

A Study of Native English-Speaking Teacher Programs in Elementary Schools in Taiwan

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This study looks into issues pertaining to the policy of including native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in elementary schools in Taiwan, i.e., NEST programs, from the perspective of the teachers involved. Through data gathered from interviews and classroom observations, this qualitative study examines the necessity of NEST programs and reveals the challenges facing NESTs and local English teachers as they negotiate the process of working together. It shows that while a NEST program is not a centralized language teacher policy in Taiwan, its necessity remains a moot point. Moreover, working with Taiwanese homeroom teachers presented challenges to the NESTs, and the local English teachers considered that working with inexperienced NESTs presented unwanted challenges. Finally, suggestions on NEST programs are discussed.

Key words: collaborative teaching, native English-speaking teachers, NEST programs

Introduction

In 2001, Hsinchu City, an industrial city in the northern part of Taiwan, launched the first ever native English-speaking teacher (NEST) program in this country, i.e., including NESTs in elementary schools. Actually, inviting native English speakers to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in the school system is not an unusual practice in the Asia Pacific region; the Primary Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme (PNET) in Hong Kong, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET), and the English Program in Korea (EPIK) are the major examples of such programs. In Hong Kong, the importation of trained and experienced NESTs to schools started in 1987 and since then, various NEST schemes have developed. In 2002, the PNET scheme was introduced to provide primary students with an

authentic environment to learn English, to develop innovative teaching and learning methods and to promote the professional development of local English teachers in Hong Kong (Carless, 2006). Since 1987, the Japanese government has recruited native speakers of English as teaching assistants through the JET program in order to improve English teaching and learning at the junior and senior high school levels in Japan (Crooks, 2001). Similarly, EPIK, sponsored by the Korean government, was implemented in 1995 “to improve the English speaking abilities of Korean students and teachers, to develop cultural exchanges, and to reform teaching methodologies in English” (EPIK website, 2005).

Contrasted with the JET program and EPIK, which are sponsored by their respective central governments and recruit foreign university graduates from English-speaking countries, the management of Hsinchu City’s NEST program is awarded to a non-state education agency by the city government and currently, program participants are all qualified and licensed native English-speaking teachers (As of 2003, all NESTs recruited in NEST programs must be qualified and licensed teachers). Since 2001, NESTs have been hired by city or prefectural governments in Taiwan in a similar fashion. It was

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not until 2004 that NESTs were recruited by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan, as opposed to being recruited by local governments, to fulfill a shortage of qualified elementary school English teachers in remote areas. As NEST programs are not a centralized language teacher policy and decisions on the implementation of programs are left to individual cities or prefectures, it is difficult to track down the total number of NESTs teaching in elementary schools in Taiwan. As of 2007, ten out of twenty-five cities/prefectures in Taiwan have implemented NEST programs.

As NEST programs have become prevalent in Taiwan, alongside other Asian countries, e.g., China, the significance of implementing NEST programs cannot be overlooked such as the potential effect of collaboration between NESTs and local English teachers on EFL teaching and learning. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look into issues pertaining to the implementation of NEST programs. Through data gathered from interviews and classroom observations, this qualitative study intends to examine the necessity of NEST programs from the perspective of the teachers involved, i.e., NESTs and local English teachers. In addition, the challenges facing the teachers in the process of working together are explored. With the insights gained from this study, the author wishes to build up knowledge about the implementation of NEST programs as well as make viable suggestions on NEST programs and the training of collaborative teaching methods.

Literature Review

A NEST program refers to a language teacher policy made by governments which results in the inclusion of NESTs as a major source of English instruction in the school system (Sommers, 2004). According to the guidelines for NEST programs in Taiwan posted on the MOE website (2003), to be eligible for a NEST program, teachers must be native speakers of English-speaking countries, four-year college graduates, and have a teaching license for elementary schools or language arts. NEST programs aim to (a) promote team work of English teaching and learning as well as a better English learning environment for students in remote areas, (b) introduce local English teachers to current concepts about English education through the sharing of ideas about teaching methods and materials between teachers at home and abroad, (c) improve students' learning and communication ability in English, and (d) facilitate cultural exchanges between Taiwan and other countries and advance other countries' understanding of Taiwanese culture (MOE website, 2003).

