Host Teachers' Evaluations of Nonnative-English-Speaking Teacher Trainees—A Perspective from the Classroom

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This article discusses the results of a survey conducted to explore how students and host teachers perceive the strengths of nonnative-English-speaking (NNES) teacher trainees based on their classroom practice. Responding to a questionnaire evaluating the NNES ESL teacher trainees in their classrooms, host teachers named the following as their strengths: teaching ability, professional skills, the grammaticality and idiomaticity of their English, and the multilingual and multicultural resources that they bring. Host teachers noted that NNES teacher trainees understood their students' learning problems and concerns, often served as role models for ESL students, and enriched the classroom experience. A small percentage of host teachers were dissatisfied with their trainee's performance because they felt the trainee had inadequate command of English. The results of the survey suggest that NNES teacher trainees are generally perceived as capable of delivering efficient instruction and treated as a welcome addition to the ESL practicum classroom.

Nonnative speakers of English have become an integral part of MA TESOL programs around the country. It is well known in the profession that practicum coordinators often have difficulties placing nonnative-English-speaking (NNES) MA TESOL students in classrooms. Some host teachers complain that NNES teacher trainees have an insufficient level of English proficiency and familiarity with U.S. culture to teach ESL successfully. Another reason host teachers cite for rejecting NNES teacher trainees is that ESL students prefer to be taught by native speakers. It is important to study the validity of these widely held perceptions from the perspective of actual classroom practice. However, this area of inquiry is new to the growing body of literature on NNES teachers.

A number of recent publications on NNES ESL professionals examine the native-nonnative speaker distinction from linguistic, pedagogical, and political perspectives (Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Norton, 1997). Most of them survey NNES teachers' own perceptions and reflections (Amin, 1999; J. Liu, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Tang, 1997) or recite stories of their struggles and successes (Braine, 1998; Connor, 1999). Some teacher educators have explored ways to modify teacher training programs to better serve NNES teacher trainees. For example, Murdoch (1994), Medgyes (1999), and Dilin Liu (1999) stress the importance of language study during teacher training in ESL and EFL contexts. Addressing the perceived needs of NNES professionals, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) describe a graduate seminar for NNES students that raises the participants' critical awareness of their roles as language teachers and learners as well as the contributions that they could make to the profession. Kamhi-Stein (1999, 2000) recommends a cross-curricular approach that develops the NNES teachers' self-image and enhances their professional preparedness.

This study addressed the issue of nonnative speakers in the profession from a different perspective. It focused on host teachers' evaluation of NNES teacher trainees as they fulfilled the practice-teaching requirement of their teacher education program. Thus, this study shifted the discourse from NNES teachers' self-perception to the perceptions of the people they serve. The term *host teacher* in this article refers to ESL teachers in various educational settings with whom MA TESOL students are paired to teach their practicum classes. Attending a teacher training caucus meeting at TESOL's 1998 convention in Seattle, I heard several MA TESOL practicum coordinators sharing difficulties they had experienced in placing NNES teacher trainees into host ESL classrooms. As the conversation progressed, the twofold nature of the situation became obvious. On the one hand, many practicum coordinators were concerned that host teachers appeared to be biased against NNES teacher trainees. They resented their accents, questioned the grammatical accuracy of their English and familiarity with U.S. culture, and referred to ESL students' reluctance to have a nonnative speaker as an instructor. And yet, other TESOL practicum coordinators and program directors worked with host teachers who welcomed NNES teacher trainees in practicum classrooms because of their expertise in diverse languages and cultures, their sensitivity to students' needs, and their responsibility and competence.

TESOL practicum placement parallels the situation in the job market, particularly at the MA level, where NNES teachers seeking employment both in the United States and in their home countries are discriminated against for the same reasons as practicum students are unwelcome in host classrooms (Braine, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Jenin, 1998; Thomas,

1999). The study conducted by Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, and Hartford (2003) found that only 7.9% of the teachers in intensive English programs were nonnative speakers of English, although the number of NNES students in graduate programs in TESOL and applied linguistics was high. On the other hand, literature and life present abundant cases of nonnative English speakers successfully teaching at home and abroad. This study's purpose was to examine voices from the field as practicum host teachers observed and critiqued various aspects of NNES teacher trainees' professional performance. It supplies a third party point of view, different from that of teacher educators and teacher trainees. The discussion of the survey results is supplemented with input from individual host teachers who verbalized their attitudes toward NNES teacher trainees' practical strengths and weaknesses. Although this survey represents only a fraction of the NNES teacher training situation, I hope that its results will be instructive for administrators, programs, and other host teachers in similar circumstances.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In recent years, the place and role of the native speaker as the model language teacher has been criticized from sociopolitical, sociolinguistic, linguistic, and pedagogical perspectives. Davies (1991), for example, rejects the idea that the "native speaker is uniquely and permanently different from a nonnative speaker" (p. 45). He maintains that second language learners even outside of the first language environment can attain native linguistic competence, and he believes that nonnative speakers can penetrate the boundary between native and nonnative English speakers. In his influential book, *Linguistic Imperialism,* Phillipson (1992) contends that the notion that the native speaker is a superior language teacher lacks scientific validity, labeling the notion "the native speaker fallacy" (p. 195). He argues that the attributes the native speaker brings to the classroom (e.g., cultural familiarity, fluency, idiomaticity, and dependable acceptability judgments) can be developed through teacher training. In addition, the experience of having consciously learned English makes nonnative speakers better qualified to teach the language than those who are born into the culture (pp. 194–199).

In a review of research on the native English speaker–nonnative English speaker construct, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) recognize the two approaches to NNES teachers in the profession that focus on nativeness. Proponents of the *dominance approach* (Medgyes, 1994; Quirk, 1995) recognize the difference between native and nonnative proficiency and view nonnative English speakers as "linguistically handicapped" (Medgyes, 1994, p. 103) in relation to native English speakers.

Medgyes (1994, 1999) argues that native speakers' linguistic competence represents an "advantage . . . so substantial that it cannot be outweighed by other factors prevalent in the learning situation, whether it be motivation, aptitude, perseverance, experience, education, or anything else" (1994, p. 342). However, Medgyes does not argue that NNES teachers' disadvantage makes them deficient in classroom performance. They bring other advantages to teaching that compensate for their linguistic deficiencies.

