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Student Perceptions of How TESOL Educators Teach Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers

Recent research on how TESOL professionals educate nonnative English-speaking students in MA programs indicates a general conviction that native-speaking and nonnative-speaking MA students should be treated equally during their studies in MA programs. Absent from this discussion and much of the literature on this topic, however, are the voices of the students themselves, which raises the question of how well self-reports from TESOL professionals match the perceptions of the students in those MA programs. The current study aims to address this issue. On a survey of current and former students in MA TESOL programs across California, data suggest generally shared perceptions between TESOL professionals and students on the question of whether nonnative English-speaking and native English-speaking students are treated equally during their studies; however, several important differences exist. This paper examines these differences and discusses the mismatches between MA students' perceptions of how nonnative English-speaking students are treated and those of their instructors.

Introduction and Study Purpose

The notion that native speakers make intrinsically better teachers, known as the *native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992), has been questioned from a variety of angles during the past 20 years (Canagarajah, 1999, 2012; Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2000; Ma, 2012; Pennycook, 1994, 1998) and has led to the development of a rich literature on nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and issues related to their participation as members of the TESOL community. Indeed, recent volumes such as Braine (2010) and Mahboob (2010) attest to the position of NNEST studies within TESOL and the growing interest and participation in this area.

As far back as 1985, Paikeday stated that the native speaker "exists only as a figment of linguist's imagination" (p. 25), yet to this day many TESOL jobs prefer native-speaker applicants to nonnative speakers (Clark & Paran, 2007). This has led to a number of studies that have investigated student preferences and that have shown that, in many cases, students are able to see the value of nonnative English-speaking teachers (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Lasagabas-

ter & Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012; Moussu & Braine, 2006; Pacek, 2005). Phillipson (1992), Canagarajah (1999), and Kramsch (1997) have all argued that simply being a native speaker of a language does not make one a good teacher, and Phillipson has suggested that because most nonnative English-speaking teachers acquired their L2 as adults, they were better prepared to address the challenges faced by other adults learning an L2 than those who had learned their L1 as children. These views are reinforced by research that shows that NNESTs can serve as models of good learners for their students (Cook, 2005; Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012; Medgyes, 1992), may be more empathetic to the needs and struggles of learners (Boyle, 1997; Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012; E. Lee & Lew, 2001; Lipovsky & Mahboob, 2010; Medgyes, 1994), often exhibit better metalinguistic awareness, and are more skilled at presenting linguistic information than native speakers (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012; Medgyes, 1994; Murphy-O'Dwyer, 1996).

In contrast to the above studies, which focus on the strengths of nonnative English speakers as teachers, other research has investigated the context of teacher training and what goes on with nonnative English-speaking students before they enter the classroom because, as Llurda (2005) notes, a large number of students in MA TESOL programs in the US are nonnative speakers. An early investigation by England and Roberts (1989) of 123 master's programs found that no additional training was offered to nonnative speakers, and that program administrators often saw no need to adapt the curriculum to fit nonnative English-speaking student needs. While various scholars have argued for the inclusion of issues related to nonnative English speakers in teacher-education programs (Brinton, 2004; Kamhi-Stein, 1999, 2004; I. Lee, 2004; A. Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2005), our own research (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012) suggests that little progress has been made on this issue. Despite this slow pace of change, there is a clear awareness of the issues among TESOL professionals.

When we examined the behavior of TESOL professionals toward their native and nonnative MA students, we were interested in uncovering to what extent TESOL professionals were aware of these issues and how such an awareness would affect their professional practices (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012). Not surprisingly, professors generally reinforced the pervading sentiment regarding nonnative English speakers, observing that *nativeness* alone does not make a good teacher and that nonnative speakers are often more knowledgeable about English grammar and more sensitive to the challenges of L2 acquisition than their native-speaking counterparts. These respondents also stated that they hold all students, native and nonnative, to the same academic and linguistic standards. While this study provides some evidence that previous NNEST research is reflected in more equitable practices in MA TESOL programs, we wondered how accurately these responses matched those of the students in their MA programs. This research focuses on what goes on before an individual ends up in his or her own classroom from a different angle: from the student's perspective.

The current study aims to fill this gap by examining student perceptions of how their own professors educate them. Do students in MA TESOL programs,

both native and nonnative, believe that nonnative English-speaking students are at a disadvantage/advantage relative to native English-speaking students? Do students think that their MA TESOL professors treat nonnative English-speaking students differently in any way, and if so, how? Do students think that nonnative English-speaking students should be treated any differently or receive any additional assistance from their professors? Are students themselves aware of global English varieties and issues related to NNESTs? How do their answers align with what their own professors say is happening in the classroom and with what the larger TESOL profession says should happen in TESOL training programs?

Method

The survey's text as presented to respondents appears in Appendix 1. Based on the results of our previous study of TESOL educators and their approaches to educating nonnative-speaking MA TESOL students (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), we devised a short set of four open-ended survey questions. As with our previous survey, we decided that these four issues-based questions should be open-ended, thereby allowing for greater creativity and elaboration on the part of respondents. These four open-ended questions were followed by eight brief biographic questions designed to permit analysis of the open-ended responses according to important information such as L1 and country of origin.

Responses to the survey were collected via Qualtrics Survey Software in Spring 2011. The survey was distributed by contacting faculty advisers at the various MA TESOL programs across California and requesting that they distribute the survey to current students via the student Listserv or email distribution list. Sixty-five students started the survey by opening the initial link, and a total of 46 finished the survey, which was completed in full with all questions answered. Responses represent a wide range of programs across Northern and Southern California (Appendix 2), provide a solid representation of the population, and exceed the minimum sample size of 30 or more that is needed for a normal distribution (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1992).[1]

After all responses were received, we compiled them into a single Excel file, grouped them by question, and then read through them separately to identify common themes using open coding. The two of us then met to discuss the themes we had identified independently, reread the responses, and recalibrated our initial coding based on our ongoing discussions (focused coding). The themes discussed below in the Results and Discussion section are derived from this process, an adaptation of the process described by Esterberg (2002). This coding process also allowed for results to be analyzed according to the collected biographic information to explore possible variation in responses among different student groups.

