



# NNEST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus

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## A Letter from the Chair

**Jun Liu**

University of Arizona

Dear colleagues:

The network among NNEST members has three main channels: Annual conventions, the newsletter, and the listserv. We have tried all of them. NNEST chair-elect Lia D. Kamhi-Stein and I have already started preparing for our NNEST activities at TESOL 2001 in St. Louis. I am excited at the idea that NNEST members can meet again to talk about our common interests, to share our stories, and to speculate the future of the caucus at the convention. According to our plan, we will have our NNEST booth for three consecutive days, and we will have NNEST survey forms, NNEST mission statements, membership information, and highlights of NNEST events at the convention. We will have our annual NNEST caucus meeting at which we will announce the results of the NNEST newsletter editor election. We will make the annual report, and deliver our future plan for discussion. In this newsletter, you will find many other events organized by NNEST members at the forthcoming convention. One of them, Energy Break, will feature a topical discussion "Empowering Nonnative Speakers in TESOL."

Thanks to Keiko Samimy, the first issue of the newsletter (Vol. 2, No. 2) under her editorship turned out extremely impressive. The new

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

### Academic Publishing In Hong Kong: Challenges to NNS

**George Braine**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Any reader of leading journals in applied linguistics such as *TESOL Quarterly*, *English for Specific Purposes Journal*, *System*, and the *Journal of Second Language Writing* will be impressed by the number of publications that originate from Hong Kong. In fact, Hong Kong could only be behind the US and Britain in terms of the number of publications in our field. It's even more surprising when one considers how small Hong Kong is, both in terms of population and the number of tertiary institutions. Nevertheless, Hong Kong does have certain advantages that could be the envy of the academic world.

Hong Kong is neither a country nor a territory, a so-called special administrative region of China with its own flag, official languages (including English), and legal and educational systems. It's also the smallest place I've lived in, with nearly 7 million people crammed into less than 3,000 square kilometers. Hong Kong has eight universities, all funded by the government. Three of these institutions—the University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University, and the HK University of Science and Technology—are ranked among the top 10 in Asia by *Asiaweek* magazine, ahead of any Australian

See *Academic Publishing*, p. 5

## From the Editor

In this issue, Jun Liu, caucus chair, reports many exciting NNEST related activities and plan for future TESOL conferences. Thank you, Jun, for your excellent leadership as the chair of our caucus.

This issue includes two feature articles. The first article is by our past chair, George Braine who discusses challenges to NNS in terms of academic publishing in Hong Kong. The second feature article is by Anila Mema who shares her experience as an ITA and how her previous experience in her home country, Albania, has empowered her as a graduate assistant teacher for an English composition class.

Suresh Canagarajah's article is the second in a series of profiles of exemplary non-native-English-speaking professionals. Suresh shares his journey as a highly successful professional at an American university. Our caucus members will be inspired by his accomplishments. Congratulations, Suresh.

Paul Matsuda's article, "My Credo as a NNES Professional" is a nice addition to this issue. It contains helpful advice for future NNES professionals. Thank you, Paul.

In the "Reflections from the Classroom", Seon-hwa Eun discusses challenges to NNS professionals in EFL context, and Megumi Abe shares her observations about hiring practices of native speakers of English in Japan.

Finally, we include a list of NNES related presentations and activities at TESOL 2001. We look forward to seeing you there. Thank you for your contributions and support. My special thanks to Seon-hwa Eun without whom I would

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME!

The NNEST Caucus invites your submissions to the newsletter in the form of articles, book reviews, reviews of TESOL 2001 sessions, and announcements!

Send materials electronically to Keiko Samimy at <Samimy.2@osu.edu>. Mailing address: Keiko Samimy, 333 Arps Hall, 1945 N. High St., Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210. The editor reserves the right to edit any materials submitted for publication in order to enhance clarity or style.

See our web site for submission guidelines.

not have been able to finish this issue in a timely fashion.

Keiko K. Samimy  
The Ohio State University  
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**NNEST Caucus Website: Visit and Contribute!**

<http://curriculum.calstatela.edu/NNEstCaucus>

**Aya Matsuda, Webmaster**  
University of New Hampshire

If you have just joined the caucus, or if it has been a while since your last visit, please come and check out our website. The NNEST Caucus Website provides the caucus members not only the useful information but also the opportunities to share concerns, resources and information. You can find the basic and background information on our caucus, including its goals and history, the list of officers, and information on the membership and NNEST Listserv, the caucus e-mail list. Information on up-coming conferences and events that are related to NNEST issues, resources for NNES teachers and researchers, and the call

for contribution to *the NNEST Newsletter* are all available online. You can share your personal accounts on NNEST related issues or read others' works on the "Voices" page.