The *difference approach* perceives nonnative English speakers from another perspective. According to this position, both NNES and NES groups may be good or bad teachers even though they arrive from different backgrounds. Its proponents argue that NNES teachers in fact bring certain linguistic and pedagogical resources that are as important for language teaching as the resources that NES teachers bring. Among the positive attributes credited to nonnative English speakers are their conscious knowledge of grammar, language learning experience that they can share with learners, a good learner model that they may represent, and the empathy they bring to the task of teaching (see, e.g., Braine, 1999).

Despite increasing emphasis on the important role that nonnative speakers play in the profession, many view NNES professionals with a skeptical eye. The *native speaker model* in language teaching is deep rooted and the covert assumption that nonnative speakers make inferior language teachers compared with their NES colleagues is strong. In a widely cited article, Widdowson (1994) points out the dominant trend when he states that "there is no doubt that native speakers of English are deferred to in our profession. What they say is invested with both authenticity and authority" (p. 386). To provide just a single example, Stern (1983) emphasizes that "the native speaker's 'competence' or 'proficiency' or 'knowledge of the language' is a necessary point of reference for the second language proficiency concept used in language teaching" (p. 341).[1] Widdowson goes on to expose the fallacy: "Native-speaker expertise is assumed to extend to the teaching of the language. They not only have a patent on proper English, but on proper ways of teaching it as well" (pp. 387–388).

But does linguistic competence necessarily imply competent teaching? De-idealizing the native speaker model and "going beyond the native speaker in language teaching" (Cook, 1999, p. 204) involves reevaluating the attitude toward NNES teachers. One step in this

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[1] Stern's (1983) model of language teaching deems native-like proficiency as the learning outcome that students, teachers, and administrators desire. Although complete proficiency is hardly ever reached by second language learners, it "forms an ideal goal to keep in mind" (p. 341).

direction is to investigate how NNES teacher trainees are viewed during their training in the ESL classroom. This study attests that nonnative English speakers preparing to become ESL teachers can be as effective as their NES peers in the same teaching situations and draws attention to their strengths as language teachers. I achieved this objective by documenting more experienced host teachers' assessments of NNES teacher trainees' classroom performance.

THE STUDY

Data Collection

The data analyzed in the study were collected between 1999 and 2001 using a questionnaire. The data collection began with an online search for MA TESOL programs in the United States that have a strong teaching practicum component. To be included, a program had to require at least ten weeks of teaching an ESL class in addition to observations. After I had located several such programs, I narrowed the study to Washington, Oregon, California, New York, New Jersey, and Florida. I chose these six U.S. states because I was familiar with their programs through graduate school, work, and TESOL connections, and because I expected that MA TESOL programs in coastal states would have more NNES students. I then contacted local program directors and practicum coordinators to help identify ESL instructors who had nonnative English speakers teaching their classes. Eventually, 97 host teachers in university, community college, and elementary and secondardy school settings agreed to participate in the survey. Each of them received a package explaining the purpose of the survey and providing instructions for completing the questionnaire, an informed consent form, a five-page questionnaire, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. I received 56 completed questionnaires: 28 respondents from community colleges, 16 from universities, and 12 from middle and high schools. These questionnaires made up the study's primary sample.

Instrument

I was less interested in objective assessment than in the host teachers' subjective perceptions and concerns. After consulting with several sources (Lange, 1990; Wajnryb, 1992; Wallace, 1991), I identified the following critical dimensions: the trainee's personal qualities, command of the language, teaching organization, lesson implementation, cultural awareness, feedback to students, and self-evaluation. An optional section on

background information at the beginning of the questionnaire was designed to provide some facts about trainees' origin, age, teaching experience, and teaching situation. The main topic areas were detailed into specific questions (see Appendix). Host teachers were asked to rate teacher trainees on a 1 to 5 scale as well as to provide verbal comments. To allow for more open-ended reactions and observations, the questionnaire's structured items were supplemented by four narrative questions. Host teachers' evaluations referred to teacher trainees whom they had observed when the survey was conducted or during the past year. Those who had worked simultaneously with more than one NNES teacher trainee received a questionnaire for each trainee's evaluation.

Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed to identify host teachers' attitudes toward various aspects of NNES teacher trainees' classroom teaching. Two types of data are available: qualitative research data in the form of host teachers' comments and written narrations, and quantitative data in the form of ratings. The study is primarily descriptive, although the numerical data, which is not intended to be strictly quantitative, can indicate some common traits in the host teachers' attitudes to NNES teacher trainees' performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I address each of the questionnaire's subcategories individually. Quantitative data in graphs are supplemented by host teachers' comments from an optional section after the rating scale on the questionnaire.

NNES Teacher Trainee Profiles

The analysis of the preliminary part of the questionnaire provided a profile of the focal teacher trainees. They came from Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Pakistan, Turkey, Russia, Poland, Slovakia, South Africa, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina with previous teaching experience ranging from "a lot" (12%) to "a little, very limited perhaps" (40%), to none (48%). Host teachers had known teacher trainees for periods ranging from 2 months to 3 semesters with one semester being the most common period (77%). Most trainees were between 20 and 28 years old (72%); others were between 29 and 35 (14%), 36 and 42 (7%), and 43 and 50 (7%). NNES

teacher trainees had served in various teaching contexts, for example: "Intermediate grammar/writing," "Intermediate oral skills," "Intermediate grammar adults," "Intermediate college students," "Pull-out multilevel 2nd–3rd grade ESL," "Beginning oral/aural class in a community college," "Adult ESL—beginning and intermediate," and "Intermediate-level content course about U.S. history and politics." The average size of their classes was 10–15 students.

Although the exact number of years of teaching experience in each case was not available, an overwhelming majority of practicum participants (88%) were novice teachers for whom practicum teaching might be their first exposure to the real classroom. Host teachers recognized NNES teacher trainees' novice status in the profession, but they did not differentiate them from inexperienced native speaking teachers, as seen from the following comments:

> The student really was all right considering it was his first few times to teach.

> My ratings wouldn't be significantly different for native-English-speaking teacher-in-preparation enrolled in the practicum course.

> This is an evaluation of a new teacher. I feel it doesn't matter whether she is native/nonnative speaker.

> I would compare her to other pre-service teachers at [my institution].

