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Nonnative English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) versus Native English Speaking Students: Perceptions*

Eunhee Han
(Korea Nazarene University)

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The study aims to answer two questions: (a) what perceptions do NNESTs have about teaching native English speaking (NES) students? (b) what perceptions do NES students have of their NNESTs? The study participants were four NNESTs and 17 NES students. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews, which were analyzed qualitatively. Major study findings showed the differences between the NNESTs and their NES students in the area of teaching and language performance. The NNESTs were perceived by their students as using ineffective teaching techniques, lacking in their command of English, especially accent; the NNESTs, in turn, perceived themselves as well-prepared teachers with not too much concern about nonnativeness of English, and felt that their students were not actively engaged in their class. The present study indicates, for both NNESTs and NES students, the need to be aware of World Englishes (WE) in terms of language and pedagogy. This involves the variety of Englishes, especially with different accents existence among nonnative speakers, and the variety of learning and teaching methods in English class, where both need to create a balance between the old and new perspective to maintain a middle ground.

[nonnativeness/NNEST/perceptions]

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) around the world is likely to increase, since the population of international scholars is growing. Baily (1984)

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* The paper is based on the author's unpublished doctorial dissertation completed at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Han, 2008).

explored the empirical studies of NNESTs' communication problems and communicative competence, since complaints about NNESTs had appeared in articles in the 1970s and early 1980s. For example, Baily stated NNS teachers received a score lower than "2" on an oral interview based on a scale of "0" to "5". Hoekje and Williams (1992) also raised the issue of the NNESTs' communicative problems in the classroom. Moreover, the undergraduates tended to judge the NNESTs' teaching ability by their linguistic nonstandardness rather than on actual language patterns (Rubin & Smith, 1990); that is, they perceived English as the property of what Kachru (1985) calls the 'inner circle' (L1 speakers mainly in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Given this, their perceptions were based on their particular variety of standard English.

In spite of the negative perceptions of NNESTs teaching effectiveness in research from this period, it is important to recognize that the world's linguistic situation is changing. More and more people from the so-called 'outer circle' (L2 speakers mainly in India, West Africa, and East Africa) and the 'expanded circle' (EFL speakers mainly in China, Japan, and Korea) are bringing their World Englishes (WE) into the academic setting. It is especially important to note the increasing number of speakers from these countries, which changes the demographic picture considerably from the earlier time. Two WE beliefs are crucial as inspiration for this study. First, it is increasingly clear that "the English language now belongs to all those who use it" (Kachru, 1988, p. 1). This statement is based on a multi-model notion of English where English moves "beyond a narrow mono-model understanding of English into a broader poly-model understanding" (Brown, 1995, p. 236). To support this, this global situation justifies the call for a "repertoire of models for English" (Kachru, 1988, p. 1). Such models emerge from and are supported by a world in which students are exposed to an international approach to understanding the language. In this context, international teachers can be defined as a valuable resource in changing the attitudes and increasing the knowledge of English native speakers (Pickert, 1991).

Under the WE perspective, despite negative perceptions toward nonnative English speakers, it is my desire to see a classroom that is a dynamic place where NNESTs and NES students can interact and experience the challenge of discovering new and unique world perspectives to broaden and deepen their classroom achievement. To provide the WE perspective, it is understandable that we must investigate the perceptions of the native/nonnative dichotomy from both the NNESTs' perspective and that of their native English speaking students.

The goal of this study is to contribute to the literature that is laying a foundation for a WE perspective through which future NNESTs and NES students can build a better understanding of language by being more active participants in the interaction with others. The following research questions are an attempt to meet this goal:

1. What perceptions do NNESTs have about teaching native English speaking students?
2. What perceptions do NES students have of their NNESTs?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Native-Nonnative Dichotomy

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. Among these teachers, some speak English as a second or even as a third or fourth language. The term 'nonnative English speaking teachers' (NNESTs), which has been applied to this group, has now created a division within the ELT profession. Questions such as these have fueled discussion for years, discussions which tend to return regularly to the original native-nonnative dichotomy.

