



NNEST NEWSLETTER

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It Is Time to Establish Close Networking Connections Among NNEST Caucus Members: A Letter from the Chair

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It has been five years since the establishment of the Non-native English Speakers (NNEST) in TESOL Caucus. As the previous leaders have repeatedly pinpointed in their letter from the NNEST Caucus Chair, the NNEST Caucus has been playing a significant role in the TESOL organization and the profession of teaching and learning English as a foreign/second language as well. I believe that we owe our past leaders a very great deal.

I am very pleased to work alongside three dedicated leaders: Ahmar Mahboob, Chair Elect, Khalid Al-Seghayer, Newsletter Editor, and Lucie Moussu, Webmaster. They are doing their best to serve you and are ready to address your concerns and needs.

One of my main leadership priorities for the coming year will be to establish a tighter network between the U.S- and non-U.S.-based members of the NNEST Caucus. A number of factors are behind this focus, including the fact that a large
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Models of NNESTs' Teacher Development: Rethinking the NS/NNS Dichotomy

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In addressing the challenges facing many non-native English teachers, many people, including non-native English teachers themselves, tend to engage their thinking within the NS/NNS dichotomy. Their logic appears to stand along two intersecting bipolar continua: one along the NS-NNS continuum and the other

along the qualifications continuum. However, the NNEST construct is so complex that it encompasses factors far beyond these language and teaching factors. Thus, a question such as, "Do NNESTs have a language problem, a qualification problem, or a combination of both?" may not present a complete picture of this construct. In this essay, I would therefore like to reflect on some of the existing models of NNEST

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Editor's Remarks

It is our destiny as non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) to face a variety of challenges on many issues, including, among others, highly required language and pedagogical competencies, proper cultural orientation, native-like accent, and the like. The question remains, should these challenges hold us back or should we exploit them as opportunities to grow professionally? Two of the articles included in this issue of the *NNEST Newsletter* suggest answers to this question. This issue also offers some related news along with a letter from the chair.

With great pleasure I want to first introduce the new NNEST Steering Committee Members for 2003-2004: Masaki Oda, Caucus Chair; Ahmar Mahboob, Chair-Elect; Khalid Al-Seghayer, *NNEST Newsletter* Editor; and Lucie Moussu, Webmaster. In private conversations, all four have expressed their eagerness to serve the NNEST Caucus to the best of their abilities. They need your support, encouragement, and constructive input.

On behalf of the current NNEST Caucus leaders and members, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Paul Matusda, Past Chair, and Aya Matusda, Past Webmaster for their invaluable contributions to the NNEST Caucus over the course of the past few years in many areas.

Masaki Oda, our current Chair, sets out the intended plans or priorities of the NNEST Caucus for the coming year and the mechanism for implementing such plans. Two of the included articles demonstrate how the potential challenges that NNEST's professionals often encounter can be looked upon so that they become opportunities to grow professionally. The first article, by John Liang, is entitled "Models of NNESTs' Teacher Development: Rethinking the NS/NNS Dichotomy" In it, Liang discusses some of the existing models of NNEST teacher development and then suggests a new perspective on this issue. Liang also encourages NNEST's professionals to seek potential avenues for professional development.

In the second article, "Challenges May Offer Opportunities to Grow Professionally," Theresa Jiinling shares some anecdotes regarding challenges she has encountered through her teaching career that either offered her opportunities to grow professionally or inspired her to use her non-nativeness to her advantage.

Finally, in the third article, "Professional Development of an NEST through Working Alongside an NNEST," Kimberly Johnson portrays how a native English-speaking teacher (NEST) can benefit from working alongside a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST). In particular, this experience offered Johnson an opportunity to learn about her own

teaching and herself as an NES teacher and to closely examine certain issues, such as language, authority, and her identity as a native English speaker.

This issue of the *NNEST Newsletter* also contains information regarding the East Carolina University/TESOL Award for an Outstanding Paper on NNEST Issues.