If you have something to contribute—resources, conference information, creative works, and so on—or if you have requests, suggestions, or questions, please feel free to contact me at <amatsuda@cisunix.unh.edu> or *Aya Matsuda, Department of English, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824, USA*. Your involvements in the website—as a reader or contributor—will be greatly appreciated.

*A Letter from the Chair* (continued from p. 1)

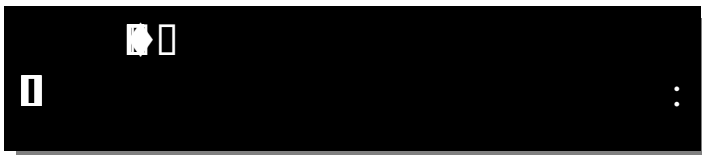
column "A Profile of an NNEST" has empowered and inspired many of our NNEST members, and the amount of information as well as the number of contributors within this issue have made this newsletter outstanding. With the continued support from our NNEST web master, Aya Matsuda, our NNEST website is getting better and better. This site, which has the following items: Goals, history, officers, membership, newsletter, activities and events, resources and voices, is designed for our members. We have had many visitors, and we are trying to make it more attractive and informative.

On our NNEST listserv, several important issues, such as NNEST job employment, and collaboration between NNEST and NEST, have been discussed. While the participation rate could be better, I was encouraged by the direction it is heading towards, and with the increased participation from our NNEST members, this listserv will become one of the important forums for NNEST information exchanging and idea-sharing.

Encouraged and supported by George Braine, our NNEST past chair, we have made efforts in networking with TESOL board directors with regards to several pertinent NNEST-related issues. One of them is to have a designated spot for NNEST and other caucuses at annual conventions to increase the visibility and stability. This issue has been brought to the TESOL Board, and has been approved. Another issue under negotiation is the caucus membership fee, which has created some problems in reaching out more people to join us. One of our NNEST goals is to move NNEST to IS direction. We are facing some difficulties, as those who express their interest in becoming NNEST members cannot join us as easily as we would like. But I am confident that with our continued effort this issue will be resolved sooner.

I have heard a lot of good news from our NNEST-affiliates over the past few months. NNEST in Mexico TESOL is still alive and upcoming. With the leadership of Lia, CATESOL will feature a special issue in CALTESOL Journal on NNEST, and Lia will be the guest editor. NNEST-related articles have been published in journals such as TESOL Quarterly, TESOL Journal, and Asian Journal of English Language Teaching. Many conferences besides TESOL (e.g., CCCC, AAAL, and GURT) have accepted proposals on NNEST-related issues for presentation. Many graduate students, both Nonnative and Native English speakers, have joined us in doing NNEST-related research with the guidance of NNEST leaders. Some graduate programs, such as the one at Ohio State, continue offering on NNEST topical seminars.

As the result of NNEST activities and publicity, several TESOL IS leaders (e.g., Foreign Language Education, and Teacher Education) have contacted us for arranging joint activities. We are in the process of



- Edit two issues of the newsletter
- Encourage and seek submissions relevant to interests of the Caucus members
- Serve as member of the NNEST Steering Committee
- Comply with all TESOL requirements for newsletters
- Must be a member of the NNEST Caucus

planning some colloquia for TESOL 2002, and on-line discussion forums. As you can see, NNEST is moving into a new phase, and we need your continued support and more involvement and suggestions to make each and every one of us proud of being NNEST. Please come to our meeting, stop by our booth, and attend our NNEST events in St. Louis. I look forward to meeting/seeing you all.

Jun Liu  
University of Arizona  
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**Announcing the NNEST Member Listserv  
Your opportunity to keep in touch**

To subscribe, type the following in the TO section of the header:  
subscribe-nnest-l@lyris.tesol.edu

In the BODY section type:  
subscribe nnest-l <your name>.

