

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIVE AND NONNATIVE
ENGLISH SPEAKING GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN ESL
METHODOLOGY COURSES AND GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS

A Dissertation

by

BURCU ATES

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2008

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of the Native and Nonnative English Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants in ESL Methodology Courses and Graduate Teaching Assistants' Perceptions of Preservice Teachers. (August 2008)

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The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the perceptions of preservice teachers toward native and nonnative English speaking (NES and NNES) graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in English as a second language (ESL) methodology and/or ESL assessment courses at a Southwestern U.S. university. This study also investigated the perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs toward preservice teachers.

This study explored the issue of whether preservice teachers are prepared to accept and validate diversity among their instructors which in turn should make them sensitive to diverse learners they will encounter in their future teaching.

In the first part of the study, a total of 262 preservice teachers were surveyed. The survey data were collected in spring 2007 and fall 2008. Of the 262 preservice teachers, 20 participated in focus group discussions to provide further insight on their views of NES and NNES GTAs. In the second part of the study, four GTAs participated in a longitudinal study by writing online blog entries after any encounters (positive or

negative) they had with their students inside and outside the classroom. The blogs reflected the GTAs' immediate reactions after their classes. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the GTAs.

Findings of the first study revealed that preservice teacher perceived NES and NNES GTAs differently. Preservice teachers put a lot of emphasis on the intelligibility of the NNES GTAs. The preservice teachers were 'tolerant' if their NNES spoke English 'clearly'. However, there were some preservice teachers who were dissatisfied with their NNES GTAs due to their possessing a non-mainstream language.

Findings of the second study revealed that NNES GTAs faced major challenges in their effort to be recognized as legitimate and competent instructors. Although the GTAs had vastly different personal backgrounds, perceptions, and identities as instructors, common themes or issues emerged from the data: (1) teaching is complex (linguistic, cultural, and racial issues are involved); (2) beliefs about teaching can change; (3) challenges are faced as an "outsider" instructor; and (4) teaching provides experiences of joy.

The study has implications for teacher education programs and training programs offered for international graduate students by universities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation, with love, to the memory of my dad, Hüseyin Ateş, who would have been so proud... To my dearest mom, Feyhan Ateş, and to my sister, Özgür Ateş.

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and advocate for equitable education for all students. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for providing me immeasurable emotional and intellectual support.

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life. Having gone through the same experience, she had a full understanding of my journey. My sister literally called me everyday from Turkey to check up on me and make sure I was doing fine. After every conversation I felt so much better and gained the strength to continue to work hard. At times when I lost courage she was able to pull me back together with her words of encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The way English is perceived worldwide has undergone a great deal of change (Llurda, 2004). The status of English and consequently of English Language Teaching (ELT), has changed drastically over the past half century, to arrive in the 21st century as a language that is dominating global commerce, information, and popular media spheres (Lotherington, 2004). Currently, the terms, ‘English as an International Language,’ ‘English as a Global Language,’ and ‘English as a Lingua Franca,’ are used interchangeably (Seidlhofer, 2005).

McKay (2002) defines an international language as “a language of wider communication both among individuals from different countries and between individuals from one country” (p. 5). According to McKay (2003), English has achieved international language status not because of a growth in the number of native speakers, but because of an increase in the number of nonnative speakers around the world. Llurda (2004) suggests that language researchers and educators are increasingly accepting of the fact that English is spoken by more people as a second language (L2) than as a mother tongue. As a result, they are embracing the notion that English is no longer solely owned by native-speaking communities but that ownership is also shared by newly arrived members of the English speaking community—nonnative speakers. English is being shaped by nonnative speakers as much as by native speakers. For the majority of users,

This dissertation follows the style of *TESOL Quarterly*.

English is a foreign language. Most verbal exchanges in English do not involve native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005). For instance, Braine (2004) states that “there are at least four nonnative speakers to every native speaker of English” (p. 13), and Canagarajah (1999) estimates that 80% of the English-teaching population worldwide are nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs).

In the last ten years, an increasing number of studies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics have focused on the topic of nonnative English speaking professionals (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005). Although the need for research has always been there, the interest and the amount of research in Nonnative English speaker (NNES) studies has recently increased (Llurda, 2005). Braine (2005) asserts that research on the self perceptions of NNESTs, or the way they are perceived by their students, is fairly recent, perhaps because NNESTs were generally regarded as unequal in knowledge and performance in teaching English compared to native English speaking teachers (NESTs).

In order to understand the issues related to NNESTs, it is useful to explore native and nonnative speaker constructs. Although these two terms may not seem difficult to define, the research has provided numerous and contradictory definitions (Chomsky, 1965; Davies, 1991, 2003; Kramch, 1997; Lederer, 1981; Medgyes, 1996; Nayar, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rajagapolan, 2005). In 1965, Chomsky defined a native speaker of a language as an “ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly” (p. 3). Many scholars opposed Chomsky’s notion that the native speaker is the ultimate model for a language user. Braine (1999) believes

“such a speaker is an abstraction, with no resemblance to a living human being” (p. xv). Davies (1991, 2003) offers a thorough discussion of the native speaker in applied linguistics and problematizes the use of the term, stating the term “native speaker” is both a myth and a reality. Davies (2003) examines the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic attributes of the native speaker. Sociolinguistically, he associates that a native speaker speaks with confidence, power, and authority, and thus exists as a reality. On the other hand, psycholinguistically, he argues that the native speaker is more ideal than real, and thus exists as a myth.

An examination of the literature about NES or NNES studies underscores the major impact on native speaker studies that Paikeday (1985) had with his book *The Native Speaker Is Dead!* Paikeday (1985) thoroughly describes his attempts to define a native speaker of a language. In his book, he summarizes the interviews he conducted with approximately 40 prominent linguists on the meaning of “native speaker.” Paikeday states that “As for the problem of ‘native speaker,’ I think I have studied it to death and it has ceased to be a problem for me” (p. 87). Paikeday concludes that the “native speaker in the linguist’s sense of arbiter of grammaticality and acceptability of language (p. 87) ... represents an ideal, a convenient fiction, or a shibboleth rather than a reality like Dick or Jane” (p. x).

Different definitions of NES and NNES in TESOL—some of which are vague and inconclusive—are found in the applied linguistics literature, making it difficult to distinguish between NESs and NNESs. As a result, the NES and NNES dichotomy creates a division among ELT professionals. Some views support distinguishing between

NES and NNES (by admitting that NNESTs are different than NESTs); however, NNESTs have strengths and positive qualities of their own (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Medgyes, 1994, 1996, 2001, Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Others believe that the distinction between NES and NNES only confirms the superiority of NES over NNES (Astor, 2000; Davies, 1991; Rampton, 1996).

As noted, the characteristics of native and nonnative English professionals have been widely discussed in TESOL and applied linguistics literature (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1996). A small number of studies pointed out the challenges that NNES professionals face when finding jobs in ESL settings (Mahboob, 2003; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004). Research has also demonstrated a concern for prejudices against NNESTs based on their race, ethnicity, nonnative language status, and even their gender (Amin, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Kubota, 2002; Tang, 1997; Thomas, 1999). Recently, a few studies of NNES professionals teaching at K-12 levels have been added to the literature (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Nemtchenova, 2005; Newman, 2005). These studies looked at perceptions of K-12 NESTs and NNESTs regarding their English language skills and teaching preferences. Nemtchenova's (2005) study explored how K-12 students and host teachers perceived the strengths of NNES trainees (graduate TESOL practicum students) based on their classroom practices. Furthermore, few studies have addressed the perceptions of NNES graduate students in TESOL programs (Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). On the other hand, other researchers have investigated issues related to International Teaching Assistants (ITAs). Different studies are conducted on the

attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the American undergraduate students about their ITAs in different universities around the United States (Brown, 1992; Fox & Gay, 1994; Plakans, 1997; Rubin & Smith, 1990).

This dissertation consists of two studies which examine the perceptions of preservice teachers and graduate teaching assistants of each other. Perception is defined as “interpretation of stimulus information in terms of concepts the information exemplifies” (Wyer, Jr., 2005, p. 276). Perceptions, inferences, and judgments are often used interchangeably in social psychology research. In this study perception is described as a way of thinking or point of view. However, there is a difference between a ‘person perception’ and an ‘object perception’ (Moskowitz, 2005). This study investigates the person perception. As Moskowitz (2005) noted, perceptions maybe influenced by various factors:

Our understanding of the people in our world has been said to be jointly determined by the situations we are in; the qualities of people we encounter; and our own biases that shape our interests, expectancies, and goal. Though we may cling to the belief that our knowledge of ourselves and others is relatively objective and accurate, many different factors determine what we know about the people that make up our social world. (p. 18)

“Person perception is a dynamic process, in which the people we are perceiving are simultaneously perceiving us.” (Heider, 1958, cited in Moskowitz, 2005, p. 19).

Therefore, as noted, this study investigates the perceptions of two groups; preservice teachers and graduate teaching assistants of each other in an academic setting. As preservice teachers perceive graduate assistants, the graduate assistants perceive them also. The context in which the perceptual experiences or observation occurs can make a difference. In addition, the differences between individuals (i.e. coming from a different

culture, having different expectancies/stereotypes) could alter “the way in which the context is experienced, and the way in which the behavior that is observed within the context is construed” (Moskowitz, 2005, p. 37).

In the first study, the researcher investigates preservice teachers’ perceptions of the NES and NNES GTAs in ESL assessment and/or ESL methodology courses. The NES and NNES GTAs are teaching assistants comparable to ITAs. The NNES GTAs are classified as ITAs who teach content to NES undergraduate students. However, the NNES GTAs in this study differ from ITAs because the subject matter they teach deals with language issues. The content NNES GTAs teach is “how to teach English,” which many native speakers claim its ownership (Widdowson, 1994).

To date, no research has specifically studied the perceptions of undergraduate American preservice teachers—who are predominantly monolingual, female, white¹, and middle class—towards their native and nonnative English speaking graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), who are culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. It is crucial to investigate the NES/NNESs issue from a preservice teacher’s viewpoint because preservice teachers will be responsible for teaching students from diverse backgrounds who may be nonnative speakers of English. This study seeks to demonstrate the parallelism between how preservice teachers perceive their NNES GTAs and how they could later perceive the diverse students in their classrooms. According to recent statistics, the number of linguistically and culturally diverse students in U.S. public

¹ In this dissertation, small letter “w” for the word “white” is used to alter the convention of capitalizing whiteness and white people (Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, & Wong, 2006).

schools has almost doubled over the past decade and is reported to have increased by almost eight times the rate of total student enrollment (Zainuddin & Moore, 2004).

Demographics in U.S. schools have changed, and preservice teachers should be able to accept and value diversity and later convey this in their own teaching. Wenzlaff (1998) believes that effective teachers are the ones who evolve from their negative dispositions and possess dispositions that are prominent for successful teaching and learning of diverse student populations. If preservice teachers have positive dispositions toward diversity, they would be able to teach *all* students irrespective of their ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic background. Positive dispositions toward diversity not only benefit the teaching and learning of diverse student populations, but also benefit all students.

Therefore, the research questions for the first section of this study, which examines the perceptions of preservice teachers toward NES and NNES GTAs, are as follows:

- 1) What are the perceptions of preservice teachers towards their NES GTAs?
- 2) What are the perceptions of preservice teachers towards their NNES GTAs?
- 3) Are there any differences in the perceptions of preservice teachers towards the NES and NNES GTAs?

The second part of the study focuses on NES and NNES GTAs. No research to date has addressed NES or NNES GTAs' perceptions and experiences teaching preservice teachers. Previous studies addressed difficulties that ITAs faced when teaching NES undergraduate American students in disciplines such as engineering, math,

and business. These studies found that miscommunication between ITAs and undergraduate students resulted not only from the linguistic or teaching abilities of the ITAs as nonnative speakers, but also from non-linguistic variables such as the ITA's race/ethnicity and culture (Brown, 1992; Rubin & Smith, 1990). This study may or may not reveal a similar outcome for NNES GTAs; however, the results will help teacher education programs and TESOL educators evaluate the sources of support that NESs, and especially NNES GTAs, receive before or during their teaching of preservice teachers. Another implication is the finding of how issues of power, language status, and race/ethnicity affect students' evaluation of their instructors.

The central research questions for the second section of this study are as follows:

- 1) What are the experiences of NNES GTAs and NES GTAs who teach preservice teachers in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses?
- 2) What are the perceptions of NNES and NES GTAs of preservice teachers?

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. This introductory chapter summarizes the purpose of the study and provides definitions of terms used throughout the document. Chapter II, "Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of the Native and Nonnative English Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants in ESL Methodology Courses," is written from a preservice teacher's perspective. Chapter III, "Native and Nonnative English Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants' Perceptions of the Preservice Teachers," is written from a graduate teaching assistant's view. Finally, Chapter IV provides a conclusion to the research study as a whole; pedagogical implications and future research directions are also provided. The three appendices include the Preservice

Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix A), Focus Group Questions (Appendix B), and Graduate Teaching Assistants' Interview Questions (Appendix C).

Definition of Terms

English as a Second Language (ESL): The learning of English for use in a setting where English is the principal language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). In an ESL situation, the learner is learning English within an English speaking environment and needs to understand and speak English outside of the classroom.

English a Foreign Language (EFL): The learning of English in a setting where English is not the primary language (i.e., learning English in Turkey, Greece, or Korea). In an EFL situation, the learners learn English inside a classroom, but continue to speak their own language elsewhere.

Native English Speakers (NES): Even though there are various definitions of “native English speaker” in TESOL and applied linguistics literature, a NES is an individual who acquired the language in childhood and sustains the language of use; an individual who has intuitive knowledge of the language, or who is able to produce fluent, spontaneous discourse (Davies, 1991).

Nonnative English Speakers (NNES): A NNES is an individual who learned English after gaining a native command of his/her mother tongue or is someone who was raised in a country where English was not the first or dominant language.

Preservice Teachers: Preservice teachers are undergraduate students who are enrolled in Education majors to become content area teachers (i.e., math/science, social

sciences, special education) at the elementary and middle school levels (Kindergarten-Eight Grade, or K-8).

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA): American or international graduate students in North American universities who have teaching assistantships.

International Teaching Assistants (ITA): International graduate students in North American universities who have teaching assistantships.

Perception: Perception is defined as an “interpretation of stimulus information in terms of concepts the information exemplifies” (Wyer, Jr., 2005, p. 276). Perceptions, inferences, and judgments are often used interchangeably in social psychology research. Perception can also be described as a way of thinking or point of view.

Weblogs or Blogs: Weblog, or blog, is a “hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser” (Winer, 2003, p. 2). The common use of a blog is as a personal online journal or diary in which an individual submits his/her entries. The entries are updated in a linear and time-based way (Stauffer, 2002).

CHAPTER II
PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIVE AND NONNATIVE
ENGLISH SPEAKING GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN ESL
METHODOLOGY COURSES

Overview

This chapter discusses the results of a survey and focus group discussions conducted to explore how preservice teachers perceive native and nonnative English speaking (NES and NNES) graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in ESL (English as a second language) methodology and ESL assessment courses at a predominantly white Southwestern university. Findings of the study revealed that preservice teachers perceived NES and NNES GTAs differently. Preservice teachers put a lot of emphasis on the intelligibility of the NNES GTAs. The preservice teachers were 'tolerant' if their NNES spoke English 'clearly'. However, there were some preservice teachers who were dissatisfied with their NNES GTAs due to their possessing a non-mainstream language. The study discusses important implications for teacher education programs.

Introduction

The way English is perceived all over the world has undergone a great deal of change (Llurda, 2004). The status of English and consequently of English Language Teaching (ELT), has changed drastically over the past half century, to arrive in the 21st century as a language that is dominating global economic, information, and popular media spheres (Lotherington, 2004). Currently, the terms, 'English as an International

Language', 'English as a Global Language', 'and 'English as a Lingua Franca' are being used interchangeably (Seidlhofer, 2005).

McKay (2002) defines an international language as “a language of wider communication both among individuals from different countries and between individuals from one country” (p. 5). According to McKay (2003) English has achieved the international language status not because of a growth in the number of native speakers but rather because of an increase in the number of nonnative speakers in the world today. Llurda (2004) suggests that language researchers and educators are increasingly accepting the fact that English is spoken by more people as a second language (L2) than as a mother tongue. English is being shaped by nonnative speakers as much as its native speakers. For the majority of its users, English is a foreign language (EFL). The majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language (Seidlhofer, 2005). Braine (2004) states that “there are at least four nonnative speakers to every native speaker of English” (p. 13), and Canagarajah (1999) estimates 80% of the English teaching population worldwide are nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs).

The spread of English as an international language has led to the question of “Who owns the English language?” (Wee, 2002, p. 282). Widdowson (1994) problematizes the notion of “ownership of English” which is claimed to belong to its “native speakers”. Widdowson argues “to grant such custody of the language, is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status” (p. 385). According to Crystal (2003), “There are probably already more L2 speakers than L1

[first language] speakers [of English]. Within fifty years, there could be up to 50 percent more. By that time, the only possible concept of ownership will be a global one” (p. 141). Brutt-Griffler (2002) stated for nonnative English speakers English is “*their* language, an expression of their unique identity. It is theirs because they have *made* it so—through their lived experiences in the language that have gained expression in the way they use English” (p. vii). Romney (2006) also believes “English language is all its speakers— that is, native, nonnative, Creole, World English, or whoever they are, the world over” (p. 151). Furthermore, Romney asserts “English is a world language— perhaps the only truly world language, with speakers in every part of the globe” (p. 151). Nonnative English speakers should feel empowered as members of the worldwide English speaking community rather than feeling like “imitators, spectators, and guests”, “politely tolerated, but never completely accepted” (Romney, 2006, p. 196). Holliday (2005) argues that it has been common for writers (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phillipson, 1992) to focus their attention to the unequal power relationship between speakers of English in different regions of the world, “between a well resourced, politically and economically aggressive, colonizing, Western ‘Centre’ and an underresourced, colonized ‘Periphery’” (p. 2).

According to Kramsch (1997) native speakership is neither a privilege of birth nor of education, but the “acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and nonnative speakers” (p. 363). The very definition of *nativeness* appears to be complicated both psycholinguistically and socioculturally (Butler, 2007). Davies (1991, 2003) offers a comprehensive discussion of the native speaker in applied linguistics and

problematizes the use of the term, declaring the term native speaker is both a myth and a reality. Sociolinguistically, he associates the *native speaker* with confidence, power, and authority: a reality. Psycholinguistically, however, he argues that the native speaker is more of an ideal than a real figure: a myth.

In the last ten years, increasing amount of studies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics have focused their attention on the topic of NNES professionals (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llorca, 2005). The characteristics of native and nonnative English professionals (advantages and disadvantages) have been discussed in the TESOL literature widely (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1996). In recent years, the role of the native speaker as the ideal language teacher has been under criticism from sociopolitical, sociolinguistic, linguistic, and pedagogical perspectives (Nemtchenova, 2005).

The division between native and nonnative English speaking professionals in TESOL field has become such as an explicit problem that, for example, in March 2006 the NNES causes in TESOL organization created a 'position statement against discrimination against nonnative speakers of English in the field of TESOL'. The statement was passed through the approval of TESOL Board of Directors.

The distinction between native and nonnative speakers of English presents an oversimplified, either/or classification system that does not actually describe the range of possibilities in a world where English has become a global language. More important, however, the use of the labels "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker" in hiring criteria is misleading, as this labeling minimizes the formal education, linguistic expertise, teaching experience, and professional preparation of teachers. All educators should be evaluated within the same criteria. Nonnative

English-speaking educators should not be singled out because of their native language.

Phillipson (1996) uses the phrase “the native speaker fallacy” to refer to unfair treatment of qualified NNEs. Phillipson refers to native speaker fallacy as a myth. A myth because ‘an ideal teacher is seen only a native speaker’; a creation of ‘political’ minds. Recent research demonstrated a concern for prejudices against NNEs based on their race, ethnicity, nonnative language status, and the gender (Amin, 1999; Kubota, 2002; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Tang, 1997; Thomas, 1999). In certain studies researchers have discussed the issue of how native speaker of English teachers (NEs) have been preferred over nonnative speaker of English teachers (NNEs) in teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) (Amin, 1999; Thomas, 1999). However, this situation has not been limited only to English language teaching settings.

As research shows, some NNE teacher educators have felt discriminated against their native speaker colleagues as well (Kubota, 2002; Li & Beckett, 2006; Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, & Wong, 2006). Kubota, an Asian female professor, revealed that her credibility as an instructor was harshly challenged by her students in an undergraduate, second language teacher education program. The students viewed Kubota as a less competent teacher and perceived her as an illegitimate nonnative speaker of English. However, the students did not have similar views towards the co-instructor of the course who was a native English speaking, white professor.

One of the major challenges NNE professionals face is “how well they can establish credibility in front of the NEs.” (Lui, 2005, p. 157); in other words, in front of

their NES students. Lui's (2005) study confirms this statement. In Lui's study, at a major southwestern university, the Chinese graduate teaching assistants (CGTAs) who had adequate amount of teaching experience in their own countries were challenged by NES U.S. undergraduate students when the students learned CGTAs were going to teach freshman English composition class to them. Their ability to teach and ability to write in English were challenged by most of the students in their class. The students could not believe the fact that Chinese NNEs were teaching them their "own" language, English. Therefore, CGTA's credibility in front of their students was very low.

This study addresses the issue of native and nonnative speaking professionals in the TESOL field from a different perspective. It focuses on preservice teachers' evaluation of the NES and NNEs graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses in an undergraduate teacher education program and brings the field of teacher education, second language teacher education, multicultural education, and sociolinguistics under one umbrella.

It is vital to note the differences and similarities between NNEs GTAs and International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) who both teach American, English speaking students. The NES and NNEs GTAs are teaching assistants like ITAs. The NNEs GTAs are classified as ITAs who teach content to NES undergraduate students. However, the unique difference related to the NNEs GTAs in this study is that the content NNEs GTAs teach deals with language, linguistic issues "how to teach English" which a lot of native speakers claim under their own ownership (Widdowson, 1994). Because of the similarities between ITAs and NNEs GTAs, it is important to discuss some of the

prominent studies which have researched the perceptions of American undergraduate students towards ITAs at various universities in the United States (Brown, 1992; Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Fox & Gay, 1992; Plakans, 1995, 1997; Rubin, 1992; Rubin & Smith, 1990).

