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# Introduction

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I immigrated to the United States in 1990. Prior to coming to the United States, I received two bachelor's degrees, one as a certified public translator and the other as a teacher of English to speakers of other languages in Argentina, the country where I was born and raised. In Argentina, I had worked as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, a college professor, and a program administrator with the Binational Center (BNC) in Buenos Aires. As an administrator with the BNC, I had the opportunity to study at the 1986 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Summer Institute in Hawaii and to present at several annual TESOL conventions.

Shortly after my arrival in the United States, I attended a language teachers' conference in California. After reviewing the conference program book, I decided to attend a session featuring administrators from several intensive English programs (IEPs). After an interesting presentation in which the administrators discussed a variety of topics (including differences in students' profiles, materials development, etc.), it was time for questions and answers. A member of the audience, then, asked the panelists whether they had nonnative English-speaking (NNES) professionals on their staffs. At that point, my attention, which I have to admit was drifting, perked up. The panel members, as if in unison, all agreed and gave a response that is still engrained in my memory. They said something analogous to: Why would we consider hiring NNES professionals? Students come from abroad to be taught by native English speakers.

While this is a sad anecdote, 14 years later, it now has a happy ending. As Ahmar Mahboob shows in a chapter in this book, students enrolled in IEPs do not buy into the notion that only native speakers

can be good language teachers (Phillipson, 1992). Had research like the one described by Mahboob (in this volume) been available in 1990, I, as an NNES professional, could have provided the administrators with a data-driven response. However, the paucity of literature available in 1990 did not allow me to refute the negative perceptions of the administrators. Nor did the limited, if any, available literature about NNES professionals allow me to draw solace from viewpoints that opposed the narrow ones expressed by the administrators.

In the early 1990s, there was some interest in the notion of the native speaker and NNES professionals (for discussions on the topics, see Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994). However, it was not until the 30<sup>th</sup> annual TESOL convention in 1996 when a NNES professionals' movement began. At the 1996 TESOL convention, George Braine organized a colloquium titled "In Their Own Voices: Nonnative Speaker Professionals in TESOL" (see Braine, this volume, for a complete description of the colloquium) featuring the struggles and triumphs of NNES educators.

As explained by Braine (this volume), the colloquium proved groundbreaking since it prompted the establishment of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL (NNEST) Caucus that has given NNES professionals both a voice and visibility in the professional community. Moreover, issues related to NNES professionals have become a legitimate topic of interest. For example, since 1996, interest in NNES professionals has been reflected in the establishment of NNEST Caucuses at the TESOL affiliate level and in the growing number of related presentations at annual TESOL (and TESOL-affiliate) conventions. Since 1996, interest in issues related to NNES professionals has also been reflected in the publication of more than 50 refereed articles and a twice-a-year *NNEST Caucus Newsletter*; the writing of over four dissertations and five master's theses; and the publication of two volumes focusing on the topic (Belcher & Connor, 2001; Braine, 1999).

*Learning and Teaching from Experience: Perspectives on Nonnative English-Speaking Professionals* reflects this current and growing interest in NNES professionals and the issues that are of concern to them. This volume consists of 16 chapters in which, writing from their unique vantage points, both native and nonnative English-speaking professionals focus on theory and research related to NNES professionals, examine a wide range of issues related to the professional preparation of NNES teachers, and discuss implications for classroom practice. In editing this book, one of my objectives was to widen the range of voices available in the literature about NNES professionals by including contributions not only by NNES but also by native English-speaking (NES) professionals. While it is critical that the voices of NNES professionals continue to be heard through the nonnative

English speakers themselves, I believe that there is a need to integrate into the discussion the perspective of NES professionals who have contributed to strengthening the professional preparation of pre-service and in-service NNES professionals and to increasing the professional opportunities available to them.

This book does not seek to define the terms *native speaker* and *nonnative speaker*. As already noted in Braine (1999), this topic is well covered by Davies (1991) in his book titled *The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics* and in his most recent book, *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality* (2003). In the English language teaching (ELT) field, several researchers have questioned the validity of the native speaker construct and, by extension, challenged the notion that the native speaker is the ideal English teacher. For example, Kramsch (1998) argues that the “native speaker” is an abstraction “based on arbitrarily selected features of pronunciation, grammar, lexicon, as well as on stereotypical features of appearances and demeanor” (pp. 79–80) and relies on the assumption that native speakers are monolingual and monocultural and only speak a standard variety of the language of which they are native speakers. However, this assumption is not supported by reality since most people speak more than one language or varieties of a language and participate in more than one culture and subculture (Kramsch, 1998). Kaplan (1999) questions the validity of the “native speaker” construct on similar grounds. According to him, the construct “creates an impression that linguistic unity exists, when global reality reflects vast linguistic diversity” (p. 5), and terms such as *native speakers* or *nonnative speakers* only serve the purpose of separating people into different camps.

Several of the chapters in this book criticize the native speaker versus the nonnative English speaker dichotomy since it is “overly simplistic” (a point made by Pasternak and Bailey, this volume) and does not capture the complexities involved in being a NNES professional. Rather than looking at the two groups of professionals as having discrete skills and competencies, several chapters in this book suggest that NES and NNES professionals *share* complementary skills and competencies. This idea is best explained by Pasternak and Bailey, who argue that language proficiency and professional development should be viewed “as continua rather than as categorical absolutes” (this volume).