I find it difficult to choose the right words to convey my greatest appreciation to the authors for their fine contributions to the current issue of the *NNEST Newsletter*. I would like also to call on prospective contributors to consider submitting articles and related news. As always, your contributions are highly welcome. ✍

Enjoy this issue of the *NNEST Newsletter*

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From The Chair *(Continued from page 1)*

proportion of the members of TESLO Inc. reside outside of North America. Related to this is that the geographical distribution of NNEST Caucus members, 837 as of July 2003, shows that most of them do not live in North America. Another related factor comes from the fact that TESOL continues to hold its annual convention in North America. The establishment of a close connection among U.S.- and non-U.S.-based members of the NNEST Caucus may help to solve any potential problems related to the TESOL annual convention, which is held in North America. Therefore, we need to establish means that will help us overcome any problem that might come from the fact that TESOL usually holds its annual convention only in North America. An example of this resolution is evident in a personal experience I had when assigned to organize the NNEST Caucus at the TESOL Annual Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, in March 2003. I had managed to locate ten non-U.S.-based members who expressed their willingness to participate in the NNEST Caucus both activities. A week before the convention, various travel restrictions were issued due to the war on Iraq so I lost all 10 of the volunteers. However, the close connection between some of the U.S.-based members, especially Ahmar Mahboob, Aya Matsuda, and myself enabled me to maintain both activities, although I was not actually present at the convention.

The proposed establishment of a close networking connection among NNEST Caucus members--those living in the United States and those living elsewhere--will be achieved by means of several approaches.

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The proposed establishment of a close networking connection among NNEST Caucus members--those living in the United States and those living elsewhere--will be achieved by means of several approaches. It should be noted that these initial thoughts will be developed further by consulting other NNEST Caucus leaders and also through your suggestions and feedback.

First, I will encourage more participation in the NNEST electronic list (E-L). We would like members to actively contribute to the list discus-

sion and raise local and global issues of interest to the NNEST Caucus. Having healthy and informative on-line discussion will bring members together and benefit everyone, especially those who cannot attend the TESOL annual conference.

Second, I will establish a mentoring system for those who would like to publish articles in academic journals, and/or present papers at conferences. It is hoped that this system will benefit both young and senior researchers.

Finally, I will conduct a membership survey. Since this is the fifth year for the NNEST Caucus, I think it is time to identify the needs and concerns of the NNEST Caucus members which, in turn, will help us set up a long-term plan.

In a few weeks, I will present some of the discussion issues mentioned above on the NNEST (E-L). Thus, I look forward to your active participation and hope that I will have the opportunity to interact with many of you soon. ✍

Models of NNESTs'

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pedagogical development and then suggest a new perspective on the concept of NNEST professional growth.

Deficit Model of NNESTs' Teacher Development

Traditionally, in evaluating a teacher's teaching ability, we tend to base our evaluation/judgment on what qualifications the teacher has or what skills the teacher does not have (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001). This deficit model is often automatically applied to the evaluation of non-native English teachers. For instance, in comparison to native English teachers, there are at least two areas of competence many non-native English teachers are thought never to be able to achieve: linguistic competence and target cultural competence.

In the area of linguistic competence, accent appears to be an ever-haunting nightmare. Many ESL teachers feel insecure because of their accent, and that this gives their students an excuse to question their credibility. In addition to the accent problem, lack of fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and syntactic-discourse skills also represent tremendous challenges (Medgyes, 1992). In the

area of cultural competence, lack of knowledge of the target culture represents yet another deficit. Many EFL/ESL teachers have admitted that due to a lack of cultural knowledge, they feel handicapped in teaching culturally-embedded instructional material to their students (Liu, 1999).

In any case, there are linguistic and cultural deficits intrinsic to non-native English teachers. These deficits undoubtedly impact these teachers' self-perception and self-image (Reeves & Medgyes, 1994), which in turn may deepen their sense of inferiority.

Competitive Model of NNESTs' Teacher Development

If the deficit model represents one extreme, then the competitive model of NS-NNS interaction perhaps represents another extreme. For instance, one line of argument is that the concept of nativeness is just a relative construct with limited validity (Davies, 1991) due to the existence of different varieties of English (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). Another line of argument is that the academic discourse community should tolerate a pluralistic rhetoric that includes different accents in writing or different varieties of English (Canagarajah, 1996).