Rubin and Smith (1990) explored American undergraduate students' attitudes and perceptions of NNES ITAs teaching competence and related variables. Undergraduate students' comprehension and attitudes toward NNES ITAs revealed that 40% of the undergraduates avoided NNES ITA instructed classes. Factors like instructor's ethnicity and lecture topic, unrelated to actual NNES ITAs speaking proficiency, tended to be more strong determinants of undergraduate attitudes and comprehension (Rubin, 1992). When students perceived high levels of foreign accentedness, they judged speakers to be poor teachers. They concluded that "North American undergraduate students need to be trained to listen to accented English" (Rubin & Smith, 1990, p. 350). Brown (1992) also examined American college students' attitudes toward speakers/instructors of an accented NNES. The study explored to what degree listeners evaluations of a speaker were based on linguistic information such as accent, grammaticality, and fluency versus non-linguistic information such as ethnicity, physical appearance, and teaching competence. Listener's judgments of speaker's personal aesthetic quality, language competence, and teaching competence varied depending on stimulus information (i.e. country of origin, educational status, and native speakerness) listeners received about the speakers. However, no single factor accounted for the judgments listeners made. Plakans (1997) investigated undergraduate students' experiences with ITAs at a Midwestern

university and indicated that students who had one or more ITAs had less positive attitudes toward ITAs than students without the experience. In addition, students who had ITAs in their required courses significantly had more negative attitudes than students who had ITAs in elective courses which were not related to their majors. In Fitch and Morgan's (2003) study, U.S. American undergraduate students generally viewed themselves as "blameless victims who have "paid good money" for an education" (p. 309) in courses taught by ITAs. The American undergraduate students most frequently complained about not understanding their ITAs spoken English. In addition, students rarely took responsibility for improving their own communication skills in order to facilitate understanding in courses taught by ITAs. Lippi-Green (1997) stated the need to educate the undergraduate students:

While the university recognizes its responsibility in screening and training non-native speakers of English who will be given teaching responsibilities, there is no parallel recognition of the need to educate undergraduates to discern between real communicative difficulties and those stemming not from language, but from stereotype and bias. (p. 126)

Examining the pertinent research studies in native and nonnative dichotomy and ITA literature provides an overview of the existing research. Additionally, it reveals the need to fill the gap in literature by exploring preservice teachers' and graduate teaching assistants' perceptions of each other in ESL-related courses.

Purpose of the Study

This research study examines the perceptions of American preservice teachers, who are predominantly monolingual female white middle class, towards their native and

nonnative English speaking (NES and NNES) graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in English as Second Language (ESL) methodology and ESL assessment courses. It is crucial to investigate the NES and NNES issue from a preservice teacher's perspective because preservice teachers will most likely have students with diverse backgrounds who may be nonnative speakers of English. Demographics in the U.S. schools have changed and preservice teachers should be able to accept and value diversity and convey this in their future teaching. Statistics show that the number of linguistically and culturally diverse students in the U.S. public schools has almost doubled in the past decade and are reported to have increased by almost eight times the rate of total student enrollment (Zainuddin & Moore, 2004).

This study also investigates whether the preservice teachers are prepared to accept and validate diversity among their instructors which in turn may help them become sensitive to diverse learners they will encounter in their future teaching. National teacher standards expect teacher candidates to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and positive dispositions toward language diversity and sociocultural differences (Major & Perreault, 2004) Teachers from a dominant culture need to gain awareness that their students' values, beliefs, and cultural practices may be different than their own and should be exposed to instructors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds during their teacher education program. Lack of exposure and sensitivity to linguistic and cultural differences among their instructors may affect their acceptance and appreciation of diversity among their students in their future classrooms. Schinke-Llano (1983, 1986) noted that some mainstream classroom teachers avoided interactions with ESL students

due to the teachers' discomfort with the students. Thus, these teachers overlooked the comprehension abilities of ESL students due to lack of interactions with them.

Theoretical Framework

This research study is guided by the theoretical and pedagogical understanding of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and cultural competence. It is also guided by the works of many other scholars in multicultural education who study the power relationships that exists in education.

Critical social theory is concerned with issues of power and justice, matters of race, class, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions to construct a social system (Kincheleo, 2004). Wink (2005) explains critical pedagogy as, "*Pedagogy* does not only mean how a teacher teaches. It is about the visible and hidden human interactions between a teacher and a learner, whether they are in a classroom or in the larger community. Critical pedagogy looks for the *why* that leads to action" (p.1). Through the lens of critical pedagogy one can ask the question of "how" and "why" power/knowledge gets constructed the way it does and why certain people are legitimized and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are not (McLaren, 1998). The critical lens will help reveal the perceptions of preservice teachers toward NES and NNES instructors and examine if preservice teachers view the NES and the NNES instructors as equal and perceive the NNES instructor as a credible teaching professional.

An individual who is cross-culturally competent is defined as someone:

who has achieved an advance level in the process of becoming intercultural and whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited but are

open to growth beyond psychological parameters of only one culture... The intercultural person possesses an intellectual and emotional commitment to the fundamental unity of all humans and, at the same time, accepts, and appreciates the differences that lie between people of different cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984, p. 230, cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Cultural competence enables teachers to work with students from different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic/racial backgrounds (Ward & Ward, 2003). For preservice teachers to be effective educators for diverse students, they need to first identify and understand their own worldviews to be able to understand their students' (Bennett, 1993). Teachers who respect and understand linguistic, cultural, and racial differences tend to believe more in the qualifications of their minority students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). On the other hand, teachers' lack of understanding of their diverse students may help perpetuate the "Other" in the classroom. In this study, lack of cultural competence among preservice teachers towards their diverse instructors may affect their acceptance and appreciation of diversity among the students in their future classrooms. Therefore, the cultural competence framework will help explain if preservice teachers in this research are ready to accept and work with a culturally and linguistically diverse student population in their future classrooms.

Research Questions

The current study examined preservice teachers' perception of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL-related courses. The central research questions for this study are as follows:

- 1) What are the perceptions of preservice teachers towards their NES GTAs?

- 2) What are the perceptions of preservice teachers towards their NNES GTAs?
- 3) Are there any differences in the perceptions of preservice teachers towards the NES and NNES GTAs?

The Study

Context

A large sized, land grant, predominantly white Southwestern university was selected as the site for this study. This university is situated in a city of approximately 130,000 in a rural area and has a student population of around 47,000. It is classified as a Research I institution by the Carnegie Foundation. According to fall 2005 demographics published at university's "statistical fact book" 77% of students enrolled were white, 8% were hispanic, 2% were black, and 8 % were international. The school traditionally attracts students interested in agriculture and engineering. However, the university also has a strong, well-defined College of Education. The college enrolls almost 4000 undergraduate and about 1200 graduate students. It is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The college offers a variety of degrees including B.S., M.Ed, M.S., Ed.D, and Ph.D.

Participants

Study Participants

The participants of this study were preservice teachers who were enrolled in the College of Education. The preservice teachers in this study were homogenous in their

demographic and experiential backgrounds. Specifically, 90% identified themselves as being from an Anglo-white ethnic background and ninety-six percent were female. The majority of teacher education students came from rural or suburban communities. The preservice teachers were typically seeking a B.S. degree with a major in Interdisciplinary Studies. Options for teacher certification through the department included pre-K-4th grade generalist certification, middle grades 4-8 math/science certification, and middle grades 4-8 language arts/social studies certification.

The undergraduate teacher education program the preservice teachers attended specifically is a strong undergraduate teacher education program. The teacher credential program requires all preservice teachers to take Multicultural Education and ESL-related courses as part of the teacher education curriculum.

The department's aim in requiring such courses is to create awareness and competency among preservice teachers about issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity and to facilitate the ability of teachers to work with diverse populations. The teacher education program offers two ESL-related courses; ESL methodology and ESL assessment and one multicultural education course. These courses investigate various theories and practices related to ESL and multicultural education. These courses are mandatory for all preservice teachers who are enrolled in the K-8 education program.

Since this study investigates preservice teachers' perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses it is important to provide information on the GTAs who teach these classes.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

The GTAs who were teaching ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses were all female and pursuing doctoral degrees in the field of TESOL. All four GTAs came from different countries. Three of the GTAs were international and NNES, one was American and a NES. All four GTAs already had master's degrees from prestigious universities in the U.S. Before the NNES GTAs were first offered to teach the ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses they were already living in the U.S. for at least three years. All of them had advance level of English proficiency and had passed the university's English proficiency exam for international GTAs.

Instruments

Two types of data collection techniques were used to address and answer this study's research questions. The data was collected using survey and focus group discussions. A questionnaire was used to examine the perceptions of preservice teachers because according to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996), questionnaires are used as data collection methods to "inquire about the feelings, motivations, attitudes, accomplishments, and experiences of individuals" (p. 188). Since administering a questionnaire may not have been a sufficient method to draw upon participants' perceptions, feelings, experiences, and reactions, focus groups discussions were also conducted to more comprehensively examine these areas. The data was collected in spring 2007 and fall 2007 from the preservice teachers who were enrolled in either ESL methodology or ESL assessment courses. Total of 262 preservice teachers participated in

the survey. The survey, which was the primary source of data, was used to obtain quantitative data from the preservice teachers about their perceptions towards NES and NNES GTAs. The second data source was the focus group discussions and was used to obtain qualitative data.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in spring 2007 to test the reliability and the validity of the questionnaire items created. With the permission of the authors, some of questionnaire items used in Fox and Gay's (1994) study "Functions and Effects of International Teaching Assistants" were modified and adapted to fit into the scope of this study. In addition to the items adapted from the Fox and Gay's study, new items were created based on the issues raised in the literature related to the International Teaching Assistants (ITA) and the native and nonnative dichotomy. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 40 Likert scale items. After factor and reliability analysis the unreliable items were deleted from the questionnaire. After the analysis the original six constructs determined were reduced to four constructs resulting in the deletion of 14 items. The rest of the three questionnaire sections remained the same without any changes.

Questionnaire

In order to examine the perceptions of preservice teachers toward the NES and NNES GTAs, a survey was administered. The survey was administered in ESL methodology or ESL assessment courses specifically taught by NES and NNES GTAs.

The survey included four parts, “Perceptions towards NES & NNES TAs”, “Scale of preferred accents in NES & NNES TAs”, “List of strengths and weaknesses of NES & NNES TAs” in ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses and lastly the “Demographic information” of preservice teachers (see Appendix A).

The first section of the survey, “Perceptions towards NES & NNES TAs”, consisted of 26 statements which represented four different constructs (see sample items in Table 1). The construct and content validity of these items were established through Q-sorts and discrimination ratings completed by eight individuals; two were preservice teachers who already took ESL-related courses in previous semesters, two were faculty members who were teaching ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses, and four were doctoral students in the TESOL program. As noted above, instrument clarity and administration procedures were verified through a pilot administration.

In the first section of the survey it was hypothesized that preservice teachers with generally positive perceptions towards NNES would (1) accept NNES TAs can have accents (2) recognize and accept responsibility and effort for communication between themselves and NNES TAs (3) perceive NNES TAs do not have a negative influence/affect on their individual performance and learning in the course they take (4)

believe NES and NNES TAs are knowledgeable and credible in the subject area they teach.

TABLE 1
“Perceptions towards NES and NNES TAs” Constructs and Sample Items

Preservice teachers with generally positive perceptions towards NNES would:

1. Accept NNES TAs can have accents

Positive Item: It doesn't matter to me whether my NONNATIVE English speaking TA has an accent or not.

Negative Item: I would prefer not to have NONNATIVE English speaking TA's with an accent teach my courses.

2. Recognize and accept responsibility and effort for communication between themselves and NNES TAs

Positive Item: In order to communicate with my NONNATIVE English speaking TA better I am willing to put extra effort into my listening and speaking skills.

Negative Item: When there are communication problems between students and NONNATIVE English speaking TA's, students can do very little to improve the situation.

3. Perceive NNES TAs do not have a negative influence/affect on their individual performance and learning in the course they take

Positive Item: It shouldn't matter whether you have a NONNATIVE English speaking TA or a NATIVE English speaking TA, you can get a good grade either way.

Negative Item: If I had to get an “A” in a course, I know my chances would be better if I did not have a NONNATIVE English speaking TA.

4. Believe NES and specifically NNES TAs are knowledgeable and credible in the subject area they teach

Positive Item: NATIVE and NONNATIVE English speaking TA's can be equal in the subject knowledge.

Negative Item: If I could choose the section of this course myself, one of my main criteria would be to get into a section taught by a NATIVE English speaking TA.

Preservice teachers responded to the perception statements on a 5-point Likert type scale, (e.g.; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). Their responses determined their perceptions towards NES and NNES.

From the literature review of NES and NNES, preservice teachers predispositions, and ITA studies four major constructs were identified for the first section of the questionnaire. The four constructs are (1) *Accent* (preservice teachers general attitude about the NNES GTAs accent) (2) *Communication* (preservice teachers effort and responsibility to communicate with the NNES GTAs) (3) *Student Performance and Learning* (influence/affect of NES versus NNES in preservice teachers performance and learning) and (4) *Instructor's Knowledge and Teaching Credibility* (preservice teachers perception of NES, specifically NNES GTAs' knowledge and credibility).

Construct One, "Accent," is a very important characteristic of a NNS speech, and there has been significant amount of research conducted to study the attitudes towards the NNS' accented speech (Derwing& Munro, 1997; Derwing, Rossiter, & Munro, 2002; Lippi-Green, 2007). Majority of the studies involved International Teaching Assistants and their undergraduate students' attitudes towards their instructors accented speech. The results have shown that accented speech was frequently regarded negatively (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Derwing, Rossiter, & Munro, 2002). This study attempts to have a closer look at the issue of accent and examine the preservice teacher's perceptions toward NNES TAs who have accents.

"Communication," Construct Two, has also been a concern between the ITAs and the American undergraduate students. Researchers have investigated the listener and

speaker variables in the communication process (Bailey, 1984; Brown, 1988; Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Kubota, 2001; Williams, 1992). These studies have found that often the ‘speaker characteristics’ possessed, affected the success or failure of the communication that took place between the NES and NNES. The speaker characteristics such as comprehensibility, intelligibility, race, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, and accent played an important role in listener’s perceptions (Brown, 1992).

Rubin (1992) argues the assumption that NNES TAs are usually the ones who are responsible for poor classroom communication is common. At a circumstance as such it is suggested that NNES TAs need to go under training. However, an opposite view exists. If communication problems occur, the responsibility should be shared between the NNES TAs and American undergraduate students. Lippi-Green echoes this belief:

In addition to the training of foreign students [ITAs], it must be noted that our own students have to be educated about matters of language and communication in the classroom, and be taught to take a reasonable amount of responsibility for a successful educational experience. (p. 130)

The views of preservice teachers on “communication” are also very important and need to be investigated.

“Student Performance and Learning” is identified as Construct Three because complaints often surface by American undergraduates that ITAs affect their learning (i.e., course content) negatively and as a result they receive lower grades in the courses taught by ITAs (Borjas, 2000; Briggs & Hofer, 1991; Friedman, 1988; Norris, 1991). Based on his study Borjas (2000) argues that undergraduate students taught by ITAs receive lower grades. On the contrary, Friedman (1988), Briggs and Hofer (1991), and Norris (1991) found out that undergraduate students perform equally well or slightly

better in classes taught by ITAs. However, both Norris (1991) and Briggs and Hofer (1991) emphasize the importance of “teaching experience” and explain the key role it plays in the academic performance of the undergraduate students. Norris (1991) claims, “students performed significantly better when taught by experienced [international and U.S. American] TAs as opposed to inexperienced TAs” (p. 443).

Construct Four, “Instructor’s Knowledge and Credibility,” is also included because NNES instructors often find themselves in the position of establishing credibility before they are taken seriously as professionals (Amin, 1999; Kubota, 2004; Lui, 2005; Thomas, 1999). As shared in the overview of the literature, Kubota (2002) explained how her credibility as a NNES instructor was harshly challenged by her students in a foreign language teaching methodology course, which enrolled undergraduate female American students who wanted to become K-12 Spanish or French teachers. Kubota claimed that the students viewed her as a less competent teacher, perceived her as an illegitimate nonnative speaker of English. On the other hand, the NES co-instructor did not experience the need or challenge to establish credibility among the undergraduate students.

The second section of the questionnaire, “Scale of preferred accents in NES and NNES TAs” provided information about preservice teacher’s perceptions and preference towards different international and U.S. accents. The preservice teachers were asked to rate accents on a 1 to 5 scale (1= desirable, 2= acceptable, 3= tolerable, 4= unacceptable, 5= no idea).

In addition to the previous sections of the questionnaire, the preservice teachers were given the opportunity to provide verbal comments about their views on NES and NNES GTAs in ESL courses. Therefore, open-ended questions on the strengths and weaknesses of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses were included.

The final part of the questionnaire, “Demographic information”, provided information about the preservice teachers. The first part asked about country of origin, place of birth, gender, race/ethnicity, age, year in school, major, residence and school background, racial and make-up of the community/neighborhood they resided, and racial and make-up of the high school they attended. The second part asked about their native language, languages spoken other than English, travel outside of the U.S., the number of TAs they had since they started college, if they would have taken the ESL course if it was not required, and if they would have take the ESL course they enrolled from a NES or NNES GTA, and why.

Focus Groups

In order to supplement and enrich the empirical data with qualitative data, focus groups were also used. The purpose of the focus group research is to draw upon participant’s attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions that may not be feasible using other methods. Through focus groups the researcher gains insight into participants’ views, perceptions, and attitudes on a given topic (Gibbs, 1997). A prompt, such as in the statement below, was used to start the focus group discussions. This quote

was taken from the student newspaper at the university where the research study took place:

Professors and TAs should be required to speak English fluently

“I'm not sure about the rest of the people attending A&M, but the week before classes, the number one concern on most of my friends' minds is whether their professors will speak fluent English. I'm tired of paying for a lecture with a professor who is unable to efficiently communicate to the class, aka [as known as] - teach. If I didn't want to understand my professors I would have gone to my local community college, skipped lectures, and learned from the book. I do not feel that I need to explain the topic any more deeply because I'm sure that most people have felt this way at some point. I just wanted to suggest a push for an 'English Fluency' system to be implemented for the sole purpose of helping professors (and Teaching Assistants) to better communicate with their students. Make attending the class mandatory and make sure that they keep their skills sharp by requiring an oral exam every semester if they want to lecture a class.

We work hard to pay for the best education, and sometimes I feel like that is not what we are receiving.”

A.J.C., Class of 2008 – The X [the school newspaper's name is deleted for confidentiality purposes], September 7, 2005

The participants of the focus groups were asked to reflect on several questions (see Appendix B) posed by the moderator.

Procedure

The primary data for this study was collected through a survey. The survey was administered to preservice teachers who were enrolled in either ESL methodology or ESL assessment courses in spring 2007 and fall 2007. All GTAs who were teaching these courses were contacted in the beginning of spring and fall 2007 in order to get their permission to survey their students. Since this survey did not entail pre and post test methods, the survey was purposefully administered in the middle of the semester to

capture preservice teachers existing perceptions of the NES and NNES GTAs.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and the surveys were not administered by the researcher, who is a NNES. Instead, the survey was administered by three American college students who were at the preservice teachers' age. Two hundred and sixty two preservice teachers participated in the survey. At the bottom of the survey a space was provided for the participants to write their email addresses if they wished to be contacted for further study which entailed focus group discussions.

Forty-four participants signed up for focus group discussions. However, only around 18-20 participants were needed for the discussions. After the initial analysis of the survey data each participant's average score was calculated. There were a total of 26 items in the first section of the survey and the possible highest score a participant could receive in the Likert scale was 130, the average score was 78, and the lowest was 26. Based on this information participants who scored less than 65 (1 SD below the mean, -13) were classified as having negative perceptions toward NNES GTAs, and those who scored more than 91 (1 SD above the mean, +13) were classified as having positive perceptions toward NNES GTAs, and participants who scored between the ranges of 65 and 91 were considered having neutral perceptions toward NNES GTAs.

Three focus group discussions were held, each consisting of 6 to 8 preservice teachers. Litosseliti (2003) stated the outcome of a single session may not provide adequate information and that building a research around a single focus group would make limited claims about a particular group of people, and could hinder both comparative and in-depth exploration of the topic. The discussions lasted approximately

one hour. Litosseliti (2003) submitted that the perceived or actual power difference between the moderator and the participants could be detrimental to the quality of the focus group discussions. Therefore, in order for preservice teachers not to feel threatened during the focus group discussions by an older, NNES researcher, a NES student who was at the preservice teachers' age (a peer) facilitated the focus group discussions. The researcher trained the facilitator in advance on how to conduct effective focus group discussions.

Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed to identify the perceptions of preservice teachers toward NES and NNES GTAs teaching ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the survey data. Descriptive statistics was used to find and report the frequencies of each Likert scale item and the demographic information. Inferential statistics, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), was used to investigate and report if four independent variables (type of area and racial/ethnic make-up of the community/neighborhood preservice teachers resided during the majority of elementary and high school years; racial/ethnic make-up of the high school preservice teachers attended; number of instructors/TAs they had since they started college) had a significant effect on preservice teachers perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs. All focus group discussions were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed by the facilitator. The thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was used to analyze the focus group discussions. The transcribed focus group discussions were divided into

text segments which were paragraphs, sentences, or parts of sentences that related to a distinct concept. Each text segment was classified into topical category labeled with a code. Themes were formed by grouping the common responses of the participants that implied the same meaning of the underlying idea and were grouped under the relevant category they belonged to.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The section starts with the results of the questionnaire based on the four constructs, followed by the perceptions of preservice teachers of the accents of NES and NNES GTAs. Next, the results of the MANOVA analysis are reported. Finally, the results of the open-ended questions on strengths and weaknesses of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses are discussed.

