantage Too," (p. 7) Bo Wang looks at the impact of the cultural differences that NNESTs bring to the English composition classroom by carrying out a case study of an NNEST who taught English composition to NES students.

Securing a job in the U.S. after graduation is a concern for some NNESTs. It is a lengthy, stressful process that is often equated with hurdles and barriers. In "Critical Issues for NNESTs Looking for US Employment," (p. 9) Searon Dogancy directs NNEST applicants' attention to critical administrative, cultural, and legal issues.

Sharing our own professional growth and struggles with other NNEST professionals is a twofold experience. It improves our own understanding along with enriching the experience of others. In "Let me Tell you How I have Progressed over the Past Years as an NNEST," (p. 10) Antonio Saldaña-Salazar shares the success he has achieved and the challenges he has encountered over the course of his professional journey

as an NNEST in Mexico.

In addition to these informative articles, this issue of the *NNEST Newsletter* includes an official ballot for the 2003 NNEST Caucus Election (p. 11). Make sure to look for it and forward your vote on the designated date.

This issue also has some information on various related NNEST Caucus events that will take place at the TESOL Annual Convention, to be held in Baltimore, Maryland, from March 25-29, 2003. Be sure to visit the TESOL website (<http://www.tesol.org>) for the most detailed and up-to-date information (including the list of NNEST-related sessions) as the conference draws near. I hope to see you there!

To you, our current contributors, my heartfelt gratitude for your persistence, patience, hard work, and most of all, your fine articles. To prospective authors, I am eager to see your contributions. Only through such involvement can we make the *NNEST NEWSLETTER* a vital ingredient of the NNEST Caucus.

Enjoy this issue of *NNEST NEWSLETTER*.

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From The Chair *(Continued from page 1)*

3. Encouraging Research on NNEST Issues. Promoting research in this area has also been an important emphasis for our Caucus. For this purpose, we have been maintaining a bibliography of research on this topic, which is available from our website. In addition, we have been collaborating with Ahmar Mahboob of East Carolina University to establish a TESOL award for outstanding NNEST-related presentations at TESOL.

4. Promoting the Role of NNESTs in Leadership Positions. NNEST Caucus has been encouraging its members to take on leadership roles in the profession. The leadership experience with the Caucus qualifies TESOL members for more advanced leadership positions such as the Board of Directors. We have also provided formal mentoring through TESOL's Leadership Mentoring Program. In 2002, Lía Kamhi-Stein served as a leadership mentor for Maria Alejandra Rejes-Cejudo, who represented the Caucus in various meetings and activities.

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Finally, I am happy to report that NNEST Caucus is growing rapidly. The membership has nearly doubled over the last year-as of December 2002, we have 209 members. Although the size is not everything, there certainly is strength in number. It is especially true for groups such as the NNEST Caucus, where the most important resources are its members. Let's work together to continue expanding the network of professionals concerned with NNEST issues! ✍

Non-Native English *(Continued from page 1)*

English Language Improvement

To be effective English teachers, instructors of English as a second or foreign language, and in particular, NNESTs need to constantly improve themselves in the four principle language skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Listening and reading should be trouble-free skills because they are private activities that individuals can do at their own pace, and there are ample and accessible means that allow effortless improvement in these two skills.

As a NNEST, I found that watching news, movies, listening to songs, or even listening to colleagues' daily discussions, to be rewarding activities for improving listening skills. While doing so, I found it important to not only try to get the meaning of what is being said, but also how it is being said. Accessible resources, such as magazines, newspapers, books, and the Internet make reading skills improvements easier for NNESTs. Reading skills can advance by engaging in an intensive reading habit. Such habit will increase lexical knowledge, reading speed, rhetorical structure of English, and comprehension ability.

I strongly believe that the productive skills of speaking and writing are the more difficult ones to build up, especially if you reside in an environment where English is taught as a foreign

language (EFL). Speaking is difficult because it is often spontaneous--you do not have much time to prepare what you are going to say--and you may feel on the spot when you express your ideas. Additionally, non-native speakers sometimes think that the language elements, such as your pronunciation, intonation, or sentence structures, are being scrutinized.