A third position is perhaps more directly related to the ELT profession. For instance, Medgyes (1992) argues that fluency in English does not guarantee effective teaching. Similarly, Canagarajah (1999) questions the native speaker fallacy. Indeed, studies have indicated that non-native speakers demonstrate a considerable number of advantages in a language classroom: they are aware of the differences between L1 and L2, are more empathetic to students' learning needs, backgrounds, and difficulties, and represent a source of motivation and a good role model (Medgyes, 1992; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999).

Collaborative Model of NNESTs' Teacher Development

Whereas the deficit and competitive models are justifiable depending on the context, it cannot be denied that native and non-native English teachers each have their own strengths. An argument over who is worth more is just a waste of energy (Medgyes, 1992; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999).

As such, a collaborative model of teacher development may be more appropriate because the strengths of both the NESTs and NNESTs can be

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well integrated and even multiplied to both parties' benefit.

For instance, on the NESTs' side, collaboration can help increase their theoretical understanding of the nature of second language learning and enhance their sensitivity to L2 learners' needs and difficulties. On the NNESTs' side, collaboration may help them develop an intuitive knowledge of language structure and use and increase their awareness of the target culture. In short, collaboration can help both groups of teachers develop their language teaching awareness, increase their teaching effectiveness, and promote greater autonomy and mutual professional growth (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001; Carvalho de Oliveira & Richardson, 2001).

However, the collaborative model is not without concerns. First, it appears to be focused more on cognitive development in teaching skills and awareness. Second, the NNESTs, due to language anxiety and fear, may be afraid to initiate collaboration with NESTs, whereas some NESTs may lack an awareness of the potential benefits of collaboration and thus be unwilling to participate.

Integrative Model of NNESTs' Teacher Development

As alluded to above, NNEST teacher development encompasses more than the cognitive dimension of development. A holistic or integrative approach to NNEST teacher development is desirable.

Perhaps an integrative model of NNEST teacher development should take into consideration the social and affective as well as cognitive dimensions of teacher development. Whereas development in pedagogical and language skills is undoubtedly essential to effective teaching, NNESTs' self-identity, self-perception, self-efficacy, and self-concept equally affect their teaching approaches and performance. Whereas professional preparation is important to NNESTs' teaching suc-

cess, their feelings of inferiority and sense of insecurity may hamper their attempts to pursue further professional growth. All in all, central to an integrative model of teacher development is the concept that NNESTs are seen as professional beings in need of sustained development in all areas—cognitive, social and affective.

An integrative model also means integrating NNESTs' language learning with their meta-thinking on the methodologies and pedagogies they are studying. After all, many of the language learning and teaching theories are Western-based. Non-native English teachers may need to mediate any conflict between these theories and the actual teaching context in their home countries. They may even need to develop their own methodologies and pedagogies appropriate to their unique learning and teaching context.

Finally, an integrative model means continual NS-NNS collaboration, whether self-initiated or program-required, hopefully beginning at the pre-service level (Kamhi-Stein, 1999) and extending into subsequent teaching and possibly teacher training careers. It has been suggested that by strategically integrating NS-NNS collaboration into curriculum requirements, the two groups of teachers may learn to develop collaborative relationships that are essential to their long-term career growth (Carvalho de Oliveira & Richardson, 2001).

Conclusion

The NNEST construct encompasses complexity and multidimensionality, factors that are beyond what is defined within the traditional NS/NNS dichotomy. The NNEST construct is not merely a linguistic issue and/or a teaching competence issue. It includes the social, affective, and cognitive dimensions of teacher development. Therefore, NNESTs should be encouraged to look beyond their "innate" deficits and/or relevant competitiveness and fix their eyes on development. After all, the challenges

they encounter in their learning process not only are inevitable but also represent opportunities for growth. Therefore, non-native English teachers should bravely confront their fear and anxiety, develop their faith, and determine to pursue their growth as professionals in constant need of development. ✍

