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Foreword

Péter Medyges' voice was the first and one of the most prominent speaking out for many teachers whose first language is one other than English, whose own voices had been silenced after almost a century of systematically being considered failed native speakers, deficient communicators and second-best teachers.

Ever since the publication of the first edition of *The Non-native Teacher*, many others have found and lent their own rich and deep voices to expose the plight of non-native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in many parts of the world. In particular, Enric Llurda, Ali Fuad Selvi, Ahmar Mahboob, Eva Bernat, Marek Kiczowski among many others have inspired me and shaped my own thinking. However, we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the first spokesperson who prepared the way for the NNEST movement. It is, therefore, a great privilege for me to have been invited to write this foreword to the third edition of *The Non-native Teacher*.

Warning to the reader

You are about to embark on a rich and complex reading experience. Be prepared for a distinctive voice like no other you might have read before, a confident voice that expresses original ideas in a highly personal, idiosyncratic style. A voice deeply rooted in a specific geographical setting (the Hungarian educational context), which informs much of the thinking, examples and experiences that shape the book. This is a rare occurrence indeed in the English Language Teaching literature – a unique, clearly situated voice which dispenses with the numbing restrictions imposed by political correctness and the controlled, measured niceties that come with the language in which it is written, characterised by politeness and understatement. For understated and measured, this work is not. And it cannot be. Get ready to be surprised, amused, interrogated, provoked or even irritated – and perhaps all of these – in the space of the very same page or paragraph. But more importantly, dare to read this text as a productive and potentially transformative activity and to make sure you notice its impact on you.

As I read this new edition, I found myself nodding in agreement, drawing big exclamation marks on the margin and smiling with complicit joy at some of its more subversive and provocative parts. I also noticed that a few other sections caused me to shake my head in disagreement – but more about this later. Here are a few of my favourite disarming moments: in Chapter 2, as the author's major objections to the definitions of the term *native speaker* are being discussed, all of a sudden the unexpected, almost childlike simplicity of the statement '*To say that a native speaker has a native-like command [...] is the same as suggesting that a good bus driver has the ability to drive a bus well.*' made me chuckle with delight. In Chapter 3, 'A "teacher-centred" approach', the one sentence almost concealed within a paragraph discussing the multiple roles of the teacher and listing teacher roles from two different sources brought the key issue of the non-native teacher back into focus without even mentioning it: '*Oddly enough, the role in which she [the teacher] could act as herself is not mentioned on either list, or anywhere else.*'

It is often statements like this, hidden in broader discussions, that cut to the heart of the non-NEST matter with the sharpness of a double-edge sword and speak intimately to those teachers who, like me, have experienced the profoundly damaging experience of having to hide the fact that we had been raised speaking a language other than English, or felt we had to do so, for fear of losing face in front of our students, their parents or sponsors. Being able to act as ourselves – to walk into the classroom without having to shed the fullness of our identity and personal history at the door; to tap into the richness of our own experiences as English language learners explicitly for the benefit of our

students; to recognise and be proud of our hard-won knowledge and expertise: in short, to feel and behave comfortable and confident in our own skin as legitimate teachers of English. This is the ultimate goal, and yet, the one that is often glossed over or denied in the literature, and indeed in many teacher education programmes. And this is why it is important that you do not get distracted by the singular voice and style that permeates the whole book, for a lot of what Péter Medgyes has to say about the NEST/NNEST issue in this new edition remains as relevant and insightful today as it was when the first edition of *The Non-native Teacher* was published over 20 years ago.

It is certainly possible that some readers might find the current edition of *The Non-native Teacher* rather alien – an overall subjective book, with elements of research about someone else’s context and circumstances, far removed from theirs. However, for readers like me, this book offers nothing less than an opportunity for bibliotherapy – a possibility of reading for healing. For teachers for whom, no matter how long or hard we have studied it, and despite the well-meaning contemporary discourses around its ownership, English remains as ever ‘*an-other* language’, it is natural to identify with the arguments, examples and anecdotes woven through these pages, because they provide a mirror in which our own experiences and professional life stories are reflected. This identification inevitably helps us feel a little bit less alone in an industry that is still inequitable and discriminatory against the so-called non-native-English-speaking teacher in many parts of the world. It also allows us to have deeper insights into our own situations.