It is important, however, to put aside these preconceptions and take advantage of every opportunity to practice speaking in English. To improve speaking skill, using English as much as possible is the most helpful strategy. For NNESTs in ESL contexts this is commonplace in everyday life. Conversely, in EFL settings, the opportunities to speak English are not easily come by; therefore, NNESTs who want to advance professionally must seek or create these opportunities. Interactions with colleagues and, if possible, with students, help to keep practice of the language alive. If we explicitly enhance language routines with prefabricated conversational patterns of presenting information, in and outside the classroom, we will gain more confidence when using the language orally. Extended monologues such as oral presentations and reports help because is the planning time can considerably increase the levels of both fluency and accuracy. In addition, it is important to focus on content rather than form and keep in mind that mistakes are part of, and play an important role in, language development (Nunan, 1999).

Writing is not easy to acquire. People write less than they speak, even in their first language, which in turn leads to fewer opportunities to practice. That, combined with internally complex clauses, partially explains the difficulty in learning or developing one's writing skills (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). Bello (1997) and Nunan (1999) noted that writing is a very challenging task, even in the mother tongue, and even some native speakers never master it.

This is not to suggest that writing skill is impossible to improve. Improvement, however, requires extra efforts

from us NNESTs. One approach for improving writing skills is to embrace the habit of writing our notes, shopping lists, reminder lists, and meeting agendas in English. Another strategy would be to write reflective essays on articles read in magazines or books. Also, remember that as classroom teachers, we must practice what we preach. The well-known five phases of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (sharing) are important ingredients to consider.

Language Improvement Teaching Pedagogy

The second vital area that we, as NNESTs, have to continuously improve is language teaching pedagogy, which reflects on teaching competence. Teaching competence includes didactics--an understanding of how a person learns a second and/or foreign language, and the best techniques for that person's learning.

To understand how people learn a second or foreign language, you must be aware of how factors such as age (Ellis, 1985), motivation, (Naganuma, Naoyuki, 1997), types of intelligences (Gardner, 1993), or learning strategies (Oxford, 1994), figure into language learning and acquisition. These issues are continuously being researched, thus, it is important to keep track of the latest findings in order to find a relationship between them and the teaching practice.

As significant as the aspects mentioned above are, the learning setting and the teaching experiences a person has are Didactics, which are based on learning processes as well as social contexts, must be dynamic. Teachers are obliged to try to find better ways of teaching that can face the new challenges set by our changing reality. Teaching children is not the same as teaching adolescents, and teaching in the United States is not the same as teaching in Colombia, for example. Teachers must be aware of these and other differences that are not so obvious. Teachers should constantly update their knowledge of techniques that could better help assist their students.

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The importance of updating our pedagogical knowledge lies in our self-satisfaction as we grow professionally, and in the results to new work demands. In the past, it was thought that language could be taught by anyone, even without adequate training. Teachers only needed to know about their discipline, in this case, English. However, now educational institutions demand and seek professionals who are not process knowledge of the language, but also exceed in their pedagogy competency. In Colombia, for example, this can be noticed in job advertisements and interviews. The same situation is presented in Australia where TESOL qualifications are required in accredited language institutions that offer English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) programs.

The question that arises at this point is how we, as NNESTs, can improve our language teaching pedagogy, for which, I think, there is no single answer. Different methods, such as attending workshops, conferences, seminars, distance education programs, which are very common nowadays, and electronic discussion groups are all very helpful to attain this goal. Other possibilities for professional development and growth are reflective teaching and action research. Reflective teaching is a teacher's ongoing efforts to observe, analyze, and self-evaluate instruction. The intent is to refine one's own teaching practices so that students will benefit and find the learning process easier. As Cunningham (2001) points out, some of the advantages of reflective teaching are its flexibility (as it fits every context), practicality (for it does not demand too much time or resources), and sustainability over time. Action research has the same benefits of reflective teaching, and requires a similar process. However, it starts with a specific practical problem or question. Both processes need to be systematic, and changes in practices must be made based on personal and/or collaborative deliberation and theory.

In conclusion, as NNESTs we continue to be learners throughout our

lives. We are English language learners and pedagogy learners, as our job is to teach, but we also learn more about what we teach, and how we teach it. For me, an interesting and pleasant way to grow professionally, in relation to both the language and its pedagogy, is to belong to professional associations locally, such as Colombian Association of English Teachers (ASOCOPI) and internationally, such as Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL). These associations make me feel part of a learning community and are great for sharing ideas, in English, about teaching English. ✍

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Your Contributions Are Welcome!