The list processor will acknowledge the subscription and give you a password. If you don't receive an answer, please contact Jun Liu at junliu@u.arizona.edu

# My Credo as an NNES Professional

Paul Kei Matsuda  
Miami University

I recently received an email message from a fellow NNES professional who is just beginning her career as a Ph. D student. She asked, among other things: “As an NNES professional, is there any advice for a first-year doctoral student, particularly a non-native speaker like me?” Quite naturally, I began to think about my own experience as an NNES graduate student, and came up with a list of beliefs that, in my opinion, helped me thrive—not just survive—as a graduate student in a field that has traditionally been dominated by native English speakers. Here is the list:

**Be confident.** In my first year as a Ph.D student, one of the senior graduate students told me (and a number of other NES students) that being accepted into a Ph.D program is in itself quite an accomplishment. “It means someone thought you had a potential to become successful,” he said. That gave all of us a great deal of confidence. I was even more encouraged when I thought about the fact that I was admitted to the program regardless of my being an NNES.

**Find a role model.** Until I began my M.A. studies, I resisted the notion of role model because, perhaps out of my own insecurity, I saw others in similar circumstances to be my competitors. I tended to focus on the differences rather than similarities and refused to learn from others. During the first year of my MA studies, however, I met a faculty member from China, who became my mentor and my role model. Once I learned to accept him as my role model, it became easier for me to cope with difficult situations and to ask for help when I needed. Now I am always looking for more people who have qualities that I want to emulate.

**Work hard.** Going through a Ph.D program takes hard work regardless of one’s linguistic or cultural background, but this is especially true for NNES professionals who may have to work even harder to achieve the same result. I made a conscious effort to start earlier, to read more widely and to revise my work more often than my NES colleagues did. One thing I was determined not to do was to use my being NNES as an excuse. Why should I be allowed to if I wanted other people to take NNES professionals seriously?

**Be visible.** Although NNESs have unique strengths and can do just as well as—if not better than—NESs, people will not recognize it unless we make it known to people around us. I tried to be visible in my department by attending talks, meetings and social events. I also tried to be active in organizing discussion groups and workshops for other

graduate students and participating in panel presentations. At the professional level, I tried to present at various conferences and to volunteer for committees not just for the vita line but also because it helped me establish my presence in the field.

**Act professionally.** The biggest and most important transition from being a student and being a professional did not take place when I got my first tenure-track job. Rather, it started when I stopped thinking of myself as “just a graduate student” and started seeing myself as a member of the profession who can make valuable contributions. Some people do have preconceived notions of what an NNES graduate student can or cannot do, but if we don’t believe in ourselves, who will? Graduate school may be the final stage of schooling, but it is also the beginning of a professional career.

I don’t claim to have found all the answers, but these are some of the beliefs that kept me going. Obviously, they may apply to any graduate students and not just NNES students, but I do believe NNESs need to make a concerted effort in these and many other areas in order to be successful. It is important to establish a habit of excellence so people can and will think that NNSs are strong individuals who can be counted on.

Paul Kei Matsuda is Assistant Professor of English at Miami University, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in composition, rhetoric and linguistics. A native speaker of Japanese, Paul’s research interests include second language writing, written discourse analysis and teacher education.

Vist the NNEST Caucus  
Website at:

<http://curriculum.calstatela.edu/NNestCaucus>



university. In the case of applied linguistics, Hong Kong is also home to some of the best known names in the field. Where else would you find the likes of David Nunan, Chris Candlin, Bill Littlewood, Liz Hamp-Lyons, John Flowerdew, Vijay Bhatia, and Ken Hyland within a radius of a few kilometers? And Jack Richards, Kathi Bailey, Lyle Bachman, and Martha Pennington have also taught in Hong Kong till recently. What all these luminaries have in common is that they are expatriates, mainly of Anglo-American origin.

In addition to the presence of well known scholars, Hong Kong is also richly endowed in terms of generous research grants available at the faculty, university, and government levels. This academic year, for instance, the government has awarded HK \$368 million (that is, more than US\$46 million) to the universities for research. At The Chinese University of Hong Kong, for instance, 148 projects submitted by researchers were funded to the tune of HK\$85 million. The government also gave HK\$66 million directly to the universities to fund internal research projects. The Quality Education Fund, another government fund worth HK\$5 billion, also supports many expensive research projects. A colleague of mine is part of a team that was awarded HK\$22 million for a neurolinguistics project.