Results and Discussion

The discussion below follows the structure of the survey itself and its order of questions. The questions are reprinted here for easier reference. All quoted

survey responses are as the respondents originally wrote them, with no editing corrections.

> **Question 1:** Do you feel that non-native-English-speaking M.A. TESOL students are at a disadvantage, or at an advantage, compared to native speakers, while studying in the M.A. program? Or are the benefits and drawbacks generally balanced? Please comment on this question with regard to two areas: writing and speaking.

The first question requested students' opinions about the position of nonnative English-speaking students in MA TESOL programs relative to their native-speaker counterparts. As previous research has demonstrated (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Canagarajah, 1999), nonnative English speakers carry many advantages with them into the classroom, varying from excellent linguistic knowledge (Cheung & Braine, 2007; Lipovsky & Mahboob, 2010; Mahboob, 2004; Pacek, 2005) to the ability to relate to the learning process students are engaged in (Cook, 2005; I. Lee, 2000; Medgyes, 1994). Moreover, our own previous research (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012) reinforces these findings by showing that MA TESOL faculty also observe these advantages among nonnative English-speaking students in their MA TESOL classes. However, missing from this discussion are the perceptions of the students themselves. Do students view "nonnativeness" as a nonissue, or at the very least one that confers certain advantages to L2 speakers of English? Or does being a student affect the way one perceives the advantages reported in the literature?

Of the 45 responses we received, 30 responded in the negative or affirmative, while 14 provided more nuanced commentary that might best be described as "it depends." One response was unclear and is excluded from the analysis.

General "Yes" Responses

Only 2 of the 45 respondents (4%) stated that they believed that nonnative English-speaking students were at an advantage while studying in their MA program. Among the reasons cited by these 2 respondents, both L2 speakers of English, are those discussed extensively in the literature (cited above): the advantages bestowed by bilingualism and biliteracy as well as exposure to and experience with a second culture, superior grammatical knowledge, and personal experience as an L2 English learner:

> I think it is an advantage in terms of teaching grammar because as an NNEST student, I have already gone through the process of learning English grammar and am aware of those grammatical terminology. It's also much easier for me to put myself in ESL/EFL students' shoes and anticipate what kinds of difficulties they will encounter in the learning process and hence provide them with appropriate guidance and resources. (L1 Mandarin)

> I think that the bar should be raised for native students, in that many reason like monolinguals, so they are actually those at disadvantage, because they often have only a minimal awareness and knowledge of other cultures and languages other than English or even of English varieties other than SAE. … The foreign language requirements for native speakers seem to me to be too elementary. (L1 Italian)

Central to these two comments is a notion that runs through the research on NNESTs: Their experiences learning English illuminate the experiences of their own students and help them to anticipate the difficulties their students may face. This sets them apart from NESTs in fundamental ways that play a central role in L2 teaching and learning. This sentiment is emphasized in the second response, which turns the question on its head and instead focuses on the disadvantages faced by native English-speaking students. Despite these two very strong "advantage"-oriented responses, the majority of the responses viewed nonnative English-speaking students at a disadvantage.

General "No" Responses

Of the 45 responses, 28 (62%) cited disadvantages faced by nonnative English-speaking students. The most common themes mentioned by respondents are the challenges that nonnative English-speaking students face in terms of linguistic proficiency, which many mention as extending across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, academic reading and writing figure as the most commonly cited challenges. Of the 28 responses, 19 (68%) mention reading and writing and the challenges of academic English.

> Many students clearly don't understand class presentations well + have great difficulty writing graduate level research papers up to the standard that would be expected in any other field. (L1 English)

> Most of the texts and articles that we read are written in very formal academic English. I am a native speaker and I find many of the articles to be challenging. I cannot imagine reading these types of articles in a second or foreign language. … non-native-English-speaking students have to put in more effort to make sure their writing is grammatically correct. Many of these students spend extra time going to tutors to make sure their written assignments are satisfactory. (L1 Cantonese; "dominant language English")

> I feel that NNEST M.A. TESOL students are at a disadvantage compared to native speakers in writing. Based on my own experience, it was and is not easy to reach a same level of academic writing. (L1 Korean)

Other responses noted the linguistic and cultural demands of the graduate classroom:

> I think that NNES Ss are at a disadvantage if for no other reason than the amount of time it takes them to consider, construct, read research and edit writing samples. There are also speaking disadvantages in the classroom in that 1. they take longer to formulate responses and often cannot do so quickly enough to compete with the NS in the class 2. many feel too much hesitance in sharing what they feel is 'bad' English in a room full of future English teachers 3. …the culture than many of the NNES come from are not accustomed to the discussion style or the slight aggressive nature of interjecting into a classroom discussion. (L1 English)

> NNES MA TESOL students are at a disadvantage in the beginning of their studies in a US program, mostly because their academic culture is different when it comes to speaking (participating in class discussions and competing for the floor) and writing papers. In terms of speaking, the American culture seems to suggest that it is better to say at least something than remain silent even if you have nothing valuable to add. Cultures of many other countries, my own included, suggest that it is better to keep silent than appear ignorant. (L1 Russian)

One thing that stands out in these responses is the perceived linguistic challenges faced by nonnative English-speaking students during their MA studies. In contrast to the linguistic advantages conferred by superior knowledge of grammatical structure noted in much of the literature, both native English-speaking and nonnative English-speaking students alike see the complexity of academic reading and writing as an additional challenge for nonnative English-speaking MA TESOL students. Of course, it should be noted that the challenges of academic reading and writing are in no way restricted to nonnative English-speaking students; most native English-speaking students also struggle to adjust to these genres of language use. A second element of linguistic knowledge, however, can pose a genuine challenge to nonnative English-speaking students: linguistic proficiency and the processing constraints associated with it. As one of the above respondents notes, it may take a nonnative English speaker longer to formulate a response or to process what someone has said, and this may result in missed communicative opportunities. Added to this are the differing cultural expectations of the American classroom (addressed in the two quotations above), which may cause some students discomfort and result in reduced classroom participation among nonnative English-speaking students.