NNEST Newsletter Welcomes your submissions in the forms of articles, conference reports, book reviews, and announcements related to NNEST issues.

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Is Our English Good Enough to Teach English?

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Do you think it is reasonable to expect English teachers to reach a minimum English standard in order to qualify for English language teaching? For most of us, the answer to this question would probably be a yes, particularly for non-native speakers who teach English as a second or a foreign language. It is, indeed, true that all over the world professionals in our field are trying to upgrade the standard of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). We talk about teacher certification, accreditation, and teacher training and preparation, etc. in an effort to deliver the best possible "service" to our students. You may be surprised to learn that in my own teaching context in Hong Kong, where English is taught as a second or foreign language, there are educators, including English teachers, who express serious doubts about the government's policy to benchmark English teachers.

Using the case of Hong Kong and language benchmarking as a springboard for a discussion of the broader issue of language improvement, I will argue that it is imperative for non-native English speakers (NNESTs) in TESOL to keep upgrading their English to strive for native or near-native proficiency. I will also put forward suggestions regarding language improvement for NNESTs and recommend areas for further research.

Doubts about NNEST English Proficiency: The Hong Kong Case

It is not uncommon to find NNESTs who have their credibility and authority challenged as English language experts. The situation, unfortunately, seems to be particularly acute in Hong Kong, where English teachers have increasingly come under fire for their declining English proficiency and their failure to enhance students' English standards. Such criticisms, however, are not backed up by local research. In 2000 the government formally announced the launch of benchmarking tests. The objective of language benchmarking is to make sure that all English teachers possess the minimum proficiency to teach English (level three out of five levels), and to encourage them to strive for higher levels of language proficiency (levels four and five).

When results of the first benchmarking tests (held in 2001, consisting of speaking, reading, listening, writing and classroom language) were announced, the general public's faith in local English teachers was further shaken. Overall, the candidates did not do very well, particularly in writing and speaking. Only 33 percent of them passed writing, and only about half of

them passed speaking. Eye-catching headlines like "Teachers flunk English test," and "Must do better," were in the local English newspaper. In the second benchmarking tests held in 2002, the passing rates were even lower. Fewer than 30 percent of the candidates passed writing, and fewer than 40 percent passed listening. English teachers were smeared, with newspapers celebrating the benchmarking initiative as an "objective" measure of teachers' English proficiency, when in fact, much more needed to be done to establish the validity of the tests.

Challenges for NNESTs and the Way Forward

Non-native speaking (NNS) English teachers in Hong Kong are surely not alone in the challenges they face. Although NNS research has highlighted the specific strengths the NNS bring to ESL/ EFL teaching (Gill & Rebrova, 2001; Kamhi-Stein, Lee & Lee, 1999), there are incessant challenges that point crudely to the inadequacy of NNESTs in their command of English and in their competence as English language educators. As a result, doubts were raised about NNEST's qualification to teach English. Irrespective of any political implications behind such finger pointing, I believe it is essential that NNESTs keep upgrading their English proficiency, apart from working on improving their pedagogic competence. In the case of Hong Kong, given the public's eroding confidence in NNS English teachers, it is urgent that NNS English teachers seek effective strategies to work toward the improvement of their English competence. It is crucial that they strive for language improvement so that they can provide a reliable model of the English language for their students.

In general, what can and should be done to help NNESTs upgrade their language proficiency? The following suggestions, I hope, would apply to all NNESTs, regardless of where they teach and who they are, whether they are frontline teachers or teacher educators. Below, I choose to use "we," because as a non-native speaker myself, I strongly believe that language improvement is also one of my life-long professional goals.

- As NNESTs, we should be more aware of our own language needs, not only as language teachers, but also as language learners. To do this, we have to be teacher and learner at the same time. As we ask our students to engage in self-directed learning to improve their English, it is crucial that we also pursue ongoing language improvement that addresses our specific language needs. For NNESTs who teach English in an EFL country, we should ask ourselves: How often do we speak English outside the classroom? How often do we watch English TV? How often do we read extensively in English? We have to try our best to get maximum exposure to English in our daily lives.