Reading the current edition gave me unexpected moments of epiphany, as a given line or sentence spoke to my history or my own thoughts with the force of a lightning bolt and helped me understand myself a little better. Let me give you an example: during a plenary at a recent EFL teachers’ conference, the speaker put forward the argument for English as Lingua Franca (ELF) in terms of English now being the medium of communication of choice in a globalised world. While nobody can dispute the fact that English is currently by far the most powerful language in the world, I found myself reacting vehemently against that statement.

A few days later, as I was reading Péter’s analysis of the impact of the global spread of English in Chapter 1, the line about immigrants for whom ‘English remains a surrogate language, a substitute vehicle for communication **forced upon them** by the speech community that surrounds them’ (*emphasis mine*), I finally understood my irrational reaction at that conference. I felt much closer to the truth about my own complicated, ambiguous and contradictory relationship with the English language – a language I both love and to which I have devoted long years of study and hard work, and one that I deeply resent when it is the only possible medium I have to express myself if I want to be understood – particularly at times when I would much rather communicate the full force of my anger, joy, despair, love, fear or anxiety, in no uncertain terms, in the language of my childhood, my family and my first life experiences.

When people who were born and bred speaking English, and have fully enjoyed the benefits and entitlements that come with that – including having relatively disproportionate opportunities to be heard or read as authors and experts in the field, given that they only represent less than 20% of the EFL teachers in the world – when such colleagues disseminate the naive view that English is now a universal property, a world heritage site of communication belonging to humanity, or blithely justify the

¹ With a score of 0.889, English features as almost twice as powerful as Mandarin, the next most powerful language in the Power Language Index. <https://medium.com/world-economic-forum/these-are-the-most-powerful-languages-in-the-world-2f7d042b9342#.likur9vmh>

omnipresence and almighty power of English in terms of choice, Péter Medgyes' voice still expresses a necessary, dissonant, liberating view for many.

I have stated above that I also found myself disagreeing with some of Medgyes' ideas. In my case, it was particularly those which reflected what could be interpreted as an introjected, negative view of the linguistic proficiency of multilingual teachers who have learnt English as a second, additional or foreign language, and which is described in the book as a 'handicap' when compared to that of 'native speakers.' And this is precisely where the damage inflicted by the long-lasting, pervasive deficit view of the NNESTs, which dominated much of 20th century thought in the fields of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching, can be seen at work only with the benefit of 21st century hindsight, courtesy of the recent Multilingual Turn in Languages Education, which offers a more balanced shift in perspective, from a deficit to an asset view of the NNEST. Seen in this light, my disagreement swiftly melts, to give way to compassion at the poignant recognition of a lonely prophet preaching ahead of his time, a physician in need of healing himself.

This updated edition of *The Non-native Teacher* is an essential book, a must-read for everyone involved in the ELT industry and, in certain respects, a classic in that, while some of its contextual detail, and a few of the ideas put forward, may at times sound slightly out of step with contemporary thinking in some quarters, its key messages have stood the test of time. You might be forgiven for thinking that this might sound like an accolade of sorts, even a virtue. In this case, however, the fact that this text is still relevant today is symptomatic of the scale and magnitude of the non-NEST issue in our industry over the twenty years after the book was first published.

When English Language Teaching ultimately becomes an equitable profession, then this book will be read as a significant contribution to NNEST studies in the history of ELT and will no longer be regarded as other than a historical work. Until then, it needs to be actively read and discussed in every teacher training, trainer training and management programme.

Silvana Richardson, Cambridge, December 2016

Publisher's Note

Publishing history

The first edition of *The Non-native Teacher* was published by Macmillan in 1994, as part of its MEP Monographs methodology series. This edition went on to win the English Speaking Union (ESU) Duke of Edinburgh prize in 1995.

The second edition, with some additional material, was published by Max Hueber Verlag in 1999.

Both editions established themselves as key titles on the topics and were widely used in training courses throughout the world. However, following various publishing company changes, both eventually went out of print.