In general, neutral and positive comments prevailed. Host teachers believed that novice NNES teacher trainees possessed skills and competencies of effective teachers that would improve as the trainees gained practical experience:

> She is very well prepared and earnest. The instructor could work with her on one or two weaknesses at a time in a focused manner rather than being holistic in her approach. More time would be most welcome for both the trainee and the instructor.

> The things that need improvement will come with time and practice. There was nothing noticeably weak that will hold the trainee back from success.

Personal Qualities

Figure 1 presents the respondents' ratings of the trainee's personal qualities. Overall, *good* and *excellent* ratings prevailed. NNES teacher trainees scored particularly high on their rapport with the class, as illustrated by the following comment: "Students liked her and didn't want to have another teacher." At the same time, 7% of the trainees received *poor* ratings on audibility of voice and eye contact. They "read

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 1
NNES Teacher Trainees' Ratings on Personal Qualities
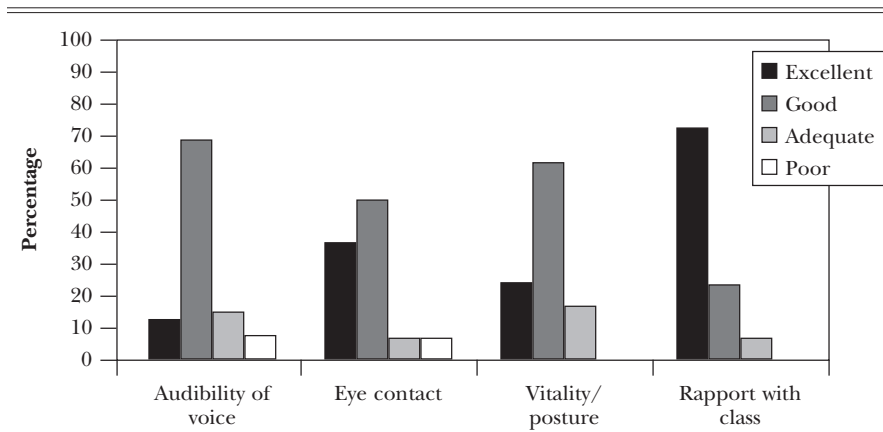
notes sometimes," "focused on the task and not the students," and were "quiet at times but perked up." Are reduced audibility and eye contact a culturally determined behaviors? Or could they be a manifestation of anxiety and lack of experience? Host teachers' comments indicate the latter: "She was nervous sometimes"; "She was nervous and spoke a bit low"; "Stage fright—words 'swallowed' at times."

Command of the Language

These data yield a number of insights about host teachers' attitude toward one of the most controversial aspects of NNES teacher trainees' professional performance. As shown in Figure 2, *good* and *excellent* ratings prevailed. On correctness of structure and vocabulary, 65% of host teachers reported *good* and 14% reported *excellent.* Host teachers' comments were

Correct but somewhat limited in variety.

Occasional errors, but often these were self-corrected.

Very seldom makes noticeable grammar errors, spoken and written.

Only 8% of respondents were "really concerned" about correctness of structure and vocabulary. Although general intelligibility, including adequacy of pronunciation and intonation patterns, was "a huge problem" for 8% of the trainees, most received generally positive evaluations

FIGURE 2

NNES Teacher Trainees' Ratings on Command of English
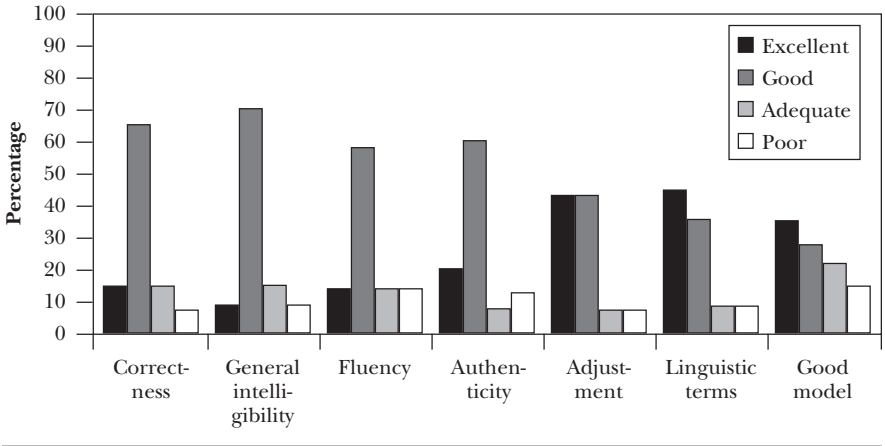
from host teachers (8% *excellent,* 69% *good,* 15% *adequate*). Teacher trainees "infrequently made pronunciation mistakes due to 1st language," and their "slight accent . . . was probably also intelligible for students who didn't share it." As one host teacher mentioned, "Pronunciation was a minor issue, but students seemed to understand her fine, and the students had many native-speaker models, so it wasn't a problem. Again, it was a positive experience for everyone." In most cases, NNES teacher trainees' English appeared to be fluent and authentic. Some host teachers pointed out that it was "correct but not colloquial" with an "occasional insertion of 'coping' language—substitution of a longer structure where a native might have used vernacular expression." Teacher trainees used linguistic terminology appropriately (46% *excellent,* 38% *good,* 8% *adequate,* 8% *poor*). One host teacher commented, "Excellent—in other words she used very few," and another noted that "this was a grammar class. Both she and students had an 'Asian' style approach to grammar and the importance of grammar rules." Commenting on trainees' adjustment to students' level of language, 43% of respondents reported *good* and *excellent* ("Rephrased when necessary"; "Excellent adjustment to beginning level"), whereas 7% felt that it was *adequate* and *poor* ("She spoke without regard to student level most of the time"). Overall, host teachers rated the trainees' ability to present a good model of English in all communicative situations as follows: 36% *excellent,* 29% *good,* 21% *adequate,* and 14% *poor.* These quantitative trends are further supported by the following comments:

Pronunciation wasn't 100%. Grammar was pretty good.

Correct, at times stilted but always pleasant and appropriate.

Always appropriate and polite, not always native in style.