Balanced Responses

While the vast majority of responses noted specific challenges faced by nonnative English-speaking students during their MA studies, a large number of respondents also noted distinct advantages. Of the 45 responses to Question 1, 14 (31%) balanced their discussion of challenges with examples of specific advantages that nonnative English-speaking students bring to the table in their studies. In a way, these responses blended the "yes" and "no" responses discussed above, addressing the challenges nonnative English-speaking students

may face in academic reading/writing and the cultural differences of the American university classroom while at the same time noting the deeper connection to notions of language learning and teaching that is due to having experienced it themselves firsthand.

> In trying to complete assignments and perhaps working in groups, NNES are at a disadvantage because of the demands of the language. They are, however, also at an advantage because they have much better understanding of the theories involved because they are able to relate to them. (L1 English)

> Disadvantages are the accents they have. Also, writing may also become the problem to them / Advantages: since they come from different backgrounds, they will have more experiences when express different cultures. In addition, they might be in ESL setting before. (L1 Vietnamese)

The remaining "balanced" responses reflect similar ideas, but one response stands out for the transformative thinking it represents and the way that it reflects identity as a multifaceted and ever-changing phenomenon (see for example L. F. Lin, 2011; Norton, 2000).

> Initially when I started my MA program, I felt I was at a disadvantage compared to my native speaking colleagues in the program, especially when it came to class discussion. I felt like I always missed my turn because I was not used to expressing my ideas in a class discussion format. I also felt intimidated by how fluently and eloquently everybody else spoke. I felt insecure and thought I was never going to be as good as my native speaking colleagues. / After a semester or two, I began to realize I was not at a disadvantage. I started seeing myself as a graduate student with a different background. I stopped labeling myself with the idea of being inferior to my native speaking friends. Through the course work, I learned that I could think as critically as anybody else and could excel in all the classes I had to take. I, in fact, did better than any of my native speaking friends when it came to research and writing papers. / / (L1 Japanese)

This quote reflects one of the difficulties of performing synchronic survey-based research: Perceptions of advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and such are not constant, but change through time. Thus, one's perception of the advantages and disadvantages faced by nonnative English-speaking MA TESOL students is also ever changing. The above quote reflects a very powerful transformation in self-perception during the course of MA study, but similar transformations occur in the perception of others as well. This means that not only is it possible for nonnative English-speaking students to change their view of their professional position, but it is also possible for native English-speaking students to change their view of the challenges, advantages, and disadvantages faced by nonnative English-speaking students.

In general, the pattern discussed above held across nonnative English speaker and native English speaker responses. However, when responses were examined according to L1, the distribution changed. For example, only 9 out of 18 nonnative English speakers (50%) saw themselves at a disadvantage compared to the 19 out of 27 native English speakers (70%) who saw nonnative English-speaking students at a disadvantage. This very important difference is discussed later in the paper.

> **Question 2:** Do your M.A. TESOL instructors treat non-native- and native-English-speaking students differently? If so, how? Do your instructors provide more help to non-native speakers in their writing or speaking? In what other ways are the differences apparent, if any?

The second survey question asked respondents to comment on whether or not they believed their instructors treated nonnative- and native-speaking students differently or if instructors provided additional support to nonnative-speaking students in any way. This question was intended to assess how well student perceptions of instructor behavior matched up with instructor self-reports. In previous research (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), the overwhelming majority of instructors reported that they treat all students the same and hold them to the same expectations, making minor exceptions from time to time on assignments such as timed exams and oral presentations. While this finding resonated with our own intuitions and experiences, it also raised questions about accuracy. Were instructors presenting themselves in the best light possible? Did student perceptions of instructor behavior match those of the instructors themselves?

General "Yes" Responses[2]

Of the 45 responses, 16 (35%) indicated that their instructors did, indeed, treat nonnative- and native-speaking students differently. Among the themes mentioned most frequently were greater lenience with grammar and pronunciation and also the provision of additional support.

> In writing, I believe non-native and native speakers are treated differently in regards to grammar accuracy expectation. Teachers seem to be more lenient and forgiving with non-native speakers grammar while demanding higher standards for native speakers. (L1 English)

> I believe that the instructors allow a little more slack with non-native speakers, allowing more time to speak, accepting difficult to understand accents, and perhaps in allowing fewer points taken off in papers for non-native common errors. I have no problem with this. (L1 English)

Whether or not instructors should be more lenient when evaluating the linguistic production of nonnative-speaking students is somewhat polemical. As we discovered in our previous survey (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012),

some instructors are vehemently opposed to differential treatment, citing reasons such as the profession students will soon be entering and the need for superior linguistic skills, while others emphasize the developmental nature of L2 acquisition, arguing that a complete lack of leniency is inequitable. Student comments reflect the complexity of this issue. As the second respondent above mentioned, some students have no problem with differential treatment. Others, however, take issue with it.

> Yes and No. It depends on the instructor. Most of them are quite fair in the grading policies, but some grade easier on the non-native speakers. It isn't fair. (L1 English)

> yes, the presentations by non natives are horrible but they still receive passign scores. If I would turn in the same quality of work as a non native, I would fail (L1 English)

The direction of such differential treatment, however, is not always so straightforward and the equity of it is highlighted in a different way.

> I believe that I have seen instructors be more critical of NNS' writing, but in contrast, less critical in oral presentations. I have had the experience of helping a NNS friend edit some papers when we were in the same class, and even after editing, when I no longer saw any problems in the writing, she would still get marked down for grammar mistakes which were not marked on my papers. (L1 English)

Although some students see no problem with a more lenient approach to error in nonnative-speaking student work, others find it unfair, while still others question the direction of unfairness.

While many respondents noted differences in treatment that might be perceived negatively (i.e., lowering expectations through greater leniency), others noted differences of added support. These comments focused on ways in which instructors often provide additional help beyond what is generally given to native-speaking students.

