

## **Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus Formed**

George Braine

The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

I am delighted to inform readers that the TESOL Board of Directors has approved the formation of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus. We are grateful to TESOL's Board of Directors and especially to Kathi Bailey, President of TESOL, for their support.

The place of nonnative speakers as English teachers has probably been an issue as long as English has been taught internationally. Although many TESOL members are nonnative speakers, their role in TESOL is not always visible, recognized, or encouraged. To bring more visibility to nonnative speaker issues, I organized a colloquium titled "In Their Own Voices: Non-native Speaker Professionals in TESOL" at the 30th Annual TESOL Convention held in Chicago in 1996. The highly charged, mainly personal narratives of the speakers generated much interest and enthusiasm among nonnative speakers in the audience; many claimed that they finally had a voice. First proposed at the Chicago colloquium, the caucus has become a reality within 2 short years mainly because of Jun Liu of the University of Arizona and Lia Kamhi-Stein of California State University, Los Angeles, who tirelessly publicized and gathered signatures for the proposed caucus. Meanwhile, the Chicago colloquium has spawned five other colloquia at subsequent TESOL conventions and inspired an anthology titled *Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching* to be published shortly by Lawrence Erlbaum.

Despite the TESOL organization's opposition to such discrimination in hiring practices, nonnative speaker English teachers continue to face discrimination in obtaining employment. Although most native speaker colleagues are supportive, some administrators and colleagues appear to view English language teaching as the sole domain of native speakers. This attitude is highly ironic, considering our profession's strident championing of multiculturalism, diversity, and other worthy sociopolitical causes, often on behalf of ESL students and immigrants.

Although ESL students are praised and admired for the multiculturalism and diversity they bring into language classes, nonnative English teachers, who can also contribute their rich multicultural, multilingual experiences, are often barred from the same classes. As a result, many nonnative speaker English teachers feel the pressure of low morale and self-esteem, lack of recognition, and marginalization. As professionals involved in teaching English, we need to address these and other issues related to the role of nonnative speakers in the profession. The overall aim of the caucus will be to strengthen effective teaching and learning of English around the world while respecting individuals' language rights. The major goals of the caucus are:

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

Membership is open to all interested TESOL members, both native and nonnative speakers alike! For further information, please contact George Braine, Chair, Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus, [georgebraine@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:georgebraine@cuhk.edu.hk), or Jun Liu, Chair-Elect, [junliu@u.arizona.edu](mailto:junliu@u.arizona.edu).