Teaching Organization

Figure 3 shows how host teachers' rated the organizational aspect of NNES teacher trainees' professional performance. The data indicate that teacher trainees generally organized class time effectively (47% *excellent,* 33% *good,* 14% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), prepared thoroughly for the lessons (79% *excellent,* 14% *good,* 7% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), managed class efficiently (57% *excellent,* 36% *good,* 7% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), and prepared nicely balanced lesson plans with a variety of activities (50% *excellent,* 36% *good,* 14% *adequate,* 0% *poor*). Some host teachers observed that trainees "[tended] to monopolize time and answered the questions before SS had time to answer on their own," or "occasionally there [was] too much repetition," though others noted "good pacing," "thorough macro and micro planning," and "very good class management and organization!" NNES teacher trainees "made great attempt to have lecture, practice and have interactive activities" and "most of the time . . . had a good lesson on the mark and focus of the class." One host teacher noted that she "actually liked the originality of many of the student's lesson plans, especially one on passive voice, using airline schedules and maps of products for export." Another stated that the trainee "spoke slowly, moved through material deliberately when a native speaker might want

FIGURE 3
NNES Teacher Trainees' Teaching Organization Ratings
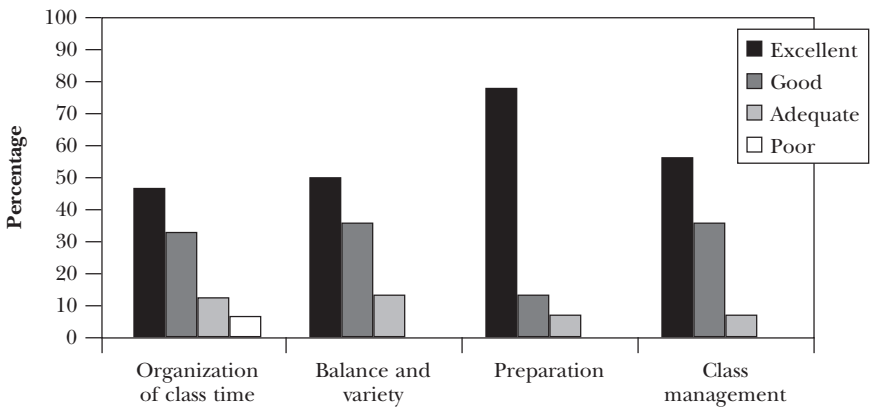
to keep the pace up." In general, a high percentage of positive ratings and host teachers' comments suggest that NNES teacher trainees were successful in organization and class management.

Lesson Implementation

In this part of the questionnaire, the host teachers were asked to rate 14 items concerning the actual implementation of the lesson. Figures 4 and 5 give a summary of the ratings. A considerable number of host teachers (79% and 72%, respectively) rated "Effective teacher/student interaction" and "Involvement and encouragement of students" as *excellent,* which is supported by the following comments:

Thoroughly pleasant personality.

Good relationship with students.

Has great rapport with the class. Students show a high level of comfort and a willingness to participate fully.

Host teachers also favorably evaluated the trainees' use of various formats for class work (62% *excellent,* 23% *good,* 15% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), clarity of objectives and procedures (50% *excellent,* 36% *good,* 15% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), and appropriateness of teaching materials (50% *excellent,* 36% *good,* 14% *adequate,* 0% *poor*). Concerning teaching materials, one host teacher mentioned that the teacher trainee "chose excellent materials to reinforce class content. Also was very helpful for work on vocabulary, comprehension"; another wrote "yes—but she is a 'born-again Moslem' and seemed to infuse the class on or off topic in Islamic topics." The same trainee's objectives and procedures were "for the most part on paper but sometimes she steered lesson to Islamic topics."

Other areas of lesson implementation elicited more diverse opinions from host teachers. Thus, the majority of NNES teacher trainees (50% and 29%) were rated *excellent* and *good* (respectively) for the clarity of their instruction ("I learned from her on this!"), whereas *adequate* and *poor* ratings accounted for 14% and 7%, respectively ("Tended to rush instructions and no modeling," "Clarification! The printed instructions were often clear but sometimes ungrammatical. Oral/verbal instructions were often unintelligible"). By the same token, teacher trainees' clarity in presenting the material and their techniques for introducing, presenting, and questioning received *poor* ratings, 7–16%, although the general attitude to these aspects of teaching was positive (see Figure 4). A host teacher pointed out that one trainee "sometimes went off on tangents" while presenting material in class. Another's questioning techniques

FIGURE 4
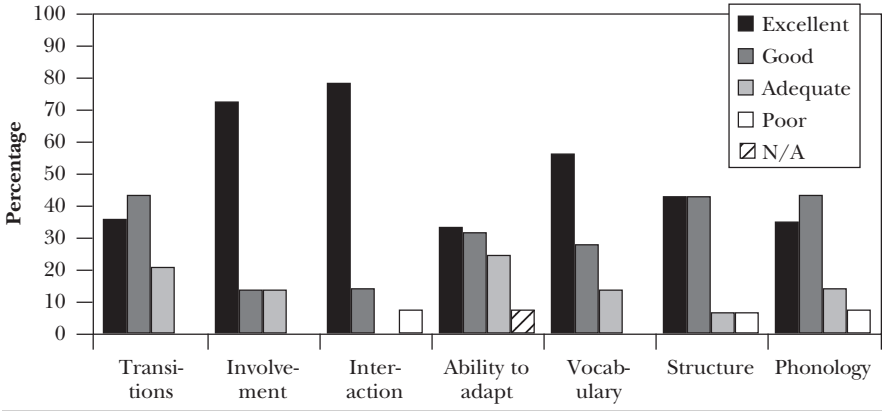NNES Teacher Trainees' Lesson Implementation Ratings
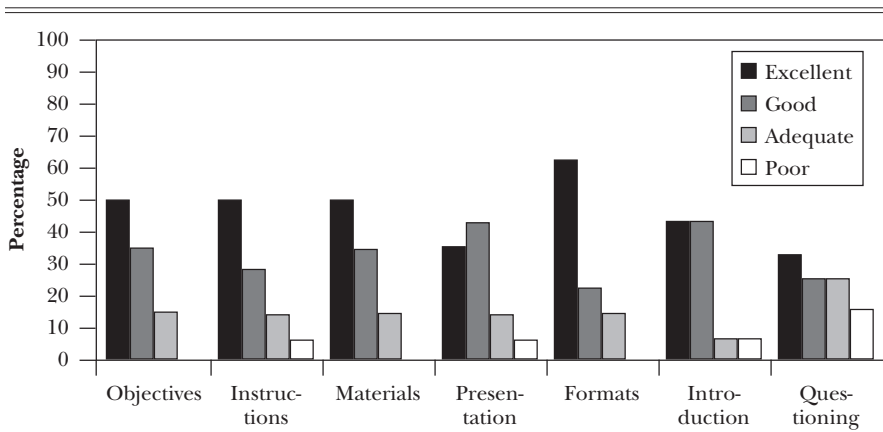
were "OK—a little formulaic only because of lack of experience," and still another "occasionally got [into] trouble getting to the right question that led to where she wanted the group to be." One even "couldn't elicit correct responses adequately." In contrast, neither smoothness of flow nor ability to adapt and extemporize was ranked *poor:* "Generally, nice progression from one activity to the next. It was clear why one thing followed the last" and "Very good in meeting them [students]where they were and explaining."