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- As language learners we should be able to analyze our own strengths and weaknesses and try to understand what kind of language learners we are, for example, our language learning styles and the learning strategies we use. This would enable us to further develop our strengths and to work on weak areas. If we are not aware of our own learning styles, the learning strategies that we use and those that we do not use as effectively and our own strengths and weaknesses as language learners, it is unlikely that we can help our students come to similar kinds of realizations.
- Our engagement in ongoing professional development activities that aim at upgrading our language competence, in addition to those that focus on teaching competence is crucial. For example, we can enroll in writing courses that help develop our own writing skills, apart from participating in courses that help us improve the teaching of writing.
- For those of us who are teacher-educators, we must seek ways to strengthen the language enhancement component in our teacher education programs. Also, we should reinforce the need for ongoing language improvement among our teacher-learners and encourage them to take part in professional activities that focus on language enhancement.

Future Research

In terms of research, much can be, and needs to be, done. Much more research is warranted to investigate ways to strengthen language training in teacher education programs (Medgyes, 1999). Overall, more research has to be done to find out how to help teachers pursue language improvement and get the kind of ongoing support they need. Instead of taking NNESTs to task for their inadequate English proficiency, it is more urgent to help them address their

language needs and to encourage them to engage in ongoing language improvement.

Conclusion

Let me return to the question raised in the title: Is our English good enough to teach English? Whether the answer is a confident yes or a hesitant yes, I believe we all must strive to keep upgrading our English proficiency,- because "... for NNS English teachers to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals, first, we have to be near-native speakers of English" (Medgyes, 1999, p.179). ✍

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Your Opportunity to Get Involved! NNEST Caucus Booth at TESOL 2003

Great news! As in previous TESOL Conventions, the NNEST Caucus will host a booth at TESOL 2003 in Baltimore. Our main objective for the booth is to publicize the NNEST Caucus and recruit new Caucus members. We will distribute NNEST statements, flyers, resources, newsletters and the like. We will also facilitate networking, answer relevant questions and make ourselves known to those who will be our potential members.

The NNEST Caucus booth also provides an opportunity for you to get involved in Caucus activities. It is a great way to get to know other Caucus members as well as to learn more about the Caucus. It is also a gateway to various leadership opportunities both within and outside the Caucus. We hope you will choose to play an active role in the Caucus by helping us staff our booth.

Our booth will be open from **9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. from Wednesday March 26 to Friday 28**. If you would like to volunteer to staff the booth, please contact Masaki Oda (oda@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp), our NNEST Chair-Elect. *We need your help!*

The Cultural Differences NNESTs Bring to the English Composition Classroom May Cause an Avoidable Problem and Be an Advantage Too

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The cultural differences that non-native English speaking-teachers (NNESTs) bring to the English composition classrooms when they assume the task of teaching native speakers of English is an unexplored area of research. Of chief interest is the examination of whether the cultural differences might lead to difficulties for NNESTs. What NNESTs need to know to communicate better with their native English-speaking (NES) students and successfully accomplish their teaching tasks, is also of interest. I was inspired to peruse this topic because of the unpleasant teaching experience I had while teaching English composition as a part of my academic requirements program.

In order to do an in-depth analysis of this issue, I chose to approach it qualitatively, rather than quantitatively. My main instruments, therefore, were interviews and observations. I conducted a series of interviews with a colleague of mine and also observed her several times while teaching English composition to native speakers of English.

Qin, my informant, was a NNEST teaching assistant for one of the first-year composition class sessions. She is a female Chinese descendant. This was her second consecutive semester teaching this particular composition class. I chose her to be my primary informant for two main reasons. First, she is a representative of a culture that is markedly different from American culture, and I thought this huge cultural differences might yield valuable data to my investigation. Second, I also come from China and have a similar cultural background. The shared similarities, I assumed, would make it easier to approach her as a potential participant.

My interviews and observations sessions started with an assumption that cultural differences have a negative impact on

NNESTs' teaching. A number of studies suggest that differences in the intercultural communication process can lead to misunderstanding (Cohen and Cavacanti, 1990; Maurice, 1986). Specifically, cultural difference will inevitably stand in the way of communication with NNESTs' students. Because they and their students come from different cultures, every pedagogical choice NNESTs make will inevitably be affected by this cultural difference. If culture can be defined as "the overall system of perceptions, and beliefs, values and patterns of thought that direct and constrain a social group" (Samovar and Porter 1991, p. 15), the teacher must know how culture informs their classroom pedagogy. What teachers know about their students' culture will affect what assumptions they make about their students, classes, and assignments. Just as Tyler (1985) puts it, "The better you understand and are prepared to deal with your own and other people's expectations, values, and desires, the more effective you can be in your interaction" (p.1).