Over the last few years, it has become clear that the questions raised in the earlier editions are still relevant, and warrant further discussion in relation to the developing range of teaching contexts and political, economic and educational change. The reactions to Silvana Richardson's plenary at the 2016 IATEFL Conference - and to both her and Péter Medgyes' subsequent sessions - confirmed the feeling that a new edition would make a worthwhile contribution to the debate.

The present edition: black and blue

The first thought was to simply 'revise and update' the original text. But this quickly proved to be unrealistic. It would require much rewriting to incorporate the developments over the last 25 years and risked being confusing for those who knew the original. It also risked watering down the author's distinctive and individual voice.

The decision was made to leave the original content largely as it was (apart from some essential updating of detail), to form the main text (printed in black), and to add substantial new material from the viewpoint of 'today' (printed in blue).

New material (in blue)

Each chapter is now framed by totally new material:

- Focus points to provide an easy way in.
- Margin notes - arising from the points in the original text and suggesting ways in which the reader/user can relate these to their own current and local situation.
- Further reading - a few current titles related to the content of the chapter.

The aim is to provide an interactive continuum between situations and views from a several decades ago and today, and looking ahead to possible future developments both internationally and within different teaching contexts.

Potential readers/users

Our aim is for the material to provide useful points of discussion on teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD) courses, while also encouraging individual readers to relate it to their own teaching situations, and raising questions that might encourage academic readers to explore different teaching classroom situations further.

We hope you enjoy it.

Susan Holden

Swan Communication

March 2017

Introduction

Rationale

This book aims to study the major differences in teaching attitudes between native-speaking teachers of English (*NESTs*) and non-native-speaking teachers of English (*non-NESTs*). My primary concern is to examine the characteristics of non-NESTs by comparing them against NESTs. Once the distinctive features have been identified, I shall suggest ideas about how non-NESTs may become better teachers on their own terms. Although the message is hopefully relevant to all kinds of ELT experts, I wish to reach practising teachers first and foremost.

Until recently, ELT literature has barely dealt with the native/non-native division and, quite often, has openly challenged it. There are several possible reasons for this negative attitude.

Those who dismiss the idea of distinction usually refer to the ambiguities with which it is so obviously loaded. First of all, they say, it is difficult to divide the world into two neat groups: English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. What about places like India, Nigeria or South Africa, where English is the first or second language for a significant number of citizens?

Opponents of this distinction raise similar problems when the native speaker is contrasted with the non-native speaker of English. What about children in immigrant families who speak the language of their parents at home and the language of the community in the street and at school? Are they native or non-native speakers of English?

The issue is also rich in politico-educational implications. For example, if we accept the native/non-native distinction, we may unwittingly abet discriminatory practices against non-NESTs who seek job opportunities abroad.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that most teachers, as well as their students, fall outside these fuzzy areas. Most of us *do* come from English-speaking or non-English-speaking countries; most of us *are* native or non-native speakers of English. But even those teachers whose identity is equivocal seem to show dominant features of belonging. In my view, the native/non-native distinction *does* exist not only in reality but also, and more significantly, in the minds of millions of teachers. It should not be rejected, overlooked or blurred, simply because it runs in the face of certain theories or ideologies; it deserves the researcher's attention. It is for this reason that the present book draws the line between NESTs and non-NESTs, if only for sake of convenience, and endeavours to highlight points of divergence by grasping them as they feature in our everyday teaching behaviour.

As a matter of fact, the native/non-native distinction has usually been neglected for far more prosaic reasons than the ones mentioned above. Let me draw attention to a few of them.

Firstly, the study of NESTs and non-NESTs is at the interface of several disciplines: linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pedagogy, educational politics and several other fields of research all seem to have a bearing. These ramifications of the topic have prevented the researcher from seeing the forest for the trees.

Secondly, non-NESTs are scattered around the globe; the differences between those working at opposite ends of the world may be staggering. Blinded by the multitude of divergences, researchers have often overlooked the features all non-NESTs have in common.

Thirdly, most professional literature gets written in English by researchers who speak English as their native language. Although non-natives also conduct research, their activities are largely restricted to their home environment and few find their way into the mainstream of international communication. This applies with particular force to researchers living in the so-called developing countries.