Discussing the terms 'native' and 'nonnative' in language brings us back to Chomsky's original conception of a language (Chomsky, 1957) which has been elaborated, but not changed in its basic view, in subsequent works (Chomsky, 1965, 1981, 2000). Chomsky's idea is that a language can be identified with a set of core principles that generate a set of grammatically correct utterance forms that are possible in the language. However, in actual language behavior, the full set of possible utterances is never produced and, more importantly, 'negative feedback' never occurs, alerting the learner to patterns that need to be avoided in the linguistic system. In addition, actual language use involves mistakes and sloppiness, and can never produce enough utterances to fully characterize a language. Yet the speaker learning a first language seems to achieve a still-mysterious miracle in constructing a language that is virtually identical to that of parents or models from incomplete, and sometimes even faulty, input data.

In this context, the question arises: Who is a native speaker? The concept of a native speaker springs from a need for having models, norms, and pedagogical goals, whether these focus on the teaching of a first or a second language. The question remains embedded, to some extent, in the reality of the speaker. However, theoretically, the native speaker concept is vague. For instance, it is unclear whether the term refers to individuals or populations; moreover, it is increasingly unclear which of many varieties count as standards or norms by which to evaluate 'native' mastery.

Halliday (1978) did not use the term 'native speaker'; instead, he used the term 'mother tongue,' when he commented on the subtle problems of learning via a second language and with teachers whose primary competence is in the second language. Davies (2003) argued that "it is possible but difficult for an adult second language learner to become a

native speaker of the target language" (p. 4). Davies seems to favor the opinion of Paikeday (1985), who prefers the notion of a 'proficient-user,' as embodying the important part of the meaning traditionally associated with the term 'native speaker.' Davies defended the validity of emerging varieties of English in his comments on grammatical correctness: "[T]he people we refer to as arbiters of grammaticality are not really so because true arbiters of grammaticality are proficient users of languages, not just native speakers" (p. 53). The question is then raised as to what allows the nonnative speaker's language development to develop a proficient user of a second language.

Phillipson (1992) used the phrase 'the native speaker fallacy,' referring to the false hypothesis that "the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker" (p. 185) in the language profession. The term was coined as a reaction to the tenet that 'the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker,' proposed at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Makarere, Uganda.

Several kinds of evidence have been traditionally advanced to support the original notion of native speaker superiority. Native speaker teachers have a better command in terms of fluency and idiomatically correct language forms. In addition, they are more knowledgeable about the cultural connotations of the language's forms and are the final arbiters of the acceptability of these forms. However, Phillipson (1992) argued against the uncritical acceptance of these assumptions about native speaker language teachers. He insisted that nonnative speakers could be taught these abilities through teacher training. He included in this training the mastery of correct forms, appropriate use of the language, and the ability to analyze and explain the language. In short, he believed the term 'native speaker fallacy' was erroneous.

2. The Emergence of World Englishes

Both native and nonnative English speaking teachers around the world play a crucial role as they continue to contribute to English language teaching programs. NNESTs have existed in non-English speaking countries for centuries. Today, the 21st century world market demands acceptable command of English as a requirement for international communication. The status of English teaching has mushroomed to a point where it has captured the attention of educators in both non-English-speaking and English-speaking nations.

Within the globalization of English language teaching (ELT), the area of World Englishes has become a pivotal field of study in recent years. With this prominence has come an increasing appreciation for the fact that the English language is changing to meet the needs of cultural interactions and markets throughout the world. As English has spread globally, its varieties have been constructed with influence from different sources

involving the first languages of its speakers, which has resulted in the development of varieties of English in such countries as Nigeria, India, and Singapore, which are known as the 'New Englishes' (Kachru, 1985; Trudgill & Hannah, 2002). Mufwene (1994) defined 'New Englishes' as "a cover term for varieties other than that spoken originally by the people called the English and living in the part of the world called England before this territory expanded its political and economic hegemony" (p. 21). Similar to 'New Englishes,' the notion of 'World Englishes' was established by Kachru to identify the characteristics of second-language speech communities. Brutt-Griffler (2002) focused on the spread of World Englishes as a linguistic process. The spread of a language to another speech community is associated with language acquisition of a specific type. For instance, new speakers acquiring English from different language groups have not acquired English as their first language. As a result of this, one effect has been that the spread of English has resulted in language changes—not accidental or occasional changes—but systematic changes elated to the conditions of the various communities in learning and using English. Widdowson (2003) may have this in mind when he says that English is "not a matter of the actual language being distributed but of the virtual language being spread and in the process being variously actualized" (p. 50).