During the first phase of the interview, I wanted to find out if Qin was aware of the cultural difference issue and its importance in the English composition classroom. She responded to my initial inquiry with the following statement.

There are some cultural differences. You know, I had been taught Communism and Marxism since I was a very little kid. Umm, and the kids here, they thought communism was just a horrible idea. And I mean, we're totally different, capitalism, and communism, and umm, and I think we had very different expectations of each other, so I was very conscious of that fact and tried my best not to bring my ideology into class.

Then, I took another direction and asked directly whether being a representative of a different cultural caused her any problems. She unexpectedly asserted that "I

don't think that's a problem in my teaching. ... Maybe because I learned the English language for a long time, and I worked with the American people for a number of years." Having assumed that Qin might not realize the existence of the problem equated with cultural differences in English composition classroom taught by NNESTs, I rephrased my question. I asked if in her teaching there was anything in the American classroom that surprised her.

Yes, last semester I had a girl student who was pretty respectful at first and her writing was generally good. She once told me she would not be coming for mid-term and also she handed in her first essay really late. When I took 10 points off her essay, she was really mad at me. And she kind of yelled at me in her e-mail; I was really shocked. I never thought students could be so rude to the instructor. And it's their fault; they turned in their essay late. And also, she would rather go to Germany to have a vacation than take her mid-term, which is, like, ten per cent of her total grade. So, both incidents were kind of shocking to me, because I don't think any Chinese student would ever do that.

To deepen my understanding of the issue under investigation, I undertook to observe Qin's class, mainly to determine whether cultural difference does indeed constitute a problem in English composition classes taught by NNESTs. In one class meeting, a group of students was responsible for giving a presentation based on the novel they the just read for their second essay assignment. The group played a bingo game to familiarize their classmates with the characters of the novel. They asked every one, including Qin, to join them. My notes indicated that Qin spoke only once during the entire game.

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When asked about it, she regretfully stated, "That is a great, great idea. Of course, if I had known about the game, probably, I would have got more out of it."

The interview transcripts and observation notes I gathered suggested that the cultural differences that NNESTs bring with them to English composition classrooms create inevitable challenges for them. This is because they need to conduct themselves according to their students' culture and at the same time they struggle to maintain their own identities and cultures. Often, NNEST composition instructors find it difficult to escape their own values and culture when reflecting on reading materials and students' writings.

Interestingly, I observed that cultural differences could still be exploited positively in English composition taught by NNESTs. In a number of classes, I found that Qin tried to introduce her NES students to her Chinese culture. For the second unit of the course, she chose a novel written by a Chinese-American author. Most of her students showed great interest in reading the novel and learning about some aspects of Chinese culture. When a group of students led a discussion about the first three chapters of the novel, they did a superb job by analyzing the use of symbols, the images that implied the cultural background, and the characters who struggled hard to keep their own culture. There was a conversation going on between Qin and the students. Some students asked Qin why a certain character did this or that. They wanted to find out because it was unlikely for such a thing to happen in American culture. When Qin responded, the students nodded their heads or took some notes.

Qin made good use of her own cultural background and managed to share part of her culture effectively, which benefited her students. To confirm my assumption, I interviewed some of her students. I asked them how they perceived the fact that their instructor chose a novel written by a Chinese-American author as the primary text for their second essay. One student stated that, "I like the material." This note was echoed by a similar statement made by another student, "Yes, I like it. I think it is very good."

Thus, it can be stated that cultural differences do not always have an adverse effect upon teaching when NNESTs teach NES

students English composition. The above examples demonstrated that NNESTs could work both as a writing teacher and a cultural informant. When this happens, cultural differences actually become an advantage for NNESTs.