Despite the presence of first-rate scholars and the tremendous financial and scholarly support (the academic libraries in Hong Kong are second to none in terms of their collections, subscriptions to periodicals, and access to electronic resources), Philip Altbach, the noted Professor of Higher Education at Boston College and the coeditor of *From Dependence to Autonomy: The Rise of Asian Universities* (1989), argues that the administrators “who run Hong Kong’s higher education system have placed Hong Kong scholars and scientists in an unfortunate straitjacket” (1997, p. 10). How are these scholars straitjacketed? Hong Kong academics are under great pressure to publish in international refereed journals, which, according to Altbach, may not be interested in what they have to say. Altbach cites a recent survey which found that American and British scholars were the least internationally minded, as a result of which it is quite difficult for scholars in other parts of the world to gain acceptance in western publications. And these local academics face the added challenge of being non-native speakers of English.

Every three years, all Hong Kong universities participate in a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which evaluates the “research output” of universities,

faculties, and academic departments. The main criterion for the assessment is the quality of publications by the academic staff. About 10% of the funding that trickles down to individual academic departments is determined by the research output. Publications are ranked into four categories that the Carnegie Foundation has defined: Scholarship of Discovery (the highest rank), Scholarship of Integration, Scholarship of Application, and Scholarship of Teaching. A teacher is considered “research active” if he/she has one publication of the top rank or three publications of the second rank. Academic journals and publishers are also ranked according to prestige.

Because funding is closely connected to the research output, a tremendous amount of pressure is exerted from the highest level of each university, and from the Faculty Deans and Department heads, on every academic. Probably as a result of this pressure, 82% of Cantonese-speaker Hong Kong academics surveyed by Flowerdew (1999a) stated that publication in refereed international (Anglo-American) journals was their priority.

However, a close scrutiny of journal articles in applied linguistics by Hong Kong authors reveals that the majority of these articles are authored by expatriate scholars, many if them named earlier in this article, who are mainly of British or North American origin. In fact, I will not be surprised if readers have difficulty in naming a single non-expatriate Hong Kong scholar in the field of applied linguistics. What could be the reasons for this great imbalance, especially in a context which was a British colony till recently, where English remains one of the two official languages, and where English has been taught as a second language for about 150 years?

Flowerdew’s (1999a) survey included 585 academics from science, engineering, social sciences, medicine, arts/humanities, business, education, and communication from six Hong Kong universities. Sixty-eight percent of these academics believed that they were at a disadvantage when writing for publication in English. Of this number, 51% had “technical problems” with English, 29% thought editors and reviewers were prejudiced, 14% had problems with organization, and 11% thought they lacked innovative thinking. Sixty-seven percent of the publications in refereed journals by these academics were collaborative: 32% with doctoral supervisors, 23% with overseas colleagues, 21% with peers, and 7% with senior colleagues. Half the collaborations were with native speakers of English.

Flowerdew (1999b) also interviewed a smaller group of 26 academics and found startling differences between his survey and interview results. All the academics who were interviewed believed that they were disadvantaged when writing for publication in English, compared to the

*See Academic Publishing*, continued on p. 6

68% of the survey sample that had made the same claim. They claimed to be disadvantaged in having less facility of expression, taking longer to write, possessing a limited vocabulary, being less capable of making claims for their research with the appropriate amount of force, being less capable of writing quantitative articles, having to cope with L1 interventions in the composing process, and being able to write only in a simple style. These academics also found that the introduction and discussion sections of articles to be the most problematic.

In my opinion, part of the problem is due to how writing was, and is, taught in Hong Kong. At least at the primary and secondary schools, the teaching of writing appears to be frozen in the practices of the 1960s. Hong Kong is not, in Kachru's terms, a country within the expanding circle; it isn't Korea, or Japan, or Taiwan, where English had no deeply-entrenched, colonial roots. In Hong Kong, English was the main language of government and commerce under British colonial rule for more than 150 years. Since the hand over to China in 1997, English continues as an official language. In public and private schools, English is taught by local as well as expatriate teachers who are mainly from Britain, Australia, and the US. But sadly, primary and secondary teachers still focus on form, using outdated practices such as pattern drills, copying from textbooks, and filling in the blank exercises. Peer feedback is hardly used in schools. Most writing is done in class, and teachers usually provided feedback only on grammar. And the emphasis on examinations leaves little time for the much writing instruction anyway. Accordingly, local scholars may have received little or no instruction in writing in secondary school. Even if they completed graduate studies in Anglo-American universities, there is little likelihood of them having received instruction or training in academic writing. Bridgeman and Carlson (1983), who studied the writing needs of graduate students at North American universities, quoted chemical engineering teachers who claimed that "it is possible to survive [graduate school] with almost no writing skills" (p. 118), and, in general, "many foreign students [in engineering] . . . ha[d] their dissertations written for them" (p. 24). A study conducted by Jenkins, Jordan, and Weiland (1993) at six North American engineering faculties with a high enrollment of foreign students revealed that the teachers make little effort to ensure that students wrote regularly. The teachers also claimed that they wrote about 25% of the theses and dissertations of their foreign students.