Preservice Teacher Profiles

The analysis of the demographic questions of the questionnaire provided a profile of the preservice teachers. Table 2 shows the demographic information of the preservice teachers based on the highest percentages in the categories of gender, race/ethnicity, age, classification, major, and the language other than English, if any, that they speak fluently. These statistics confirm the fact that the future teacher force is predominantly female, white, and monolingual.

TABLE 2
Demographic Majorities of the Sample (N=262)

	n	%
Gender		
Female	253	96.6
Race/Ethnicity		
White	237	90.5
Age		
18-22	253	96.6
Classification		
Junior	161	61.5
Major		
Early Childhood Education	175	67
Fluency in L2		
None	247	94.6

The internal reliability for the first section of the questionnaire (26 items), was .915, using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. As noted, 26 items represented the constructs of accent, communication, student performance and learning, and instructor's knowledge and credibility.

Enrollment in ESL-related Courses

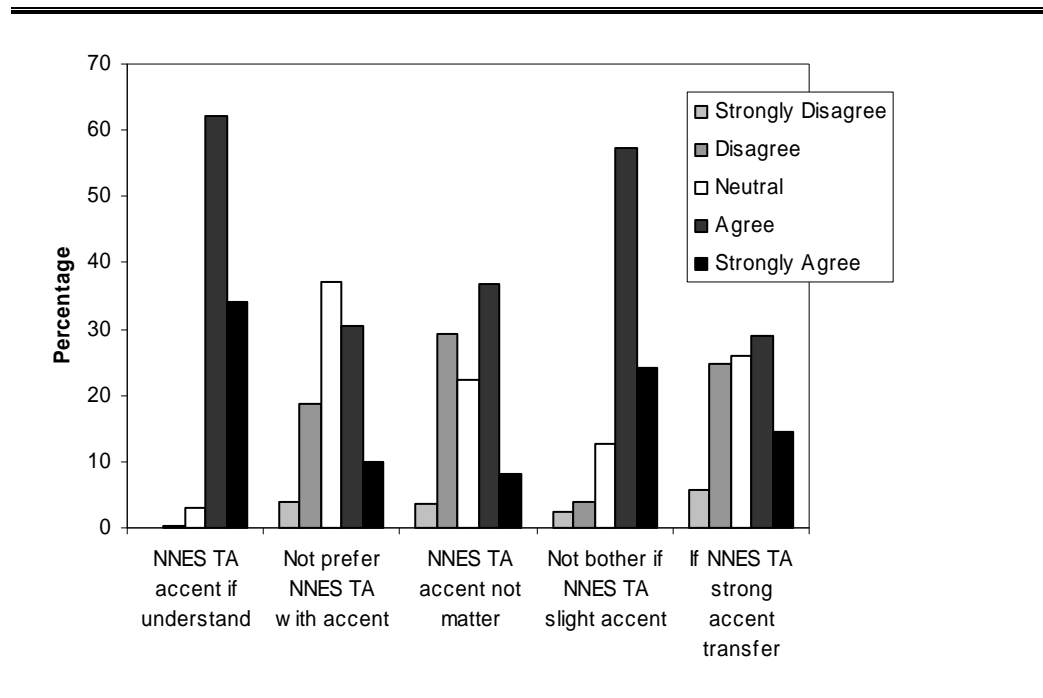
Of 262 preservice teachers surveyed, only 68 (26.3%), stated that they would have taken these courses if had not been required. Only four students of the 262 were taking them as an elective. Thus, most students did not have a very positive attitude toward these mandatory courses. In addition, 62 (24%) of the 262 participants indicated that they were planning to teach ESL after graduation.

These results indicated that preservice teachers at this university were homogeneous and were not interested in taking ESL-related courses if these courses were not a program requirement.

Accent

Figure 1 represents the preservice teachers' ratings and perceptions of the NNES GTAs accent. Ninety-six percent of preservice teachers agreed that an accent is not problematic as long as students can understand their NNES GTA. However, about 40% of students preferred not to have a NNES GTA with an accent teach their courses and 37% were neutral on the issue. Only 22 % disagreed with this statement, which revealed that some students were not willing to be taught by or to listen to a foreign-accented instructor in the classroom. When asked about how they felt if they had a NNES TA with a slight accent, 81% rated being okay with it. Forty-three percent were concerned about the NNES TA having a strong accent and stated that they would seek to transfer to another section of the course. On the other hand, about 39% said they would not seek to transfer to another course.

FIGURE 1
Preservice Teachers' Ratings on Accent



During focus group discussions, one of the themes that emerged was the intelligibility of the instructor. Focus group participants said that they perceive a difference between a NNES instructor who can speak English and one who cannot speak English. One participant in the focus groups stated, “I love having teachers from other places like you said. It’s interesting. But a lot of them can speak fluent English, like, very well and I can understand. But there’s those that can’t and that’s where the problem is.” Regarding having a NNES instructor in the ESL methodology or ELS assessment course, another participant said:

Because like I said I had a teacher who I don’t, she wasn’t a native English speaker I don’t think. I don’t know. Because she didn’t speak very clearly but the

pro was that she had experience. She was teaching an ESL class, she had experience of like, having to learn in two different languages, so she could give you those view points and like open your eyes to see like, the inequalities and things and all that but then there was the drawback of not being able to understand her, like what she was trying to teach us. So, but I thought it was really great that she was bilingual and not like a native speaker herself, but just drawbacks.

This statement provides an example of how some preservice teachers believe that having a NNES GTA in ESL-related courses is helpful in gaining an understanding of multiple views and hearing the NNES GTA's experiences in learning another language. On the other hand, they also complain about not being able to understand the TA and view this as a drawback. An important point to note is that all the NNES GTAs who were teaching the ESL-related courses had high, almost native-like, English-language proficiency. The student quoted above even questioned whether the GTA was a NNES or not, since "... she wasn't a native of English I don't think. I don't know." This student's comments were echoed by other participants who also had NNES GTAs in ESL-related courses and had difficulties understanding their instructor.

I also took one of those ESL classes and my teacher didn't speak English well, which is kind of ironic but the whole class everyone would just look at each other and be like, what'd she just say? Like, we never understood anything until she would post things on WebCT like typed out and even those had errors all in them but they're understandable but, like, I, even that class was a struggle... we didn't really learn anything because we couldn't understand her so, it was just hard.

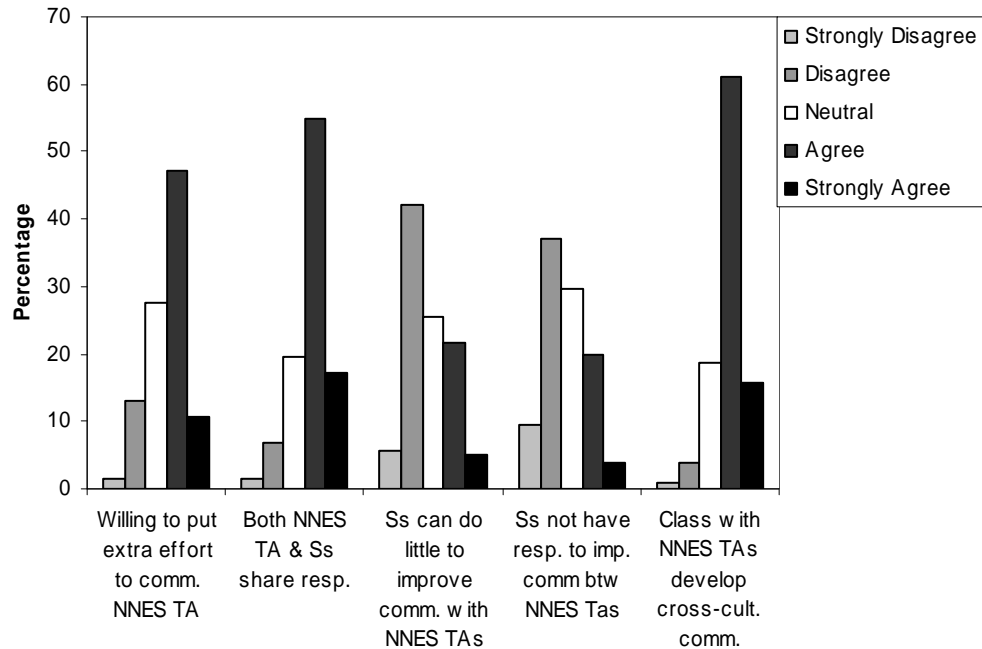
The students believe that these highly proficient GTAs do not speak English well and with this predisposition, they may actually subconsciously make the decision to not understand the NNES GTAs. As Derwing, Rossiter, and Munro (2002) stated, "...bias attributable to ethnicity [of the L2 speaker] or a genuine lack of ability to understand

accented speech” may be a factor. The GTAs who taught the ESL-related courses were either from an Asian or a Middle Eastern country. According to Pae (2001), “Factors such as student attitude towards ITAs, ethnocentric values towards other cultures, and the effects of familiarity influenced individual intelligibility.” (p. 73) Therefore, some intelligibility issues may not be language related and may involve other factors such as race/ethnicity and culture.

Communication

Figure 2 represents the preservice teachers’ perceptions of communication with their NNES GTAs. Fifty-eight percent of preservice teachers agreed that they were willing to exert extra effort to communicate with their NNES GTAs. About 72% of the students also agreed with the statement that NNES GTA and the student should share the responsibility for classroom communication. In addition, only about 46% of participants disagreed that students should not have to take responsibility for improving communication between themselves and the NNES GTAs. The other 54% were either neutral or agreed with this statement. These results reveal the disturbing fact that it is generally only the NNES GTA who is expected to take responsibility for improving communication in the classroom (Kubota, 2001).

FIGURE 2
Preservice Teachers' Ratings on Communication



Another theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was the responsibility of the speaker and listener for communication. In this context, the speaker refers to the NNES GTA and the listener refers to the student. Similar to the survey results, the participants had different opinions about the communication responsibility as reflected in the focus group data. Some commented, “It is listeners’ responsibility;” some said “it is speaker’s responsibility;” and finally, some stated that “it is both listeners’ and speakers’ responsibility” to communicate. Although participants had different views on this topic, the majority of participants believed that it is the responsibility of the

speaker—the NNES GTA— to communicate. The participants (two or three students out of 20) who agreed that it is the listener’s responsibility shared the view:

I think if you don’t understand then it’s your job to make sure you understand. Like, if it’s them presenting to you and the presenter does their part, then, if you don’t understand that becomes your job too to understand. To get it explained to you or to get additional help or whatever it may be.

The participants who viewed “it is speaker’s responsibility” stated,

I just kind of feel like I’m paying to go to school to learn about teaching and that doesn’t include having to learn it, you know, having to learn how to communicate with my teacher. Because I feel like if I have to pay a lot of money to come here anyways, then it should be more, you know, them teaching me about how to teach and not how to communicate with a teacher that doesn’t speak English. And I know that it’ll help when I have kids that don’t speak English, but that’s more my responsibility. That’s why I’m taking the ESL class, is to teach them not to have to understand what my Math teacher is trying to say to me personally.

As a preservice teacher, the participant does not believe that she is attending college to “learn how to communicate with a NNES GTA,” but is at school to “learn about teaching.” As noted, this study investigates whether preservice teachers are prepared to accept and validate diversity among their instructors, which in turn will make them sensitive to the diversity of learners they will encounter in their future teaching. The participant acknowledges that the effort to communicate with the NNES instructor prepares her for her future classroom with some ESL learners when she said “I know that it’ll help when I have kids that don’t speak English, but that’s more my responsibility.” The participant, however, fails to make the connection that accepting the NNES instructor (i.e., accepting the accent and her share of the responsibility to communicate) during college courses (teacher education program) would most likely transfer to her future classroom and her attitude towards linguistically and culturally diverse students. It

is ironic that this preservice teacher ignores the fact that communication and ability to communicate with diverse learners is at the heart of teaching and a strong variable in successful teaching. Likewise, many participants commented on the fact that they were paying a lot of money to attend college, so it was not their duty to comprehend the instructor, "...like, if we're paying to go to these, like, classes then I think they should speak the way like the majority of the class is, like in English..."

On the other hand, few participants believed it was "both the listener's and speaker's responsibility" to ensure that communication takes place.

... as far as learning goes it's kind of like when someone is trying to, like when the mechanic, I don't know about you guys, but when a mechanic is trying to explain to me what's wrong with my car, I start listening but then I stop understanding so I just stop listening Because basically he's speaking a foreign language to me. And is it my fault for not really trying to listen? Well yeah, but it's I guess it's not really his fault for trying to explain to me what's wrong with my car, but, I think partially your mind kind of shuts off when you stop understanding because you know that by the time the information gets to your head it's going to be useless and you're just going to have a headache because. But I agree with that. There's kind of two sides to it. And generally the speaker gets the blame because they're supposed to be the teacher or the authority figure.

Kubota (2001) wrote that often a speaker who uses non-mainstream language carries all the communicative burden and the member of the dominant language group feels justified in rejecting his/her role as listener.

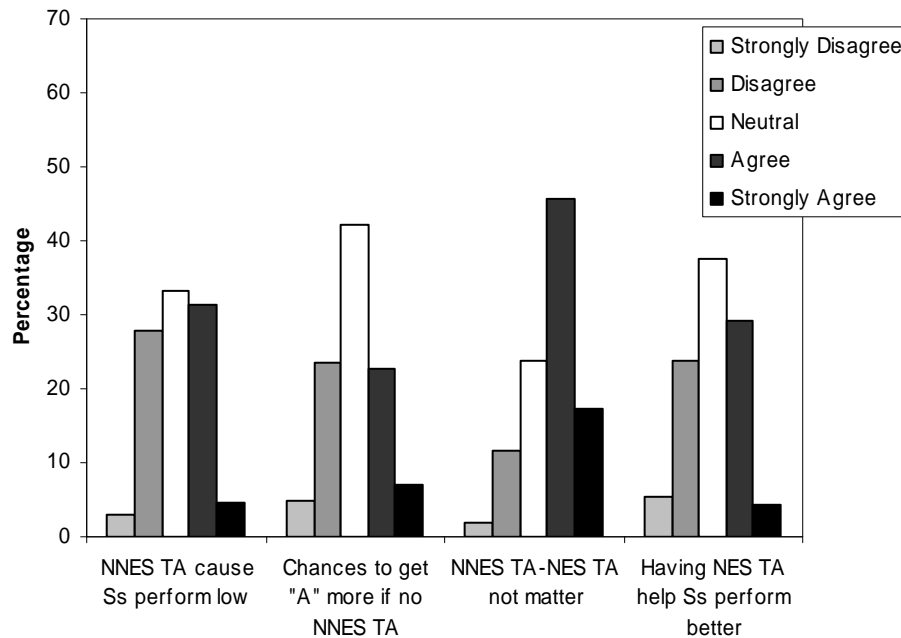
On the other hand, 76% of preservice teachers believed that "having a class with a NONNATIVE English speaking TA is an opportunity for developing cross-cultural communication skills," which is a positive outcome.

Student Performance and Learning

Student Performance

Figure 3 displays preservice teachers' ratings on how they link student performance to having a NES versus a NNES GTA. The results demonstrated that preservice teachers had mixed feelings on the statement "having a NNES GTA will often cause students to perform lower on exams." Thirty-five percent of the students agreed with this statement. Around 33% were neutral and 31% disagreed. Similarly, students had mixed responses regarding their perceptions of the effect of having a NNES GTA on their chances of getting a grade of "A". Twenty eight percent disagreed and 29% agreed with the statement, "If I had to get an 'A' in a course, I know my chances would be better if I did not have a NONNATIVE English- speaking TA." Forty two percent gave a "neutral" response to this statement. Many students who receive a lower grade than expected assign the ITA the role of the "villain" (Fitch & Morgan, 2003). In their 2003 study, Fitch and Morgan concluded that undergraduates believed they would have gotten an 'A' in their courses if their instructor had not been an ITA. Therefore, the students saw themselves as "victims." As Fitch and Morgan explained, "The student as victim is allowed to assign guilt to the ITA either for the student not learning or for the student receiving an unsatisfactory grade." (p. 304)

FIGURE 3
Preservice Teachers' Ratings on Student Performance



There was again a split between preservice teachers on their perception of whether having a NES GTA will make a difference in their performance. Around 33% agreed a NES GTA will help students perform better in exams, 29% disagreed, and finally 37.5% were neutral with this statement. On the other hand, interestingly, 63% still stated getting a good grade did not depend on having a NES or NNES GTA.

The ratings on the relationship between NES/NNES GTAs and student performance underscored the fact that there are students who believe that having a NNES TA will have a negative impact on their performance. During focus groups discussions, one preservice teacher commented, "I think a lot of students sometimes like to use the

non-fluency as a scapegoat and blame it on that's the reason they didn't do well in the class when really they probably didn't do well because they didn't go or something. I think that's a lot of what students blame it on..." Blaming the NNES GTA for lack of good grades and success in the classroom is common among undergraduate students (Fitch & Morgan, 2003).

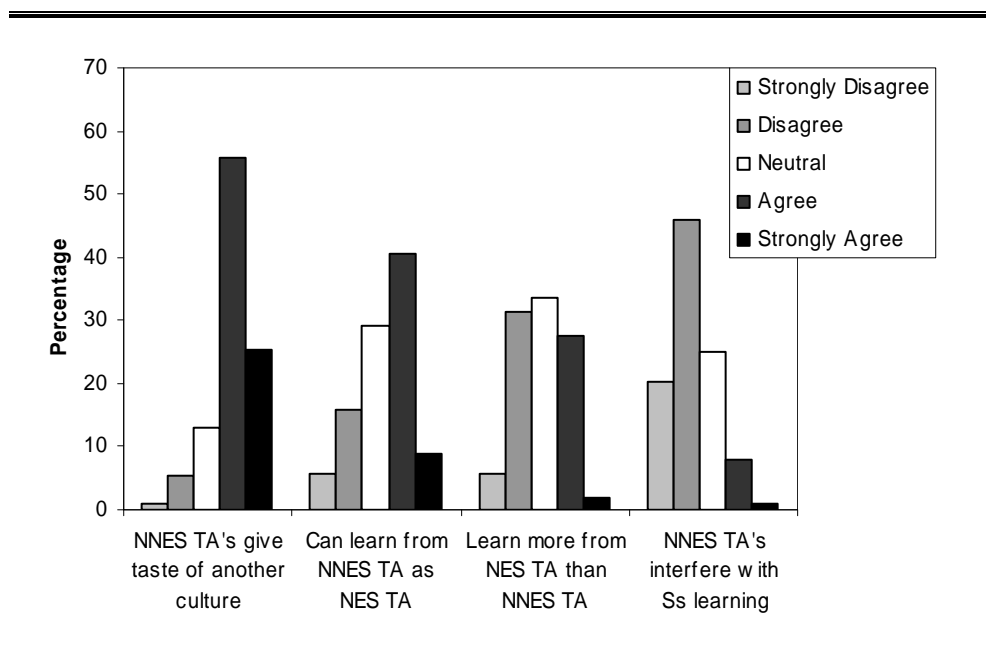
Student Learning

Eighty percent of the respondents believed that NNES GTAs give students a taste of another culture (see Figure 4). Forty nine percent agreed that they could learn just as well from a NNES GTA as from a NES GTA. About 21% disagreed and 29 % were neutral. These percentages indicate that only half of the preservice teachers actually believed they could learn from NNES GTAs.

Students' ethnocentrism is often associated with the outcome of such ratings (McCroskey, 2003). In other words, students prefer the "known" to the "unknown." The 'us'-'them' (foreigner and nonnative) ideology (Holliday, 2005) can play a role in such a preference. Fitch and Morgan (2003) pointed out that the students in their study always "repeated usage of the universal 'they' in reference to ITAs...You can't understand *them* and you can't comprehend anything *they* say...You don't know what *they* are talking about and *they* [italics added] can't understand you..." (p. 303). The words "them" and "they" were also used often in this study when the preservice teacher was referring to the NNES GTA.

Around 30% of respondents agreed that that they will learn more from a NES TA. However, 37% disagreed and 33% were neutral. Sixty-six percent of the preservice teachers disagreed with the statement that “NNES GTAs interfere with [*universities acronym deleted for confidentiality during reporting*] students’ learning.

FIGURE 4
Preservice Teachers’ Ratings on Student Learning



The third theme that emerged during the focus group discussions was the description of an ideal instructor of ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses. The preservice teachers described the ideal instructor as someone who has field experience, who models and provides examples, and who has a background in ESL. One participant said,

It doesn't matter to me what their native language is as long as I understand and I am able to like learn things from the class. And so like, what we were saying earlier, they have experience in what they're teaching us and they have first hand knowledge of it and it doesn't really matter what their native language is to me.

Statements like this were not common during the focus group discussions. The data reveal that a major concern for preservice teachers is the ability to understand their TA; if they can understand him/her, they believe they will be able to learn. The following statement by another preservice teacher confirms this view:

I wouldn't mind. Like if they did speak English I think, like native speakers, it would still be okay, but it, I think it's good to have the nonnative speaking because they can tell you what worked best for them or like the way they were treated, so we can make sure that we don't treat our students like that but if there's like a native English speaking teacher that's taught ESL students then they could also give insight, so I don't think it matters either way. As long as you can understand them.

The student still puts emphasis on "understanding" the instructor. Having an experience with either ESL students or having been a learner is equally important for preservice teachers. Being taught by a NNES instructor will expose students to linguistic and cultural differences and will affect their acceptance and appreciation of diversity among their own students. However, while some students acknowledge the importance of this, others fail to do so.