The ultimate result of English spreading around the globe is that the language itself changes as it touches, and evolves within, each new context. This language change has produced the concept of the 'varieties of English' and terms such as New Englishes and World Englishes. In fact, a recent history of the language is entitled "The Stories of English" (Crystal, 2004). The head word being deliberately pluralized shows the diverse paths the language has now taken in the world. However, among these nonnative speakers of the new varieties of World Englishes it is noteworthy, judging from the tenor of many writings on the subject, that these speakers still tend to have a perceived sense of insecurity based on a lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities.

The acceptance of World Englishes spoken within communities has led many to ask for a crucial understanding of the particular functions and role of any particular variety. Those who describe the language need to use certain categories for the users of English in various types of speech communities (Kachru, 1990). In particular, any English language speech community needs to be provided a pedagogical model with reference to a specific variety of its language. In a sense, "a model implies a linguistic ideal which a teacher and a learner keep in mind when imparting instruction or learning a language" (Kachru, 1990, p. 177).

3. Nonnative Speaking English Teachers (NNESTs)

The existence of nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) around the world has opened debate on issues related to their credentials. In particular, research on nonnative speaker (NNS) English teachers is a recent research phenomenon in TESOL and the applied linguistic field (Braine, 1998, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Teachers of English in ESL/EFL contexts, as well as non-ESL/EFL contexts, have been growing including many new prospective NNS scholars every year. Moreover, the EFL market, where the greatest percentage of professionals are nonnative speaking teachers, has continually expanded since World War II and has gained the favor of being named as a specific interest group (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994, 1998).

However, native speaking (NS) English teachers are still considered more prestigious (Pennycook, 1998), and the presence of nonnative speaking (NNS) English teachers continues to focus their institutions' attention on their credentials for teaching English. According to Canagarajah (1999), one of the main reasons that NS English teachers have received special privileges is because the NS is said to be the true facilitator of the language, and it is because of this that the NS can serve as the most reliable model for the second or foreign language learners' language acquisition.

Peter Medgyes's (1983, 1992) groundbreaking study on NNS teachers focused on examining the research on NNS teachers. He himself is a nonnative speaker and has brought attention to the NNS issues with two articles in *ELT Journal*: 'The schizophrenic teacher' (1983) and 'Native or nonnative: Who's worth more?" (1992). Based on his research, he developed four hypotheses involving his own experiences and observations. He suggested that NNS and NS are different in terms of "language proficiency, and teaching practice (behavior)." He noted that "most of the differences in teaching practice can be attributed to the discrepancy in language proficiency, and both types of teachers can be equally good teachers on their own terms" (Braine, 2005, p. 14). Even after Medgyes' (1983, 1992) gate-opening studies, research on NNS issues has become an area that researchers were reluctant to touch. The general perceptions were that the NNS teachers do not have the same knowledge and performance as the NS teachers of English and therefore, open discussion was avoided on this issue (Braine, 2005).

After Medgyes's (1992, 1994) pioneering research, issues concerning NNS English teachers have mostly focused on the perceptions of nonnative speaker English teachers – how they perceive themselves and how they perceived by their students. This includes specific areas such as linguistic performance, listening and speaking skills, cross-cultural communication, and pedagogical performance. In fact, these areas become intertwined when examining the issue of NNS English teachers.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Participants

Two groups of participants played a major role in this study. One group consisted of the NNESTs, and the other group was made up of the NES students who took an English class from the NNESTs during the university's fall semester of 2006 in Pennsylvania, USA. Four NNESTs were selected. They were from various countries: Aadit was from Nepal, Daniil was from Russia, Hagar was from Egypt, and Ya was from China. Their college-level teaching experiences had varied from one year to four years prior to this position, and they had taught both in their home countries and in the U.S. All participants had teaching experience with nonnative English speaking students. The NNESTs did not speak English as their native language, yet each had met the qualifications to become teachers at a university level. The NNESTs, like native speaking teachers, taught one or two of the required English classes.

The NES students were all native English speaking students who were either freshmen or sophomores and were enrolled in English courses with the NNEST participants. The course names of the required liberal arts courses were *"College Writing"* and *"Research Writing."* Four students were selected from each NNEST's class. The total number of undergraduate students was 17.