Closing Thoughts

The obtainable data revealed that awareness of and sensitivity to classroom behavior and students' culture could indeed help NNEST composition teachers overcome the potential problems caused by cultural differences. For this to happen, NNESTs need to enrich their understanding of the target group's culture, or, I should say, understanding of U.S. cultural norms of classroom behavior. Additionally, NNESTs composition teachers must avoid imposing their own cultural values upon their students when discussing reading materials or commenting on students' writing assignments. Yet, they can increase understanding and compunction by sharing their own culture with their prospective students. ✍

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NNEST Caucus Events at TESOL 2003				
Events	Date	Time	Location	Room
NNEST-Issues in and Strategies for mentoring NNESTs	Wed., 3/25/03	9:30-11:15 am	Baltimore Convention Center	313
Caucus Open Meeting-NNEST	Thu., 3/27/03	5:00-7:00 pm	Baltimore Convention Center	323
All Caucus Social Event	Fri., 3/28/03	5:30-7:00 pm	Baltimore Convention Center	345

Critical Issues for NNETs Looking for US Employment

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Being on the job market, regardless of where or who you are, can be a stressful experience. Scouting job ads, preparing cover letters, updating resumes/vitas, arranging for the forwarding of recommendation letters and transcripts, time spent in front of the copy machine, and the like, are surely no one's favorite activity. Add to these all the fact that looking for a job in a culture and through a language one might not feel completely comfortable with can indeed make the job search process even more stressful for Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNETs).

Based on my experiences first as a NNET job candidate who passed through a similar experience and successfully secured a tenure track position at a US institution, then as a member of search committees and adviser to graduate students searching for jobs, I would like to highlight some issues that might facilitate the job search process for NNETs. **Be Aware of Appropriate Norms Governing the Search Process in the US**

The job search process is an educational, professional, as well as a sociocultural event whose norms can vary across cultures and disciplines. You need to learn the processes and appropriate norms governing the search process in the US. What questions to ask and not to ask, how you are expected to conduct yourself in an interview, the kinds of documentation you will be asked to provide, what to wear, etc., for instance, can be quite different from what you expect or are accustomed to. Finding out about these issues should be part of your preparation. Also, remember that you, as a job candidate, are much more than what is written on your resume and the grades on your transcript. In most cases, search committee members often try to get a feel of what kind of a colleague you will make. This means that search committee members instinctively, and often, consciously, evaluate

you as they are making small talk during meals, while asking and answering informal questions, or while walking around campus. It is therefore important that you conduct yourself appropriately during formal and informal interactions.

Make Use of Career Services and Other Electronic Resources

Through my advising sessions, I have noticed that significantly fewer NNETs than NES degree candidates use the career services offered by their institutions. This can be explained because some NNETs may feel it easier to talk with a professor or a friend than visit the Career Center. Yet, professors often do not have enough time for you, being engaged in myriad obligations and, most importantly, they may not have the expertise to provide you with the professional services that you would readily obtain from Career Services staff.

Although many NNETs are capable of writing cover letters and preparing good resumes that require no editing, it is always advisable for a professional to look at the appropriateness of the style and the content of your application materials for the US context. Another valuable practice opportunity you should consider is to arrange for mock interviews, an opportunity that the career center at your institution may offer.

In addition to making use of the career services, an excellent resource that can demystify many aspects of the job search process in the US for you are the job-search related articles of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (www.chronicle.com/jobs) You can also use TESOL's Career Services (www.tesol.org/careers)

I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourselves with and take advantage of the services that the career center at your institutions offers and also make use of electronic job related resources.

Be Aware of Related Legal and Financial Issues

Other issues many NNETs must think about are the legal and financial aspects of obtaining employment authorization in the US. You need to know what your visa type

allows you to do after graduation and how to do it. Are you a J-1 scholar with a home residency requirement or an F-1 student? You also need to find out whether and how various employers will aid you in the lengthy and costly process of getting an H-1 temporary worker visa. Will you apply for an Employment Authorization Card yourself or will the host institution sponsor an H-1 temporary work visa for you? Who will do the paper work and pay for the expenses? If you intend to apply for permanent residency in the US later on, you must ask whether the institution will support you, financially and legally, in this process. Given the budget cuts many institutions are now facing and the changing climate after September 11th, it is imperative that you are well informed of INS rules and regulations and ask the right questions of possible employers. Moreover, do not assume that deans and provosts or the faculty of the host institution will be knowledgeable about INS regulations. Talk first with your foreign student advisor about your own case and then ask to speak with their counterparts in the host institution. Whatever you might have heard about a friend in the same visa category might not be applicable in your case. Different institutions have different rules and budgets. And regardless of what you decide to do for the present time, make sure you keep all your IAP-66 or I-20 forms, and any other forms from the INS, old passports, visa stamps, and the like. You will need them for obtaining work permits and if you apply for permanent residency.