> They try to understand some difficulties and provide some feedbacks. For example, when I pronounciate a word incorrectly, they try to demonstrate how to make the sound correct and explain the reason why it is difficult or how to teach in the future based on my experience. Thus my experiences will be a good supply to understand my future students. (L1 Korean)

> there are instructors who treat the same and different. Those instructors who see non-natives' struggles and try to help them - are mostly non native instructors. (L1 Spanish)

> The majority of NNES Students in my program are from Asian countries

(Korea, China, and Japan) and have had different experiences in their education as far as amount of participating in class and speaking up and volunteering their ideas and opinions. … In one particular class, the teacher will even let groups of Korean students take a pass and not report back when doing group work. … I think they miss out (and indeed, the whole class does) when the teacher sort of patronizingly tells them they don't need to talk if they don't want to. (L1 English)

A number of very important observations emerge from the above quotes and others like them. First, of the 18 nonnative speakers who responded to this question, 5 (28%) stated that they believed instructors treated them differently compared to 11 (41%) native-speaking respondents. Thus, a higher percentage of native-speaking students believe instructors treat nonnative speakers differently than do nonnative-speaking students. Moreover, NS comments are qualitatively different. While nonnative English-speaking student comments focused more on ways in which instructors provided additional support, native English-speaking student comments tended to focus on differences of a more negative sort, such as greater leniency and the like. Of course, greater leniency can be viewed as unjust not only because of the unfair advantages it may confer, but also because of the way it can shortchange students.

General "No" Responses

While a sizeable number of respondents thought that instructors treated nonnative English-speaking students differently, the majority of respondents (25 out of 45, or 56%) believed that instructors treated all students the same. The common thread among these responses was that instructors tended to offer the same assistance to both native- and nonnative-speaking students, even if those offers were accepted more frequently by one group over the other.

I don't feel that the Ts treat NNES Ss any differently. The Ts give all the same opportunities for help to all their Ss, it's just the NNES that tend to take them up on the offers more frequently. (L1 English)

I didn't feel the professors treated us differently. / No, they didn't provide help in my writing or speaking. Only one professor carefully corrected all my mistakes in my papers, but she did the same with the other students as well. (L1 Brazilian Portuguese)

I didn't feel I was treated differently because I was a non-native speaker of English. My professors corrected some of my grammar mistakes in my papers, but I later found that that they were doing that to anybody. (L1 Japanese)

These students indicated that instructors treated students the same both in terms of assistance and in how instructors responded to student error. The first comment, which suggests that nonnative English-speaking students are

more likely to accept assistance from their instructors, indicates a potential advantage for nonnative English speakers that has yet to be addressed in the literature. The final comment once again points to the ongoing development that takes place across one's MA education. What may be perceived as differential treatment early on—by either native or nonnative—can turn out to be similar treatment as one learns more about local learning conditions. Other comments further reflected this realization of an unexpected, yet appreciated reality:

> I think that it makes sense that they would, but actually, they don't. I like it that they put the same demands on everyone native or non-native. I think this is fair because it's important to uphold the same standards. (L1 English)

Although the majority of "no" responses followed the generally favorable pattern of the quotes provided above, a few noted alignments that sometimes occurred as a result of instructors' and students' backgrounds. As one student noted:

> I do notice sometimes some more camaraderie between native instructors and native students, but that's just me personal perception, and it can also be due to the fact that both share the same L1, thus are more into the same jokes etc. (L1 Italian)

This response reflects previous research (Cook, 2005; I. Lee, 2000; Ma, 2009, 2012) in EFL classrooms that indicates that some students prefer nonnative English-speaking teachers because they are better able to relate to them culturally and socially. It seems that a similar phenomenon may be at work here, which is not in itself bad, but which may leave nonnative English-speaking students feeling left out.

A final comment about the distribution of responses on question 2 is in order before turning to question 3. When responses were examined according to the respondent's L1, the balance shifted. Among native English-speaking respondents, 14 out of 27 (52%) provided responses that were coded as "no," a mere one response over 50%. Nonnative English-speaking student responses, however, shifted in the opposite direction. Among these responses, 11 out of 18 (61%) indicated that instructors did not treat them differently. Although this difference is not as striking as that found in question 1, it is nonetheless very important and will be addressed later in the paper.

We should also note a methodological limitation to question 2. The question is limited to the respondents' *perception* of (un)equal treatment, rather than *actual* treatment. In this survey we had no way of gauging whether respondents' perceptions were actually valid; that is, we did not observe their instructors in practice to see how they were treating their native- and nonnative-speaking students. However, the implications from students' perceptions remain valid.

Question 3: Do you believe native- and non-native-speaking M.A. TESOL students SHOULD be treated differently? Do you believe that non-native-speaking students should receive extra help in any way? If so, how?

Question 2, discussed above, was purely observational, asking respondents to comment on whether or not they had seen their own instructors provide differential treatment to the native- and nonnative English-speaking students in their MA TESOL programs. Question 3, by contrast, veers into value judgment: Regardless of what they observed, how do they feel about the propriety of differential treatment—if it should even be permitted? Forty-five respondents provided commentary on this item, and in the aggregate they did so by answering separately the two Yes/No questions therein.

General "No" Responses

To the question of whether MA TESOL students should be treated differently, 38 of the 45 respondents (84%) answered in ways we interpreted as a "No" in our coding scheme. Many of those responses pointed to the issue as one of equity between the students—the notion that "we're all in this together" and that any special consideration would ultimately serve little purpose in their later teaching—as in the following quotes that all use some form of the concept of "real world":

> I don't think it helps NNESTs in the long run. The real world will not offer any such extra help. (L1 Spanish)

> The rules and the expectations should be the same for all students, regardless of their "native" or "non-native" status. I think that letting all students know which gap they need to fill, is necessary. Trying to protect the non-native students is not helpful, they need to learn to deal with the reality outside the training program. (L1 Italian)

> [N]ative and non-native speakers should be treated equally in the classroom and especially when being graded. They all entered meeting certain requirements and are working to achieve the same goal. If non-native speakers are held to an easier standard, it may help their grades while they are in the program but overall, it isn't going to help them in the real world when they're teaching English. (L1 Cantonese and English)

At stake also, according to some respondents, is not only a future teacher's own abilities to teach, but the reputation of his or her master's program. Respondents thought that if some classmates were given special consideration, the value of their MA degree suffers. The following quote is representative of that notion:

> I believe that because these two populations come into the program with different strengths and weaknesses it is understandable that NNS students

might need more assistance. However, once these students have completed the program the assessment requirements should be the same for both groups. After graduating, the Master's degree should represent that all students have fulfilled all requirements, including mastering academic language and speaking. (L1 German)

All surveys such as this one invite the occasional radical, uncompromising response. Taking a hard-line approach, the following respondent clearly feels frustrated with any classmates requiring additional aid. The response is worth reprinting here, even if (fortunately) it did not represent a large proportion of respondents in our survey, as an indication of a stance that instructors and students should be prepared to encounter.

