

Experiences and perceptions of nonnative-speaker teacher trainees on a TESOL programme in New Zealand

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Reasons for the research

- More NNS trainees entering the programme
- 'Native speaker preferred'
- Anecdotal evidence of NNS trainees' concerns

Anecdotal evidence of NNS trainees' concerns

"Half students in our class are non-native speakers. Many of us including me want to be an English teacher. However, as non-English native speakers, are we able to become a good English teacher here? What are the advantages and disadvantages of it? What should we do to achieve this goal?"



NNS teachers in ELT (NNESTs)

- More than 80% of ELT professionals internationally are non-native speakers
- The number of NNESTs has been larger than the number of NESTs for some time (Canagarajah, 1999)

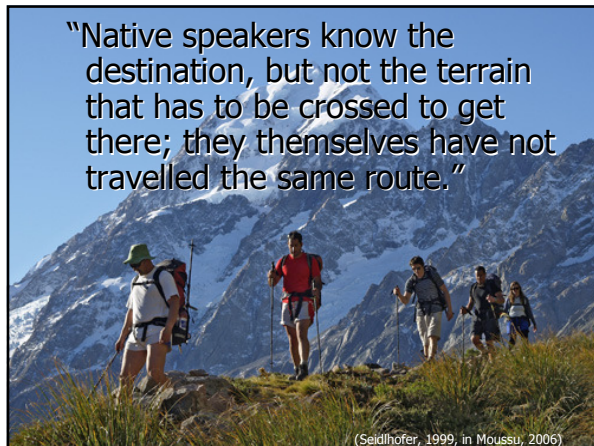


Native and non-native speakers in ELT

- NNESTs have suffered from:
 - Inferiority complex
 - Schizophrenia (Medgyes, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999)
- Differences between, and status of, NESTs and NNESTs addressed in late 80s/early 90s
- The 'native speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1992)

Unique strengths of NNESTs

- Provide a good learner model for students
- Can teach language strategies more effectively
- Able to supply learners with more information about the English language to their students
- Can anticipate and prevent language difficulties of their students better
- Able to be more empathetic to the needs and problems of learners
- Can use students' L1 to their advantage, if they know it (Medgyes, 1999)



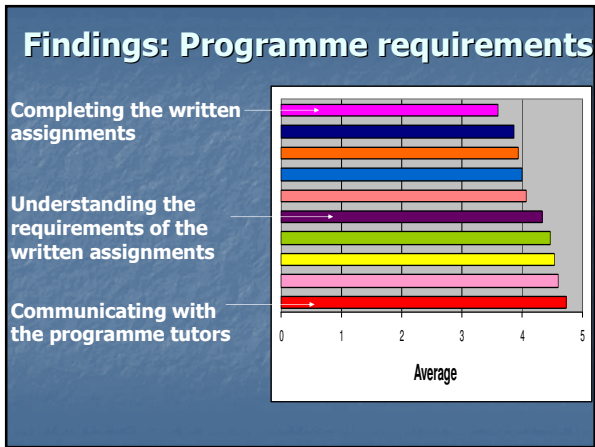
Aims of the research

- NNS trainees' experience on the programme?

→ Self-perception and confidence?

Methodology

- **Participants**
 - First Language
 - Previous Qualifications
 - Previous Teaching Experience
- **Questionnaire**
 - Qualitative and Quantitative



Findings: Overcoming difficulties

- **Most commonly mentioned difficulty:**
 - Completing the written assignments
- **Strategies for dealing with difficulties**
 - Ask classmates for assistance
 - Do more reading or research

Findings: Improvements

- Improvements for NNS trainees
- Reasons for improvements related to NNS concerns
 - *Improvement:* One-to-one tutorials
 - *Reason:* "NESB trainees can have opportunities to clarify the course requirements."

Findings: Advantages of being a NNS

- Having previous English language learning experience 9
- I have studied English grammar before/My knowledge of grammar is better than that of NSs 5

Findings: Disadvantages of being a NNS

- Non-native speaker accent 5
- Sometimes I couldn't pronounce words correctly/ incorrect pronunciation 3
- Reading and writing assignments take longer than for NS/ reading and writing skills are not good enough 6

Findings: Interaction with NS trainees

- **Personal relationships**
 - Very good/Good/positive 11
- **Study relationships**
 - Worked often with NS 9

Findings: Comparisons with NS trainees

- **Balanced:**
 - "When I looked at other native speaker teachers on the programme they seem to have not many difficulties in producing language such as speaking and writing. However, I was good at identifying learners' difficulties and grammar because of previous learning experience."
- **Neutral:**
 - "During discussions there were times when I found my point of view was very different to that of native speakers of English."

Comparisons with NS trainees

- **Negative:**
 - "I sometimes felt that native speaker teacher trainees were better than me, especially in discussing time. I always felt that I didn't give much contribution to the group."
- **Positive:**
 - "I'd like to know what is the difference between us. I thought if I can speak fluency English I can be a better teacher than some of the native speaker teacher trainees. I knew grammar. I understand how to learn English better. I clever than some of the native teacher trainees."

Comparisons with NS trainees

- **Tried to learn from NS trainees**
 - "I watched how they explained a topic/subject, how they handled certain situations. I watched and listened for pronunciation, and behaviour in class. I compared their resources with mine and generally tried to learn from them."
- **Want to learn more about the differences**
 - "I want to know what are my advantages in learning this programme, and what are theirs (the natives). Then, we could help each other and make the learning process easier."

Summary of Findings

- **Key areas of concern to NNS trainees:**
 - Writing assignments
 - Pronunciation
- **NNS trainees have strategies for dealing with difficulties**
- **NNS trainees are aware of their strengths:**
 - They have learned English themselves
 - They have learned about English grammar
- **NNS and NS seem to work co-operatively**
- **NNS trainees compare themselves favourably to NS trainees**

Previous Findings about NNS TESOL trainees

- NNS trainees "constantly ask for additional classes in pronunciation and vocabulary" (Medgyes, 1999)
- Most NNS teacher trainees had higher language awareness than NS trainees (Lurda, 2005)
- NNS TESOL students did not necessarily think that NS teachers were superior to NNS – 58% said that both are successful in ESL teaching, 24% said non-natives, and 12% natives (Samimy and Brutt-Gifler, 1999)

Previous recommendations - training of NNS teachers

- Provide English language training for NNS trainees. "...for NNS English teachers to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals, first, we have to be near-native speakers of English" (Medgyes, 1999)
- Integrate instruction on issues related to NNS across the whole teacher training curriculum. (Kamhi-Stein, 2004)
- Teach the value of collaboration between NS and NNS teachers (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004)

Future directions – this project

Interviews with participants to find out more about:

- Aspects of pronunciation that NNS trainees from different language backgrounds need assistance with
- Difficulties that NNS trainees experience with writing assignments

Conclusions

- **NNS trainees' experience on the programme?** ✓
- **Self-perception and confidence?** ✓

Final word

- From a NNS colleague:

"The questions are very interesting and thorough and I think I would love to answer them if I was your student (something about feeling valued, belonging to a cohort of "non-native speaker teachers", etc)."



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