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Challenges May Offer Opportunities to Grow Professionally

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The Chinese translation of the word "crisis" is composed of two characters "wei ji": the first character "wei" means "danger," or "challenge," and the second character "ji" means "opportunity." In other words, from one perspective, a challenge implies an opportunity to change positively. As a non-native English-speaking teacher (Chinese descendant), I have taught ESL and EFL, as well as native English-speaking students at colleges and universities for 17 years-- with 14 years in the U.S. In this article, I intend to share some anecdotes of challenges I have encountered throughout my relatively long teaching career, which either offered me opportunities to grow professionally or inspired me to use my non-nativeness to my

advantage.

My first job, after I received a master's degree in Speech Communication, was a part-time ESL teaching position at a community college in Southern California where I taught adult ESL classes to mainly Spanish-speaking learners. As I was taking the attendance in this first class meeting, I mistakenly pronounced "Jesus" as /geezuz/, "Jose" as /jouz/ and "Angel" as /angel/. I mumbled to myself, "What a holy class I have", especially after my students corrected me. I felt a little bit embarrassed and decided to take a Spanish class. My purpose was not merely to pronounce my students' names correctly, but also to understand them and help them more effectively.

The Challenge of Learning another Language

Indulging myself in the challenge of learning Spanish offered

me the opportunity to better understand the process of learning another language and to become aware of the challenges and hurdles equated with such a difficult intellectual experience. Such realizations became salient as my instructor used Spanish even on the first day of my Spanish 1 class. I felt the teacher was talking too fast and I became anxious when I had difficulty understanding and communicating with my teacher and classmates. After going through this experience, I have to agree with the contention proposed by Lowe (1987) and Bailey (2001) which states that learning a new language helps L2 teachers put themselves in the learners' shoes, thereby becoming sensitive to the problems and processes confronting their own students.

This challenge made me alter how I taught ESL beginner classes.

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Because of it, I tried a number of approaches, including attempting to reduce my students' anxiety by slowing down and repeating the new language items frequently and in varying contexts. I also tried to make the target language comprehensible to my students by employing context clues, such as pantomiming or using a lot of pictures. Furthermore, my own experience offered an understanding of the areas in English that might present difficulties for my Spanish-speaking students. For instance, what had seemed perplexing learner errors such as "estop" (for "stop") and "eschool" (for "school") became clear to me once I became aware of the spelling pattern in Spanish: the letter "e" always goes before "s + a voiceless stop /p/, /t/, or /k/" in the word's initial position.

Having the feeling that I was becoming a better English teacher and also receiving positive feedback from my students encouraged me to pursue the journey of learning Spanish further. By the time I had finished my fourth semester of Spanish, I was able to help my Hispanic students express what they wanted to say-- when I noticed that they were struggling-- in Spanish. I often got a kick out of it in a new class when I heard my Spanish-speaking students' exclamation, "¿Entiende español?!" (You understand Spanish?!) after I helped them. My relative linguistic and cultural knowledge also enabled me to help Asian students to some degree (in the classes I have taught, I usually had about ten percent Asian: e.g., Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, or Japanese). Hence, I would argue that that empathy toward the second language learners and an understanding of students' mother tongues helped establish my credibility as a non-native English-speaking

teacher (NNEST).

The Challenge of "Native-Speaker Fallacy"

The notion of "Native-Speaker Fallacy" was another challenge that I came across through my teaching career. This obstacle, as I saw it, stood in the way of my securing a full time ESL teaching position. My realization of this challenge comes from two sources. A non-native English-speaking (NNEST) counselor at my college told me that we, as non-native English speakers, have to work twice as hard as our native English-speaking counterparts to be accepted as full-timers. She also stated that "The interviewers will examine the non-native speaker's qualifications and performance microscopically." Additionally, she pointed out that, based on her experience when she served on a hiring committee, administrators mostly tend to give full time ESL teaching positions to native English speakers based on the belief that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.