If they need extra help, they should NOT be in the MA program. If there are language issues, they should take ESL classes before entering the MA program. Professors are NOT there to teach them "when to use plural 's'" I do not think that they should expect extra help – that's unfair. (L1 Turkish)

Qualified "No" Responses

Notwithstanding the extreme reaction type of the above quotation (which was rare in the survey) and the general feeling that nonnative English speakers should not receive differential treatment (which was common), many responses pointed to a need for and encouragement of sensitivity on the part of professors toward the extra burden facing students who attempt an advanced degree in a language that is not their first. Representative of this call for sensitivity are the following quotations.

[T]hey don't have to be treated differently, but instructors MUST understand difficulties and challenges Non-native students have. (L1 Spanish)

I don't think they should be treated differently nor receive extra help, but I think it is the professors' responsibilities to address some of the students' language deficiencies. (L1 Brazilian Portuguese)

These first two quotations share the one rhetorical structure that was most common of all responses in this category, in which the initial emphasis on the mandate against differential treatment is followed by the concession that TESOL educators must remain vigilantly aware of nonnative speakers' additional challenges. Another fairly common type of response gave guidelines for classroom behavior on the part of TESOL instructors, such as in the following, in which a specific classroom problem is highlighted:

I believe that professors have a responsibility to be linguistically sensitive that there are students who will have trouble following a too-quiet or too-fast speaker, and who will not be included in the conversation when there are pop cultural references unique to America. (L1 English)

A few respondents pointed to the "role-model" possibilities of nonnative-speaking instructors (pointed out extensively in NNEST research, e.g., Ellis, 2002; Liu, 1999a):

> If non-native speaker instructors would discuss more openly about the challgnes they must have faced at their beginnings, i think it would help non-native students. (L1 Italian)

Another common response type was that some MA students should indeed receive extra help (if not be "treated differently," which respondents tended to interpret as "be held to different standards"). But that help should not be limited to nonnative-speaking students; all students in need of any help are entitled to it, though the responses generally framed the "help" in institutional terms (labs for writing or pronunciation, special classes) rather than coming from individual instructors.

> [E]xtra help - yes / different standards – no (L1 English)

> In my opinion, I would love if both types of students are treated equally. However, I love if there are some pronunciation classes to help non-native speakers. (L1 Vietnamese)

> I think there should be assistance available for NNEST speakers who may request it, especially in writing. They have to work extra hard to complete graduate level courses in a second language; therefore, I think their efforts should be supported as much as possible. (L1 English)

Of course, many university campuses already have special centers for "extra help" (tutoring labs, etc.) and some respondents cited the common-sense idea for students to take their own initiative in pursuing those options for themselves:

> [T]hey should go to the tutoring center etc if they need extra help or attend office hours but other than that no extra help should be given (L1 English)

General "Yes" Responses

Of the 45 respondents to Question 2, two of them answered with an unequivocal "Yes" to whether nonnative English-speaking MA TESOL students should receive some sort of differential treatment. This is a distinct minority, to be sure. Yet their comments are instructive—and inspiring—in that they evince an admirable sensitivity and compassion for students engaged in advanced academic activity in a foreign language. The first of these was an English speaker with experience studying in other countries, thus under similar circumstances as his or her nonnative English-speaking MA TESOL classmates:

> As a person whose L1 is English and who has lived in different countries

> and studied different languages – getting to an acceptable but not exceptionally high level in those other languages – I imagine having to write papers at the graduate level in one of these L2s would be extremely challenging. I would hope that an institution I attended would offer free writing assistance and that perhaps I would not be graded down excessively for such errors like prepositions and articles, which are notoriously hard to master and don't interfere too much with comprehension. (L1 English)

This first respondent makes an implicit distinction, in describing grammar in writing, between "local" and "global" errors. The respondent also appears to take a fairly liberal view of an English teacher's language accuracy: One can easily imagine an argument in which the contrary view held that since MA TESOL students will soon be teaching English themselves, they should attempt to be as near perfect in their own language accuracy as possible.

The second "Yes" respondent mirrors the one above, except that it is a non-native English-speaking student in "another country" not his or her own (i.e., here in the US). This respondent appears to believe that TESOL programs are set up primarily with native-speaking students in mind (this is probably a misinterpretation).

> Yes, I do. The M.A. TESOL program is initically desinged for native-English-speaking students (I think, in U.S.A.), so as a NNES student, I needed/need some extra help such as editing for my paper or having study group for reading. (L1 Korean)

One more respondent could be interpreted as answering "Yes" to the question of whether or not some students should receive extra help, but the explanation points out that, in grammar classes, it is actually *native* speakers who need the extra help, so as to save time for everyone:

> I think native speakers need more extra help in pedagogical grammar courses because they don't seem to know the grammar rules. So, much of the class time was spent on explaining grammar rules instead of "how to teach grammar." (L1 Chinese)

This response also raises the issue of the *practicality* of an MA TESOL degree. A frequent concern of MA TESOL students (in our experience as program coordinators, and from anecdotal evidence) is that their master's programs are excessively theoretical, and students would prefer much more practice-oriented programs. This issue, beyond the scope of the current paper, is certainly worth further inquiry.