The ratings for the command of the subject matter indicate that most NNES teacher trainees were competent in English phonology (36% *excellent,* 43% *good,* 14% *adequate,* 7% *poor*), vocabulary (57% *excellent,* 29% *good,* 14% *adequate,* 0% *poor*), and structure (43% *excellent,* 43% *good,* 7% *adequate,* 7% *poor*), and were able to communicate their knowledge to students. Some teacher trainees "occasionally got a little caught in subtle points" and "needed help with grammar explanations." This problem is common to many inexperienced teacher trainees, native and nonnative alike, and may be even more so for native speakers who do not have the advantage of having consciously learned English.

Cultural awareness

Host teachers' ratings displayed in Figure 6 show that NNES teacher trainees were reasonably familiar with U.S. culture (29% *excellent,* 50% *good,* 21% *adequate,* 0% *poor*) and demonstrated "particularly acute awareness of the difficulties involved in adapting to US culture." Their

teaching was generally characterized by a realistic attitude toward target culture (47% *excellent,* 33% *good,* 20% *adequate,* 0% *poor*). They presented an appropriate and reliable cultural context of the language, neither idealizing nor diminishing it. NNES teacher trainees' choice of materials, topics, activities, and patterns of interaction reflected 38% *good,* 39% *excellent,* and 23% *average* involvement of target culture in their teaching. The only comment available for this item noted that "there was a bit of a 'foreign accent' here. Materials showed a cultural mindset that was less free flowing than an American construction," but no specific details were provided.

FIGURE 6

NNES Teacher Trainees' Ratings on Cultural Awareness
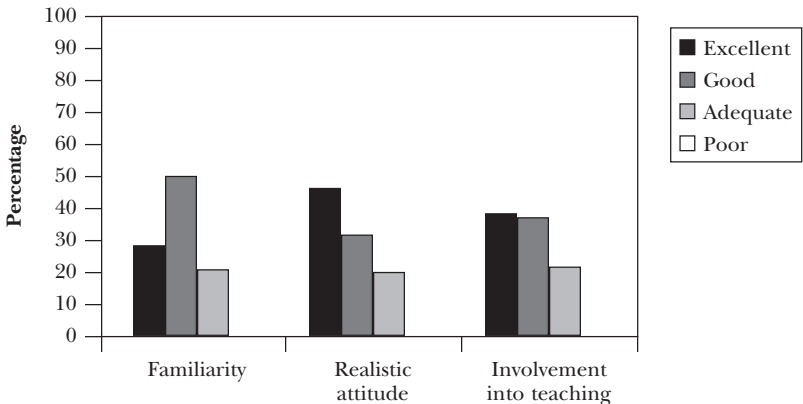
Feedback to Students

Host teachers' assessment of feedback that teacher trainees provided to their students is summarized in Figure 7. The overall percentage of positive responses suggests that teacher trainees provided genuine positive feedback (70% *excellent,* 10% each for *good, adequate,* and *poor*) and evaluated students' performance fairly, though sometimes they were "a little tougher than" the host teacher would have been (67% *excellent,* 25% *good,* 8% *adequate,* 0% *poor*). They conveyed enthusiasm and showed concern for and openness to students. NNES teacher trainees demonstrated 29% *excellent,* 43% *good,* and 21% *appropriate* awareness and correction of errors, although 7% were rated *poor:* "Sometimes the student teacher even miscorrected a student!" Other host teachers made the following comments on the same item:

> Just needs more experience.

> She was not so experienced but she began to follow my lead.

> Always used appropriate tactics for correction. Doesn't always catch errors.

> Very tactful, indirect, but clear.

NNES teacher trainees use of nonverbal feedback was rated as 23% *excellent,* 54% *good,* and 23% *adequate.* Host teachers noted that the trainees used "good precise gestures," "expressive and positive gestures," and "excellent, focused use of gestures." In most cases, NNES teacher trainees tried to attend equally to and involve all students in the class

FIGURE 7
NNES Teacher Trainees' Ratings on Providing Feedback to Students
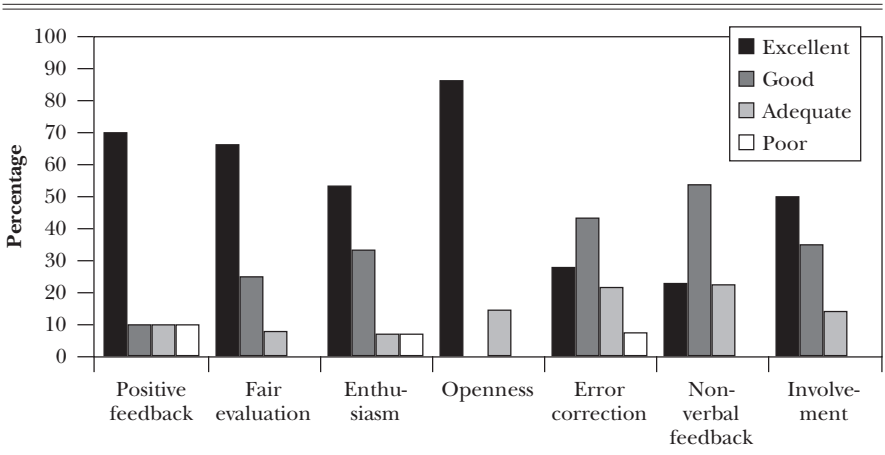
(50% *excellent,* 36% *good,* 14% *adequate*). Although one host teacher noted a "possible tendency to focus on compatriots," it was "not a serious problem." Another host teacher was impressed by the fact that a trainee "made a point to memorize students' names."