Will non-native speaker scholars in Hong Kong begin to dominate academic publishing? The status of English in post-1997 Hong Kong (the year it was handed over to China) is crucial here. There is no doubt that the government wants to promote English, because English is the key to maintaining Hong Kong's position as an

international business center, and its rivalry to Singapore and emerging cities in China such as Beijing and Shanghai. But, there are factors that work against the promotion of English in Hong Kong. The medium of instruction in schools is a case in point. English was the medium of instruction in secondary schools till recently, but students had difficulty in learning in a second language, and there was a shortage of teachers trained to teach various subjects in English. As a result, the government recently made Cantonese the medium of instruction in most secondary schools. In addition, Cantonese is slowly replacing English in government and the law, too.

With the use of English declining in all aspects of society, future Hong Kong academics are going to be exposed to even less English. Further, doctoral degrees in almost all disciplines are available in Hong Kong, which means that fewer academics will be going abroad for terminal degrees, thereby lessening the opportunities for collaborative research and publications with doctoral supervisors and overseas colleagues. Hence, I cannot be optimistic of the future place of non-native scholars in academic publishing.

Is there a moral, a lesson, in this for other non-native speaker applied linguists? Perhaps the situation in Hong Kong is unique. Expatriates, other than volunteers in NGOs, are attracted by financial benefits and other perks. In this aspect, with a per capita income of US\$24,000 (the fifth highest in the world), low taxes, a cosmopolitan environment, and perks such as generous housing allowances as well as attractive educational allowances for children, Hong Kong is a magnet to the best among expatriate scholars. And, they, in turn, will dominate the academic publishing. But a similar situation may exist in other prosperous Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, and to a lesser extent in Thailand and Malaysia. In essence, the challenges to non-native speakers in academia are apparent at every level in every context, and the case of Hong Kong is another example of this manifestation.

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## The Sources of Confidence:

### *Confessions from an ITA*

By Anila Mema  
University of Arizona



On the first day of class and as the semester progressed, I did not feel nervous or lack of confidence, or question my entitlement to be in front of my native English-speaking students in freshman composition just because English was not my first language. Neither did I perceive my role as a teacher to be challenged or threatened by the fact that I was going to teach in a language that I had learned instead of acquired as a first language. Instead, I entered the classroom with excitement about meeting my new students thinking how my students will benefit from my class. Having taught for at least four years in different institutional settings in my home country, Albania, I could remember experiencing similar excitement and consideration every time I stood in front of a class. So, even in a totally different educational setting, facing my students for the first time, I experienced exactly the same feelings -- I was just being a teacher. Training and support by the educational institution, my previous teaching experience, the wealth of my cultural and educational background as well as my pursuit and motivation to get acquainted with and fit in the host culture serve as the main sources of my rewarding confidence.

After one year of experiencing and benefiting from the education at English Language/Linguistics graduate program, the Graduate Teaching Assistantship position at the University of Arizona struck me in the beginning as a wonderful opportunity since it promised to enrich my teaching experience. It was not until I attended the orientation organized by the English Department that I began thinking of the multiple dimensions of this "wonderful opportunity" in light of teaching composition. Since I had no previous experience in teaching writing, and my educational background did not provide me with any specific theory or training in teaching this subject, I became concerned with how I could best understand the goals of this subject and be able to transfer them into my own teaching philosophy and decisions in syllabus-making for this class. This orientation served as a catalyst for some of the pedagogical modifications or innovations that I would make part of my teaching.

The goal of the orientation is to prepare first year Graduate Assistant Teachers (GAT-s) with necessary guidelines for teaching composition according to the philosophy of the English department at the University of Arizona. All first year GAT-s, regardless of their nationality or experience in teaching in general or teaching of writing or related fields in particular, go through the same orientation. Such an initial training acclimates all composition instructors teaching for the first time with the nature of the subject and the philosophy of the institution and provides us all with ample guidelines and tools to further

research and prepare for our task. In this context, non-native speaker (NNS) GAT-s are not given special attention to any particular needs that stem from their linguistic, educational or cultural background. The institution treats NNS GAT-s as equal to their native speakers (NS) counterparts and are expected to benefit from same sources. This expectation did not strike me as unfair, neither did it create any hindrance in my keeping with the standards. On the contrary, I perceived this attitude as a message that we as NNS GATs are not being looked at as being deficient; instead, we are trusted with the teaching position based on the same criteria as our NS colleagues are. This also proves that we are considered by the English Department as equally qualified (or not qualified) to teach this subject.