By and large, the function of NEST programs in Taiwan is twofold: educational and cultural. It is clearly stated in the guidelines by the MOE that teachers in NEST programs are to work with Taiwanese teachers of English (TTEs) as an English teaching team at the school and to support the research and development of English teaching methods and materials. Job descriptions for NESTs are as follows: (a) to support collaborative teaching of English and develop effective learning activities, (b) to support compensatory instruction for students and promote conversational English, (c) to support the research and development of supplementary materials, (d) to promote current concepts of English learning through teaching demonstrations and school visits, and (e) to assume other duties related to English learning and cultural exchanges. While NEST program policy decisions are made by local governments in Taiwan, these guidelines serve as a framework for programs in individual cities or prefectures where they are implemented.

In spite of the prevalence of NEST programs in particular in North-East Asia (i.e., Japan, Korea, and Taiwan), some studies argue that the effectiveness of NEST programs as an educational policy remains an open question. For instance, the JET program has existed in Japanese high schools for many years, but academic research seems to have revealed some of the program's shortfalls such as lack of training, institutional conflicts (Crooks, 2001), and uncertainty surrounding the roles of team teachers (Kachi & Lee, 2001). A study by Peng (2003) on the issues of NESTs in Hsinchu City in Taiwan also shows that while NESTs could create an authentic language learning environment for and introduce different cultures to students, challenges such as the management of NESTs and conflicts between NESTs and local English teachers have accompanied the implementation of such programs. Furthermore, Sommers (2004) argues that NEST programs are not efficacious because most NESTs working in NEST programs are not involved in teaching in a professional manner and the teaching activities most NESTs carry out resemble the instruction given in clubs or non-school organizations. He states that NESTs most often work as an assistant teacher in team teaching¹ situations, where instructional skills and ability are irrelevant and the responsibility of student conduct inside the classroom does not fall on the shoulders of the NESTs. Notwithstanding Sommers' arguments, a few studies related to NEST programs suggest a favorable stance on this issue. For instance, a study by Cheng (2003) indicates that elementary school English teachers and parents in a prefecture, where a NEST program was not yet available, were positive in their attitudes towards

the inclusion of NESTs in elementary schools in their prefecture. In addition, in Lin's (2001) study, a questionnaire survey of 2210 students from grade 2 to grade 6 in Hsinchu City, where a NEST program had just been implemented at the time, shows that most of the students became more interested in English learning under the teaching by NESTs after one school term. Similarly, a study by Carless (2006) on the PNET scheme in Hong Kong indicates that the scheme had a positive impact on students and teachers.

In the limited research on collaboration between NESTs and local English teachers in the school system, Sturman (1992) conducted a case study of a cooperative project between the British Council Cambridge English School (CES) and a local Board of Education in Japan. In this project, qualified and experienced teachers of ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) from CES worked with Japanese teachers of English to team teach junior high school students. Sturman's study suggests that the teacher participants developed a successful approach to working together throughout the project and that students' reactions were positive. In addition, Tajino & Tajino (2000) reviewed team teaching practice in Japanese secondary EFL classrooms and suggested that "team-teaching should be reinterpreted as team-learning" (p. 9). They proposed various new team patterns which provide both NEST and local English teachers with opportunities to develop as language teachers. In comparison, Kachi & Lee (2001) investigated the team teaching experiences of Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and assistant language teachers (ALTs) in the JET program. They found that the biggest problem for JTEs and ALTs in team teaching was a lack of channels to access the upper educational administration. They suggested pre-service and on-going in-service training at different levels such as school- or local-level teachers' meetings, small group forums and summer workshops.

Previous studies have illuminated some of the strengths and challenges of NEST programs, such as the JET Program. However, little classroom-based research has been published on this topic. While the implementation of NEST programs has generated animated discussion both at home and abroad (such as China and Korea), more studies based on empirical data are called for in order to shed light on programs of this kind (e.g., Chou, 2005).