Self-Evaluation

This part of the questionnaire dealt with the NNES teacher trainees' ability to evaluate their own performance as well as to respond constructively to others' evaluations. Pennington (1990) suggests that practicum can provide experience in accepting feedback and implementing suggestions offered by another professional, in this case a host teacher. As the data in Figure 8 show, teacher trainees performed well on both accepting feedback (42% *excellent,* 33% *good,* and 25% *adequate*) and implementing suggestions (40% *excellent,* 40% *good,* 20% *adequate*). Host teachers' comments suggest that trainees tended to underestimate their own performance which, in their opinion, could have a positive outcome:

> Too hard on self!
>
> She was very hard on herself and made efforts to improve.
>
> Can be hard on herself when evaluating own performance. But that leads to improvement.

Generally, NNES teacher trainees in this study were "very eager to get feedback, especially on pronunciation." They responded to host teachers'

FIGURE 8
NNES Teacher Trainees' Ratings on Their Ability to Self-Evaluate and Use Feedback
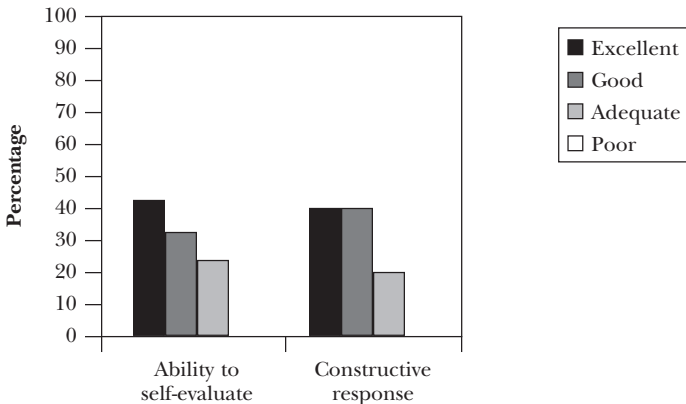
criticism constructively: "She increased her volume, had more eye contact, made more participatory activities and paid attention to student errors/correction during her last lesson." On the whole, teacher trainees "truly [appreciated] feedback and [made] changes accordingly."

What Do the Trainees Do Especially Well?

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire concluded with a set of open-ended questions that allowed for more personal observations. According to the host teachers, NNES teacher trainees exhibited a variety of strengths. Teacher trainees were good at "materials selection and preparation (except for the occasional ungrammatical instruction)" and "handout design, games and follow-up activities." One teacher trainee "tried hard to be creative even though the curriculum called for a fast march through Azar for this particular class." Another "[prepared] lessons that have a variety of activities and facilitates a variety of learning styles (oral, kinesthetic, etc)." Still another "[explained] points clearly, methodically, in appropriately loud speaking voice and makes good eye contact." A further asset was the teacher trainees' ability to relate to students, establish rapport with them, and engage in efficient interaction:

> Rapport with students. Gentle and kind. Good eye contact.

> One-on-one interactions were excellent! Her command of English is also excellent.

> Identifies with students' needs.

A distinctive attribute that the NNES teacher trainees brought to their classrooms was their ability to empathize with ESL students and share their language learning experience and cultural background. This finding is consistent with previous research that describes the positive impact nonnative English speakers have on ESL students (Kamhi-Stein, Lee, & Lee, 1998; J. Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997). Identifying with their students' linguistic needs and cultural concerns allows NNES teachers to establish positive relationships with students and to contribute to a productive atmosphere in the classroom. Host teachers noted that the NNES trainees' presence motivated students by offering an example of successful language learning.

> As a non-native speaker she was acutely aware of pitfalls experienced by students. She built that understanding into each phase of her lessons. Excellent at easing away any affective filters.

> Students loved her classes and saw her as a role model.

Students looked up to her and were grateful. She kept conversations going in all her small-group work.

It's encouraging to see that an immigrant person has succeeded. I can succeed too (typical comment in adult ESL classes).

Many host teachers observed that having an NNES trainee in the classroom had a positive effect on the students.

She knew what the students were going through because of her own experience. She herself was still adapting. Her situation and adaptation process proved very helpful to my students.

I think students from backgrounds similar to hers may have appreciated her explanations—a style they were used to.

The trainee used the fact that she is not a native speaker in a very positive, constructive way. She related certain incidents and emotions around learning a second language [in a way] that I could see was comforting to the students and let them know she understood them.

What Could the Trainees Do Better?

Suggestions for improvements clearly fall into two groups. Some comments concerned target language use, in particular, pronunciation:

Speak more clearly.

Focus on oral communication for himself. Take oral communication classes; interact more with Americans; proofread all materials carefully before handing them out; practice presenting each lesson out loud, tape-recording each one if necessary.

There might have been some room for improvement with pronunciation.

Just spend more time in an English-speaking environment and (optionally) work on a few articulatory issues.

Most host teachers' comments, however, suggested further work on teaching skills and classroom behavior:

General things that all beginning teachers need to work on: voice projection, model/demo more, error correction via elicitation (e.g. Do you mean "He go?" or "He goes?").

Error correction. Deciding on what errors to focus on is an issue for all novice teachers (native and nonnative English speakers). Instructions (giving clear instructions is a concern for all).

More self-confidence. Higher energy.

Just needs experience; needs to learn to negotiate safely through a change in plans.

Host teachers attributed most of these issues to the trainees' lack of teaching experience and noted that these problems are common for all novice teachers, native and nonnative speakers alike.

Do Cultural Factors Consciously or Subconsciously Affect the Trainee's Planning and Teaching?

Although cultural differences could be expected to present important challenges to NNES teacher trainees, host teachers' responses indicated that cultural factors did not affect trainees' classroom performance. One response (briefly noted earlier) stands apart in this category, but it seems to be an exception rather than the rule:

Yes, she was a born-again Moslem and wore a chador/scarf and raincoat every day. She would make Islamic references to class topics and generally ignore students' interests at times.