I also came to know about this challenge via the arguments made by some researchers favoring native English-speaking teachers over non-native English-speaking teachers. These researchers maintained that native English speakers are the only truly valid and reliable source of language data (Ferguson, 1992, p.xiii). Widdowson (1994) indicated that "native-speaker expertise is assumed to extend to the teaching of the language" and consequently native speakers "not only have a patent on proper English, but on proper ways of teaching it as well" (pp. 387-388).

To overcome the challenge of the "native-speaker fallacy," notion, I decided to seek means to advance myself professionally. I

undertook to obtain a second master's degree, majoring in linguistics with a TESL concentration. I was driven by the strong belief that with appropriate training a non-native speaker could prove to be as good an English teacher or even better than a native speaker. Assuming the role of a teacher and a student at the same time was a difficult but invaluable experience. It was a challenge for my time and energy because I had to juggle two part-time teaching jobs (including teaching as well as "freeway-flying" to get to work sites) and keeping up with my own graduate studies. However, the arrangement provided me with opportunities to try out the new teaching methodologies and theories I was introduced to in my courses and to reflect upon the connections between theories and practice as well.

The result was that not only did I have fun in teaching, my students were also more motivated to learn. One of my students said, "You really understand our needs in learning English." Another student-- who was very motivated, but often had trouble in finding the right vocabulary to express his thoughts-- became fairly fluent and found a high-paying job at a computer company a year later. The secret behind his successful progress was reading and writing every day (e.g., computer magazines, cartoons in the newspaper, copies of *Reader's Digest*, and close-captioned TV) and attempting to utilize the phrases and expressions he encountered in reading and writing in his daily communication with others. He stated, "You are *not* a native-speaker of English, but you could be an ESL teacher. I thought the methods you told us must be something you have tried and found useful."

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For my perspective, this student's improvement could be ascribed to both his motivation to learn English and the power of pleasure reading or extensive reading. The latter is said to play a big role in second language acquisition (e.g., Krashen 1993; Smith 1994). Though the researchers do not claim that there is a strong connection between reading and speaking, apparently this highly motivated student was able to benefit from his free voluntary reading and using what he learned from reading in his oral and written communication. What I did was simply share the scholars' ideas I had learned from my graduate courses with my students and encourage them to use the new language as often as possible. Nevertheless, my identity as an NNEST added to my students' trust in what I said to them.

The Challenge of Establishing Oneself Credibility

Another area of challenge was establishing my credibility as an English teacher. This was difficult to accomplish apparently due to the fact that I was teaching native English speakers. Those students were not used to being taught by a teacher who looked markedly different from their preconceived images of English teachers. In this regard, Thomas (1999) states, "we [non-native English speakers] often find ourselves in situations where we have to establish our credibility as teachers of English to speakers of other languages before we can proceed to be taken seriously as professionals" (p.5). I managed, however, as to be explained shortly, to overcome this difficulty by relying on my unique status as a non-native.

When I secured a full-time instructor position, I was assigned to teach a freshman English writ-

ing class for native speakers of English. On the first day of the class, students stared at me with looks of distrust as I entered the classroom. One of the students rolled his eyes 360 degrees as if he could not believe what he was seeing: A non-native speaker was going to teach them English! Several students who sat at the back of the classroom put their feet up on the chairs in front of them. With folded arms, they were waiting to see how I was going to teach them. One of them raised his hand and asked, "What does *epistemology* mean?" Though the question might have been a real one, I suspected that the student was trying to test my vocabulary because it was a question out of relevant context.

After I answered his question, I began introducing myself. I first spoke in English, but half way through, I switched into Spanish, and moments later, I continued my introduction in Chinese. Facing the challenging students, I knew that I had to temporarily ignore my basic Chinese value of humility and be assertive. My little scheme worked. Students started asking me how many languages I could speak and paying attention to what I said. Later on during the semester we discussed Amy Tan's (1989) *The Joy Luck Club*. My students were highly motivated to explore the cultural aspects presented in the stories because they then viewed me as a cultural informant who could help them explore the cultural differences.

I found that establishing our credibility is even more pressing when we, NNES teachers, are teaching native speakers. I think one way through which we can earn the trust of our prospective students is to take advantage of our cross-cultural experiences. In the same vein, Wang (2003) stated that the cultural differences NNESTs bring to the English

classroom could be positively exploited.