> **Question 4:** In what way, if at all, do your M.A. TESOL instructors discuss World Englishes in your classes? What insights, if any, have you received in your classes about how the existence of different varieties of World English influences non-native English teaching issues?

In our previous study (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), which surveyed TESOL educators (professors) in California, we discussed the large proportion of survey responses that called into question the very definition of a "native speaker," especially in light of the growing understanding of the divergent varieties of English around the world and the resulting difficulty in defining a standard form of the language. The tenor of those responses was congruent with research on World Englishes and its pedagogical implications (e.g., Jenkins, 2006; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). Respondents to that previous study, as well as researchers of World Englishes, emphasize that the complexities of defining a standard English are to be, ideally, extensively covered in MA TESOL programs. However, in the conclusion to our past paper we noted our doubt that such coverage exists on an adequate scale.

That doubt seems at least partially justified for California MA TESOL programs, based on the results of the current survey. Of the respondents, 44 provided substantive answers to Question 4, but only 24—just over half—indicated definitively that they had received course work on World Englishes. One would hope for that percentage to be higher—especially because those who *had* received exposure to World Englishes research often recited pointed pedagogical implications therefrom. For example, several responses indicated that exposure to World Englishes research, and the resulting class discussion, can enhance future English instructors' sensitivity toward their own students:

> In my sociolinguistics class we touched upon the topic on World Englishes. This topic suggests that teachers and students alike should become more tolerant to different varieties of English and learn the language with their specific goals in mind rather than trying to attain a native speaker's level. (L1 Russian)

> From what I can recall, we discussed how the native English speaker should not be seen as the norm or the target goal; this ideal is nonexistent. We discussed the reality of multiple varitiers of English and how one should not be treated better than another. (L1 English)

> [I]t is always interesting to hear the input of non-native students who have experience learning or teaching English outside of the United States, because they can share subtle differences in meaning, language, or technique that they might have learned elsewhere. (L1 English)

The first response above, with its emphasis on analyzing the "specific goals" over achieving "nativeness," dovetails well with insights on the native speaker fallacy (see Phillipson, 1992); it also reflects a growing post-method pedagogical stance of greater attention to local contingencies and needs than to larger-umbrella general teaching methods (Canagarajah, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Phillipson, 1992). These are important notions to budding teachers (the second response voices them in a different manner), and the fact that the respondent recalled so much of it via a mere "touch[ing] upon" of World Englishes research

speaks of the great value of even just a little coverage in MA classrooms on the topic. The third response above illustrates what can happen during class discussion: Just being in the same room with people who speak (or at least have been exposed to) "nonstandard" varieties of English can lead to greater sensitivity to linguistic variation.

In our previous paper (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), another commonly cited theme by respondents was the idea that a "native"/"nonnative" dichotomy is misleading, and that instead it is more fruitful to regard the space between those two poles as a continuum. Respondents in the current survey saw that as well, with lights on the subject having gone off during their MA studies. The following quote illustrates this:

> It was eye-opening to learn that there were so many varieties of English and to dismiss the idea of British English or American English to be the most proper and ideal English was refreshing. The concept of World Englishes made me think about if we could simply draw a line between English spoken by so called "native English speakers" verses English spoken by "non-native speakers." (L1 Japanese)

Also, respondents echoed the usefulness of World Englishes research for pedagogical practices; at the least, respondents have become aware of the teaching implications of such research (exemplified by the first response below), but some claimed that they had even learned to implement specific classroom practices in response to their exposure to the research (second response below).

> As a NS of English I learned about how different varieties of World English influences non-native English teaching issues. I was not aware of it before. (L1 German)

> [N]ow that I am an instructor at the Intensive English Program at [the same institution as the M.A. TESOL program], I use what I have learned to help my students realize the great variety of English in the world and I always attempt to treat each English equally. (L1 Spanish and English)

All the comments above serve as a "mini-laboratory" on the value of covering the topic of World Englishes, even just a little, given the clear insights on linguistics and teaching available from that field. We would hope that in a follow-up survey several years hence, the number of respondents reporting extensive exposure to World Englishes research would approach 100%.

This hope appears to be echoed by MA TESOL students themselves. Of the 44 substantive responses to Question 4, we coded 10 of them as "minimal," meaning that their responses indicated a marginal level of exposure to World Englishes research. This extra category of "minimal" occurred to us as we read in these responses (as well as the 7 responses that indicated "no coverage") an almost plaintive wish for *more* exposure, such as in the following:[3]

> Courses I have taken so far only briefly touched upon the concept of World Englishes. I wish I will have more chances to discuss about this kind of issue more in my future courses. (L1 Mandarin)
>
> [W]e stick to theory and we don't seem to have much time to explicitly talk about how [this concept] can or could manifest in our program's courses. (L1 English)
>
> [B]eing aware of World English would help non-native speakers adapt better to all English-speaking cultures. (L1 Thai)

The general conclusions to be drawn from the responses to this item seem to be that in California at least, we have come far in injecting worthwhile research on World Englishes into our MA TESOL curricula, but we have a way to go yet to make it ubiquitous. That research is useful not only on a theoretical level, but also on the day-to-day pedagogical level, and thus can be legitimately taught in classes focusing on teaching practices. And that research and its implications are accessible, judging from the responses of those who have been even just slightly exposed to it: MA TESOL students armed with knowledge of World Englishes quickly surmise the practices they may employ or at least the sensitivity that research can engender in a language teacher. As in our past discussions on this topic, we continue to urge MA TESOL instructors to make World Englishes research a permanent part of their programs.