2. Data Instrument and Procedures

The current study's main research instrument was an in-depth interview concerned exclusively with the experiences and perceptions of NNESTs and their NES students, and the meanings they describe which emerged from their classroom experience. The data was collected from September through December of 2006. Data collection was divided into three different time frames during the semester. Both NNESTs and the NES students were interviewed at the beginning of the semester during the 2nd and 3rd week. Two follow-up interviews were scheduled in the following time manner: The 2nd interview session – week 8-9 of the semester, and the 3rd interview session – week 11-12 of the semester. Interview questions for NNESTs were:

1. How did you feel about starting to teach an English class as a nonnative English speaking teacher teaching native speaking undergraduate students?
2. What concerns did you have?

Interview questions for NES students were:

1. Tell me about your experience in taking an English class from this teacher.
2. Does (Did) your teacher affect your learning in the English course? If so, how? If not, why?

The interview questions in this study were developed as:

1. a means of gathering information listing the challenges for the NNESTs as nonnative English speakers.
2. a means of addressing the native and nonnative dichotomy in teaching English.
3. a way to clarify the perceptions of both NNESTs and NES students as they interacted in the classroom setting.
4. a means of refocusing the perspectives of English language use through NNESTs who have been shaped by their experiences as individuals and learners from unique and varied educational cultures.

In the present study, the first interview lasted for approximately an hour. The two follow-up interviews had features of both the general interview guide approach which was a prepared list of specific topics and issues in outline form to be discussed and the standardized open-ended interview approach which were prepared in advance. All interviews lasted for approximately an hour and were tape-recorded with the participants' permission.

3. Data Analysis

Guided by qualitative inquiry, all of the data was organized categorically. The first interview phase began the inquiry, and was followed with two follow-up interviews. Each step was reviewed repeatedly, and continually evaluated. Taped interviews were transcribed precisely. Field notes from the interviews were regularly reviewed. From all the data meaningful data chunks were identified, retrieved, isolated, grouped, and regrouped for analysis. Categories could be entered initially or at a later date, as well as added, changed, or deleted in direct relation to the data.

In order to understand the participants' experiences and perceptions, the data were examined for themes and patterns. Using a data-driven approach, the collected chunks of data were individually isolated and incorporated for each study participant. To develop a theme, those participants with relatively high concerns and issues were identified as well as those with relatively low concerns and issues.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Interview Questions and Answers

1) Aadit and the Students Perceptions and Experiences

Nonnative English Speaking Teachers vs. Native English Speaking Students

The interview question "How were you feeling about starting to teach an English class as a nonnative English speaking teacher teaching native speaking undergraduate students?" Aadit expressed that being a NNEST teaching NES students became a major concern relating to his status as a teacher in the beginning of the semester. However, his concern about being a nonnative speaking teacher was minimalized because he felt that, in order to establish a strong presence as a teacher, he had to forget his ethnic or national differences even if there were communication problems. Although he maintained his confidence in teaching NES students throughout the semester, he admitted that he had concerns about his language performance. This ambivalence shows in a comment he made at the beginning of the semester: "I am concerned about [my] accent, pronunciation, but I don't have too much concern about it." However, he emphasized that he was well equipped and knowledgeable enough on the subject he was teaching that he could model his professional status in a way that incorporated his teaching philosophy. To be effective, he admitted that lecturing was the easiest method for him to use when teaching his students.

On the other hand, five of his students, Brian, Denise, Isabel, Michelle, and Tyler expressed the major concern of understanding their teacher's lectures mainly due to his accent and pronunciation. All of them expressed the same concern over the three different interview sessions throughout the semester. Brian saw that understanding his English teacher would become a major concern in taking the course, due to his teacher's thick accent. Moreover, besides the understanding of his teacher's language, the communication conflict also was exacerbated because of his teacher's ineffective teaching methods. Brian, Isabel, and Michelle sensed that their teacher was a novice, based on how he handled teaching materials, which did not seem organized to students, and on his inability to provide explanations of requirements to the class. The classroom interaction was not lively because there were no highly involved classroom activities or discussions. Despite the communication conflict, the student participants reported that the teacher's content knowledge was not questionable. They added that they trusted the teacher's qualifications.

2) Daniil and the Students' Perceptions and Experiences

In the interview at the same time of Aadit's, Daniil was not particularly concerned about being a nonnative teacher. He emphasized that, even though he had his own native language, the language in which he could best articulate his ideas was English. He confirmed that he didn't have any language issues in regards to his overall class lectures or any other class related activities. He felt comfortable that all students understood him well. If there were any communication issues that arose in class, Daniil analyzed it as due to the noise level because of some reason other than the language issue. Managing the class was

not difficult for Daniil because he saw the class as responding well and expressing themselves in a coherent manner. He believed that his students' poor behaviors, such as not paying attention, represented individual choices. He emphasized that he possessed enough knowledge to teach effectively.