The "sympathy" coming from all directions, be it from colleagues in the English department or my acquaintances, that it would be challenging for me to teach in my second language, made me more alert to the perception of NNS instructors' within the community. I found that I was neither discouraged nor offended by this "caring and sympathetic" behavior; instead, I used this awareness to be proactive in my classroom interaction as well as identify and develop strengths in myself that would compensate my language hesitancy. Thus, I made an effort to initiate and encourage a few in-class discussions that would also touch on how the community perceives NS and NNS teachers and how my students' own perception fits this picture. Although these discussions could not be totally objective, my ambition was to encourage my students to bring their expectations and perceptions to the surface and think for themselves on how they were affected by instructors from different backgrounds.

In this demanding and rewarding pursuit to compensate for the lack of experience in teaching writing and my perceived role as a NNS teacher, my previous teaching experience served as a stable ground for basing my numerous decisions on both dealing with the dynamics of my classes and the specific nature of the subject. Comfort level, effective interaction strategies, timing, materials/topic selection, class activities, and so on, are teaching skills that come from teaching experience and often translate across cultures and serve as an irreplaceable asset for both native and nonnative speaker teachers. I believe that successful teachers are characterized not only by passion for and dedication to their subject and their students, but also an obvious sense of confidence that often stems from careful preparation and experience in teaching. I felt that the rewarding experience I've had teaching composition this semester was due mainly to my being able

## A Profile of an NNES Professional: Suresh Canagarajah

Baruch College of the City University of New York

*This is the second in a series of profiles of exemplary nonnative-English-speaking professionals.*

Suresh Canagarajah was born in Sri Lanka in the year of the first major outbreak of ethnic violence between the Tamil and Sinhala speaking communities there. This was a baptism of fire. As a member of the minority group-- Tamils-- he would grow up in a politically charged environment that would influence his research and teaching practice based on critical pedagogy. Furthermore, due to the nationalistic turn in the country, he didn't have the option of being schooled in the English education system left behind by the British colonial administration. He would have all his education in the vernacular. But because he went to a Christian missionary school, he had the possibility of studying English language and literature as a subject.

After majoring in English literature, he became a junior lecturer in the University of Jaffna (UJ) in 1984. Around this time the ethnic conflict had intensified and UJ became a haven for mobilizing Tamil Marxist youth for armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state for autonomy. Suresh became attracted to sociolinguistics for explaining the linguistic and cultural conflicts in his society. When he came to United States soon thereafter on study leave granted by UJ, he enrolled in the very interdisciplinary applied linguistics program at the University of Texas at Austin. Since he found that he couldn't go back home to gather sociolinguistic data due to visa restrictions, he turned his attention to another minority group in the US that he was very interested in--the African American students. During vacations, bored in the university towns far away from home, he had volunteered as a social worker in inner-city rehabilitation programs in Los Angeles, South Bronx, and Washington DC. This experience had acquainted him with the discourses and concerns of the African American community. His dissertation on the challenges for Black students in acquiring academic literacy has been disseminated in many composition fora, including the *College Composition and Communication* (see Canagarajah 1997).

Suresh rushed back to Sri Lanka on June 1 1990 at the expiration of his study leave, without waiting for his convocation. Within a week of his return, the worst ever fighting between militants and the state broke out, resulting in the establishment of a de facto Tamil state in Jaffna. With the university closed and constant imposition of curfews, the only productive activity he did at that time was to go to the village market in the mornings to shop for food. On some of these visits he found the strategic ways in which local fish vendors were codeswitching between English and Tamil to sell their catch. Observing and recording their conversation, he developed an interest in codeswitching behavior. Whenever he managed to come out of the bunker during the brief respites from government aerial bombing raids, he composed the results of

his study. The paper on fish vendor discourse now appears in *Multilingua* (Canagarajah 1995a). The ways in which local people use codeswitching to negotiate the Tamil-only policy of the de facto regime appears in *Language in Society* (Canagarajah 1995b).