The Study

The present study, lasting five months, is a qualitative

study of the necessity of NEST programs from the perspectives of the teachers involved in Hsinchu City's NEST program. The reason for the teachers in the Hsinchu City program to be included in this study was that the Hsinchu City program was the first program of this kind to be implemented in Taiwan. At the time of this study, it had been four years since the Hsinchu City program was started. The teachers in the program might be able to provide more insights into NEST programs, even if not first-hand. Six teachers, i.e., three local English teachers, Chen, Lin, and Wang, and three NESTs, David, Ken, and Sue (these are pseudonyms assigned by the author) were included in this study. All the teacher participants were invited through personal contacts. Namely, the author first invited the local English teacher participants through personal contacts and through them their NEST counterparts were invited to take part in this study. They all agreed to participate in this study on a voluntary basis over one school semester. These teachers were teaching in two elementary schools in Hsinchu City. Chen and David were team teachers in one elementary school. Lin, Wang, Ken, and Sue taught in the other one, where Wang co-taught with Ken, and Lin taught with both Ken and Sue. The NESTs were not teachers of ESOL, but all were qualified and licensed teachers of either the elementary or secondary level. David, from South Africa, was a newly certified teacher of Physical Education and Science at the elementary level with no formal teaching experiences except for a teaching practicum. Ken was a secondary school teacher of English and Mathematics. Originally from Ireland, Ken had taught English in Taiwan for about one year and five months before joining Hsinchu City's NEST program. As for Sue, from Canada, she was a secondary school teacher of English and had taught in England for about one year before moving to Taiwan. They were in their first year in this city's NEST program at the time of this study. As for local English teachers, both Wang and Chen were certified elementary school teachers and became qualified to teach English at the elementary level after having successfully completed a 20-credit English teacher training program. Wang had been an elementary school teacher for six years and it was her first year of teaching English at the time of this study. Chen had taught in elementary schools for about five years and co-taught English with various NESTs at her current school for three years. Wang and Chen were the head teachers of English at their respective schools. Lin, who used to teach at a private language school for several years, was a contracted substitute English teacher at the time. With the exception of Chen, none of the other teachers had previous experience of

collaborative teaching of EFL in elementary schools.

In addition to documentary analysis of previous research, two kinds of instruments were employed to solicit qualitative data: interviewing and observation in classrooms. The data collection includes: (a) transcriptions from tape-recorded interviews with the teachers during the study, and (b) field notes taken in classroom observations. Interviews with the teachers were formal and semi-structured and conducted in two forms: individual and focus group interviews, which looked at issues related to teachers' perceptions of collaborative teaching and the necessity of NEST programs in elementary schools in Taiwan (see the interview schedule in Appendix 1). In addition, interview questions could be initiated from the author's observation notes without identifying the source of the questions. Each teacher had two individual interviews and participated in one focus group interview with their colleagues. Two separate focus groups were identified: local English teachers (i.e., Chen, Lin, and Wang) and NESTs (i.e., David, Ken, and Sue). Individual interviews were conducted in the first and the last month of the study, while focus group interviews in the third month. Each individual interview took 30 to 45 minutes, while the focus group interview took one to one and a half hours. Interviews were performed in English or Chinese by the teachers' choice. All the interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed or translated into English.

In addition, a formal non-participant observation was carried out once every month for one period of class (i.e., 40 minutes) in the teachers' classrooms during the study (see the list of observation focuses in Appendix 2). Observations were conducted in the classroom where the teachers co-taught with their team teachers, namely, Chen co-teaching with David, Wang with Ken, and Lin with Sue. There were five classroom observations in each pair of teachers' classroom. In total, there were 15 classroom observations. Field notes were taken during observation and analyzed in combination with interview data gathered from the teachers.

In this study, methodological triangulation was used. Namely, the author employed multiple sources of data (i.e., NESTs and local English teachers) and multiple methods of data collection and analysis (e.g., individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations) in order to confirm the emerging findings and strengthen reliability and internal validity. It is also hoped that, through triangulation, the author could obtain a holistic understanding of teachers' perceptions of NEST programs in elementary schools in Taiwan and be able to construct plausible explanations for the issues being studied.

Discussion on Research Findings

Necessity of NEST Programs

Local English teachers' perspective: A moot point: When asked her perception of NEST programs, Wang, a local English teacher, seemed to see both benefits and drawbacks to the programs. In the first interview, Wang commented that NEST programs are "a double-edged policy with advantages and disadvantages as well" (from Wang's first interview). She considered it a wonderful thing for students to receive English input directly from native speakers on the one hand. On the other hand, she was concerned that students might experience cultural shock when NESTs taught students in styles different from local English teachers. Later in the focus group interview with her Taiwanese colleagues, however, Wang remarked that "the Taiwanese government should have focused on training local English teachers instead of spending additional financial resources on hiring NESTs from overseas" (from the focus group interview with the local English teachers) and came to consider NEST programs as a waste of government funds. Intriguingly, in the final interview, Wang re-stated that it was necessary to implement NEST programs so that students could receive native input of English. She also emphasized the importance of local English teachers in collaborative teaching with NESTs as Taiwanese co-teachers could provide language support for lower-level students.