Daniil's class participants, Andrew, Caroline, Leanne, and Mara noticed that there were a lot of blank faces in the class, because their teacher was hard to understand. This made the class quiet, and nobody asked questions. Mara added that her English teacher had a thick accent, and this caught her attention since she had never had a teacher with a strong accent until now. She commented, "My English teacher's accent was a lot thicker [than my other professors]." The participants reported that there were no live interactions and they described their classmates as "being really quiet." However, the students were assured of their teacher's knowledge on the subject by his written feedback.

3) Hagar and the Students' Perceptions and Experiences

To Hargar, who was from the Middle East, her nonnativeness was not an issue that would separate her from being a teacher to her students. She further expressed that becoming a nonnative teacher of native English speaking students was exciting. She continued to confirm her nonnative status as an English teacher, "For my class, they don't look at me as a nonnative or that I am not an English teacher. They think that all information is useful." Hagar was satisfied with her teaching performance. She believed that her teaching methods had improved because of her nonnative background, which she felt helped her adapt her teaching in the new situations. Moreover, she believed that her students learned something from her, which gave her a sense of confidence and a growing feeling of success in her profession.

In contrast, Hagar's students, Amber, Heidi, Kurt, and Timothy expressed that their teacher's language performance created difficulties of understanding and following the class was mainly due to mispronunciation of words and a different accent. Moreover, they were concerned about their teacher's lack of vocabulary knowledge. Amber noted that her teacher sometimes used a completely wrong word, which confused everybody. Kurt added, "A lot of times we translated to each other what she said [when] people didn't understand." However, the participants agreed that their teacher understood the subject well.

4) Ya and the Students' Perceptions and Experiences

Ya's main concern on becoming a teacher was how to convey her knowledge to her students. In other words, the academic area was her greatest concern and was the most

important part of teaching, regardless of her East Asian foreign status. She reported that as long as she taught the legitimate academic field that she was assigned to teach, other things such as receiving respect from students or worrying about mistakes due to her nonnativeness were less important to her. She believed that her in-depth academic knowledge maintained her teacher status. However, she fully understood that as a nonnative English speaker she would be challenged to perform well with her language in class. She explained her difficulty in choosing a variety of words or using language skills. Although she admitted her language limitations, she felt that her misunderstandings with students were often due to the volume of their voice, because students didn't speak loudly enough for her to hear them. However, as the semester moved on, she became more comfortable and confident with her language performance. She reported that lecturing was the easiest.

Amanda, Dora, Jeremy, and Pedro, on the other hand, expressed their perceptions and experiences as Ya's students and admitted that sometimes they had difficulty following their teacher's class because of their teacher's accent. Dora commented, "It was her accent. It was too hard to understand her." However, Ya's students reported that they didn't doubt her qualifications as a teacher since they believed their teacher knew what she was doing despite the communication problems between their teacher and the class. Despite the students' positive experience of the teacher's content knowledge, they described the class as passive, which they believed was the lack of a variety of teaching methods. The NNES participants mainly used a teacher-centered, content-based approach as their main teaching method. However, they did not apply a student-centered communicative approach in their class.

2. The NNESTs' Perceptions and Experiences

1) Teaching Performance

In higher education, and in all levels of education, a variety of teaching methods are used within a given course, and diversity is an important ingredient for creating a course that holds the interest of the students. Research related to the NNESTs' problem has indicated findings which are well known to TESOL professionals (Bailey, 1984; Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter, 1992). The issues raised in those studies also appear in the data from the present study. Developing instructional methods was the study participants' main issue in teaching their class. In developing instructional methods for the NNESTs, Smith, Meyers, and Burkhalter's (1992) have suggested that language skills, teaching skills, and interactive skills should all be assessed.