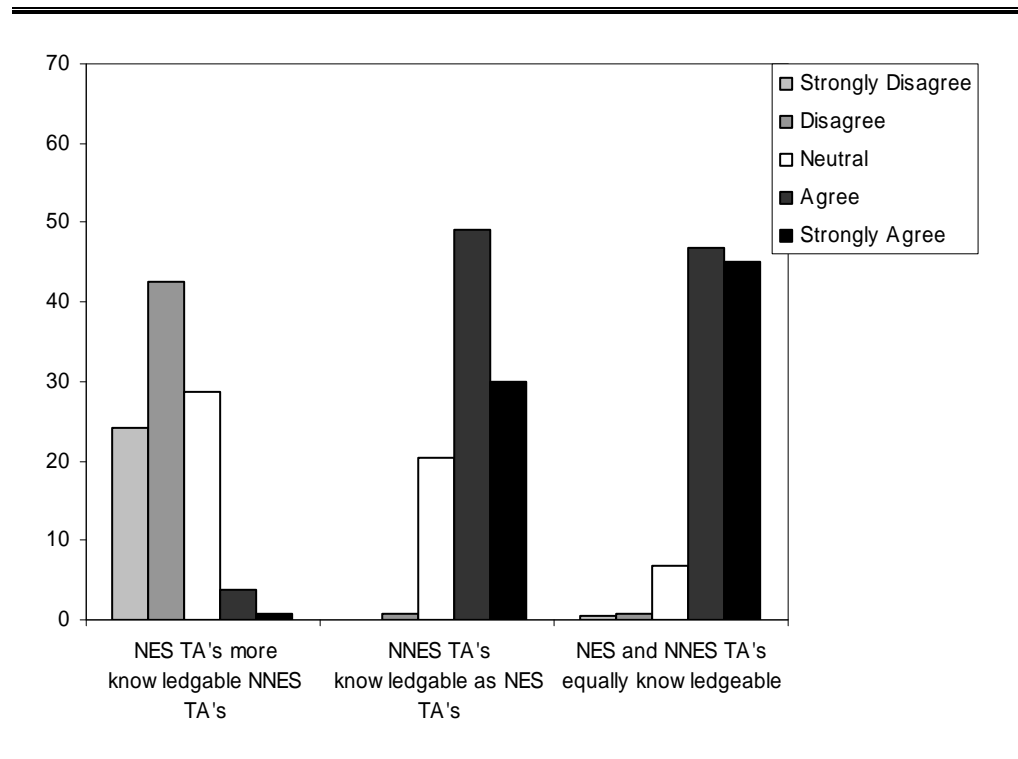
Instructors Knowledge and Credibility

Instructors Knowledge

Three items were used to investigate the preservice teachers' perceptions of the knowledge of NES and NNES GTAs. In general, a high percentage of positive ratings were provided on the issue of a NNES GTA's knowledge, as seen in Figure 5. Sixty-six

percent disagreed with the statement that NES TAs are generally more knowledgeable than NES GTAs. Almost 80% of respondents found NNES GTAs as knowledgeable as NES GTAs. And, finally, 92% believed that NES and NNES GTAs can be equal in their knowledge of the subject. Some participants in the focus group discussions stated that the university they were attending hired highly educated foreign instructors; however, these instructors did not necessarily know how to teach because “they’re just so smart that sometimes it’s hard for them to get it out...” Therefore, the preservice teachers acknowledged the knowledge of the NNES teachers and believed they were well educated.

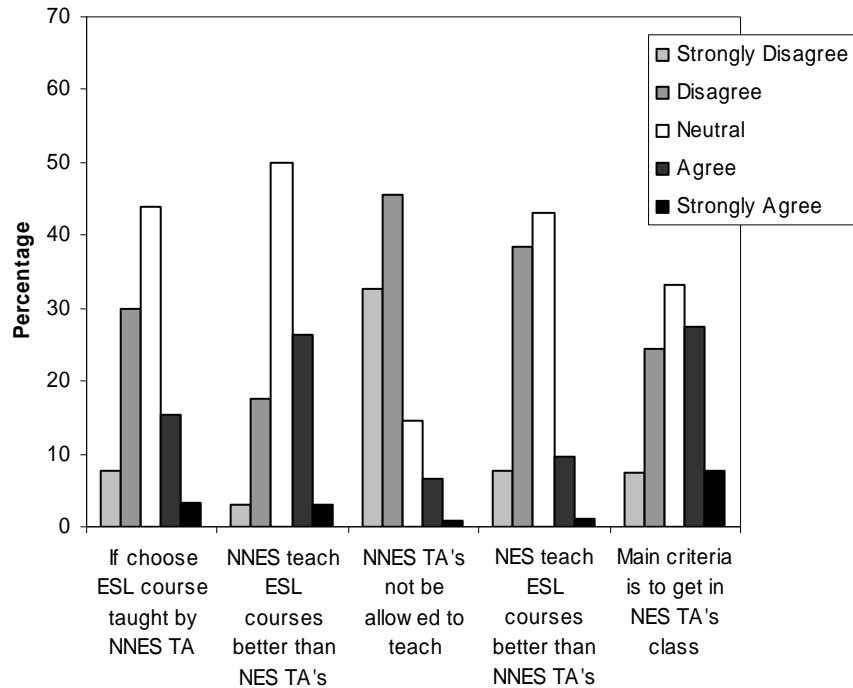
FIGURE 5
Preservice Teachers’ Ratings on Instructors’ Knowledge



Instructors Credibility

The data yielded a number of insights about preservice teachers' perceptions of the credibility of NES and NNES GTAs. As shown in Figure 6, ratings varied. Only 19% of respondents stated that if they could choose a section of an ESL-related course, they would prefer to be taught by a NNES GTA. Around 37% disagreed and about 44% remained neutral. When asked whether NNES TA's could be better teachers of ESL courses than NES TA's because of their experience learning a second language 29% agreed, 21% disagreed, and 50% remained neutral. On the other hand, 46% agreed that NES TA's can teach ESL courses better than NNES TA's because they are native speakers and about 43% were neutral. More preservice teachers believed that NES TA's could teach ESL-related courses better than NNES TA's because they are native speakers. The results revealed that when teaching ESL-related courses, "native speakership" of the instructor is more valuable than a NNES GTA's experiences learning English. This is similar to the argument of "Does being a native speaker or nonnative speaker make a difference when teaching a language?" In the TESOL and applied linguistics literature, the discussion of NES and NNES differences has been complex. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) stated that although an instructor may be a native speaker of a language, his/her language proficiency is only one element of professionalism. There are other aspects, such as appropriate education and preparation to be an educator which are equally, if not more important, factors related to professionalism.

FIGURE 6
Preservice Teachers' Ratings on Instructors' Credibility



On the other hand, 78% of respondents disagreed with the statement that NNES GTAs should not be allowed to teach in the department in which the preservice teachers were enrolled. Around 15% remained neutral and 7% agreed that NNES GTAs should not teach in the department.

As noted, the data revealed that preservice teachers wanted to be taught by NES GTAs because they were “native speakers” of English. These results can be related to both the intelligibility issue and also the lack of tolerance for linguistic diversity. The preservice teachers may have provided these ratings because they constantly have the fear of not being able to understand their NNES GTAs. These ratings may also be due to

the race/ethnicity or foreign culture of the NNES GTAs, or in other words, ethnocentrism, or native speakers' "ownership" of the English language.

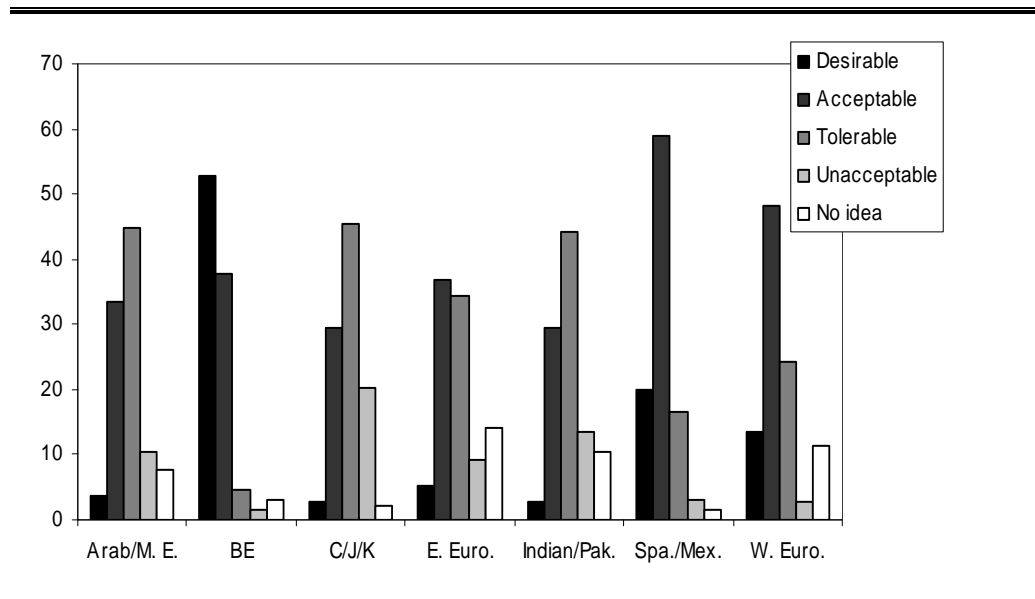
NNES and NES Accent Ratings

NNES Accent Ratings

The second section of the questionnaire, "Scale of preferred accents in NES & NNES TA's," provided information on preservice teachers' perceptions and preferences regarding non-U.S. and U.S. accents. The preservice teachers were asked to rate NES and NNES accents on a 1 to 5 scale.

The British/English accent (although British/English accent is a NES accent, in this context it is a non-American one and thus is included with NNES accents) showed the highest percentage of "desirability," at 52%. None of the other accents got desirable ratings as high (see Figure 7). The next closest one was Spanish/Mexican accent by 20%, followed by Western European accent (i.e., German or French) at 13.5%. Arab/Middle Eastern, Chinese/Japanese/Korean, and Indian/Pakistani accents were regarded as *acceptable* at 33.6%, 29.4%, and 29.4 %, respectively and *tolerable* at 44.7%, 45.4%, and 44.3 %, respectively. Among all the NNES accents, Chinese/Japanese/Korean received the highest rating of unacceptable (20%). Indian/Pakistani and Arab/Middle Eastern accents received 13% and 10% unacceptable rating, respectively.

FIGURE 7
Preservice Teachers' Ratings of NNES Accents



Chacon (2006) argued that “the distinction among the world Englishes (Kachru, 1992) shows the relationship among prestige, power, and language. Why is it that American English or British English has more prestigious than do the other Englishes in the world? Definitely, this is not a coincidence” (p. 60). Chacon claims race is a determining factor in deciding the variety of English that is prestigious. Indian English and Pakistani English are also considered English; however, these Englishes received one of the lowest ratings by the respondents.

Lippi-Green (1997) claims that people easily *use accent* to exclude, to limit discourse, and to discredit other voices, because some accents simply do not sound white. As Lippi-Green further explained, “It is crucial to remember that it is not *all* foreign accents, but only accent linked to skin that isn’t white, or which signals a third-

world homeland, that evokes such negative reactions...” (p. 239). The results toward Arab/Middle Eastern, Chinese/Japanese/Korean, and Indian/Pakistani accents do not reveal negative reactions; however, the ratings are not as positive as other European accents, especially Western European accents. Lindemann (2005) looked closely at 79 U.S. undergraduate students’ belief systems and the insights they provided in addressing linguistic discrimination. She found that the term “broken” English was used for the language of all nonnative speakers except those with Western European and English accents.

During the focus groups discussions, participants reflected on the difference between a British/English accent and NNES accents. One said, “...because I, you know, and I don’t know why. Because I’ve heard somebody from England and I’m like ‘oh I love your accent that is so cool.’ And, you know, that is so weird. Why is their accent better than somebody from you know, India or you know, it’s the same thing. It’s different.” Another student related the reason to Hollywood movies, commenting:

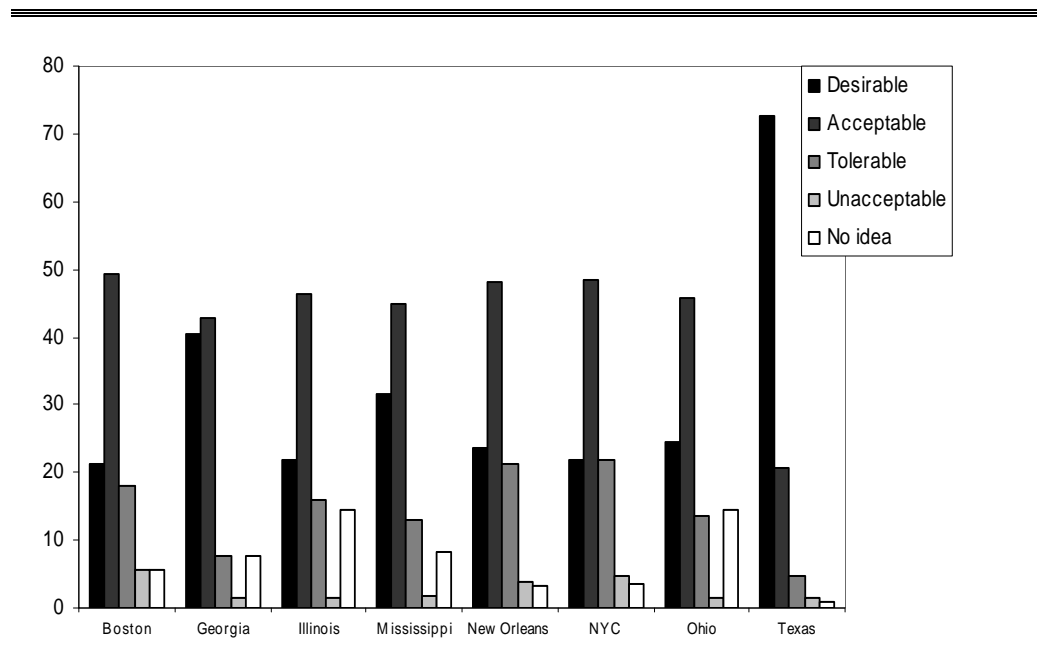
...just an example like English accents like, I don’t know whenever you hear it’s kind of like a powerful like ‘oh that’s cool’. But whenever you hear like an Indian accent or something like that it’s never like, in the movies or whatever it’s never like the powerful person. So maybe it’s that kind of connection too, some kind of stereotype.

Therefore, the preservice teachers admitted that they liked British accents better; However, they could not explain why. They still acknowledged that it might be due to stereotyping.

NES Accent Ratings

Preservice teachers' answers shown in Figure 8 indicate that their ratings did not show significant difference among American NES accents. Because the participants of the study were from a Southern state, the Southern states' accent ratings had the highest desirability and acceptability percentage. The Texas accent received the highest rating, 72%, and was considered *desirable*. Second most *desirable* was the Georgia accent (40.5%) followed by the Mississippi accent (31.7%). In general, almost all American accents were rated as *acceptable*. The New York City, New Orleans, and Boston accents had the highest percentage of *tolerable* ratings.

FIGURE 8
Preservice Teachers' Ratings of NES Accents



As noted, the preservice teachers who answered this survey were from a southern state. The answers could have easily differed and could have significantly favored northern accents if the participants had been from a northern state. Within the local perspective, it is another example of an “us” versus “them” issue. These preservice teachers, as Southerners, found Southern accents more acceptable and desirable.

During the focus group discussions, one of the preservice teachers stated, “I think the basic English language is the same everywhere. I mean, it’s English. Like, there might be different accents, but I don’t think that that’s making a big enough difference that you can’t understand what they’re trying to get across.” This statement underscores that some students do not hear accent in different varieties of American English but are extraordinarily conscious of non-American accents. They believe that all these variations are intelligible and do not hinder the speaker’s message. Lippi-Green (1997) stated that native speakers of English also have an accent depending on the region they come from. However, Chacon (2006) pointed out that “although speakers from Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States have different accents within their own regions, those accents are not perceived as negative or disqualifying when compared with the accents of NNEST from periphery countries” (p. 60). The “Englishes” that are not one of their own cause problems.

Results of MANOVA of Four Independent Variables across Four Constructs

MANOVA was used to determine whether (1) *type of area*, (2) *racial/ethnic make-up of the community/neighborhood* preservice teachers resided during the majority of elementary and high school years, (3) *racial/ethnic make-up of the high school* they attended, and (4) *number of instructors/TAs* they had since they started college made a significant effect in the perceptions of preservice teachers towards the NES or NNES GTA.

Preservice teachers' views on the NNES GTAs' communication were slightly more positive (mean = 17.68/25, standard deviation= 3.06) compared to the accent of NNES GTAs (mean=14.22/25, standard deviation=2.38), depending on the geographical area where the preservice teachers lived during the majority of their elementary and high school years. Preservice teachers had slightly less positive views on student performance/learning (mean = 26.84/40, standard deviation= 5.47) compared to instructor's knowledge and credibility (mean = 28.55/40, standard deviation= 4.17). Although the results related to demographic variables and perceptions were not significantly different, preservice teachers had slightly more positive perceptions on NNES GTAs' communication compared to accent and had slightly less positive perceptions on student performance/learning compared to instructor's knowledge and credibility (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics of the Average Scores for each Independent Variable across Four Constructs

Independent Variables	Accent		Communication		Stu Perform/Learning		Know/Credibility	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>
Type of area resided during elementary/high school yrs								
Rural	13.87	2.49	17.87	23.00	25.04	23.00	27.83	23.00
Town/City of less than 10,000	14.65	2.23	17.47	34.00	26.47	34.00	28.65	34.00
City of 10,000 to 25,000	14.39	2.09	18.35	57.00	27.05	57.00	28.58	57.00
City of more than 25,000	14.10	2.52	17.40	136.00	27.15	136.00	28.64	136.00
Total	14.22	2.38	17.68	250.00	26.84	250.00	28.55	250.00
Racial/ethnic make-up of com/neighbor resided								
Only one	13.88	2.64	16.25	8.00	26.25	8.00	26.75	8.00
Predominantly one	14.15	2.48	17.54	101.00	26.14	101.00	28.17	101.00
One racial/ethnic	14.15	2.25	17.79	73.00	27.11	73.00	28.79	73.00
Two or three	14.14	2.37	17.63	49.00	26.96	49.00	28.80	49.00
Four or more	15.10	2.31	18.40	20.00	29.25	20.00	29.50	20.00
Total	14.22	2.38	17.66	251.00	26.83	251.00	28.53	251.00
Racial/ethnic make-up of high school attended								
Only one	13.17	1.60	17.00	6.00	27.17	6.00	24.50	6.00
Predominantly one	13.93	2.45	17.47	87.00	26.08	87.00	28.28	87.00
One racial/ethnic	14.26	2.34	17.66	82.00	27.07	82.00	28.54	82.00
Two or three	14.37	2.43	17.71	59.00	26.98	59.00	28.71	59.00
Four or more	15.25	2.05	18.81	16.00	28.69	16.00	30.56	16.00
Total	14.20	2.38	17.66	250.00	26.81	250.00	28.52	250.00
Number of NNES instructors/TAs since started college								
None	14.54	2.33	17.08	13.00	27.85	13.00	29.08	13.00
Current instructor	13.95	2.28	17.90	20.00	26.75	20.00	27.25	20.00
1	13.63	2.30	16.83	24.00	24.88	24.00	28.08	24.00
2	14.49	2.41	17.89	76.00	27.01	76.00	28.89	76.00
3	14.15	2.32	17.62	66.00	26.59	66.00	28.17	66.00
More than 3	14.22	2.54	17.84	50.00	27.52	50.00	28.98	50.00
Total	14.22	2.38	17.67	249.00	26.81	249.00	28.52	249.00

As shown in table 4, MANOVA results, ($F(12, 643) = 1.39, p > .19, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$), indicated that type of area in which preservice teachers resided during the majority of their elementary and high school years did not have statistically significant effect on their perception of accent, communication, student performance, and knowledge and teaching credibility of the NES and NNES GTAs.

TABLE 4
Analysis of Between-subjects Effects for Area Resided during Elementary/High School

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2	<i>p</i>
ACC	3	.73	.01	.53
COM	3	1.37	.02	.25
SPL	3	1.05	.01	.37
KTC	3	.26	.00	.85

Note. ACC = Accent; COM = Communication; SPL = Student Performance/Learning; KTC = Knowledge and Teaching Credibility.

The racial/ethnic make-up of the community/neighborhood in which students resided during the majority of their elementary and high school years was not a statistically significant predictor of preservice teachers' perception also, $F(16, 743) = 0.72, p > .77, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
Analysis of Between-subjects Effects for Racial/Ethnic Makeup of
Community/Neighborhood

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2	<i>p</i>
ACC	4	.77	.01	.54
COM	4	.79	.01	.53
SPL	4	1.48	.02	.21
KTC	4	.95	.02	.44

Note. ACC = Accent; COM = Communication; SPL = Student Performance/Learning; KTC = Knowledge and Teaching Credibility.

Table 6 shows the results of the MANOVA of racial/ethnic make-up of the high school preservice teachers attended and four dependent variables, $F(16, 739) = 1.39, p > .20$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. The results indicated that preservice teachers' perception of accent, communication, student performance, and knowledge and teaching credibility of the NES or NNES instructor did not significantly differ based on racial/ethnic make-up of the high school they attended.

TABLE 6
Analysis of Between-subjects Effects for Racial/Ethnic Makeup of High School
Attended

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2	<i>p</i>
ACC	4	1.44	.02	.22
COM	4	.72	.01	.58
SPL	4	.93	.02	.45
KTC	4	2.52	.04	.04

Note. ACC = Accent; COM = Communication; SPL = Student Performance/Learning; KTC = Knowledge and Teaching Credibility.

Similarly as shown in Table 7, number of NNES instructors/TAs preservice teachers had since they started college did not significantly differentiate preservice teachers' perception of the four constructs ($F(20, 796) = .723, p > .80$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$).

TABLE 7
Analysis of Between-subjects Effects for Number of TAs

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2	<i>p</i>
ACC	5	.60	.01	.70
COM	5	.59	.01	.71
SPL	5	.90	.02	.48
KTC	5	.80	.02	.55

Note. ACC = Accent; COM = Communication; SPL = Student Performance/Learning; KTC = Knowledge and Teaching Credibility.

In sum, the results of MANOVA indicated that the four independent variables did not make statistically significant difference on the perceptions of preservice teachers toward their NES and NNES GTAs.

Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of NES and NNES GTAs

As mentioned before, the questionnaire consisted of a set of open-ended questions that allowed the preservice teachers to write down the strengths and weaknesses of NES and NNES GTA's who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses. The following were mentioned as the strengths of NES:

Can communicate very clearly (with no accents) and easy to understand (can clearly understand NES students' questions and concerns in the classroom).

Can relate to NES students better (knowledge of American culture, language, and mindset).

Knowledge of the language spoken their entire lives. They may know the challenges of trying to communicate with someone who does not speak English.

The issue of communication was brought up again. Most of the strengths listed were related to a NES GTAs ability to communicate with NES students without any problems. The second most common strength listed was that NES GTA's were able to

relate to them in the classroom. The NES GTAs' familiarity with preservice- teacher culture and language was seen as important. A NES GTA is one of "them." An interesting point that was frequently listed was the NES GTAs' knowledge of the English language from birth, which provides a significant advantage for them to teach English. As noted, in the native and nonnative literature, this concept has caused a lot of controversy. Just because someone is a NES does not necessarily mean s/he is a better teacher. Astor (2000) argued, "The only real difference among teachers of English or ESL lies in their qualifications, not in their nativity" (p. 19) Phillipson (1996) also claimed the following:

Non-native teachers may, in fact, be better qualified than native speakers, if they have gone through the complex process of acquiring English as a second or foreign language, have insight into the linguistic and cultural needs of their learners, a detailed awareness of how mother tongue and target language differ and what is difficult for learners. And first-hand experience of using a second or foreign language. (p. 27)

The preservice teachers stated that NNES GTAs had the ability to empathize with ESL students and share their language-learning experience and cultural background. Preservice teachers noted NNES GTAs strengths as:

Experience learning a second language. First hand experience (i.e. share what methods/strategies did or did not work for them).

Connect better with the ELLs due to the experience of learning ESL. They meet the students on a more personal level (i.e. able to relate to struggles) and can help bridge the gap between the ELLs and the teacher.

May have different world views and ideas, different perspectives on language and culture to share.

The preservice teachers have seen the NES GTAs' strengths from their point of view, primarily in the ease in communicating with GTAs and the ability to relate to

them. On the other hand, the NNES GTAs' strengths were seen as it related to the ESL students; in other words, their being able to relate to the ELL population and their ability to teach ESL to ELL's—the ability to help “others.” However, the majority of preservice teachers commented on NNES GTAs' teaching from first-hand experience.

The respondents were also asked to list the weaknesses of both NES and NNES GTAs. The primarily listed weaknesses of NES GTAs were:

No first-hand experience in learning English as a second language. Do not have personal experience in understanding the process or difficulty of acquiring ESL.

As noted in their comments, the preservice teachers were aware of the fact that NES GTAs did not have experience learning ESL; therefore, it was difficult for them to understand the experiences of ESL students and relate to the course.

The most common weaknesses of NNES GTAs listed were:

Communication barrier; may not have acquired all of the necessary tools to communicate effectively in English.

Language barrier; their accents. Especially strong accents can lead to miscommunications.

Trying to understand how to teach in English language.

Different cultural background; may not know the native culture well [and] therefore may not be able to relate to their NES students.

Once again, the issue of communication and language was discussed as two main issues by the preservice teachers. They listed the weaknesses of NNES GTAs as not being able to effectively communicate due to various linguistic, communicative, and cultural barriers. They also pointed out that NNES GTAs may not know the native culture of the preservice teachers well. An interesting point that was repeated was NNES

GTAs' "trying to understand how to teach in English language"; NNES GTAs might have problems teaching in a language that is not their own.

The fourth theme that emerged during the focus group discussions was the effectiveness of the instructor. Participants described an effective instructor as someone who knows different ways of teaching, who has teaching experience, and who is able to share his/her experiences with prospective teachers. One of the participants who had a NES GTA for the ESL assessment course stated,

Like, to me I think like what constitutes a good ESL teacher is that they've had like experience like teaching, you know, ESL, like, and it didn't matter to me like, whether they were I guess native English speakers or not because our teacher had like she was a teacher so she dealt with ESL students and she gave us a lot of like helpful information I thought.

The importance of having experience teaching ESL students is highlighted by the above participant. Another participant, who had a NNES GTA for the ESL methodology course, commented:

I think that maybe only in this class you can see the benefits of having somebody with, who is, who has English as their second language. Just because they can get you a first-hand take on it. But at the same time it's always, you always hope you can just understand what they're teaching. But I never really thought about it and after the first class I knew that it was going to be okay. Even though she, you can, you can completely understand what she is saying, even though sometimes you can tell that she's definitely not a native English speaker, but she does a good job with getting it across and you also know that she's coming from a personal perspective.

This student stated that the benefits of having a NNES GTA "only" in the ESL-related courses resulted from the NNES GTA being able to share his/her personal experiences in various ways. Reporting of positive encounters with the NNES GTA's as such was rare.

Discussion

The preservice teachers' responses gives insights into how these respondents view and perceive the NES and NNES GTAs who are serving as their instructors in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses.

These preservice teachers believed that they can “clearly understand” a NES GTA without any communication problems due to the instructors having “no accent.” Preservice teachers stated that different American accents do not impede their understanding of the message of the NES instructor. On the other hand, the students perceive the NNES instructor as someone who has an “accent,” which hinders their understanding of the content they are learning. As Rubin and Smith (2002) suggested, “North American undergraduates need to be trained to listen to accented English and to distinguish acceptably moderate levels of accent from unacceptably high levels” (p. 350). However, as Rubin and Smith (2002) also stated, “Undergraduates need to be disabused of the stereotype that teachers who speak with nonnative accents are necessarily going to be poor instructors” (p. 350). All the NNES GTAs who taught ESL-related courses to preservice teachers had very high—almost native-like—English proficiency. However, some students still stated that they had a hard time understanding their NNES GTAs. They were not accepting of different “Englishes”. Romney (2006) explained, “Acceptance of all Englishes (i.e., Creole, native, nonnative, and World Englishes) is acceptance of all English speakers. And acceptance of all Englishes as equally legitimate is acceptance of English as world language” (p. 194).

During focus group discussions, the preservice teachers did not discuss issues of linguistic and cultural diversity among student populations in schools, and that having NNEST GTAs will allow students to be exposed to diversity in their teacher education classes. Preservice teachers also failed to note that English has become a global language and their students may speak one of the World Englishes.

As Romney (2006, p. 197) noted:

....In a world where there are more nonnative and World English speakers than inner-circle native speakers of English, preservice educators must learn that it is pedagogically healthy for their students to be exposed to a variety of Englishes, through materials and teachers, because they will probably interact with speakers in all three circles.

During focus group discussions, the preservice teachers did not want to discuss the issue of race and its relation to accent, culture, and credibility. Although the moderator specifically asked about race and its relation to accent in a guiding question, all of the preservice teachers felt very uncomfortable discussing race and preferred not to elaborate on the topic and chose to be silent.

Very often during the focus group discussions, the issue of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ surfaced. The NES GTA was one of them, “us”, as a “native speaker by birth” and by “familiarity with the U.S. culture.” On the other hand, the NNEST GTA was not one of “them” as a “nonnative speaker” and by “lack of understanding and knowledge of the U.S. culture.” Holliday (2005) described, ‘us’-‘them’ as the “Self” and “Other.” The Other is “something which is constructed as opposite to the familiar, with often falsely attributed negative or exotic characteristics which are opposite to the positive characteristics of the Self” (p. 19). He argued that ‘native speaker’ students and

colleagues are seen as “unproblematic sel[ves]” and ‘nonnative speaker’ students and colleagues are seen as the “culturally problematic Other.”

Hill-Jackson, Sewell, and Water (2007) stated that there are two types of students who surface in multicultural courses: advocates and resisters. They define advocates as preservice teachers who positively respond to information presented in multicultural courses such as issues of gender, race, white racism, and ethnic stereotyping. Resisters are defined as preservice teachers who negatively respond (through their unreceptive attitudes) to such multicultural issues. The results of this study yield somewhat similar reactions from preservice teachers. The advocates were the ones who had positive perceptions toward their NNES GTAs and the resisters were the ones who expressed negative views. The preservice teachers were almost equally divided between the positive and negative perceptions on whether they would prefer to have a NNES GTA with an accent teach their courses or not, or if they would try to transfer to a difference section of a course if they were assigned a NNES GTA who had a strong foreign accent.

Half of the students stated that “Having NNES GTAs will often cause students to perform lower on exams” or they would do better if they did not have a NNES GTA in their courses. As noted, very often the NNES GTAs were blamed for the lack of student performance. One focus group participant stated the importance of having a NES instructor: “I know one of the first things I do when I try to pick my new classes and it has multiple teachers for that class I will go through and find the most English sounding name that there is and I will pick that person.” Another participant agreed, and responded to her peer as, “Yes, I also choose last names such as ‘Nelson’!” These

students did their course selections solely based on the last name of the instructor. Such preservice teachers are “resisters” who would not even give themselves the opportunity to be exposed to a NNES speech or instructor. Half of the students stated that if they could choose a section of the ESL methodology or ESL assessment course in which they were currently enrolled, their main criteria would be to get a section taught by a NES GTA.

One preservice teacher commented on how one NNES GTA from another non-ESL-related course was trying to learn from her students in the classroom, a practice that she believed unfairly took time away from the instruction that was the purpose of the class:

She a lot of times would cause discussions or ask questions just to learn for herself, English ways and American culture. Not necessarily teaching us but she was trying to learn for herself, what students thought and what their views on it were. So I think a lot of times they might try to do that, they might try to get like our opinions out instead of really teaching us what the real curriculum is for that class.

It is highly probable that this instructor has been strategically using class discussion to promote intercultural competence among her students, which is needed in every classroom in this global age. However, the student is looking at who is benefiting from this experience from a capitalistic point of view. This student believed that the NNES instructor was learning from her students rather than teaching them due to not being familiar with American culture. The student failed to make the connection that in the future, she may have students who speak diverse languages and who are from different cultures that she, as a teacher, may not be aware of. As a future teacher, should

she not be asking her diverse students about their culture or language in the classroom to find out and learn more about them?

Most of the focus group participants emphasized that they were paying a lot of money to go to college and did not believe that it was their responsibility to try to understand what their NNES professor was saying. Fitch and Morgan (2003) argued that students enrolled in courses taught by ITAs “typically construct their identities as students as blameless victims who have ‘paid good money’ for an education (which should result, not incidentally, in good grades)” (p. 309). Furthermore, Fitch and Morgan (2003) explained that students view their experience as “If you are not learning, then the real issue is that you are not getting a legitimate return on your individual investment.” (p. 306)

The results of MANOVA indicated that there was no statistical significance in the preservice teachers’ perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs whether the preservice teachers resided in a rural area or in a city of more than 50,000 during the majority of their elementary and high school years; or had lived in a community/neighborhood or attended a high school with only one racial/ethnic group versus four or more different racial/ethnic groups, with no group in the clear majority; or had one versus three or more NNES GTAs since they started college. In other words, preservice teachers living in and being exposed to a diverse environment before they started college did not affect their perceptions.

In only two areas, preservice teachers indicated positive attributes to having NNES GTAs. Based on the survey results, preservice teachers agreed that NNES GTAs

gave students an opportunity to be exposed to another culture (80%) and provided an opportunity for students to develop cross-cultural communication (77%).

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study yield a number of implications for teacher education programs. Researchers have written extensively on the need for infusing conversations about cultural diversity throughout teacher education programs, as opposed to offering “stand-alone multicultural education courses” (Sleeter, 2001, p. 98). The “resisters” mentioned above need to become “advocates” to ensure that the student population from different cultural, linguistic, and racial/ethnic backgrounds is getting the acknowledgement they need in schools. While many teacher education programs report incorporating multicultural education throughout their curriculum, external research has found otherwise. Many programs have inserted courses on multicultural education, bilingual education, or urban education, but have left the overall curriculum unchanged and intact (Goodwin, 1997). Therefore, a change in the overall curriculum needs to happen quickly because the student population is getting more diverse, not less.

This study tries to make the connection of how preservice teachers perceive their linguistically, culturally, racially/ethnically diverse NNES GTAs may be a reflection of how they will perceive their students from diverse backgrounds in their future classrooms. In this study, the preservice teachers failed to fully benefit from the cultural richness that the NNES GTAs bring to their classrooms. They focused on the fear of not understanding their GTA’s rather than focusing on the positive aspects. It seems as

though they had made up their minds “not to understand” the NNES GTAs from the beginning. The willingness and effort to communicate with NNES GTAs can actually result in the preservice teachers’ better understanding of people who speak different language varieties and who are from different cultures and races. This study supports the call for teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers in such a way that they acquire the necessary positive dispositions and training that will help them meet the expectation of being an effective teacher for *all* students.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This study surveyed preservice teachers on their perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL assessment and ESL methodology courses. The findings of the study are restricted to 262 preservice teachers and the context is limited to one university in the Southwest United States. It may be useful to investigate the perceptions of preservice teachers at other universities around the country. It may also be insightful to conduct a similar investigation with preservice teachers at a predominantly non-white institution to see if the findings will be similar.

This study also exclusively focused on preservice teachers’ perceptions towards GTAs. The scope of the study can be expanded by studying preservice teachers’ perceptions toward NNES professors, who have a higher power status than GTAs.

This study focused on perceptions. One limitation with perception studies is that the respondents may not always provide true answers; the results may represent what the

respondents *report* to feel or believe rather than what they *actually* feel or believe (Dornyei, 2003).

Conclusion

Preservice teachers had both positive and negative views of their NES and NNES GTAs. They claimed to approve of NNES GTAs in the classroom if they were able to understand what the GTAs were saying. However, very often they reported having trouble understanding the speech of even the most English-proficient NNES GTA speaker in ESL-related courses. Their initial bias against NNES GTAs continued. The statement below by a preservice teacher referring to her Asian NNES GTA in an ESL methodology course exemplifies the situation well:

I think for this class I really haven't had a problem at all it's been really good. And I really didn't think much about it until other people started saying stuff the first day of class, you know. Looking at her name, or seeing her walk in. I really didn't think anything about it until everyone else, was you know talking about what if she can't speak up sort of thing, but she's, she's been great so far. She's been fine, we haven't had a problem.

The student ended up being very happy with the NNES GTA; however, her initial bias and other students' negative attitudes make her doubt the NNES GTA and minimize the credibility of the instructor. The preservice teachers immediately misjudged the NNES GTA, a visible minority, due to her having a foreign name and obvious non-American appearance when she first entered the classroom. False judgment, prejudices, and stereotyping are common. Preservice teachers need to "unlearn" these biases and prejudices against NNESs and accept diversity among their instructors, which

in turn will make them sensitive to the diverse learners they will encounter in their own teaching.

Finally, globalization of the English language does not mean that all speakers of English will speak the same version. Preservice teachers need to be aware of “World Englishes” and need to learn and effectively negotiate with instructors and students who speak different varieties of English. English is no longer owned exclusively by “native speakers.” Preservice teachers should be taught and reminded that a “good” instructor or a “good” student is not necessarily someone who is a NES, but also a NNES. Nativeness alone does not determine goodness or quality.

CHAPTER III
NATIVE AND NONNATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING GRADUATE TEACHING
ASSISTANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Overview

This chapter reports on a qualitative longitudinal multiple case study that explored the experiences of nonnative English speaking (NNES) and native English speaking (NES) graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) teaching English as Second Language (ESL) methodology and ESL assessment courses to preservice teachers at a university in the Southwestern United States. The study examined the perceptions of NNES and NES GTAs toward the preservice teachers. Participants were three female NNES GTAs and one female NES GTA. Online journal entries and interviews were the data sources that facilitated an in-depth analysis of the GTAs' perspectives about their students and their teaching experiences. This case study underscores that NNES GTAs faced major challenges in their effort to be recognized as legitimate and competent instructors in their classrooms. The study also summarizes the positive experiences both NNES and NES GTAs gained during the time of their teaching, presents the common themes that have emerged, and provides recommendations for teacher education programs and TESOL educators to evaluate the sources of support provided to GTAs before or during their teaching.

Introduction

The qualifications of native English speaking (NES) and nonnative English speaking (NNES) professionals have been a prominent and an increasing topic of discussion in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics literature (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Liu, 1999; Llurda, 2005; Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Widdowson, 1994). The distinction between a native speaker and nonnative speaker teacher is a major area of focus in language instruction (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). One of the major issues raised is if being a native speaker or nonnative speaker make a difference when teaching a language. The answers are complex. The discussion of differences has extended beyond mere linguistic perspectives to include pedagogical and political perspectives as well (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1996; Rajagopon, 2005). In the last 15 years the dichotomous notion of native versus nonnative speakers has drawn criticism (Davies, 2003; Kachru & Nelson, 1996). The very definition of *nativeness* appears to be complicated both psycholinguistically and socioculturally (Butler, 2007). Davies (1991, 2003) offers a comprehensive discussion of the native speaker in applied linguistics and problematizes the use of the term, declaring the term native speaker is both a myth and a reality. Sociolinguistically, he associates the *native speaker* with confidence, power, and authority: a reality. Psycholinguistically, however, he argues that the native speaker is more of an ideal than a real figure: a myth.

According to Kramsch (1997) native speakership is neither a privilege of birth nor of education, but the “acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and nonnative speakers” (p. 363). Nero (2000, 2001, 2002, 2006) pointed out the limitations of “native/nonnative” speaker paradigm on which she argues the TESOL field is premised. She claims that nativeness and nonnativeness “perpetuates racist/classist assumptions about language, and simultaneously undermines the complexity of actual language use/users in the world” (Nero, 2006, p. 29). Canagarajah (1999) argues that the association of the native speaker with ownership of English and good pedagogy disempowers and marginalizes the nonnative speaking teacher. Widdowson (1994) also problematizes the notion of “ownership of English” which is claimed to belong to its “native speakers” and assumed to be “white”. However, English has become a world language (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Since English has globalized through “colonialism, postcolonialism, and technology, millions of people worldwide (mostly of color) claim and use the language as their own” (Nero, 2006, p. 29). Romney (2006) argues that the value and legitimacy of many varieties of English, specifically Ebonics and World Englishes, is constantly challenged. Romney further explains, “Acceptance of all Englishes (i.e., Creole, native, nonnative, and World Englishes) is acceptance of all English speakers. And acceptance of all Englishes as equally legitimate is acceptance of English as world language.” (p. 194).

Llurda (2004) suggests that language researchers and educators are increasingly accepting of the fact that English is spoken by more people as a second language than as a mother tongue. As a result, researchers and educators are embracing the notion that

English is no longer solely owned by the native speakers, but that ownership is also shared by newly arrived members of the English speaking community who are nonnative speakers. English is being shaped by nonnative speakers as much as its native speakers. For the majority of its users, English is a foreign language; the majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005). For instance, Braine (2004) states that “there are at least four nonnative speakers to every native speaker of English” (p. 13), and Canagarajah (1999) estimates that 80% of the English teaching population worldwide are nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs). Although the TESOL professionals in the United States are overwhelmingly native speakers, the number of nonnative speaking professionals has grown significantly.

Researchers have discussed that NNESTs’ credibility as teachers has often been questioned due to their race, ethnicity, nonnative language status, and even their gender (Amin, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Tang, 1997; Thomas, 1999). Braine (2004) asserts that NNESTs were generally regarded as unequal in knowledge and performance in teaching English compared to NESTs. Phillipson (1996) coined the phrase “the native speaker fallacy” to refer to unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs. The native speaker fallacy arises, he claims, because “an ideal teacher is seen only as a native speaker”- a creation of “political” minds. Although the need for research has always existed, the interest and the amount of research in NNEST studies have increased dramatically in recent years (Llurda, 2005).

As noted, the distinction between a native speaker and nonnative speaker has been widely researched in the context of teaching a language. The research on the

experiences of NNES TESOL educators is limited and only a few studies address the issue of nativeness and nonnativeness (Curtis & Romney, 2006; Kubota, 2002; Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, & Wong, 2006; Major & Yamashiro, 2004; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004).

NNES teacher educators have often been positioned as “unauthentic English speakers” and thus “unauthentic ESL teachers” (Kubota, 2002; Li & Beckett, 2006; Lin, et al. 2006). Lin, et al. (2006) discussed their experiences in investing significant amounts of time and energy to establish themselves as legitimate professors in the eyes of both their NES students and their NES colleagues. They described this experience as a constant requirement to “prove yourself”.

Kubota (2002), an Asian female professor, also discussed how her credibility as an instructor was harshly challenged by her students in an undergraduate, second language teacher education program. The students viewed Kubota as a less competent teacher, perceived her as an illegitimate speaker of English. In her first three years of teaching in this program, her students in their course evaluations stated that Kubota’s English proficiency was a “barrier” and a “limiting factor” in her understanding and answering their questions. The students did not have similar views regarding the course co-instructor, a NES white professor. The irony, as Kubota noted, is that “these students were preparing themselves to become second-language teachers charged with advocating linguistic and cultural diversity in the schools” (p. 297).

Very few studies to date have investigated the experiences and self-perceptions of international GTAs who teach American undergraduate students. Lui’s (2005) study

has been the first to fill this gap. Previous research was mostly related to ITAs' language proficiency (specifically, pronunciation) and mainly focused on ways new methods of training designed to improve their language skills. Studies have also been conducted on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the American undergraduate students about their ITAs in different universities across the United States (Brown, 1992; Fox & Gay, 1994; Plakans, 1997; Rubin & Smith, 1990).

Lui's (2005) study on four NNES Chinese graduate teaching assistants (CGTAs) who taught freshman composition to NES undergraduate American students examined the CGTAs' teaching experiences and their students' attitudes toward them. Lui's interviews revealed that the CGTAs' biggest challenge was language related. Participants stated that they were unable to demonstrate linguistic advantage over NESs in the areas of vocabulary, idioms, accuracy, and fluency in speaking. The linguistic difficulties the participants experienced made them feel less confident and more intimidated in front of their NES students who spoke English more fluently than they did. Lui referred to this phenomenon as nonnative speaker syndrome.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the major issues concerning NES and NNES GTAs who taught undergraduate ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses to predominantly monolingual white native English speaking American preservice teachers at a university in the Southwestern United States. The study investigates the invisible power relationship between NNES GTAs and preservice

teachers and captures the challenges and rewards of GTAs teaching the preservice teacher population and as a result, evaluates the sources of support provided to GTAs before or during their teaching.