Similarly, Chen commented on the positive and negative points of NEST programs in her first interview:

"I think there are advantages and disadvantages. The good side is that our students have a chance to meet people from different cultures.... Now students encounter foreigners when they are young. They don't think it is strange to talk with foreigners. When they meet foreigners, they are not afraid of speaking English and can express themselves openly... but if you work with an inexperienced foreign teacher, he or she will make your job very tiring...." (Excerpt from Chen's first interview.)

Chen used to teach with an inexperienced NEST, and she described that their teaching "was like a puppet show" (in Chen's first interview) in which the NEST sat and read the textbook in front of the classroom while she acted out what was in the book and tried to promote a positive atmosphere in the classroom. In her first interview, Chen commented that this kind of collaborative teaching did not motivate students' learning and made her feel tired. The interview excerpt shows

that Chen considered the undesirable situation of working with inexperienced NESTs as a negative point of NEST programs (see also session below about challenges for the local English teachers). In addition, Chen saw the suitability or necessity of NEST programs in different lights according to the virtue of students' ages. In her second interview, Chen commented that it would be beneficial to include NESTs in the classrooms of lower graders "as young children were excited when seeing a foreigner in the class and therefore were motivated to learn English" (in Chen's second interview). For higher graders (e.g., the sixth graders) who were starting to study grammar, however, Chen argued that they needed to be taught by local English teachers "because English grammar was complex and students needed thorough explanations about grammatical rules" (in Chen's second interview). She did not think that NESTs would be able to provide "solid instruction of English grammar" for Taiwanese students, even at the elementary level (in Chen's second interview).

In comparison, Lin commented that NEST programs were "a waste of educational resources" (in Lin's first interview). She said:

"Schools hire NESTs to teach English, but they don't speak Chinese at all, and schools have to assign local English teachers to assist them. I think it is kind of a waste of educational resources. I think it is kind of odd to implement NEST programs. It would be better if we hired Taiwanese teachers who are familiar with new teaching skills and methods. First of all, Taiwanese teachers don't have language barriers. They can respond to students' questions or problems right away. In addition, some young students might be too shy to ask questions. They might be scared by foreign teachers. They would feel more comfortable with talking to Taiwanese teachers." (Excerpt from Lin's first interview)

Lin suggested that it would be far better to hire local English teachers as they shared the same language with the students and would be less intimidating to the students than NESTs. Like Wang, Lin thought that owing to NEST programs, collaborative teaching by local English teachers and NESTs became crucial for students in particular at lower-levels, who could seek assistance from the local English teacher in the class when questions arose, for instance, asking for leave to go to the washroom. In spite of Lin's remarks that local English teachers could be better teachers for elementary school students, observation notes, however, show that the local English teachers in this study tended to perform as an assistant whereas the NESTs led

teaching in the classroom. A teaching episode commonly seen in the classes I had observed was: the NESTs were in charge of teaching while the local English teachers walked around the class to ensure the students participated and assisted the NESTs whenever necessary such as recording points for teams, explaining how to play games and disciplining students. The commonly observed episode seems to corroborate Wang's remarks on the advantage of implementing NEST programs, i.e., as the NESTs led teaching in the class, the students could receive most native input of English from the NESTs (see Wang's comments above).

The above discussion suggests that from the local English teachers' perspective, the necessity of NEST programs remains a moot point. It seems that Wang's perception of the necessity of NEST programs was adjusted over the time of the study, while Chen saw NEST programs in a positive as well as a negative light. There was no, as yet, consensus on the necessity of NESTs programs. Except for Lin, who viewed NEST programs in a less favorable light, the other local English teachers tended to see both positive and negative aspects of NEST programs.

NESTs' perspective: A necessary expedient and a measure to motivate student learning: From the NESTs' point of view, the necessity of NEST programs seems less in dispute. In the focus group interview, Sue, a NEST, remarked that she was aware that the recruitment of NESTs was a policy enacted by the government and NEST programs could be a necessary expedient for elementary school English teacher development in Taiwan.