Aadit reported that the central goal in his teaching philosophy was to be well equipped on the subject content, in order to become a model for his students. Although he was confident in the subject knowledge, which reflected the high priority he placed on expertise, he had a difficult time establishing mutual respect between his students and himself. He felt that regardless of what teaching methods he selected, the students did not respect him because of their negative response to his language performance. Ya believed in an academically well prepared teacher who could utilize those skills in her teaching methods. Unlike the other three teachers, Ya changed or modified her teaching methods as the semester progressed in order to help students learn better. Daniil designed the instructional methods with a view to pursuing a mutual understanding between the teacher and students. Daniil claimed that his teaching method was to "establish a mutual understanding in the classroom," and "that's where I think the students learn best." Unlike Daniil's individual instructional approach, Hagar's teaching methods were derived from her belief in cultural influences. She believed her double cultural background would enhance and help formulate her teaching goals and methods.

2) Language Performance

Being a nonnative speaker teaching an English course to native speaking college students, one can become centrally focused on one's language performance. No matter how well prepared one is to articulate English in teaching both academically and pedagogically, a nonnative speaker can be challenged. The NNESTs' language performance has been an issue of research since nonnative teaching professionals appeared in the language teaching field (e.g., Braine, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Briffler, 1999). Each participant acknowledged their language background and expressed concern about their language performance. The most noticeable finding from the NNESTs is that they all maintained a strong confidence which appeared to enhance their perceived language performance. Despite maintaining strong confidence in their language performance, the four study participants reported pronunciation, aural comprehension, and vocabulary issues in their language performance.

Gaining confidence was the key characteristic in language performance for all four participants. They reported that their nonnativeness did not hinder their language performance. In other words, they reflected confidence even though they were nonnative speakers which supported recent research implications of the importance for maintaining confidence (Liu, 2004). In the beginning they were concerned about their language performance, particularly Aadit and Ya, but as the semester progressed, all four teachers gained confidence in their language performance. Aadit showed his confidence as, "I felt very confident. I knew that they had learned from me, even the accuracy, appropriateness,

and grammar of English." Daniil supported his confidence by comfortable language usage in class. Hagar perceived her nonnativeness as an issue that would not separate her from being a teacher. Ya perceived that her nonnativeness was less important even though she made some errors. The study participants reflecting confidence contradicted what Kamhi-Stein (1999) study had concluded. Her study noted that the lack of confidence among the nonnative student teachers or teacher-in-preparation had become an issue.

Out of four participants, only two, Aadit and Hagar reported their concern about pronunciation and accent. However, these two participants' perspective on this issue was not negative. The present study participants have different self-perceptions on the issues of pronunciation and accent than the research of the Reves and Medgyes' (1994) study which showed that 84% of nonnative speakers reported negatively on this issue. However, the perceptions of the students and their teacher participants reflected a larger difference concerning the issues of pronunciation and accent. For instance, the data showed that almost all of the student participants had experienced difficulty in understanding their teacher mainly due to the heavy accent or mispronunciation.

3. The NES Students' Perceptions and Experiences

1) Teaching Performance

The participants' main concern about their teacher's teaching performance was the need for developing better teaching techniques and methods. Many student participants indicated unsatisfactory learning experiences due to their teacher's lack of skills with instructional methodology. Isabel (in Aadit's class) referred to, "material he tries to convey that he doesn't explain enough," and reported that she had problems with "just the way he presents the work." She felt that her teacher did not know how to handle or teach his students. Brian (in Aadit's class) strongly criticized his teacher's teaching performance, concluding that his teacher was an inexperienced teacher who did not know how to teach using various teaching methods. These comments on the nonnative speaking teacher's lack of teaching skills seem to contrast with what Mahboob (2003) found in his study results which supported the NNESTs' use of effective teaching methodology. Mahboob's study indicates that students perceived the NNESTs as equal to their NS counterparts in relation to the pedagogical understanding in their teaching.

2) Language Performance

Research from the 1980s reported that students have a negative perception of nonnative speaking teachers' language proficiency (Baily, 1984; Cohen & Rubin, 1985). This present

study strongly supports those earlier studies. Despite the growing number of NNESTs and their many training programs, the continuing emergence of issues based on the nonnative English speaking teacher's language performance still represents a major problem for the NNESTs.