Closing Remarks

While the linguistic and cultural differences we bring to ESL/EFL or English classrooms may create challenges for ourselves, we also bring a great many positive attributes that may enhance our students' learning. Thomas (1999) argued that as NNESTs "we are role models; we are success stories; we are real images of what students can aspire to be" (p. 12). Looking back, I see that several times my professional growth as an NNEST was triggered by a challenge in my career. Being non-native English-speaking teachers, we can certainly take advantage of our uniqueness. The challenges we face can very well be opportunities for our growth. ✍

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Professional Development of an NEST through Working Alongside an NNEST

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In the spring of 2000, teaching in an Intensive English Program at a Midwestern University in the U.S.A, I participated in the TESL practicum as a mentor (or cooperating teacher) with a non-native English speaking (NNES) graduate student teacher. Many of the events of that spring still resonate and inform my teaching and interactions with NNES graduate students and ESL students; this is one story from that experience.

This story, drawn from a larger narrative (Johnson, K.A., forthcoming), provided me the opportunity to learn something about my teaching and myself as a (native English speaking (NES) teacher (Johnson and Golombek, 2002). This “critical incident” (Tripp, 1994), forced a closer examination of the assumptions I make about language, authority and my identity as a native English speaker.

Teacher Identity

Teacher identity is relational and dynamic, shifting with each new context (McLean, 1999). Perhaps most fundamentally, our teaching identity will shift in our relationships with people, with learners, as well as colleagues. Brison (2002), argues that the self is both autonomous and dependent, shaped and “formed in relation to others and sustained in a social context” (p. 41), and understanding this relational aspect is essential to learning who we are as people and as teachers.

There is perhaps no relationship more capable of transforming the teachers involved than that between a mentor teacher and a student teacher. While some studies have examined how this relationship effects student teacher identity (Britzman, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001; Johnson, 1992), little has been written about the impact on the mentor teacher. In my work as a NES mentor teacher, I am curious about the effect that the mentoring experience, especially when working with a NNES student teacher, may have on my own teacher identity. What can I learn about myself

from the experience?

The Caring Relation and Teacher Values

Noddings (1984) argues that the activity of the classroom itself is one of relations, between students and between students and teachers. This “caring relation” involves one participant as the *one-caring* (in the position of authority and responsibility, as a mother, or teacher) and the *cared-for* (those of less power and authority, as a child, or student). Although Noddings can identify salient aspects for each role, the roles themselves are not fixed; and furthermore each participant bears a responsibility in structuring and negotiating the relationship.

Noddings identifies “engrossment” as central to an understanding of the character of the one-caring – a commitment to another that varies in intensity with the context and the relationship, manifested through acts that require a need to “see the other’s reality as a possibility for my own” (p. 14). I would argue that this need to understand the “other’s reality” becomes

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even more significant in second language teaching and in our dealings with so many of diverse cultures; this is equally true, and potentially problematic, in the relationship of the NES mentor and the NNES student teacher. The combination of mixed linguistic and cultural identities, and individual values and beliefs, may result in increased tension that requires special effort for the NES mentor teacher in the role of the one-caring to “see the other’s reality.”

Mentoring Ali

In this context, an MA TESOL program at a large US university in the Midwest, mentor teachers and student teachers work together for the duration of a semester, cooperating on every aspect of the classroom: planning, leading activities, assessing, reflecting, finalizing grades.

I worked with Ali, an Angolan man in his early thirties with a variety of teaching experiences. He had taught EFL at home and had taken a certificate in teaching EFL in England, but had never taught ESL. We were very different people: gender, race, culture, language, religion.

Together we taught a course that met two evenings a week for 2½ hours each night. We had seven students from Morocco, China, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, all involved in the biological sciences, medicine, engineering, or business.

The Preposition

In terms of language proficiency, I found him to be quite fluent (and English was his fourth or fifth language) and comfortable in conversations with me. I would often make notes while he led the class about language issues that arose, we would talk him about issues after class, and during class he and the students would often

check with me on some aspect of the language. I prided myself on being honest and non-judgmental.