In a context where power, communication, and transportation had broken down, he couldn't keep up with publishing or other academic developments. Divorced from his computer and books, which were still in luggage in the capital city, writing was not easy. Added to these difficulties were the prejudices of publishers when they get manuscripts from remote locations, in frayed paper, typed in old type writer ribbons. Suresh began saving the editorial correspondence, thinking to himself that he would write a paper about this injustice if he managed to come out alive from the civil war. This paper on the inequalities in academic publishing now appears as the lead article in *Written Communication* (Canagarajah 1996). After receiving enthusiastic feedback from other off-networked scholars in many periphery communities, he has now published *The Geopolitics of Academic Publishing and Knowledge Construction* (U of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming).

It must be said to the credit of TESOL that the then editor of TQ, Sandra Silberstein, was among the few publishers who adopted an impartial attitude to Suresh's submission from "backward" Jaffna, providing a forum for his first major academic publication (Canagarajah 1993b). She then invited him to join a panel on critical pedagogy in the TESOL convention held in Baltimore. After the presentations, Suresh strayed into the Employment Clearinghouse. Seeing many faculty positions advertised there, he decided that he needed a break from the fighting in Sri Lanka! During the interviews he discovered that once someone has published in "elite" journals he/she enjoys certain advantages that transcend color, linguistic, and regional differences! Accepting a tenure track position in CUNY, he went back to UJ at the end of the convention to complete his teaching, pack his bags, and reach here for the Fall 1994 semester. As fighting had further intensified meanwhile, he was forced to get transportation to the airport from boats operated by the Red Cross. He wasn't embarrassed to pack one of the only two bags permitted each passenger with sociolinguistic audio tapes and ethnographic field notes.

Once in New York, he found his scholarly life suddenly transformed. Equipped with a computer, laser printer, and other technological gadgets in a wired office in Manhattan, his research and writing became far too easy to manage. His book *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* (Canagarajah 1999), which has won the Modern Language Association's award for the best book on "research in English



three years, I felt professionally qualified to teach college freshman composition to American students. When acquaintances remarked that I have “very little accent,” I felt encouraged. But at the same time I wondered how much accent is too much accent for freshmen. I felt cultural differences were not an impeding factor for me (I thought I had bridged them in the past four years, as they hadn’t been that great in the first place). Nevertheless, I remained attentive to teaching and learning styles that differed from what I knew from my country.

The fear that my accent might invalidate my qualifications and efforts in the eyes of some students was confirmed half way through my first semester of teaching, when a student wrote in the first draft of his reflective essay that he was disappointed with his learning experiences in college because “not only are most of [his] instructors not professors, but on top of it all [his] English teacher is not even a native speaker of English!” Preoccupied with the structure and logical solidity of his argument, I made marginal comments asking him to clarify what the qualities of a good teacher worthy of teaching college students were. The second draft came back to me without clarifications and without the original remarks.

Towards the end of the second semester, I asked my students to reflect on what they had learnt in our English composition course. Although the prompt did not lead to such comments, a student wrote to me that I “have very little accent and, because of that, [I] will be a very good teacher.”

If nothing else, these comments signal that the NNEST’s accent is an issue for NES students. And while it is understandable that students should take a stance when the teacher’s accent hinders comprehensibility, it is surprising that they would bring it up when this is not the case. Moreover, such comments confirm the fact that the NNEST of English is always, tacitly or openly, challenged to prove his/her worth first and foremost because the presence of an accent undermines his/her qualification in the eyes of some students. This is not to say that all students feel this way, or that the teacher’s accent is the only criterion students use to evaluate NNESTs. However, it is an important factor in determining the teacher’s self-image and daily performance in the classroom (Medgyes, 1994; Thomas, 1999).

The NNEST’s cultural background may also cause some NES students to feel that the teacher has no authority in speaking about certain topics. During a unit reserved to analyzing and reflecting on the American Dream, one student implied that I was not qualified to discuss the American Dream because I am not American. Without knowing anything about my culture, the student assumed that it must somehow render me unable to understand his, let alone share it. Rather than reacting directly to his assumption, I found that his provocation enabled me to achieve my pedagogical goal during that unit. I asked his fellow students to define the American Dream. Early in the discussion, it became evident that my American students did not agree on any definition. They saw how different they were from one another, and how none of them was out of place. At the same time, the more my stu-

dents disagreed, the more they confirmed that my being “different” was not enough to exclude me from the dialogue.