Finally, for quite some time ELT researchers were reluctant to write about the teacher at all, whether NEST or non-NEST. 'Learner-centredness', the buzzword of the 1970s and 1980s, implied that teachers should keep a low profile in the teaching/learning operation. As a consequence, research focusing on the teacher was pushed to the periphery. Nowadays efforts to bring the teacher back onto the stage are gaining momentum - I wish to join this movement.

The structure of this edition

The book is symmetrically arranged in six parts and twelve chapters. *Part I* is like a runway for take-off, placing the issue of the native/non-native speaker in a general framework extending beyond ELT. While Chapter 1 discusses problems arising from the hegemony the English language enjoys in international communication, Chapter 2 is an attempt to clarify certain ambiguities inherent in the dichotomy between the native and the non-native speaker.

In *Part II*, the focus shifts from the speaker in general to the teacher in particular. Chapter 3 seeks to justify why it is the teacher, and not the student, who is the focus of my attention. By drawing the line between NESTs and non-NESTs, in Chapter 4 I advance a few hypotheses and then introduce the three surveys whose purpose it is to validate those hypotheses.

Part III carries the central messages of the book. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively scrutinise the negative and positive aspects of being a non-NEST in great detail.

Chapter 7 in *Part IV* is meant to round off the debate by suggesting an answer to the question: 'Who's worth more: the native or the non-native?' In a reconciliatory tone, Chapter 8 suggests forms of collaboration between 'them' and 'us'.

Part V is essentially a collection of practical ideas about how non-NESTs can improve their English-language proficiency. Chapter 9 offers activities related to teachers' professional lives whereas Chapter 10 recommends activities they can do in their leisure time.

Part VI opens avenues for further research in the area. Whereas the empirical studies shown in earlier chapters are based on teachers' self-perception, Chapter 11 examines mismatches between stated and actual teaching behaviour through video-recordings and interviews. The final chapter, Chapter 12, investigates the learners' take on the issue.

In conclusion, I freely admit that this book is slanted towards non-NESTs for at least two good reasons. One is that, although we greatly outnumber NESTs, there is relatively little on the market to address our special problems. The second reason is that our difficulties are often more daunting than those confronting NESTs. Let's face it: my full sympathy is with the non-NEST - what other attitude would you expect from an author who himself is a non-NEST?

Péter Medgyes, Budapest, March 2017

CHAPTER 8

Collaboration between natives and non-natives

Focus points

- Models of NEST and non-NEST collaboration
- The difficulties of launching team-teaching projects

8.1 Collaboration outside the school

In the previous chapter, I pointed out that the desirable goal in all schools should be to achieve a fair balance of NESTs and non-NESTs – a desire which is clearly unattainable in the foreseeable future. Logically enough, the next question is what forms of organised collaboration are possible between NESTs and non-NESTs. First let me draw upon the data supplied by my respondents, which mostly refer to non-NESTs collaborating with NESTs outside the school. Afterwards, I shall mention several forms of NEST/non-NEST cooperation in the school and, more specifically, in the classroom.

Survey results

Question 5: Do you know of any organised NEST/non-NEST cooperation? Describe.

In **Survey 1**, out of the 21 respondents with considerable teaching experience abroad, only eight gave a positive answer, whereas in **Survey 2**, 91 respondents (42.1 per cent) answered in the affirmative, as opposed to 86 'no' answers (39.8 per cent); 39 respondents (18.0 per cent) left this question unanswered.

Collating the data of the two surveys, I found that the most frequently listed items were various forms of in-service training courses, workshops, seminars and conferences, usually organised under the aegis of national and local educational authorities, or agents from the 'Centre'. Mention was also made of professional gatherings run by local English teachers' associations and by branches and affiliates of IATEFL and TESOL. The British Council was also acknowledged for its role in recruiting NESTs from Britain and functioning as a 'culture centre'. Some respondents expressed their appreciation of the support provided by the American Peace Corps, while others included professional journals and bilingual schools among available opportunities. ^①

There are two observations I wish to make in this respect. One is that hardly anybody mentioned the possibility of NEST/non-NEST collaboration at school level. The other point is that collaboration was usually regarded as a one-way relationship, with the NEST being the benefactor and the non-NEST the beneficiary. Both aspects may be explained by the scarcity of NESTs. ^②

^① Is your local or national ELT association affiliated to a larger international organisation such as IATEFL or TESOL?