Discussion and Suggestions for Action

In analyzing the data, a number of interesting observations emerge, especially as they relate to prior research on TESOL professionals. First, while acknowledging the challenges that nonnative English-speaking students face in MA TESOL programs, the TESOL faculty that we previously surveyed (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012) framed their responses in terms of strengths and advantages, reinforcing previous studies (Cheung & Braine, 2007; Cook, 2005; I. Lee, 2000; Lipovsky & Mahboob, 2010; Mahboob, 2004; Medgyes, 1994; Pacek, 2005) that show nonnative English-speaking students may have a more sophisticated linguistic knowledge of English, are often more empathetic about the L2 acquisition process, and can draw upon their own experiences as L2 learners in their teaching. In contrast, the current study revealed that students often see nonnative English-speaking students at a disadvantage in terms of language proficiency and the amount of time needed to complete graduate-level reading and writing assignments.[4] What is interesting about this, however, is that it breaks down differently across language background. Whereas nearly 70% of native English-speaking students considered nonnative English-speaking students at a disadvantage, only 50% of nonnative English-speaking students viewed themselves in a similar way. This difference suggests that the reality may be other than the numbers indicate and that a survey is merely the beginning of a thorough investigation of the issue. It also indicates that students need more opportunities to discuss the issue openly in various courses during their MA

studies. What is it that leads each group of students to different conclusions? What about nonnative speaker production and performance in class gives native English-speaking students this impression when their MA faculty think otherwise? Frank and open discussions on the topic would allow for students to clear the air and for everyone involved to arrive at a better understanding of the local reality. This might result in the establishment of more language-focused courses (i.e., grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, culture) as suggested by Cullen (1994), as well as greater empowerment of nonnative English-speaking students who would have clearer opportunities to discuss and share their experiences (Kamhi-Stein, 1999), thereby helping NSs better understand their learning experience. If MA faculty and nonnative English-speaking students themselves see language proficiency and academic language demands more as challenges than disadvantages, TESOL educators would do well to provide native English-speaking students greater exposure to such ideas.

Second, in general, students were in agreement with faculty regarding treatment of nonnative English-speaking students, with slightly more than half indicating that all students are treated the same. Despite this general agreement, however, student responses displayed greater diversity and were divided again along native-speaker/nonnative-speaker lines. Just over half of native speakers indicated that professors treated all students the same while nearly two thirds of nonnative speakers did so. What could explain this? On the one hand, nonnative English-speaking students could be receiving different treatment from their instructors but not recognize it or consider it as such. On the other hand, native English-speaking students may be noting a difference in treatment that does not exist. Either way, it should be a concern, as it indicates a possible mismatch between what faculty say they do and what they actually do, but also because it reveals a perception of unfair treatment on the part of many native English-speaking students who believe that some instructors "grade easier on the non-native speakers." Again, a greater focus on NNEST issues in MA TESOL courses would allow for more discussion and sharing on this topic, which we believe would lead to a better understanding among all parties of the actual situation and would give each a voice in shaping how we address the issue. As noted in student comments, nonnative English-speaking students tended to emphasize how instructors treated them differently by providing them with additional support while native English-speaking students often indicated that the different treatment resulted in greater leniency. Such differing views indicate that TESOL educators could do a better job engaging this topic in their classes and that much more open discussion of the matter is needed.

The third general observation from the survey was the overall agreement among the respondents that students in MA TESOL programs should not receive differential treatment from their professors during their studies. On this question there was less divergence between native- and nonnative-speaking students: The great majority of each gave an response that could be interpreted as "treat all students the same," and respondents from each group discussed similar reasons: the demands of the "real world" after receiving their degrees, the inherent value of the degree (and its debasement in case of more lenient

treatment of some students), and the need for greater sensitivity on the part of professors in their treatment of all students. It is this last rationale that points to the most apparent direction for TESOL educators to head: Take pains to avoid the appearance (at least) of differential treatment. This conclusion leads to a dilemma, however. In our previous paper (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), we provided a discussion—based on one of the respondents' comments—of the difference between "equality" and "equity": treating everyone exactly the same way, or knowing how to read each student individually and provide the guidance and feedback for each. Simply put, *all* students (nonnative-speaking, native-speaking, etc.) need different kinds of help, and an effective teacher knows how to diagnose each student's needs and base his or her treatment on those. So the problem becomes one of understanding those needs, acting on them, and also (crucially) having frank and open discussions with students about that approach to the situation. Are we as TESOL educators already having that discussion? This is a question for further research.

This survey's final observation is that while California's TESOL educators do not appear to be covering the topic of World Englishes with enough depth, MA TESOL students have some surface knowledge, or at least intuition, about the implications of World Englishes on matters pertaining to the English language and to the teaching and learning thereof. They seem primed, therefore, for more information and training on the subject. Resources such as Jenkins (2006) are good introductions and accessible to master's students. The recent (2012) founding of the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* is also a welcome addition to scholarship on the topic.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

This study, along with our previous research (Frazier & Phillabaum, 2011/2012), provides a good initial snapshot of the attitudes and perceptions of TESOL students and professionals regarding a variety of issues affecting nonnative English-speaking students. Future research would do well to use this as a point of departure and expand the scope of investigation to include interviews, ethnographic observation, document study, and video recordings. Interview data allow participants to elaborate ideas and the researcher to probe more deeply into the details of individual students' experiences. Past research (Ellis, 2004; Holliday, 2005; E. Lee & Lew, 2001; Liu, 1999a, 1999b; Morita, 2004; Tsui, 2003) has used interviews and journaling to great effect, and future investigations of student perceptions of the position of nonnative English-speaking students in MA TESOL programs would benefit from the detail interviews could provide. While interview data can provide a richer description of student perceptions than the frozen responses of survey data, they still represent perceptions, which may or may not be accurate. For this reason, we recommend future investigations make use of ethnographic observation, document study, and video data. Ethnographic observation and video data provide the researcher with access to an experience that has not been filtered through the student or the professor and that can be used to measure the accuracy of student perceptions. Through examining video data, evaluations of differential treatment

can be empirically confirmed/disconfirmed, and when present, the specific mechanisms of such treatment can be identified. This information could then be used to shape future teaching and learning practices for both students and professors. Finally, since the theme of greater leniency in grading is common throughout many of the responses, we recommend that future research examine the actual work that students produce and the sorts of commentary that they receive from their professors. Such an analysis would help to illuminate how professors actually respond to student work and would address the question of whether or not nonnative English-speaking students are treated more leniently in grading. This information would allow for a discussion of the issue that moves us away from mere perceptions and attitudes toward an empirically based understanding that would benefit all stakeholders. Professors would be able to reflect on their own beliefs and real-world practices, and students would be able to speak frankly about issues of fairness and equal treatment from a research-informed perspective.