Other host teachers commented on how cultural factors affected other trainees' performance:

Sure, that's possible, but I didn't notice anything in this class.

At this level, US holidays are about the only explicitly-taught elements of culture. Familiarity with holidays would be helpful . . . but . . . hey . . . why couldn't the intern teach what she knows best . . . the culture and arts of Korea? The kids are bombarded by US culture by TV, friends, etc.

No, the trainee did not interact with students in any ways affected by cultural factors.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings from this study yield a number of implications for teacher preparation. Host teachers' opinions, views, and perceptions lend insights into NNES teacher trainees' strong and weak points. Among the numerous positive attributes that NNES trainees bring to their teaching are their conscious knowledge of grammar, their ability to understand the challenges that second language students are facing, their empathy for their students, their cross-cultural experience, and their ability to serve as excellent role models. These conclusions are

consistent with published claims on the effectiveness of NNES professionals (Kamhi-Stein, Lee, & Lee, 1998; J. Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997). The results of the study contest the misleading notion that nonnativeness is a handicap in language teaching, however, and suggest that it may in fact be an advantage in some important ways. These advantages may need to be explained to those who assume that the only good teacher is a native English speaker. Practicum coordinators and program administrators can raise awareness among reluctant host teachers and ESL students by accentuating the advantages identified by those who have had NNES teacher trainees in their classrooms.

Diverse as the survey population, its backgrounds, and teaching situations may be, the majority of teacher trainees in this study emerged as novice teachers. Because they are still at the initial stage of their professional development, certain deficiencies in their classroom practices that host teachers noted during practicum are typical for novice teachers regardless of their first language. Trainees in most teacher training programs present these deficiencies during practicum because teacher trainees, NES and NNES alike, often do not engage in any practical experience (e.g., involving role plays, simulations, or case studies) until the formal teaching practicum at the end of the program (Pennington, 1990). And yet the lack of sufficient experience does not make these teacher trainees incompetent. NNES teacher trainees know the latest research and teaching methods, and they have adequate formal language training. At this stage of their careers, they need real-life ESL teaching experience as well as host teachers' support and advice to help them improve their teaching skills and increase their confidence.

Implementing certain measures within TESOL programs could help NNES teacher trainees deal with the challenges they face in practicum classrooms. Given more opportunities for simulation, observation, and discussion, teacher trainees could increase their exposure to ESL teaching, explore successful teaching strategies, and reflect on issues specific to NNES status. Reports on similar measures implemented in MA TESOL programs (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000) testify to their beneficial effect for NNES teacher trainees' personal and professional development.

Although researchers have repeatedly emphasized the importance of target language proficiency for successful language teaching (Allen & Valette, 1994; Lange, 1990; Murdoch, 1994), contrary to common assumptions grammar and pronunciation generally did not present problems in NNES trainees' teaching. According to the survey, teacher trainees did not appear to experience difficulties while trying to communicate with their students or mediate the subject matter. They effectively communicated in English, presented their ideas at different levels, and discriminated between the domains of language use. Their English was

phonologically, lexically, and structurally correct, generally authentic, and presented a good model for the students. Although it can be argued that many of NNES teacher trainees did not exhibit native accuracy and fluency in the target language, the literature on native proficiency generally agrees that NNES teachers should achieve "comfortable intelligibility" (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 16). That is, NNES teacher trainees should speak in a way that is intelligible enough for classroom use, though the degree of fluency and accuracy may vary. On the whole, host teachers and ESL students understood the focal NNES teacher trainees well. Only some host teachers raised the issue of target language proficiency. That issue could be addressed by offering a language course specifically designed for NNES teacher trainees (Cullen, 1994; Medgyes, 1999; Murdoch, 1994). As a rule, NNES teacher trainees are competent in formal language conventions because they have had years of language instruction, but they often lack the performance aspect of language ability. Providing them with opportunities for additional practice using the target language could bring their comprehensibility to a satisfactory level. The ultimate goal of such a course, however, should be intelligibility rather than perfection.

Next, NNES teacher trainees did not have difficulty addressing U.S. cultural topics in the classroom, nor did they have trouble with their own cultures interfering with their teaching. Although *cultural competence* has no straightforward definition, teacher educators concur that teachers should be "experienced in the cultural environments of the language they teach" (Lange, 1990, p. 256). NNES teacher trainees gain this experience by living and studying in the target cultural environment. The study of language and culture other than their own enables them to make explicit cross-cultural comparisons and contrasts, to identify and articulate similarities and differences, and to weave these observations into their teaching. Also, as products of the North American educational system, NNES teacher trainees have been exposed to competent instruction and U.S. pedagogical standards, which they can adopt and transfer to their own classrooms. Therefore, their teaching behavior, values, and expectations conform to U.S. academic norms. Their own cultural assumptions about teaching and learning do not hinder their acculturation into the U.S. classroom, and their cultural competence is sufficient to teach in a U.S. academic context with its distinctive sociolinguistic, discourse, and cultural requirements.

Finally, although *excellent* and *good* ratings abounded in the study, the negative ratings and unfavorable comments in some categories cannot be disregarded. For example, one host teacher wrote, "It was very frustrating to me to work as a master teacher with a person whose lack of fluency caused such an impediment to learning [for my own students]." However, the graphs of total ratings and host teacher quotes do not show

that the same NNES teacher trainees consistently received *poor* rankings and negative remarks. For the most part, host teachers' frustrations and concerns relate to 7% of teacher trainees or 3 people out of 56. The same teacher trainees who were consistently rated *poor* in the questionnaires received negative comments mainly for their command of the language. These negative comments, upsetting as they might be, can in no way be attributed to all the NNES teacher trainees who participated in the study. Also, some of the trainees who were rated *adequate* and even *poor* for their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, excelled in such areas as lesson planning, rapport with students, and degree of preparation for each class, so the trainees exhibited a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the results show no marked difference in classroom performance between NES and NNES teacher trainees.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This study surveyed the reactions of host teachers to various dimensions of NNES teacher trainees' classroom performance in an ESL practicum setting. It may be useful to collect the host teachers' background information (e.g., gender, years of teaching experience, country of origin, previous working experience with NNES teacher trainees, etc.) and investigate if and how this data affected their responses and evaluations. The opportunity for the host teachers to identify themselves yielded minimal response. Could this show their discomfort in openly addressing a controversial topic on which their institutions and superiors may hold divergent views? It is also striking that even the condition of anonymity did not prevent these host teachers from providing largely positive comments on NNES teacher trainees' performance. Investigating the influence of variables in the host teachers' backgrounds on their evaluations of NNES teacher trainees' performance would add to an understanding of the dynamics in teaching practice.