Further reading:
Braine (2010)

^② Generally speaking, are plenary speakers at local conferences NESTs or non-NESTs?

Incidentally, **Question 5** showed a significant correlation with other variables in **Survey 2**. For example, respondents teaching relatively small-size groups reported on collaborative activities more frequently than those who were working with larger groups. This discovery is not particularly surprising if we consider that small groups are the privilege of teachers from well-off schools who can afford to employ NESTs as well. The same explanation may apply to the strong correlation found between the length of time spent by non-NESTs in an English-speaking country and the frequency of native/non-native collaboration.

A significant positive correlation was discovered between this question and **Question 1**; that is to say, those who had experience of NEST/non-NEST collaborative efforts appeared to be more conscious of the differences in teaching behaviour between 'us' and 'them'. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, those who participated in some kind of NEST/non-NEST collaboration (and hence were more likely to be more proficient speakers of English) turned out to be very perceptive of the effects that their L2 weaknesses might exert on their teaching behaviour (**Question 10**: see page 55). By the same token, those non-NESTs who claimed to be sensitive to maintaining and improving their linguistic skills solicited more NEST support than those who did not.

Survey results

Question 6: Suggest ways of strengthening cooperation.

While the former question investigated reality, **Question 6** elicited ideas about desirable types of NEST/non-NEST collaboration. More than two thirds of the respondents in **Survey 2** presented their 'wish lists'.

Nearly all the areas mentioned previously recurred here. Special emphasis was placed on the necessity of professional visits to English-speaking countries and running in-service training courses. 'Each school should have at least one NEST!' – was advocated as a minimal requirement, but views on how NESTs could be best employed ranged from using them as mere language consultants to partners in team-teaching. A few respondents would like to have English-language clubs set up, where they could chat with native speakers in informal circumstances.

Whilst, in most people's minds, collaboration was an exclusively one-way process, some respondents hinted at its cross-fertilising effect. Exchanging information on cultural issues was considered to be an obvious area of mutual benefit. On the more directly professional side, non-NEST respondents whose mother tongue had international currency wished to have a wider scope for teacher exchange programmes.

8.2 Collaboration in the school

At fortunate institutions with a mixture of NESTs and non-NESTs, the mutual benefits are patently visible. The profit non-NESTs can derive from daily encounters with NESTs is obvious. The language of communication is bound to be English in both professional and personal interactions within the English Department. It goes without saying that this permanent 'language bath' may dramatically improve the non-NESTs' English-language proficiency.

More concretely, the non-NEST can turn to her native colleague with questions that have cropped up during the planning or conduct of lessons. Although the idea that the NEST should be regarded as the ultimate arbiter in deciding what is correct and what is not has often been called into question (Preston 1984), it is clear that the linguistic judgements and intuitions of sophisticated native speakers, let alone qualified NESTs, are worth taking into account. In addition, a NEST can serve as a genuine carrier of the culture of an English-speaking country.

In my view, however, this relationship is not unilateral. ☉ Non-NESTs can also supply NESTs with a lot of support. Provided that the NEST is keen on learning the host language and dipping into the culture of the host community, non-NESTs can help her with these endeavours. On the more informal side, they can help the newly-arrived native-speaker colleagues who have difficulty settling in.

NESTs and non-NESTs can collaborate on a less directly professional basis as well. The very existence of a multinational and multicultural staff inevitably contributes to a better understanding of each other's traditions, customs and mentality, helps get rid of prejudices, clichés and stereotypes, and engenders a higher degree of tolerance to each other – an attitude that will ultimately be conveyed to the students. Out-of-school gatherings and parties enable us to see the world through a new pair of spectacles and enjoy ourselves in the company of people who think in a different manner and speak a different language. ☉

8.3 Team-teaching - the most intensive form of collaboration

When designing the timetable for the next school year, principals strive to make the best of the few NESTs available in the school. On the grounds of their native proficiency in English, they are often assigned advanced-level groups and conversation classes. Elsewhere, in order to make them accessible to everybody, they are torn into as many small bits as there are groups in the school. Needless to say, NESTs are not always pleased with this task allocation – some complain that they are regarded as 'rare animals in a zoo'.