Summary and Conclusion

Student responses to our survey display a significant amount of agreement on certain topics regarding nonnative English-speaking students, but they also reveal significant diversity on others. As with previous research on nonnative English speakers, student responses indicated a range of advantages that nonnative English speakers bring to the table, while noting a variety of challenges related to cultural differences and language proficiency. Overall, students are in agreement about whether nonnative English-speaking MA TESOL students should be treated differently by their professors, and this finding accords with the attitudes expressed by instructors in our previous research. However, students are in less agreement regarding whether or not nonnative English-speaking students actually do receive different treatment from their instructors. A significant number of native English-speaking students expressed the idea that professors respond to nonnative English-speaking student work with greater leniency, and some specifically indicated that they believed this was unfair. Nonnative English speakers, on the other hand, generally framed differential treatment in terms of additional support provided by instructors, not in terms of unequal treatment. As we noted in the discussion, this should be a concern to TESOL educators because it indicates a possible mismatch between what professors say they do and what they actually do, and because student views diverge clearly along native-speaker/nonnative-speaker lines.

Finally, student responses reveal that the push toward greater discussion of World Englishes has been slow in trickling down to MA programs, as just over half of all respondents noted having discussed World Englishes in their studies. That said, those students who were familiar with World Englishes were uniform in describing the way that this knowledge had shaped their understanding of concepts such as the native/nonnative dichotomy and the native speaker fallacy, and how such an understanding might shape their pedagogy. Other responses provide additional hope along these lines as a number of students expressed a desire for more exposure to and more opportunities to discuss such topics.

In our view, the most significant finding of this survey is the fact that nonnative English-speaking and native English-speaking students differ in their views of how professors treat them—more support versus greater leniency—and the fairness of such treatment. As noted throughout the paper, this finding demonstrates the need for greater and more open discussion of nonnative English-speaker issues in MA TESOL programs as well as among TESOL faculty. Students require opportunities to scrutinize their own experience and the experiences of others, and faculty need time to engage in critical self-reflection. If we do this, we may well see more and more students, native and nonnative, express views such as the following:

> I think they miss out (and indeed, the whole class does) when the teacher sort of patronizingly tells them they don't need to talk if they don't want to. I wish teachers would make a conscious effort to more actively solicit feedback from NNES Students. (L1 English)

> Initially when I started my MA program, I felt I was at a disadvantage compared to my native speaking colleagues in the program. … After a semester or two, I began to realize I was not at a disadvantage. I started seeing myself as a graduate student with a different background. I stopped labeling myself with the idea of being inferior to my native speaking friends. Through the course work, I learned that I could think as critically as anybody else and could excel in all the classes I had to take. (L1 Japanese)

The first comment holds professors responsible for engaging students in discussion while the second shows how one's identity develops throughout the course of study. For more students to reflect similar views, we need to engage students in greater discussion of the challenges and advantages that nonnative English-speaking students experience, issues of equality and equity, as well as perceptions of fairness in grading, support, and the like.

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Notes

[1]We omitted Questions 7 and 8 from the table because the city and university would allow for the identification of specific participants.

[2]Four responses (two native English-speaking and two nonnative English-speaking students) indicated an inability to answer the question due to lack of knowledge. These responses have been excluded from the analysis but not from the overall percentages presented in the paper.

[3]We coded the remainder of the responses as "Other," as they chose to answer the question indirectly or not at all (making their own points instead).

[4]Though faculty in our previous study mentioned the increased time needed for completing assignments, they framed it as a challenge and not as a disadvantage. In the current study, it is clearly framed as a disadvantage.

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Appendix 1
Student Survey

Open-Ended Survey Questions

1. Do you feel that non-native-English-speaking M.A. TESOL students are at a disadvantage, or at an advantage, compared to native speakers, while studying in the M.A. program? Or are the benefits and drawbacks generally balanced? Please comment on this question with regard to two areas: writing and speaking.

2. Do your M.A. TESOL instructors treat non-native- and native-English-speaking students differently? If so, how? Do your instructors provide more help to non-native speakers in their writing or speaking? In what other ways are the differences apparent, if any?

3. Do you believe native- and non-native-speaking M.A. TESOL students SHOULD be treated differently? Do you believe that non-native-speaking students should receive extra help in any way? If so, how?

4. In what way, if at all, do your M.A. TESOL instructors discuss World Englishes in your classes? What insights, if any, have you received in your classes about how the existence of different varieties of World English influences non-native English teaching issues?

Demographic Information Questions

1. What is the language you learned first?
2. Do you consider the language that you provided above to be your dominant language?
3. What do you consider your dominant language?
4. At what age did you begin learning English?
5. What country are you from?
6. Please state your age.
7. Please state the name of your M.A. TESOL university.
8. Please state the university's location (city).

Appendix 2
Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

First language learned	*Number*	*Dominant language*	*Age started learning English*	*Country of origin*	*Age*
Cantonese	1	English	1-2	US	22
Chinese	1	English	3	China	32
English	28	English	From birth	US	22-62
Foreign language	1	Not provided	7	Not provided	25
German	1	English	4	US	49
Italian	1	Italian	10	Italy	41
Japanese	1	English	10	Japan	37
Korean	1	Korean	13	Korea	43
Mandarin	1	Mandarin	13	Taiwan	32
Portuguese	3	Portuguese	12	Brazil	36
		Portuguese	9	Brazil	Not provided
		Portuguese	14	Brazil	27
Russian	1	Russian	4.5	Russia	24
Spanish	3	English	Infancy	Peru	29
		Spanish	15	Mexico	40
		Spanish	5	Mexico	54
Thai	1	English	~ 6 (in school)	US/ Thailand	37
Turkish	1	Turkish	12	Turkey	28
Vietnamese	1	Vietnamese	6	Vietnam	27