Sue: As the recruitment of NESTs was a policy enacted by the government, I think it ought to be regulated accordingly. I know that NEST programs could be a necessary expedient for elementary school English teacher development under current circumstances and might be withdrawn when the demand for English teachers at elementary school diminished. (Excerpt from the focus group interview)

Compared to Sue, the other NESTs, David and Ken, commented positively on NEST programs and considered the programs as an important means of motivating English learning. The following excerpts are from the interviews with David and Ken, respectively:

"I think the focus of NEST programs is to get the kids excited about English learning and to motivate them to learn by themselves. The foreign teachers bring excitement into the class. Kids are really excited when I come to the classroom. They are eager to learn and to

play games.... I think the foreign teachers are not just there for forty minutes but to motivate students to learn. Even though Chen [i.e., David's co-teacher] can do a good job, without NESTs, I don't think the program is going to be so effective." (Excerpt from David's second interview.)

"...I can bring a lot besides just English teaching to the kids. Being a foreigner, I can make a difference to their lives, maybe through encouragement, to help them, to relate kids to good perceptions of foreigners. It is not just about English teaching... it is more about the overall development of the child." (Excerpt from Ken's second interview.)

Both David and Ken remarked that NESTs could bring excitement and novelty into the classroom and motivate students' learning. Field notes taken from classroom observations indicate that students, especially at lower grades, were excited in the English class and the classroom atmosphere was uplifting. The author observed that students greeted David and Ken cheerfully in the classes. The students were not afraid of participating in activities even if sometimes they did not grasp the point of the activity at first. As Ken emphasized in his second interview, being a NEST, he not only had the chance to teach English but also inspired young learners by relating to them well and conveying a "good perceptions of foreigners."

The above discussion shows that the NESTs, compared to the local English teachers, were positive about NEST programs because they (e.g., David and Ken) hoped to contribute to students' overall development and to make a difference to their lives rather than simply teaching English. They were aware that they could be an inspiration for Taiwanese elementary school students to learn English as well as foreign culture. The NESTs being an inspiration for students seems to match the purposes of NEST programs as stated in the MOE guidelines (see literature review session), i.e., to improve student learning and facilitate cultural exchange.

Challenges Facing Teachers

Challenges for NESTs: Working with homeroom teachers:

According to the MOE guidelines of NEST programs, NESTs are to work with local English teachers at the school and support the development of teaching materials. However, as discussed earlier, observation data indicates that the NESTs actually took the leading role in collaborative teaching with the local English teachers. Furthermore, data from the

interviews with the NESTs reveals that in reality the NESTs took sole responsibility for lesson planning and were to either co-teach with a local English teacher or a homeroom teacher in whose classroom they came to teach. Varying on the size of a school, the number of co-teachers the NESTs worked with could be up to 18 if homeroom teachers were included (in Sue's case). Both Sue and David mentioned that co-teaching with homeroom teachers whose English ability was limited presented a challenge in working collaboratively. The following excerpts are from interviews with Sue and David, respectively:

"The homeroom teachers do not have the time, the energy or the English ability to be a co-teacher to me... so I think a lot is expected from foreign teachers...." (Excerpt from Sue's first interview.)

"Because those homeroom teachers don't have good English speaking abilities, that's difficult for me. I would ask Chen to help and to translate.... I asked Chen and she would speak with the homeroom teachers before the lesson. I am doing the teaching by myself, and that's really hard... after the class, half of the students don't understand what I was saying." (Excerpt from David's second interview.)

The above remarks by Sue and David suggest language barriers the NESTs might encounter when working with homeroom teachers whose English competency was limited. Other than language barriers, when working with numerous homeroom teachers, the NESTs had to deal with individual homeroom teachers who utilized various teaching styles. The following accounts by Ken indicate that, occasionally, bewilderment or even disagreement happened when a NEST and the homeroom teacher s/he worked with did not share the same ideas about teaching. According to Ken, some NESTs were even moved from particular schools owing to an inability of NESTs and co-teachers to get along with one another.

"It has caused problems. I know some foreign teachers have been moved from particular schools because they can't get along with their co-teachers.... I know one teacher who wanted to play a game that involves a physical activity...but the Taiwanese teacher rejected strongly because she found it was too dangerous for kids, so their relationship went down completely because she couldn't play a game which she thought was safe to play...." (Excerpt from Ken's second interview.)