Theoretical Framework

This research study is guided by a theoretical and pedagogical understanding of critical theory and critical pedagogy. Critical social theory is concerned with issues of power and justice, matters of race, class, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions that construct a social system (Kincheleo, 2004). Through the lens of critical pedagogy one can ask the question of “how” and “why” power/knowledge gets constructed in a particular way and why certain people are legitimized and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are not (McLaren, 1998). According to Davies (1991), from a sociolinguistic perspective native and nonnative speaker is comparable to majority-minority relations and is power driven, identity laden, and confidence affecting (p. 166-167). According to Pennycook (2001), the fundamental element of critical applied linguistics is the exploration of language in social contexts that goes beyond correlations of language and society and instead raises critical questions related to access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance. Mahboob (2006) argues race, ethnicity and language (including accent) in TESOL are closely tied together. Amin (1999) asserts that in the field of TESOL “much attention has been and continues to be paid to the race, ethnicity, culture, and gender of the learners, but far less attention has been given to how these variables in the teacher may

impact on the classroom” (p. 93). This critical outlook will help provide insight into the experiences of NES and NNES GTAs and examine if there are any similarities and/or differences in NES and NNES GTA experiences that result from their being nonnative or native speakers.

The Study

Research Questions

The current study examined experiences and perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs in ESL-related courses. The central research questions for this study are as follows:

- 3) What are the experiences of NNES GTAs and NES GTAs who teach preservice teachers in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses?
- 4) What are the perceptions of NNES and NES GTAs’ of preservice teachers?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative multiple case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of GTAs’ lived experiences and perspectives when teaching ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses to preservice teachers. Triangulation of data sources was used to achieve an in-depth understanding. The study documented the participants’ change in beliefs and feelings towards their teaching and their students over an extended period, revealing their challenges and celebrations during their journey as teachers.

The Site

A major land grant university in the Southwestern United States was the site for this study. This university is situated in a city of approximately 130,000 in a rural area and has a student population of around 47,000. Students come from every state in the United States and 128 foreign countries. According to fall 2005 demographics published at university's "statistical fact book" 77% of students enrolled were white, 8% were hispanic, 2% were black, and 8 % were international. The university is classified as a Research I institution by the Carnegie Foundation. For much of its history, the university attracted students interested in agriculture and engineering. However, the university today is comprehensive, with 10 colleges, including a strong, well-defined College of Education. The college enrolls nearly 4,000 undergraduates and about 1,200 graduate students. It is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and offers B.S., M.Ed., M.S., Ed.D., and Ph.D. degrees.

The Context of the Study

Because this study examined the experiences of NNES and NES GTAs in teaching preservice teachers, it is important to provide background information on this student population.

The preservice teachers were enrolled in the teacher education program in the College of Education and were homogenous in their demographic and experiential backgrounds. Specifically, 90% identified themselves as being from an Anglo-white ethnic background and 96% were female. The majority of students came from rural or

suburban communities. One of the main reasons for attending this university was its proximity to their hometowns. Most of the preservice teachers were seeking a B.S. degree with a major in Interdisciplinary Studies. Options for teacher certification through the department included pre-K-4th grade generalist certification, middle grades 4-8 math/science certification, and middle grades 4-8 language arts/social studies certification.

The university has a strong undergraduate teacher education program. The teacher credential program requires all preservice teachers to take junior-level multicultural and ESL education courses as part of the teacher education curriculum. The teacher education program offers two ESL-related courses: ESL methodology and ESL assessment- which cover various theories and practices related to ESL education. These courses are mandatory for all preservice teachers who are enrolled in the K-8 education program.

The department's goal in requiring these courses is to create awareness and competency among preservice teachers about issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity and to produce teachers competent to work with diverse populations.

Graduate Program

The four GTA participants in this study were doctoral students in ESL Education at this university and taught undergraduate ESL education courses. The graduate ESL Education program is an interdisciplinary program which offers M.S., M.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees for individuals with a professional interest in the teaching of ESL/EFL (English

as a Foreign Language) and teacher education in ESL and EFL contexts. The faculty and graduate students in the program are diverse in their demographic and experiential backgrounds. Although the ESL faculty is small in numbers, the program has attracted a large number of graduate students, including many international students. The American graduate students who are enrolled in the program are predominantly teachers working full-time in the K-12 school system.

The Participants

To consider the complexity of interactions and perspectives fully and to provide an in-depth description and contextualization of each case (Duff, 2008) four participants were selected in this study. The participants were GTAs who taught ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses at a major research university in the Southwestern United States. They were all female and pursuing doctoral degrees in the field of TESOL. Each GTA came from a different country. Three were from outside the United States and NNES and one was American and a NES. They identified themselves as Middle Eastern (two), Asian (one), and American of European descent (one). All of the GTAs already had master's degrees from prestigious universities in the United States. All NNES participants had a very advanced level of English proficiency and graduated from well-known undergraduate universities in their native countries. In addition, all participants had teaching experience in either ESL and/or EFL settings before they taught these undergraduate courses at the university where they were pursuing doctoral degrees.

One significant distinction is that the NNES GTAs in this study unlike international TAs in other studies, taught ESL courses that dealt with language, linguistic issues, and “how to teach English,” which many native speakers claim as their own (Widdowson, 1994).

To protect the identities of the research participants, pseudonyms of Ayda, Mei, Noor, and Sally were given to each GTA. Table 8 provides a detailed overview of the four participants.

TABLE 8
Overview of Case Study Participants

	Ayda	Mei	Noor	Sally
Program	Ph.D. in ESL	Ph.D. in ESL	Ph.D. in ESL	Ph.D. in ESL
Education	Education	Education	Education	Education
Age	30	35	40	50
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Ethnic background	Middle Eastern	Asian	Middle Eastern	American of European descent
Age/Grade when learned English	9/3rd grade	12/6th grade	13/7th grade	native speaker
Previous degrees and Majors	B.A., M.A.; Language Ed., TESOL	B.A., M.A.; English Lang. & French Lit., TESOL	B.A., M.A. & M.S.; English Lit., TEFL, M.I.S	B.A., M.Ed.; English/Ele- mentary Ed., Leadership and Policy Studies
Years spent in the U.S.	9 years	6 years	8 years	Entire life

The Graduate Teaching Assistants' Profiles

Ayda

Ayda graduated from one of the top universities in her home country. She started to learn English when she was nine years old and attended a private school that had an intensive English language program. She studied foreign language education in her undergraduate program. To fulfill her long-time desire to earn a graduate degree in the United States, she applied and was accepted into a well-known M.A. TESOL program. This program provided various ESL teaching opportunities, and she accepted all that were available in order to gain teaching experience. Ayda later applied for the Ph.D. program at another American university and started the ESL Education program. Ayda was very excited and happy when her professor offered her the opportunity to teach ESL methodology courses beginning in fall 2004.

Mei

Mei also graduated from one of the top universities in her native country. The university she went to was famous for its foreign language education and literature program. Mei started learning English at the age of 12, in sixth grade. She always had a special interest in the English language since childhood and always had a good relationship with her English teachers. She was attracted to Western culture and enjoyed the Western pop songs, pop music, and movies. Everything foreign was intriguing to her. Although she majored in French literature and minored in English education, she always preferred English. Therefore, she decided to study for her M.A. in TESOL at a

prestigious university in the United States. After graduating, she taught EFL for five years in her home country, then returned to the United States to earn a Ph.D. in ESL Education. After two years in the Ph.D. program, she was offered a teaching assistant position and she accepted it without hesitation. She started teaching in fall 2006.

Noor

Noor also graduated from one of the top universities in her country. In her country, English is taught beginning in the seventh grade, but for only three hours per week using the grammar translation method. However, Noor stated, English for communication was learned when she was admitted to the English literature program in college. Noor later pursued a master's degree in teaching EFL at the same university. During her master's program, she was the only student, out of 10, who was offered an opportunity to teach EFL. At the same time, she also taught ESP (English for Specific Purposes) at a technical university in the same city, a feat that made her proud. When she applied to the Ph.D. program in ESL Education, the program chair told her that because of her background, she would be offered the chance to teach once admitted to the program. As an international student, Noor had to take the English proficiency test in order to teach. All of her grades were higher than 90, making her eligible to teach. She started teaching the ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses in spring 2004.

Sally

As a child, Sally attended many different schools because her father was in the military. When she finished high school she began working as a secretary and did not go to college immediately. Her parents did not believe that she was “college material.” However, she always wanted to go to college. When her children were in elementary school she decided to get certified as a teacher and earned a bachelor’s degree in English and elementary education. After graduation, she taught for several years at different elementary school grades. Sally later received a master’s degree in Leadership and Policy Studies from the same university, after which she was offered a job as assistant principal at an elementary school. After serving in this role for two years, her colleagues encouraged her to take the steps required to become a principal. However, she wanted to pursue a doctoral degree. She applied to the Ph.D. program and got accepted. In fall 2006, after one year in the ESL Education program, she began teaching the ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses.

Data Collection

For triangulation purposes, two data collection methods were used. First, the participants in this study were asked to write, via a Web log, or blog (Lichtman, 2006), about their experiences after each class session. Blogs served the purpose of an online journal. Each blog was kept confidential through the use of a password and only the blog author (the GTA) had access to write or view the entries. No guiding questions were provided to participants when writing their blogs. The length and how often the GTAs

blogged varied based on their experiences. They were instructed that they could focus on any encounters (positive or negative) they had with their students inside and outside the classroom. The blogs provided the GTAs' immediate reactions after their classes. The four participants provided a total of 136 entries between spring 2006 and the end of fall 2007. In addition, at the end of fall 2007, 90-minute semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C for list of interview questions) were conducted with the GTAs. Table 9 shows the data collection methods in detail.

TABLE 9
Summary of Data Sources

	Ayda	Mei	Noor	Sally
No. of blog entries	40	18	37	41
No. of words in blogs ^a	6,299	5,298	3,215	12,763
Semesters blogs written	spring and fall 2006; spring and fall 2007	fall 2006 and fall 2007	spring and fall 2006; spring and fall 2007	fall 2006; spring and fall 2007
Time of interviews	December 2007	December 2007	January 2008	December 2007
Length of interviews	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1 hour	1.5 hrs

^a Some entries were longer and less frequent, and some were shorter but more frequent.

Analysis

The data analysis was mainly inductive. Categories and themes emerged from the collected blog and interview data. Merriam (1998) called for multiple case studies to be performed in two steps: “within-case analysis” followed by “cross-case analysis.” During within-case analysis, each case was treated as a comprehensive case in and of

itself. Contextual variables that may have an influence on the case were examined. After each case was analyzed cross-analysis was made and cross-analysis themes were identified. As a result, valuable insights were gained by comparing and contrasting the experiences of GTAs who taught the same courses. In order to find overarching themes both blog entries and transcribed interview discussions were divided into text segments which were paragraphs, sentences, or parts of sentences that related to a distinct concept. Each text segment was classified into topical category labeled with a code. Themes were formed by grouping the common responses of the participants that implied the same meaning of the underlying idea and were grouped under the relevant category they belonged to.

The Researcher and the Researched

The researcher and the participants shared a similar background as well as the same gender. In many ways the researcher was an insider to them. All were doctoral students in the same program and all were teaching ESL-related courses to preservice teachers. The researcher was a colleague and a friend to them. As a result, this close relationship helped the participants talk more freely and sincerely about their experiences and perspectives with the researcher.

Findings

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of four GTAs who taught ESL-related courses to preservice teachers. The study also aimed to uncover

whether the experiences of GTAs varied based on whether they were a NES or NNES. Another goal was to find out the GTAs' perceptions of their students. Although the GTAs had vastly different personal backgrounds, perceptions, and identities as instructors, common themes or issues emerged from the data: 1) teaching is complex (linguistic, cultural, and racial issues are involved); 2) beliefs about teaching can change; 3) challenges are faced as an "outsider" instructor; and 4) teaching provides experiences of joy.

Before the discussion of general themes, an overview of each GTA's initial reflection on the time when they were assigned to teach ESL courses is provided to help readers understand each GTA's initial thoughts and disposition.

Initial Bliss of the Teaching Assignment

Each of the four GTAs were full of excitement and surprised when they found out that they were assigned to teach ESL methodology and/or ESL assessment courses to preservice teachers. All of them were enthusiastic about teaching.

When Mei, Noor, Ayda, and Sally were offered the teaching opportunity, they immediately accepted it because they always loved teaching and wanted to share their experience and knowledge with students. They thought that teaching was a great opportunity that did not come along very often while studying in a graduate program in ESL Education. NNES GTAs were aware of the difficulties in securing a teaching position in the U.S., so this was like a dream come true. They believed this was the perfect time for them to put everything they had learned about ESL education into

practice. Mei, Noor, and Ayda believed in their English language skills and had gained confidence from their previous language teaching experiences. Although standing in front of exclusively American students as a NNES was intimidating to Mei, she described this as a “healthy stress level.” Ayda said, “definitely had millions and billions of butterflies in my stomach.” Mei, Noor, and Ayda anticipated all kinds of challenges, but generally were very positive, optimistic, and ready for the new experience. Initially Sally was worried also because her teaching experiences were exclusively at the elementary level and never at the college level. She got nervous and doubted whether she could really do the job or not. However, she loved teaching and believed she got a lot of her energy and motivation from her students.

The Complexity of Teaching

Linguistic Issues

All the NNES GTAs in this study had very high, almost native-like, English proficiency. Noor proudly expressed how she passed the English language proficiency exam with very high scores. “This is a nightmare for international students,” she said, “I didn’t study even for one minute for that test and then all of my grades were higher than 90. And then I remember when I went for my oral interview, there were three ladies and they really, really liked my English and they gave me a lot of compliments”. This proficiency exam is required for all international students who want to teach at the university. Despite their high English proficiency and their experiences of teaching, at various time, the NNES GTAs in this study faced challenges because they were

nonnative speakers of English. Kubota (2001) asserted that in many U.S. college campuses ITAs and professors from other countries who use different varieties of English face a challenge in communication with undergraduate students who are native speakers of English. Kubota noted that often a speaker who uses non-mainstream language carries all the communicative burden and members of the dominant language group feel justified to reject his/her role as a listener.

When the NNES GTAs in this study were asked “How confident are you about your English skills?” they answered with the following:

Mei: I feel it’s... my English skills are enough for me to express myself in the academic setting and I feel my English skills are enough for me to do my everyday communications. So, when I’m... not tired, my English skills are usually good.

Noor: Well I believe my accent is quite easy to understand. It’s not like a native, but it’s easy to understand and then I’ve always had a very good vocabulary.

Ayda: I do believe, of course this is debatable and it’s open to a discussion, but I think I communicate well. I think I express myself well. I think I speak clearly that people understand me....I consider myself highly advanced English speaker in various ways; in speaking, listening, reading and writing I would say in those four skills.

Although NNES GTAs were confident in their language skills at times they were challenged by their students. Noor shared the experience below:

I remember one student came to me at the end of a class and told me that in the first session she couldn’t understand even a word I was saying. And I was wondering how, is it possible not to understand a word I was saying?...She knew that I was not American and this made her block her mind. Okay, she is not American, I don’t understand her English. She didn’t even try to listen to me. She just believed that she couldn’t understand my English. Just as a language issue...

This example underscores the fact that the moment students recognized their GTAs as non-English speaker and non-American, they mentally blocked their mind and

came to class with predispositions that they would not understand their instructor because s/he was NNES. The “English” the NNES instructor spoke did not fit the mainstream one. Rubin and Smith (1990) stated, “Undergraduates need to be disabused of the stereotype that teachers who speak with nonnative accents are necessarily going to be poor instructors” (p. 350). Ayda stated that while in class, she often felt that she was being monitored by her students. She continually felt they were concentrating on her language skills and monitoring her English. She said, “If I do make a mistake they’re going to immediately notice that. It just creates a lot of anxiety on me. I feel, as if, at times...when I’m nervous and I’m anxious in front of the class, I make more mistakes.”

Ayda’s blog entry is an indication of her feeling:

The news is the student (J.) started it, told me that everybody was confused with the assignment. Hard to believe! I already spent one session before about what I wanted in the project, the problem is, it is okay they may not understand, it is the fact that they sounded as if it was my fault that I did not do a good job explaining when I talked to them about the assignment. I remember explaining it in very good details. Today at one point I felt so stressed that I really needed water so bad cuz my mouth was so dry! Very often the students make me feel I am not adequate. Am I that bad in communicating with students? ² (Ayda; *March 23, 2006*).

Ayda felt helpless because no matter how much she tried to communicate, the students did not seem to “understand” her, causing her to feel frustrated, discouraged, and inadequate. Furthermore, Ayda noted:

It seems whatever I teach they will not be interested in learning. I feel the whole time, the classes attitude is, "what is she saying?", students looking at each other, as if they are so lost...Ohh what did you say? I explain to them the page I want them to look at, they do not understand!!! Then, I tell them very nicely and

² The blog entries were informal, free conversations therefore, the GTAs did not mind the spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. The researcher copied the journal entries directly from the blogs without editing.

slowly, later on my evaluations they write, "well I didn't appreciate the teacher talking to us like we are 3rd graders" well if you shut me down, and pretend everything is my fault, because I do not speak 100% perfect English how do you want me to act...I don't know I provided some writing samples of TAKS writings today, both NES and NNES writings...they were shocked to see the ESL writings belonged to either 6,7,or 8th grade students. I feel as if they live in their bubble and there are no different individuals on this planet... (Ayda; April 15, 2006).

Ayda felt her students viewed her with very low “credibility”. Her students had a “monolingual ear” (Chacon, 2006) and were not willing to “understand” a different variety of English and seemed to be puzzled. Like Ayda, Mei was concerned about her students not understanding her. Mei posted many examples in her blog about times when her students felt “confused” about the class or the projects. Mei also posted in her blog that “there is something that they are very good at: emailing me to ask something I either have announced in class or posted on webct with explicit instruction. Example like this is not a rare case.” Mei shared the example below:

hey mei –
 i think that a lot of people are really confused and overwhelmed about what is due and when, including me :).....
 i am a 'list' person and i think it would really help if you could.....
 ...i think that would help everyone a lot. just a suggestion :) thanks! –CF

First of all, I've said it at least 3 times about addressing me by my last name. Nope, not happening. Second, I talked about midterm in the beginning of the semester, on the syllabus (twice), and on Monday, and yet she still had to ask me through email. Three, oh no, not everyone is overwhelmed, only SHE who is CONFUSED ABOUT EVERYTHING. (Mei; September 28, 2007).

After sharing various e-mails her students sent about how “confused” they are in her blog, Mei wrote, “My final comment: If I had gotten my Ph.D as a NES, would I be treated this way?” Mei stated she believed she was always clear and explicit when giving instructions. As noted, some students mentally block their mind and come to class with

predispositions that they would not understand their instructor because they are NNES; especially if they have an Asian English accent.

Other students challenged the GTAs' linguistic competence as an excuse for their lack of preparation and insufficient knowledge for the exam. Noor said:

I even remember the name of that student. She came to me and told me that she couldn't understand the wording of the questions. Uh, it was funny because I had given them, it was a quiz, and I had given them true/false questions and the sentences were copied exactly from the book. So, I could see for myself that it's, that they can always use my English as an excuse to compensate for their own weaknesses.

The NNES GTAs were often considered the cause of a student's low performance. In one of her blog entries, Ayda reflected on how disappointed she got after she saw some students' comments at the end-of-semester evaluations. The student wrote:

I felt that this professor could not handle the language demands that this class had. She had trouble understanding our answers especially if we happened to use more complex diction which as university students we are almost required to have in most other courses. This problem with understanding played an important role when we took an essay test. I felt as if I had to use small words so she could grasp my meaning. She tried really hard and was willing to learn from us, but isn't her job suppose to be teaching us? (*Ayda; February 12, 2006*).

Ayda is highly proficient in English. However, as the above example shows the student believed that she was not able to handle the language demands of the course. The student noted that the lack of language proficiency was even more obvious when students tried to get their points across and their instructor, Ayda, failed to understand them unless stated in easily understood terms.

Cultural Issues

The data suggested that all NNES GTAs believed that there were cultural differences between them and the American preservice teachers. For example, Noor compared the relationship and status between teachers and students in America to that in her native country, where students show great respect to their professors. Quite often she felt unhappy, and sometimes angry, with some of the students in her class because of the way they talked and acted. Many things were new to her, especially in the first few semesters she taught. Noor stated:

I learned from that class that I should inform them that I'm from a different culture and because of cultural differences I want them to observe certain things, even though they think okay, this is America, and you are teaching in America so you should, you should accept us. But I started even writing it in my syllabus that I don't want to see certain things in my class and that they should take a few steps and I will take a few steps just to have a better understanding of each other.

Noor expressed that she did not appreciate hearing students talking in class or putting their feet on the chairs in front of them. Coming from a Middle Eastern culture, Noor stated that these kinds of behaviors were a sign of disrespect toward the instructor. As the following blog shows, Noor was quite frustrated by some of her students' manners. She wrote:

I had put it in my syllabus and highlighted it that they were not supposed to put their feet on the chairs in front of them. Still I noticed some of them (just a couple) were doing it. That's why I sent them an email and reminded them of it and told them that I did not want to call on anybody in the class in this regard. Last week I noticed one of them who used to do it was looking at me with hostility (as if I care at all!). She kept talking during the class which made me stop and look at her to make her stop. But the second I started talking she started too which made me ask her to stop talking. She obviously would have killed me if she could. I wonder what makes her think that it is O.K for her to talk as I am teaching and it is not O.K for me to ask her at first indirectly not to talk when I am teaching or explaining about a project (*Noor; March 27, 2007*).