Tough the job search process in a culture different than your own can be stressful, remember that it is stressful for everyone regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, and that the number of NNETs holding various jobs in the US today can tell you that it is perfectly doable. Good luck to you all. ✍

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Let me Tell you how I have Progressed Over the Past Years as an NNEST

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Over the course of 15 years of having the privilege of teaching English as a foreign language, I have been able to develop my own teaching assumptions and beliefs, have made myriad success, and faced some challenges, all of which shaped my identity as a Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNEST). This essay tells all about these success and challenges and spells out what it takes me to grow professionally.

My First Years of Teaching

For some reason I used to believe that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. However, I was not sure at all about this as this paradigm did not seem to prove to be right in my own teaching practice. During the 70's, at least in public Mexican universities, teaching a foreign language was mostly based on a traditional approach. Other than that, EFL teachers barely touched on different kinds of teaching approaches that could be more engaging for students in the language classroom. As a novice non-native teacher of English, I tried to be creative and versatile in my class. In order to meet my students' learning needs, I set up my lesson plans with a variety of activities that stimulated my students to learn the target language. Although my lesson plan sometimes did not work as I expected, I was able to reflect on my teaching so that I could re-plan such a lesson for the next time. This experience made me reflect upon my teaching style and brought about some interesting changes in

my way of teaching. I thus decided to further improve my teaching practice by joining EFL-related groups of experienced teachers.

Showing Some Progress

With this in mind, I started attending local and regional EFL conferences where I met teachers who provided me with some valuable advice. I also made an action plan in which I put a more interactive style of teaching into practice. That is, I was willing to negotiate with my students the content of the lesson, evaluation forms, and the type of activities that they were more interested in. This, of course, meant planning a student need analysis to help me reorient my classes. This plan was one of the best tools that I had for improving my teaching. These two decisions were not only positive for the students to accomplish their learning goals, but also for me, as a language teacher, to accurately accomplish the institutional goals.

Participating in academic conferences provided me with the confidence necessary to plan my classes more thoroughly, thus I was eager to experiment with new methods of teaching. For example, the audiolingual method, which was in fashion during that time, proved to supply plenty of repetition drills that provided the students with good doses of confidence in their oral practice. However, things were different when I took in-training service, where I had the opportunity to learn about other teaching methods. Such training courses not only provided me with an array of teaching techniques, but also helped me to formalize my teaching practice as I did not graduate from any language teaching school or any other

EFL-related institutions.

I looked at the connection between theory and practice, and more specifically how these two aspects were closely related to language teaching. I used to argue that theoretical principles were not always useful in the classroom because they did not seem to match what happened there. By the end of my first in-service training course, I had already changed my mind on this point. I realized that theory is implicit in any teaching activity, since everything teachers do in the classroom is influenced by a number of assumptions about teaching and learning. That is, we as teachers plan and do things in the classroom in accordance with what we believe will work, either because we have done it successfully before or because we have read, heard or seen how it works. In any case, such beliefs constitute teachers' own theories of language teaching, as defined by Richards (1994) who regards teaching "as a very personal activity, and it is not surprising that individual teachers bring to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching" (P.101). Thus, these assumptions are a result either of formal research findings, previous teaching experience, or both.

My Biggest Challenge

Perhaps, as a novice non-native teacher of English, one of my biggest challenges was to make my students use the target language in the classroom. Given to the lack of practice speaking opportunities, many adolescents really struggle to say a word in a foreign language. This is true at least in Mexican public high schools where EFL young learners usually seem insecure when

they try to speak English in class. In order to confront this situation, I used to invite native speakers of English to join the class so that my students were encouraged to meet them and find out some personal information from them. By filling out grids, questionnaires and charts, students were able to gather enough information to write down a biography about the guest. This way, students were mostly engaged in the speaking activity as they deliberately practiced their speaking skills. And, at the same time, this activity gave them an opportunity to achieve an attainable task, which was generally combined with other language skills (e.g., writing, reading).

Closing Remarks

The above constitutes a solid reason to argue that every single teaching activity should be examined, not only for what it is about, but also how it should be presented to be effective activities. In short, what I did in the classroom was based on my early beliefs about teaching and learning. At this time, as an experienced non-native teacher of English, my assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning a language have been modified, driven by the impact of my own teaching experience together with new teaching methodologies.

Reference

Richards, J. C. and Lockhart, C. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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