Differing from the findings of the previous studies (e.g., Cheng, 2003; Lin, 2001, Peng, 2003), the above discussion

shows challenges facing the NESTs resulting from working with homeroom teachers due to language barriers and personal incompatibility between NESTs and homeroom teachers. Although homeroom teachers' perspectives were not included in the scope of the present study, the finding indicates that the role of homeroom teachers might come into play when NESTs' perceptions and experiences of working in NEST programs are discussed.

Challenges for local English teachers: Working with inexperienced or opinionated NESTs: When asked about her experience of collaboration with NESTs, Chen described her past experience of working with inexperienced NESTs, which was unpleasant and undesirable. She said:

“If you work with an inexperienced foreign teacher, he or she will make your job very tiring. I used to co-teach with an inexperienced NEST. Our lesson was like a puppet show. He sat and read the textbook in front of the class, and then I acted out what was in the book and tried to create an encouraging atmosphere in the class.... Furthermore, sometimes I need to deal with his emotions or what happened to him on the day.”
(Excerpt from Chen's first interview.)

Working with novice NESTs presented a challenge for Chen, and the unpleasant experience in the past seems to have contributed to her less favorable perception of NEST programs (see above discussion about the local English teachers' perspective on NEST programs). Another local English teacher, Wang, commented that some NESTs “came to Taiwan simply to make money while experiencing Oriental cultures. When they came to teach English with this kind of attitude, unpleasant situations often occurred” (from her first interview). In addition, she mentioned that working with opinionated NESTs could be a challenge.

“What is even more challenging is when you co-teach with a NEST who is very insistent on his or her own opinions. That might result in dispute. When teachers have different opinions from each other, arguments often happen.” (Excerpt from Wang's first interview.)

It seems that challenges facing the teachers involved in collaborative EFL teaching might vary for the NESTs and local English teachers. Nevertheless, a similarity between challenges facing these two groups of teachers could be found. Namely, the NESTs and local English teachers considered it as a challenge to work with a co-teacher who is opinionated and does not share the same ideas about teaching. The above comments by Wang on working with opinionated NESTs could be applied to the NESTs' situation of co-teaching with

homeroom teachers of various teaching styles who were not willing to adapt to change. It is suggested that challenges of this kind would unavoidably result in arguments or obstacles to communication between the NESTs and local English teachers or homeroom teachers, which in turn could adversely affect the performance of collaborative teaching by the teachers. Consequently, the effectiveness of the NEST program would be impaired.

Suggestions

In light of the discussions of these research findings, the author wishes to make a number of suggestions. First, the local English teachers' mixed views regarding NEST programs indicate the ambivalent position of NEST programs in the perceptions of those involved (cf. Peng, 2003). The study reveals that NEST programs are a double-edged policy imposed by local governments and entail the indispensability of collaborative teaching by NESTs and non-native co-teachers (i.e., local teachers of English and homeroom teachers). Hence, the author suggests that local governments put in place the *infrastructure* necessary for successful collaborative teaching before implementing NEST programs if such a decision is made. The infrastructure should consist of pre-service and on-going in-service training focusing on collaborative teaching for both NESTs and non-native co-teachers. As Crooks (2001) emphasizes, there needs to be greater support from all levels, including the educational authorities and the schools, for in-service training for both NESTs and local English teachers. This author is in accord with Crooks in that to justify the existence of NEST programs, the local governments need to go beyond the present pre- and in-service training for NESTs and local English teachers in Taiwan. In other words, the training needs to help team teachers collectively develop effective collaborative teaching skills as well as the ability of planning lessons jointly.

Second, in contrast to Sommers (2004), the NESTs in the study were qualified teaching professionals and fully committed to teaching. The NESTs, in line with Chou's (2005) study, actually took charge of teaching, rather than acting as an assistant teacher, and were responsible for lesson planning. To cope with challenges resulting from working with co-teachers who do not share the same teaching styles or ideas, it is important for NESTs and non-native co-teachers to realize that they are equally qualified and both can contribute to students' learning evenly. The author suggests that NESTs and non-native co-teachers take a tandem approach to

collaborative teaching (cf. Kachi & Lee, 2001; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Namely, NESTs can utilize all the resources and assistance that non-native co-teachers provide on the one hand, and on the other hand, NESTs need to fully involve their co-teachers in teaching. A feasible instruction mode in a collaborative teaching class is that the NEST and non-native co-teacher demonstrate lessons together so that both NEST and non-native co-teacher are fully included in the class and the students know that both teachers are equal. To alleviate the difficulty of working with homeroom teachers whose English is not proficient enough to demonstrate lessons, NESTs should invite homeroom teachers to participate in classroom activities alongside the students in a way that creates an uplifting classroom atmosphere and motivates students' learning. Homeroom teachers, even with limited English, could contribute to collaborative teaching by helping monitor students' learning while engaging themselves in classroom activities.