Stephens (1997) wrote, “misunderstandings that can occur between people of different cultures may not be reducible exclusively to language difficulties, but may be also attributable to different sets of experiences, different expectations and even profoundly different ways of thinking” (p. 123). Although the situation Noor described is not purely a misunderstanding, it is definitely a product of different sets of experiences and expectations.

In Noor’s first quote, she clearly explains that she understands the complexity of culture and the role it plays. She believes that both she and her students should compromise to have a better cultural understanding. Noor admitted that at times, she would pretend not to know all the characteristics of the American culture to give her students the joy of teaching something new about their culture. Noor stated, “like when it’s, Halloween and I ask them some question, even if I know the answer I would ask them some questions about Halloween and they get excited that they are giving me some information I’m not aware of, I don’t know about”. This is one example of how the dynamics of culture can come into play in the student-teacher relationship. However, Amin (1999) and Lin et al. (2006) avoid “I-don’t-know” strategy. They believe as female NNES and faculty of color who struggle for recognition and credibility they avoid following this strategy. It is commonly believed that stating “I-don’t-know” can create an open and conducive learning environment and improve the teacher-student relationship because it humanizes the teacher. Lin et al. (2006) believe this strategy creates unjustified challenge for double minority faculty members who have to be twice as good as others to be considered competent. As one of Ayda’s students wrote in the

end-of-semester evaluation "...She tried really hard and was willing to learn from us, but isn't her job suppose to be teaching us?" Using the "I-don't-know" strategy by Noor may at times result in opposite reactions as such and damage her credibility and recognition by her students (Lin et al., 2006).

Coming from a Middle Eastern culture, Ayda, like Noor, also did not appreciate her students putting their feet up during class.

Ohh the other thing I forgot to mention...I always told my students the things that offended me in my first class, however this time I forgot about it. I would always tell them, please do not put your feet on the chair front...There was a student who did that the whole class & because I forgot to mention that I couldn't say a word. I should have talked about the guidelines before. My bad! (*Ayda; January 31, 2007*)

Because Ayda did not mention this on the first day of class, she believed it would have been inappropriate to confront the student about this behavior. However, if Ayda had felt more authority and more empowered she could have asked this even after the first day.

During Mei's first semester of teaching, some of her students filed a complaint with departmental administrators about her "demanding" course load, specifically the classroom project they were required to complete. Mei stated that in her country, it would have to be a "life and death" situation for students to file a complaint against an instructor. Plakans (1997) explained that if students have difficulties and are feeling pressured by the workload in required courses, they are reluctant to go to their ITAs for help if those TAs have different cultural and pedagogical expectations. Mei found it difficult to comprehend why her students did not come to her first to discuss the problems they were having with the project and ask for clarification and guidance. This

complaint was one of the most difficult situations Mei had to deal with in her teaching career.

I am from Asian culture where people see education as a biggest thing in life. We are trained to demand ourselves and to consider hardworking as a natural part of learning. Of course, being submissive and obedient emerges as the byproduct of this kind of cultural context. Here in the United States, things work different in higher education, at least for educational majors (*Mei; January 17, 2007*).

In his study of Chinese GTAs who taught freshman composition classes, Lui (2005) defined the challenges the Chinese GTAs faced as “the gap between their understanding about American culture and expectations about American undergraduates and the expectations of their teachers by American students.” Although all the NNES GTAs had lived in the United States for some time before they began teaching, that gap still existed.

Since Sally was American and a NES, she did not face the cross-cultural issues that Noor, Ayda, and Mei faced. She had another perspective on culture due to her age and educational background. For Sally, the challenges were different. The biggest challenge, she wrote, was the issue of attendance. She wrote, “If you’re not there, you don’t learn.” Sally was in her 50s and came from a background and culture where attending class was extremely important. It was an indirect and direct sign of respect to the course, the course material, and the professor.

Okay, when I was in college, in some courses, and probably a lot of courses that I take now, the attendance is up to you. But if you don’t come, you don’t learn. But for some reason, with the undergraduate students, attendance is supposed to be more important. You’re supposed to want them to come, you’re supposed to grade off if they don’t come, we’re supposed to take attendance and that, and so I vary each semester.

Sally viewed students' absence as significant and as a challenge. She was quite bothered by students' frequent e-mails asking her if they were going to do something important in class because they were going to miss it. Her response was always "yes, everything we do is important."

Racial Issues

As discussed earlier, during Mei's first semester of teaching, eight of her students filed a complaint with department administrators regarding Mei's "demanding" course load, especially regarding a term project. The students complained that Mei did not give clear instructions on the project, and as a result, they were quite worried about their performance and grades. Mei said:

As I said, I do not understand why my students would bypass me and file the complaint as they were sabotaged by me.....I do believe what put me in misery was the foreignness of me that distanced those Ss [students]. They didn't feel comfortable talking to a person this foreign. I have to be self-paranoid of all this racism thing, but it really seems like the case. I've never encountered this type of racism occurring disguised with these subtleties. My Ss felt more comfortable talking to Dr L and Dr F because they thought these two come from the same background (race and language), so they should be able to understand how bad they were treated by this "alien". There is no way for me to confirm this idea with anyone, but I try not to think about it. Even though I have to admit its existence, I still believe these kids they had no idea how biased they were when they took the action of filing official complaints (*Mei; October 26, 2006*).

Mei believed that being an "alien" and her "race" played a factor in her students' filing a complaint through higher channels instead of going directly to her. Mei was not aware that some students were having problems with their project. She believed that being a NNES of a different race was the true factor behind their complaint. As Motha (2006) stated race is like an "enormous elephant standing silently in the room, plainly

visible to everyone present and yet unmentionable” (p. 163). As Mei explained it, she considered herself the one “who probably had a weaker position in the department and who can easily be challenged, and who would give in, more easily, so to speak.” Kubota (2002) claims instances as such demonstrate that “...instructional fields are indeed site of struggle for power. Compared to faculty who have a higher social status in terms of race, gender, class, and language, minority faculty (including myself) tend to be confronted with more intense struggles for power” (p. 302).

Mei, in her blog further explained:

This is the 1st time in my entire life that I have felt about being a person of color. I came from two major cities from both countries. I was raised in a prestigious family and well-educated. I always had my head high when walking among my people and/or the people in the cities I traveled. Nonetheless, in this little college town of X [the States name is deleted due to confidentiality], I felt like a person who was born with shame or guilt for being a yellow-colored person. Ironically, Asians are often called “super minority” in other big cities, for their excellent performance inside and outside of school. I had a great support system—my boss, my other Ph.D. international friends, and my family, but I didn’t have anything positive from the American side of the circus. I hate to see the wall between white and nonwhite groups, but there indeed has been one (*Mei; January 17, 2007*).

Mei admitted that it was the first time she felt as a person of color; as if like a person who was born with shame or guilt. However, Mei remained optimistic and learned to accept things happen for a reason. She believed what she had experienced prepared her for her future teaching. Mei noted:

Everything happens for a reason. From this experience I know I will be more sympathetic for other people of colors and will be able to recognize that the serious racial issues still exist in most part of the US. If I will stay in this country, this experience had prepared me for the future as well. Those students were still youngsters. They misjudged me and my teaching in the beginning. It also gave a pretty good reasoning why there has been a warning sign about

discrimination warning on the 1st floor of our building, because they really need to be reminded all the time (*Mei; January 17, 2007*).

From Noor's perspective her race did not have a direct and major effect on her teaching experiences as Mei. Even though Noor was a minority, she was not as obviously a "visible" minority as Mei. Similar to Mei, Noor perceived dislike and prejudice among her students which made her feel uncomfortable in class. Noor, as a Middle Eastern, stated:

To be honest, not with most of the class, but no matter what every semester I can, I can see there are some students that dislike the fact that I'm from X [she says the name of her country], or I'm a Muslim, or I'm not a white American. The way they look at you, the way you, you know, their expressions never change. You joke, they don't laugh. It's just they, they just stare at you and, yeah I've seen it for myself with some students but, definitely every semester.

Although Noor admitted that it was not all of the students but only some, she still encountered hostility in the classroom each semester she taught.

Ayda, who was also from a Middle Eastern country, had very similar experiences as Noor and Mei. She often felt discomfort by the looks of her students and expressions also.

Change of Teaching Practices and/or Beliefs

Whether it was due to being complained to the department administrators, or an ESL methodology course was offered in mid-December and ninety six students were enrolled in it, Mei's course section for spring was closed. As a result, she did not teach the following semester. Mei wondered why she was not allowed to teach when all the other GTAs kept their classes. She expressed her belief that she would never know the

true reason, so she put it behind her. However, the experience caused her to change her teaching practice and beliefs. After meeting with the department administrator and modifying her course syllabus³, making it less “demanding”, she reported that her situation improved. Mei noted, “This experience taught me that teaching in United States, it’s not about teaching, it’s about how to survive, how to come up with a way to compromise your teaching beliefs”. She believed the incident of students’ filing a “complaint” and her classroom experiences led her to decide to be a student pleaser whose courses would “sell,” thus creating happy students and happy administrators. She said:

...you know, I had to stop, you know, sticking to my own beliefs and be a troublemaker, you know. If I were keeping, challenging my students, I would get into trouble again, and I would lose my assistantship, and because I really wanted to teach again, so...I didn’t really vocalize on it, and, on this kind of...dishonest, professional demure in the department, and then, I kept it quiet, because I really wanted funding from the department, unfortunately.

After not being able to teach for one semester, Mei got an opportunity to teach again. In this new situation she changed her teaching style and beliefs. She decided to simplify everything in her new syllabus and curriculum. She literally took the course down to freshman level and, with the department’s permission, decided to do an online class. She said:

So, I mean, I don’t know whether that’s...the pitfall of American, the current, or the contemporary American education, or it’s because of the cultural differences, cultural conflict between my native culture and the local culture. I don’t know where it, how the problem emerged this way, but the problem was there, I had to

³ It is important to note that GTAs had access to each others course syllabus (they often exchanged course materials such as videos and articles). Although every section used the same mandatory textbook, the additional classroom assignments varied according to GTAs personal or academic interest (i.e. Mei was very interested in intercultural telecommunication projects).

deal with it, so, I had to survive in this very narrow gap. And that's how I came up with the hybrid, teaching approach. Not approach, teaching format.

Mei believed teaching online minimized the challenges and prejudices faced by a NNES, an international GTA, and from a different culture. When online, she stated, "My skin color or my language or my language proficiency or my accent, you know, don't really have any effect on them or my teaching quality, in this sense, because they don't think about me as much." In a sense Mei claimed, "Out of sight, out of mind" After the complaint incident, Mei became more "generous" with grades and started to give 90 percent of her student's grades of "A." In her second semester of teaching she told her students:

I said, "well, I don't tend to give out a lot of Bs or Cs because I believe as long as my students try their best, I'm willing to give out good grades to everybody." I believe that's the reason why, that's probably part of the reason why they stay in my session... Even though, you know, maybe some of them are not happy with the fact that I'm a non-English speaking, non-native English speaking teacher. It's all about grades. It's all about keeping them happy.

Mei stated giving high grades was only a strategy to overshadow and eliminate the issues raised by her being a NES and an Asian. Ayda had a similar experience with students worrying about grades. The second semester that she taught, she gave a test and a final exam on which the majority of students did not do well. In her end-of-semester evaluations, most of the students complained that the grades they received were not a true representation of their knowledge. Ayda believed the students ignored all of the other valuable projects offered and focused only on grades.

It made me redefine my teaching skills in terms of practices. You know what I did last time? I made the test from now on, I do test their knowledge. I still give them two exams each semester, a midterm and a final. But how I do it is, I make

the exams much easier than I have done in the past. And because I don't want them to complain about it...

Previously, Ayda asked exam questions that required students to apply analytical and critical thinking however, after that semester she purposely prepared the exams that were not as difficult. Ayda also believed giving easy exams or grades does not add another level of challenge she has to face as a NNES GTA.

Similarly, Noor also decided to change many aspects of her teaching. She decided to be more strict with her students. She reviewed each exam in class to ensure that everything was explicit and fair. If, after the test was administered, she discovered something wrong with a question or a point she had missed, she did not let that effect students' grades. However, she soon realized that some students took advantage of the situation and pushed her to accept wrong information they had written in an exam.

I learned to mention it in advance that okay, we want to review the test, but it doesn't mean that you should try to impose, whatever you think is correct. We just accept the correct answer, but we will discuss it. So, I tried to be tougher there, in general, I guess what I compare what I'm doing right now to the first or the second semester I have tried to be more strict. I think I had to because as you know the simple fact that I'm non-American and other things, makes it more difficult for me to teach, so I decided that it's better to be more strict.

After this experience, Noor decided not to review the test and negotiate answers with the students. As already noted, some students challenged her regarding the correctness of test items and specifically focused on language issues.

The “Outsiders” and “Insiders” Perspectives

“I feel...like an outsider when standing in front of the class.”

This is how Mei felt at times when she taught the preservice teachers. This sentiment was echoed by Noor and Ayda as well. They had tried to understand where their students were coming from and why they thought or acted the way they did. However, from time to time, they believed that their students did not do the same for them. In their own ways, these instructors tried to “help them understand the people outside of their circle.” They stated they were not sure if they were successful because the way they were treated at times indicated that there was a lot of “room for improvement.” The three GTAs had lived in the United States more than five years before they taught preservice teachers. They considered themselves “Americanized” in different ways and levels. They often wondered how NNES GTAs in other disciplines dealt with issues in their classrooms.

These NNES GTAs believed their students felt “pushed” in the face of even the most minimal challenge. Noor said even before she started teaching, she had heard from international students in other departments that “the minute they have a problem they would rush to your supervisor or the department head and say that we don’t understand her English.” These stories, as Mei found, created insecurities in each NNES instructor.

All of the GTAs in this study argued that some students consistently offered intriguing ideas in class and were always engaged. They brought new information to the class and shared external resources. These groups of students knew what they were supposed to do and mastered the assignments. Other students, however, did not know

what they were doing and failed to accomplish the assigned tasks. All of the GTAs in this research also believed that many of their students did not want to be in these ESL methodology and assessment courses and thus lacked motivation. The NES and NNES GTAs in this study specifically noted that it was difficult to teach and keep in class students who were not motivated. As noted, Sally also believed that her students lacked motivation. However, as an “insider” who did not experience challenges regarding language, culture, and race, Sally had pride and faith in her students. She was excited about her role in placing competent and caring teachers into the education system. As she said:

Because I used to think when I went from third grade to second grade teaching I used to think the more I went down, the more I could catch the students and motivate them to be excited about school. And now I’ve realized no, if I started at the teacher level, and started with training the teachers, then they would train the children. And so it’s actually a better place to start and, I’m excited about them. And I tell them that. I’m excited they’re going to be a teacher.

As an ‘insider’, Sally had positive teaching experiences. She did not perceive any of the concerns that the NNES GTAs recognized and looked forward to her students becoming teachers. Sally’s excitement was one that was not shared by NNES GTAs who have faced various difficulties due to not being as “privileged” as an insider.

The Joy of Teaching

Although the GTAs—specifically the NNES GTAs—faced different challenges in teaching preservice teachers, they learned and developed strategies to cope with challenges, which led to encouraging feedback and good teaching evaluations from their students.

Ayda shared some of the end-of-semester evaluations written by her students.

The students seem to have gained a good understanding of the needs of English language learners (ELLs) in their future classrooms. The students wrote:

“I feel like there was a lot of different view points presented and gave me a lot of ideas as to how I can be prepared to teach my ELL students.”

“I had never really thought about my approach to teaching ELL students until this class. I plan on teaching at an inner-city school, so what I learned in this class is going to be important.”

Ayda stated that even if she reached only a couple of students in her classroom each semester, she had made a difference in those students’ lives.

An end-of-semester evaluation from Mei’s class was:

“Yes, I believe this course allowed me to connect information to my career as a future teacher. It provided me with different ideas to work with ESL or ELL learners in my classroom. In addition, the course assisted me to have a better understanding of the ESL or ELL student’s hardships in learning English.”

Noor stated that despite all the challenges, she still had positive experiences with her students. Some students were consistently engaged and wanted to learn about Noor, her country, her language, and her culture. Noor considered being able to teach an invaluable experience. In her blog, she wrote about a specific positive incident. A student commented on the experience she had with an international conversation partner as part of their course requirement:

In the middle of all this a very nice student said that she and her friend had had wonderful experience in ELI classes with their language learners and that it had been the most rewarding and interesting experience of this semester. She also said that ELI language learners were also extremely enjoying conversing with them. It was such a big relief (*Noor, February, 23, 2007*).

At times, Sally worried about her students who did not attend class often, had problems learning the course material, and did not write well. However, at the end of semester she was always amazed by her students and believed they were going to be good teachers.

Teaching preservice teachers might seem complicated when we look at the experiences of these GTAs. However, it seems that the students they have reached provide them the incentive and motivation to be persistent in their mission and have commitment to what they believe.

Discussion

This study examined GTAs' experiences of teaching preservice teachers. An in-depth, longitudinal examination of GTAs' inner voices regarding their classroom experiences was conducted. The participants indicated that as college-level instructors, they experienced challenges as well as celebrations. The challenges resulted mainly from their cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds and brought change to their teaching beliefs and practices.

Hill-Jackson (2007) discussed the "three attitudes or consciousness patterns of White pre-service teachers in multicultural classrooms" (p. 30) as: unconscious, responsive, and critical consciousness. In the responsive stage, she explained, white preservice teachers were "introduced to the cultures of others and become curious but not totally accepting as it relates to the new knowledge about other cultures" (p. 31). The analysis of the NNES GTAs' narratives reported that some preservice teachers were not

fully aware of the complexities of culture; they were introduced to the “other” culture of the NNES GTA, but did not completely embrace it because it was “unknown”. As Mei expressed, the preservice teachers were “comfortable talking to their own kind” (known) but were not comfortable with the “outsider” (other).

I think students are also victims by their surroundings because they got so comfortable in their little circles, you know, their circles of their own people, and everybody has the fear of unknown. And once they know the international people are very friendly and are fun and, you know, there will be more, knowledge exchange and everything. I do believe some of them will change their perspective, but it is just a comfort level. When they had to deal with the international GTA, they had to step out of their little box, their comfort zone, and, for anybody in this world, it's difficult.

Hill-Jackson (2007) further noted, the responsive stage, “is the most treacherous because White pre-service teachers may retreat because their worlds—their comfort zones—have been unsettled.” Some preservice teachers stepped out of their comfort zone and some did not. The ones who were able to do so became “advocates” and the ones who did not became “resisters.” Hill-Jackson, Sewell, and Water (2007) stated that there are two types of students who surface in multicultural courses at predominantly white institutions: advocates and resisters. Advocates are preservice teachers who positively respond to information such as issues of gender, race, white racism, and ethnic stereotyping presented in multicultural courses. On the other hand, resisters have an unreceptive attitude toward critical issues in multicultural education. Similarly in this study, advocates were the preservice teachers who positively responded to being taught by an international and NNES GTA and resisters were those who responded more negatively.

Noor also noted how some of her students “haven’t had enough experience with non-American, non-English speaking people. So they don’t feel comfortable listening to somebody with an accent, or somebody different”. In other words, not one of their “own”. Holliday (2005) described this as “Self” and “Other”. The Other is described as “something which is constructed as opposite to the familiar, with often falsely attributed negative or exotic characteristics which are opposite to the positive characteristics of the Self” (p. 19). He argued the ‘native speaker’ students and colleagues are usually seen as “unproblematic self” and ‘nonnative speaker’ students and colleagues are seen as the “culturally problematic Other”.

The common background, language, culture, and race of Sally with the preservice teachers caused Sally not to experience the same complexities as NNES GTAs. The issues Sally experienced with her students were mostly administrative such as attendance of the students. Sally did not notice the lack of appreciation students had for diversity, nor did she face any of the challenges the NNES GTAs faced. In her perspective, most things were going fine and the students were going to become great teachers.

Being a NES or NNES GTA made a difference in the participants’ experiences. Being a NNES brings aspects of language; culture and race are also interwoven into the experience. For instance, Lippi-Green (1997) stated that language discrimination becomes more visible based on the race of the NNES. She claimed discrimination is not directed at all foreign accents, but only accents that are linked to skin that is not white, or that signal a third-world homeland. The idea of NES and NNES as Pennycook (1999)

argues, is, “interwoven with issues of race and ethnicity, as one’s nativeness as a speaker of English is often assumed to correlate with the paleness of one’s skin” (p. 333). As an Asian NNES female professor, Kubota (2002) pointed out that students’ perceptions of her legitimacy as an instructor varied due to different kinds of interplay of her background and expertise with students’ academic interests and willingness to negotiate her cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills. Kubota claimed that the “perceived authority, prestige, and power of an instructor are not constant or absolute; rather, they are relative and unstable, implicated in power relations that exist in a particular situation” (p. 299). As Lin (2006) believes, “because we have been sociohistorically constructed as “women,” “person of color,” and “non-native English speakers,” we are triply disadvantaged by all the labels of marginalization and exclusion” (p. 77).

Implications for Teacher Education

A number of suggestions and recommendations can be provided to teacher education programs and TESOL educators as they evaluate the sources of support that GTAs do or do not receive during their experiences teaching preservice teachers.

Specifically, NNES GTAs who teach in predominantly white universities need assistance in learning how to teach the undergraduate student population. GTA training programs generally focus on classroom management skills, syllabus design, and/or teaching materials. Rather than focusing on only the administrative side of teaching NNES GTAs should be informed and trained about working effectively with white

monolingual undergraduate American students. They need to be equipped with tools to face challenges and negative dispositions constructively (Ates & Eslami, forthcoming).

The voices and experiences of GTAs should be shared with preservice teachers, who should be made aware of the realities they will face as teachers, including the amount of linguistic diversity they will find in their classrooms and their responsibility regarding students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These courses are designed to make preservice teachers aware of the difficulties their ELLs might face in their future classrooms. The question, “Are preservice teachers ready to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms?” is worth investigating. According to the experiences of the GTAs in this study who taught preservice teachers, if the preservice teachers do not accept and appreciate their linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse NNES GTAs, they will be poorly prepared to serve future ELLs. Although the GTAs who taught ESL courses had high English proficiency, their linguistic competence was challenged by the preservice teachers who interacted with them in their classrooms. Therefore, hidden social inequalities and racial prejudices against NNES individuals and in this case, against NNES GTAs, should be further explored (Ates & Eslami, forthcoming).