When taking a class from an NNEST, every student participant's initial concerns included worries about whether they would be able to understand their teacher, because of the instructor's noticeably thick or heavy accent. Smith, Byrd, Nelson, Barrett, and Constantinides (1992) reported that, in their research, pronunciation was the main language problem among the nonnative English speaking teachers. The participant's interview data indicated that almost all of the student participants experienced difficulty trying to understand their teacher, mainly due to the instructor's heavy accent. Brian, from Aadit's class, reported that he noticed the teacher's accent immediately in the first class of the semester, and many participants echoed this concern. On this point, his classmate Denise noted, "I realized that he's kind of different because I couldn't really understand him," Leanne, from Daniil's class, was also concerned that she would not be able to understand her teacher properly when she noticed that he had an accent. Dora's (in Ya's class) similar initial reaction led her to wonder if she should have taken the course. Kurt, from Hagar's class, explained that his inexperience in hearing people with different accents forced him to pay more attention to his teacher.

Thus, the participants' reactions recall Thuy's (1979) observation that "[t]he accent with which a foreign born person speaks English can create a favorable or unfavorable impression on a number of Anglo-Americans" (p. 5). Many of the comments in this area were negative. However, several participants were also capable of reflecting on the possibility that negative impressions might stem from negative expectations on the students' past. Isabel described her opinion that people who prejudged speakers with a different accent may be doing so because of their inexperience with hearing the particular accent rather than with the accent's being intrinsically hard to understand.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore, examine, and interpret factors that NNESTs and their NES students perceived and experienced in college classrooms. Analysis of the results showed that teaching language performance has a significant concern for the NNESTs; NNESTs are perceived by the NES students as sometimes using ineffective teaching techniques and having heavy or thick pronunciation and accent in their English; and the NNESTs, in turn, saw themselves as well-prepared teachers and felt that the NES students valued well-prepared teachers who varied in their use of effective teaching

methods and techniques, regardless of their NNS status. The NNESTs, in contrast, felt that if they were knowledgeable in the subject field, they were well equipped teachers for the students regardless of the teaching methods they chose. The NNESTs' strong or heavy accent influenced the students' learning environment. Furthermore, this supported the students' perception that their NNESTs lacked an appropriate command of English, whereas, the NNESTs accepted that their NNS status as being outsiders enhanced their ability to reach the NS level.

Study implications can be drawn from the data. Many of the NES participants mentioned the NNESTs' lack of pedagogical skills, and noted how they thought their NNESTs could better utilize various teaching techniques and styles. Thus, there is a need for NNESTs to gain awareness of the range of teaching techniques expected in the classrooms and of how, specifically, to effectively teach students through various methods, rather than relying on lecture style class plans. To enhance the NNESTs' teaching techniques, teacher educators should ask NNESTs to be familiar with a variety of teaching methods and their applications.

The most significant finding in this study was that the NNESTs need to improve their English skills, especially speaking and listening skills. The main task of all NNESTs in their role as teachers is to communicate with students, especially those who are teaching English courses to NES students. These study data indicate that student participants tended to perceive various communication problems with their teacher. Once a barrier between the NNEST and his/her students arises, it becomes difficult to collaborate for an effective classroom experience. Therefore, it is desirable for the NNEST to tell students that English is not their first language and to help his/her students become aware that there are a variety of accents among English speakers in the world, not only as L1 speakers, but L2 speakers.

Here, NNESTs need to be aware of World Englishes (WE) and its applications in the teaching field. The NNEST needs to admit his or her accent and simply ask for the students' understanding, not as an apology, but to establish a relationship. Furthermore, it is important that all teacher educators and high school teachers become informed of the WE issue and NNS teachers. Given the expectations of the different accents by WE speakers, it is essential that teacher educators and classroom teachers read and understand the WE concept. This can be achieved if teacher educators increase the awareness of WE issues in their language teaching repertoire. Increasing knowledge of the WE perspective offers a venue where the NS and NNS may begin the process of learning how to adjust and remain open to learning from people who seem a little different from the NS and continue to incorporate collaboration into language awareness.

To conclude my study, the researcher has attempted to answer this study's guiding inquiry – What perceptions do NNESTs have about teaching NES students? And what perceptions do NES students have about their NNESTs? – based upon the data analysis,

and findings. The response is that NNESTs are making an effort to emerge into the NES classrooms with their subject knowledge, but they still need to develop teaching techniques and language skills, especially speaking and listening skills. NNESTs need to realize that not many NES students are familiar with different accents; and they also lack the concept of World Englishes based on their previous education.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College or University

Eunhee Han
Department of English Korea Nazarene University
456 Ssangyong-Dong, Seobuk-Gu, Cheonan
Tel: 041-570-1522
Email: ehhan@kornu.ac.kr

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