Third, due to the small number of teacher participants, the present study is limited to making fair generalizations of the research findings. The author suggests more empirical studies be conducted, e.g., questionnaire surveys or comparative studies of NEST programs in different contexts concerning program efficacy and implementation, so as to better understand programs of this kind. Additionally, the research finding that working with homeroom teachers could present challenges for the NESTs suggests that in order to examine NEST programs in Taiwan in a comprehensive manner, the homeroom teachers' perspective should be taken into account. While a growing number of native speakers of English, whether or not teacher-certified, join the EFL teaching profession in school systems in Asian countries, continuing evaluation of NEST programs by educational authorities should be conducted to ensure and sustain the quality and efficacy of the programs. Policy makers need to scrutinize potential outcomes of the implementation of NEST programs. After all, it is when students' learning is optimized that the purposes of NEST programs can best be served.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is an attempt to provide insights into the necessity of NEST programs and the challenges facing NESTs and local English teachers when they learn to work together. This study shows that the local English teachers had an ambivalent attitude towards NEST programs, whereas the NESTs tended to see the programs in a favorable

light. In addition, it is found that teaching with Taiwanese homeroom teachers presented a challenge for the NESTs, while the local English teachers considered working with inexperienced and opinionated NESTs to be undesirable. In spite of the fact that this study was conducted on a small scale in a Taiwanese context, it is hoped that the research findings can help shed light on similar programs in other contexts such as China, Japan and Korea.

Notes

- ¹ Team teaching refers to true team work between two qualified instructors who jointly make presentations to an audience (Quinn & Kanter, 1984). Collaborative teaching is defined as two teachers working together in designing and teaching a course that uses group learning techniques (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). The author takes the liberty of using "collaborative teaching" instead of "team teaching" to represent the teaching practice of this kind because, as Edmundson and Fitzpatrick (1997) state, the former encompasses the latter which suggests simply "teaching as a team in the classroom while the nature of collaboration over teaching may take other forms" (p.16).

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

For the First Individual Interview:

1. Please describe your educational and training background.
2. What kind of collaborative EFL teaching training have you received?
3. What is your perception of collaborative EFL teaching in elementary school classrooms in Taiwan (e.g., challenges, difficulties, issues, etc.)?
4. What is your experience of the collaboration between you and your co-teacher(s) in and outside classroom? Please give examples.
5. What is your perception of NEST programs in elementary schools in Taiwan?
6. Please describe your role in collaborative EFL teaching in elementary school classrooms in Taiwan.

For the Second Individual Interview:

1. Have you found so far collaborative EFL teaching problematic?
2. What is your perception of collaborative EFL teaching in elementary school classrooms in Taiwan (e.g., challenges, difficulties, issues, etc.)? Are there any changes? Please give examples.
3. What kind of support or assistance have you received from your co-teacher(s)? Please give examples.
4. What is your perception of NEST programs in elementary schools in Taiwan after you have worked with your co-teacher(s) for almost one semester?
5. What kind of teacher training do you think will be helpful for you when practicing collaborative EFL teaching in Taiwanese elementary schools?

For the Focus Group Discussion:

1. How do you feel about the interaction between you and your co-teacher(s) in and outside classroom? Please give examples.
2. Have you experienced great collaborative teaching? Why do you think it was successful?
3. If you have more time, what would you do to improve your collaborative teaching skills?
4. What is the purpose of collaborative EFL teaching in elementary school classrooms in Taiwan?
5. What would you suggest for pre- or in-service teacher training for collaborative EFL teaching?
6. Would you like to be a co-teacher of English in elementary schools in Taiwan if you have another opportunity in the future? Why or why not? (for NESTs)

Appendix B

Observation Focuses

1. How do the local English teacher and NEST interact with each other in the classroom?
2. What is the interaction between the teachers and students?
3. How do the teachers jointly give instruction, e.g., role play, joint demonstration, etc.?
4. What kind of support or assistance do the teachers provide to each other, e.g., instruction translation, student discipline, teaching material preparation, etc.?
5. How do the teachers manage the class, e.g., disciplining students, monitoring students' learning, etc.?