The preposition incident occurred toward the end of the 15 week semester. Students were working on a writing task led by Ali, when one of the students turned to ask for clarification with a preposition. Typically, given the varied nature of preposition usage in North American English, questions about prepositions got referred to me. But in this case, neither Ali nor any of the students glanced my way. Ali answered the student and the activity continued. I didn’t write down the question, nor do I remember the preposition (other than recognizing it as one that defied easy categorization and for which there was often confusion), but I remember the moment. At the top of my observation notes for that day is written, “Great! He knew the preposition and the students don’t need my expertise either!” In my journal from that day is the following:

One of the students today asked about a preposition and Ali answered without hesitation. How nice to see that the students accept him as knowledgeable about something like prepositions! Interesting development...although Ali still turns to me as the language authority for some things, it is clear that he is confident in himself and the students are confident in him as a teacher. How big has the NNS factor really been?
(4/24/00)

At the time, I celebrated this moment as a triumphant one for Ali; he had demonstrated language expertise and not a single student turned to me for confirmation, an indication to me that the students accepted his language expertise as

well. This is all still true. What has changed for me is the way I think about myself with this incident.

Ali, as a NNEST, was aware of language issues, and I was too. What caught me by surprise with this preposition incident is the way that I was surprised by it. Without bad intentions, I accepted myself, as everyone else had, as the acknowledged language expert in the class. By reflecting critically on my own reaction, I believe that I was surprised at the preposition incident because in a way it challenged my unconscious understanding of myself as the English language authority, bestowed upon me as a native English speaker.

The significance of this moment for me, as I reflect now, is what it reveals about the assumptions that I bring with me to mentoring and what it could mean for any NNESTs that I may mentor in the future. My journal and class notes from this semester are riddled with comments about language, minor errors, confusion that I registered from students, things that I wanted to talk to Ali about later. Below are a couple of examples:

Again tonight he had difficulty listening to the students. I wonder if, as I’ve read about the challenges of being a NNEST, the pressure to teach communicatively is stressful. Isn’t it likely that he is working on the language, anticipating the next move or instructions or task in such a way that it is difficult for him to concentrate on student responses?...Just how important is the linguistic component? How do I learn if this is indeed the issue? (2/15/00)

He asked me to define

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“niche” as he led the class tonight, although I thought he had already defined it correctly – linguistic insecurity or just involving me? (3/6/00)

Clearly, I was aware of my status as an NEST, and of his status as an NNEST. But how many of these issues are really important, in terms of the language learning of the students and the development of this teacher? Don't NES teachers make language mistakes, too? How can I know if the errors made really matter at all?

The significance of this moment is also related to the caring relation shared by me and Ali. My pleasure in this incident is part of my belief and care for this student teacher, my reactions are “embedded in a relationship that reveals itself as engrossment and in an attitude that warms and comforts the cared-for” (Noddings, 1984, p. 19). While I may feel jarred by the realization that Ali is also a language expert and that I am no longer in the one-up position, I am also pleased at this realization.

Ultimately, and key to a relationship between mentor teacher and student teacher, is the understanding that the “student is infinitely more important than the subject” (Noddings, 1984, p. 20). As a NES mentor teacher, I feel it is vital to recognize the significance of

this, and to ask: How inhibiting or difficult might it be for NNES student teachers, who already question their own competence, to be aware that they have a critical audience at all times to monitor their language? How can we best provide an environment of caring and support that allows the NNES student teacher to grow?

Professional Growth Through Mentoring

Bill Johnston, at the 2001 TESOL colloquium on teacher identity, asked for those investigating TESOL teacher identity to focus not just on the question of who we are, but also on the question of what we do and what we know. Reflecting on this experience with Ali, it becomes clear that more than what it tells me about Ali is what all of this tells me about myself, the very things that Johnston suggests. All of this is more than who I am, it is about what I do in the classroom, what I believe and what I know about the language and the pedagogy. It is fundamentally about the relationship with this student teacher and the values that I bring to this context.