Though many host teachers in this study spoke favorably about NNES trainees' teaching, using a comparison NES teacher group would offer further insights into NNES teachers' abilities and might even strengthen the case for their effectiveness. Further research should conduct a similar analysis of the ways that host teachers perceive NES teacher trainees and compare the strong and weak points of both groups.

Furthermore, this study exclusively focused on host teachers' opinions. The scope of the survey should be expanded to investigate the attitudes of ESL students taught by NNES teacher trainees. The findings of two recent studies exploring the views of ESL students of NNES teachers (Mahboob, 2003; Moussu, 2002) show that such students

generally support their NNES teachers. Students' voices can be an important source of information leading to suggestions for enhancing NNES trainees' teaching.

CONCLUSION

Just like any survey population, the body of NNES teacher trainees was not homogeneous. The amount of time that they had spent in the target language country, their amount of teaching experience, their fluency and accuracy in the target language, and their personalities varied. Consequently, the ratings their performances received from host teachers ranged from extremely favorable to somewhat disapproving. This study suggests that the problems perceived by host teachers are typical for all novice teachers. Overcoming these limitations requires extensive training and practice. NNES teacher trainees in the study are at the very beginning of the long and arduous process of becoming teachers. They have the potential to evolve into accomplished professionals as they gain teaching experience and improve the quality of their instruction.

The survey showed that NNES teacher trainees possessed skills that characterize the performance of efficient language teachers. They prepared thoroughly for their classes and use the class time effectively, which resulted in well-organized and versatile lessons. They implemented their lessons using clear objectives and procedures, appropriate teaching materials, clear and specific instructions, smooth transitions, and adequate introduction, presentation, and questioning techniques. However, developing specific teaching skills is only one aspect of teacher preparation (Britten, 1985a, 1985b; Richards & Nunan, 1990). Teachers' behaviors and general attitudes toward teaching are as essential to the profession as knowledge of subject matter and current methodologies. Qualities such as providing genuine feedback, conveying enthusiasm, and showing sensitivity to students' needs are much more difficult to coach directly in training, and yet host teachers' comments suggest that NNES teacher trainees were particularly successful in this area. That NNES teacher trainees possessed these key attributes for creating effective learning environments so early in their careers reinforces the view that nonnative English speakers bring their own strengths to the task of language teaching and makes them important participants in the practicum classroom and valuable members of the profession.

This study was designed to help practicum coordinators who have problems placing NNES teacher trainees into host classrooms because some host teachers may have reservations about their teaching abilities. I hope that the survey results will bring recognition to NNES teacher

trainees' teaching ability and respect for their scholarship, thus helping them to grow as professionals. Also, it might enable administrators "to see beyond their accents and pronunciation" (Braine, 1998, p. 14) and to appreciate their personal and professional qualities as well as the multilingual and multicultural experiences they bring to the ESL classroom. Although this survey is not going to miraculously solve the difficulties that nonnative-English-speaking MA TESOL graduates encounter in the practicum classrooms and on the job market, it can contribute to the discussion of nonnativeness and provide educators with alternatives to traditional focus on the native speaker as an ideal language teacher.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Using the rating scale 1 to 5 evaluate nonnative English speaking student teachers with whom you are working now on the basis of the dimensions identified below. Circle the appropriate rating and write your comments in the "Comments" column.

5-excellent   4-good   3-adequate   2-poor   1-unacceptable   N/A-non applicable

Student teacher's name (optional)	
Nationality/country of origin	
Previous teaching experience	Yes No
How long have you known the student teacher	
Average age of the trainee	20–28 29–35 36–42 43–50
Number of years of study of English (optional)	
Place of observation	
Level of class	Beginning Intermediate Advanced
Number of students in class	Male Female
Any other relevant information (e.g. type, size, length of the class)	

Personal Qualities	Rating	Comments
Audibility of voice	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Eye Contact	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Vitality-Posture	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Rapport with the class	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Command of Language	Rating	Comments
Correctness of structure and vocabulary	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
General intelligibility including adequacy of pronunciation and intonation patterns	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Fluency	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Authenticity of the language	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Adjustment to students' level of language	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Appropriateness of the use of linguistic terms	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Presents a good model of English in all communicative situations	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Organization	Rating	Comments
Organization of class time	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Lesson plan, balance and variety of activities	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Thoroughness of preparation for each class	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Effective organization and class management	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Implementation	Rating	Comments
Clear objectives and procedures	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Clear and specific instructions	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Command of the subject matter:		
Vocabulary	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Structure	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Phonology	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Appropriateness of teaching materials	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Clarity in presenting the material	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Various formats (individual, whole class, pair, group) employed appropriately	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Introduction and presentation techniques	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Questioning techniques	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Smoothness of flow/transitions	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

	Rating	Comments
Involvement and encouragement of students	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Effective teacher/student interaction	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Ability to adapt/extemporize	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Culture	Rating	Comments
Familiarity with the target culture	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Realistic attitude toward target culture	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Involvement of target culture as seen from the choice of materials, topics, activities, patterns of interaction	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Feedback	Rating	Comments
Provides genuine positive feedback	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Evaluates students performance fairly	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Conveys enthusiasm	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Shows concern for and openness to students	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Awareness and correction of errors when appropriate	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
The use of non-verbal feedback	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Attends equally to all the students in the class and involves everybody	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Evaluation:		
Ability to evaluate own performance	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	
Ability to respond constructively to evaluation from others	5 4 3 2 1 N/A	

Summarizing comments:

Please answer these questions:
1. What does the trainee do especially well (please be specific)?
2. What could the trainee do better (please be specific)?
3. Do you think that cultural factors might consciously or subconsciously affect planning and teaching of the trainee? For example, certain aspects of a topic have not been discussed because of cultural reasons. Or, the way the trainee addresses and interacts with students is affected by cultural factors.
4. Are you aware of any comments from the students regarding this particular trainee? What were they?