English as a second language Education programs and administrators should address social inequality and empower their NNES GTAs and teacher educators. Most importantly, they need to create opportunities for GTAs to have their voices be heard. As Lin et al. (2006), claim one cannot respond to the needs of minority children at schools without addressing the challenges faced by minority teacher educators.

The experiences of the GTAs in this study underscore the importance and the need of including multicultural and ESL-related courses and issues throughout the curriculum during the preparation of NES preservice teachers. One or two required, stand-alone, multicultural and/or ESL courses may not be enough to create awareness among preservice teachers about linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity. As Valentin (2006) noted, “Diversity in teacher education programs cannot continue to be looked at in a fragmented approach” (p. 202). Teacher education programs need to adopt a more comprehensive and holistic approach to issues of linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity. Motha (2006) argued “one token minority” referring to the minority instructors in teacher education courses is inadequate—“being the sole minority voice is an unfairly heavy load for a single individual human being to take on.” (p. 169).

Kubota (2001) argued international GTAs and international professors are not the only ones responsible for communication difficulties. Kubota explained that in human interaction, both the listener and the speaker should share responsibilities for the communication to take place. Kubota believes often a speaker who uses non-mainstream language carries the entire communicative burden. Preservice teachers and other educators should be made aware that English is an international language. Globalization of English does not mean that all speakers of English language will speak the same variety. Therefore, preservice teachers need to learn and negotiate with instructors and students effectively who speak different varieties of English effectively.

Romney (2006, p. 197) noted:

Teacher education must include both curricula that raise awareness of the diversity and legitimacy of Englishes worldwide, and materials that represent

them. In a world where there are more nonnative and World English speakers than inner-circle native speakers of English, preservice educators must learn that it is pedagogically healthy for their students to be exposed to a variety of Englishes, through materials and teachers, because they will probably interact with speakers in all three circles.

Conclusion

Teaching is complex. The level of complexity increases when GTAs/instructors are not from the dominant culture and do not share the language, race, and ethnicity of their students. The experiences of these instructors, who are seen as “Others,” differ from those of their mainstream counterparts (Hill-Jackson & Ates, forthcoming; Vargas, 2002; Li & Beckett, 2006; Stanley, 2006). In this study NNES GTAs had different teaching experiences compared to their NES counterpart. Vargas (2002) gives the example of her professor who used heart disease as a metaphor to explain multiple social differences and the impact on academic career.

The more of those risk factors [for heart disease] you possess, the more your chances are of developing heart disease. It’s the same thing that we’re talking about here. You can sort of apply that approach to being Other. The more factors you have that make you Other, the more impact that it has on your life and on your accomplishments. So if you’re a person of color, not from a strong economic background, English as a second language, female, with a handicap. I mean, the more, more layering you have, the more of those attributes you have, more of those characteristics or factors, it’s like going up a hill with a weight. You’re adding a weight. So those make it far more challenging to survive (p. 8).

Being an educator is not easy; however, being an “Other” educator makes the task even more difficult. The voices and the stories of “Other” educators should continue to be shared with advocates of social justice. As Lorde (1984) noted, “It is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken” (p. 44).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the perceptions of preservice teachers toward NES and NNES GTAs in ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses at a Southwestern U.S. university. In addition, this study investigated the perceptions of NES and NNES GTAs toward preservice teachers.

Findings of the first study revealed that preservice teachers perceived NES and NNES GTAs differently. Preservice teachers put a lot of emphasis on the intelligibility of the NNES GTAs. The preservice teachers were ‘tolerant’ if their NNES spoke English ‘clearly’. However, there were some preservice teachers who were dissatisfied with their NNES GTAs due to their possessing a non-mainstream language.

The results of MANOVA indicated that whether the preservice teachers lived in a rural area or in a city during the majority of their elementary and high school years; or lived in a less diverse versus more diversity; or had one versus three or more NNES GTAs since they started college; did not make a statistically significant difference in preservice teachers’ perceptions toward NES and NNES GTAs. In other words, whether preservice teachers lived in or were exposed to a diverse environment before college did not affect their perceptions.

Findings of the second study revealed that NNES GTAs faced major challenges in their effort to be recognized as legitimate and competent instructors in their classrooms. Although the GTAs had vastly different personal backgrounds, perceptions, and identities as instructors, common themes or issues emerged from the data: 1)

teaching is complex (linguistic, cultural, and racial issues are involved); 2) beliefs about teaching can change; 3) challenges are faced as an “outsider” instructor; and 4) teaching provides experiences of joy. The study also summarized positive experiences that both NNES and NES GTAs gained during their teaching.

Pedagogical Implications

This research study tried to make the parallelism between how preservice teachers perceive their linguistically, culturally, racially/ethnically diverse NNES GTAs and how they will perceive students from diverse backgrounds in their future classrooms. In this study, the preservice teachers failed to fully benefit from the cultural richness the NNES GTAs brought to their classrooms. They focused too much on their inability to understanding their GTAs instead of on the positive aspects of the experience. A willingness and effort to understand NNES GTAs can help preservice teachers appreciate and understand individuals from different cultures who speak different languages. In addition, globalization of English means that speakers of English will speak different varieties of English. Preservice teachers need to be aware of “World Englishes” and need to learn and negotiate with instructors and students who speak different varieties of English. English is no longer owned by its “native speakers.” Preservice teachers should be taught and reminded that a “good” instructor or a “good” student is not only someone who is a NES but also an NNES and that nativeness does not determine one’s goodness or quality.

This study supports the call for teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers in such a way that they acquire the necessary positive dispositions and training that will help them meet the expectation of being an effective teacher for *all* students.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

The findings of the study were restricted to 262 preservice teachers and four GTAs. The context was limited to one Southwestern U.S. university. It may be useful to investigate the perceptions of preservice teachers at other universities around the United States. It may also be insightful to conduct a similar investigation with preservice teachers at a predominantly non-white institution in an effort to see if the findings will be similar to those of this study. Although the current research indicated that preservice teachers had issues with NNES GTAs, it is unknown whether and how these perceptions are politically or socially grounded.

In addition, the results of MANOVA indicated that areas where preservice teachers lived and resided, or the community/neighborhood in which they lived, or the racial demographics of the high school they attended, or the number of GTAs they had since they started college, did not affect their perceptions of NESs and NNESs. Further research can examine why this is the case and also include students with more diverse demographics.

The second part of the study used three NNES GTAs and only one NES GTA. It would be important in future research to investigate a more balanced number. Furthermore, all the GTAs in this study were female. It will be important to examine the

experiences of males who teach ESL-related courses to preservice teachers. It is noted that gender plays a difference in the teaching experiences of instructors (Li & Beckett, 2006; Vargas, 2002).

In conclusion, this dissertation tried to corroborate or challenge previous findings regarding the NES and NNES dichotomy and present a new lens through which to view the dichotomy from a teacher education point of view. It also tried to fill the gap that existed in the literature by studying the perceptions of preservice teachers and graduate teaching assistants of each other in ESL-related courses. It is hoped that these findings will prove useful to all those involved in English learning and teaching.

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APPENDIX A

PRESERVICE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Course _____

Date _____

I. Please indicate your feelings by circling the appropriate number below. Please circle only one number for each statement.

-NONNATIVE English speaking TA's are Nonnative English Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants; TAs who learned English *in addition* to their *first* language.

-NATIVE English speaking TA's are Native English Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistants; TAs whose *first* (native) language is *English*.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Example: I enjoy getting to know people from other cultures and countries.	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is okay if a NONNATIVE English speaking TA has an accent as long as I can understand her/him.	1	2	3	4	5
2. In order to communicate with my NONNATIVE English speaking TA better I am willing to put extra effort into my listening and speaking skills.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Having a NONNATIVE English speaking TA will often cause students to perform lower on exams.	1	2	3	4	5
4. If I could choose the section of an ESL related course I would like to be taught by a NONNATIVE English speaking TA.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would prefer not to have NONNATIVE English speaking TA's with an accent teach my courses.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Both the NONNATIVE English speaking TA and the student should share the responsibility for classroom communication.	1	2	3	4	5
7. NONNATIVE English speaking TA's can give students a taste of another culture, which in itself is educationally valuable.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can learn just as well from a NONNATIVE English speaking TA as I can from a NATIVE English speaking TA.	1	2	3	4	5
9. If I had to get an "A" in a course, I know my chances would be better if I did not have a NONNATIVE English speaking TA.	1	2	3	4	5
10. NATIVE English speaking TA's are generally more knowledgeable than NONNATIVE English speaking TA's.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. Due to having experience learning a second language, I feel NONNATIVE English speaking TA's can teach ESL related courses better compared to NATIVE English speaking TA's.	1	2	3	4	5
12. It doesn't matter to me whether my NONNATIVE English speaking TA has an accent or not.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When there are communication problems between students and NONNATIVE English speaking TA's, students can do very little to improve the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
14. It would be better if NONNATIVE English speaking TA's were not allowed to teach at our department.	1	2	3	4	5
15. It shouldn't matter whether you have a NONNATIVE English speaking TA or a NATIVE English speaking TA, you can get a good grade either way.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Students should not have to take responsibility for improving communication between themselves and NONNATIVE English speaking TA's.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Due to being a native speaker of English, I feel NATIVE English speaking TA's would teach ESL related courses better compared to NONNATIVE English speaking TA's.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I will likely learn more from a NATIVE English speaking TA than from a NONNATIVE English speaking TA.	1	2	3	4	5
19. It would not bother me to have a NONNATIVE English speaking TA with a slight accent.	1	2	3	4	5
20. NONNATIVE English speaking TA's interfere with TAMU students' learning.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Having a class with a NONNATIVE English speaking TA is an opportunity for developing cross-cultural communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5
22. If I could choose the section of this course myself, one of my main criteria would be to get into a section taught by a NATIVE English speaking TA.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Having a NATIVE English speaking TA will often help students to perform better on exams.	1	2	3	4	5
24. NONNATIVE English speaking TA's are as knowledgeable as NATIVE English speaking TA's.	1	2	3	4	5
25. If I got a NONNATIVE English speaking TA with a strong foreign accent, I would try to transfer to a different section of the course.	1	2	3	4	5
26. NATIVE and NONNATIVE English speaking TA's can be equal in the subject knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Which of the accents below do you think are more (1) desirable, (2) acceptable, (3) tolerable, (4) unacceptable, and (5) no idea/never been exposed to it in a **NONNATIVE English speaking TA**?

(1) **Desirable**– This option is what you think sounds good and would like to hear it from your TA.

(2) **Acceptable**- This option is not what you would consider to be ‘Desirable’, if you were given a choice, but you could certainly ‘live with it’.

(3) **Tolerable**- This option is not what you want. But, as part of college experience/ learning about other cultures and languages, you would be willing to put up with it.

(4) **Unacceptable**- This option is completely unacceptable under any circumstances. You would not accept it, even as part of learning about other cultures and languages.

(5) **No idea**- You have never heard/been exposed to this accent.

Please circle only **ONE** in each row.

1. Arab/Middle Eastern accent	1	2	3	4	5
2. British/English accent	1	2	3	4	5
3. Chinese/Japanese/Korean accent	1	2	3	4	5
4. Eastern European accent (i.e. Russian, Czech)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Indian/Pakistani accent	1	2	3	4	5
6. Spanish/Mexican accent	1	2	3	4	5
7. Western European accent (i.e. German, French)	1	2	3	4	5

Which of the accents below do you think are more (1) desirable, (2) acceptable, (3) tolerable, (4) unacceptable, and (5) no idea/never been exposed to it in a **NATIVE English speaking TA**?

Please circle only **ONE** in each row.

8. Boston accent	1	2	3	4	5
9. Georgia accent	1	2	3	4	5
10. Illinois accent	1	2	3	4	5
11. Mississippi accent	1	2	3	4	5
12. New Orleans accent	1	2	3	4	5
13. New York City accent	1	2	3	4	5
14. Ohio accent	1	2	3	4	5
15. Texas accent	1	2	3	4	5

III. Please list some of the strengths and weaknesses **NONNATIVE English speaking TA's** and **NATIVE English speaking TA's** have, who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses.

What ***STRENGTHS*** do you think **NONNATIVE English speaking TA's** have as instructors who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses?

What ***WEAKNESSES*** do you think **NONNATIVE English speaking TA's** have as instructors who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment course?

What ***STRENGTHS*** do you think **NATIVE English speaking TA's** have as instructors who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses?

What ***WEAKNESSES*** do you think **NATIVE English speaking TA's** have as instructors who teach ESL methodology and ESL assessment courses?

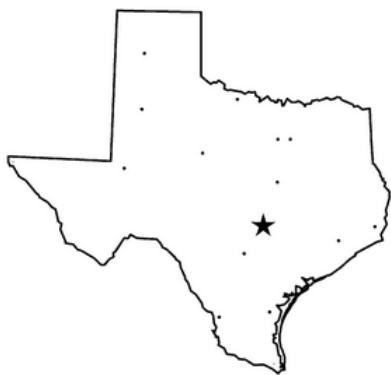
IV. Demographic Information

Please respond to the following questionnaire based on your own interpretations of the items.

1. My country of origin is:	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S.A <input type="checkbox"/> Other
2. I was born in:	<input type="checkbox"/> Texas <input type="checkbox"/> Other
3. Gender :	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
4. I consider my race/ethnicity heritage to be (check all that apply):	<input type="checkbox"/> American Native Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____
5. My age is:	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 or below <input type="checkbox"/> 18-22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> over 50
6. I am a:	<input type="checkbox"/> freshman <input type="checkbox"/> sophomore <input type="checkbox"/> junior <input type="checkbox"/> senior <input type="checkbox"/> 5 th year senior and over
7. My major is:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School Math & Science <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School Language Arts and Social Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Other major

8. Residence and school background

Region in which you resided during the majority of your elementary and high school years (please refer to the map, then check only one region on the list):



- (A) Texas Panhandle
- (B) North Texas
- (C) Permian Basin/West Texas
- (D) Central Texas
- (E) Piney Woods/East Texas
- (F) Galveston Bay
- (G) Rio Grande Valley

9. Type of area in which you resided during the *majority* of your **elementary and high school years** (please check only one):

- Rural
 Town/City of less than 10,000
 City of 10,000 to 50,000
 City of more than 50,000

10. Racial/ethnic make-up of the **community/neighborhood** in which you resided during the majority of your elementary and high school years (please check only one):

- Only one racial/ethnic group
 Predominantly one racial/ethnic group, with less than 10% of other group(s)
 One racial/ethnic group in the majority, with more than 10% of other group(s)
 Two or three different ethnic/racial groups, with no group in the clear majority
 Four or more different ethnic/racial groups, with no group in the clear majority

11. Racial/ethnic make-up of the **high school** you attended (please check only one):

- Only one racial/ethnic group
 Predominantly one racial/ethnic group, with less than 10% of other group(s)
 One racial/ethnic group in the majority, with more than 10% of other group(s)
 Two or three different ethnic/racial groups, with no group in the clear majority
 Four or more different ethnic/racial groups, with no group in the clear majority

12. My native language is:	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____
13. I speak the following foreign languages fluently:	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> German <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="checkbox"/> None
14. I speak the following foreign languages somewhat:	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> German <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ <input type="checkbox"/> None
15. Have you tried to learn any languages other than English?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, which language(s)? _____
16. Have you ever lived outside of the United States?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, where and for how long? _____
17. Have you ever traveled outside of the United States?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, where did you go? _____

18. How many nonnative English speaking instructors/TAs have you had since you started college?	<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> my current instructor/TA is the first one <input type="checkbox"/> one <input type="checkbox"/> two <input type="checkbox"/> three <input type="checkbox"/> more than three
19. Your current TA for this ESL course is:	<input type="checkbox"/> a NATIVE speaker of English <input type="checkbox"/> a NONNATIVE speaker of English <input type="checkbox"/> not sure
20. Why are you taking this ESL class?	<input type="checkbox"/> Required <input type="checkbox"/> Elective
21. Would you have taken this class if it was not required?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
22. If you had a choice would you have taken this class from a NATIVE English speaking TA or a NONNATIVE English speaking TA? <input type="checkbox"/> (a.) a NATIVE English speaking TA <input type="checkbox"/> (b.) a NONNATIVE English speaking TA <input type="checkbox"/> (c.) it does not matter If you chose (a.) Why? Please explain: _____ If you chose (b.) Why? Please explain: _____ If you chose (c.) Why? Please explain: _____	
23. The overall grade you expect to receive in this class is:	<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> F
24. My overall GPR (Grade Point Ratio) is:	<input type="checkbox"/> 4.00-3.50 <input type="checkbox"/> 3.49-3.00 <input type="checkbox"/> 2.99-2.50 <input type="checkbox"/> 2.49-2.00 <input type="checkbox"/> 1.99-1.50 <input type="checkbox"/> 1.49 or below
25. Are you planning to teach ESL when you graduate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
26. Are you planning to get ESL certification?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

NOTE: Your thoughts are highly valued. If you would like your voice to be heard and therefore, would like to participate in focus group discussions in regards to this research topic please write down your e-mail address that you could be reached at. We really appreciate your input.

My e-mail address is: _____

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The participants in the focus group discussions are asked to reflect on this newspaper statement written by a student:

Professors and TAs should be required to speak English fluently

“I’m not sure about the rest of the people attending A&M, but the week before classes, the number one concern on most of my friends’ minds is whether their professors will speak fluent English. I’m tired of paying for a lecture with a professor who is unable to efficiently communicate to the class, aka - teach. If I didn’t want to understand my professors I would have gone to my local community college, skipped lectures, and learned from the book. I do not feel that I need to explain the topic any more deeply because I’m sure that most people have felt this way at some point. I just wanted to suggest a push for an ‘English Fluency’ system to be implemented for the sole purpose of helping professors (and Teaching Assistants) to better communicate with their students. Make attending the class mandatory and make sure that they keep their skills sharp by requiring an oral exam every semester if they want to lecture a class.

We work hard to pay for the best education, and sometimes I feel like that is not what we are receiving.”

A.J.C., Class of 2008 – The X [the school newspaper’s name is deleted for confidentiality purposes], September 7, 2005

Guiding Questions:

- What are your reflections on this statement?
- When you found out who your ESL Methodology/Assessment instructor was did it matter to you if he/she was a native or a nonnative English speaker?
- Do you think it makes a difference if a native or a nonnative English speaker teaches the ESL Methodology/Assessment courses?
- What is your ideal ESL Methodology/Assessment instructor like?

Question Related to Responsibility of Both the Listener and Speaker

Kubota (2001) argues many U.S. college campuses have faced a challenge in communication between international teaching assistants or international professors, who use different varieties of English, and undergraduate students who are native speakers of English. Kubota argues ITAs and international professors are not the only ones responsible for communication difficulties. Kubota explains that in human interaction, both the listener and the speaker should share responsibilities for the communication to take place. Kubota believes often a speaker who uses non-mainstream language carries all the communicative burden. What are your reflections on this statement?

Question Related to Accent

Lippi-Green explains that it is not all foreign accents, but only accent linked to skin that is not white creates negative reactions. Lindemann (2005) did a study where

she looked closely at 79 U.S. undergraduate students belief system and how it provided insights in addressing linguistic issues. According to one of the findings of the study, the term “broken” English was used for all nonnative speakers except the Western European English accents.

For example, Lippi-Green states discrimination against Asian Americans which centers on language, but which has more to do with race, is an established practice. She believes people easily use accent to exclude, to limit discourse, and to discredit other voices, because accents simply do not sound white. What are your reflections on this?

Question Related to Race

Amin (1994) interviewed minority female ESL teachers in Canada and found out their ESL students had two assumptions. First “Only white people can be native speakers of English and second, only native speakers know “real,” “proper,” “Canadian” English.” (Amin 1999, p. 94) What are your reflections on this statement?

- Can you share a story (good, bad, funny, sad) about an experience you had with a native English speaking GTA (if applicable) and with a nonnative English speaking GTA (if applicable) specifically in ESL Methodology and/or ESL Assessment courses?
- Do you believe you chose the right academic major and profession for yourself?
- Hearing about English language learners and the need to help them in the classrooms; do you feel prepared or do English language learners scare you?

- Do you feel you spend extra energy learning class material in INST 332?
- All in all, do you feel satisfied with your education here?

APPENDIX C

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**Interview Questions for NNES GTAs**

- 1) When did you begin learning and speaking English?
- 2) What is your educational background?
- 3) What made you decide to teach preservice teachers?
- 4) How long have you been in your current position?
- 5) How confident are you about your English skills?
- 6) How confident are you about your teaching skills?
- 7) What was your first reaction when you were assigned to teach ESL methodology or Assessment in ESL course to Nonnative English speaking (NES) students?
(adapted from Lui, 2005)
- 8) How were you perceived as and treated by your NES students in general, and in the first few classes in particular? (taken from Lui, 2005)
- 9) What has your experience been like teaching preservice teachers? What are some challenges you have encountered? Are there stories you want to share?
- 10) What are some positive events you have experienced? Are there stories you want to share?
- 11) How is your relationship with your students, preservice teachers, in general?
- 12) Amin (1994) interviewed minority female ESL teachers and found out that the ESL students had two assumptions. First "Only white people can be native

speakers of English and second, only native speakers know “real,” “proper,” “Canadian” English.” (Amin 1999, p. 94) The ESL teachers felt they were constantly being judged and compared unfavorably with White teachers. They felt disempowered by their students’ stereotyping. What are your reflections on this statement? Do you think you are perceived differently by your students, preservice teachers, due to your race?

13) Have you experienced any “critical episodes”, by critical episodes events that changed or resulted in change of attitudes/beliefs/practices in your teaching?

Interview Questions for NES GTAs

Only questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13 were asked from NNES GTA interview questions.

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