Ultimately, I have learnt that the ownership of English and the supremacy of the native speaker can be disputed in every classroom in the real world of teaching. Challenges to our linguistic and cultural “otherness” as NNESTs usurp our self-confidence not only as individuals but mostly as professionals. Therefore, in order to take the emphasis off our “otherness,” in our own minds and in our students’ minds, we can turn provocations into pedagogical opportunities or strategies. Sometimes we can do that by asking for clarifications and supporting evidence from a student who thinks that instructors without Ph.D.-s and English as a native language are not worthy of their job. Other times, we can open class discussions about “otherness” –they will invariably reveal the “otherness” in each participant. Our students might see the validity of our position and of our points of view. Thus, by negotiating meaning, we negotiate and balance power.

Next to negotiating power with our students, there are several other things that we as teachers can do to maintain our self-confidence and professionalism. We can first of all acknowledge that most students get over their resistance to their NNESTs for the sake of performing well in the class. Most students realize that it does not matter in what accent their subject is delivered as long as they learn what they want and need. Remaining constantly alert to our students’ wants and needs, supporting students’ efforts in the learning process, as well as communicating with students are essential aspects of our profession. It is also important that NNESTs collaborate with NESTs not only for exchange of professional advice, but also because during such exchanges with colleagues we may realize that many of their struggles are similar. Last but not least, it is crucial for us, NNESTs, to associate and share our experiences in order to facilitate a better understanding of our status.

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# Reflections from the Classroom:

Empowering NNESTs

by Carmen Chacon,  
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Two years ago, I started my Ph.D in TESOL at one of the largest midwestern universities. I still remember the painful experiences and struggles I went through during my first quarters both as an outsider and as an international student wanting to fit into the academic culture of American classrooms. I tried very hard in order to be accepted into that academic community.

However, I had constant feelings of fear and lack of confidence about my ability to orally express myself in front of my professors and my American classmates. I was conscious about not being a native speaker and the fact that I have a Spanish accent which would interfere and even break down the communication with my professors and classmates. In class, I noticed that American students always dominated the classroom discourse while I was just listening and struggling to understand what was being discussed. I was so concerned about my accent and not being able to appropriately express what I wanted to say, I usually chose to remain as a passive listener. Even now, I would say that my communication apprehension is more evident in my interaction with native speakers of English than with nonnative speakers. Recently, however, I have come to the conclusion that besides my linguistic competence, there are other factors that affect the way I think about my English proficiency.

First, it is clear that as an NNS, my knowledge and experiences with English in the past had contributed to those feelings of my insecurity. I learned English mainly under the traditional and audiolingual methods. It was only later when I came to the U.S. to pursue my MA and PhD that I actually became a user of the language for communicative purposes.

Secondly, as an EFL teacher, I was never faced with the questions regarding the relationship between language and power. Nor was I aware that behind the benefits of learning English as an international language, there are also issues of power and social inequality. However, as I read scholars such as Fairclough (1989), Kachru (1982), Pennycook (1994), and Phillipson (1992), in the Seminar for Nonnative Speaker Professionals, I started to reflect and question my role as an English teacher as well as issues of race, accent, power, and language. During the process of figuring out who I am and where I came from, I became aware that my feeling of despair, frustration, and lack of confidence in my English competence were somehow connected with the issues of language, power, and identity. It became clear to me that these issues are much more complex than the simplistic dichotomy between being a native or a nonnative speaker of English. As Pennycook (1994) argues, language is not neutral nor is language teaching

actice. Both language and language teaching involve politics and culture. Thus, the spread of English as an International Language (EIL) all over the world should not be only seen as a benefit, but closely related to issues of social, economic, and political power which has contributed to maintain and reproduce social inequalities (Pennycook, 1994) in the periphery countries.

From my own experience, I realized that over the past 16 years as an EFL teacher, I taught English from a “neutral” “apolitical” perspective. But, now I realize that teaching is political, and as an EFL teacher educator, I have to assume a critical stance, a political agenda to help my student teachers become aware of the social and political implications of teaching English in a broader context that extends beyond the traditional linguistic knowledge.

Having reflected upon and struggle with my identity as a TESOL professional, now, I have a better understanding of the relationship between language, race, identity and power in the context of TESOL pedagogy. I feel more confident about myself and my English proficiency. I acknowledge that having an accent is a part of my identity, of who I am, not a deficiency or a reason

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