With the preposition incident, I wonder about my own expectations of the importance of language for the NNEST. Of course I recognize that a minimum level of fluency is necessary (although defining that is another

issue completely, see Valdes, 1998, or Nickel, 1987) but I felt, as did the faculty and directors at the IEP, that fluency was not an issue for Ali. At the same time, I seemed very aware of the language, to the point that my notes are littered with references to errors or issues. I worry that my focus on this will do more harm than good in terms of Ali's own self-confidence and freedom to focus on more pressing issues in the classroom. Won't my concern about language keep him from growing in other ways by forcing him, more than he already does, to be constantly reminded of his status as a non-native English speaker?

I think that one lesson here is in the value of critical reflection for the NES mentor teacher and in open communication with the NNES student teacher. As NESTs, we must be available to assist with linguistic issues should they arise, but we must balance that with an awareness of issues of self-confidence for these new teachers. This is a question of competing values, and one that the NES mentor must reconcile. I believe an important factor in Ali's development and self-confidence as a teacher was the acknowledgement, by the students, and the NES mentor teacher, that he was linguistically competent. This was demonstrated by the students' acceptance of his expertise, and my willingness to

accept this as well.

Conclusion

In the end, the interaction between students and teachers is, as Noddings notes, about caring. In my caring relation with Ali, I recognize that I was “not attempting to transform the world” but allowing myself to be transformed through the experience (p. 34). Constructing this narrative has allowed me to understand this mentoring experience as a learning experience and how I have been changed as a teacher and a person. I think about the NNES graduate students that I know and their struggles to forge a positive identity as English language teachers, and I wonder how the perceptions, and the critical eyes and ears of their NES peers or mentor teachers' might inhibit this growth. I wonder what I can do differently, or if I need to do anything differently.

It is my hope that sharing such stories can become a resource for professional development for other teachers, that listening may act as a catalyst to encourage us to look critically at our own experiences. I am sure that others have wondered about the difficulties of working with international student teachers, or have asked themselves if they have done their best for everyone involved: the learners, the student teacher, themselves.

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How can we know these things if we are unwilling to tell our stories, to have them valued, and to expose ourselves in an attempt to grow and encourage others?

We do need for further research on the personal experiences of mentor teachers and student teachers, particularly any combinations of NESTs and NNESTs. We need more research into the nature of this relationship and the outcomes of working together before teacher educators can work to make the teaching practicum experience the most valuable experience that it can be for everyone involved. We have much to learn from each other. ✍

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NEW AWARD FOR PAPERS ON NNEST RELATED TOPICS

In June 2003, a new TESOL award was approved. The East Carolina University/TESOL Award for an Outstanding Paper on NNEST Issue provides US\$250, and a complimentary convention registration, to TESOL members (native or nonnative speakers of English) who have had a proposal on NNEST issues accepted for presentation at the annual TESOL convention. This Award was initiated by Ahmar Mahboob of East Carolina University and supported by the NNEST Caucus leadership.

The following information are taken directly from the TESOL website: <http://www.tesol.org/mbr/awards/tesol/nnestissues.html>

Who's Eligible	TESOL members who have had a proposal accepted for presentation (paper or colloquium) on NNEST issues at the 38th Annual TESOL Convention in 2004. Both native and nonnative speakers of English may apply.
Purpose	To recognize scholarship on NNEST issues.
Amount	One award of US\$250, donated by East Carolina University, and a convention registration to the Annual TESOL Convention.
Criteria	Eligible proposals are evaluated according to (a) the significance of the topic as it relates to the NNEST research, (b) the contribution to the field of TESL/TEFL, (c) originality and creativity in concept, and (d) relevance and broad impact.
To Apply	Applicants will submit their proposals through the TESOL call for participation. Using the box provided on the proposal form, applicants must indicate their desire to be considered for this award. *For the 2003-2004 awards cycle only, all TESOL members whose NNEST-related proposals have been accepted for TESOL 2004 will be eligible for the award.
Due Date	The application deadline is the same as the call for participation for TESOL 2004.

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