A far less frequent form of harnessing the NEST is team-teaching. Whether or not in the context of NEST/non-NEST collaboration, team-teaching is a system whereby a group of teachers jointly undertake a programme of work with a group of students. ☉ An umbrella term, team-teaching may range from two teachers engaging in some kind of loose relationship, such as planning a lesson together, to tighter forms of collaboration, such as team-teaching a series of lessons.

☉³ When NESTs and non-NESTs collaborate at school or university level, is the playing field level? Who can contribute, with what, to the 'common good'?

☉⁴ Lortie (1975) calls traditional schools 'egg carton-like institutions' employing 'lone rangers' (Medgyes 1995).

Are these metaphors appropriate to describe your past or present school?

☉⁵ Have you ever taught, or considered teaching, with a partner? Why (not)?

On the basis of the scanty literature available, the majority of those who have been involved in team-teaching are in favour of this pedagogical practice (Bodóczy & Malderez 1993, Brumby & Wada 1990, Schaefer & Chase 1991, Siriwardena 1992). They claim, for example, that collaborative relationships:

- encourage the partners to enter into an endless series of negotiating, listening and exchanging feedback sessions;
- foster a growth in mutual trust, openness, tolerance and responsibility;
- make the partners more reflective about their own teaching philosophies;
- enhance their familiarity with another value system and culture;
- decrease anxiety, loneliness and teacher burnout;
- stimulate better concentration. ⁶

If team-teaching also involves upfront teaching, there are further benefits to be reaped:

- periods of intense concentration and relaxation alternate;
- students learn more effectively at the juncture of different teaching styles;
- motivation is higher than in the traditional classroom. ⁷

It must be admitted, however, that team-teaching is fraught with potential drawbacks as well. For example:

- it is extremely time-consuming and expensive;
- some teachers do not like to work in close partnership;
- others refrain from team-teaching, because they feel vulnerable (Chapter 5.4).

I suppose that time and money are the major stumbling blocks which prevent teachers not only from trying their hand at team-teaching, but even from observing each other's classes on a regular basis.

Let me stress that team-teaching, with or without NESTs, is a useful form of further education, too. Its effectiveness results from two factors:

- the participants' language proficiency, language awareness and pedagogical skills are enhanced in the process of uncontrived interaction and negotiation;
- team-teaching, by its nature, is a prolonged activity in contrast to other forms of in-service training, which typically range from two hours to two weeks in duration. ⁸

⁶ Luo specifies different models of collaborative (EFL) teaching. Discuss elements of these models.

Further reading: Luo (2010).

⁷ Choose one of these three papers: de Oliveira & Richardson (2004), Matsuda & Matsuda (2004), or Snow *et al.* (2004).

Present its arguments and discuss which of the three papers best suits your own school environment.

⁸ On the basis of the three articles above, make a note of the many benefits and possible drawbacks of collaboration.

Compare these findings with those described here.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined possible types of organised collaboration between NESTs and non-NESTs. On the basis of my surveys I found that cooperation depended, among other things, on the availability of NESTs in the school. After pointing out that collaboration need not be regarded as a one-way activity, I have elaborated on team-teaching, highlighting both its pros and cons.

Further reading

- **Braine, G.** (2010) *Non-native Speaker English Teachers: Research, Pedagogy, and Professional Growth* Routledge.

A staunch supporter of the 'non-native speaker movement', the author gives a thorough overview of recent research on non-NESTs, exemplifying it through two case studies. He advocates that non-NESTs engage in collaborative efforts, enhance their language proficiency and make the most of professional organisations. His book ends with demonstrating the challenges faced by non-NESTs and ways to tackle them.

- **Luo, W-H.** (2010) Collaborative teaching of EFL by native and non-native English-speaking teachers in Taiwan. In A. Mahboob (Ed.) *The NNEST Lens: Non-native English Speakers in TESOL* (pp. 263–284) Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Based on an elementary school project in Taiwan, the paper presents collaborative models of teaching between 'imported' NESTs and local non-NESTs. The author specifies the components of R.E.F.L.E.C.T. and ways in which these elements can be incorporated into teacher education.