I would like to think that this volume represents the “state of the art” in issues related to NNES professionals at the present time. The book is organized into four sections. **Section 1, Theoretical Underpinnings**, presents three chapters designed to provide an introduction and background information to the issues discussed in this book. Emphasis in this section is placed on contextualizing the NNES professionals’

movement and identifying emerging research related to the topic of NNES professionals. This section also presents two personal narratives designed to promote a better understanding of the professional development process of two different types of NNES professionals: visible and invisible minorities—that is, minorities who come from white or non-white ethnic groups (Hansen, this volume).

**Section 2, Focus on Research**, presents four studies exploring issues related to NNES professionals from different perspectives. The first chapter in this section deals with the interaction of language, race, and gender and how such interaction affects students' perceptions of immigrant women instructors teaching adult English as a second language (ESL) classes in Canada. The next chapter focuses on kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) teachers from a native and a nonnative English-speaking background and issues of professionalism, including perceptions about job satisfaction and professional preparation. The subsequent chapter focuses on a topic that has not received much, if any, attention in the literature: the hiring criteria implemented by U.S.-based intensive English program (IEP) administrators. The final chapter in the section presents the results of research focusing on another topic that has also received only limited attention in the literature: students' attitudes toward native and nonnative English-speaking professionals teaching in IEPs in the United States.

**Section 3, Focus on Teacher Preparation**, presents five chapters supporting the notion that it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to create conditions in which all teachers, regardless of language status, succeed. The first chapter in the section breaks new ground by articulating the idea that language proficiency is not the same as nativeness and that language proficiency and professional development should be viewed “as continua rather than as categorical absolutes” (Pastenak & Bailey, this volume). The next two chapters examine the dialogue journal entries of student teachers enrolled in practicum courses. The following chapter describes how a practicum course in the United States has been redesigned to address the cross-cultural needs of NNES student teachers. The last chapter in the section describes a variety of strategies used by a NNES teacher educator designed to empower nonnative English-speaking teachers for EFL teaching.

**Section 4, Focus on the Classroom**, discusses the implications of theory and research on NNES professionals for ESL and EFL classrooms. In the first chapter, a teacher educator and a U.S.-trained EFL professional reflect on their reconstructed views about EFL education and teacher preparation and offer suggestions for adapting Western instructional practices to the realities of an EFL setting. The next chapter focuses on a notion that has not been widely discussed in the

literature—the figure of the “intercultural speaker”—and describes a variety of classroom projects designed to help EFL students become intercultural speakers. The final two chapters in the section emphasize the value of native and nonnative English speaker collaboration. There has been much talk about the value of native and nonnative English speaker collaboration, but to my knowledge, very few examples of collaborative projects have been published. The first of the final two chapters in Section 4 describes the history of the authors’ collaborative relationship and discusses how their individual differences and similarities have contributed to their enhanced understanding of the teaching and learning process and to their shared growth as professionals. The last chapter in the book describes the lessons learned from and the steps followed in completing a project in which both native and nonnative English-speaking professionals collaborated to produce standards for EFL teachers, in-service teacher trainers, educational leaders, and in-service training courses in Egypt. Each of the four sections in the book concludes with Questions for Reflection, which provide readers with issues to consider regarding the chapters in each section. The questions also require readers to synthesize information from the different chapters in the section.

In this book, the notion that collaboration brings clear benefits to TESOL professionals is not limited to the chapters that describe collaborative projects between native and nonnative English-speaking professionals. Several other chapters in the book emphasize the importance of professional collaboration in that they have been co-authored by native and nonnative English speakers. In writing these chapters, the authors have engaged in a partnership characterized by their mutual respect for one another’s ideas and experiences.

The chapters in the book vary as to their foci. Some chapters have been written with a North American/British/Australian audience in mind, and others have been specifically written with an EFL audience in mind. The chapters also differ in terms of the setting on which they focus (ESL or EFL) and the level of instruction with which they deal (K–12 programs, IEPs, adult ESL programs, ESL and EFL teacher preparation programs, etc). However, central to these chapters is the notion that the practices described for one setting or level may well be applicable to a different setting or level.

The contributors to this book come from diverse backgrounds. While all but one of the contributors have completed, at least in part, their studies in the United States, many of them are NNES professionals who have taught in EFL and ESL settings and who eventually became teacher educators in the United States and in other countries. Other contributors are NES professionals who have shown great interest in the NNES professionals’ movement as well as in the NNEST

Caucus. (In fact, one of these contributors, Kathleen M. Bailey, was the president of the TESOL organization at the time the organization approved the establishment of the NNEST Caucus.) Other authors are practitioners from native and nonnative English-speaking backgrounds who teach at different levels (kindergarten through college) in ESL and EFL contexts.

It is my hope that the readers of this book—including teachers-in-preparation and practitioners from native and nonnative English-speaking backgrounds, teacher educators, and researchers interested in issues related to NNES professionals—will find the contributions insightful and meaningful to their professional lives. Issues of professional credibility, language proficiency, and job opportunities are of concern primarily to NNES professionals. On the other hand, issues of classroom management, teacher preparation, and the role of collaboration in professional development are of common concern to both native and nonnative English speakers alike. Whether the issues are common to both NES and NNES professionals or unique to one group or the other, this book seeks to develop a better understanding of the complexities involved in being a NNES professional and to identify strategies that will allow NES and NNES professionals to draw on their strengths and bridge their differences toward a common goal, the teaching of English.

Given the large numbers of NNES professionals worldwide, it is my hope that *Learning and Teaching from Experience: Perspectives on Non-native English-Speaking Professionals* will increase the understanding about this group of professionals, who have only recently become more vocal and visible. I hope that the path that native and nonnative English-speaking professionals share is made wider by this book.

## References

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